

What is the unpardonable sin in Matthew 12:32? How does that relate to intentional sins in Hebrews 10:26, 27?

The Unpardonable Sin

(Matthew 12:31–32)³¹ “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men.³² Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come.

- God is gracious, with patience beyond what we would consider reasonable.
- Blasphemy itself is not the unpardonable sin.

Paul was a former blasphemer:

(1 Timothy 1:12–13)¹² And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry,¹³ although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.

Most of us would consider murder a greater sin than blasphemy. But blasphemy isn't the issue here. It's blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

What does the Holy Spirit do differently than the Father or Son? What makes speaking out against Him worse than the others?

1. He teaches us the way of salvation.

(John 14:26) But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

- He is our teacher, revealing the truths of God's word.

2. He guides us into all truth.

(John 16:13–14)¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you.

- Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot understand the truth.

3. He convicts us of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

(John 16:7–11)⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:⁹ of sin, because they do

not believe in Me;¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

- He works on us from within, the mind and heart.
- This is the internal conversation.

High-Handed Sin

There is a special class of sin that cannot be atoned for in the sanctuary services. These are high-handed in nature, meaning they are a defiant, rebellious, pre-mediated kind of sin where no repentance is desired.

“Num 15:22-31 presents two overarching classes of sin: vv. 22-29 describes the *shagah/bishgagah* ‘inadvertent’ (non-rebellious) sins, and this is contrasted in vv. 30-31 with the sin *beyad ramah* ‘with a high hand,’ i.e., ‘high-handed,’ presumptuous, rebellious, sin. The former class can be atoned for and forgiven (through the sin/purification offering), while the latter class has no means of atonement in the sanctuary services, if such a sinner ‘defiantly maintains an unrepentant attitude.’ If the sinner continues to revile the Lord, he is ‘completely cut off; his guilt shall be upon him’ (v. 30).” (*Song for the Sanctuary*, Dr. Richard Davidson)

It could be that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a reference to such sins as these refer to intentional pre-meditated sin that opposed the will and authority of God.

Conclusion

What does it mean to speak against the Holy Spirit? This would be better interpreted as resisting the instruction, guidance, and conviction that the Holy Spirit is sent to give us.

(Acts 7:51-53) “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:19) Do not quench the Spirit.

It’s not that God is unwilling to forgive, but that He cannot forgive someone who persists in rejecting the work of the Holy Spirit. Why? Because such a person is being intentional in his/her rebellion.

Essentially, if you are fearful that you have committed the unpardonable sin, you have not. Those who commit the unpardonable sin do not care that they are lost.

Intentional Sins

(Hebrews 10:26–27)²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

Before we talk about intentional sin, let's talk about the battle we all face against temptation.

We all have freewill, to choose to obey or yield to temptation; to do what's right, or sin.

Certainly, it's God's will for everyone who is saved to sin no more. But we are born in iniquity and our natural inclination is to follow the sinful heart.

(Jeremiah 17:9) "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

We have all succumbed to temptation when we previously told ourselves we would not. This is the weakness of our sinful flesh. Even our best efforts cannot cover our corrupted nature.

(Isaiah 64:6) But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags...

Praise God that the trend of our life is obedience to His will, and we desire to keep His commandments. He gives us the Holy Spirit and the power to obey Him. As we cooperate with the promptings of the Spirit, sin doesn't become habitual.

(Galatians 6:7–8)⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸ For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

What we sow will largely determine whether or not we will sin.

(Christ's Object Lessons, p. 65) The germination of the seed represents the beginning of spiritual life, and the development of the plant is a beautiful figure of Christian growth. As in nature, so in grace; there can be no life without growth. The plant must either grow or die. As its growth is silent and imperceptible, but continuous, so is the development of the Christian life. At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime.

- We spend our entire lifetime learning to hear and surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

(Steps to Christ, p. 57) If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact. While we cannot do anything to change our hearts or to bring ourselves into harmony with God; while we must not trust at all to ourselves or our good works, our lives will reveal whether the grace of God is dwelling within us. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are. The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts.

Now for today's question: What is intentional sin?

If we choose not to listen to the Holy Spirit, then we place ourselves on dangerous ground. Sowing the seed of the flesh will always lead back into sinful living. In effect, we fall away from God.

Intentional sin is when we deliberately choose not to course correct. We return to a life of sin without sorrow or repentance. This is something God cannot forgive, largely because we don't ask for forgiveness.

There are several passages that speak directly about willful sin:

(2 Corinthians 7:9–10)⁹ Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing.¹⁰ For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

- Sorry you caught, but not sorrow for sin.
- Repentance is a willingness to give up cherished sin.

(Hebrews 6:4–6)⁴ For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit,⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,⁶ if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame.

- Falling away is intentionally returning to a life of sin.

(2 Peter 2:20–21)²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.²¹ For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.