

“The Unpardonable Sin”—Matthew 12:22-37

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Take a Bible and meet me in Matthew 12...

We are going to finish our examination of this controversial passage this morning. We have some ground to cover, so I want to make haste and get right to it. Let's read the same verses we have been studying these past weeks, then we will turn our attention specifically to the most challenging verses in this passage. I'll begin reading in verse 22. Follow along as I read...

“Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. ²³ And all the people were amazed, and said, ‘Can this be the Son of David?’ ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, ‘It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.’ ²⁵ Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. ²⁶ And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷ And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁸ But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. ³⁰ Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. ³¹ Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³² And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. ³³ Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴ You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵ The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. ³⁶ I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷ for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.’” (Matthew 12:22-37)

This is God's Word...

We have really covered down through verse 30. We have seen the following:

Jesus Exposes the Pharisees: The Stupidity of Their Accusation

Their Accusation Is Illogical: Would Satan Fight Against Himself? (vv. 25-26)

Their Accusation Is Inconsistent: What About Their Own Alleged Exorcisms? (v. 27)

Jesus Exposes Himself: The Significance of His Actions

Jesus' Actions Evidence Divine Activity (v. 28)

Jesus' Actions Evidence Kingdom Entry (v. 28)

Jesus' Actions Evidence Satan's Inferiority (v. 29)

Jesus' Actions Exclude Human Neutrality (v. 30)

We have now come to the most controversial part of this exchange. And it is what Jesus says in verses 31 and 32:

“Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³² And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.” (Matthew 12:31-32; cf. Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10)

Here we see Jesus refer to what has been called the unforgivable/unpardonable sin, namely, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. It should surprise no one that the prospect of committing such a sin has troubled countless people over the centuries, including many of us in this room. Compounding the problem is that there are competing proposals as to what this sin entails that have been advanced over the years. It is worth acknowledging some of these as we move forward.

Common Understandings of the Unpardonable Sin

Andy Naselli has written a helpful article wherein he identifies what have historically been the four most common explanations of the unpardonable sin.¹ The first one is that it entails...

A Particularly Grievous Moral Failure

Now, on one level, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, whatever it refers to, must be a particularly grievous moral failure. No one denies that. But some have made attempts to tie it to particular sins, like adultery, or murder, idolatry, or other sins that were often deemed capital offenses in the Old Covenant (i.e., in the OT Law). Others have tied it to New Covenant offenses like denying Jesus under the threat of persecution, a common temptation in the early church and in places around the world today where Christianity is not tolerated. So there are variations of this interpretation, but in each case the conclusion is drawn that one (or several) of these sins is unforgivable.

However, I don't think such an understanding fits the context of this passage, where none of those sins are being discussed. And, furthermore, I don't think this interpretation fits the teaching of the rest of Scripture, where each of these sins is shown to be forgivable. King David, for example, was guilty of both murder and adultery, but was forgiven. Peter was among those who have denied Jesus in fear, but the Lord restored (Luke 22:31-34, 54-62). Paul addresses Christians in Corinth who formerly practiced sexually immorality, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, theft, greed, drunkenness, abuse, and so on, and yet, Paul says, they *“were washed...sanctified...justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God”* (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Paul even describes himself as a former *“blasphemer”* (1 Tim. 1:13). So clearly these sins do not preclude the possibility of forgiveness.

Another common suggestion is that blasphemy of the Holy Spirit entails...

A False Assertion about the Spirit or His Work

This interpretation does appear to take more seriously the context of the statement. The Pharisees, as we've seen, were attributing the miracle of Jesus to the work of the devil, when Jesus shows convincingly that the miracle He performed was actually done *“by the Spirit of God”* (Matt 12:28). So if the Pharisees here are guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (or at least at risk of blaspheming the Holy Spirit), then it would seem to have some connection to their falsely attributing the Spirit's work to Satan as a means of discrediting Jesus.²

This view, however, seems too general to be helpful. Don't get me wrong, I do think it would be appropriate to imagine that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit always involves attributing falsity to or denying the Spirit or His Work. But I also think it goes too far to say that every such blasphemy rises to the level of this unforgivable sin. In other words, those who have committed the unpardonable sin have spoken wrongly of the Spirit and His Work, but not everyone who has spoken wrongly about the Spirit and His Work is guilty of the unpardonable sin. As Naselli points out, "Many non-Christians have expressed false beliefs about the Spirit but later corrected those beliefs as they matured in understanding what the Bible reveals about the Spirit."³

The third suggestion that is often put forth is a more specific variation of the last. Advocates of this position claim that blasphemy of the Holy Spirit involves...

Attributing to Satan the Miracles Accomplished by the Spirit

Again, you can see (and hopefully appreciate) how this view takes into consideration the context. This is essentially what the Pharisees have done in this text. This view was held by John F. Walvoord, for example, and is quite common among dispensationalists.⁴ Naselli notes that...

"Some who hold this view specify that one could commit this sin only during Jesus' earthly ministry because the Spirit-empowered miracles refer exclusively to the miracles that Jesus performed. Others argue that one could commit this sin during the period of supernatural sign miracles in the first century but not after that since sign miracles ceased."⁵

I don't find this view particularly compelling, in part, because I am not convinced that God does not perform such miracles today (but that is a discussion for another day).⁶

The fourth view, which in my estimation is probably the best offering, is that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a sin that involves, what I would describe as...

A Conscious and Decisive Rejection of the Spirit's Work and Testimony about Jesus

That's a long description, I know, but let's break it down a bit. Why do I say that it is conscious rejection? Because it knows what it's doing. It knows what it is walking away from, what it is rejecting. The Bible does seem to distinguish between the sort of rejection that is made in full (or adequate) knowledge of the truth (cf. self-aware) and the sort of rejection that results from ignorance (cf. unaware).

Paul is a fitting example of the latter—the kind of person who rejects the work of the Spirit for a time, out of ignorance and misunderstanding—which is why he says to Timothy:

"I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service,¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 1:12-14)

So Paul acknowledges that he was once a blasphemer and opponent of the Spirit's work in the Church, but he was shown mercy and grace. This means that his blasphemy was pardoned. And Paul says that this was because he "acted ignorantly in unbelief." "His ignorance did not excuse him," as Dennis Johnson explains, "but it left his heart permeable to the Spirit's invasion" at some later point.⁷

This reminds me of the person that I meet from time to time who is openly (and sometimes aggressively) dismissive of Jesus and Christianity, but then when I begin to dig into that rejection it becomes clear that the

Jesus and Christianity that they are rejecting does not really conform to what the Spirit has revealed in His Word. They have constructed a strawman of sorts. They don't really have a clear understanding of the real Jesus, what He has done, and why it matters. They haven't understood the true Gospel yet. They haven't heard it. They're ignorant in this sense. But that ignorance can be overcome. They can learn of the true Gospel and have the Spirit change their mind about Jesus. So their rejection is one of ignorance.

But then there are others who have heard the truth of the Gospel. They have understood what the Spirit has revealed about Jesus. They have heard the invitation of the Gospel. But yet they have hardened their heart to the Spirit and His Work, rejecting Jesus, not in ignorance, but with eyes wide open. They understand who they are resisting and rejecting. They just don't care. They desire something else more. That's what is meant by a self-conscious rejection. They are conscious of the truth—they're not lacking evidence or information sufficient to believe—but they reject the Lord anyway. This is like the "high-handed" sin of Numbers 15:30-31. It is, in the words of Henry Alford, "a definite act showing a state of sin, and that state a willful determined opposition to the present power of the Holy Spirit; and this as shown by its fruit, blasphemy."⁸ Such people, explains John Calvin, "resist God's truth, although by its brightness they are so touched that they cannot claim ignorance."⁹

This is the sort of thing that we see (or are close to seeing in the Pharisees) in our text. They are dead-set against Jesus at this point in the story, plotting to have him killed (Matt. 12:14). Their accusation that Jesus is doing the devil's work is blasphemous, and Jesus has shown that their conclusion is both illogical (12:25-26) and inconsistent (12:27). So now they are caught between a rock and a hard place—they can either be for Jesus or against Him (12:30), they can either acknowledge that Jesus is right or reject Him in full view of that knowledge. Jesus is warning, however, that to reject the Spirit's work through Him and testimony about Him with such knowledge could prove unforgivable. It's worse than even the slander they have issued against Jesus Himself, according to verses 31 and 32. Yet, as D. A. Carson clarifies,

"The distinction between blasphemy against the Son of Man and blasphemy against the Spirit is not that the Son of Man is less important than the Spirit... Instead, within the context of the larger argument the first sin is rejection of the truth of the gospel (but there may be repentance and forgiveness for that), whereas the second sin is rejection of the same truth in full awareness that that is exactly what one is doing—thoughtfully, willfully, and self-consciously rejecting the work of the Spirit even though there can be no other explanation of Jesus' exorcisms than that."¹⁰

This is not a difference of opinion on how to interpret the laws about the Sabbath. This is digging-in-your-heels defiance in the face of incontrovertible evidence. If that doesn't change your mind, nothing will.

Why though could that be unforgivable? Why is blasphemy against the Spirit the unpardonable sin? Well, an unforgivable sin is self-defining (i.e. a sin that cannot be forgiven), but when we take into account the teaching of Scripture we discover that every sin we repent of can be forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ. But the key to note at this juncture is that this is true of sins *repented* of. God forgives the repentant who turn to Christ. So John the Baptist, who prepared people to receive Jesus, called people to repent of their sins and proclaimed "*a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*" (Mark 1:4). The message of Jesus was (and is) "*repent and believe the Gospel*" (1:15; cf. 6:12). Peter told the people at Pentecost, where the Spirit of God was poured out, "*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins*" (Acts 2:38). Repentance is consistently tied to forgiveness of sins elsewhere in the preaching of the Apostles (e.g., 5:31).

Since forgiveness comes only through the atoning work of Christ—His death in our place on the cross—then we are called to turn from our sin (repentance) and trust in Christ to save (faith). That's the call of the Gospel. Repent and believe in Jesus. Repentance and faith go together. And no one is forgiven apart from that disposition toward Christ. So we could say that the only sin that is not forgivable is the sin that is not repented of in faith. Repentance is the implied condition in Matthew 12:31.¹¹

And now we start to get at why it is blasphemy against the Spirit *in particular* that is so problematic. Who works in us repentance? The Holy Spirit. This is why blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is so serious. It's why Jesus can say that every sin and blasphemy can be forgiven, *except* this one. Blasphemy against Jesus? Forgivable. Blasphemy against the Spirit? Not. How can this be? John Piper traces the logic beautifully:

“I think it's because of the unique and decisive role the Holy Spirit plays in our salvation. If we look to God the Father and then turn from his glory to embrace sin, that is bad. If we look to his Son Jesus Christ whom he sent into the world and then turn away from his glory to embrace sin, that is doubly bad.

But in either case there is hope. The Father has planned redemption and the Son has accomplished redemption. This wonderful redemption is outside ourselves and available to us if we repent of our sin and turn back to Christ in faith. But it is the unique and special role of the Holy Spirit to apply the Father's plan and the Son's accomplishment of it to our hearts. It is the Spirit's work to open our eyes, to grant repentance, and to make us beneficiaries of all that the Father has planned and all that Christ has done for us.

If we blaspheme and reject the Father and the Son, there is still hope, for the Spirit may yet work within us to humble us and bring us to repentance. But if behind the Father and the Son we see and taste the power of the Holy Spirit and reject his work as no more precious than the work of Satan, we shut ourselves off from the only one who could ever bring us to repentance. And so we shut ourselves off from forgiveness.”¹²

But remember the distinction I made earlier. This unbelief is not an act of ignorance. This unbelief is an outright rejection that is made with eyes wide open. It's self-aware. It's self-conscious. The person knows what they are rejecting, who they are walking away from. This is not a matter of not knowing the truth or not having sufficient evidence or needing more information. This is “I get it, but I don't want anything to with it.” There is nothing accidental about this. It's not a momentary lapse in judgment or impulsive outburst. “It is a deliberately repudiating the truth about Jesus.”¹³ And it's decisive. There *is* a line. There is a line that is crossed that makes the sin unforgivable, because the Spirit withdraws from a person, conviction evaporates, and as a result repentance becomes impossible.¹⁴ And that's why I have said that this sin is both self-aware and *decisive*. It's a posture that is unrelenting, “an unrelenting rejection of [the Spirit's] advances.”¹⁵

Some say that it's always possible to repent, as long as there is still breath in your lungs. But I don't think that is what the Bible teaches. Yes, there are people who repent and believe and are saved on their deathbeds. There are thief-on-the-cross moments. Amen and hallelujah. But there are also those who cross a line. The Spirit leaves them to their devices as an act of judgment (cf. Rom. 1). Repentance is no longer possible (cf. Heb. 6). The author of Hebrews uses Esau as an example of this, one who “*found no chance to repent*” (Heb. 12:17; cf. 6:6).¹⁶ That is not a description of the end of life in Esau's case, but of the callous condition of his heart that ruled out repentance.

And when that happens with people who once professed Christ, we call that apostasy. Their profession proved empty. They didn't lose their salvation; their falling away from Christ fully and finally shows that they never truly possessed Christ (1 John 2:19). They walked away from the truth of the Gospel, knowing exactly what they were rejecting. This is the “sin that leads to death,” which John speaks about (1 John 5:16). This is what the so-called warning passages in Hebrews are about (e.g., Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-31). In other words, this is not the only place such a sin is discussed in God's Word. But it is here in Matthew 12 (and the Synoptic parallels) that the sin is described as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. It is not, in these cases, that God is unable to forgive. It's that the person is unable to repent any longer, “having so fully and finally hardened his [or her] heart against the grace of God.”¹⁷

Now I recognize that there are more questions that many of us have, so let me try to at least touch on some of the most common. We don't have time to be elaborate, but let me offer...

Some (Rapid-Fire, but) Needed Clarifications

Why can God not forgive this sin? I'm not sure such a question is framed right. It's not so much a matter of God's ability to forgive, but of a person's willingness to repent. The problem is in the person, not in God. And that is the point of the analogy that Jesus gives in verses 33 to 37 (which is the same lesson we've examined from 7:15-20):

“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴ You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵ The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. ³⁶ I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷ for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matthew 12:33-37)

The Pharisees should be able to look at Jesus and what the Spirit has been doing through Jesus and infer that He is a good tree, so to speak. The fact that they instead are bearing the fruit of blasphemy shows the extent of their sinful condition. Their slander is the dead fruit of the dead tree that is their spiritual condition. And on the day of judgment, those words will condemn them. They will not be acquitted (that is what is meant by justified here) because their blasphemies against the Spirit evidence the settled, self-conscious, and definitive unbelief.

Can a Christian commit this sin? On the one hand, Christians are capable of all kinds of sin. However, true Christians do not commit *this* sin because God preserves their faith to the end. The saving work God has begun in His people, He is faithful to complete (Phil. 1:6). The Bible is clear that there is no salvation apart from the forgiveness of sin. So if those God saves He saves finally and forever, then there is no room for an unforgivable sin in their life. As one author put it: “Christians can commit all kinds of sin, but what marks a Christian is that they don't settle in long term. They hate it and they repent of it. They feel bad about it. They turn to God for fresh forgiveness.”¹⁸ And if they don't, then they were never truly saved.

Is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit the same as grieving the Holy Spirit? No. The difference is seen in Ephesians 4...

“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:29-32)

We can see here that when a person grieves the Holy Spirit, they are grieving the One who “*sealed [them] for the day of redemption.*” You're grieving, in other words, the One that provides you your eternal security, the One who makes sure you make it into glory in the end.¹⁹

Can you know if a person has committed the unpardonable sin? I don't think we can ever know definitively, this side of heaven, though I do think there are times when we can have a pretty good idea (cf. 1 John 5:16-17). Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that we do not know the human heart, we cannot see all that God is doing behind the scenes in the heart, and we should never underestimate the power of His grace and Gospel, or His willingness to answer prayer. Just like there are people in our lives who we assume to be Christians but will prove on the last day to have not been, so also there are also those who appear to be so hardened that they will never repent, but will in fact before the end. Paul is a good example of the latter.

Can you know if you have committed the unpardonable sin? I know this is a question that has haunted some of you, but I hope you will see that the fact that it has haunted you is itself an indication that it is not describing your situation. While I would never want to diminish “the pinch and pain” that these words are meant to have

for particular people who need to be warned about the consequences of persistent resistance to God's Spirit and His invitation, I also don't want some of you to mistake who these words are addressed to, not "the tender conscience or stumbling believer, but rather the pseudo-religious who stands over against Jesus in smugness."²⁰ And so I think Naselli is correct when he echoes the common pastoral comfort that...

"Those who have committed the unpardonable sin are not worried about it. They are hardened in their unbelief. So if you are worried that you have committed the unpardonable sin, that is a reliable sign that you have not committed it. If you are ashamed of your sin against God, then you have not committed the unpardonable sin. So instead of feeling hopelessly condemned, keep turning from your sins, and keep trusting Jesus. If you are in Jesus the Messiah, then there is "no condemnation" for you (Rom 8:1)."²¹

I pray that those who need to hear that will hear it today.

How Should We Respond to Such a Teaching?

I think this text reminds us that there is a cost to resisting the Holy Spirit. There is a hardening of heart, a settling in of resistance, a line that can be crossed. Since this is true, then I think we must be a people who resolves to run from sin and respond to God's grace.

We must run from sin. Don't be arrogant. I once heard an illustration about a buzzard who spots a carcass on a piece of ice heading ever closer to a waterfall. He lands on the ice and begins to consume the carcass, knowing that there is a dangerous fall ahead but assuaging all fear because he reasons he can just fly away when the ice topples over the ledge. But when the end of the river comes, he discovers that he can do no such thing because his wings have frozen while he satisfied his lust for food. He goes over to his doom, along with the dead thing he had been feeding on. There was no escape for him—in this age or the next.²² And that is a cautionary tale for the danger of toying with sin. We need to have the urgency that Jesus calls for. We need to be a people who never thinks it is harmless to resist the Holy Spirit—His conviction or invitation. We need to be a people who would rather lose a hand or an eye, than have them lead us away from the Spirit's direction. Our passage this morning is another in a long line that warns us against resisting the Spirit and calls us to mortify our sin. Be thankful for the Spirit's conviction in your life. But don't push it aside and ignore it, lest you find one day that conviction is no longer there, and you don't even care.

Second, we must respond to God's grace. What a comfort this text provides when it says that all sins and blasphemies can be forgiven. If you will turn from your sin in repentance and trust in Jesus for forgiveness, you will find His grace and mercy beyond measure. And, yes, the blasphemy against the Spirit is an unforgivable sin, but we must put such a teaching alongside the promises of God, like "*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*" (Rom. 10:13). Paul didn't say, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, unless they have previously blasphemed the Spirit." No, he says, "Call on His name and you will be saved." Those who turn to Jesus in faith are saved. Always. Every time. And for all time. As Jesus said, "*It is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day*" (John 6:40). If you would draw near to Jesus, you would find grace and mercy (Heb 4:16). Dennis Johnson is absolutely right, and I'll close with this,

"Of two truths we may be sure: None who commits this unforgivable sin will ever trust in Christ to receive the forgiveness found in Him. And no one who flees to the crucified and risen Son of Man has committed that heinous slander of the Spirit—nor will the Savior turn away anyone who turns to Him."²³

Let's pray...

¹ Andy Naselli, “The Unpardonable Sin,” accessed online at: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-unpardonable-sin/>.

² Grant R. Osborne is correct to note that “[t]he switch from ‘blaspheme’ to ‘speak against’ is stylistic; the two are synonymous and refer to the scurrilous accusations of the Pharisees” (*Matthew*, ZECNT [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010], 477).

³ Naselli, “The Unpardonable Sin.” Along these lines, Jonathan Pennington writes, “Another misinterpretation would be to understand the blasphemy too generically as meaning that anyone who at any point rejects Christ openly can’t be a true Christian later. While we may initially read these texts this way (especially in Luke’s least-explained version), the New Testament’s own retelling of key events belies this interpretation. Specifically, we see contrary evidence in both Peter and Paul. Paul’s conversion story wasn’t simply one of ignorance and then acceptance of Christ but rather one of hardened opposition to Christ and his followers preceding his conversion (Acts 9:1-19). Such open rejection of Jesus apparently wasn’t an unforgivable sin. Even more shocking, Peter himself—after following Jesus for some time—denies him openly (three times!), yet is restored not only to forgiveness but leadership in the early church (John 18:15-27; 21:15-19). Without question, this sin on Peter’s part, though equal parts serious and incontrovertible, cannot be construed as an unforgivable blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.” Jonathan Pennington, “You Asked: What Is the Unforgivable Sin?,” accessed online at: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/you-asked-what-is-the-unforgivable-sin/>.

⁴ See, e.g., J. F. Walvoord, *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come* (Chicago: Moody, 1974), 89.

⁵ Naselli, “The Unpardonable Sin.”

⁶ Naselli also quotes D. A. Carson at this point: “Apart from the question of whether miracles take place now, Jesus elsewhere warned that miracles are not necessarily the criterion of true discipleship ([Matt] 7:21–23); i.e., they do not necessarily reveal the Spirit’s presence and power” (D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *Matthew-Mark*, 2nd ed, EBC [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010], 336).

⁷ Dennis Johnson, “Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit,” accessed online at: <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/blasphemy-against-holy-spirit>.

⁸ Quoted by John Piper, in “Can a Christian Blaspheme the Holy Spirit?,” accessed at: <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/can-a-christian-blaspheme-the-holy-spirit>.

⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols., The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1:6:17.

¹⁰ Carson, “Matthew,” 291-92.

¹¹ Cf. Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 203.

¹² John Piper, “Beyond Forgiveness: Blasphemy Against the Spirit,” accessed online at: <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/beyond-forgiveness-blasphemy-against-the-spirit>.

¹³ Naselli, “The Unpardonable Sin.”

¹⁴ “The unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is an act of resistance which belittles the Holy Spirit so grievously that he withdraws forever with his convicting power so that we are never able to repent and be forgiven” (Piper, “Beyond Forgiveness”).

¹⁵ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 204.

¹⁶ Piper writes that “the point here is not that Esau repented and could not be forgiven, but that he couldn’t find the place of repentance. He had come to such hardness of heart against God, such love for the world — his bowl of cereal against his inheritance. He loved the world so much, he couldn’t stop loving the world. He could find no genuine repentance. And so he perished. His tears were not tears of repentance. They were tears of remorse that he couldn’t repent.” John Piper, “Can a Christian Blaspheme the Holy Spirit?”

¹⁷ R. C. Sproul, “Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit,” accessed online at: <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/blasphemy-against-holy-spirit>.

¹⁸ Piper, “Can a Christian Blaspheme the Holy Spirit?”

¹⁹ *Ibid.*; Pennington, “You Asked.”

²⁰ Pennington, “You Asked.”

²¹ Naselli, “The Unpardonable Sin.” Cf. the diagnostic statements offered by Sam Storms, *Tough Topics: Biblical Answers to 25 Challenging Questions* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 89-90.

²² Piper, “Beyond Forgiveness.”

²³ Johnson, “Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.”