

# I'm 99% Sure I Committed The Unpardonable Sin

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**Question:** Maybe I've said this before, the two topics that seem to be the most sought after, of the most interest that James posts, it seems like either have to do with the battle against sexual sin and temptation, or this one classic question has to do with the unpardonable sin. And we've dealt with it. We had a special - we filmed a special interview basically where I dealt with that, and then have we ever dealt with it in any other APT's? Five times? So, that's how often this situation comes up. Let me read it to you. "I've committed the unforgivable sin - 99% chance. I just want to ask you what happens when you commit it? Because here's what happened to me. Everything went away. Honestly, everything. Even temptations now - I have none." I don't think that's exactly what he means to say. I think he means that even with temptations, everything has gone away. He has no ability to resist or fight I think is what he means. "Emotions - I have only fear. I don't even love my family anymore. It all happened two days ago after I blasphemed the Holy Spirit in my mind. I didn't mean the words that I said, but somehow I said them from my heart in my mind. It was just like in one second, there it was. I cannot believe it. I asked God if I've really done this, and my conscience says that I did. I've been begging for forgiveness and nothing happened. I cannot recognize when I commit sin anymore. I'm not being convicted. I wish I was never born."

## **Discussion:**

**Tim:** Now, let me just say this. When a person is perceived to be struggling, oftentimes what that provokes, or we think should be provoked from us is pity. But the thing is with spiritual things, sometimes the things that people struggle with or the problems that they have is not actually something to be pitied; it's something that they are to be blamed for. There are ways of handling problems that people have that can seem less than compassionate. I feel like I have read so many - this is the classic question. There are so many individuals. I've spent I don't know how much time with people on the phone and by email, and if I've spent that much time, James has probably spent a hundred times that amount. Craig is answering. He's dealing with that. Do you ever give those things to Jeff?

**James:** A lot of the unpardonable sin ones Jeff gets. Yes.

**Tim:** Okay. So here's Ichabod Spencer. This man lived about 200 years ago. He was a pastor in the northeast. He wrote this book. I highly recommend it. It's called "A Pastor's Sketches." What this book is - now you talk about photographic memory - he must have had a photographic memory. He could interview somebody and then sit down and write and record the conversation that he had word for word. And this is what we have here. We have him dealing with people - both Christians in struggles that they had and unbelievers - him dealing with them in an evangelistic sense. It's an extremely helpful book. He deals with some problems that are

timeless. They're not just things people struggled with 200 years ago. And here is a short chapter where he deals with a young lady who believed that she committed the unpardonable sin. And I want you all to hear it. Because what has struck me about the vast majority of the people that think that they've committed the unpardonable sin, is even if you could convince them that they hadn't, I'm not really convinced these people are lining up to be saved. I think the real problem is they think that it's no longer within their capacity to be saved when they want to be saved and that's what concerns them. Not that they really want to be saved; they just want to know that they can be if they want to. And they've done something, and whether the devil's involved in it and whispering in their ear and condemning them, or trying to convince them that they've committed it when they haven't committed it, I don't know. How much it's their own conscience; how much it's their own ignorance.

But listen to this. "Her most common topic..." This young lady he's speaking to. "Her most common topic was the magnitude of her sins. She was such a sinner that there was no mercy for her." And he would try to convince her the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. Well, at this point, he doesn't know that she thinks she has committed the unpardonable sin. He's pressing her. He's visiting with her from time to time. "One day, as I was urging this point, and entreating her to be reconciled to God by yielding her heart to the persuasions of the Holy Spirit, she said to me, 'I believe I've committed the unpardonable sin.'" Now listen to how he interacts with her. "What makes you think so?" See, that's a good question to ask people. People who come along and say, "I've committed the unpardonable sin." Well, ask them why they think so? Because what you want to be is you want to be a soul doctor. You want to try to help people. Why would they think that they committed it? "'Well, I feel so,' she said hesitatingly. 'What makes you feel so?' 'Well, the Lord would have forgiven me before this time if there was any forgiveness for me.'" And he says to her, "He will forgive you now if you will repent of sin and trust in the redemption of Christ." Now listen, no matter what anybody says they think they've done, I'll guarantee you this, if somebody repents and trusts the redemption of Christ, they will be saved. You say what if they've committed the unpardonable sin? I don't care what they've committed. If they will trust Christ, Jesus said He will not turn away anybody that comes to Him. That's what He says. And so that's a good place to go with people. No matter what you think that you've committed, if you will repent of sin and trust in the redemption of Christ, He will forgive you now. That's based on His promises.

"'No,' said she, 'I've committed the unpardonable sin. There is no forgiveness for me.' She wept and sobbed aloud." So this isn't superficial with her. This is deep. She feels this. "Said I, 'How long have you been thinking that you committed the unpardonable sin?' She answered, 'I have known it a long time.'"

See, that was a good first question he asked. What makes you think you've committed it? Now, here's a good question too when somebody asks it. What is the unpardonable sin? You know, you get a lot of people that think they've committed it. (incomplete thought) Listen to how she answers. "'What is the unpardonable sin?' She answered, 'the sin against the Holy Ghost which hath never forgiveness neither in this world nor in the world to come.'" But see, although that's

correct what she said, that isn't what the sin is. "He says, 'What is the sin against the Holy Ghost?' After much hesitation, she replied, 'It is the sin that Jesus Christ mentioned, speaking against the Holy Ghost.' He asked her, 'Have you been speaking against the Holy Ghost?' 'Oh no, I have not done that,' said she. 'What then do you mean? What is your unpardonable sin?' She gave no answer." You see, that's the thing that you would ask somebody is have you been speaking against the Spirit? I mean, you remember what those Jews did? They were saying that Jesus had an unclean spirit. (incomplete thought) And they were doing it maliciously. They were doing it willfully; purposely. It's not like a thought shot through their minds, and they're like, "Oh no! I thought that thought! Now I've committed the unpardonable sin!" They're attacking Christ. They're maliciously saying, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons."

You see what they're doing? And she said, "No, I have not been." "She gave no answer. I continued to ask, 'When did you commit this unpardonable sin?' She said nothing. 'Tell me what it is.' She said nothing. 'How came you to commit it?' She said nothing. 'What makes you think you've committed it?' She said, 'God would have forgiven me before this time if I had not committed it.' 'Before this time? What do you mean?' 'Why I have been a great while seeking religion.' He answered, 'Because you've been so long seeking it, you think it's no present fault of yours that you have not found it? But that God will not forgive you because months ago you committed the unpardonable sin? Is that what you mean?' 'Yes sir.' 'Very well,' said I. 'I suppose you want nothing more of me if you're unpardonable. I can do nothing for you if that is the case. I may as well leave you. You may go to your closet and tell God as you kneel before Him that you are willing to repent, that you're willing to trust in Christ, you're willing to obey God in all things, and that it's no fault of yours that you're not a Christian. Tell Him that the only thing now in your way to salvation is that old unpardonable sin which He will not forgive. Goodbye.' I left her at once."

Now, you think. I would say that to this man. I would say that to anybody who thinks they've committed the unpardonable sin. See, that gets right to the point. Are you saying that you're ready to take Christ at His word and trust what He's done on that cross? You're ready to turn from your sin? You're ready to follow Christ and take His commandments as your daily meat, your daily food, and follow Him? You're ready to do that? You desire to do that? And you're telling me that you're actually repentant and you're believing, but God won't save you because of that unpardonable sin? You see, that would make God to be a liar. Because God says if you trust His Son you will be saved. You will not be ashamed. Scripture says that if you repent, you will not likewise perish. If you don't repent, you will perish. If you do repent, you'll be saved. God's a liar otherwise. (incomplete thought)

So, he walks away. Now listen, let me tell you this. Too often, especially with young believers, you can feel like if people are willing to listen, you'll just talk on and on and on and on and on... Some of you are getting involved in door-to-door ministry. You do not have to talk to somebody for two hours just because they're willing to talk. You can tell them the truth. If they have valid questions, you can seek to answer them, but you don't have to go in circles. You can walk away. Do you notice that the rich young ruler, Jesus didn't debate with him. He laid it all on

the table, and that was it. In that case, Jesus wasn't the one that walked away; the rich, young ruler was. But you know what? Same thing. You do not have to go on and on. I'm afraid that many less mature Christians would have sat with this girl and they would have almost carried her into the kingdom. He walked. And you know He often did that.

You know, Asahel Nettleton - he was a contemporary of Ichabod Spencer. He was very greatly used in the second Great Awakening. He would walk away from whole churches. He would stay away from whole churches. If he saw that their attitudes weren't right about revival; if he saw that they weren't trusting the Lord, they were trusting him... (Incomplete thought) It's not our calling to simply say as much as we possibly can to every single person in this world. In fact, we're told things like don't cast your pearls before swine. Jesus told His own disciples if they don't receive you, you shake the dust off your feet and hit the road. It's amazing sometimes we feel like we just have to go on and on and on, like our multitude of words is going to persuade them. You know what? If they don't receive the truth, there's a place just to walk away. And sometimes that can be the most powerful thing, because what you're doing - you gave them the truth, now you're leaving them with the Lord. By the way, it's the Lord you need to have speak to people through your words more than your multitude of words.

"The next day..." See, he walked away from her and how she's not comfortable. Her own conscience is going crazy. "The next day, she sent for me again. I found her as I did not expect." See, he expected that this was going to be beneficial. And that she'd come to the Lord. He said, "I found her in the same state of mind; brooding sadly over the unpardonable sin. After much conversation and aiming to remove the difficulty and assuring her of her error, she still insisted, 'I've committed the unpardonable sin. I know I have. I know I have. I know I have.' I desired her after a few moments to quit her agitation and fix her thoughts on things which I was going to say to her." You know what he said to her? He said young lady, I'm going to speak to you plainly. He said you're going to understand every word I say. That's good.

"Some of the things which I shall say may surprise you, but I want you to remember them. All along through the summer I've treated you with the utmost kindness and indulgence. I've always come to you when you've sent for me and many times when you have not sent for me. It's because I feel kindly towards you still and wish to do you good that I shall now say some very plain things which you may not like, but they are true." This is another thing. If you want to deal with people's souls, you often have to tell them things they don't like. You see, he was a man who knew when to walk away, and he was also a man to say hard things to people. This is where I'm coming back to this. You get a person that's struggling with the unpardonable sin. Oftentimes the feeling I get is that the people want pity. They want you to help them. They want you to pity them. They want you to feel bad for them. They want you to enter into their pity party.

Now, you're going to maybe think what he says is cruel, but I want you to hear him very carefully. "First, you say that you have committed the unpardonable sin, but you do not believe what you say." Now, obviously, he got her. Because he said to her, have you spoken against the Holy Spirit? And she said no at first. And then she couldn't answer. "And he said, 'you don't

believe what you say. You believe no such thing." Now look, that's not to say that there aren't some people that you come across who really do believe it and may be under a vicious attack of the devil. Bunyan is a great example of that. He was attacked with that. I remember that happening to me after I was saved. It didn't happen when I was lost. It happened after I was saved. I was bombarded with these thoughts. But he said, "you believe no such thing. You know indeed that you're a sinner, but you do not believe that you've committed the unpardonable sin. You're not honest; not sincere when you say so. You do not believe it." Anyways, he's just there - he's pegging her on her own words. Some people do actually believe it. But I think what he says after this is so applicable to so many of these cases.

"Second, it is pride. A foolish pride of a wicked heart which makes you say that you've committed the unpardonable sin." Now, I suspect if I would have read that and said, okay, what would you all say to her, probably none of you would have raised your hand and said, "I'd have said that she had a foolish, prideful, wicked heart..." which makes him say that he's committed the unpardonable sin. You say, how is that? Listen. "Influenced by pride you half-strive - only half after all - to believe you've done it." And you know what he says? You wish to exalt yourself. You say how? You see, that's what pride is. Pride is when we exalt ourselves. How can it be that many people who claim to commit the unpardonable sin - how would that be an exalting of self? What sort of sin is an unpardonable sin? It's like the sin of all sins. It's like you're a sinner greater and further and blacker and deeper and darker and more sinister and more debauched and more depraved than anybody else. You're the worst of the worst. It's one thing if the Spirit of God has broken you and you can say like Paul, "I'm the chief of sinners." That's one thing. When you're able to say that in humility. When you're able to say that in brokenness, but you also are able to cling to Christ and trust what He's done. It's another thing when a person says they're this horrible sinner and then they turn around and say but I won't take God at His word and trust His Son. He says, "you wish to exalt yourself. You pretend that it's some great and uncommon thing which keeps you from being a Christian. It's the unpardonable sin. Pride lies at the bottom of all this."

And then third, right on the same note. "You have no occasion for this pride." He says there's nothing uncommon about you. You're just an average sinner. "You're very much like other sinners. It's not likely that you could commit the unpardonable sin, even if you should try. I don't think you know enough to do it." You see, one of the things that the Jews - they had great light. Jesus was doing these miracles right in front of them. They knew - even in their own councils, they would say, we know that nobody can do these things unless God is with them. That a notable miracle has been done? They knew. And they would look at that. They would watch Jesus heal. They would know the miracles that took place, and they knew miracles took place. They knew He cast out demons. They knew He healed the sick. They knew that He did this. And they looked at it and they said the devil enables Him to do that. He's just saying the unpardonable sin is basically this - it's the idea that you have all this light on who Christ is, on who the Spirit is, and you specifically say - with all that light - you specifically blaspheme the Spirit of God. (Incomplete thought) He's not even imagining that she has sufficient light to do

that. "'Why?' said she, 'Is there not such a sin?' 'Well, yes, but you don't know what it is, and you don't know enough to commit it.'"

Now, this fourth one I think is huge too. He says this to her, "You are one of the most self-righteous creatures I ever saw." So he's told her she's full of pride. Now, one of the most self-righteous creatures I ever saw. Now you have to stop and think. Why would somebody be considered by Spencer to be this mass of self-righteousness? See, I think this is what you want to remember especially in dealing with people who believe they've committed the unpardonable sin. "You try to think that you're not to blame for your irreligion." You see? It becomes an excuse. "Well, I can't become a Christian." "I can't repent." "I can't fall down before God in surrender." "I can't." Why? "I've committed the unpardonable sin." In other words, it's not my fault. And you know what it implies? Well, I would do all of that if God would let me, but God won't let me because I've committed the unpardonable sin. He says to her, "You try to think that you're willing to be a Christian, and would be a Christian, if it were not for that unpardonable sin which you try in your pride to believe you've committed. You pretend that it's not your present and cherished sin which keeps you in your impenitence."

Now that's huge. You see what he's saying to her? The reason you're not a Christian is because you've got sin in your life that you love, and you're not willing to let go of. And what you're wanting to do is blame God for the fact, because God invented this unpardonable sin and you want to convince yourself you've committed it and therefore give you an excuse as to why you're not turning from your sin and embracing the sacrifice of Christ. That's exactly it. And that is the feeling that I get from most of the people. You don't get the sense that it's: "I'm wicked, and I'm looking to the healing that's found in Christ's suffering." That's not it. It's typically: "Well, I can't become a Christian. I just can't." Why? "I've committed the unpardonable sin." And what they're implying is, well, I would become one if it wasn't for that unpardonable sin. I would become one if it wasn't for the fact that the doorway's been shut on me. That's just not true. The reason they're not becoming Christians is because they love their sin and they won't come to the light. And that's what he's calling out. "You pretend that it's not your present, cherished sin which keeps you in your impenitence. Oh, you are good enough, surely, to repent. You would repent. Indeed, you would, if it were not for that unpardonable sin. That's your heart - full of self-righteousness and pride."

Fifth, "Your wicked heart clings to this idea of the unpardonable sin as an excuse for your continued impenitence; for your living in the indulgence of sin, unbelief, and disobedience to God every day. And your excuse will not stand. You make it insincerely. It's not the unpardonable sin which hinders your being a Christian. It's your wickedness of heart, your pride, your vanity, and your insincerity." And now he's done with her for good. He says, "I shall never speak again. I shall never again have anything to say to you about the unpardonable sin. If you had any real and just conviction of sin, you would never name the unpardonable sin." You ought to pick up on that too. When a person truly has a convicting work of the Spirit, that Spirit crushes a man from every dependence in himself. A God-given, Spirit-given conviction. That Spirit will cause us to look to Christ and find our hope there and find our help there. He's right. If you had

any real and just conviction of sin, you would never name the unpardonable sin. "Some months after this, she called upon me in deep trouble. But now her complaint was that she had a wicked, deceitful, and hard heart opposed to the law of God. She became finally, as she believed, a true penitent and professed Christianity publicly. But in all her religious exercises, there appeared nothing very peculiar and she never named to me the unpardonable sin again." In other words, he just said in the end, she was just an average sinner.

Then he makes one last statement here. "True light..." True light. "True light in the conscience is one thing and a deceitful gloom in the proud heart is quite another." Do you see the difference? You get individuals who feel like they've committed the unpardonable sin, and it just fills them with this gloom and this dread. But he's saying this. This is what he recognized. He lived in the day where I believe he saw five separate revivals. And he saw when the Spirit of God was working true light in the conscience - it looked one way. People felt the weight of their sin, and they turned to Christ. And it's as somebody has said before, once you take a sinner and you show them indeed truthfully their sin and you show them the remedy, the work's done. They will run to the remedy. You show them their sickness. They will run to the doctor. And that's totally different than when you get a person who has a proud heart coupled with a deceitful gloom. He says this, "When a sinner has any just sense of his condition as alienated from a holy God, he will not be apt to think of the unpardonable sin. Spurious conviction is common but useless." Spurious conviction - where people are convicted - spurious means it's no good. You're all riled up about something that leads to no good end. Just thinking you've committed this unpardonable sin. Anyway, I thought his treatment of it goes to the root of exposing some of the real issues concerning it.

**(from the room)** So from that email, what made you believe with a limited context, that this person who emailed in was just like maybe one of these people that Spencer dealt with and not maybe someone like Bunyan or when he was a young Christian. I guess how would you maybe differentiate them?

**Tim:** Well, I mean the thing was that if you go back and read "Grace Abounding," Bunyan's testimony. When he's under attack and being tempted to feel that, he's running to the Word of God. He's calling upon the Lord. He's looking to Christ. That was the same thing I was doing in the midst of all of it. Where you have a gloom; (incomplete thought) "I've committed the unforgivable sin; 99% chance. I just want to ask you what happens when you commit it, because here's what happened to me. It all happened two days ago. I didn't mean the words that I said..." So right there I would say he didn't mean the words that he said. That's not the unpardonable sin. If you even start where he started with the girl, this isn't the unpardonable sin. But the thing is, "I've asked God if I've really done this. My conscience says that I did. I've been begging for forgiveness. Nothing happened. I cannot recognize when I commit sin right now. I'm not being convicted. I wish I never was born." You know, "I'm not being convicted," and yet, "I'm begging for forgiveness." Well, what that tells me is that what he's saying is I don't even sense my sin; I don't love my family. What he's asking forgiveness for is that this one thought shot through his mind.

And I think the real issue comes back to what was happening there. Is this really a young man that's been convicted of the Spirit? True light in the conscience? Where he sees himself as a wicked sinner and is coming to God to be pardoned of all of it. Or, is it really somebody who's wanting to blame God? "I've committed the unpardonable sin, therefore all these things are justifiable because after all, I've committed the unpardonable sin and now God has put me in this place. He's taken away my love for my family. I don't have any conviction anymore." I would just say this - the same thing that was said to the girl - so are you saying you would repent and flee to the cross if only it wasn't for this unpardonable sin? I think the difference is that Bunyan was likely already converted. I was already converted. I don't doubt that the devil can play with our minds and thoughts and consciences on this point. You come across the fact that there's an unpardonable sin and the devil will be right there to tell you you've committed it. There's no use going. But I think the thing is people do all sorts of things where they heard about the unpardonable sin, the unforgivable sin, this blaspheming the Holy Spirit, and then what happens is they make an oath; they make some kind of covenant, they make some kind of commitment, they vow and then they break it. We've seen that before. Or, he has a thought that crosses his mind and I think that's the question that needs to be asked. What are you saying? Are you saying that you would repent and believe and trust Christ if it just wasn't for this unpardonable sin? I think he's hitting at the root of a vast ocean behind these unpardonable sin questions and concerns, that is a tremendous self-righteousness. Obviously, he met repeatedly with this young lady. We only have the ability to work with a paragraph. So, yes, if Spencer sat down with this guy and upon much further conversation and digging have answered differently? Perhaps. But I guess, I have this sense that people are saying: "Well, yes, I would repent and I would believe and I would if it just wasn't for this unpardonable sin." That's a total fallacy.

**(from the room)** I guess, yeah, answering emails this comes up, but I've never gone out evangelizing and had a conversation like that.

**Tim:** No, typically that's not the kind of thing you'd come across evangelizing. It's the kind of thing that the very nature of I'll Be Honest and the fact that we entertain questions and have this APT and James is available and Jeff is available and Terry and Craig, that they're answering all these questions. There's a lot of people who find this outlet to try to get some kind of answers for whatever may be plaguing them or troubling them.