



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
Dr. Rob White – Senior Minister
<https://aulc.us>

TITLE: No Forgiveness???

SERMON IN A SENTENCE: Are we guilty of the unforgiveable sin—probably not.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 3:20-35

Our scripture lesson today, comes from the Gospel of Mark, chapter 3 verses 20 to 35.

Starting at verse 35:

Then He went home, and the crowd gathered again so that they were not even able to eat.

When His family heard this, they set out to restrain Him, because they said, “He’s out of His mind.”

The scribes who had come down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebul in Him!” and, “He drives out demons by the ruler of the demons!”

So He summoned them and spoke to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan?

If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

And if Satan rebels against himself and is divided, he cannot stand but is finished!

“On the other hand, no one can enter a strong man’s house and rob his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he will rob his house.

I assure you: People will be forgiven for all sins and whatever blasphemies they may blaspheme.

But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

Then His mother and His brothers came, and standing outside, they sent word to Him and called Him.

A crowd was sitting around Him and told Him, “Look, Your mother, Your brothers, and Your sisters are outside asking for You.”

He replied to them, “Who are My mother and My brothers?”

And looking about at those who were sitting in a circle around Him, He said, “Here are My mother and My brothers!

Whoever does the will of God is My brother and sister and mother.”

-- May the Lord add His Blessing to the reading of His Word!

-- I am Doctor Rob White with the A U L C Ministries with our message this week.

-- I am happy that you can take a few minutes out of your busy week to be with us today!

We can learn a lot from animals. This is a heart-warming story that I would like to share with you: A baby hippopotamus, named Owen, was swept down a river and into the ocean when a tsunami struck and then was tossed back to shore by waves and landed on the coast of Kenya in Africa.

Wildlife workers rescued him and took him to a shelter where he was adopted by a one hundred year old tortoise that acted as his mother. In a picture of these two, they look very happy together.

Baby hippos like to be with and play with their mothers until they are about four years old. These two, the hippo and the tortoise, although very different from each other, are fast friends that eat, sleep and swim together. The tortoise likes being a mother and Owen likes his new mother. The two of them formed a family. That is absolutely wonderful!

What we can learn from this story is that close family members may come in many forms. Not all of us are blessed with families that include a mother, father, brothers, and sisters. Families are made of people who love and care for each other.

We find friends, in our church and elsewhere, who are loving and caring. They make good family members. Jesus says, "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

--

In today's scripture lesson, Jesus says in verses 28 and 29:

**"All sins of the descendants of man will be forgiven,
INCLUDING THEIR BLASPHEMIES with which they may blaspheme;
but whoever may blaspheme against the Holy Spirit
never has forgiveness,
but is guilty of an eternal sin".**

Let me repeat that last part:

**"Whoever may blaspheme against the Holy Spirit
never has forgiveness,
but is guilty of an eternal sin."**

If you take Jesus seriously, and most of us do, that's pretty scary. We've heard over and over again that God loves us and Jesus saves us from our sins—even grievous sins.

But now Jesus is talking about a kind of sin that cannot be forgiven—a kind of sin that is eternal. If you take Jesus seriously, you have to ask two questions:

- First, what is the sin that can never be forgiven?
- Second, have we somehow blundered into committing that unforgivable sin? In other words, are we beyond hope? Have we done something so bad that it can never be forgiven?

I'm sure that some people have read this scripture and thought, "If this is such terrible sin, I wonder why the preacher never explained it." So I'm going to try to explain it.

To understand WHY Jesus said WHAT he said, we need to look at what happened just before he mentioned the unforgivable sin.

It was early in Jesus' ministry. A great crowd had gathered around him. Then some people close to Jesus—maybe his family—maybe his friends—thought that Jesus was crazy and tried to seize him.

My best guess is that they thought their hometown boy had become way too big for his britches—that he was acting like he was really somebody, when they knew that he was really nobody, just like themselves. Whatever their reason, those people were afraid that Jesus had gone off the deep end, and they wanted to get him back where he couldn't embarrass himself—or them.

That was a mistake—a serious mistake—but I don't think it had anything to do with the unforgivable sin.

But then scribes who came down from Jerusalem said of Jesus, "**He has Beelzebul**"—a demon. They said, "**By the prince of demons (Jesus) casts out the demons**" (as we see in verse 22). Now we're getting closer to the unforgivable sin.

When it says that these scribes came down from Jerusalem, we need to hear every word.

- First, they were SCRIBES, religious professionals, people who taught others about God. In that time and place, their word was law.
- When it says that the scribes CAME DOWN FROM JERUSALEM, we need to remember that Jerusalem was the home of the temple. It was the Holy City. It was the nerve center of the Jewish world. Jerusalem was where all the important people lived. It's where they made the rules.

So when Mark says that the scribes came DOWN from Jerusalem, that was true in two ways. First of all, Jerusalem was on a mountain, so everyplace was downhill from Jerusalem.

But second, when you were used to living in Jerusalem and being a key player, visiting one of the many villages had to feel like going down—like slumming.

So these scribes came down from Jerusalem, and said of Jesus, "He has Beelzebul"—a demon. They said, "By the prince of demons (Jesus) casts out the demons." In other words, they were saying that Jesus was using the devil's power to cast out demons.

This wasn't the first time that Jesus and the scribes had crossed swords. Only a few days earlier, four men had carried a paralyzed man into Jesus' presence in the hope that Jesus would heal the man. Instead of healing the man, Jesus said, "Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5).

I'll be real honest. If one of you had said something like that, I would probably think that you had exceeded your authority. That's certainly what the scribes thought about Jesus. The scribes thought that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy (Mark 2:7)—a sin worthy of death—because Jesus stood proudly on a high wire without a net and dared to say, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." "BLASPHEMY!" the scribes thought.

But Jesus knew their hearts. He said:

"Which is easier --,
to tell the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven;' --
or to say, 'Arise, and take up your bed, and walk?'" (as we see in Mark 2:9).

Then Jesus told the man to stand up and walk, and the man stood up—and walked. The people were amazed and glorified God.

But that didn't include the scribes. Jesus had embarrassed them, and they hated him.

That's the background for our scripture about the unforgiveable sin.

Now we see the scribes again. The crowds are gathered around Jesus, who has just cast out a demon. The scribes say, "**(Jesus) has Beelzebul**"—a demon. They say, "**By the prince of demons (Jesus) casts out demons.**"

At that point, the scribes are doing two bad things.

- First, the scribes are slandering Jesus—bearing false witness against Jesus in violation of one of the Ten Commandments.
- Second—and this is important to understanding the unforgiveable sin—the scribes were looking at something good—Jesus casting out demons—and were calling it evil.

Let me repeat that. The scribes were looking at something good—Jesus casting out demons—and were calling it evil.

Now we're getting closer to understanding the sin against the Holy Spirit—the unforgiveable sin. It has more to do with the spirit of the sinner than with God's unwillingness to forgive.

Let me say that again. The sin against the Holy Spirit has more to do with the spirit of the sinner than with God's unwillingness to forgive.

Let me explain. The scribes had so hardened their hearts against Jesus that they would not see the good in what Jesus was doing. It was as if their internal wiring had gotten crossed—had shorted out. Their moral sense had become twisted beyond recognition. So they got everything backwards. They could no longer discern between good and evil.

The scribes could have been forgiven. God had not turned his back on them. But, no longer able to discern good from evil, they found themselves opposed to the work of Jesus—opposed to the work of the Holy Spirit—opposed to the work of God. They had turned around and faced the wrong direction—and would not do otherwise.

And therein lay their problem. The scribes could not ask forgiveness, because they didn't think they needed it.

So Jesus responded. He assured them that all sins could be forgiven—even blasphemy (verse 28). But then he went on to say in verse 29:

**"But whoever may blaspheme against the Holy Spirit
never has forgiveness,
but is guilty of an eternal sin".**

Jesus said that because the scribes had said, "**(Jesus) has Beelzebul**"—a demon. And "**By the prince of demons (Jesus) casts out demons.**"

So the sin against the Holy Spirit has to do with hearts being so twisted that they can no longer discern good and evil. The sin against the Holy Spirit has to do with people preferring the evil and hating the good.

I doubt that there's anyone here like that. You wouldn't likely be here if you had so hardened your heart against the good that you could never repent of the evil in your heart.

But I won't go so far as to say that no one who attends church could never be that evil. After all, the scribes were the most religious people of their day—the best, not the worst. But their hatred of Jesus twisted something inside them—so that they saw the Holy Spirit at work in Jesus and said, "**By the prince of demons (Jesus) casts out the demons**" (verse 22).

I need to be careful with what I'm about to say, because God hasn't given me the right to usher people into or out of God's kingdom. God's the judge.

But I'd would like to give a couple of examples of people who would seem to be guilty of an eternal sin. Just keep in mind that these are my opinions. God has the final say.

- My first example is Adolf Hitler. Hitler hated the church, and tried to destroy it. He made himself a demi-god. He started a war that ended up killing fifty million people. He cared nothing about the

suffering of his own people. Even when it became clear that Germany could not win, Hitler continued the war until the Soviets were on his doorstep. Then he committed suicide. Hitler was evil throughout his life—and he remained steadfastly evil to his dying day. I cannot imagine that he will be forgiven. At least that's how I see it. God will be the final judge.

- My second example is less horrible. Some years ago, a man purchased what had been a beautiful Episcopal church in New York City—and turned it into a disco called The Limelight. In an interview with *New Yorker* magazine, a club guide said:

"Over here, there'll be a replica of a confessional booth,
and that's where you'll pay your admission...."

The bar upstairs is going to be made out of old church furniture....
And then you walk into the church itself, and that's the dance floor....

You see that huge stained-glass window with the picture of Jesus?
With holograms and lasers,
we'll be able to make it seem like
that figure is walking around in the air."

That club gained further notoriety when a member was arrested and convicted for murdering and dismembering another member.

There is always the possibility that the owner will repent of his blasphemous acts. If he does, I believe that God will forgive him. But I think it's possible that his moral compass has been so damaged that he will never even consider that he needs forgiveness.

So I believe that the sin against the Holy Spirit is when the person's moral compass gets so out of whack that they see the work of the Holy Spirit and think it's bad—and feel free to blaspheme God and God's people.

Let me close with a quotation from C. S. Lewis. Lewis had a gift for seeing things that the rest of us are likely to miss—and for explaining them so clearly that we can see them too. Lewis was commenting on the beatitude, "**Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.**" Here's what Lewis said:

"We are afraid that Heaven is a bribe,
and that if we make it our goal
we shall no longer be disinterested.

"It is not so.
Heaven offers nothing that a mercenary soul can desire.
It is safe to tell the pure in heart that they shall see God,
for ONLY the pure in heart want to."
(found in C.S. Lewis book, *The Problem of Pain*)

I believe that those who are guilty of the sin against the Holy Spirit are those who will never see God—because they don't want to.

And I believe that, if you ask God to forgive you, he will do so. Your desire for forgiveness shows that you have not gone round the spiritual bend.

-- That's our Lord's message for this Lord's Day and I hope you got a blessing out of it!

-- Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed! -- For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed!

-- Thank you all for watching and listening and we will see you all next week!

Copyright © 2024 – Athens Universal Life Church – All Rights Reserved!