

What is Blaspheming the Holy Spirit?

Tom Brown Ministries

I appreciate the question. Many sincere believers have feared that they have committed this unpardonable sin.

Fear came over me when I heard those scary words: "God will forgive you for saying anything bad about Him or His Son, but if you speak against the Holy Spirit, God will not forgive you!"

I'm sure that Mrs. Rutton did not know the impact her words would make on me and the rest of her second grade Sunday school class, but her words put the fear of God into us!

Some may legitimately question the wisdom of a Sunday school teacher warning young, impressionable children about blaspheming the Holy Spirit. I can understand that concern. For one thing, my little, immature mind couldn't comprehend what that sin was; all I knew was that I didn't want to commit it. I thought it had something to do with cussing.

I heard my peers using God's name in vain and even saying "Jesus!" as a dirty word. But I never heard my friends speak against the Holy Spirit. As far as I was concerned they were safe!

Obviously, blasphemy against the Spirit has nothing to do with cussing; it has to do with mocking the works of the Holy Spirit, with the intent on keeping others from wholeheartedly following Christ.

Jesus alerted the Pharisees to the possibility of them committing this unpardonable sin when they accused Him of driving out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons. (see Matthew 12:22-32 and Mark 3:22-30).

Did Jesus take this slander personally? No. He, in fact, steers their criticism away from Himself and directs their criticism toward the Holy Spirit. He indicates that their judgment, though it seemed targeted against Himself, was really aimed at the Holy Spirit.

"I drive out demons by the Spirit of God," Jesus proclaimed to His accusers. To criticize a miracle from Jesus was equivalent to criticizing a miracle of the Holy Spirit. His power came from the Spi

I'm aware of the differences of interpretation concerning blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. One group says that it is impossible for anyone to commit this sin except those in Jesus' day. But they miss the point. Today is the age of the Holy Spirit. If there ever was a time that a person could commit this sin it would be now.

Another group claims that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is simply the act of rejecting Christ. But they, too, seem to miss the point. The unpardonable blasphemy is not *action* against Christ, but *words* against the Holy Spirit. "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven," Jesus assured. The unforgivable sin is not related to Christ but to the Spirit.

It is clear that Jesus was endeavoring to protect the charismatic ministry of the church. On another occasion Jesus seems to bend over backwards to do this. He cautions the disciples from misusing their authority when they tried to silence a renegade disciple who obviously had a supernatural ministry.

"Do not stop him," Jesus said. "No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me" (Mark 9:39).

Perhaps, for the sake of unity between evangelicals and charismatics, we leaders have been hesitant to echo Christ's warning against blasphemy of the Spirit. But we should not think doing so will bring division. Most non-charismatics do not even come close to blasphemy. They wisely remain silent, instead of talking against the

manifestations of the Spirit. At worst, they simply propagate their view that the gifts have passed away without condemning those who believe differently.

But there appears to be a vocal segment of anti-charismatic leaders who arrogantly speak against the gifts of the Holy Spirit. (Of course they claim only to be speaking against charismatic leaders, not the Holy Spirit. But after listening to their scathing accusations I can't tell the difference.)

I met two Mormon missionaries who had more fear of God than these charismatic-bashers. They politely shared with my wife and me their view that only Mormons could be saved.

I kindly objected and told them how I was born again. I shared how I was filled with the Holy Spirit.

"How do you know that you have the Holy Spirit?" the head missionary asked.

"I know because I have the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including speaking in tongues," I answered boldly.

And without hesitation, he questioned, "How can you be sure that your speaking in tongues is from the Holy Spirit and not from an evil spirit?"

I cleverly answered, "You tell me, did I receive the Holy Spirit or an evil spirit?"

The other missionary interrupted, "It is not our place to judge."

"But you say that no one can receive the Holy Spirit without being a Mormon," I baited.

The leader spoke up. "I'm prepared to tell you whether you received the Holy Spirit or an evil spirit!"

"Go, ahead. Tell me.

"He paused. He thought for a moment. His mind seemed to drift. Finally, he forced the words out slowly, but almost wishing to keep silent, "You received an evil spirit."

With a boldness not my own, I pointed my finger at him and fired the words, "Jesus said you can blaspheme Him or His Father and still be forgiven, but if you blaspheme the Holy Spirit, you'll not be forgiven in this age or the age to come! If you're right, then you have nothing to fear; but if you're wrong, then you are in danger of eternal damnation!"

The other Mormon jumped in, "I didn't say it." Then he pointed to his friend. "HE SAID IT!"

A couple of minutes elapsed when the leader softly said, "I want to take back my statement." And with humility, he apologized, "Sir, not only should I not have judged you, but I was wrong in my judgment of you. According to my Mormon teaching, you cannot have the Holy Spirit. But, I believe, you are the first non-Mormon I've met who has the Holy Spirit."

I wish some fundamentalist would have the same fear of God as these Mormons.

Instead many anti-charismatics have spewed their venom to ministers like me who operate in the gifts of the Spirit and will actually judge our salvation. They will tell others that we are not even saved. I have noticed that when a person vehemently rejects the ministry of the Holy Spirit that eventually they will hate those ministers who operate in the gifts of healing, miracles and casting out demons. They will turn their hatred toward the charismatic ministry into a crusade.

I get many hate emails from these people who are very opposed to the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. Many have told me that they do not even think I am saved. Why? Simply because I heal the sick, cast out demons and speak in tongues. If I would abstain from the gifts of the Spirit, then they would accept me, so it is clear that what they really reject is the Holy Spirit and not me.

On the other hand, I get many that write to me telling me they are afraid that maybe in the past they have blasphemed the Spirit out of ignorance, now they accept the gifts of the Spirit. They do not need to worry, because Jesus was not speaking to those who get carried away by wrong teaching, rather He warns those who have a hateful attitude toward the gifts of the Spirit. I think most people may have simply "grieved" the Holy Spirit, instead of blaspheming Him. To grieve Him is to simply limit what He wants to do because of doubt. But blasphemy involves "hate" not "doubt".

The word "blasphemy" is a term that speaks of damnable heresy, not misjudgment. Many, because of poor teaching, misjudge others— that's forgivable. The Pharisees, on the other hand, went beyond judging to trying to keep others from following Christ. *Blasphemy against the Spirit is the absolute, permanent, hateful rejection of the gifts of the Holy Spirit with the motive to keep others from fully following Christ as well as to keep one's position of power.* A person who has committed this sin has no desire for repentance, will divide the body of Christ, judge the salvation of others, and will ultimately die in this state.

