

## SLIDE 1

# Mark 3:20-35

## Is there an unforgivable sin?

Lazy Mountain Bible Church

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January 24, 2010

### Introduction

If there is one thing that strikes fear in the heart of any believer is the thought: Is there an unforgivable sin? What is it? Have I committed it I God's eyes?

An ancient Asian legend tells the story of a man who had a wild and impetuous son. Curtis E. Liens, in *The Man with Dirty Hands*, says:

**The boy became involved with the ruffians of the village who persuaded him to join them in a robbery of his own father's treasury house. After the robbery was over, his friends fled with the stolen treasure and left him to face the guilt of the crime alone. The young man was desperate. He was deserted by his friends, and he had betrayed the trust of his father. But his greatest crime was that he had brought public dishonor on the family name. And, in a culture where ancestors are worshiped and family integrity is a sacred trust, this was the worst wrong of all.**

**Broken and deeply repentant, he went to his father and begged forgiveness. Graciously, it was granted. The father called all of the members of the family together to celebrate the reconciliation and return of his son. When all had enjoyed the banquet to the fullest, the father stood and lifted his cup of rice wine for a toast. But, as the son drank deeply the contents of his cup, he grabbed his throat and fell lifeless across the table. The son had been poisoned. The father, with ceremonial dignity nodded to the guests. Each in turn graciously and politely bowed to the father as they silently left the banquet hall. All was now put right. The son had paid the price of his pardon with poison. His honor had been restored. The family integrity and honor were reestablished. The unfortunate incident was closed.**

*Kevin Miller, Wheaton, Illinois; source: Richard Carol Hoefler, And He Told Them a Story (C.S.S. Publishing, 1979); cited in Curtis E. Liens, The Man with Dirty Hands (self-published, 2000)*

Is this how God deals with us if we commit the unpardonable sin? Will it just appear we are forgiven when all along God plans for us to pay for the sin in order to restore honor? If Christ came to seek and to save that which is lost, is there a sin that can make us so lost, that even Christ won't rescue us from it?

And to compound the tension this question raises, Christ himself indicates there is.

Turn in your Bibles to Mark chapter 3, beginning with verse 20.

**SLIDE 2****Mark 3:20–30 (NIV)**

<sup>20</sup> Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. <sup>21</sup> When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.” <sup>22</sup> And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.” <sup>23</sup> So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? <sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup> If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. <sup>26</sup> And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. <sup>27</sup> In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house. <sup>28</sup> I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. <sup>29</sup> But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.” <sup>30</sup> He said this because they were saying, “He has an evil spirit.”

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The quote that rings so ominous is when Jesus says in verse 29:

**All sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven.**

Where there it is, as clear as can be, the words right out of Jesus mouth: Never be forgiven.

It makes you shudder doesn't it?

Especially when you think back just as recently as our “Live the 10 Series”, remembering the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment reads:

**SLIDE 4****Exodus 20:7 (NIV)**

**7 “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.**

Or what about Exodus 22:28 which reads:

**Exodus 22:28 (NIV)**

<sup>28</sup> “Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people.

Or other new testament verses which read:

#### SLIDE 5

##### 1 John 5:16 (NIV)

**16 If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that.**

Is the sin that John is referring to the same one that seems to be indicated in Hebrews? The sin of continuing to sin?

#### SLIDE 6

##### Hebrews 10:26–29 (NIV)

**26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?**

So what is “the Sin” that is unforgivable. Blaspheme against the Holy Spirit.

So I am safe, right, as long as I don’t commit that sin?

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##### So what is blaspheme against the Holy Spirit?

- Is it using the Lord’s name in vain—as the third commandment seems to point to?
- Is it an inability, or unwillingness to stop sinning—as seems to be indicated in Hebrews?
- Is it the sin of continuing to sin?

To help us understand this, let’s look at the words of Christ in their context. Let’s remember what we have looking at the past two weeks in Mark 2 & 3.

Remember, the Jews have become extremely frustrated with Jesus. He is not following the religious rules that they have carefully devised to keep control of people. His disciples pick and eat grain from the field on the Sabbath, then Jesus heals on the sabbath. This so infuriates the Pharisees that they are willing to go in league with their hated enemies the Herodians—for the purpose of killing Jesus.

Jesus family becomes so alarmed by this turn of events in their son's life, that they try to intervene, using an insanity defense in Mark 3:21, trying to justify his actions by saying, 'He is out of his mind'.

### SLIDE 8

#### Mark 3:20–30 (NIV)

<sup>20</sup> Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. <sup>21</sup> When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

The Pharisees are having none of it. They want to discredit this young rabbi—Jesus. So they call in the reinforcements—the specialists—the teachers of the law from Jerusalem.

The teachers of the law strike out declaring that in their learned opinion, Jesus is simply demon possessed—and that is how he has this power to drive out demons.

Notice they don't address how driving out a demon can result in the healing of a man's hand.

### SLIDE 9

#### Mark 3:5–6 (NIV)

**5 He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.**  
**6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.**

But their goal is a mudslinging campaign against Jesus.

Jesus responds to fire with fire. He frustrates their logic by stating the obvious—how could it be by the power of Satan that I am taking charge and commanding these demons out of people. A kingdom divided against itself simply cannot stand.

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#### Mark 3:23–30 (NIV)

<sup>23</sup> So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan?” <sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup> If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

And no one can enter a strong man’s house unless he first ties up the strong man.

His point he is willing them to see: **Can’t you see something mightier, stronger, more significant than the power of Satan is here?**

Jesus has come to demonstrate the authority of God: Authority over sickness, authority over demonic possession, and authority over legalism.

But they, the teacher of the law, are not able to discern this difference. More importantly they have missed that the Messiah is in their presence. God has come to earth in the form of the Holy Spirit indwelling the Son of God. So instead of giving glory to God for the miracles they have seen, they have blasphemed God by concluding that the work is being accomplished by evil. In reality they have rejected God in their midst.

And then he gives this ominous warning to them:

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**Mark 3:23–30 (NIV)**

**<sup>28</sup> I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. <sup>29</sup> But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.” <sup>30</sup> He said this because they were saying, “He has an evil spirit.”**

So what is this unforgivable sin? As we see from this context:

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**The unforgivable blasphemy specified here is the act of deliberately associating the power and the work of Jesus, who is full of the Holy Spirit, with the work of Satan.**

Now we can see why this would make this sin unforgivable. The person doing this is equating supreme spiritual good with supreme spiritual evil, hardening one’s heart in a way that makes repentance, and therefore forgiveness, impossible.

So behind it all, what Jesus was calling them out for, and solemnly warning them about is:

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**This is the unforgivable sin is the sin of rejecting God.**

Because, speaking against the Spirit, calling the work of the Spirit the work of Satan, involves an explicit, willful, and decisive rejection of the very Power that can bring about repentance.

So I hope you see from today's text that the notion of the "unforgivable sin" has caused needless anxiety amongst believers. Because anyone who has been convicted of sin by the Spirit (John 16:8) and now believes the truth cannot possibly have committed it<sup>1</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Invitation to trust Christ

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<sup>1</sup> Whitlock, L. G., Sproul, R. C., Waltke, B. K., & Silva, M. (1995). *Reformation study Bible, the : Bringing the light of the Reformation to Scripture : New King James Version*. Nashville: T. Nelson.