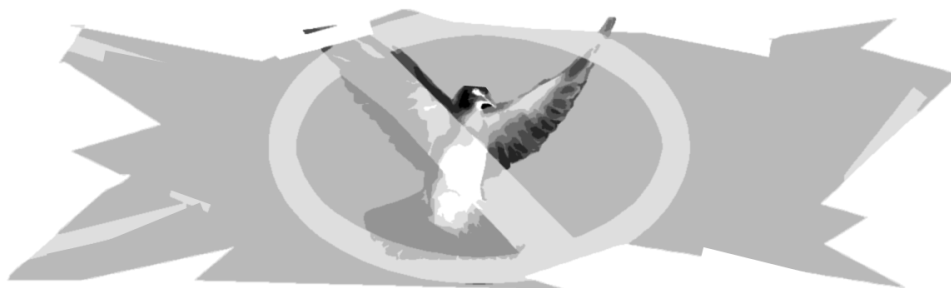


The Sin Against the Holy Spirit



SABBATH—JUNE 10

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 12:22-31; Mark 3:22-30; Mark 10:45; Luke 18:10-14; John 3:14-16; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Timothy 1:15; Hebrews 2:9.

MEMORY VERSE: “What I am about to tell you is true. Everyone’s sins and evil words against God will be forgiven. But anyone who speaks evil things against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. His guilt will last forever” (Mark 3:28, 29, NIV).

THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE IS ONE OF THE HARDEST IN THE BIBLE. We think about who Jesus is and what He did so He could forgive our sins. But the idea of a sin that even Jesus cannot forgive should make us tremble. He can forgive murder, incest,¹ pride, adultery, theft, idol worship, and words spoken against Himself (Matthew 12:21-32; Ephesians 1:7). Jesus Himself said, “Anyone who speaks evil things against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven” (Mark 3:29, NIV).

So, we must ask, what is this sin Jesus cannot forgive? It is hard for us to understand the idea of a sin Jesus cannot forgive because we know that God went through so much to forgive us all our sins. That is why it is so important to study the sin against the Holy Spirit. We all need to study this subject more deeply because if anyone sins against the Holy Spirit, that person cannot be forgiven (Mark 3:29).

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 17.

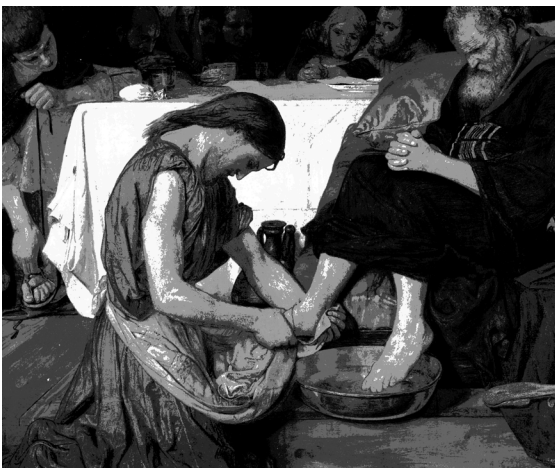
¹ incest—illegal sex between family members, such as sex between a brother and sister.

SUNDAY—JUNE 11**TO SAVE SINNERS
(1 Timothy 1:15).**

Christ hid His godly nature in human form. He lived on this earth and died for sinners for the following reasons:

1. He came to show us what God is like (John 14:9).
2. He came to be God's Servant and to show what it means to be a servant (Matthew 20:25-28; Philipians 2:5-7).
3. He came to show us how to live (John 2:6, 1 Peter 2:21).
4. He came to be a faithful and merciful² High Priest for us (Hebrews 2:17, 18).

All these things are important. But they would be meaningless without the most important reason why Christ came and died.



Jesus came to show us what it means to be a servant.

What reasons do the following verses give for the life and death of Jesus? Mark 10:45; John 3:14-16; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Timothy 1:15; Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 3:8.

The most important reason why Jesus came and died was to save us from eternal³ death. The great news is that through Jesus' work anyone can be saved who accepts Him. Salvation comes to all who believe. Those who believe are then saved from the eternal death Jesus warned about in Mark 3:29. Jesus talked about the one sin that could lead to this eternal death. The rest of this week, we will learn what that sin is.

**MONDAY—JUNE 12****“ALL MANNER [KINDS] OF SIN
AND BLASPHEMY”⁴
(Matthew 12:22-31).**

Summarize Jesus' thoughts in Matthew 12:22-31. How does know-

² merciful—to be full of mercy. Mercy is kindness we do not deserve.

³ eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

⁴ blasphemy—saying evil things against God.

ing to whom He was speaking help us understand what He was saying about the sin that cannot be forgiven? Also read Mark 3:22-30.

Jesus' words were not empty words. He was answering several Pharisees⁵ who said that He "cast out devils" by Beelzebub (Matthew 12:24). Beelzebub was the prince of the devils. The Pharisees showed a rebellious attitude (feeling) even though they saw proof of Jesus' power as God. This power showed the holiness of His life. His holy life showed how He supernaturally healed the sick (Matthew 8:14-17; Mark 1:29-34; and so forth). His holy life showed how He cast out devils and raised people from death (Matthew 9:32, 33; Luke 7:11-17).

However, the Pharisees still refused to admit that Jesus was God. By opposing Him, the Pharisees were forced to explain that His works were the work of Satan. Doing so closed their minds to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings truth to the mind and heart (John 14:17; John 16:13). The Holy Spirit makes people believe they have sinned (John 16:8). God is very patient and merciful. He does not want anyone to die an eternal death (2 Peter 3:9), but the Holy Spirit

will not work with a stubborn heart forever (Genesis 6:3). If people continue to refuse truth, the Holy Spirit will stop leading them. Then they are left in terrible darkness.

This is perhaps the condition Paul was talking about when he described certain consciences⁶ as being "seared [burned] with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:2). For a person guilty of the sin against the Holy Spirit, probation⁷ has closed. For that person, there is "no offering [sacrifice] for sins. All [he or she] can do is to wait in fear for God to judge" (Hebrews 10:26, 27, NIV).

Based on the lesson so far, how do you understand the sin against the Holy Spirit?

TUESDAY—JUNE 13

THE SIN THAT CANNOT BE FORGIVEN (Mark 3:29).

Sin means death, but God delights to forgive us our sins. Jesus died so repentant⁸ sinners could receive forgiveness. There is one sin that cannot be forgiven. So, that sin leads to eternal death. Accepting God's goodness leads us to repentance⁹ (Romans 2:4), but if we always refuse His goodness, we will finally do the sin

⁵ Pharisees—religious leaders of Jesus' day who believed a person must keep God's law to be saved.

⁶ consciences—a conscience is the knowledge or sense of right and wrong with an urge to do right.

⁷ probation—the time people have to accept Christ; when probation closes, people will not change; wicked people will stay wicked, and righteous (holy) people will stay righteous.

⁸ repentant—being sorry for your sins and turning away from your sins with the Holy Spirit's help.

⁹ repentance—to be sorry for your sins and, with the Holy Spirit's help, to want to stop sinning.

that cannot be forgiven.

How do Matthew 12:31, 32 and Mark 3:29 support the idea that always refusing God’s goodness will lead a person to do the sin that cannot be forgiven?

The sin against the Holy Spirit is stubborn refusal to accept what Christ has done for us. This refusal blinds a person’s mind and heart to the Holy Spirit’s leading. Finally, there is full darkness in the soul, and the person is eternally (forever) lost. This is what happened to some of the Pharisees.

Putting one’s self beyond the Holy Spirit’s power cannot be forgiven. This is because we cannot even repent¹⁰ without the Holy Spirit’s help. However, He will never force us to do anything. We choose to accept His salvation or we choose to reject His salvation.



The sin against the Holy Spirit is stubborn refusal to accept Christ.

Read again Matthew 12:31, 32 and Mark 3:29. Notice how Jesus ties the sin against the Holy Spirit to the idea of speaking. Why would He do that?

In the Bible, words are the same as actions. For example, God spoke, and the world came to life (Genesis 1). Jesus Himself is called the “word . . . made flesh” (John 1:14). In the Hebrew language, the most common word for “word” is *dabar*. *Dabar* also means “thing,” “history,” “prophecy.” That is because words are connected with the real world they speak about. So, Jesus says that speaking words against the Holy Spirit is the same as refusing to accept the truth the Holy Spirit brings us.

Think about the last time someone hurt you with words. That should help you understand that words are “real” things. Why not ask God now to help you choose your words wisely.

WEDNESDAY—JUNE 14

CONVICTIONS¹¹ OF THE SPIRIT (John 18:6, 9).

Read John 16:8, 9. To receive salvation, a person must accept that he or she is a sinner. We cannot ask Jesus to help us if we do not admit that we have a need. One of our greatest needs is a personal

¹⁰ repent—to say you are sorry for your sins and then to turn away from your sins.

¹¹ convictions—the process in which a person is made to believe and admit that he or she is a sinner.

conviction¹² of sin. We cannot have this conviction by ourselves. It is the Holy Spirit's work to convict¹³ us of sin. The Holy Spirit's very first work is to make sinners know they are sinful and lost. The Holy Spirit is not just the Comforter. He is also the Person who convicts others of sin. He becomes the Comforter to those who have made peace with God by confessing¹⁴ their sins.

What example shows the Holy Spirit's power to convict people of sin? Luke 19:1-9.

How did Jesus show that salvation is available to a sinner who repents? How did He show that a person who thinks he or she is righteous (holy) is hopeless? Luke 18:10-14.

"We must have a knowledge of ourselves, a knowledge that will lead to sorrow for sin before we can find forgiveness and peace. The Pharisee had no conviction of sin. So the Holy Spirit could not work with him. His soul was hardened by a self-righteous armor. The arrows of God failed to go through that armor. Christ can save only a person who knows that she or he is a sinner."—Adapted from *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 158.

A person may have a vision of God's holiness as the prophet Isaiah did (Isaiah 6:5, 6). When a person has such a vision, the Holy Spirit will make

that person believe that he or she is sinful. Then that person must admit that nothing but judgment and eternal death awaits him or her if Jesus' offer of salvation is not accepted. So it is the Holy Spirit's power that is so important in leading us to Christ. Think about the hopeless condition of people who have refused to be led by the Holy Spirit.

How can guilt be a good tool used by God? At what point does guilt become the devil's tool? How can we know if the guilt we feel is from God or the devil?

THURSDAY—JUNE 15

REPENTANCE AND THE SIN THAT CANNOT BE FORGIVEN (Psalm 51:1-4).

Sometimes there are church members who are afraid they have done the sin that cannot be forgiven. It is not hard to understand why they are afraid. We all are sinners. If we are not under the Holy Spirit's control, we can do just about any sin. For a person who has known God and His holiness, that person's own sin can make that person feel hopeless. Most Christians have had moments of believing that their case is hopeless. Then they believe they have done the sin that cannot be forgiven.

The sin that cannot be forgiven is continually refusing the Holy

¹² conviction—to know for sure that you have sinned.

¹³ convict—to make a person admit that she or he is guilty of sin.

¹⁴ confessing—admitting to God that you have sinned and that you feel sorrow for having sinned.

Spirit. So why is someone who fears he or she has done that sin not guilty of having done it? Psalm 51:1-4; Luke 5:8; Luke 18:13.

The doing of a crime or a sin is not a lasting block to salvation. Jesus can save anyone who is willing to accept salvation. His blood can remove any sin and shortcoming.¹⁵ However, we must repent first. Only the Holy Spirit can give us the power to repent. When we repent, we receive forgiveness. We must remember that sin is not something to fool with. Each sin hardens us. We sin because we push away the Holy Spirit. The more we push Him away, the easier it is to push Him away again and again. We always can repent and find forgiveness. The more we sin, the more we harden our hearts to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads us to repentance.

So, you see how important it is for us to claim the power of God to cleanse us, to renew us, and to remake us in the image of the Savior (1 Corinthians 10:13; Galatians 5:16; Titus 3:5).

Have you ever felt you were hopeless? Have you thought you were going to be lost even after you had made a decision to follow Christ? What caused those feelings? Why did they finally leave? What did you learn from that experience that could help someone

else who feels she or he is hopeless?

FRIDAY—JUNE 16

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 621, 622; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 321–324, 565–568; *The Acts of the Apostles*,¹⁶ pp. 75, 76; *Christ's Object Lessons*, "Two Worshipers," pp. 150–152.

"Every impure thought defiles the soul, impairs the moral sense, and tends to obliterate the impressions of the Holy Spirit."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 302.

"Those who refuse to accept the work of the Holy Spirit are putting themselves where repentance and faith cannot come to them."—Adapted from *The Desire of Ages*, p. 322.

"Each impure thought pollutes the soul. It prevents the person from choosing what is right. It removes the leading of the Holy Spirit."—Adapted from *The Desire of Ages*, p. 302.

"If people always refuse to accept God's leading, they will lose the ability to recognize goodness. Their moral¹⁷ values are so twisted that evil to them is good and good to them is evil. Even when Jesus challenges them, they do not know their sins, so they cannot repent and be forgiven. That is the sin against the Holy Spirit."—Adapted from William Barclay, *The*

¹⁵ shortcoming—fault; weakness.

¹⁶ apostles—God's disciples who preached the gospel after Jesus returned to heaven. The word *apostles* means "people who are sent out." The apostles were sent out into the world to tell others about Jesus.

¹⁷ moral—having to do with what is right and wrong.

Gospel of Mark (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 81.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Imagine working with someone who believed he or she had done the sin that cannot be forgiven. What have you learned from this week's study to help that person find hope and forgiveness?
2. What examples can you find in the Bible of people who have done the sin that cannot be forgiven?
3. Review Barclay's quote from the previous page. What is he describing? Why is this a danger for everyone, even those who claim to be Christians?
4. As a class, pray together that each member will surrender more to the Holy Spirit's leading.