

Other Bible examples of people who reached this limit:

- The people before the Flood (Gen. 6 : 3, 5, 11, 12).
- Pharaoh (Ex. 8 : 15).
- Herod (Luke 23 : 8, 9).
- Judas (Luke 22 : 3).

4.—WHAT, THEN, IS THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT?

From what we have learned thus far, we are now in a position to draw some conclusions:

The sin against the Holy Spirit is not some single, isolated act of wickedness, such as murder, lying, theft or impurity.

It is rather the climax to a long series of stubborn refusals to heed the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

It is the place where repeated stifling of the voice of God in the soul hardens into unbreakable habit.

It is the final, deliberate closing of the heart against the Spirit of God.

Says Alexander McLaren: "The only unpardonable sin is the sin of persistently refusing the pardon that avails for all sin." These conclusions are supported by God's lament concerning ancient Israel, and Jesus' warning to the people of His day.

II Chron. 36 : 15, 16: "Till there was no remedy."

Matt. 6 : 23: "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness."

John 3 : 19, 20: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness more than light."

5.—WHAT MAKES THIS SIN UNPARDONABLE?

The fact that it is unrepentable. The man who repeatedly closes his heart against the Spirit of God is deliberately destroying his own capacity for repentance. Just as a ship's radio officer, by wilfully smashing his delicate receiving set, cuts off his only channel of communication with the shore, so we, by persistently stifling or resisting the Spirit of God, may destroy the only channel of communication between ourselves and Heaven!

Thus, deprived of the Holy Spirit's ministry by our own perverse and wilful action, conviction becomes impossible. So does repentance, forgiveness, peace and assurance. Even the desire to be reconciled with God is eventually lost. We have reached the man-made limit to the Holy Spirit's work.

Paul describes this tragic condition in Heb. 6 : 4-6 and 10 : 26-31.

Conclusion One question remains to be answered before we close this Bible lesson: "How can we avoid committing the unpardonable sin?"

There are three simple safeguards that everyone can employ:

(a) By keeping our hearts sensitive to the slightest promptings of the Spirit of God. I Sam. 3 : 10: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

Isa. 30 : 21: "This is the way, walk ye in it."

(b) By guarding against the first step in conscious resistance to the known will of God. Num. 22 : 18: "I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord."

Isa. 50 : 5: "I was not rebellious, neither turned away back."

(c) By cultivating the habit of prompt obedience when any new duty to God is made plain.

Ps. 18 : 44: "As soon as they hear of Me, they shall obey Me."

Ps. 119 : 60: "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments."

Heb. 3 : 7, 8: "Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."