**The Unforgivable Sin**

Based on [John 8:42-59](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn8.42-59)

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The Fifth Sunday in Lent ~ Judica

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Our religion is about the forgiveness of sins. Jesus Christ died on the cross for one central purpose…to make a way for sinners to be forgiven. We say he “won” forgiveness on the cross for all people, so that their sins are paid for, and he “gifts” that forgiveness to his church through faith.

Jesus won forgiveness for every human being on the earth. But the sad reality is that not all will be forgiven. Some will shun the grace of God and forfeit their claim to eternal life. This is the war we wage in the flesh, and is especially heightened during Lent. We are told to take heed lest we fall; to discipline our bodies lest we are found disqualified, and we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling…not because we are to live a life of fear…but because of the great weight and consequence of the gift we have been given should keep us awake and sober about the heavenly things to which we are entitled and entrusted.

But beyond this difference between faith and unbelief lies another issue on the topic of forgiveness…the unforgivable sin. And christians should know about it, for several reasons…

1. It is clearly taught in scripture. Mark records Jesus saying, “All sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.” Matthew adds Jesus saying, “The blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven (12:31). Christians aren’t to pray for them or their salvation. John writes in his first epistle, “If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life. There is a sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that: (1 John 5:16).
2. The unforgivable sin pertains only to people who are or once were believers. Hebrews says “For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the power of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance (6:4-6). Peter says, “For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. 21For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.”
3. The unforgivable sin is committed by people who know they are persecuting God and calling his teaching evil. St. Paul himself writes, “though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,”
4. The doctrine of the Unforgivable Sin is useful to sincere faith, because it assures forgiveness to everyone who seeks it in Christ.

The unforgivable sin is one of a kind. It is not a part of the universal struggle between faith and unbelief. The faithful are always struggling in faith. The man confessed “I believe, help my unbelief”, and Jesus commended him for it. There is nothing unforgivable about struggling against unbelief on the contrary, it is itself a sign of faith.

And that is how the doctrine of the Unforgivable sin is useful to faith. The sincere christian who is anxious for forgiveness has many struggles in this life, but never has to worry about being unforgivable. We never have to doubt that forgiveness is within our reach…because it is never farther away from us than Christ himself. No matter what you’ve done, when we turn away from our sin and despair, we have Christ to turn to. By fleeing to him and clinging to him, we know we are forgiven. We know this more than we know that 2+2 is four or that the sun will rise tomorrow. For God never sent a prophet to teach arithmetic, and a Ph.d in mathematics today has no greater understanding of the Trinity than a child who knows that somehow three is one. And as far as the sun rising, there was a time even when God’s servant Joshua stopped the sun in the sky from setting…why not from rising? In both of these instances the word of God trumps lofty mathematicians, and the word of God shames planetary scientists of our age. But by the Word of the Lord, forgiveness is assured to all who would earnestly seek it.

The unforgivable sin is not a warning to the anxious christian, but to the arrogant one. It’s not a warning to those who seek christ, but to those who only seek him up to a point. And here’s what he says to certain Jews who are saying he has a demon and was born in sin:

“If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. 43 Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. 44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ]

46 Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? 47 Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”

The bible is clear that Jesus is speaking these words to (quote) “***the Jews who had believed in him***” These are people who believed Jesus to a point, but began resisting and even opposing his teaching as their catechism instruction went along. It happened earlier when most of his disciples left because his teaching about eating his flesh and drinking his blood was too hard and they couldn’t accept it. It’s like someone who will believe in a Jesus that will save them, and will follow Jesus in his teaching to love your neighbour and to pray and to be a good person. But then when someone tells them God also says Wives submit to your husbands, or that Christ teaches from the beginning God created them male and female…they begin calling his teaching demonic.

The doctrine of the unforgivable sin is a warning to those in the church who would claim to follow God, but who reject His actual teaching as being evil. But it is a comfort for us who care more about being forgiven our many sins above all else. Look at Abraham, if anyone following God claims to have a reason to call his angel a demon based on being offended by the teaching…Abraham has more. God sent an angel to tell him to sacrifice his son…and Abraham didn’t get offended, didn’t draw the line and say this teaching is to hard and I can’t accept it. Abraham didn’t accuse the angel of the lord of having a demon for suggesting such a thing. For Abraham, the first question is whether the word is from the lord…and if it is then to reject it is to blaspheme, but abraham believed.

And yet, in the word of God there is never a place where a person who in doubt and despair comes to Jesus and gets turned away. There is never a person who flees his despair by running to the lamb of God, who is rejected as unforgiven. On the contrary, Christ says “come to me all who weary and are heavy laden and I will give you rest”. He says “Everyone whom my Father has given me shall come to me, and whoever will come to me I shall not cast out.”

And we come to Jesus through faith. He prepares a table for us every Lord’s day, making his last will and testament to be that we should take bread and thus eat his body, take a cup and drink his blood for the forgiveness of sins, and come to him. His work is still preached in a world seemingly lost to the delusion that it can save itself without God…and wherever his word is preached so is the invitation, “Whoever has ears to hear let him hear.” And if you hear you are forgivable, and have access to forgiveness. Even in our most desperate hour, alone and suffering with no comfort in this life, our faith reaches out to Christ in prayer who bids we ask anything in his Name and he will see to it.