

As we open to Mark 3 today, we open to Jesus walking on this earth and confronting the Scribes, men of the Word. As we prepare to read the 11 verses that record that event stop and think what I just said. Jesus was face to face with a group of humans. Have you ever thought about how we appear to Jesus? Not spiritually, but physically. He has such a different perspective that we do. Remember the story of our origin. Genesis records that God the Son, Jesus Christ, took some dirt, or soil, and from the elements of the crust of this planet and shaped a body.

Suppose¹ we were going to make a human body. We would need fifty-eight pounds of oxygen and fifty quarts of water, two ounces of salt, three pounds of calcium, twenty-four pounds of carbon, and some chlorine, phosphorous, fat, iron, sulphur, and glycerin. We bring the items home -- so much dust and some water. There it is, our do-it-yourself kit for making a human body. The only problem is with the instructions.

The human body is so complex an entity that no scientist can comprehend more than a fraction of its composition and functions. A mere piece of skin the size of a postage stamp requires three million cells; a yard of blood vessels, four yards of nerves; one hundred sweat glands, fifteen oil glands, and twenty-five nerve endings! Yet the evolutionist would ask us to believe that the blind forces of chance produced our bodies.

Dr. Mayo of the Mayo Clinic had a humorous way of putting it. He said you would need enough potassium for one shot of a toy pistol, enough fat for seven bars of soap, enough iron for one large nail, enough sulphur to delouse a dog, enough lime to whitewash a chicken coup, enough magnesia for one dose of medicine and enough phosphorous for a few boxes of matches! The total purchase would not fill more than a couple of grocery bags...

So here we go. Face to face -- the Most Loving Person in the Universe, who gave more than any could imagine looked sadly into the eyes of a piece of His personal craftsmanship -- some dirt, some water, some air. Jesus had just supernaturally delivered a blind and mute man (in Matthew 12), and everyone was stunned at the unmistakable finger of God in their midst. And then Jesus uttered the ultimate curse. Jesus said that day "You will never have forgiveness -- if you die in your sins!"

Think of it, the Creator Himself, the One who scooped up the dirt and shaped it into a body, and then ignited that body with a soul, breathed in by the very breath of God!

That Infinite Being turned and looked at one of His creations.

¹ John Phillips, Exploring Genesis, Moody Press, Chicago, 1980, p.16, 49.

Just think what He may have thought.

Just think of the inexpressible emotions Jesus must have felt. Looking at a piece of clay, only alive at His command, only existing at His will – and seeing a completely self-hardened and self-blinded soul that would die without any hope. Exist without any recourse. Suffer without any end. Endure without and respite. Scream without any response. Burn without any end to the consuming. No wonder that Jesus warned more of Hell than He spoke of Heaven.

In our portion of God's Word today -- Jesus spoke three words that are so solemn, so hopeless, so devastating that they are hard to even comprehend for us who know and love Him. Jesus said: **never has forgiveness.**

Every day the one truth I cling to is the gracious forgiveness of our loving Savior. I know that however many times I fail – He forgives. I know that how every many times I fall – He restores. I know that how ever many times I sin – He cleanses, restores, and forgives. That is so encouraging, so refreshing, so hope filled. But Jesus said: **never has forgiveness.** Those are the darkest words of all – **the Endless Doom of a Soul.**

Those three words have shaken many believers to the very core of their being. Those words have troubled many sincere Christians, dogging their steps all through life. Those words have become what we call today – the unpardonable sin. Jesus said: **never has forgiveness.** Those are the darkest words of all – **the Endless Doom of a Soul.**

- If you have ever heard of the unpardonable sin – you need to listen to Jesus speak today.
- If you have ever wondered if you have sinned a sin that Jesus may not ever forgive – you need to hear what He has to say today.
- If you have ever secretly feared that you may someday face Jesus and have to answer for your sins – and you fear Him turning you away – you need to let Him speak words of comfort and assurance to your heart from His Word today.

As we open to Mark 3.20-30 we come to the place where Jesus pronounced the greatest doom of all. In verse 29 Jesus said: **never has forgiveness.** Those are the darkest words of all – **the Endless Doom of a Soul.**

- Far worse than the end of the world – is the Doom of the Soul.
- Far worse than the death of a body – is the Doom of the Soul.
- Far worse than a pain filled life of deprivation and hardship – is the Doom of the Soul.

But today, side by side with the most gloomy, hopeless verse in the Bible – is the most hope filled, comforting verse in the Bible. Five words that should ring in your heart if you have ever feared the grave, if you have ever feared the judgment, if you ever fear not making it to Heaven. In verse 28 Jesus said: **all sins will be forgiven.** Those are the brightest words of the Bible --

Side by side in two verses in the Gospel by Mark are the three darkest words of the Bible, and the five brightest words. And there is a message for each of us from those two verses. The messages are:

Mark 3:20-30

1st Jesus Serves: 20 Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. 21 But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind."

2nd Scribes Scoff: 22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons."

3rd Jesus Explains: 23 So He called them to Himself and said to them in parables: "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. 27 No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.

*4th Jesus Promises: 28 "Assuredly, I say to you, **all sins will be forgiven the sons of men**, and whatever blasphemies they may utter;*

*5th Jesus Warns: 29 but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit **never has forgiveness**, but is subject to eternal condemnation"— 30 because they said, "He has an unclean spirit."*

Today begin our journey through the next paragraph in the Gospel by Mark. These verses contain one of the most feared, probably the most misunderstood, and certainly the most horrible words ever uttered by Jesus.

Jesus the Savior of the World, who came to seek and save the lost says side by side the greatest and worst words ever spoken to any humans. What were those words?

- 1st Jesus says that there is no sin that God can't and won't forgive.
- Then Jesus warns that there is a sin for which there is no forgiveness. This is such an important passage that we are going to take two weeks to digest it all.

We need to understand the context of this enigmatic passage, then the scope of Christ's declaration, and finally the meaning of unpardonable sins.

To rest any troubled minds who may fear that they have somehow committed this sin which can never be forgiven – on the basis of Christ's words in Mark 3.28. Rest your finger there on those words, allow your eyes to follow along – hear the voice of Jesus speaking. Let Him assure you today!

- The unpardonable sin is not taking God the Father, God the Son or even God the Holy Spirit's Name in vain. **"Assuredly I say to you – all sins will be forgiven..."**
- The unpardonable sin is not any form of sexual sin – no matter how vile – not adultery, not perversion. **"Assuredly I say to you – all sins will be forgiven..."**
- The unpardonable sin is not any form of murder, even the most heinous forms. **"Assuredly I say to you – all sins will be forgiven..."**

So what is it then? Listen to the kind voice of a great Pastor from Chicago as Kent Hughes explains this sin that can never be forgiven.

Very simply it is the ongoing, continual rejection of the witness of the Holy Spirit to the Divinity and Saviorhood of Christ.

- *It is the perversion in the heart -- which chooses to call light darkness and darkness light.*
- *It is continuing rejection of the witness of the Holy Spirit, whether that witness be a quiet witness in the conscience, the rational witness of the Word, or even miracles and wonders.*

The scribes here were at the very brink of committing this sin...We must add that the unforgivable sin—blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—is a sin which requires knowledge...their daily business was the Scriptures ... they were therefore subject to the constant witness of the Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures...It is not the ignorant blasphemer on the street who is in danger of committing the unforgivable sin, but the man or woman in the Church who knows the Scriptures, has heard the Word held forth with accuracy, has seen something of the miraculous power of God in changed lives, and yet rejects it all...The warning is particularly to those who have grown up in the Church and may even have some theological education, but have willfully rejected it and in their heart of hearts attribute supposed Christian reality to evil...To those who are afraid they have committed the sin, we can say with absolute confidence that their being so troubled is infallible testimony they have not committed it... Note that as vile as the blasphemy of the scribes was, Jesus did not say they had committed this sin, but only warned them².

Jesus always offered only one way out of sin. Sorrowful admission of guilt, and humble requests for mercy. Confession and Forgiveness. Belief and repentance.

As long as any person seeks Jesus and hates his sin, even if unable to stop at times – Jesus offers forgiveness. But to the one who rejects God, turns from the Light, hardens their heart – and never turns back, can never repent, and thus will never be forgiven. The work of the Holy Spirit is rejected, the escape route is closed, and the way of salvation is forever shut.

Before we examine those verses (28 and 29) there are the initial verses to explore. Rapidly follow along with the event and the lessons that Jesus taught even in this dreadful exchange.

- 1. JESUS SAYS DIVISION IS DEADLY. 3:24-26** **“If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.”** ^{NKJV} Jesus said that the line of reasoning they used (Jesus using Satan to defeat Satan’s emissaries) would mean that there was civil war in Satan’s camp. A king would not get rid of his own army; Satan would not destroy his own power. When someone fights them self they are destroyed. So in Christ's family when we fight against our own brothers and sisters we destroy the effectiveness of our witness for Christ. Galatians 5:15 But if you

²Hughes, R. K. 1989. *Mark : Jesus, servant and savior*. Preaching the Word. Crossway Books: Westchester, Ill.
macintosh hd:users:juliabarnett:public:dtbm:mp3:ghs good heart series:study guides:ghs-3_the unpardonable sin_040208am.doc Tuesday, March 09, 2010 Page 4

bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! **“And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.”** ^{NKJV} A kingdom that is divided and set against itself will not last long. So a family that isn’t united, a marriage that isn’t mutual, a church that isn’t harmonious – will not last long as a testimony for Christ, and a conduit of His blessing. We must strive together for the same goals in our marriages, families, and fellowships – is what Christ is saying. ***DIVISION IS DEADLY:***

“On³ no point has the abuse of the right of private judgment produced so much evil. The divisions of Christians are one great cause of the weakness of the visible church. They often absorb energy, time and power which might have been well bestowed on better things. They furnish the unbeliever with a prime argument against the truth of Christianity. They help the devil. Satan indeed is the chief promoter of religious divisions. If he cannot extinguish Christianity, he labors to make Christians quarrel with one another, and to set everyone against each other. No one knows better than the devil that “to divide is to conquer.”

Let us resolve, so far as in us lies, to avoid all differences, dissensions and disputes in religion.

Let us loathe and abhor them as the plague of the churches. We cannot be too jealous about all saving truths. But it is easy to mistake dead scruples for conscientiousness, and zeal about mere trifles for zeal about the truth.

Nothing justifies separation from a church but the separation of that church from the gospel.

Let us be ready to concede much, and make many sacrifices for the sake of unity and peace.

“And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come.” ^{NIV} Just as division would harm the forces of evil – so it is deadly to us. Jesus said division makes us fall, and prevents us from standing. James 1:8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

2. **JESUS SAYS DISARMAMENT LEADS TO DEFEAT 3:27** **No one can enter** his realm to **carry off** (*diarpasai*, “plunder”) his possessions **unless he first** binds the strong man (shows he is more powerful). **Then he can rob** (*diarpasei*, “plunder”) the realm, releasing the enslaved victims. Remember Abraham and his 318-servant army? In ancient times wealthy people had their own security. The picture Jesus paints is of Satan as a strong man (with many servant demons) in this parable. *“His house is the realm⁴ of evil where there is sickness, demon possession, and death. It also refers to a possessed individual in whom Satan’s demons live. Satan’s possessions are the demons—those beings through whom Satan carries out his work in the world. The only way those possessions could be carried off would be for someone to first tie up the strong man—the only way for the demons to be cast out is for someone to first limit Satan’s power”*. And that is exactly what Jesus did when He came to “destroy the works of the Devil” (1 John

³ Mark. The Crossway classic commentaries. Crossway Books: Wheaton, Ill; 1993.

⁴ Barton, B. B. 1994. *Mark 3.20-30*. Life application Bible Commentary . Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, Ill.

3:8). What is the lesson for us? Be strong in the Lord and in His powerful spiritual weapons lest we be swept away in defeat!

- SATAN FELL AND WAS EJECTED FROM HEAVEN. Isaiah records this event ([Isaiah 14:12-15](#)), which is probably when the angels who followed Satan became demons, and were also cast from heaven.
- SATAN AND HIS HOSTS CAN GREATLY INFLICT DAMAGE UPON THIS WORLD. In Job they can cause storms, sickness, death, and warfare but only with God's permission ([Job 1:12](#); [2:6](#)). Some of the especially malignant angels are bound until the Tribulation; others are waiting final judgment ([Jude 6](#)).
- SATAN IS DEFEATED. Jesus showed us that God's Word can defeat anything Satan has to fight with ([Luke 4:1-13](#)). But for now he is the "god of this world" ([2 Corinthians 4:4](#)). and he tries to exercise his lost lordship. Our greatest weapon is to walk by faith as Christ defeats our adversary the Devil ([Romans 6:12-13](#); [Ephesians 2:1-3](#); [3:10-12](#); [6:10-18](#); [Colossians 2:15, 20](#)).

3. **JESUS DECLARES ALL SINS ARE FORGIVEABLE. 3:28** **"Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter."**^{NRSV} In light of the preceding charges Jesus issued a strong warning. The words, **I tell you the truth** (lit., "Amen [truly], I say to you"), are a recurring formula of solemn affirmation (13 times in Mark) found only in the Gospels and always spoken by Jesus. Jesus declared, **All the sins and blasphemies** (derogatory words vs. God) **of men** (generic, "people") are open to God's gracious forgiveness (cf. 1:4). ***FORGIVENESS IS ABSOLUTE:*** "These words fall lightly⁵ on the ears of many people. They see no particular beauty in them. But to the person who is alive to his own sinfulness and is deeply aware of his need of mercy, these words are sweet and precious. **"All sins will be forgiven." The sins of youth and age -the sins of head, hand, tongue and imagination—the sins against all God's commandments—the sins of persecutors, like Saul—the sins of idolaters, like Manasseh—the sins of open enemies of Christ, like the Jews who crucified him—the sins of backsliders from Christ, like Peter—all may be forgiven. The blood of Christ can cleanse all away. The righteousness of Christ can cover all, and hide all from God's eyes."** There is one⁶ sin that cannot be forgiven—blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This sin does not appear to be a single act. Even the Scribes Jesus said "were in danger of..." it appears that the persistent state of rejection was what Jesus was referring to. This is the unforgivable sin—the deliberate refusal to acknowledge and accept God's power in Christ. This condition betrays an irreversible hardness of heart. Chosen, repeated rejection of the work of the Holy Spirit is blasphemy because it is rejecting God himself. Sometimes believers worry that they have accidentally committed this unforgivable sin. But only those who have turned their back on God and rejected all faith have any need to worry. When Jesus said that this sin was unforgivable after saying all sin was forgivable He implied that this sin was eternal because they would never ask for His gracious forgiveness. They were eternally holding onto their sins – and would pay the eternal price for sin.

⁵ *Mark*. The Crossway classic commentaries. Crossway Books: Wheaton, Ill; 1993.

⁶ Barton, B. B. 1994. *Mark 3.20-30*. Life application Bible Commentary . Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, Ill.

Listen to what J.C. Ryle, the evangelical bishop of Liverpool who lived 1816 to 1900 said about this passage:

The sin against the Holy Ghost is ever attended with these two symptoms—an absence of all contrition, and of all desire of forgiveness. Now, if thou canst truly say that thy sins are a burden to thee, that thou dost desire forgiveness and wouldst give anything to attain it, be of good comfort; thou hast not yet, and by God's grace never shall commit that unpardonable offense⁷.

Lord Jesus Christ, I believe that you are who you say you are. I believe that you are God. I believe that you died for *my* sins. I rest my hope of eternal life in you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Watch out while you have the Light with you!

The unpardonable sin today is when an individual so totally turn their backs on God's revelation that they permanently cut themselves off from salvation. "We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day," Jesus said; "night is coming, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

One vivid moment of World War II, was the American battle for shipping in the North Atlantic. The Navy was in the midst of a heavy battle with Nazi ships and submarines on a moonlessly dark night. The Admiral dispatched six planes from the carrier to search out targets. But upon engagement with those enemies, while the planes were in the air - a total blackout was ordered to protect the aircraft carrier from attack. Without lights on the carrier's deck it was impossible for the six planes to land. Repeated radio calls for the lights to be turned on just long enough for them to land were ignored. For the sake of thousands of sailors no lights were permitted. Soon the six planes ran out of fuel, crashing in the freezing water of the dark Atlantic, and all the crew members perished. That tragic piece of history is a grim reminder that there is a point known only to God, when He turns out the lights, and further opportunity for salvation is forever lost. That is why Paul told the Corinthians, "Now is 'the acceptable time,' behold, now is 'the day of salvation' " (2 Cor. 6:2). One who rejects full light can have no more light-and no forgiveness.⁸

⁷ Barton, B. B. 1994. *Mark*. Life application Bible commentary . Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, Ill.

⁸ Adapted from MacArthur, J. 1989. *Matthew 12*. Moody Press: Chicago