

Matthew 12:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

Analysis

'Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.' Jesus pronounces solemn warning introducing unpardonable sin. First the comfort: 'All manner of sin and blasphemy' (πᾶσα ἁμαρτία καὶ βλασφημία/pasa hamartia kai blasphemia) can be forgiven—no sin is too great for Christ's atonement. Murderers, adulterers, idolaters, blasphemers—all can be saved through repentance and faith. But one exception: 'blasphemy against the Holy Ghost' (ἡ δὲ τοῦ πνεύματος βλασφημία/hē de tou pneumatos blasphemia) won't be forgiven. Reformed theology interprets this as persistent, willful rejection of Spirit's testimony to Christ—attributing to Satan what the Spirit clearly reveals as God's work. It's not accidental word or momentary doubt but hardened, final rejection of the only means of salvation. Those worried they've committed it haven't—such concern indicates Spirit's ongoing work. Those who commit it become incapable of concern or repentance (Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26-27).

Historical Context

The context clarifies this sin: Pharisees witnessed undeniable miracles wrought by Holy Spirit through Jesus yet deliberately attributed them to Satan (v.24). This wasn't ignorance or misunderstanding but willful perversion—calling good evil, light darkness. They reached point where hearts were so hardened, minds so darkened, that they could witness God's clear work and call it demonic. This is

judicial hardening: persistent rejection of truth leads to inability to recognize truth. Isaiah 6:9-10 (quoted in Matthew 13:14-15) describes this pattern. Paul references it in Romans 1:24-28—God gives persistent rejecters over to their chosen delusions. Church history shows this pattern: some hear gospel clearly, witness its power, understand its truth—yet deliberately reject it. Eventually, they lose capacity to repent (Hebrews 6:4-8). The sin is unforgivable not because God won't forgive but because the sinner becomes incapable of seeking forgiveness. Modern pastors frequently counsel worried believers who fear they've committed this sin—the very concern proves they haven't. True blasphemers are unconcerned, seeing no need for forgiveness.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What distinguishes blasphemy against the Spirit from other sins—why is it uniquely unforgivable?
2. How does understanding this sin as willful, hardened rejection provide assurance to worried believers who fear they've committed it?
3. What warning does this give about the danger of persistently resisting the Spirit's conviction and rejecting clear evidence of God's work?

Interlinear Text

Διὰ	τοῦτο	λέγω	ὑμῖν	πᾶσα	ἁμαρτία	καὶ
Wherefore	G5124	I say	unto you	All manner of	sin	and
G1223		G3004	G5213	G3956	G266	G2532
βλασφημία	ἀφεθήσεται	τοῖς	ἀνθρώποις·	ἢ	δὲ	τοῦ
blasphemy	be forgiven	G3588	unto men	G3588	but	G3588
G988	G863		G444		G1161	
πνεύματος	βλασφημία	οὐκ	ἀφεθήσεται	τοῖς		
against the Holy Ghost	blasphemy	not	be forgiven	G3588		
G4151	G988	G3756	G863			
ἀνθρώποις·						
unto men						
G444						

Additional Cross-References

Luke 12:10 (Holy): And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.

Hebrews 10:29 (Holy): Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Hebrews 10:26 (Sin): For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

Hebrews 6:4 (Holy): For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

Acts 7:51 (Holy): Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

1 John 1:9 (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 5:16 (Sin): If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

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