

PNEUMATOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

I. THE THIRD PERSON OF THE TRINITY

The word pneumatology comes from two Greek words, pneuma, meaning “spirit,” and logos, meaning “doctrine.” Hence, pneumatology is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity. One of the most misunderstood doctrines of the Bible is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The student will do well to carefully study what the Bible reveals to us about the Holy Spirit, our Comforter.

A. The Holy Spirit is a Person.

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity. That does not mean that He is inferior to the Father or the Son. It is simply an expression that is used because of the order in which the Trinity is most often found in the Bible (Matt. 28:19—20; 2 Cor. 13:14).

Some view the Holy Spirit as a force or as a power, not as a Person. This opinion has arisen partly because of the King James Version translators’ use of the word it in reference to the Spirit. The word spirit in the Greek language is in the neuter gender. Every noun in Greek has a gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter). But gender does not imply personality.

In the Greek language, inanimate cities are often in the feminine gender. In the German language, one of the words for girl is in the neuter gender. In the English language, we often refer to ships and cities as feminine.

The translators of the King James Version occasionally referred to the Holy Spirit as it (Rom. 8:26) to remind us that a pronoun must agree with its antecedent in gender and number (singular or plural). Since the antecedent (Spirit) was neuter, the pronoun (it) must be neuter as well.

1. The personality of the Holy Spirit is shown by His names.

a. Comforter. *This word (paraclete in the Greek) means one “called to your side,” as a lawyer.*

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, . . . shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” John 14:26

“But when the Comforter is come, . . . even the Spirit of truth, . . . he shall testify of me.” John 15:26

b. Guide.

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.” John 16:13

c. Intercessor. *The Holy Spirit intercedes (pleads) for us during our prayer time.*

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” Rom. 8:26—27

THE INTERCESSION OF THE Holy SPIRIT

- 1. We are too sinful to understand what we really need. (Rom. 8:26)**
- 2. The Holy Spirit knows the will of the Father for our lives. (Rom. 8:27)**
- 3. As we submit to the Lord’s will, His will becomes our will. (Rom. 8:27)**
- 4. The Holy Spirit prays with us for the requests we truly need. (Rom. 8:27)**

Thus our prayers will be answered and everything in our lives will work together for God’s ultimate good. (Rom. 8:28)

2. The personality of the Holy Spirit is shown by His characteristics.

a. He has a will.

“The selfsame Spirit, [is] dividing to every man severally as he will.” 1 Cor. 12:11

b. He has a mind.

“And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit.” Rom. 8:27

c. He has great knowledge. (John 14:26; 15:26; 1 Cor. 2:10—13)

“The Holy Ghost... shall teach you all things.” John 14:26

d. He has speech ability. (Acts 1:16; 28:25; Rev. 2:7, 11)

“The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers...” Acts 28:25

e. He has sensibilities.

1. He can be grieved by the Christian. (Eph. 4:30)

2. He can be lied to by the Christian. (Acts 5:3)

3. He can be quenched by the Christian. (1 Thess. 5:19)

4. *He can be resisted by the unsaved. (Acts 7:51)*

5. *He can be blasphemed by the unsaved. (Matt. 12:31)*

6. *He can be insulted by the unsaved. (Heb. 10:29)*

3. The personality of the Holy Spirit is shown by His abilities.

a. He teaches. **“The Holy Ghost... shall teach you all things.” John 14:26**

b. He guides. **“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Rom. 8:14**

c. He commissions. **“So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed.” Acts 13:4**

d. He intercedes. **“The Spirit itself maketh intercession.” Rom 8:26**

e. He commands. **“Then the Spirit said unto Philip, ‘Go near.’” Acts 8:29**

f. He restrains. **“My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” Gen. 6:3**

g. He loves. **“... for the love of the Spirit.” Rom. 15:30**

4. The personality of the Holy Spirit is shown by the unusual grammar of the New Testament:

Although the word Spirit is in the neuter gender, there are times when a masculine pronoun is used to refer to Him. This seems to be the case whenever one of the Holy Spirit’s duties is being revealed. This exception to grammatical rules indicates that the Bible views the Holy Spirit as a Person. In John 14:16, Jesus Christ used the masculine pronoun in referring to the Comforter.

B. The Holy Spirit is God.

1. The divine names for the Holy Spirit show that He is God.

a. The Spirit is called **“God.”**

“But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost... Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.’” Acts 5:3-4

b. The Spirit is called **“Lord.”**

“But we. . . are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Cor. 3:18

The Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son.

*“...baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”
Matt. 28:19*

2. The divine attributes of the Holy Spirit show that He is God.

a. He is eternal.

“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience.” Heb. 9:14

b. He is omniscient.

“The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” 1 Cor. 2:10

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, . . . shall teach you all things.” John 14:26

c. He is omnipotent.

“By his Spirit [Holy Spirit], he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent.” Job 26:13

“And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: ... For with God nothing shall be impossible.” Luke 1:35—37

d. He is omnipresent.

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit [Holy Spirit]? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?... If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.” Ps. 139:7-10

e. He is holy

It is often forgotten that His name contains one of His important attributes. He is God; therefore He is holy. It should be remembered always that the One Who is present with us at all times is holy.

f. He is truth.

“And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.” 1 John 5:6

g. He is life.

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Rom. 8:2

h. He is wisdom.

*“Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counselor hath taught him?”
Isa. 40:13*

i. He is sovereign.

“But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” 1 Cor. 12:11

In the context, this passage is dealing with spiritual gifts. The point is that the Holy Spirit is sovereign. No one can demand a certain spiritual gift. Although each Christian does have a spiritual gift given to him by the Spirit, it is important to note that the Spirit determines what the gift will be.

THE MOST MISERABLE PERSON

Who is the most miserable person in the world? One might answer that the wicked, unsaved person surely must be because he is on his way to hell. But that is not true. The unsaved can enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11:25). However, the true Christian cannot. The moment he accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in his life. He can no longer enjoy a life of sin. Therefore, a Christian who is not right with God is the most miserable person in the world. His own carnal desires will not let him enjoy his Christianity, and the Holy Spirit will not let him enjoy his sin.

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT'S PAST AND PRESENT WORK

A. *The Holy Spirit's work in the past*

1. In creation

Each member of the Godhead was present and active in the creation of the world and mankind. This included the Holy Spirit.

“And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” Gen. 1:2

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after likeness.” Gen. 1:26

“Thou sendest forth thy Spirit [Holy Spirit], they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.” Ps. 104:30

“By his spirit [Holy Spirit] he hath garnished the heavens, his hand hath formed the crooked serpent.” Job 26:13

“The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.” Job 33:4

2. In the inspiration of the Scriptures

One of the Holy Spirit's most important works was the inspiration of the Bible through approximately 40 men of God over a period of 1,500 years. His very name, Spirit (“Breath”), reminds us of the definition of inspiration (“God-breathed”).

“For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy foot stool.” Mark 12:36 quoting Ps. 110:1

“Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. . . . For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his dwelling place let another take.” Acts 1:16—20 quoting Ps. 69:25

“After Paul had said one word, ‘The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, ‘Go to this people and say: ‘Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull.’”’” Acts 28:25-27 quoting Isaiah 6:9-10

“For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2 Peter 1:21

3. In the Lord's work

Through the centuries the Holy Spirit has been actively empowering Christians for special tasks. As these Christians yield their lives to the Lord, they experience the joy of knowing the Holy Spirit's power in their lives. The power of the Holy Spirit is not for the preaching ministry alone. All responsibilities in the Lord's work need the power of the Holy Spirit behind them if they are to glorify God and count for eternity.

a. Bezaleel was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

"See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: And I have filled him with the Spirit of God." Exodus 31:2-3

"See, the Lord hath called by name Bezaleel... And he hath filled him with the Spirit of God... in all manner of workmanship; And to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in the cutting of stones... And he hath put in his heart that he may teach." Exodus 35:30-34

God called this man, Bezaleel, to work in manual labor and teach those skills to others. The preacher is not the only one who needs the power of God in his life. If God impresses upon a person a ministry of labor, or teaching, that person will need the power of the Holy Spirit as much as any other Christian.

b. Gideon was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

"But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon." Judges 6:34

Gideon felt totally inadequate for the job he was called by God to do (Judges 6:13-15). With the Spirit's help, Gideon and his three hundred men were able to win a great victory over the Midianites. The Christian soldier in today's world needs the power of the Holy Spirit as much as anyone else.

c. Samson was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Although we usually think of Samson as a poor example of a Christian worker, several facts should be remembered:

(1) His name is included in the "Faith Chapter," Hebrews 11:32.

(2) He judged Israel for 20 years. Judges 16:31.

(3) His two major failures occurred toward the end of his 20-year judgeship.

(4) He was filled with the Spirit on at least four occasions. Judges 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14. He is the only judge of which this is recorded.

d. David was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

“Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward.” 1 Sam. 16:13

e. It is important to realize that Christians of all ages need the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

QUENCHING THE HOLY SPIRIT “Quench not the Spirit.” 1 Thess. 5:19

The power of the Holy Spirit can be quenched by sin in a believer’s life. Saul and David are both Old Testament examples of this truth.

“But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him.” 1 Sam. 16:14-15

“Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.” (From David’s confession in Ps 51:11)

David’s sin with Bathsheba destroyed his testimony with others. He needed the Holy Spirit’s power in order to again have a successful ministry.

“Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.” Ps 51:12-13

B. The Holy Spirit’s work in the present

1. Foretold by Jesus

Jesus foretold the coming of the Holy Spirit:

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of him shall flow rivers of living water.’ (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” John 7:37—39

When Jesus was glorified after His resurrection that evening in the upper room, He breathed upon the disciples, signifying the coming of the Holy Spirit to every Christian.

“And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost.’” John 20:22

Since then every truly born-again Christian receives the Person of the Holy Spirit at his conversion.

2. In salvation

When an individual receives Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, he also receives the Holy Spirit to dwell in his body. The following Scriptures teach this important truth.

“For in him[Jesus Christ] dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” Col. 2:9—10

There is no need for a subsequent reception of the Holy Spirit into our lives. He comes in at salvation. There is no need to pray for the Holy Spirit’s presence in our lives, although we need to daily pray for His power and fullness in our lives.

At Pentecost the disciples did not “pray down the Spirit.” They were commanded by the Lord to “wait for the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4). The Holy Spirit’s coming at Pentecost was according to God’s schedule. Pentecost was the fiftieth day after the offering of the barley sheaf (Feast of Firstfruits) during the Passover week. Just as Jesus Christ came in “the fullness of the time” at Bethlehem (Gal. 4:4), so the Holy Spirit also came in God’s perfect timing at the Feast of Pentecost.

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” 1 Cor. 12:13

The Greek verbs in 1 Corinthians 12:13 are in the aorist tense, signifying a once-for-all occurrence. It is significant that we are never commanded to “receive the Holy Spirit,” but we are commanded in Ephesians 5:18 to “Be filled with the Spirit”; that is, we are to allow the Holy Spirit to have His full reign in our lives.

“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” Eph. 4:30

At salvation the Holy Spirit gives us a guarantee that someday “this corruptible” [body] will “put on incorruption” (1 Cor. 15:53). Our body is finally changed (Rom. 8:22-23).

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” 1 Cor 3:16

“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” 1 Cor 6:19

3. In Sanctification

Sanctification is the act of setting apart something or someone from the world and unto God's service. It is a work that only the Holy Spirit of God can do. As we yield to the Holy Spirit, he purifies our lives and uses us for God's work.

The phrase "filling of the Spirit" is often used to describe this process of sanctification. We are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." Eph. 5:18

The command of Ephesians 5:18 "be filled with the Spirit" is in the Greek present tense which denotes a continual process for the Christian. The more we yield to Him, the more He can use us. Without the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, our service for God will reap only wood, hay, and stubble (1 Cor. 3:11-17).

III. THE GIFTS AND GRACES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. Introduction

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life is a wonderful reality. He not only provides us with abilities to serve God more effectively but also helps us to mature as Christians by refining spiritual qualities in our lives. These spiritual advantages are revealed in two passages of Scripture. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 outlines nine special gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to believers. Galatians 5:22-23 discusses nine graces which make up the fruit (evident result) of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives.

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." 1 Cor. 12:4-11

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." Gal 5:22-24

NINE GIFTS (1 COR. 12:4-11)	NINE GRACES (GAL. 5:22-23)
Wisdom	Love
Knowledge	Joy
Faith	Peace
Healing	Longsuffering
Miracles	Gentleness
Prophecy (preaching)	Goodness
Discerning	Faith
Tongues (languages)	Meekness
Interpretation	Temperance

There are important distinctions between the gifts and the graces (fruit of the Spirit):

Distinctions Between The Gifts And The Graces

NINE GIFTS	NINE GRACES
Each gift is distinct.	All nine graces make up the fruit of the Spirit.
God determines which gift to give each believer.	God wants the believer to have all nine of these graces.
The gift equips the believer for service.	The fruit consists of important character qualities.
Gifts are represented in every church.	These graces are to be represented in every Christian.
The ultimate purpose of gifts is power in soul winning.	Their purpose is maturity of the Christian so that the world will see a difference in the believer.

B. The gifts of the Spirit 1 Cor. 12:4—11

Spiritual gifts are “extraordinary powers, distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating in their souls by the Holy Spirit.” —J. H. Thayer

1. Every believer has one spiritual gift.

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit of all.” 1 Cor. 12:7

“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” 1 Cor. 12:11

2. Each spiritual gift is given by the sovereign choice of the Holy Spirit. No Christian has a right to ask for a particular gift.

“But now hath God set the members every one of the in the body, as it hath pleased him.” 1 Cor. 12:18

3. Each spiritual gift is important because of the Giver, not the receiver.

“And there are differences of administration, but the same Lord.” 1 Cor. 12:5

“But one and the same Spirit works all these things...” 1 Cor. 12:11

For this reason, no one has a right to boast in his spiritual gift. The Christian is just the instrument; the power comes from God.

4. The great diversity of spiritual gifts brings unity to the body of Christ.

“But now are they many members, yet but one body.” 1 Cor. 12:20

It is clear from Scripture that we as Christians need each other. We cannot all be the “eye” in the body of Christ, nor can we all be the “foot.” God uses the analogy of the human body to show the importance of every member of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12—27).

5. No one should compare his spiritual gift with the spiritual gift of another.

“Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body;

but that the members should have the same care one for another.” 1 Cor. 12:22—25

6. God’s spiritual gift will never guide you contrary to God’s Word.

Some might think that God’s gift of wisdom, knowledge, or discernment might supersede what God has revealed in His Word. But the “same Lord” and “the selfsame Spirit” which gave us God’s Word are the Ones who give the diversity of gifts.

We should never be guilty of accusing the Holy Spirit of “leading us” in a direction which is contrary to God’s Word. The Holy Spirit will never lead a person to marry an unsaved person. God has already spoken on that subject (2 Cor. 6:14). We should never use “spirituality” as an excuse for disobedience (1 Sam. 15:1—35).

“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.” Matt. 15:8

C. The graces of the Spirit Gal. 5:22—23

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, ion gsuffering, gentleness, goodness,faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” Gal. 5:22—23

The fruit (singular) is made up of nine Christian graces (characteristics). They all need to be a part of the Christian’s walk. Just like the notes of a musical scale, all must be present in order to have a harmonious Christian life. The key to the fruit of the Spirit is love.

“Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” Matt. 22:37

The great love chapter (1 Cor. 13) shows that with love as the root, all of the Christian graces can blossom into fruit in the Christian’s life.

<i>ROOT (LOVE) – 1 COR. 13:4-13</i>	<i>FRUIT - GALATIANS 5:22-23</i>
<i>“The greatest of these is love.” (v.13)</i>	<i>Love</i>
<i>“rejoices in the truth” (v.6)</i>	<i>Joy</i>
<i>“is not easily provoked” (v. 5)</i>	<i>Peace</i>

<i>“suffers long” (v. 4)</i>	<i>Longsuffering</i>
<i>“is kind” (v. 4)</i>	<i>Gentleness</i>
<i>“thinks no evil” (v. 5)</i>	<i>Goodness</i>
<i>“believes all things” (v. 7)</i>	<i>Faith</i>
<i>“does not seek its own” (v.5)</i>	<i>Meekness</i>
<i>“does not behave rudely” (v. 5)</i>	<i>Temperance</i>

FAITH: A GIFT AND A GRACE

The word faith is the only characteristic found in both the listing of the nine spiritual gifts and the listing of the nine graces of the fruit of the Spirit. Evidently all Christians are to increase their faith, but there is also a special gift of faith given only to certain Christians. Occasionally a young person will become frustrated by someone who is able to “trust God to supply his every need.” Yet when he asks God for that same help nothing happens. Does that mean his faith is weak? Of course not. In fact, it may take more faith to keep trusting in God when there is no “evidence” of God’s working. George Muller, a man who knew the power of prayer, determined never to ask man for anything, only to ask God. But he also admitted that his belief was not to be the pattern for others. God had given to George Muller a special gift, the gift of faith.

IV. The Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (or the unpardonable sin, as it is sometimes called) is a doctrine that is only vaguely understood by most Christians. It is probably more misunderstood than any other teaching on the Holy Spirit.

A. The Scriptural account of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is found in Matthew 12:22—32, Mark 3:22—30, and Luke 12:10.

“Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb.’ and he healed him....But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, ‘This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.’ And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them,. . . ‘if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? 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.” Matt. 12:22—32

The following observations should be made:

Jesus Christ contrasted speaking against Himself with blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Questioning the deity of Christ could be expected, since He purposefully veiled His deity throughout most of His ministry.

Jesus never stated that the Pharisees had just committed the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

B. The Scriptural ingredients of the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit

It would seem that two facts were present in Matthew 12 and Mark 3 that perhaps cannot be duplicated today:

1. A work was done (before many observers) by Christ on earth that was unmistakably supernatural.

2. A work that was clearly the work of Deity was insultingly ascribed to Satan.

The doctrine of an “unpardonable sin” should not be viewed lightly. Is it possible for such a sin to be committed today? Several Bible scholars believe that it is not. Those who do believe that such a sin is possible equate it with the rejection of Jesus Christ as Savior.

“Sins against the Son of man may be forgiven because it was easily possible, by reason of His humble birth, lowly parentage, etc., to question the claims He put forth to deity. But when, after Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came, and presented to every man’s conscience evidence sufficient to prove the truth of these claims, the man who then refused to yield to Christ’s claims was guilty of resisting, insulting, and that amounts to blaspheming the testimony of the whole Godhead, of which the Spirit is the executive.” —William Evans

A person who fears he has committed the unpardonable sin is clearly indicating that he has not.

A hard-hearted person would not care about the things of the Lord. He would not be concerned with the things of salvation. A spiritually soft-hearted person, on the other hand, either is saved or is close to salvation. He should be shown the love of God which passeth knowledge.

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect [mature] in love.” 1 John 4:18

Even when it appears that God’s longsuffering has exhausted itself, he is still patient.

“Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.” Hosea 4:17

Yet later God says: “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?” Hosea 11:8

The sinner who repeatedly hears the gospel and knowingly and willingly rejects the Spirit’s tugging at his conscience to accept Christ as Savior may in time reach the place that he not only rejects God’s dealing in his life, but also despises God’s dealing to such an extent that he openly and defiantly speaks blasphemously against the Holy Spirit’s dealing in his life.

C. The Scriptural contrast between the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and the “sin unto death”

Occasionally the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is confused with the sin unto death. The expression “sin unto death” is found in 1 John 5:16, “There is a sin unto death.” This refers to a habitual life of sin that the Christian becomes involved in which ultimately leads to a premature death. The theme of Hebrews deals with this sin. At Kadesh-barnea the Jewish nation rejected God’s offer of the Promised Land and committed the “sin unto death.” As a result, all the Israelites over 20 years of age (except Joshua and Caleb) eventually died in the wilderness. In the book of Hebrews we are warned not to follow in their footsteps since we have it so much better than they did.

“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness, Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’ Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God...” Heb. 3:7-13

Throughout the book of Hebrews the Christian is warned not to harden his heart against God’s leading or God will take him home early. In Hebrews chapter 12 God gives the progression of His dealings with His children.

1. God exhorts His children to do right.

God uses parents, the Word of God, preachers, and Christian teachers to admonish His children to obey His commands.

“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children.” Heb 12:5

2. God chastises His children if they reject His exhortations.

God’s second step is sending tribulation into the lives of His children. It may be in the form of sickness, financial reverses, animosity among friends, discouragement, failure in a class, or hundreds of other ways.

“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.’” Heb. 12:5-6

3. As a last resort, God will finally take His child home to heaven prematurely.

An event that would normally be accompanied by the blessings of God will instead be accompanied by the sorrow of God’s judgment. The rewards that could be gained with additional life on earth will be forever lost. This is God’s final step in working with disobedient children who did not listen to the exhortations nor heed the chastisement of a holy God. They finally are guilty of sinning the “sin unto death.”

**“Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?”
Heb 12:9**