

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

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In this month's Topical Bulletin the following questions will be considered in the light of the Holy Bible: ***What is the sin against the Holy Ghost? Why is the sin against the Holy Ghost also known as the unforgivable sin?***

What the *sin against the Holy Ghost* is can be found by carefully looking at Mark 3:22-30, where we read: "And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He [i.e. Jesus] hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils. And he called them *unto him*, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit."

The term *blaspheme* is a translation of the Greek root word βλασφημεω {blas-fay-meh'-o}, meaning: 1) to speak reproachfully, rail at, revile, calumniate, blaspheme 2) to be evil spoken of, reviled, railed at. [Abridged Thayer's Greek/English lexicon] Thus, *blasphemy is a sin of the tongue, a sin of speech that flows from a sinful heart*, for Jesus says: "from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man." (Mark 7:21-23 KJV)

Accordingly, the sin against the Holy Ghost is to speak reproachfully in an evil manner against God the Holy Ghost, which includes speaking against His work; and, it is a sin from an impenitent heart that perversely and persistently denies and rejects divine truth after actually knowing the Gospel of Christ to be true through the gracious illumination of the Holy Ghost.

For instance, the scribes and Pharisees were extremely close to committing the sin against the Holy Ghost if they had not already committed that sin, because Holy Writ reports in St. Matthew's account: "Then was brought unto him [i.e. Jesus] one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and

spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. 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.” (Matthew 12:22-32 KJV) The Pharisees in fact knew that Jesus was NOT working in concert with Satan, for “There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” (John 3:1-2 KJV)

So, Jesus had performed a wonderful miracle by the power of *the Spirit of God* as was plainly evident to all who witnessed the fact that He had cast a devil out of a possessed man. Nevertheless, instead of admitting that the Holy Ghost worked in and through Jesus Christ, the scribes and Pharisees said, according to St. Mark’s account as quoted earlier, “He hath an unclean spirit.” But, Jesus says, “whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.” (Luke 12:10 KJV) Therefore, depending upon exactly who the scribes and Pharisees actually directed their blasphemy toward from their sinful hearts, they were either very close to committing the sin against the Holy Ghost or indeed did commit the sin against the Holy Ghost. In any case they greatly sinned; however, if their sin was actually directed against the Holy Ghost it was the unforgivable sin.

The sin against the Holy Ghost is unforgivable since Jesus says so, and Jesus always says the truth since He is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6 KJV). The reason the sin against the Holy Ghost is unforgivable is because it is the one sin that is maliciously directed against the only remedy for sin – the Holy Ghost and His sanctifying work – for it is only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ that one personally receives the forgiveness of sins and salvation earned by Jesus for the whole world, and such saving faith is a gift wrought solely in the sinner’s heart by the Holy Ghost working through the Word of God, particularly the Gospel of Christ.

The following Scripture passages prove the foregoing statements: “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” (1 Corinthians 12:3 KJV) “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Romans 1:16-17 KJV) “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17 KJV) “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9 KJV) “For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23 KJV)

Jesus has paid for ALL sin; but, the individual sinner can only personally appropriate the forgiveness of sins and salvation through faith in Christ— faith the Holy Ghost alone graciously gifts the sinner with as He works in the sinner’s heart through the Gospel, for Christians are “born again, not of

corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” (1 Peter 1:23 KJV) And, “it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:13 KJV)

The fact that the sin against the Holy Ghost is unforgivable is further substantiated in the following texts of Holy Writ: “*it is impossible* for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame.” (Hebrews 6:4-6 KJV) “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10:26-31 KJV) “If any man see his brother sin a sin *which is* not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.” (1 John 5:16 KJV)

Let us therefore be on guard against all sin, especially the sin against the Holy Ghost. Let us value the Holy Ghost and His sanctifying work by treasuring the Holy Bible through which the Holy Ghost works in our hearts and minds, for “...the holy scriptures... are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Timothy 3:15-17 KJV) Let us always remember: “the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.” (Romans 8:7-10 KJV)

Closing comments:

There are people who are worried they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. Such people need not be worried since the fact they are concerned about possibly having committed the sin against the Holy Ghost is positive proof they have NOT committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, the unforgivable sin. Take it to heart that those who do commit the sin against the Holy Ghost are not at all worried about it but rather delight in their blasphemy of the Spirit of Christ, for they are of their “father the devil,” and the lusts of their “father” they “will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” (John 8:44 KJV)

On the other hand, Jesus says to all troubled sinners: "...I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 9:13; 11:28 KJV) "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37 KJV)

Let us therefore daily and sincerely repent of our sins. Let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord, and let us thank God the Holy Ghost for gifting us with such trust and confidence – such faith – in Christ Jesus. Let us go forward continuing in the Holy Word of God through which the Holy Ghost works to grant, sustain, and grow us in the true faith of Jesus Christ unto life everlasting, for "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (1 John 2:1-2; Acts 4:12 KJV)

m.e.l.