

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

HEBREWS 10: 24-31

Introduction:

This may be the most sobering paragraph in all of the New Testament. It pulls the cover off of what Jesus called “the eternal sin” or the “unpardonable sin.” If you can grasp the truth of this passage you will never doubt the seriousness of this sin.

Scholars have debated about the audience for these words. To whom were they addressed? When you consider the context of the Hebrew letter, the audience becomes rather clear. These words were addressed to a first century company of Hebrew Christians. They had heard and understood the Gospel. They had embraced what they heard outwardly by being baptized. They were identified with the visible church. But when persecution against Hebrew Christians became extremely intense, some of them were denouncing their faith in Christ and returning to Judaism. They were become what has been called by Biblical scholars “apostates.” They were those who had turned back to an old way of life. In fact some scholars consider these words applicable only to first century Jews who changed their minds about Christ.

While it can be admitted that they were the primary audience for this message, like all of the Word of God, it has application in every age. The eternal sin was not limited to the first century of Christendom.

Let's simplify the presentation for the sake of clarity by asking three questions concerning the unpardonable sin.

I. WHO IS IN DANGER OF COMMITTING THE UNPARDONABLE SIN?

1. Anyone who is received a good understanding of the Gospel.
2. Anyone who has identified with Christ outwardly without being born again.
3. Anyone who has turned their back on participation in public worship?

II. HOW DOES A PERSON COMMIT THE SIN?

1. They commit this sin by rejecting utterly the claims of Christ on their lives as the Son of God.

Hugh Hefner was raised in a minister's home. Joseph Stalin studied for the priesthood. Mao Tse-tung was raised under missionary teaching. The very light of Christ can become darkness.

¹Hughes, R. K. (1999). *John : That you may believe*. Preaching the Word (231). Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books.

2. They commit this sin by treating the redemptive work of Christ as common.

The January 1991 issue of *Harper's Magazine* carried a reproduction of an anti-Christian tract entitled *Dear Believer*, a “non-tract” published by the Freedom from Religion Foundation of Madison, Wisconsin. The tract variously attacked creation and miracles and then God himself, finally coming to Jesus and saying:

And Jesus is a chip off the old block. He said, “I and my father are one,” and he upheld “every jot and tittle” of the Old Testament law. He preached the same old judgment: vengeance and death, wrath and distress, hell and torture for all nonconformists. He never denounced the subjugation of slaves or women. He irrationally cursed and withered a fig tree for being barren out of season. He mandated burning unbelievers. (The Church has complied with relish.) He stole a horse. You want me to accept Jesus, but I think I'll pick my own friends, thank you.

I also find Christianity to be morally repugnant. The concepts of original sin, depravity, substitutionary forgiveness, intolerance, eternal punishment, and humble worship are all beneath the dignity of intelligent human beings.

This tract captures the emotion of the word “trampled,” which is a singularly powerful expression for disdain—as, for example, when the swine find your pearls and “trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces” (Matthew 7:6; cf. Matthew 5:13; Luke 8:5). Figuratively, the metaphor portrays taking “the Son of God”—the highest accord given to Christ in Hebrews—and grinding him into the dirt.⁷ Thus, turning away from Christ is an attack on his *person*.

⁷ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), p. 295.

² Hughes, R. K. (1993). *Hebrews : An anchor for the soul*. Preaching the Word (2043). Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books.

3. They commit this sin by holding contempt for the Holy Spirit and His work.

III. WHAT IS THE CONSEQUENCE OF COMMITTING THIS SIN?

1. They have a heart that cannot repent.

William Pope was a member of the Methodist Church in England for most of his life. He made a pretense of knowing Christ and served in many capacities. Meanwhile, his wife died a genuine believer.

Soon, however, he began to drift from Christ. He had companions who believed in the redemption of demons. He began going with them to a house of prostitution. In time he became a drunkard.

He admired the skeptic Thomas Paine, and on Sundays he and his friends assembled to confirm one another in their infidelity. They amused themselves by throwing the Bible on the floor and kicking it around.

Eventually Pope contracted tuberculosis. Someone visited him and told him of the great Redeemer. He told Pope he could be saved from being punished for his sins.

But Pope replied, "I have no contrition; I cannot repent. God will damn me! I know the day of grace is lost. God has said to such as me, 'I will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh.' I have denied Him; my heart is hardened."

Then he cried, "Oh, the hell, the pain I feel! I have chosen my way. I have done the horrible damnable deed: I have crucified the Son of God afresh; I have counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing! Oh that wicked and

horrible thing of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, which I know that I have committed; I want nothing but hell! Come, oh devil and take me!”

(recounted in *Voices from the Edge of Eternity*, John Myers, ed. [Old Tappan, N.J.: Spire, 1972], pp. 147–49)

He spent most of his life in the church, but his end was infinitely worse than his beginning. Every man and woman has the same choice. You can abide in the vine and receive all of God’s blessings, or you can be burned.

³MacArthur, J. (1992). *Saved without a doubt*. Cover subtitle: How to be sure of your salvation.; Includes indexes. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books.

2. They can expect to be destroyed by the fiery indignation of God.
3. They can expect to be treated as an enemy of God in the judgment.
