

**UNFORGIVABLE SINS**  
Numbers 15:28-31, Matthew 12:31  
By Raymond White

Much is said about unforgivable sins. We talk about the sin against the Holy Ghost (*Matthew 12:31*), the sin unto death (*1 John 5:16*), and murder (*Numbers 35:31*) and call them unforgivable without much thought as to why — what makes an unforgivable sin unforgivable. For that matter, what makes a forgivable sin forgivable.

We're fond of saying "ignorance is no excuse," but in God's law ignorance is indeed an excuse. And even in our law, there are just some situations where we are disinclined to convict. If a child kills someone, if someone talking on their cell causes a fatal accident, if a surgeon makes a mistake and a patient dies — we'd all be angry but we'd be hard pressed to turn in a verdict of murder along with a capital penalty. So our law has varying degrees, shades of gray. Beyond the act itself we try to judge the intent. Premeditated murder, it seems, is a different thing than just plain murder, which is a different thing than manslaughter, which is a different thing that "wrongful death," which is a different thing than negligence, which is a different thing that just plain old bad luck; that is, a true accident. And all that complexity spins off just the sin of killing.

All other sins also have their own shades of gray. Suppose years after your honeymoon you learn that your marriage license was not valid for some reason. Are you guilty of sex sin? Suppose in a dark restaurant the water you ordered was really vodka (that happened to me). God is somehow in a more forgiving mood when the intent was innocent. But, *feigned* ignorance, now that's a different story. When the defendant says: "But I didn't know the gun was loaded when I pulled the trigger." Well maybe, or maybe not. If the defendant *did* know the gun was loaded, and he's only pretending to have been ignorant; well, that's the issue, isn't it? That's the job of CSI to find out the truth, and the verdict depends on that truth.

The distinction goes back to the law and the sacrifices —

**[1] PRESUMPTUOUS SINS VERSUS IGNORANT SINS**

*Numbers 15:28* And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly ... and it shall be forgiven him. **:30** But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously ... that should shall be cut off from among his people. **:31** Because he hath despised the word of the LORD.

*Leviticus 4:2* ...If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of the LORD ... **:3** ... let him bring for his sin, which he hath sinned, a young bullock without blemish unto the LORD for a sin offering.

The idea here is simple. Some people want to do a sin so badly, but they know it's wrong so they suppose, "But there is forgiveness, so I'll just go ahead and do my sin and afterwards get forgiveness. It'll all be okay."

No, sorry, it won't be okay. That's presumption. Presuming on grace puts you in an awful position with God and with the courts. This was exactly where Satan tried to lead Jesus in the second temptation:

**Matthew 4:6** ...If thou be the son of god, cast thyself down... :7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Presumptuous sin is just that: tempting God and his law and, for that matter, tempting the courts and their laws. There is leniency and forgiveness available, ye, but not for lying hypocrites who want to milk the system by tricking the law to have it both ways. They want to do their sin or their crime, then pled for mercy because they were “ignorant.” You can’t do that (well, you can try, but it’s the court’s job to make sure you don’t get away with it.) That’s why Martin Luther complained about the sale of indulgences. This is what unforgivable sins are about: not the nature or severity of the sin, but the intention of the sinner.

Forgiveness then has nothing to do with the nature of the sin but has everything to do with premeditated knowledge. Forgiveness is available generally. But forgiveness is not available if the sinner intended to game the system, to sin *because* forgiveness was available. That’s presumption. “God will forgive me so I will take advantage of that and sin all I want, then repent and he will forgive me.” No, he will not.

All sin is to be feared. But presumptuous sin is to be feared the most.

**Psalms 19:13** *Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.*

This is very interesting. If a person is not guilty of presumptuous sins then he is only guilty of ignorant sins which can be forgiven, then a person has a shot at being “upright” and “innocent.” And what is the “great transgression”? Probably some great sin that is tempting the author. He doesn’t want to give into that temptation because if he does it would be a presumptuous sin, which means that he could never find forgiveness and it would stick to him forever like super glue.

Peter, as he is preaching Christ to the Jews said this to them.

**Acts 3:17** *And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.*

In other words, when you killed Christ I hope you did it ignorantly. If so, then there is forgiveness available to you.

And didn’t Jesus say as much on the cross?

**Luke 23:34** *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

The point is that ignorance leaves God some wiggle room, something to work with. He can hope to change your mind by educating you. God can say, “What you’re doing is wrong. You need to understand and change.” And if a person does understand and does change, then there is forgiveness.

Presumptuous sin and ignorant sin are opposites. What makes a sin ignorant? There are several possibilities. At the time of the sin, the sinner: (1) didn’t know it was a

sin; (2) felt justified in doing it; (3) had no sense of right and wrong; (4) it seemed like a little thing of little consequence. There are likely other possibilities, but the point is that the sinner came to realize afterwards that what he had done was truly harmful and felt sufficient guilt so that his plea for forgiveness is genuine.

## [2] SAUL OF TARSUS

The Apostle Paul, formerly Saul of Tarsus, was the most forgiven person on the planet. We know that because he said so.

*1 Timothy 1:15 ... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*

Paul claimed the ignoble distinction of being the world's worst sinner. Why should we believe him, that he was the world's worst sinner? What could he possibly have done to earn that un-coveted position of number one sinner?

*Acts 22:4 And I persecuted this way unto death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. 26:11 ... and compelled them to blaspheme ...*

What did he do that was so bad? He persecuted Christians, he killed them ("unto death"), and he tortured them ("compelled"). This man, Saul of Tarsus, was a bad man.

Now, I have occasionally said that Paul was a bad man in a Sunday school class. And when I was so bold, I drew fire.

"No, he wasn't a bad man," people complained, "he was a good man who was just misguided."

This is wrong for two reasons. First, good men who are misguided don't torture people to death. Regardless of one's motive, that's an evil thing to do. And second, we don't judge people's goodness or badness on their intent, we judge them by what they do.

In this case, Paul not only tortured people, but his victims were Christians, the most right people and most innocent people on earth. And he can't claim, "I was just following orders." *He* was giving the orders. If that's not a bad man, then Jeffery Dahmer and Adolf Hitler and Torquemada were not bad men. How else would you judge badness other than the evil that people do?

Why is that important? Because he was forgiven. And the badder Paul was, the greater was Christ's forgiveness. And that is why Paul accuses himself, to make sure we understand just how far Christ's love can stretch to reach us.

So why in the world did Jesus pick this Christian killing Saul of Tarsus?

*1 Timothy 1:16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.*

In other words, Jesus intentionally chose the worst man on the planet to show the "pattern" so that we would know how far his forgiveness reaches. If we excuse Paul's

earlier faults, we mitigate Christ's love, and Paul would have none of that. He wanted us to know how bad he was so that we will know how good Jesus is.

But now that brings us to the question: if Paul was *so* bad, how could he have been forgiven? Wouldn't his sins have been unforgivable? The answer lies in the one defense that he allows himself.

*1 Timothy 1:13 ... but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*

The only thing that Paul said in his own defense is that he did it ignorantly. He really thought that killing Christians was the right thing to do. And Paul's ignorance gave Jesus something to work with. So Jesus straightened Paul out on the road to Damascus, Paul understood the gravity of his sins, he repented, and became the great missionary that we've come to know and love.

Notice that Paul did not use authority of government as a defense. Some might argue, well, if the law allows it then it's not murder. The argument to that is that Hitler has shown us otherwise, that government and law are quite capable of murder. Just because a murder has government approval, doesn't make it not murder.

Ignorance was Paul's only defense, and a wonderful defense it is, if it is real ignorance and not feigned ignorance.

### [3] DAVID AND SAUL

Why was King David forgiven and King Saul not? Was it because Saul's sin was worse than David's? That doesn't seem correct. It seems more likely that David's was the worse sin.

God ordered Saul to kill all the Amalekites and to leave nothing and no one alive. But when it was over, Saul had kept the best animals "to sacrifice" and also king Agag. Why Saul kept king Agag alive the bible doesn't say, perhaps as a trophy.

This willful negligence God took as rebellion, so God "rejected" Saul as king and it was final. Saul had no opportunity to repent and make it right. His sin was unforgivable (*1 Samuel 15:23*).

What about David? He had sex with the wife of one of his loyal soldiers (not only adultery but also the betrayal of a friend), got her pregnant, and tried to cover it up by ordering the death of that soldier. And for all that, David was forgiven (*2 Samuel 12:13*).

Now I'm not God to judge, but David's sin sounds more despicable to me than Saul's sin. And if we're weighing the gravity of sin (and I am), wouldn't we think that David's sin was weightier than Saul's? And if so, then why was David forgiven and Saul not? The answer has nothing to do with the weightiness of their sins. But maybe God took Saul's sin more personally because it was failure to obey a direct order.

But there was another difference between their two sins, and it was this: Saul denied his wrong doing, and he blamed everyone but himself. While David never denied his wrong doing, and he blamed only himself and no one else.

Here is how Saul accounted himself.

*1 Samuel 15:13 I have performed the commandment of the LORD [he hadn't] :15 they [his soldiers] have brought them [the animals] ... the people spared the best*

*of the sheep [transferring blame] :20 Yea, I have obeyed ... [claiming innocence]  
:24 I have sinned [finally admitting guilt when he can't deny] :24 ... because I  
feared the people, and obeyed their voice. [transferring blame again].*

Saul simply would not accept that he had done anything wrong. He insisted that nothing was wrong. And then he insisted that if there was something wrong, it was not his fault but their fault. The problem with that reasoning is that, while you can delegate authority, you cannot delegate responsibility. As Harry Truman said, “the buck stops here.” Saul said he “feared the people”? Nonsense. They were there doing battle, dying for his cause, and if they didn't understand Saul's instructions, it was his fault, not theirs.

Here is how David accounted himself.

*2 Samuel 12:13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.*

*Psalms 51:3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.  
:4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou  
mightiest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*

David never blamed anyone but himself, and that is the reason, I believe, that God forgave David and not Saul.

What does this have to do with unforgivable sins? It exposes the character of unforgivable sins, why they are unforgivable. *We* make them unforgivable by refusing to see the fault in ourselves and therefore rejecting forgiveness. Saul is a good example.

#### [4] DEATHBED REPENTANCE

Mormons, and I suppose some other Christians, are not keen on the idea of deathbed repentance. It seems unfair that a person might procrastinate his repentance intentionally, live a life of sin, and accept Jesus with his dying breath, and squeak into heaven just as the door is closing.

The Mormon view is correct that God rejects such shenanigans, but Mormons don't defend their position very well. When an orthodox Christian poses the reasonable argument: “You Mormons reject deathbed repentance, but what about the thief on the cross? Jesus granted *him* heaven,” Mormons typically reply with a slightly wrong answer.

To the thief-on-the-cross challenge, the typical Mormon argument would be: “But Jesus didn't promise him heaven, he promised him paradise. And that's a different place. So the thief-on-the-cross argument does not help the deathbed repentance notion.”

The problem with that argument is that paradise is a temporary parking place for heaven bound souls. So when Jesus promised paradise, he also promised heaven. Any serious Book of Mormon reader knows that, they just ignore it to win an argument.

*Alma 40:12 the spirits of those who are righteous are received into ... paradise.  
4 Nephi 1:14 the disciple of Jesus ... had all gone to the paradise of God ...  
Moroni 10:34 I [Moroni] will soon go to rest in the paradise of God ....*

So it's a poor argument to say that Jesus did not grant to the thief heaven because he only granted him paradise. And the reason it's a poor argument is because everyone who goes to paradise also goes to heaven. So, by giving paradise Jesus also gave heaven.

However, there is another argument that Mormons could make against deathbed repentance, but they don't because they don't know about it. And that argument is the difference between presumptuous sins and ignorant sins, which distinction makes some sins forgivable and other sins unforgivable.

The argument would go like this: Forgivable versus unforgivable has nothing to do with deathbed repentance. Timing is not the issue. Intent is the issue. The relevant question is: is the repentance genuine? And the answer is: not if it was intentionally delayed to get in a few more sins. That is the characteristic that defines unforgivable sins, and the label "deathbed repentance" is misleading and draws attention to the wrong issue.

Consider: A Mormon missionary finds a 90 year old investigator and baptizes her (more likely a her than a him at that age). What if that night she dies of a heart attack peacefully in her bed? Would that too-soon death void her baptism because now it's a "deathbed conversion"? That would be absurd. Of course not. If that were true, would a baptism for the dead be *more* valid than a "deathbed" baptism? Should missionaries refuse to baptize 90 year olds and say "we'd rather baptize you when you're dead"? That would be silly, wouldn't it? If baptism for the dead is valid, then so must so-called deathbed baptisms — our 90 year old lady at least got it done while she was still breathing, that should count for something

The point: the validity of her baptism has nothing to do with its proximity to her death. What it does have to do with is this: Was she intentionally delaying her baptism so that she could get in a few more sins? If yes, then those were presumptuous sins and no amount of repentance will forgive them however many years she has to live.

Now if you still want to call that deathbed repentance, be my guest. But that label misses the point and creates theological confusion and way too much debate. If we all understood it for what it is, presumptuous sins, I think that Evangelicals and Catholics and Mormons would all agree. Repentance counts only if it is acted on when the person understands what's at stake. Intentional delay invites disaster. We call that deathbed repentance but that's a poor name for it. What it really is is presumptuous sins.

Jesus gave a good parable that describes one half of this dynamic. It is the parable of the day-employer.

A farmer had a crop to harvest and needed day-workers. So he went to the place where day-workers hang out and hired a bunch. He employed people in the early morning, in the late morning, at noon, in the early afternoon, then finally in the late afternoon. Then when the day was done, he paid them all the same. The early workers grumbled and the employer replied, "Hey, I paid you what you agreed to, so it's fair."

That sure sounds like deathbed repentance, doesn't it? But it's not. The reason it's not is because the late workers were not late intentionally.

But what Jesus told is only half the story, Now the other half which I'll make up.

The next day the employer still had more crop to harvest so he went out again and did the same thing. But some of those workers were now wise to him, so instead of taking the job in the morning when offered, they slipped away, went to the track and spend the morning betting on ponies. Then they returned at 2:00 for the much easier afternoon shift.

It all sounded good they thought — easy money for half a day's work.

But there was one problem. The employer never showed up. He had hired in the early morning, then in the late morning, then finally at noon. But then the harvest was done and he didn't need any more men. So the late workers now were stranded.

Now *that's* deathbed repentance (if you still want to call it that), intentionally delaying to take advantage. And that's what God forbids.

Another example of presumptuous sins (a real life example) was the Catholic practice in the 16<sup>th</sup> century of selling indulgences (sorry to pick on you). Indulgences were basically pre-forgiven sins, or sins to go. This was Martin Luther's chief complaint that led him to the reformation. (To their credit, Catholics don't do that anymore.)

That is precisely what God forbids, presuming on God to forgive your sins so that you can freely sin and feign regret afterwards. God knows phony repentance when he sees it and that's why presumptuous sins are unforgivable. God does not accept pre-planned repentance. True repentance grabs forgiveness quickly, eagerly, and *now!*

### [5] SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST

The sin against the Holy Ghost is not as mysterious a thing as many think it is. Just follow the reasoning.

*John 5:31 If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. :32 There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness that he witnesseth of me is true.*

*Matthew 12:22 Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, inasmuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. :24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. :31 Wherefore I [Jesus] say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.*

Jesus had two witnesses: himself (what Jesus said) and God (what Jesus did; that is, the miracles). The Holy Ghost is God, and the Holy Ghost was behind the miracles. So the testimony that the Holy Ghost was providing was the miracles. So when the Pharisees witnessed the miracles and concluded that Jesus was demonic they were rejecting the clear evidence that Jesus was who he said he was. In other words, God had taken his best shot at convincing them, the miracles, and still they would not believe.

So, what else could God try that might convince them? There was nothing left, they were done.

Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is unforgivable, not because God set a cosmic rule, but because they were so determined to not believe that God had nothing left to persuade them. The Holy Ghost was conspicuous in the miracles and still they rejected.

### [6] SIN UNTO DEATH

*1 John 5:16 ... There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.*

John did not give us any clue what he had in mind. But perhaps it doesn't matter. What does matter is to know that there are such things, sins that will cling to you 'till you're dead.

Here's what I think John was talking about: God's forgiveness is an act of grace. It is therefore not a requirement; he doesn't have to forgive you. And if he chooses not to forgive, then he slams the door shut in your face and that's that. He can do that.

But, you may object, God always allows repentance, and he always responds with forgiveness. I don't think so. There is evidence to the contrary.

*Genesis 6:3 My spirit shall not always strive with men ...*

*Exodus 4:21 And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he will not let the people go.*

*Romans 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves. :26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections ... :28 ... God gave them over to a reprobate mind ...*

*John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father ... draw him*

*John 10:26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep ...*

*John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you ...*

Yes, I know about man's free agency, but I also know about God's sovereign will. And they are both true and I have no idea how they can both be true. I have my theories which are probably as bogus as the next man's, but I will give you one possibility:

When God hardened Pharaoh's heart, it doesn't mean (in my view) that God made Pharaoh make a wrong choice. It means that when Pharaoh made the wrong choice God accepted that choice as final. In other words, once Pharaoh made a choice, God kept him in that choice. But it was Pharaoh's free agent choice — he could just no longer escape it. Thus, God had his sovereignty and Pharaoh had his free agency.

Consider this parable of my own: Two drunk boys stole two hotrods and went joy riding and played chicken with an oncoming freight train.

One boy was killed. But the other boy escaped with his life, sobered up, accepted guilt for his friend's death, repented, gave his life to Jesus, became a super righteous saint, was generous to a fault, helped people sober up, and died of old age leaving many children and grandchildren who loved him and blessed his name. And he went to heaven.

When he arrived in heaven he learned that his friend didn't make it to heaven but went to some other place because he had died without faith and without righteousness.

Now, what's the moral of this story? That your eternal fate is the flip of a coin? Maybe. Or maybe it's that God has the right to conclude your life and accept your most recent free agent choices as final.

Or, you don't even have to die. Suppose the boy who died didn't die. Suppose the accident with the train left him in forty years of permanent vegetative state. It happens.



Or, suppose he had permanent short term memory loss. Did you see the movie “Fifty First Dates”? No? You should.

Or, suppose God just stopped giving you new ideas that might change your mind.

What’s my point? My point is: don’t have a hissy fit about God hardening Pharaoh’s heart. Pharaoh made his choice. All God did was let the concrete set. That’s what “harden” means.

What does that mean to you? God could harden your heart right now, and accept what you’re thinking right now as final. You could die, or have a stroke, or just never be able to change your mind. And you’d have no complaint against God — you would not have been deprived of free agency, it is your free agency that has brought you to this moment. If this is your final moment of agency, you’ve had your agency, haven’t you?

Here’s my real point: If you’re not where you should be right now, perhaps you should move to a better place — I mean now, before the concrete hardens.

*John 9:4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.*

Whatever you want to be for eternity, maybe you’d better try to be that now, and not try to get in a few more sins. Your next sin may not be forgivable.

## [7] WINDOW

Just because forgiveness is available, doesn’t mean it will always be available. There are many different things that might make a sin unforgivable. One of them is that the window of opportunity may close. Here’s an example:

When God and Moses told Israel to enter the promised land and conqueror, Israel balked, fearing the people of the land and refused to go in. So God said to them, alright, in that case, I think you should wander in the wilderness for forty years.

That caused Israel to have a change of heart.

*Numbers 14:40 Lo, we be here, and we will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned.*

Now they found their courage and were ready to go in. “We were just kidding,” they said, “we didn’t mean it, we’re ready to go into the land and conqueror it.

Good idea. But it was too little and too late.

*Numbers 14:42 Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies.*

Their flip-flop did not serve them well. God had given them one opportunity and one only. When they delayed, the window of opportunity closed.

Now if they entered the land they’d be without God’s protection and they’d lose.

I have often said that it’s easy to repent of smoking, it’s not so easy to repent of lung cancer. And it’s a whole lot easier to repent of promiscuity than to repent of AIDS.

If you're going to repent, repent now while there still may be grace enough to forgive you and deliver you from the worst consequences of your folly.

Opportunities are fleeting. Not only for repentance, but also for business, love, education, and a great many things. When you see the chance, don't delay, just grab it.

## [8] MURDER

Is murder forgivable? Or to ask it differently, is it possible for a person to commit a murder and not know its evil so that he can later plead ignorance? Let's start with —

*Numbers 35:31* Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall surely be put to death.

There are many sins that you can buy your way out of — pay the fine rather than do the time (which is too big a subject to deal with here). But one crime you cannot buy your way out of is murder. Under God's law, when you kill someone, you die. Murder is not forgivable, at least not under the law, God's law anyway.

But then, what about ignorance? Paul killed a lot of Christians and was forgiven because he was ignorant. In other words, he thought (wrongly) that he was right to do it. \

And if Paul, then why not Hitler? Did Hitler believe that he was doing the right thing by murdering 6,000,000 Jews? Was his an enormous ignorant sin? I don't believe that. It is simply impossible that he didn't know he was doing evil.

But what about King Henry VIII? Was he justified in beheading two of his wives for adultery? He thought he was. I don't know. I guess we'll find out.

How about Sir Thomas Moore? Was he justified in burning Protestants at the stake? He died under a headman's ax so there's no doubting his conviction.

What about Pontius Pilate washing his hands? Did that get him off the hook for Jesus' murder? That's one I really want to know the answer to.

And how about the Parker-Hulme case? In 1954 New Zealand, a mother was murdered by her 16 year old daughter and a friend. Later, the two girls each had their own "what have I done" moment and moved on into their repented adult lives. One became a Mormon and the other a Catholic nun. Are they forgiven? I suppose so. Youthful ignorance can be pretty ignorant. But they would have to have been pretty ignorant to do what they did and think it justified. But I can believe that, I think.

Now, how about King David? Is it possible that in some dark moment of ignorance that for some bizarre reason of his inventing that he thought he had a king's right to kill Uriah? After all, kings order many men to their deaths and it's not murder. So, what's one more casualty? And if anybody was sincere in repentance, it was David.

So, reviewing the question: Is murder ever forgivable? Here's the answer: It depends. If it was done in ignorance, yes. Paul proved that. Ignorance is the only plea that God will consider. But if it was presumptuous, certainly not.

## [9] JESUS

Presumptuousness is at the heart of the second temptation of Christ.

In the first temptation, Satan was basically saying, “I see that God is not taking very good care of you — out here in the desert starving to death. What kind of God would do that to his son? Hey, I have an idea. You have all this divine power, why don’t you use it to turn these rocks to bread and feed yourself?”

Jesus’ answer was basically, “My divine powers are not to feed me, they’re to save the world. God will take care of me.”

And that drew the second round temptation where Satan basically said, “I see. So God will take care of you, will he? Are you sure? We’d better test that theory. Prove it. Jump off the pinnacle. And if he does save you, then, wow, you’ve proved to the world that you are who you say you are. Everyone will have to believe you. And you’ll believe it too. Go ahead. Jump!”

And Jesus’ answer to that was, “I won’t tempt God.”

By saying “I won’t tempt God,” Jesus was rejecting a presumptuous sin.

Notice how dangerously close trusting God is to tempting God. The presumptuous reasoning goes like this.

“God loves me. So if I buy lots of things on credit, God will make sure that I’ll have the money to pay it all off.” Oh? Maybe he won’t. That’s not trusting God, that’s tempting God, and it may not be forgivable except in bankruptcy court.

“God loves me. So I can smoke and drink, and God will make sure I don’t get cancer and that my liver doesn’t fail.” Oh? Maybe not. That’s presumptuous. Remember, it’s easy to repent of smoking, it’s not so easy to repent of lung cancer. And you may not be able to buy a liver at any price.

“God loves me and I’m saved. My preacher said so. So I can have all the women I want and God will still let me into heaven.” Oh? Maybe not. Are you sure you are reading those verses right? I don’t think that grace grants that kind of license.

At the heart of presumptuous sin is the idea that we have God on a short leash, and that we can tempt God to do our bidding.

Take whatever risks you want, you have your free agency. But if you jump from the pinnacle, you’ve only yourself to blame if you go “Splat!”

## [10] UNFORGIVABLE SINS OF NATIONS

Nations too can reach a point where it’s too late to repent and nothing they can do will avoid judgment. After all the good that good King Josiah did, he and his country were still under a curse.

*2 Kings 23:26 Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal. :27 And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.*

Sorry, Judah. All your good works now are too little and too late. There’s no turning back. You’re on a one way ticket to captivity.

*2 Kings 24:3 Surely at the commandment of the LORD came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did :4 And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon.*

Babies. It was about the babies. They murdered their babies, their “innocent blood,” on the altars of pagan gods until the true God had finally had enough of that and said they’re through. Once they had reached that threshold, no amount of repenting could save them. Their sins were unforgivable.

*Proverbs 1:28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.*

I pray that our nation never reaches that point, but I fear that maybe we already have. How many unborn babies do we murder every year? Way over a million. And that same greed that murders babies also spends the country into bankruptcy. How long, I wonder do we have before our presumptuous sins finally devour us?

## [11] CONCLUSION

We have so far looked at the many examples of unforgivable sins in order to grasp the meaning of it all. But to grasp the whole of this enormous subject at once we might best consider this verse —

*Hebrews 12:16 ... Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. :17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*

The point is not the nature of the sin or their severity or even the injury. The point is the clinginess of some sins. Some sins stick like superglue.

Esau’s sin was not all that bad, there were not even victims. But when he finally realized what he had done, he wanted to undo it, but there was no way out, no way to escape the consequences. That’s the broader point of unforgivable sins. It’s not that God has decreed that these sins and those sins are unforgivable, it’s just that some sins by their very nature are sticky.

You may think that the sin you are doing right now is no big deal, and maybe it isn’t. Or maybe it is. Maybe, like a stone in a pond, its consequences ripple out forever and touch what you can scarcely imagine.

So my final question to you is this: Are you sure, really sure, that you want to do what you are doing? And would you walk away if you could see the future and find no place for repentance though you seek it carefully with tears? Sin is always bad. But beyond that, it’s the stickiness that you should mostly fear.