

The Holy Spirit
The Sin Against the Holy Spirit

Lesson #12 for June 17, 2006

Scriptures: Matt. 12:22-31, Mark 3:22-30, 10:45, Luke 18:10-14, John 3:14-16, 1 Cor. 15:3, 1 Tim.1:15, Heb. 2:9.

1. **Is there really any such thing as an unpardonable sin? What distinguishes this particular sin from all others? Is it worse than murder, incest, pride, adultery, theft, idolatry, or words spoken against other members of the Godhead?**
2. Does God have a detailed record of all our past thoughts and behaviors and if each one is not carefully forgiven we are left out of heaven? There has never been a time when God was unforgiving, or not willing to pardon. God's very nature is forgiveness.
3. Where did the idea come from of "the recording angel"? Why do we make such a big deal out of it? The big question in the judgment is not usually about us. Our cases are usually fairly simple and straightforward. Everyone looking over the records can see the trend in our lives. The big question in the judgment is about God. Can God find a group of people who will serve Him with absolute conviction and security no matter how difficult the circumstances are just because they love Him?
4. There is a major emphasis in this lesson on the idea that Jesus came to this earth primarily to save sinners.
5. The section for Sunday, June 11 mentions four possible reasons why Jesus had to die:
 1. He came in order to reveal to us just what God was like (John 14:9).
 2. He came in order to be a Servant of God and show what servanthood was about (Matthew 20:25-28, Philippians 2:5-7).
 3. He came to leave us an example of how to live (John 2:6; 1 Peter 2:21).
 4. He came in order to be a faithful and merciful high priest in our behalf (Hebrews 2:17, 18).

6. Remember Ellen White's description of why Jesus came:

"The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary. He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God. Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. **The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes.**

"Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, "I have manifested thy name." "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." **When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men."** *The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1890 (2ST 351:2:0-3:1); compare ST December 4, 1893; *Manuscript Releases*, vol 18, 359; RH August 14, 1900; YI November 21, 1883

7. Read Mark 10:45; John 3:14-16; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Hebrews 2:9; and 1 John 3:8. These verses suggest the ideas that Jesus came to redeem many—Hebrews suggests he died for everyone, that man might have eternal life, and that Christ died for our sins.
8. **“Of all the reasons Jesus came and died, the most important—at least from our perspective—is that He died to save us from the legal penalty of sin, which is death, eternal death. And the great news is that through His work He is able to do just that for anyone who accepts Him.”** (See Sunday, June 11) Do you agree with this statement? How does it fit with the quotation above?
9. The cross makes it possible for God—by answering all of Satan’s questions and accusations—to go on being forgiving without any misunderstanding. By looking at the cross we can get some idea of just how very evil sin is. It should snap us out of our self-centeredness immediately!
10. Our *Bible Study Guide* suggests that it is very important to believe in the forgiveness that Jesus provides. Why would this be so?
11. Do you agree that the central aim of the Gospel is to save us by bringing us to repentance, confession, and forsaking of our sins? **“Christ came primarily to save us from sin.** (See Luke 19:10; 1 Timothy numeral 1:15.)” How does this fit with your understanding of Romans 3 especially verses 25-27? Romans 3 is the only place in the Bible where one of the Bible authors specifically tries to explain why Jesus had to come and die.
12. God forbid that we should think that the great controversy is ultimately about us.
13. The Teachers Outlines suggests that Jesus’ entire purpose for coming to this earth was to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).
 - A. Through Jesus’ death we have forgiveness of sins.
 - B. The Holy Spirit helps us to fully understand all that Jesus did for us by convicting us of our sins and leading us to repentance.
 - C. The “unpardonable sin” is the *complete* rejection of the Holy Spirit (*Mark 3:28, 29*).
 - D. This is not a sin of ignorance but of determined effort.
14. Why is it so dangerous to give up on the help provided by the Holy Spirit?
15. **We can resist the Holy Spirit by our self-centeredness which usually manifests itself as some form of wanting to feel good. We can even reach the place where the value we place on other individuals is based on whether or not they make us feel good. By doing this we deny them their personhood and treat them as things. And the ultimate sin is turning other people into things, i.e. they’re worth to us only what we can get out of them!**
16. How many times can you confess the same sin and still be forgiven? Infinity plus one. But remember that you are damaging yourself each time. How many times can you commit the same sin and *want to be forgiven*? That’s the real question! When you ask God for forgiveness you are not receiving something that you don’t already have. The concept of grace means that God cares about us and loves us at times where we least deserve it.
17. Review Matthew 12:22-31; Mark 3:22-30. Why do you think Jesus talks about the sin against the Holy Spirit in this context? Who was He speaking to? Why was He addressing them? Was anyone at that point in time approaching the possibility of committing the unpardonable sin? Why?

18. How frequent is the unpardonable sin? "The Lord sends warnings to His people, not to destroy them, but to correct their errors. I have never been given the testimony to bear to any one, 'You have committed the unpardonable sin.' God never told any one to say to a fellow being, 'You have committed the unpardonable sin.'" {RH, July 30, 1901 par. 5}
19. **If the sin against the Holy Spirit is thus very rare why do we talk about it? What can we learn about our relationship to the Holy Spirit and to God through studying the unpardonable sin?**
20. "Therefore, the unpardonable sin refers to a mind-set, an intransigent repudiation of God's convicting and converting love. It is a fixed determination to regard the wooings of the Holy Spirit as a form of harassment or even as an accusing voice from Satan. Thus did the Pharisees who accused Christ of being Beelzebub. Judas, who linked himself in close association with Jesus, withdrew progressively (or, rather, regressively) from the Spirit of Christ because of his insistence on retaining his love of pride, wealth, and prestige." (*Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 141)
21. **Committing the unpardonable sin is the work of a lifetime.** The only reason sinners cannot be helped is if they feel no need or refuse the help.
22. The sin against the Holy Spirit is:
- An inward resistance and not an outward expression. You cannot drive God away. You can only seal yourself off.
 - Persistently rejecting pardon, not any single "unpardonable" act or sin.
 - Never about one particular act or thing which we have done wrong. Dwelling on one sin in such a way is a distortion of our understanding of God.
 - Man leaving God and never God leaving man. God never gives up but He can be shut out if we work on it for a long time. It is possible to come to the place where God in honoring our freedom has to say "let him alone." (Hosea 4:17).
 - The result of many, many choices not just one choice or one sin. God doesn't close probation, we do.
 - Leaves the person void of any spiritual concerns and certainly not with a worry about whether or not he or she has committed the unpardonable sin. But spiritual concern is not to be confused with worry or fear about consequences.
23. As you currently understand the unpardonable sin is it that God cuts us off if we do something wrong of a particularly evil nature? Or is it that we, by persistently refusing and rejecting God's advances, cut ourselves off from communication with Him?
24. One of the first and most important things that the Holy Spirit normally does for us is to point out our sins! Thus the Holy Spirit is not only a Comforter but a Convicter of sin. (John 16:8, 9). Jesus spoke about the necessity of feeling one's need in order to be pardoned and accepted before God. Look at the story of the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:10-14). "But we must have a knowledge of ourselves, a knowledge that will result in contrition, before we can find pardon and peace. **The Pharisee felt no conviction of sin. The Holy Spirit could not work with him. His soul was encased in a self-righteous armor which the arrows of God, barbed and true-aimed by angel hands, failed to penetrate. It is only he who knows himself to be a sinner that Christ can save.**" Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 158.

25. The Bible speaks repeatedly about the dangers of sinning. Particularly if the sin is persisted in. Ellen White has some very strong words on this as well. Does this have anything to do with the unpardonable sin? Is there really any sin that God can't—or won't—forgive?
26. Can other sins if persisted in lead to the sin against the Holy Spirit?
27. If we choose to believe a lie because it's more comfortable than accepting the convictions of the Holy Spirit would that lead to the unpardonable sin?
28. "There are none so hardened as those who have slighted the invitation of mercy, and done despite to the Spirit of grace. **The most common manifestation of the sin against the Holy Spirit is in persistently slighting Heaven's invitation to repent. Every step in the rejection of Christ is a step toward the rejection of salvation, and toward the sin against the Holy Spirit.** "In rejecting Christ the Jewish people committed the unpardonable sin; and by refusing the invitation of mercy, we may commit the same [325] error." {DA 324.2,3}

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khart@llu.edu

Last modified: April 22, 2006

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