

DID JESUS SAY THAT?

“Is there a sin that can’t be forgiven?”

Scripture: Mark 3:20-30

Delivered during the COVID-19 crisis via Livestream at Central Baptist Church on July 12, 2020,
by Pastor Steven Edelman

(SLIDE 1) INTRODUCTION:

Good morning everyone. Thank you for joining us online. We are so glad you are with us. My name is Steve, and I am one of the pastors here at Central.

Today, I want to start a new series called, “Did Jesus say that?” and answer the question “is there an unforgiveable sin!” In other words, can you be too far gone to receive God’s grace? Is there a line that we can cross where we simply move beyond His reach? Can we live a life that is so depraved that there is a point of no return! Is there an act that we commit that we’re simply too sinful for God to save? Does Jesus say that?

STORY: Over the years, I have received this question a lot as people are working through their mistakes that they have made in their lives. I remember a teenage girl who I led to Christ and baptized who asked me the same question. She said something like “I’m in a relationship with a guy, and I’ve done something I never thought I’d do. I gave him something I shouldn’t have, and I know I can never get it back. I’m so ashamed. I’m fearful now that God won’t have me. I think I’m too dirty, too sinful. . . .” Her words dissolved in tears.

Her story is a familiar one for other Christians too. It comes up for Christians who are addicted to secret sin. For others, it’s an affair, a felony, or a multiyear sin that keeps going. But whatever the issue, the result is the same—we can find ourselves in a bad place and seriously wonder if God will forgive us. Have you gone beyond forgiveness?

Just like in the story, we may feel like we are permanently stained by our sin and that there is no forgiveness for us. **You may feel like you are damaged goods. We may tell ourselves things like, “You’ve gone too far. God has given you so many chances and you continue to blow it, you think he’s just going to forgive everything again?” Here is the question: Are there some sins that God won’t forgive? Does Jesus say things like this?**

As you are going to see, if we want to find forgiveness in Christ, we need to understand what Jesus is saying about sin.

Here is where I am going today:

1. IS THERE A SIN THAT CAN'T BE FORGIVEN?

2. IF SO, WHAT IS IT?

3. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?

***In this sermon you feel the heaviness of sin, but as we unpack the text, you will see the hope of forgiveness.**

First, to find forgiveness in Christ, we must understand what Jesus is saying about sin.

(SLIDE 2) QUESTION #1 – IS THERE A SIN THAT CAN'T BE FORGIVEN?

(SLIDE 3) Look with me at Mark 3:29 which says, “**29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin....**”

a) What is sin? (SLIDE 4)

First, what is sin? **At the core, sin is a rebellion against God. It's our behavior, thoughts, and attitudes that push Him away. It's a rejection of God as ruler by trying to run your life without him. Is there a point in which we have gone too far in our rebellion that it has eternal implications? It looks like Jesus is saying that! Right? Yes? No?**

Note verse 29, “Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin.”

Next,

b) What is God's forgiveness? (SLIDE 5)

Secondly, what is forgiveness? **Forgiveness is God's restoration of relationship that entails the removal of guilt.** The Bible develops the theme of forgiveness through a variety of terms and images: that stain from sins are wiped away, wiped clean, covered, removed, released, or passed over.¹ Or another way to look at it, sin cages you and it leads to death. And forgiveness frees you. To experience and

¹ Saldarini, A. J. (2011). [forgiveness](#). In M. A. Powell (Ed.), *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary (Revised and Updated)* (Third Edition, p. 297). New York: HarperCollins.

receive God's forgiveness is the best news for a sinner. On the hand, if we are beyond forgiveness, that is terrible news.

This is what Jesus is saying, "it doesn't matter what our culture thinks about our sin and His forgiveness. However, it's extremely important what God thinks about your sin and how to obtain forgiveness." For example, our culture can call abortion or sleeping around "good!" But God says differently.

Next,

c) What does never mean? (SLIDE 6)

Thirdly, in this passage Jesus is saying that God will never forgive someone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit. This is a warning for all of us.

Think about the word never for a second. It is absolute refusal to do something. When someone in your life says that they will not forgive it's hard and upsetting. While we may or may not believe the person who says this, when God says, "Never will I forgive you," than you want to pay attention as that holds a lot more weight.

(SLIDE 7) For example, Mark 12:32 Jesus makes it even more clear when he says, "Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven either in this age or in the age to come." When Mark 3:29 says blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is an "eternal sin," it means a sin that **God will not forgive you for all eternity.**

So, to answer to the first question, yes, there is an unforgivable sin. Jesus is saying in this passage that **someone can commit an eternal sin** in which there is no point of return.

ILLUSTRATION:

(Show TITLE SLIDE 8) Let me try to illustrate this. I got my first car when I was in grade 12. It was a red Daytona sports car, with a 5-speed transmission and a turbo engine that had no shortage of power and speed. There were a few moments in which I was testing the capacity of the car. The more friends I had in the car the more I was 'testing it!' "Go faster. Pull the e-brake." I slowly became more and more comfortable with speed. I would be able to make it from city to city faster than most. The more I broke the rules of the road the more I didn't care.

One day, when I was exceeding the speed limit, I suddenly saw red and blue lights flashing behind me. When I got pulled over, I felt bad because I got caught, not because I was going too fast. **At first, I received a warning.** The next day, I got pulled over again. However, it was fun, so I continued to go fast. I got pulled over a couple more times before I realized that the consequences are starting to add up. I had to pay all the fines. A part of me didn't care and just wanted to mock and defy the authorities. I realized that I am going down a path of losing my license. The warning signs of the red and blue lights started to sink in. Something needed to change. I needed a slower car! More importantly, I needed to take my sin seriously.

What I want you to see is that there was a turning point in which I took the warning seriously, before there was a forever consequence from speeding. A big consequence would be losing my license or crashing the car. However, a forever consequence, would have been killing someone or even myself.

APPLICATION:

Just like in the story, the more we let sin creep into our lives the more we become hardened to the warnings and consequences. Jesus gives us all a warning of what our sin does to us and others. As we entertain a continuous pattern of sin, at first, we may feel bad and later on we feel nothing. **Jesus is saying that we can reach a point in which we can no longer receive forgiveness as we reach the point of belittling the Holy Spirit.**

A SPOILER ALERT: If you have any remorse for your sin you have not reached the point of unforgiveness.

Richard Donovan says, **"I have tried to imagine people who might be candidates for this kind of judgment. Anything I say must, be tentative, because every category might include someone who is steeped in guilt, but who might yet repent. Also keep in mind that this is a list of possible people. The final judgment belongs to God.**

Let's start with cult leaders such as Jim Jones and David Koresh—those who made themselves like God and whose leadership proved disastrous for their followers.

Some have said that Hitler was one of these people. “Hitler and his henchmen hated God, persecuted and tried to subvert the church, followed an evil program unswervingly, caused untold suffering, and died without repentance. There has never been a shortage of such tyrants. Every generation produces its own crop.”

What does that mean for us? What I want you to reflect on is that sin has consequences for all of us. There are big consequences and even forever consequences. Sin has a way of hooking us and hardening our heart.

Why did God harden Pharaoh’s heart? For the same reason, he did not heed the warning signs and God said enough was enough.

I hope you can see the red and blue lights going off in your head when you deliberately sin! **Jesus is saying, “caution!” Are you purposely gossiping and slandering? Telling lies? Holding on to bitterness? Or not showing love? Even purposely pushing God away. Jesus is saying, “warning!” Why? Because when we purposely rebel against God and intentionally turn to sin it leads to apathy and a hardened heart. It leads to big and even for some, a forever consequence.**

As you can see, to find freedom in Christ we must understand what Jesus is saying about sin.

Secondly, to find forgiveness in Christ, we must understand what the unforgivable sin is.

(SLIDE 9) QUESTION #2 – WHAT IS THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN?

(SLIDE 10) Look with me at verse 29 which says, “**29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness,**”

First, let us note what it is not. It is not taking the Lord’s name in vain, though that is certainly a vile sin. It is not adultery or sexual perversion. It is not murder, even multiple murders, or genocide.

A commentator says, “it is the ongoing, continual rejection of the Holy Spirit and Saviorhood of Christ that leads to a hardened heart.”² As you are going

² Hughes, R. K. (1989). *Mark: Jesus, servant and savior* (Vol. 1, p. 92). Westchester, IL: Crossway Books.

to see, this rejection of the Holy Spirit is very intentional. Also, a person with a hardened heart calls what is good and say's it's bad or what is bad and calls it good.

*Let's look at the context of why Jesus said there is an unforgivable sin.

CONTEXT:

(SLIDE 11) Look with me at Mark 3:20, which says, ²⁰ Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. ²¹ And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.”

(SLIDE 12) Look with me at Mark 3:22, which says, ²² And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.”

Verse 22 gives the reason why Jesus brought up the issue of an unforgivable sin. The scribes are individuals who are experts in the Jewish law who could draft legal documents for marriage, divorce, loans, inheritance, and mortgages.

They kept on saying to the crowd that Jesus was being controlled by Satan and his demons. **They were saying that His authority came from Satan, not from God.** They knew that Jesus said He was the Son of God and they mocked him and accused Him of being a fraud.

(Show TITLE SLIDE 13) The verb form for “saying” as it can be translated as, “**They kept on saying.**” It wasn't just a matter of a sudden thoughtless words or an instant reaction. **Their words represented a hardened attitude and heart.**

Note very carefully: Jesus does not say that these scribes have committed the unforgivable sin. He hears them attribute his power over demons to Satan instead of to the Holy Spirit and he says, “Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness” (verse 29). It is a warning to the scribes as they have crossed the line or are about to. Maybe they have committed the unforgivable sin, maybe they haven't. Only God knows.

Why, does Jesus seem to exclude this one sin from His forgiveness? Why is this sin elevated? Why do these not put us beyond repentance and forgiveness? Why only blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? **It's because of the unique and decisive role the**

Holy Spirit plays in our salvation. The answer lies in each role God the father, God the son and the unique role of the Holy Spirit. We can read about God the Father and then turn from his glory to embrace sin. We can hear all about Jesus Christ whom he sent into the world and then turn away from his glory to embrace sin. **The problem is that it's the unique role of the Holy Spirit to show us these things. The reason is that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit puts you *beyond repentance*, and therefore *beyond forgiveness*.** Mocking the Holy Spirit is different as it turns off the tap of forgiveness. It cuts the rope connected to the life raft. Why because it's the Holy Spirit that shows you who Jesus really is and convicts you of your sin and leads you to genuine repentance.

It's all connected. God the Father had a saving plan from the beginning and the Jesus the Son has accomplished it on the cross. But it is the unique and special role of the Holy Spirit **to open our eyes, to give us repentance and make us recipients of all that God the Father has planned, and all that Christ has done for us.**

***This unforgivable sin is ultimately connected to how we view Jesus.** When we belittle and mock the help God has given us, it's like turning off the light, and **as a result**, in the darkness we can no longer see Jesus for who he really is.

ILLUSTRATION: As a staff team we took this course called "**Crucial Conversations – Tools for Talking when Stakes are High**" which I highly recommend. One of the things that this book talks about is what some people do in conflict. For example, if someone has conflict with their boss or a coworker, they tell themselves a story and paint the other people in a negative light. **The story is an interpretation of the facts that makes the other person out to be a villain.** When we villainize the person, we decide this person must be bad. We may even tell others how bad that person is because we didn't get our way. However, there is a difference when someone is willing to listen to the other perspective and work it through. Most of the time, when we go over the facts and get the rest of the story, we may find that other person is not a villain... it is just that the story we told ourselves and it was misinterpreted and got way bigger in our head.

Well, Jesus is being villainized. He is being misjudged. **As a result, He is being slandered and belittled!**

This brings up a question: (SLIDE 14) How do you view Jesus? Some people think “He’s insane. He’s out of his mind.” Others think, “He’s bad. He’s evil. He’s in league with the Devil.” Is he some Jewish guy with long hair and a beard that you see hanging on the walls of Christians? **How you answer this question “who is Jesus” means absolutely everything as it’s connected to whether you can receive forgiveness or not. Why? In order for anyone to receive forgiveness of sins, they have to repent — repentance means turning away from sin and turning toward God, trusting his grace, and following him.**

(SLIDE 15) Tim Keller says, “**People need to learn that rejecting Jesus out of ignorance is one thing, but attacking the power by which he works is something far more serious. If one is weak, one can be encouraged. If one is ignorant, one can be informed. If one is willfully blind and deaf and rejects help, what can be done? One has cut oneself off from what might lead to repentance. The sworn enemies of Jesus have shut their eyes to the truth. (SHOW SLIDE 16) They say good is evil in order to turn others away from Jesus, to preserve their own authority, and to resist becoming disciples. God is willing to forgive even this sin, but they have willfully shut themselves off from God’s forgiveness. It is not a single action but a continual state of spurning the Spirit’s work.**”³

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 17)

APPLICATION:

At times when I have purposely continued on in sin, I can feel a wall go up between God and myself. I become miserable. My connection to God feels distant or even nonexistent. I stop praying. I stop reading the Bible. Until there is repentance.

What if you continued in the state of continuous sin? That wall stays up. I am sure we all know people who have willfully decided to turn away from God and embrace sin. Maybe you have too. This is what happens, **it brings about confusion and separation.** At times, we may even make Jesus out to be the villain for our mistakes.

Think about what is going on in the world. Think of all the injustice. Think of all the fighting and death. Think of the disunity. Think of all the brokenness. Do you think

³ Garland, D. E. (1996). [Mark](#) (p. 136). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

humanity is going to overcome that? No. But the Bible tells us that Jesus can and will. When someone continuously and purposely reject and mock God (in words or in action), it ends badly for them.

Are you seeing your need for Jesus clearly right now?

(SLIDE 18) In summary, what is the unforgiveable sin? Piper says, ***“It’s the act of resistance which belittles the Holy Spirit so grievously that he withdraws forever with his convicting power so that we are never able to repent and be forgiven.”*** Also, the unforgivable sin results in the stubborn refusal to acknowledge that God is working and has worked in the man Jesus.⁴

As you can see, to find forgiveness in Christ, we must understand what the unforgivable sin is.

Lastly, to find forgiveness in Christ, we must ask Jesus to forgive us and run from sin.

(SLIDE 19) QUESTION #3 – HOW DO WE LIVE WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF COMMITTING THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN?

(SLIDE 20) a) Run from Sin

Knowing the fact that there is an unforgivable sin should wake us up. **None of us knows when our playing with sin will pass over into irreversible hardness of our heart.** If by God’s grace you are feeling the need to repent today of your sin, do it now, because you may not be able to tomorrow. Don’t be naïve thinking that you can live your life doing whatever you want.

Have You Committed the Unforgivable Sin?

Well, do you mock Jesus? Is your heart so hard because of sin that you can’t sense God at work in your life? Do you call what is good, evil? Those are signs that you may have. **Ultimately, that is up to God to determine.**

However, if you’re bothered by sin in your spirit than you have not committed the unpardonable sin. The very fact that you have concern over this question is a sign that you have not. If God is still working in you, it’s not possible to have committed the unforgivable sin.

⁴ Brooks, J. A. (1991). [Mark](#) (Vol. 23, p. 76). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Jesus gives us a warning; however, He also gives us a promise.

(SLIDE 21) Look with me at Mark 3:20-30 which says, “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven...”

Is this a contradiction? No. Jesus is saying, “I can forgive every sin, but there is one exception as I can’t forgive you if you can’t see who I am, and your need forgiveness!”

(SLIDE 22) HERE IS THE PROMISE: As long as one desires to repent, to get his or her life back in order spiritually, God will always forgive.

So, don’t worry that you’ve committed the unpardonable sin if you know Jesus.

However, if don’t have a relationship with Jesus in which He has forgiven you, be concerned that you might. If you’ve resisted Christ and refused Him as your Savior, and if something happens and you die, it’s no different than the unpardonable sin. You don’t get a second chance after death.

Jesus is saying, you have heard the warning. Now hear the offer of grace.

(SLIDE 23) b) Run to repentance

Jesus says, “All sins will be forgiven if you come to Him.”

Consider David, a man after God’s own heart as he talks about his inner condition. in Psalm 51, David says, **(SLIDE 24)** “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely, I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:3–5).

In this brutal confession by the man after God’s own heart, David acknowledged the root of his troubles. He understood that he was guilty not for what he had done but simply for who he was.

(Show TITLE SLIDE 25) David committed many of the “big” sins. For example, he committed adultery, murder, conspiracy, and lying. Those are the types of sins that we think just might make a person unforgiveable to God. But what we can learn from David is that didn’t stay in a place in which he carried those labels. He simply confessed that he was born guilty. God doesn’t see sins; he sees the sinner. He doesn’t see a murderer, a liar, a gossip, a slanderer, a drug addict, or a lazy person.

He sees people in needs Jesus and His grace. That is why he sent his Son into the world to deal with the root cause of our sin.

It's through the work of the Holy Spirit that you can see Jesus for who he really is. You can see that Jesus had to die for you and was willing to die for you, so you that could experience a deep forgiveness and newness in a messed-up world. It's not something that you have to work for. It's not something that earn by trying not to sin. The gospel is

the best news – it means, “I'm accepted by God through what Jesus Christ has done; therefore, I obey.” Religion says that Jesus is just a moral teacher. Religion says to follow all the rules and you will be saved. **But the gospel says**, “Jesus is for you, He is the one who won the fight over sin because of what he did on the cross. So, turn will you turn to Jesus and find a new freedom. Find justice. Find peace. Find victory over the confusion and the labels that sin brings.

ILLUSTRATION:

I want to leave you with this picture from another pastor. People who purposely continue in their sin, “are like a buzzard who spots a carcass on a piece of ice floating in the river. He lands and begins to eat. He knows it is dangerous because the falls are just ahead. But he looks at his wings and says to himself, “I can fly to safety in an instant.” And he goes on eating. Just before the ice goes over the falls he spreads his wings to fly but his claws are frozen in the ice and there is no escape — neither in this age nor the age to come. The Spirit of holiness has forsaken the arrogant sinner forever.”⁵

Are you too far gone? Are you beyond God's forgiveness? Absolutely not, if you turn to the gospel and repent of your sin. It's my prayer that you will do that today. Don't wait or put it off until tomorrow – you don't know what tomorrow will bring.

I just want to take a moment to let God speak to you.

⁵ <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/beyond-forgiveness-blasphemy-against-the-spirit>

- 1. Prayer: Jesus, I admit that I have rebelled against you in thought and deed and need you to forgive my sin.**
- 2. I Believe you are who you say you are in God's word and that you died on the cross for my sin.**
- 3. I give you my life, use it to help others find forgiveness in you!
Amen.**

If you have questions and would like to talk to me or any of the pastoral staff, please call the office telephone number or send me an email and I would be glad to talk to you about this.