

# The Unpardonable Sin

## Degrees of Sin?

### Ignorance - Weakness - Rebellion

*compiled by Rachel Cory-Kuehl, December 24, 2007  
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Scripture from NKJV unless otherwise noted.*

Does God treat all sinners alike?  
Are there different types of sin?  
Are there degrees of sin?  
Is the punishment the same for every sin?

SIN is SIN

1 John 3:4 "Sin is lawlessness."

Romans 5:13 "for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law" (ESV).

*Before the Sinai Covenant humans were sinning, but their sins were not counted against them (for eternal life), because they had not yet heard the rules. "For by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20). There are millions who have lived and died in this world, without hearing God's law.*

*Sin is still sin, even if you don't know it's sin – but you won't be counted guilty because you didn't know any better. Your sin is "covered" by the blood of Christ until you become aware of your sin. Then sorrow for your sin, and repentance (changing your behavior) is required.*

*Willful ignorance also counts as sin, and adds guilt for the sins you might have repented of.*

## SINS of IGNORANCE

John 9:41 “Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would have no sin, but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains.”

John 15:22,24 “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin ...” [*The sin of rejecting Christ.*] “If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin, but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.”

*It’s all about attitude.*

*If you know that God doesn’t want you to do something, and you do it anyway - that is rebellion against God. That is the essence of sin. God makes the rules - the law. “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness” (1John 3:4 NIV).*

*God only holds you guilty if you know what he expects of you. If you do something before you know that it is sin, and then later you learn that what you did (in your past) was sin, then you must ask forgiveness (from God and from people you hurt), and you must change your behavior going forward, so you won’t do those things again. That was the command concerning “sins of ignorance” in ancient Israel.*

1 Timothy 1:13 [Paul writing] “Although I was formerly a blasphemer, [against Christ] a persecutor, [of Christ followers] and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”

Leviticus 5:4-6 “When he realizes it, then he shall be guilty in any of these matters. And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these matters, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing, and he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD for his sin which he has sinned.”

*We can “sin” without realizing it. Then later - when we come to realize that we have sinned - we must confess that sin and seek forgiveness.*

1 John 5:16 “All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.” If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask [God], and He will give him life for those who commit sin, not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.”

*For you students of the word, this verse is about sins of ignorance, versus sin (with attitude). Sin with attitude (in heart rebellion against God) leads to death, unless that sinner surrenders to Christ, acknowledges his sin and prays for forgiveness and a new heart.*

*Sins committed in ignorance do “not lead to death” because God will accept Christ’s death in your place - for those sins. We can pray for these people, asking God to forgive them. This is what Jesus did, on the cross when He prayed, “Father forgive them--they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).*

Hebrews 9:7 “But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people’s sins committed in ignorance;”

*The blood of Jesus “covers” all sins of ignorance. His blood does not cover sins that result from willful ignorance.*

*“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you ...” (Hosea 6:2).*

## Unintentional Sin: Sins of weakness

(without premeditation, thoughtless, careless)

You lost your temper. You cursed because you have a bad habit. You just recently quit smoking and the craving just got the better of you, and you smoked another one. You lingered a little too long, looking at that girl in shorts ahead of you in the check-out line, until you were fantasizing about her in bed. You shared a bit of gossip before it hit you - what you were doing. There are about a thousand examples we could give here - but you get the picture. We just slip up sometimes.

Romans 7:15 [Paul wrote] “I do not understand my own behaviour; I do not act as I mean to, but I do things that I hate” (NJB).

*I have heard this type of sin called “missing the mark.” You were trying. You aimed at the target. You just missed. Once again, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).*

Leviticus 4 and 5 “If a person sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the LORD in anything which ought not to be done, and does any of them . . .”

*He was to bring an animal for a sacrifice – called a “sin offering” or “trespass offering.” The offering was different depending upon who sinned (common person, or ruler, or the whole camp). The “sin offering” symbolized Jesus - the true “sin-offering.”*

*I have wondered. If folks had to pay a significant penance of money every time they sin, would it cut down on the sin? Probably. But our society today, has eliminated penalties for all but the most terrible sins.*

## SIN - with ATTITUDE

This one is different. This person knows what God wants him to do. He just doesn't care. He is rebellious. He sins willfully and knowingly - with premeditation - with no regard for God's commands, God's feelings, or the pain he may cause for others. Is there a remedy for this person?

*There was no sacrificial remedy for rebellious sin.*

*Why do you think King David spent a week on his face before the LORD after his sin of kidnap, rape and murder? He knew that he had gone too far!*

Hebrews 10:26 "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,"

*But what if that person has a change of heart? What if he comes to see that all his sinful pleasures were not worth it? The story of the "prodigal son" is the story of just such a person. He knew that he was not honoring his father. He knew that wasting his inheritance on debauchery was morally wrong. — When his money was gone, and he was left feeding the pigs, he had a change of attitude. And his father welcomed him back home – with great joy! (Luke Chapter 15).*

Isaiah 55:7 "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

*The story of King Solomon is another such story. Solomon was truly blessed of God. But he squandered those blessings - decorating his palace, throwing wild parties, having sex with hundreds of wives and concubines (pagan ones at that). Did you know that paganism was brought into Jerusalem by Solomon, who allowed his pagan wives to build temples to their pagan gods right in the heart of the city? Only later in his life, when he realized that the sinful pleasures were empty, did he return to the Lord. Then he wrote the Proverbs, which teach that a simple life in harmony with God, is the only one which leads to peace, and joy.*

***We can return. We can be forgiven, even for sins with attitude - but only if we loose the attitude. We must have true heart sorrow for our sin in order to be forgiven. The danger in the wild lifestyle is that the person will get so far out there - that he will never WANT to return.***

*The Italian Mafia used to keep a priest on retainer - just in case, so a mobster could receive "last rites" and avoid Hell. They had no change of attitude. They were just buying "fire insurance." The LORD will not accept a plea for forgiveness without true heart sorrow for sin and a sincere intention to live righteously henceforth.*

It's all about attitude.

Which brings me to something I call **“the salvation issue”** – the thing that determines whether an individual will live forever with God in the earth made new, or die the second death.

I could go to “church” every week. I could say a thousand prayers. But if there is no love in my heart - it will be for nothing. It's just buying “fire-insurance.” I believe that the determinative “salvation issue” is the response of each person to the Spirit of Christ. True unselfish love is not something that my carnal heart can generate. It comes as a gift through the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ. Have I invited Him in?

He may come to me with the conviction that I really should treat my body like the temple of the Holy Spirit. He may tell me that I've been impatient or judgmental, and thus misrepresented Him. When Jesus lived on earth, the Spirit convicted the Jews that Jesus really was the Son of God, and the Messiah.

Whatever the sin - the individual response to that pleading of Christ, over the course of their lifetime, will determine their relationship with God, for eternity. Will they respond with willful ignorance, with careless disregard, with outright rebellion, or with humble submission and a desire to know Him?

John 10:14 [Jesus said] “I know my sheep.”

John 10:27 [Jesus said] “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

## WHAT IS THE UNPARDONABLE SIN?

Matthew 12:31-32 [Christ speaking] “Therefore I say to you, every 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 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.”

Luke 12:10 [Christ speaking] “And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven.”

*To “blaspheme” is to speak falsehood. To blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, would be to speak falsehood against God - Who “is spirit” (John 4:24).*

Jesus was condemned for blasphemy, by the high court of Jerusalem.

John 10:33 “The Jews answered Him, ‘For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.’” (NAS)

*I wonder who told the Jerusalem authorities to charge Jesus with “blasphemy.” He had not claimed openly, to be God’s very Son. Even His disciples were a long time coming to that understanding. We finally have Peter affirming it, but only late in the game (Matthew 16:16-17). Jesus told Peter that God had revealed this to him. The disciples knew that Jesus had claimed to be the only “way” to God the Father. So who passed all this on to the ruling Council? Judas - of course. Judas didn’t just tell the Council where to find Jesus, to arrest Him quietly. He may have told the Council what crime to charge Jesus with.*

Stephen was stoned for preaching the same “blasphemy” - that Jesus was/is God’s son. Every Apostle who preached “the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” was guilty of the same blasphemy. To preach that Jesus Christ was/is “the Son of God” - that God’s Son had actually “come in the flesh” to die for the sins of mankind - that was THE all time worst “blasphemy” (according to the High Court of Israel). Worthy of death.

But it was not blasphemy. It was the truth.  
To resist THIS TRUTH - is Antichrist, according to John.

1 John 4:2-3 “By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses Jesus as the Christ who has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God, and this is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and now is already in the world.” (NET)

2 John 1:7 “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.” (NAS)

The two sides are defined:

1. Spirit of God - Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God who has come in the flesh.
2. Spirit of Antichrist - Jesus is not Messiah, and was not God’s Son who came “in the flesh.”

To continually say that Jesus was only a man (not God’s Son who came “in human flesh”) - is “blasphemy” against the “Spirit from God,” and is the message of Antichrist. Speaking lies will turn many away from God and life. This is why the sin against the spirit is worse than others.

It boils down to believing that God “gave His only begotten Son” - OR denying it. Because Jesus is the only way to God the Father, to forgiveness and to eternal life, denying Him is the sure way to death. There are not MANY paths to God. There is only ONE.

I would of course, point out that many have resisted against the Gospel of Christ, who later repented of their resistance -- Paul being a chief example. That may be why Paul called himself “a blasphemer.” Certainly Paul wasn’t swearing, or using God’s name in a coarse way.

## HARDENING THE HEART

Revelation 3:20 “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

John 6:44 “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

*It is only when one has “resisted” the drawing of God’s spirit, to the point of hardness, that one is “lost” forever, and has forfeit eternal life. The reason of course, is because Jesus cannot help the person who rejects Him. Even God cannot save the person who shuts Him out. Some reach this point of no return, long before their physical death.*

Psalms 95:8 “Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, As in the day of trial in the wilderness.”

1 Samuel 6:6 “Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts?”

*We use the expression “heart of stone” to describe someone without sympathy, or someone who absolutely will not change his mind.*

Acts 7:51 [Spoken by Stephen just before they stoned him.] “You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.”

This is the unpardonable sin! The Lord cannot pardon someone who does not ask. He cannot heal the heart of someone who has locked the door.

## HOW DID THE LORD HARDEN PHARAOH’S HEART?

Exodus 4:21 “The LORD said to Moses, ‘When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go’” (NIV).

Exodus 7:3 “And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.”

Exodus 14:4 “And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD” (ESV).

The Lord tells Moses that He will “harden Pharaoh’s heart.” Wouldn’t that make God guilty for what He did to Pharaoh? It’s a valid question. Was God just using Pharaoh, so He could display His power?

Exodus 8:32 “But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also; neither would he let the people go.”

There are several verses that say Pharaoh hardened his own heart. So which is it. Did the Lord harden his heart, or did he harden his own heart? Here’s my take on it.

When the Spirit of God convicts a person of something, and that person doesn’t want to change his behavior, he will resist that inner conviction. The more strongly God convicts, the stronger the resistance. When the Lord sent mighty plagues against the gods of Egypt, Pharaoh could not help but be impressed. He even relented slightly a time or two, but he would not give in completely. His pride wouldn’t let him. Pharaoh determined that he was going to win. It cost him his life. He drowned in the Red Sea.

Who was responsible for the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart? The Lord convicted. Pharaoh responded. It is the same with every human being who is drawn to God. Pharaoh happened to be a powerful king. So was Nebuchadnezzar. He finally gave in to God. **To resist until one is beyond the influence of God, IS the sin which cannot be forgiven.**

*NOTE: I do believe there are many whom the Lord simply did not convict. They lived at a time, or in a place where they could not be educated in the ways of God. They perhaps died as little children. I believe these will be resurrected at the 8<sup>th</sup> millennium, to be educated in the ways of God, to then choose whether they will serve Christ or rebel against Him.*

*We pray this study will prove a blessing.  
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