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## The Holy Spirit and the Unpardonable Sin

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**N**OT LONG AGO an American governor pardoned all 156 death row prisoners in his state. Opponents of the death penalty were delighted; but the families of victims and supporters of the death penalty were outraged.

*Pardon.* It encompasses the ideas of forgiveness, undeserved mercy, being set free from what you've done. If you were in charge of deciding whether to pardon people, would there be any deeds you wouldn't pardon — murder, rape, child molesting, genocide? What if the people were genuinely repentant and sorry? Is there a sin so bad even God can't pardon it? The Bible says yes. But if you worry that you've committed the unpardonable sin, that's evidence that you *haven't* committed it.

### Thoughts to Remember:

♦ *It isn't murder*, because Moses murdered an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew; yet he repented, and God forgave him. *It isn't lying/deception*, because Jacob pretended to be his brother Esau in order to steal Esau's birthright; yet he repented, and God forgave him. *It isn't denying Christ*, because the apostle Peter denied Christ three times, yet he repented and God forgave him. *It isn't denying God's existence or persecuting God's people*, because Saul (later the apostle Paul) did those things; yet after he met Christ on the Damascus Road, he repented and God forgave him.

♦ We may be great sinners, but we have a great Savior. God's grace is greater than our sin. **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"** (1 John 1:9). If we confess, God will forgive. So the unpardonable sin must be one we don't confess, a sin we cling to in rebellion against God.

♦ If we say our sins are too great for Christ to forgive, we make Him a liar; He has said that if we confess, He will forgive. **"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"** (Hebrews 8:12).

♦ **"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"** (John 3:16). He wants to forgive, and no sin is too great for Him to forgive. **"But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"** (1 John 1:7).

♦ **"Therefore I say to you, all manner of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the**

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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" (Matthew 12:31, 32).

• The Holy Spirit's role is to work on people's hearts. There can be only one explanation: **The unpardonable sin is the continual and continuing rejection of the Holy Spirit on our hearts.** The unpardonable sin is not the first rejection, or the second; but when God calls you and you persistently reject His calls, it is possible for your heart to become so hardened that you can no longer hear His voice or feel the pleading of the Holy Spirit in your conscience. This doesn't mean that everyone who ever rejects God's voice has committed the unpardonable sin; the Holy Spirit continues working on their hearts. It simply means that it's possible to enter a state of perpetual sinning in which each time God calls us, we reject Him, and soon our hard hearts can no longer hear Him. We have trained our hearts to reject God forever.

• We know when God is telling us right and wrong: we sense a quiet inner voice guiding us. It is the Spirit of God working on our hearts. The Holy Spirit doesn't just convict us of sin, He helps us to win the battle. We can't do it alone, and the Spirit is our ally.

• God promises that when we accept salvation in Christ, the Holy Spirit will enter our lives and change us. **"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"** (John 16:13). It is the Holy Spirit who has impressed you with truth.

• Does speaking in tongues prove we've received the Spirit? What does the Bible say?

■ When the gift of tongues was given on the day of Pentecost, every person was able to understand in their own language (Acts 2:6).

■ The gift of tongues was actual human language used to communicate the gospel.

■ Tongues are a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers.

■ Two, or at most three, people should speak in tongues in a meeting (verse 27).

■ There must be an interpreter (verse 27). **"I would rather speak five words with my understanding than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue"** (1 Corinthians 14:19).

■ Only one person at a time must speak. There must be reverence to God (verse 27). **"For God is not the author of confusion"** (1 Corinthians 14:33).

■ The individual must be in control of his words and actions. God never bypasses the brain. He is not glorified when we speak gibberish. The true gift of tongues is used occasionally to communicate the gospel to unbelievers or other languages.

• When Jesus saw Mary caught in adultery, He told her to go and sin no more—to not harden her heart. **Continual sin hardens the heart. "If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another helper, that he may abide with you forever, the Spirit of truth"** (John 14:15-17). We receive the Spirit as we surrender our lives to Christ and

decide to follow the truth of His Word.

## The "take-home" message for you . . .

• Is there anything in your life that's not in harmony with God's will? God understands that change takes a struggle and He has compassion. But be sure you are struggling to accept His will, instead of struggling to find a way to reject the Spirit's promptings. One day Jesus will come again. Through God's love and power, you can look on the face of Jesus with joy on that day.

## Just between you . . . and God:

• If there's anything you need to make right with God, any secret sin, or any truth you're resisting, bring it to God. His Spirit is your greatest guide and powerful ally, and He will help you.

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