

## THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT



Every so often, people ask, “What is this sin against the Holy Spirit,” which Jesus mentions? (Mark 3:28) None of the sins listed in the examination of conscience can be “the sin against the Holy Spirit,” for all of them can be forgiven. That’s what they’re listed for.

So it’s a different sin. One that’s not listed.

What would that be?

We approach the answer by looking at the incident in which Jesus raises the question. He has just healed someone, and the Pharisees are questioning whether he has done it by the power of darkness. First, Jesus deals with the inherent unlikeliness of such a strategy for the prince of darkness. If his house is divided against itself, it must fall. So don’t worry, that’s not whose power is at work here. It’s as if he is speaking to the ordinary onlooker here, assuring him that the corrupt leadership cannot be right in saying he, Jesus, works by the power of the devil.

But then he goes on, now speaking to the leadership itself, and makes a very ominous pronouncement, a truly dire warning. Whatever sins we commit can be forgiven, but not the sin of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit.

Ever.

Implicitly, he is warning that they may be blaspheming just so.

What? To mistakenly attribute something to the devil which is actually from God? Everyone makes mistakes!

Yes, but this one is deeper.

Everyone makes the mistake of calling evil things good – that’s how we excuse ourselves when we sin. “It wasn’t really so bad after all... I did my lousy best.” (You did not.)

But calling a good and holy thing evil is somewhat else. Calling a work of the Holy Spirit a work of darkness is different.

That’s the crux of it; that’s what may take us beyond the reach of forgiveness, not only in this life, but in the next. If we call evil, good, that is our natural self excusing. But if we call the Holy Spirit the prince of darkness, then we have entered complete darkness, and if we suggest that the specific works of the Holy Spirit are the works of darkness, we are deeply in danger; if we call good, evil, then we are moving into the realm of the sin that cannot be forgiven.

In December 2015, there was this terrible shooting in San Bernardino. Quite wicked!

But not necessarily unforgiveable.

Afterwards, when certain people were gathered, and having been cowed out of prayer by two generations of “thou shalt not pray in public,” someone made the suggestion that the last scrap of permitted prayer be undertaken: a moment of silence. He was immediately told that this was wicked: that to be silent instead of acting against the evil (i.e. by passing gun laws at the national level, laws which already existed in San Bernardino and did not prevent the carnage) was wicked.

That is the topic. Calling good, evil. It is a dangerous sin.