

Thrasher-Donahue Discussion

Can People Commit the
Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit
(Matthew 12:31-32) Today?

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&
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DEDICATION

To all who are concerned that they may have
committed the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit
this book is affectionately dedicated.

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INTRODUCTION

In the adult Bible class of the North Huntsville church of Christ we have been studying the events recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in approximately chronological order. On Sunday, January 1, 2023, we studied Matthew 12, with particular emphasis on the context of Jesus' statement concerning blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. As teacher of the class I presented what I believe generally about the sin of blasphemy mentioned more than 50 times in God's word. I then dealt extensively with blasphemy of the Holy Spirit in the context of Matthew 12:31-32. A few comments were made during the class period by members of the class. All those present were invited to comment or raise questions if they desired. No points were raised in disagreement with the views I expressed.

Nevertheless, I received by email a copy of an article and a chart from brother Patrick T. Donahue in which he took issue with my position on blaspheming the Holy Spirit, although he did not directly respond to the statements I made in class. His material was copied to the members who were in the class. I decided to reply to Pat's position by email to him and those who were sent his material. Several emails were soon involved in this study.

This book is being published in order to share these discussions with anyone who may have an interest in studying the controversial topic of "the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit." The publisher recommends that all of us attempt to understand what this sin is, aided by a study of the context in Matthew 12, supplemented by the accounts in Mark 3 and Luke 11-12, and enlightened by other statements in God's word. All that God tells us is important, but we must be careful to comply with the Apostle Paul's admonition—"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15, NASB 1995).

Thomas N. Thrasher



Thomas N. Thrasher Patrick T. Donahue

DONAHUE'S FIRST ARTICLE

In Matt 12:31-32 Jesus said "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." Both Mark 3:28-29 and Luke 12:10 say the same thing.

What Is The Sin Of The Blasphemy Against The Holy Ghost?

By examining these three passages we see what Jesus condemned here as "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost" was attributing the miraculous work of the Holy Ghost to the power of Satan.

Can This Sin Be Committed Today?

If a person attributes the miraculous work of the Holy Ghost to the power of Satan today, then he commits the sin of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost today the same as then. But some say, "but nobody is performing miracles today; so how could we attribute the power of a Holy Ghost enabled miracle to Satan?" In reply, let me remind the readers that when we discuss with the Pentecostals, and we point out the miracles were to confirm the word, they say that we need the miracles today to confirm the word to us today. We usually reply (and rightfully so), we have the miracles found in the Bible for confirmation. Using similar reasoning, the truth is that someone could blaspheme against the Holy Ghost today by believing the miracles of the New Testament actually occurred, but believe and say they were performed by the power of Satan

The Obvious Meaning Of The Passages

Frequently in Albert Barnes' commentary, he gives various explanations for a passage, and then tells which one he believes is the correct one. Many times, one of the reasons given for why he takes his position is stated by the following quote from him: "Because it seems to be the most obvious. It is that which will strike plain men as being the natural meaning; men who have not a theory to support, and who understand language in its usual sense." Now I ask my reader - What is the "most obvious" meaning of Matt 12:31-32? What is the meaning "which will strike PLAIN men as being the natural meaning; men who have not a theory to support, and who understand language in its usual sense"? Of course the obvious meaning is the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is the one sin that cannot be forgiven, EVEN IF REPENTED OF.

But What About I John 1:9, etc.?

In opposition to this obvious meaning of the passage, many Christians will ask about passages like I John 1:9 that teach any and all sin can be forgiven. Their point is that since the Bible teaches any sin repented of will be forgiven, that means the position taken by this article is incorrect.

There is really no conflict however. What we have here is the rule, and the exception to the rule. We understand the rule, and the exception to the rule in the divorce and remarriage passages. Luke 16:18 states the general rule that remarriage after divorce is adultery. But Matt 19:9 states the one exception ("except") to that rule: if the divorce was "for fornication," then the subsequent remarriage is not adultery.

Likewise I John 1:9 states the general rule that any and all sin will be forgiven, if we are willing to confess that sin. However, Matt 12:31 states the one exception ("but" is used in the sense of "except") to that rule: if the sin is the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, it will not be forgiven, even if we confess that sin. As a matter of fact, the first part of Matt 12:31 ("All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men") states the same general

rule of forgiveness as I John 1:9; and then Matt 12:31 goes on to state there is one exception to that rule. Conclusion: all sin will be forgiven (if one repents and confesses), but there is ONE EXCEPTION to that rule, blasphemy against the Holy Ghost!

Does Blasphemy Of Holy Ghost Equate To No Repentance?

Some say the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is any sin a person won't repent of, or is when a person reaches a point where they cannot repent. Notice the following two quotes from an article written by a Christian, commenting on the sin of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost: "His sin is unpardonable simply because he is unwilling to travel the road that leads to pardon. The only sin that God is unable to forgive is the unwillingness to accept forgiveness" ... "Grieving ..., resisting ..., and quenching ... the Holy Spirit may lead one to become so calloused that he will not even hear the truth."

These two positions end up at the same place, that anybody willing to repent may receive forgiveness for any sin. This position is pleasing from an emotional viewpoint, because we are never put into a position of having to say somebody desiring forgiveness cannot receive it. Someone has put the position this way: anybody desiring forgiveness and showing remorse, must not have committed the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, therefore they can be forgiven. But though this position may be appealing from an emotional viewpoint, it ignores the plain truth taught by Jesus, that there is one sin that will not be forgiven, no matter how sorry a person might be that they have committed the sin. Following is a summary of scriptural problems with this position that this blasphemy equates to being unwilling to repent:

- There is NOTHING EVEN REMOTELY RESEMBLING THIS IN THE PASSAGES. Nothing in either of the three passages (Matt 12:31-32, Mark 3:28-29, or Luke 12:10) say or imply the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost is a sin that will not, or cannot be repented of.

Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit

- This passage names ONE sin as unpardonable, but these positions would mean that ANY SIN could be called the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost (since any sin can remain unrepented of, or since a person could eventually be hardened concerning any sin) including blasphemy against Jesus, which the passage says is NOT the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.
- Is there a passage that teaches you can reach a point where it is absolutely impossible to change your mind, or does the Bible just teach you can reach a point where it is difficult to repent? Assuming one can reach a point where it is impossible to repent, there is absolutely no reference made to it by these three passages in question.
- The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is not the lack of repentance at all, but involves SPEAKING against the Holy Ghost. The sin does not involve leaving something off, such as repentance; instead it involves doing something actively, specifically, speaking evil against the Holy Ghost.

The difference between the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost and every other sin is not in the repentance, but in the forgiveness – at least according to Jesus. Let me restate Matt 12:31 with what is understood from other passages (like Luke 13:3, Acts 2:38, 3:19, 8:22, II Pet 3:9) inserted - "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men (if they repent): but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." The word "but" here is used in the sense of "except." So the clear force of the exception is there is one sin that won't be forgiven men "if they repent" as opposed to the "all" (other) sin that will be forgiven if one repents. That exception no more contradicts I John 1:9 and the like (the general rule) than Matt 19:9 (the exception) contradicts Luke 16:18 (the general rule). Seeing it that way should help us to understand that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost can be repented of just like any other sin (there is no reason to think otherwise anyway); the difference is that God will not forgive it, even if it is repented of.

I John 5:16 A Sin Unto Death

I John 5:16 reads, "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." The teaching here fits Matt 12:31 "hand in glove." If a man commits any other sin, pray for him, he shall be forgiven (again, assuming he repents). But if a man commits the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, no need to pray for him (you would be wasting your time), he cannot be forgiven (even if he does repent). I John 5:16 is not talking about sin unrepented of, because we are to pray for people in that circumstance (Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60); I do it all the time.

Why Is This Issue Important?

Understanding this issue correctly is important for the following reasons:

- Because it is important to teach exactly what God's book says on this and every other matter.
- Because we need to warn people that if they commit this sin, unlike any other sin, they CANNOT be forgiven, even if they repent.
- Because we must not compromise God's teaching in order to make it more palatable. We must not water it down just because we feel unwilling to face the possibility of God refusing to accept someone who truly desires his acceptance.
- Because we must be willing to accept clear Bible teachings over standard brotherhood positions. Where is our loyalty, to our brethren's standard positions, or to God's book and what it actually teaches?

Conclusion

Is there any real reason not to accept the OBVIOUS meaning of the Matt 12:31-32, that there is one sin God has decided not to forgive no matter what? I'm sorry, but the Bible teaches once a person commits the sin of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost,

there is no hope for him left. It doesn't matter if that person is baptized, it doesn't matter how good that person lives, it doesn't matter how many times that person repents, prays, and confesses, he CANNOT ever be forgiven of this sin!

Pat's Chart: General Rules And The Exception

Luke 16:18 Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

Matt 19:9 ... Whosoever shall put away his wife, **except it be for fornication**, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

The same general rule is given but the second verse states the one exception to that general rule, right?

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Matt 12:31 ... All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: **but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.**

The same general rule is given but the second verse states the one exception to that general rule, right?

Pat's Chart: If Repentance Is Understood In The First Clause Then It Must Be Understood In The Second Clause Also

Matt 12:31 ... All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men (**if they repent** is understood from other passages)

but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. (**if they repent** must be understood here also or the second clause is not really an exception to the first clause)

THRASHER'S FIRST RESPONSE

In our Sunday morning Bible studies at North Huntsville, we have been surveying “a harmony of the gospels” for more than a year. I have stated that the accounts in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are not necessarily presented in chronological order, so I have been leading our studies by selecting texts in approximately chronological order, although (as I have indicated) it is not always possible to know the precise order in which all of the events occurred. Consequently, we have moved through our studies using accounts in these first four books of our New Testament, occasionally shifting from one book to another.

In responding to Pat’s two emails that he sent yesterday I am numbering my observations/comments to make it easier for Pat and all of you who read this material to refer to these points. He can reply when he writes again and/or in our class next Sunday morning, if the Lord wills that we live until then. If Pat disagrees with any of my points, I request that he express his disagreement and explain wherein I am mistaken. Although my remarks will be somewhat lengthy, I will not incorporate comments on everything in his material in order to shorten this response. However, I encourage Pat to call attention to any significant point he made on blaspheming the Holy Spirit that he thinks I should address.

Point 1

In the Bible class on Sunday, January 1, 2023, I pointed out that statements in Luke 11-12, Mark 3, and Matthew 12 present some parallel points, particularly relating to the Lord’s comments on “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.” Because the record in Matthew’s account is somewhat more detailed than that recorded in Mark and Luke, I gave special attention to what is recorded in Matthew 12 (although I also read from the statements in Mark 3 and Luke 11 and 12). Pat evidently agrees with that approach. After

he quoted Matthew 12:31-32 at the beginning of his article, he wrote, “Both Mark 3:28-29 and Luke 12:10 say the same thing.”

Point 2

During the Bible class I commented at some length on the term “blasphemy” in its various forms that include blasphemy, blasphemies, blaspheme, blaspheming, blasphemed, blasphemous, blasphemous, and blasphemously. I stated that the NKJV uses these words in more than 50 verses (62 occurrences, if I’ve counted correctly), although I read only a few of these, making several observations. For purposes of thoroughness in this study, I will cite the occurrences of this term in its various forms in the NKJV: Leviticus 24:11, 16; 2 Samuel 12:14; 1 Kings 21:10, 13; 2 Kings 19:3, 6, 22; Psalms 74:10, 18; Isaiah 37:3, 6, 23; Isaiah 52:5; 65:7; Ezekiel 20:27; 35:12; Daniel 11:36; Matthew 9:3; 12:31 (2); 15:19; 26:65; 27:39; Mark 2:7; 3:28, 29; 7:22; 14:64; 15:29; Luke 5:21; 12:10; 22:65; 23:39; John 10:33, 36; Acts 6:8, 11, 13; 13:45; 18:6; 19:37; 26:11; Romans 2:24; Colossians 3:8; 1 Timothy 1:13, 20; 6:1; 2 Timothy 3:2; Titus 2:5; James 2:7; 1 Peter 4:14; 2 Peter 2:2; Revelation 2:9; 13:1, 5, 6 (2); 16:9, 11, 21; 17:3.

I pointed out that the word “blasphemy” basically means “speak against,” although more specific definitions may be found in sources such as Thayer, Vine, Bauer, Berry, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, etc. For example, in Thayer’s *Lexicon* (1967, page 162) in the listing for the verb βλασφημεω (a verb form), Thayer says this word means “to speak reproachfully, rail at, revile, calumniate ... Spec. of those who, by contemptuous speech intentionally come short of the reverence due to God or to sacred things” Berry’s *Lexicon* (1952, page 19) says regarding the same word, “to speak abusively, to rail ... to calumniate, speak evil of, blaspheme ... Spec. of God, ...the Holy Spirit, ... the divine name or doctrine ...”

Point 3

I cited several of the references above and made a few observations. For example, I showed that “blasphemy” was a serious matter, as is evident by its practice being subject to the

death penalty under the Old Law (e.g., Leviticus 24:10-16) and the numerous warnings of its consequences in both the Old and New Testaments (e.g., Isaiah 65:7; Matthew 15:19; 2 Timothy 3:2)

Point 4

Sometimes people were **falsely accused** of blasphemy. I cited the examples of Naboth (1 Kings 21:10-13), Stephen (Acts 6:11-13), and Jesus (Luke 5:21; John 10:33-36). I think Pat agrees with the point I made in class to this effect, but, if not, he can tell us.

Point 5

Blasphemy was a sin that was sometimes forgiven by God. An example is Paul, who had formerly been guilty of blasphemy (1 Timothy 1:12-16), but he was forgiven of this and his other sins when he obeyed the gospel of our Lord (cf. Acts 22:16 as well). Of course, his obedience included repentance as one of the conditions.

Point 6: (Pat's View: Sometimes Genuine Repentance Does Not Lead To Forgiveness)

Although Pat and I may have some disagreements on other aspects of this study of "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit," I think his most significant error, and one that I think invalidates his conclusions, is exemplified by his view that God refuses to forgive some people even if they REPENT! Pat asserted (in his article section entitled "The Obvious Meaning Of The Passages" (Pat's emphasis): "**Of course the obvious meaning is the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is the one sin that cannot be forgiven, EVEN IF REPENTED OF.**" Pat ASSUMES the point he makes without the Lord's saying that!

In his website outline entitled "Some Things 'church of Christ' Preachers Won't Preach" Pat wrote, "**Blasphemy against HG cannot be forgiven today even if one repents.**" Once more Pat asserts the last part in saying that the guilty party "cannot be forgiven today EVEN IF ONE REPENTS" (My caps, TNT).

In Pat's emailed article (the section entitled "Does Blasphemy of Holy Ghost Equate To No Repentance"), he wrote: "God will not forgive it, even if it is repented of." Pat, what Bible passage says so?

In his emailed article (the section entitled "Why Is This Issue Important?"), Pat said, "Unlike any other sin, they CANNOT be forgiven, even if they repent." I think Pat needs to follow his own advice "because it is important to teach exactly what God's book says on this and every other matter."

Perhaps other statements from Pat may be cited to prove that HE THINKS there is a sin of which one can genuinely REPENT, but there is NO POSSIBILITY of receiving God's FORGIVENESS. However, these instances already cited are sufficient to prove that's what Pat THINKS.

Point 7: Genuine Repentance is Required

The Bible indisputably teaches that God requires REPENTANCE of all people BECAUSE all people need God's FORGIVENESS! Please consider (and accept) what God's word says on this matter.

Paul, addressing his Athenian audience in Acts 17:30-31, said, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands **all men everywhere** to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." WHO is commanded by God to repent? "All men everywhere! WHY does He require repentance? Because there will be a Judgment Day when Jesus will judge ALL MEN EVERYWHERE! We have ASSURANCE of this based upon the resurrection of Jesus from the dead!

A passage introduced by Curtis in the Bible class is relevant here (2 Peter 3:9): "The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, **not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**" Why is the Lord so longsuffering? He wants ALL to "come to repentance" so they can avoid "perishing"! Of course, Pat's position implies that this is not true because God is UNWILLING to

forgive some even if they do repent (see the proof from Pat's quotations under Point 6 above)

God "desires **all men to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4). Pat evidently thinks that God does not want those who repent of their sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit to be saved! Remember, Pat contends that it is POSSIBLE for them to REPENT, but God rejects their repentance and refuses to forgive them anyway.

The problem people face today is often an UNWILLINGNESS to do what the Lord says: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but **you were not willing!**" (Matthew 23:37). Many people WILL NOT do what the Lord says (e.g., they will not repent so they can be saved).

Point 8: Does the Lord practice what he preaches?

Pat recognizes that in order to follow the Lord we must forgive those who sin against us WHEN THEY REPENT. In his outline "Some Things 'church of Christ' Preachers Won't Preach," Pat wrote: "We should not forgive a brother until he repents." Pat cites Luke 17:3, which is quoted in my next paragraph.

Several times during His ministry Jesus taught His disciples to forgive: "Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'" (Matthew 18:21-22). Jesus further explained in Luke 17:3-4, "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him." Please note that the Lord **requires** us to forgive those who repent, but (according to Pat's position) the Lord **will not** forgive some **even if they have repented**. That seems to make the Lord hypocritical (of course, He isn't hypocritical, because he forgives those who

genuinely repent). Pat's contention that those who are guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will NOT be forgiven by God **even if they do repent** suggests that God is unwilling to act consistently with His requirements for us! The truth is, as I pointed out in our Sunday class, that those who do not repent of sin will not be forgiven by God. Those who were guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit would not be persuaded to repent!

Forgiving others is so important that God makes it a prerequisite to our being forgiven by Him: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14-15).

In summary regarding blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, I emphasized that the CONTEXT of Matthew 12:31-32 informs us of the following circumstances:

- Jesus healed a blind and mute man by casting out a demon (Matthew 12:22; cf. Matthew 12:28).
- Certain Pharisees did not deny the miracle, but they attributed it to the power of Beelzebub ("This *fellow* does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons," Matthew 12:24).
- Jesus demonstrated the fallacies of their charge (Matthew 12:25-30).
- We then have Jesus' statement concerning blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come" (Matthew 12:31-32).
- Jesus then explains the source of such conduct (Matthew 12:33-37), including the fact that "a good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things."

- Contextually, the Lord's warning in verses 31-32 concerns people who had first-hand evidence of Jesus' miracles done by the power of the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:29-30). However, these Pharisees, who recognized the miraculous nature of what Jesus did, attributed the miracle to being by the power of Beelzebub. Such people could not be persuaded by anything said or done by the Lord or His messengers and, therefore, they could not be led to repentance and, consequently, forgiveness by God. No person on earth today has made any such **observations** of the miracles of Jesus or others who were given such power by God. Hence, no one today can see them and draw a conclusion that a **miracle occurred by the power of Beelzebub**. People may be guilty of rejecting God's revealed truth that the Bible records (John 12:48) and be judged by Jesus and His word in the last day.

The lesson we need to learn today is to take sin seriously and avoid it. However, when we fail to do so, we must repent and seek God's forgiveness on His terms. When we resist or neglect God's truth, there is danger that we may become hardened against it, and, failing to accept God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ, remain unforgiven and ultimately lost.

Point 9: God promised blessings to "whoever"

If we desire to be forgiven by God and receive an eternal reward, **God has promised to bless us** when we are obedient to His word.

- Psalms 50:23, "Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; And to him who orders *his* conduct *aright* I will show the salvation of God. **Whoever** offers praise glorifies Me; **And to him who orders *his* conduct *aright* I will show the salvation of God.**"
- Proverbs 1:33, "But **whoever** listens to me **will dwell safely, And will be secure, without fear of evil.**"
- Proverbs 12:20, "He who heeds the word wisely will **find good**, And **whoever** trusts in the LORD, **happy is he.**"

- Proverbs 28:13, “He who covers his sins will not prosper, But **whoever** confesses and forsakes *them* **will have mercy.**”
- Proverbs 28:26, “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But **whoever** walks wisely **will be delivered.**”
- Matthew 10:32, “Therefore **whoever** confesses Me before men, **him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.**”
- Mark 3:35, “For **whoever** does the will of God **is My brother and My sister and mother.**”
- Acts 10:43, “To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, **whoever** believes in Him **will receive remission of sins.**”
- Romans 10:13, “For **‘whoever** calls on the name of the Lord **shall be saved.**”
- 1 John 2:5, “But **whoever** keeps His word, truly the love of God **is perfected in him.** By this we know that we **are in Him.**”
- 1 John 4:15, “**Whoever** confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, **God abides in him, and he in God.**”
- 2 John 9, “**Whoever** transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ **has both the Father and the Son.**”
- Revelation 22:17, “And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. **Whoever** desires, let him **take the water of life freely.**”

“Whoever” is rather comprehensive. Pat, does “whoever” exclude any who are guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit and who cannot be forgiven **even if they repent?** I believe that “whoever” includes anyone who will come to Jesus in genuine repentance, obeying the Lord’s commands. That message is one of hope consistent with the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.

DONAHUE'S SECOND RESPONSE

Tommy says "Pat's position implies that this is not true" – this referring to II Pet 3:9. No, II Pet 3:9 states the general rule just like Matt 12:31a (all sins will be forgiven upon repentance) while Matt 12:32b states the one exception to that general rule. This is just like when we say Matt 19:9 states the one exception to the general rule of Luke 16:18, that does not mean our position implies Luke 16:18 is not true. I think my point here replies to the rest of Tommy's arguments against my position - because they are all really just a restating of the principle II Pet 3:9 teaches, just in different form. With any of these verses Tommy supplied, just think about what that verse would mean if Matt 12:31-32 really means what it says. Then you will have the solution.

So II Pet 3:9 presents no problem with my position (when really you understand what an exception to a general rule means) but if it did, Tommy would have the same problem as I do, because Tommy doesn't think all can come to repentance and avoid perishing, as he thinks (unless I am mistaken) it is impossible to repent of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. So he thinks Matt 12:31b is an exception to II Pet 3:9 just like I do. Tommy wrote "Such people could not be persuaded by anything said or done by the Lord or His messengers and, therefore, they could not be led to repentance and, consequently, forgiveness by God." That certainly sounds like an exception to II Pet 3:9 ("that all should come to repentance") to me.

As I said previously - Jesus does NOT say anything like one can't repent of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (you will find that concept absolutely nowhere in the scriptures); instead Jesus says the difference is in whether or not one can be "forgiven" for that sin. I repeat – Jesus says in Matt 12:31-32 one can't be "forgiven" for this sin NOT that one can't "repent" of this sin (the latter is an invention of men, love, Pat). One can repent of speaking evil

against the Holy Ghost just as easily as he can repent of speaking evil against Christ and just like he can repent of rejecting the Holy Spirit's written word. I repeat a chart ...

**If Repentance Is Understood In The First Clause
Then It Must Be Understood In The Second Clause Also**

Matt 12:31 ... All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men (if they repent is understood from other passages)

but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. (if they repent must be understand here also or the second clause is not really an exception to the first clause)

If "the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men" because they won't repent, then it is just like any other sin. It is not an exception at all!

THRASHER'S SECOND RESPONSE

Before specifically addressing the statements in Pat's second email, there are some preliminary observations I want to make regarding my participation in this and similar exchanges (with Pat or others), either formally or informally. Obviously, I am not averse to controversy, having been a participant in more than 100 formal debates as well as a great number of less formal exchanges over a period of more than half a century. A few brethren, and perhaps some individuals who are not brethren, have charged me with being "contentious"; however, I emphatically deny that charge! I make a fervent effort **not** to be contentious (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:16), because that is a sin condemned in God's word (e.g., Galatians 5:19-21; Titus 3:9). However, I do strive to "**contend** earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). While there are contentions that frequently occur even among Christians (cf. Acts 15:1ff; 1 Corinthians 1:11; 2 Corinthians 12:20), we should avoid such behavior by **all speaking the same thing** and having no divisions among us (1 Corinthians 1:10). I prefer that all of us be unified in our belief, teaching, and practice because we all accept what the Holy Scriptures teach. The world (and the church) would be much better off if we would all speak the same thing (as determined by the Bible). I pray that this discussion with my beloved brother Pat will be productive of **more Bible study** and **better attitudes** among people who may disagree in their viewpoints regarding Bible subjects. [Note: In this response I will continue my numeration from my first response as I explained then: "I am numbering my observations/comments to make it easier for Pat and all of you who read this material to refer to these points."]

Point 10: To What Does the Sin of Blaspheming the Holy Spirit Refer?

As I commence my response to Pat's position on blaspheming the Holy Spirit, I want to emphasize a point that is sometimes misunderstood. Because my understanding of Matthew 12:31-32 **IN CONTEXT** [cf. Point 8 of my First Response] is that the sin of

blaspheming the Holy Spirit involved those Pharisees who rejected the miraculous evidence they received that Jesus exercised power from God by casting out demons (Matthew 12:22). They did not deny the miracle, but they charged Jesus with casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul (verse 24). The Lord warned that those who did that **would not be forgiven** either in this age or the age to come (verse 32). Pat's position is that people can do that **today**; my position is that no one today can replicate what those Pharisees did. What does the context say those people were capable of doing? Receive first-hand, compelling evidence of Jesus casting out a demon by the power of God, yet refusing to accept the truth concerning who Jesus truly was and charging that He acted in casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul. Pat, do you know anyone who has done what the Pharisees were warned against doing here? If you think you know of anyone, can he/she be saved (go to heaven)?

Point 11: Matthew 12:31-32 Is Relevant Today

If Pat or someone else concludes that my view of Matthew 12:31-32 means the verses have **no relevance** today, and there is nothing of value we can learn from the Lord's warning, that individual is mistaken (cf. Romans 15:4—"For whatever things were written before were written **for our learning**, that **we** through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."). There are **many examples** in the Biblical record of people **who committed sins that WE cannot replicate today, yet WE can learn from what they did!** In elaborating on this point, I'll refer to three Biblical instances that are very familiar to all Bible students—Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), Uzzah (2 Samuel 6:1-7), and Noah (Genesis 6:5-22).

Adam and Eve sinned **when they ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil** in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-7), in disobedience to God's command. The text informs us that they were **punished** for their sin, including being expelled from the garden. We **cannot** commit the **specific sin** of which they were guilty. However, we can learn from that account in Genesis 3 that

WE must not disobey what God **commands US to do** (or **not to do** in some cases). We can learn that God punishes sin, although WE cannot commit the specific sin of which Adam and Eve were guilty!

Uzzah was struck dead (God's punishment) because of **his sin** in reaching out to **touch (i.e., hold) the ark of the covenant** that was being transported on an oxen-drawn cart (2 Samuel 6:2-7; cf. Exodus 25:13-14). Although WE cannot commit the **specific sin** of which Uzzah was guilty, WE can **learn** from what happened to him when he committed this sin—*don't ignore God's instructions given to US!*

Noah was commanded by God to **make an ark of gopher wood** according to specific details (Genesis 6:5-22). According to verse 22, "Thus Noah did; according to **all that God commanded him**, so he did." Was Noah forced to obey God? Of course not. He chose to obey God's commands regarding building the ark (cf. Hebrews 11:7). He might have foolishly opted to disobey God and sinned; he had a choice. However, **nobody today** can commit that **specific sin** of refusing to build the ark that Noah was commanded to build. Fortunately, WE benefit from HIS EXAMPLE by learning that WE ought to obey the Lord's instructions given to us!

Similarly, although we **cannot specifically do** what those Pharisees were warned about in Matthew 12:31-32, we can LEARN not to speak against God (or anything God's word says, cf. John 12:48). Jesus is the only way to salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:10-12).

Point 12 (Re-Affirmation of Point 8 from my first response)

Pat completely neglected any attempt to reply to my Point 8, so I am repeating the point (Point 12 now). My beloved friend and brother recognizes that in order to follow the Lord we must forgive those who sin against us WHEN THEY REPENT. In his outline "Some Things 'church of Christ' Preachers Won't Preach," Pat wrote: "**We should not forgive a brother until he repents.**" Pat cites Luke 17:3, "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and **if he repents**, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I

repent,' **you shall** forgive him."

Please note that **the Lord REQUIRES us to forgive those who repent**, but (according to Pat's position) the Lord will not forgive some even if they have repented. That seems to make the Lord hypocritical (of course, He isn't hypocritical, because he forgives those who genuinely repent). Pat's contention that those who are guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will NOT be forgiven by God **even if they do repent** suggests that God is unwilling to act consistently with His requirements for us! The truth is, as I pointed out in our Sunday class recently, that those who do not repent of sin will not be forgiven by God. Those who were guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit cannot be persuaded to repent!

Forgiving others is so important that God makes it a prerequisite to our being forgiven by Him: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14-15). Can anyone endorse the idea that God would **refuse to forgive** a repenting sinner, while **requiring** His servants to forgive others when they repent? Please take note of the fact that **I AM NOT denying** what the Lord **said** in Matthew 12:31-32. I am denying that those whom the Lord stated "will not be forgiven" were people who had repented!

Point 13 (Some people WILL NOT repent)

Some people, including those to whom the Lord referred in Matthew 12:31-32, will not repent. The Bible clearly teaches this! I am quoting a few Bible statements in proof of this important point.

Hebrews 6:4-6 (NKJV), "For *it is impossible* for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, **to renew them again to repentance**, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame." Because many writers find this passage difficult to understand, I

will also quote a few more English translations.

Hebrews 6:4-6 (NIV), “It is **impossible** for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen away, **to be brought back to repentance**. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.”

Hebrews 6:4-6 (ESV), “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 powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, **to restore them again to repentance**, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.”

Hebrews 6:4-6 (NASB 1995), “For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and **then** have fallen away, **it is impossible to renew them again to repentance**, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.”

I could have quoted many more translations than these four; however, I think it is not too difficult to understand these statements **unless** we are holding on to preconceived false opinions (e.g., “once saved, always saved”). Clearly, the inspired writer declares the **“impossibility” of some being brought to repentance**.

In some cases, people just would not repent, even when God provided “time” and “opportunity.” Consider what our Lord said about Jezebel in Revelation 2:20-21: “Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I

gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.”

That is a similar attitude as that to which the Lord referred in Matthew 23:37—Jesus said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often **I wanted** to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, **but you were not willing!**” The Lord charged such people with killing God’s prophets, and, although He wanted to bless them, they refused Him (KJV—“ye would not!”).

These Pharisees in Matthew 12 responded to miracles of the Lord (**which they admitted were miracles**) by charging that He “cast out demons **by Beelzebub.**” Although they claimed to love and serve God, they utterly despised Jesus and what He said and did! They would never be convinced of the truth in Jesus’ identity as the Son of God. To these Pharisees Jesus was a blasphemer! They completely rejected the indisputable evidence demonstrating the truth, and they stubbornly “would not” be persuaded, regardless of the strength of the evidence.

Point 14 (2 Peter 3:9)

2 Peter 3:9 states: “The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” Pat (sincerely, I think) sought to nullify the impact of this verse on his view of Matthew 12:31-32 by writing, “One **can repent** of speaking evil against the Holy Ghost [*by which I infer that Pat is referring to the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*] ... just like he can repent of rejecting the Holy Spirit’s written word.” This statement confirms once more Pat’s position that a person can repent of the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, but God will refuse to forgive that person. That argument cannot be maintained for reasons I discussed in Point 12 above (Point 8 in my first response) and is also incompatible with my proof (discussed in Point 13) that some people **will not repent** and, consequently, be forgiven!

Pat comments, "So II Pet 3:9 presents no problem with my position ... but if it did, Tommy would have the same problem as I do, because Tommy doesn't think all can come to repentance and avoid perishing" Pat evidently misreads 2 Peter 3:9. That verse does NOT SAY that all WILL repent and avoid perishing. The verse says God does not WANT anyone to PERISH; He WANTS all to come to repentance! That's what God WANTS, but He does not FORCE people to repent and avoid perishing. By the way, the Lord Himself stated the same desire in Luke 13:3, 5, "... but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." Perhaps quoting a few more translations of 2 Peter 3:9 will be helpful.

2 Peter 3:9 (NASB 1995), "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing** for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

2 Peter 3:9 (NIV), "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, **not wanting** anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

2 Peter 3:9 (ESV), "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing** that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

Therefore, the apostle Peter wrote that God WANTED people **to repent and not to perish**. God **doesn't WANT** people to perish; He wants to forgive them. However, the choice about repenting is left to each individual!

DONAHUE'S THIRD RESPONSE

I am again appreciative of the friendly way Tommy discusses the scriptures. I am enjoying the good discussion.

I did not neglect to reply to Tommy's point 8 but I lumped all such arguments together as being equivalent to Tommy's argument on II Pet 3:9. God does forgive all who repent (II Pet 3:9) which is exactly what Matt 12:31a says, but 31b gives the one exception to that general rule. I do not believe the scriptures require us to act differently than God in this regard. We are to treat the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit exactly as God treats him – as unpardonable (I John 5:16). No if one commits this sin today he can't be saved "neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matt 12:32).

Regarding Heb 6:4-6 I think Tommy would agree with me the text is not saying it is impossible for such a person to repent period, but it is impossible to bring them to repentance as long as they "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh." Let me know Tommy if you disagree with my understanding of that text. Regardless, this passage is talking about any sin wherein one crucifies the Son of God afresh, not just the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. So Heb 6:4-6 is not describing what Matt 12:31-32 is talking about because Matt 12:31-32 is talking about one and only one sin. One can reach a point of stubborn refusal to repent (almost unreachable – Heb 3:13) with just about any sin, but Matt 12:31-32 is talking about one single particular sin. It is the only one of its class.

Tommy writes about Matt 12 – "*They would never be convinced of the truth in Jesus' identity as the Son of God.*" Matt 12 says nothing like that. I know of a number of people who were not convinced initially of "the truth in Jesus' identity as the Son of God" and then later changed and became Christians. The text does not say or teach "they stubbornly 'would not' be persuaded, regardless of the strength of the evidence." Perhaps some of them were later

persuaded – there is no way to know. That is not the issue. The issue according to Jesus is that they would not be “forgiven,” not that they would not “repent.” Check again what Jesus actually said and see for yourself the words He uses.

Let me illustrate our difference with two versions of Matt 12:31 – (1) ... *All manner of sin and blasphemy can be repented of by men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost cannot be repented of by men.* And (2) ... *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.* There is no reason to think blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is any harder to repent of than blasphemy against Christ or blasphemy against the Holy Spirit’s written word – that point came from man’s imagination. As a matter of fact, based upon my studies with smokers, I would think the smoking habit would be much harder to repent of than this sin. At least with the blasphemy against the HS, there is no addiction involved. I know if had committed this unpardonable sin, if I had believed (and said) the miracles in the NT actually happened but were done by the power of the devil (say I was a Jew), and then if I were convinced Jesus was the Son of God (a lot of Jews have been convinced of that), then I think it would be pretty easy to get me to repent of the blasphemy against the HS just by showing me Jesus’ divine reasoning about the absurdity of the sin in Matt 12:25-26. The fact is the Bible never indicates this sin is any harder to repent of than any other sin. The revealed problem is not repenting; the problem is being forgiven – at least according to the Bible.

I did not misread II Pet 3:9 thinking it said “*all WILL repent and avoid perishing*” – not at all. What I said in the paragraph Tommy is referring to is that Tommy thinks Matt 12:31-32 is an exception to II Pet 3:9 like I do – except he puts the exception on the repent part (can’t repent of this) and I put the exception on the forgiveness part (can’t be forgiven of this). Now look back at Matt 12:31-32 and see where Jesus put the exception – on the repent part or on the “forgiven” part?

Matt 12:31b is stating the one and only exception to the general rule stated in Matt 12:31a, I John 1:9, II Pet 3:9 and all such passages, just like Matt 19:9 is stating the one and only exception to the rule general stated in Luke 16:18, Mark 10:11-12, Rom 7:2-3, I Cor 7:10, Matt 19:6, and etc. If we can understand the latter, why not the former?

If Repentance Is Understood In The First Clause Then It Must Be Understood In The Second Clause Also

Matt 12:31 ... All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men (**if they repent** is understood from other passages)

but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. (**if they repent** must be understand here also or the second clause is not really an exception to the first clause)

If “the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men” because they won’t repent, then it is just like any other sin. It is not an exception at all!

THRASHER'S THIRD RESPONSE

Pat wrote: "Tommy doesn't think all can come to repentance and avoid perishing, as he thinks (unless I am mistaken) it is impossible to repent of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit." I demonstrated in Point 13, my second response, and I'll do so again in this third response, that some people **will not** be brought to repentance. They can become **hardened** against truth (example of Pharaoh in Exodus; John 12:40; Acts 19:9; Romans 2:5; Hebrews 3:8, 13, 15; 4:7). Sadly, with some nothing will bring them to repentance and, consequently, to forgiveness. While addressing the Athenians (Acts 17:30), Paul declared, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but **now commands ALL MEN EVERYWHERE to repent.**" Pat, is there an exception to Paul's statement? For what reason were "all men everywhere" to "repent"? Paul went on to explain that there would be a day of judgment! In order to be prepared to face the Lord, people must repent of their sins! Unfortunately, some will not be ready for that judgment, and it will be a "sad day" for them, as the song "There's A Great Day Coming" warns.

Point 15 (a question that Pat neglected to answer)

Pat states: "*I know of a number of people who were not convinced initially of 'the truth in Jesus' identity as the Son of God' and then later changed and became Christians.*" That is not the issue, Pat! Do you know of ANYONE **who witnessed miracles such as Jesus did in casting out demons and who attributed the miracles to the power of Beelzebub** who later changed and became Christians"? (or even changed their minds at all). I don't know of ANYONE who did that. I specifically asked, "Pat, do you know anyone who has done what the Pharisees were warned against here?" If he answered that question, I missed it. However, I will answer that: I do **not** know of ANYONE! The basis for my

answer is that **NO ONE TODAY** has the power to do such miracles; the age of miraculous gifts ended (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). No person on earth today is doing such miracles as those Pharisees in Matthew 12 witnessed and attributed to the power of Beelzebub. **That is the context to which I have repeatedly referred in setting forth my position!** Since **NO ONE TODAY** can be guilty of doing *specifically* what the Lord warned those people against doing, I cannot see the need of devoting more time and effort to such a discussion as Pat and I have been having thus far. I explained in the beginning of my second response why I entered this study. You can read those observations again, if you wish. However, I also think there are more pressing issues that need discussion because they involve sins that **CAN** be done, and **ARE** being done, by people today, including (in some cases) Christians. This question of “blaspheming the Holy Spirit” needs *some* discussion because there are people who are concerned about it, *thinking* that they may have been guilty of that sin. I have been willing to participate in such discussions in an effort to assuage the unnecessary concerns of those people, so that they realize they can be saved by meeting God’s conditions ... and **THEIR SINS** will be forgiven by God (cf. Matthew 11:28-30; Mark 16:15-16; Revelation 22:17-21)! They are not beyond hope of forgiveness! Note that this is not the case of the Pharisees in Matthew 12 if they were guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit as described in that context. **THEY** could do that, but **WE** cannot, although there are plenty of other sins **WE CAN COMMIT!** Let’s all be concerned about those!

Point 16 (Continuation of Point 11)

In Point 11 in my second response, I stated: “Although we **cannot specifically do** what those Pharisees were warned about in Matthew 12:31-32, we can **LEARN** not to speak against God (or anything God’s word says, cf. John 12:48).” I provided three Bible cases of sins of which we *cannot* specifically be guilty today:

- **Adam and Eve’s sin** in the Garden of Eden of **eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil FORBIDDEN** them by God (Genesis 3). We cannot sin today

by disobeying that command that God gave Adam and Eve.

- **Uzzah’s sin of touching the ark of the covenant** when it was being transported (2 Samuel 6:2-7). We cannot sin today by disobeying the commands that God gave Uzzah (and others in that time, cf. Exodus 25:13-14).
- **Noah** was commanded by God to **make an ark of gopher wood** according to specific details (Genesis 6:5-22). He *could have disobeyed* God’s command to build the ark according to God’s directions, but **he chose to obey** God (Genesis 6:22; 7:5). We cannot sin today by disobeying the command to **build an ark** (Genesis 6:13-21) that God gave Noah.

As I stated in my second response, many more examples could be given of sins that WE cannot specifically commit (although these sins COULD be, and sometimes WERE, committed by people in the past). Nevertheless, I will add one more example: **Simon’s sin (Acts 8:9-20)**. This context is sufficiently familiar to Bible students that I will not quote all of the details, but limit my quotation to verses 18-19: “And when Simon **saw** that **through the laying on of the apostles’ hands** the Holy Spirit was given, **he offered them money**, saying, ‘Give me **this power** also, **that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.**” What was Simon’s sin?—When he “**saw** that through the laying on of the **apostles’ hands** the Holy Spirit was given,” Simon “**offered them money**” to be given “**this power.**” What Simon did was a SIN (verses 20-22). Question: Can **we** (people today) be guilty of the specific sin of which Simon was guilty? I don’t know what Pat’s answer is, but my answer is “No, the circumstances of his sin cannot be replicated today.” However, we need to learn lessons from this event (e.g., that a child of God CAN SIN and endanger his soul) so that **we do not sin in those things it is possible for us to do**. Furthermore, when we have sinned, we need urgently to turn back to God for forgiveness (Cf. Acts 8:22 in Simon’s case).

Point 17: Is It Harder To Repent of Blasphemy Against the Holy

Spirit?

Pat commented, “The Bible never indicates this sin [that is, blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, TNT] is any harder to repent of than any other sin.” I never said that it was! However, I did point out that **some people cannot be led to repentance** from some of their sins! The Bible shows that. For instance, I cited the case of Jezebel in Revelation 2:21: “... **I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she DID NOT REPENT.**” It is often the case that people CANNOT be led to repentance, because they “**will not**” (cf. Matthew 23:37, which I also cited).

Those Pharisees were warned that they would not be forgiven if they **blasphemed the Holy Spirit** (refer to the context of Matthew 12:31-32). Why not? Because they had rejected the strongest evidence for the Lord’s miracles being done by the power of God. No more convincing evidence could be provided to them. Yet they rejected it, and they attributed Jesus’ miracles to the power of Beelzebub. What would persuade them to change their minds? Nothing would!

Point 18: Pat’s Reference to Smoking

Pat said, “I would think the smoking habit would be much harder to repent of than this sin [blaspheming the Holy Spirit, TNT]. At least with the blasphemy against the HS, there is no addiction involved.” I have no inclination to deny that this is what Pat *thinks*. I agree that smoking is indeed a problem for many people, including some Christians. Smoking is a sin that people TODAY **can commit!** However, I know personally several people who quit that sin, although it may have been difficult for them. The unforgiveable sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit is in the same category as those sins (for which I have given **four Bible examples**) that we **cannot** replicate today (see my Point 16 above, a continuation of Point 11 in my second response).

Point 19: Pat’s “Exception” Argument

Pat’s primary argument is summarized in these words: “Matt 12:31b is stating the one and only exception to the general rule

stated in Matt 12:31a, I John 1:9, II Pet 3:9 and all such passages, just like Matt 19:9 is stating the one and only exception to the general rule stated in Luke 16:18, Mark 10:11-12, Rom 7:2-3, I Cor 7:10, Matt 19:6, and etc.” Is this an accurate statement? —Matthew 12:31b is ‘the one and only exception.’”

- Matthew 12:31a reads: “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men”
- Matthew 12:31b reads: “but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men.”

Pat contends that the second statement (Matthew 12:31b—the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men) is “the ONE AND ONLY exception to the general rule (Matthew 12:31a—”every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men”). Again, I ask, “Is this an accurate statement?” Does Pat believe that EVERY SIN **will be** forgiven EXCEPT blasphemy against the Spirit? I do not agree that this correctly represents Bible teaching.

- Jezebel taught and seduced the Lord’s servants to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols (Revelation 2:20-21). She was not forgiven (verses 22-23). Was her sin “the blasphemy against the Spirit”?
- Those who participated in accusing and killing the Lord (Luke 23:1ff.) were guilty of sin (several sins). Blasphemy against the Spirit was not one of the sins cited in the text. *Envy* was one sin of which some of these people were guilty (Matthew 27:18; Mark 15:10). If “every sin” will be forgiven EXCEPT blasphemy against the Spirit, will ALL of those guilty of envy be forgiven?
- Of those two criminals who were crucified beside Jesus, one of them was forgiven. What about the other one. Were all of his sins forgiven EXCEPT blasphemy against the Spirit (if he was guilty of that)?

Of course, Pat will probably object that those who didn’t “repent” won’t be forgiven. But Pat’s “rule” quoted above is that

the ONE AND ONLY EXCEPTION to every sin being forgiven is blasphemy against the Spirit. I believe that **any sin** may be **unforgiven** if we don't meet the Lord's conditions, and (as I've shown, some people refuse to be brought to repentance)—e.g., Hebrews 6:4-6 [NASB 1995] states, "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and **then** have fallen away, **it is impossible to renew them again to repentance**, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame."

Pat commented on this passage, saying, "Heb 6:4-6 is not describing what Matt 12:31-32 is talking about because Matt 12:31-32 is talking about one and only one sin." However, Pat has asserted that blasphemy against the Spirit is unforgiven **even if repentance occurs**. In fact, he has said that it is **easier to repent** of blasphemy against the Spirit than some other sins (e.g., he mentioned *smoking*). By the way, Pat, **what Bible verse** says that a particular SIN **will not be forgiven even if repentance occurs**?

Pat continued, "One can reach a point of **stubborn refusal to repent** ... with just about any sin ..." (my emphasis, TNT). Thank you for acknowledging a point I have made throughout this discussion. The nature of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is precisely "a point of stubborn refusal to repent." That's why it is unforgiven! The context of Matthew 12 shows what those Pharisees were warned about whereby they could be "hardened" against the miraculous proof of the truth of the Lord's identity, even attributing His miracles to the power of Beelzebul.

Pat's conclusion is that "Matt 12:31-32 is talking about one single particular sin. It is the only one of its class." I'd like to know

what “its class” is.

Pat again refers to a chart with the title *If Repentance Is Understood In The First Clause Then It Must Be Understood In The Second Clause Also*. Why “**must**” it be understood that Matthew 12:31b requires the qualifier “if he repents”? I’d like for Pat to explain what his authority is for this conclusion. I recognize that sometimes points are to be **understood** from the context of a statement and/or from other statements (e.g., other statements in the Bible). However, why **MUST** the Lord’s statement **require** the qualifier “even if one repents”?

Regardless, the context indicates that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was a sin that could be committed by people who witnessed miraculous deeds of the Lord and attributed them to “the power of Beelzebul.” Those who argue that this particular sin can be committed by people today **IGNORE** this context and draw their conclusions in the absence of contextual limitations! Such a mishandling of this passage exemplifies a common approach that many religious leaders have employed in their attempts to uphold their faulty viewpoints.

May our Lord bless our efforts to study, understand, and obey His word.

THRASHER'S FOURTH RESPONSE

My beloved brother Pat wrote: "Of course the obvious meaning [of Matthew 12:31-32] is the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is the one sin that cannot be forgiven, EVEN IF REPENTED OF" (Pat's caps). He has stated this belief several times during this discussion, including every one of his articles.

As I have discussed in previous responses, with quotations of several supporting Bible passages (e.g., Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 8:22), repentance is **required** of us in order for our sins to be forgiven. Of course, repentance is not the only requirement for forgiveness, because, for instance, **confession** is also required (1 John 1:9).

The primary argument made by Pat on Matthew 12:31-32 has involved his assumption and assertion that "**if repentance is understood in the first clause then it MUST be understood in the second clause also**" (my emphasis, TNT). Although Pat has asserted this frequently, his statement (I'll call it "Pat's Rule") is actually untrue! Furthermore, Pat's Rule involves him in a predicament (that is, it logically leads to an inconsistency in his argument). Please follow carefully as I demonstrate how this occurs.

Pat's basic argument (with my emphasis in bold print) has been illustrated with a chart he has introduced in each of his articles—

"Matt 12:31 ... All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men (**if they repent** is understood from other passages)

"but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. (**if they repent** must be understand here also or the second clause is not really an exception to the first clause)"

Stating this argument in another form that he has sometimes used, Pat wrote: "The first part of Matt 12:31 ('All manner of sin

and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men') states the same general rule of forgiveness as I John 1:9; and then Matt 12:31 goes on to state there is one exception to that rule. Conclusion: all sin will be forgiven (**if one repents and confesses**), but there is ONE EXCEPTION to that rule, blasphemy against the Holy Ghost!" (my emphasis, TNT).

In commenting on Pat's argument in my Third Response, I gave the following summary:

- Matthew 12:31a reads: "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men"
- Matthew 12:31b reads: "but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men."

Pat argued that if the exception "if he repents" is understood in Matthew 12:31a, it **MUST** also be understood in Matthew 12:31b. Therefore, his contention has the passage teaching as follows:

- Matthew 12:31a reads: "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men **IF THEY REPENT**"
- Matthew 12:31b reads: "but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men **IF THEY REPENT.**"

However, instead of proving Pat's contention that those who commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven **even if they repent**, it says that those who blaspheme the Spirit **will not be forgiven IF THEY REPENT!** In other words, Pat would believe that IF THEY REPENT of blasphemy against the Spirit, they will not be forgiven, and it would state nothing about the situation of those who committed that sin and did NOT repent. The act of REPENTING would lead to their being **UNFORGIVEN!** (Repentance is a condition of NOT BEING FORGIVEN of that sin!

Making that point in another way, Pat believes that a person receives forgiveness **ONLY IF HE REPENTS** (by which neither he nor I think

that repentance is the **ONLY** condition, but that repentance is an **absolute requirement**—It is equivalent to saying in Matthew 12:31a—“Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men **ONLY IF THEY REPENT**”—a view that Pat holds correctly, but when that condition is incorporated into Matthew 12:31b, as Pat has taught that it **MUST** be, the reading would be “but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men **ONLY IF THEY REPENT**”! **When** would the sin of blaspheming the Spirit be UNFORGIVEN?—“**only if they repent**” (according to Pat’s reasoning)! Of course, it is not true that the Lord is teaching that those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit (as that is explained in the context of Matthew 12) will **not be forgiven** ONLY IF THEY REPENT! The Lord was NOT teaching that, but that is a consequence of Pat’s Rule!

Therefore, Pat’s argument leads to the conclusion that (for those guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit) they **WILL NOT BE FORGIVEN** (that is, they’ll be UNFORGIVEN) only if they **do repent**. In their cases it’s “DON’T REPENT or you will PERISH” (those people would be **unforgiven** and, therefore, **LOST** if they REPENT. This is NOT what Pat believes, but it’s where his argument (“Pat’s Law”) leads!

Since Pat also said (correctly, 1 John 1:9) that one must CONFESS, and that should be understood in Matthew 12:31a. Matthew 12:31a would then be correctly understood to teach: “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but **ONLY IF THEY CONFESS**.” [Note: I agree with this!] However, according to “Pat’s Rule”:

- Matthew 12:31b **MUST** read: “but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men, but **ONLY IF THEY CONFESS**” (Remember, Pat contended that this same expression when understood in 12:31a **MUST** be understood also in 12:31b!

So, according to “Pat’s Rule,” those who blasphemed the Spirit would be **unforgiven** ONLY IF THEY CONFESS. Consequently, if they had confessed their sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, instead of their being forgiven, they would be **unforgiven**. Their CONFESSION would then be a **necessary** factor (a requirement) in their being UNforgiven!

Of course, Pat does not think these will be forgiven no matter what they do, including if they repent and confess. However, his argument (“Pat’s Rule”) says they will be **LOST** (unforgiven) **only if**

they repent and confess!

Remember that Pat said, “Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost can be repented of just like any other sin ...; the difference is that God will not forgive it, **even if it is repented of.**” He asserted that several times! Instances include the following:

- “But if a man commits the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, ... he cannot be forgiven (**even if he does repent.**)”
- “we need to warn people that if they commit this sin, unlike any other sin, they **CANNOT** be forgiven, **even if they repent.**”
- “it doesn't matter how many times that person repents, prays, and confesses, he **CANNOT ever** be forgiven of this sin!”

Yet, Pat thinks that either situation, whether **repenting** or **not repenting**, one will **not be forgiven**, while according to his “rule” IF HE REPENTS or CONFESSES (or both) he will NOT be forgiven (that is, he will be LOST)! In other words, Pat’s Rule leads to the conclusion that IF the person “REPENTS (or CONFESSES) he will PERISH!

Remember, “Pat’s Rule” (stated in the title of Pat’s Chart) says **“If Repentance Is Understood In The First Clause Then It Must Be Understood In The Second Clause Also”** (referring to Matthew 12:31a and Matthew 12:31b). He has said that **repentance** must be understood in BOTH parts of the verse. Consequently, the pronouncement of “not being forgiven” (31b) **REQUIRES** repentance, not merely allows repentance to occur. The truth is that Pat did not find any statement in God’s book to prove his claim that sinners who **genuinely repent** will **perish/be lost/be unforgiven.**

MARK 16:16 ILLUSTRATES A RELEVANT POINT

Our Lord said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” The main clause of verse 16a is “He ... will be saved.” If that were everything the Bible said, it would teach that ALL will be saved. However, Jesus

included an exception to the general rule that “all people will be saved”—He gave the exception to all being saved by saying, “He who **BELIEVES AND IS BAPTIZED.**”

Mark 16:16b reads, “... he who does not believe will be condemned.” The main clause in this part of the verse is “he ... will be condemned.” Without qualification/limitation, this statement would teach universal condemnation. However, the Lord provided a limitation: “he who does **not believe.**” Consequently, when we take all of the Lord’s statement, we learn that some (those who satisfy the Lord’s conditions) will be saved (necessitating our being forgiven by God) and some (those who do not believe) will be condemned/lost/unforgiven.

The idea expressed in Mark 16:16a is that he (an individual) will be saved **IF he believes and is baptized.** However, unlike “Pat’s Rule,” the Lord does NOT use the same expression in 16b. In fact he uses the negation of belief: “but he who does NOT believe will be condemned.” Basically, using the word “if” that has become an important element of our discussion, this means “he will be condemned IF he does not believe.” Note that the IF expression is NOT THE SAME in Mark 16:16a and Mark 16:16b! It is NOT the case that BELIEF and BAPTISM must be understood in BOTH Mark 16:16a AND Mark 16:16b!

PAT’S APPEAL TO MATTHEW 19:9

Matthew 19:9 states: “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”

Pat correctly points out that the EXCEPTION (“except for sexual immorality”) needs to be understood in passages such as Luke 16:18, in which the exception is NOT expressly STATED. We need to take ALL that the Bible teaches on this, and all, subjects.

However, Pat’s Rule is not applicable to what Matthew 19:9 says:

- Matthew 19:9a—“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery”
- Matthew 19:9b—“and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery”

Does Pat insert the exception (“except for sexual immorality” that is given in Matthew 19:9a INTO Matthew 19:9b? If so, as would be required according to Pat’s Rule, Matthew 19:9b would read:

- Matthew 19:9b—“and whoever marries her who is divorced, except for sexual immorality, commits adultery”

If that were the case, the person who married a woman who was divorced for sexual immorality WOULD **NOT BE GUILTY OF ADULTERY!** I am confident that Pat **does not** accept that idea! That position (expressed in the bullet above) would mean that a man who married a woman who was divorced for sexual immorality was okay in the sight of God for that marriage. He would NOT be committing adultery in that marriage with a scripturally put-away woman! Some of our brethren, and many in the world, would approve such a marriage, BUT GOD DOES NOT!

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this discussion with my dear friend and brother, Pat Donahue. I want to emphasize that I in no way question Pat’s intelligence or his honesty. However, I do question the correctness of his argumentation offered in an attempt to uphold his position on the issue of “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit,” particularly in relation to his argument that **“If Repentance Is Understood In The First Clause [of Matthew 12:31] Then It Must Be Understood In The Second Clause Also.”** I have no doubt that Pat sincerely believed that “rule” when he made the argument; however, I also have no doubt that upon learning that his rule is unsound, he will disavow it.

I urge all of the readers of this discussion, and all accountable people everywhere, to take ALL SIN seriously and REPENT of each one of which we have been guilty so as NOT to perish (2 Peter 3:9;

Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit

Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30), which our God does not want anyone to do: “The Lord ... is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

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