

## Introduction

The greatest theme of the Bible is mankind has hope. The Bible warns of the tortures of Hell and provides an avenue in the person of Jesus whereby man can be saved. Jesus said, “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). God’s love, which gives mankind forgiveness, is a message of hope for the world.

### Man’s Regret And God’s Hope

The sad news of the Bible is that all have sinned (Romans 3:23). If the message stopped at mankind’s sin, then there would likely be many men who would not preach today. Sin is described as harlotry (Jeremiah 3:6), filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), putrefying sores (Isaiah 1:6), vomit (2Peter 2:22), death (Ephesians 2:1), and a host of other unpleasant thoughts. Man’s justification of sin attempts to make it look better than it really is but God’s view is not pleasant at all. Yet, the good news of the Bible is that mankind does not have to pay the price for sin. The descriptions of sin in the Bible do not have to describe godly people. God has given His Son to be the propitiation (1John 2:2, 4:10) for the sins of mankind – any and all sin can be removed from the record.

It is oftentimes difficult for mankind to see the love of God shown in such a way. God gives mankind what they do not deserve and removes what they do deserve. 1John 4:9 says, “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” God demonstrates biblical love toward man by allowing His Son to bear the price for sin. Ultimately, the message of the Bible is a message of salvation for mankind. Any and every sin of man can be forgiven.

## The Sin of Blasphemy Against The Holy Spirit

Some have argued not every sin can be forgiven. They will then turn to passages such as Matthew 12:31-32 where Jesus said, “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. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come” (see also Mark 3:28-30 and Luke 12:10). Many have turned to this passage as proof that there are unforgivable sins in the world. However, there are some points which need to be considered before coming to such a conclusion. The first word (wherefore) of Jesus indicates conclusion. Examination of the context of Matthew 12 is warranted if a proper understanding of the passage is to be gained.

Matthew 12 is about the Pharisees who were trying to trap Jesus, looking for inconsistency in His teaching. The idea is present though not directly stated when Jesus plucked grain and ate on the Sabbath. Jesus made it clear — the argumentation of the Pharisees was ridiculous (verses 3-8). Following those events, Jesus healed a man with a withered hand and the Pharisees wanted to accuse him of committing sin according to the law (verses 9-13). The next verse says the Pharisees were still trying to plot against Jesus. Jesus continued to heal people in verse 15 and tells how he does not want His identity to be revealed in verses 16-21. In verse 22, a demon-possessed, blind, mute man was healed by Jesus. The Pharisees (remember their attitude revealed in verses 10 and 14) accused Jesus of using the power of Satan to heal the sick man. The text is clear stating the motivations and attitudes of the Pharisees were not to seek truth but to accuse Jesus of wrongdoing. Their hearts were in the wrong place.

Following their accusations, Jesus points out the ridiculous nature of their argument. He states, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to

desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand” (verse 25). The Pharisees, in their stubbornness to declare Jesus was not who He claimed to be, resorted to the unreasonable. They accused Jesus of casting out Satan by using the power of Satan! Jesus points out how ridiculous the argument is. The hardness of hearts found in the Pharisees is crucial to understanding Jesus’ statement concerning the so-called “unforgivable sin.” Jesus was speaking to people who were desperately attempting to prove He was not who He said He was. They were so desperate, they resorted to the unreasonable.

To blaspheme means to speak against, to go against, or to speak injuriously of someone. In Matthew 12, it is used to refer to saying Christ is using the power of Beelzebub when, in fact, He is using the power of God. The idea of speaking against or blasphemy is used over 50 times in the New Testament in reference to God and man. In Matthew 12, Jesus mentions blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and blasphemy against the Son of Man.

Several options have been presented as to what Jesus was referring to when he spoke of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit being unforgivable. Some have suggested the text indicates accusing miracles to have their origin in Satan when they have their origin in God. Those who advocate the position will further state (or imply) such is not possible today since miracles have ceased. The difficulty with this position is it provides no good reason for these events to be preserved for us today. The Bible is a book for all times and needs to have application to today.

Others have suggested blasphemy (speaking against; going against) against the Holy Spirit, specifically is unforgivable. These proponents generally point toward the specificity of the language used by Jesus. The position, however, comes with some concerns. If blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable but blasphemy against God the Father or God the Son is forgivable, the implication is a lack of unity in the divine Trinity. Also, the broadest definition of

blasphemy would be a disobedient life – A life not in congruence with the Bible inspired by the Holy Spirit. Thus, all have blasphemed and spiritual hope is negligible at best. If there is one totally unpardonable, totally unforgivable, no-matter-what sin, then genuine hope and assurance are cheapened. If one were to commit that one unforgivable sin, then there is no hope! This idea stands in opposition to the message of the Bible. Jesus said, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

The difficulty of Matthew 12:31-32 can be alleviated when one considers the attitudes of the Pharisees. They were of mind-set to discredit Jesus. The text is clear they were not searching for truth but rather seeking to find fault in the faultless Son of God. They displayed an attitude which goes against godliness. More to the point, at least in the moment, they displayed unwillingness to repent and hardness of heart. In any age, this attitude will not be forgiven.

### **Genuine Assurance Is In Grace**

Often times, young and older Christian alike will express doubt and dismay regarding their own salvation. Sometimes it is seen in the elderly person who knows they are near death who says, “I just hope I have done enough to get to Heaven.” It is also seen in the young person who may exclaim, “I just do not feel like God is with me anymore.” Many people want assurance but are expressing difficulty finding (or accepting) it.

In Luke 18:9-14, Jesus describes the attitude of two individuals. One (a publican or tax collector) was focused on his works. The other focused on the mercy of God. Jesus gives assurance to the one who focused on mercy and removes hope from the one who exalted himself. The person who ponders if he has done enough to get into Heaven has missed the point. No one has done enough to get into Heaven and there is no hope in works as works are only a consequence of a grace-saved life. Paul said, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and

that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of work, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hat before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

### **Conclusion**

Mankind tends to cling to old habits and, as the cliché goes, “Old habits die hard.” It is easy to cling to a works-and-reward type system in a barter economy. It is easy to fathom a God who will give mankind something if mankind will do something. It is also easy to imagine someone allowing a person to suffer the consequences of their own actions. One can easily hear someone say, “You reap what you sow” or, “You will get what you deserve!” It is much more difficult for some to imagine or fathom biblical grace. It does not make sense to many for God to give something mankind does not deserve or to remove something mankind does deserve. Perhaps, many cling to a works-based system of salvation because grace makes no sense outside of the love of God.

There is no assurance in a works-based mind-set. With such a system, people will continue to wonder if they have done enough. When focused on works, people will doubt God’s presence and God’s assurance. Paul was clear – Salvation is, “Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:9). Assurance will never be found in the works man does. Assurance is only found in the grace of God.

By the grace of God, *I know any sin can be forgiven.*

This tract is condensed from a lesson presented at the  
30th Annual Mid-West Lectures,  
“*I Know*”

To hear or view the complete lesson go to  
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# **I Know...**

## **Any Sin Can Be Forgiven**

by  
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