

BLASPHEMY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

(Matt. 12:30-32)

The tension between Jesus and the religious leaders of Israel came to a climax with the religious leaders claiming that Jesus had His power from Satan. They NEVER denied His power to heal and cast out demons! Instead, they credited it to the power of Satan. That was most serious!

The Holy Spirit was behind everything that Christ was doing (Acts 10:38). He made the evidence very clear. He is the Spirit of truth (Jn. 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). And it is for this reason what the Pharisees were saying about Jesus – that He was casting out demons by the power of Satan - was inexcusable and exceedingly blasphemous.

After presenting cogent arguments showing the absurdity of the idea that He was casting out demons by Satan, Christ then said:

Matthew 12:30 (NKJV)

30 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

Jesus has all power – power over all the forces of darkness as clearly demonstrated in His ministry. But to know His deliverance from the forces of darkness, one has to side in with Christ. And we do this by FAITH! Each person has to decide on where they will stand. Will they in FAITH, stand with Christ and His ultimate freeing POWER, or will they stand against Him?

There is a great spiritual war going on between God and Satan and people are caught in the middle. Christ invites all who labor and are heavy laden to come to Him and find rest (Mt. 11:28). And there is no neutral ground. You either side with Satan or you side with Jesus! Who are you with?

There were MULTITUDES of people who followed Jesus because He was a miracle worker. Yet, many of these people were fickle enthusiasts not willing to personally sell out and commit to Jesus Christ. They were more fascinated observers instead of being committed followers.

On the one hand, the multitudes in amazement at Christ's miracles skeptically wondered about Jesus being the Son of David (Mt. 12:23). On the other hand, the Pharisees were seeking to influence the people by saying Jesus did these awesome miracles by the power of Satan. So, the people were caught in the middle?

What would they do with Jesus? Jesus makes it very clear there can be no middle ground. And the reason this is so very serious is that the Spirit makes the truth of Christ very CLEAR, for which people are then accountable! Consequently, he who is not with Christ is against Him. We must decide! To remain undecided is to decide against Him! It is an either-or proposition. He who does not gather with Christ scatters abroad.

“In Mark 9:40, Jesus said, “...he who is not against us is on our side.” This seems to be a flat reversal of His words here in Matthew 12:30. The difficulty is resolved when we see that in Matthew it is a matter of **salvation**. A man is either for Christ or against Him; there is no neutrality. In Mark, the subject is **service**.” – **William MacDonald**

Matthew 12:31–32 (NKJV)

**31 “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.
32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.**

In view, here is an especially egregious sin. It is called “**blasphemy against the Spirit**”. Blasphemy is the idea of irreverent speech. It is “extreme slander”. It has been called “defiant irreverence”. It is insulting speech against God and, in this case, specifically against the Holy Spirit.

Jesus says every sin and blasphemy can be forgiven, but not this level of blasphemy against the Spirit. Jesus even says that whoever speaks against Him can be forgiven, but not the one who speaks against the Holy Spirit.

In view is an especially offensive sin against the Spirit. In context, this is exactly what this sin was.

The **blasphemy against the Spirit** was attributing to Satan the miracles that Jesus did in the power of the Holy Spirit while He was upon the earth.

This EXACT sin cannot be committed today because Jesus is no longer upon the earth working miracles as He was during His earthly ministry.

It would seem that speaking against Jesus in isolation of the Spirit was not as grievous a sin because of how Christ came in a veiled position of lowliness. He looked like a regular person. There was nothing outwardly impressive about Him.

Isaiah 53:2 (NKJV)

2 For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.

It was forgivable if people initially didn't understand Who Jesus was and therefore slighted Him. Even his own brothers were initially in this category of people (cf. Jn. 7:2-5). Jesus was so common and ordinary in appearance that His glory was veiled in humility. So, it is understandable why people on that level would be dismissive.

“The title Son of Man was used in contexts that emphasized His humility associated with the incarnation (see 8:20). Perhaps speaking against the Son of Man was pardonable because Jesus' identity was veiled.” – ***The Moody Bible Commentary***

But then bring in the Holy Spirit and that changes everything. The miracles that Jesus did by the power of the Spirit were undeniable. They were good benevolent miracles that were beneficial to people. They were powerful miracles that logically could only be attributed to the power of God because of the very nature of them.

Acts 10:38 (NKJV)

38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

Along with the evident power of God on display through Christ's ministry was the internal conviction of the Spirit. This is the work of God in the heart that only the Spirit can do.

Back before the Genesis flood of Noah's day God in Genesis 6:3 said, “***My Spirit shall not strive with man forever***” as God was giving humanity 120 more years before the judgment of the flood. The Spirit convicts and He works in people wooing them to respond to the truth. Stephen, the first martyr of the Church said to the Jews, “***You always resist the Holy Spirit***” (Acts 7:51). In the last invitation in the Bible in Revelation 22:17 we are told that the Spirit is saying “***Come!***” in conjunction with the gospel ministry of the Church.

We share the truth outwardly, but it is the Spirit who does the work in the heart. Thus, we are completely reliant upon the Spirit to help people see the truth spiritually.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 (NKJV)

5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

1 Corinthians 2:4–5 (NKJV)

4 And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

True converts are the result of the Spirit working in the hearts of people. Only He can make it happen in the heart. This is why the blasphemy of the Spirit was so serious. If you shut the door on the Holy Spirit, there is no hope. There is no means of seeing the truth. There is no way of responding. That is the point of no return.

Hebrews 3:7–8 (NKJV)

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you will hear His voice,

8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness,

The blasphemy of the Spirit was not a sin of ignorance. It was sinning willfully and knowingly against the plain truth – made plain by the Spirit. In the OT there was the sin of a high hand which was unforgivable (cf. Num. 15:30-31). There is such a thing as sinning against the truth of God with your eyes “**wide open**” as in the case of Balaam in Numbers 24. That becomes unforgivable in the sense that the person is rejecting the full light of God’s truth brought forth by the Holy Spirit.

If a person rejects that level of truth, there is nothing more that can be done. As I say this exact sin of blaspheming the Spirit cannot be committed today because Christ is not here physically in person doing miracles in the power of the Spirit. However, a similar sin of rejection is seen in Hebrews 6 and 10.

Hebrews 6:4–6 (NKJV)

4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit,

5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,

6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

These people intimately know the truth and intimately know the ministry of the Spirit and yet walk away from it. That becomes a point of no return! Truth CLEARLY presented by the Spirit and brazenly rejected is a most serious issue.

Hebrews 10:26–29 (NKJV)

26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

This is willful rejection of known truth! It's not that these people don't know. They do and yet willfully reject it. There comes a point of no return for these people. Only God knows where that line is but it is clear that there is a point where it is impossible to bring people back to considering true repentance. They have hardened themselves to the place of no return. But again, only God knows when a person has crossed this line.

"This is apostasy, and it involves a break with what one has formally adhered to. The universal witness of the NT is that apostasy if persisted in not only damns but shows that salvation was never real in the first place. The NT reveals how close one may come to the kingdom – tasting, touching, perceiving, understanding. And it also shows that to come this far and reject the truth is unforgivable."

– **D. A. Carson**

I would emphasize that people who are concerned about whether they have committed this sin have not. People guilty of this don't care. They are hardened in their rebellion and have absolutely no desire for the truth.

Ignorance is one thing but hardened rebellion against the knowledge of the truth is another thing.

1 Timothy 1:13 (NKJV)

13 although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I **did it ignorantly** in unbelief.

Ignorance is forgivable, but purposely, knowingly, and willfully sinning against the truth of the Spirit can eventuate in a hardened state of no return. That is why we are warned to respond while we can – while the Spirit is working with us. Don't play games with the Spirit. If He is convicting you - respond. If He is calling you - come! No one can do it for you! Only you can respond to the Spirit and in order to be saved you must do so!

The Pharisees in view in Matthew 12 deliberately sinned against the truth made exceedingly clear in the most powerful way possible by the Spirit as seen in the ministry of Christ. Such a level of rejection was unforgivable (cf. Jn. 11:48; Acts 4:16). It wasn't that they didn't know the truth. They did! They just flagrantly sinned against the brilliance of the light given them.

John 11:47–48 (NKJV)

47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For **this Man works many signs.**

48 If we let Him alone like this, **everyone will believe in Him,** and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

They didn't deny the truth of what was happening; they just had sinful, self-serving motivations for not accepting it.

"As far as it applies today, it is not the thought that one seeking pardon will not find it, but rather that the one who rejects the Holy Spirit will not seek pardon. It is the ultimate in unbelief."

– ***John Walvoord***

When Jesus says that blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven "***either in this age or in the age to come***" He is saying it will NEVER be forgiven. They are locked into an unforgivable position forever. That is hell!