

The Unpardonable Sin

Mark 3:20-35

Introduction

As we continue our study in the Gospel of Mark, let us read Mark 3:20-35 today.

And He came home, and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal.

When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses."

The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons."

And He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan?"

"If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

"If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

"If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished!

"But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house.

"Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter;

"but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" –

because they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him and called Him.

A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You."

Answering them, He said, "Who are My mother and My brothers?"

Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers!"

"For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother."

Now I love historical trivia. I found some important historical events that occurred during this month many years ago. These include:

- 253 years ago – the great pioneer Daniel Boone was born;
- 195 years ago – Beethoven took his first piano lesson from Franz Joseph Hayden, and it cost him 19 cents;
- 145 years ago – Abraham Lincoln married Mary Todd;
- 65 years ago – the entrance to King Tut's tomb was discovered in Egypt, and the discoverer almost missed the find of a lifetime

when he ignored his worker's comments that they had discovered steps;

- 20 years ago – an overdrawn book was returned to the library at the University of Cincinnati. It had been out since 1823, or 164 years! The fine was figured to be \$22,646! It would take an honest person to return that book!

I like to think of all the wonderful things that happened years ago. Today, however, we will study a passage that records something very tragic that happened many years ago. In fact, it is known by those who write about this situation, and you may have heard something about it, as the unpardonable sin.

As we come to this passage in the Gospel of Mark, I almost need to don the hat of an evangelist because it is directed to those who do not know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Perhaps there is someone hearing this today, who does not know Jesus Christ as their Savior. I caution you to listen carefully because you may find yourself in the party with the men in this passage. If you are a believer, take heart and rejoice because your sins have been forgiven.

The Crowds Continue to Grow

Notice first that Mark 3:20 begins with the simple thought that the crowds following Jesus are continuing to grow.

And He came home, and the crowd gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal.

Jesus has returned to His home in Capernaum – the borrowed house where He lives. The crowds have gathered about that home and have probably packed in the front foyer area and even spilled out into the street. These people are so close to Christ and His disciples that they are not even able to eat. They could not pause because the crowd had found out that this Man could heal.

Now, Jesus is not specifically going to them to heal them. I believe they are probably rushing to Him. They are not even waiting for His hand, but are reaching out to touch Him.

The masses were following Jesus and, I think, were believing that He was who He said He was. Matthew, in fact, expands this account and tells us that the people were saying,

. . . This man cannot be the Son of David, can he? (Matthew 12:23)

The people were catching on. And although the opposition is rising, the people, I think, were beginning to believe the words of Jesus Christ.

A present day application of this simple truth is: *Spiritual discernment is not for religious leaders only.*

The tragedy of this is that these people followed their religious leaders and failed to question; failed to think for themselves. As a result, there was:

- rebellion instead of revival;
- riot instead of repentance;
- crucifixion instead of the kingdom that had been offered.

Understand that in the context of this setting; in this dispensational context, the people were bound by the decision of their religious leaders. If their leaders said, "Yes," the people would directly benefit. If their leaders said, "No," the people would suffer.

This is similar to the situation of a man who has a wife and children. That man can decide something for himself, but it will ultimately, affect his family.

So understand that these people were following their religious leaders. The people were starting to step back and say, "Look, this Man must be the Son of David; He must be genuine," but because their religious leaders would refuse Jesus, they would indirectly and later, directly suffer the consequences.

Jesus' Family Continues to Misunderstand

Notice secondly, in Mark 3:21, that Jesus' family continues to misunderstand.

When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, "He has lost His senses."

This is Jesus' own family saying, "He's mad. He's crazy."

They had good reason to say this. Let me give three.

1. First, Jesus had literally, thrown away His reputation.

Jesus had thrown away the reputation that He probably had as a very honest, hard working carpenter. He was a very compassionate man who

was almost certainly well known. Before He entered the ministry, people probably loved Him.

However, Jesus throws away His reputation and becomes a maverick. He begins saying some very strange things.

It is fascinating to note that Jesus does not care what His reputation is. One man wrote that for most people, the voice of other people; the voice of their neighbors is louder than the voice of their God. But Jesus Christ would continue to do the will of His Father regardless of what the neighbors said; regardless of what society declared.

Jesus had thrown away His reputation.

2. Secondly, Jesus had forfeited His security.

Understand that even in that day, there was security – and Jesus Christ had forfeited it. This is the security of things that we consider very valuable; such as, a bank account, a credit file, equity, and things of this sort. Jesus had no credit file; no equity. He lived in a borrowed house and spent most of His nights on a fishing boat. He had forfeited His personal security – He must be crazy.

3. Thirdly, Jesus had ignored His personal safety.

Understand that you do not take on the Pharisees; you do not take on the scribes. You do not put these religious leaders in a box; you do not back them in a corner and expect to get away with it. In fact, as a result of this, death threats would be constant. Yet, Jesus threw away His own personal safety.

Jesus would often travel on the road that was known as “the highway of robbers” because He had to get to Jericho. He disregarded, as it were, His personal safety because of His mission.

So everyone watching this Man could see all of the things that He was doing. It was amazing! They figured that He must be crazy; He must be out of His senses; He must be mad!

His family,

... went out to take custody of Him . . .

The original word for this is the word that we could translate as “arrest”. They come to forcibly take Him.

The Pharisees would like to arrest Him, but for His own harm. His family wanted to arrest Him, but for His own good.

Understand that Jesus’ family love Him. So they are going to come to this poor, demented Jesus, who has gone out of His head, and take Him away for some rest. They think, “Maybe, if we get Him home, His lunacy will end.”

So Jesus’ family continues to misunderstand.

A present day application of this is:

The work of God does not need men’s approval.

I think, in fact, that most people who frequently do a work for Jesus Christ, are often misunderstood.

We look at men like D. L. Moody, whom I greatly admire, and we see all of the grand things that he did. We forget that in his day, the media dubbed him with the title, “Crazy Moody.” He would pick up the newspaper and would not see what we see today, but would see headlines that said, “Crazy Moody In Town.”

People are often misunderstood. I know you are, aren’t you?

One of my favorite historical characters is Winston Churchill. The other day, I was listening to Dr. Sweeting, the former president of Moody Bible Institute, preach. He was telling a story about Winston Churchill, who was often misunderstood. In fact, you either hated him or you loved him. A lady, who was one of his arch enemies, came up to him. She had spit in her eye and was quite mad. She said, “Mr. Churchill, if I were your wife, I’d put arsenic in your tea.”

Churchill, without even batting an eye, replied, “Lady, if you were my wife, I’d drink it.”

When we look at a person like Jesus Christ, we need to understand that He was completely; totally misunderstood.

The Religious Leaders Continue to Accuse

Notice, thirdly, that the religious leaders continue to accuse Jesus. Look at Mark 3:22-30.

Verse 22a tells us,

The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, . . .

These scribes travel over a hundred miles to come down and give their verdict, and it is, according to Mark 3:22b,

... “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.”

In other words, “He has the lord of the house; He has the prince of the demons as His power.”

One of the problems that Jesus had given them was the fact that He exorcised demons from demon possessed people. In the scribes’ writings, that was proof that one had the power of God. Only one who had the power of God could remove an evil spirit from a person.

According to Luke’s expansion of this in Luke 12, just before the scribes say this, Jesus Christ exorcises a demon. So He boxes them in the corner. They cannot deny it, but instead of attributing it to the power of God, they say He is empowered by Satan himself; He is demon possessed, not just with a demon, but with the person of Satan.

Notice the way that Jesus Christ responds to them. He says, in Mark 3:23b-25,

... How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

In other words, Jesus says, “Look! Wake up! Common sense! If I’m empowered by Satan, why would I cast out a demon that’s doing harm? What sense would that make? I’m dividing My efforts.”

He then, illustrates this further, in Mark 3:27, by saying basically, “Look, if a burglar goes into a house, he cannot rob until he ties up the owner.”

Jesus Christ says, in effect, “I am invading Satan’s territory, but in order to do it, I must be more powerful than Satan. Can’t you see that I, in fact, have the power of God?”

Yet, these religious leaders refused to see. In fact, they rejected three witnesses. Let me give you these before we discuss the unpardonable sin.

1. The first witness the religious leaders rejected was that of the Father.

These men had been there and had heard the rumbling in the clouds,

... You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased. (Mark 1:11)

The leaders had been there and had heard this, but they refused it.

2. Secondly, they rejected the witness of the words and the works of Jesus Christ.

In Mark 2:10, in fact, Jesus had the power over demons. He fulfilled prophecy after prophecy, yet they refused the testimony of the person of Jesus Christ.

3. Thirdly, they refused the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Let me give two thoughts on this. The function of the Holy Spirit, in that day and in our day, is two-fold:

- The first function of the Holy Spirit is to reveal the truth of God to men and women – He is the revealer of truth.
- The second function of the Holy Spirit is to enable an individual to recognize the truth when they see it.

Jesus Christ was there, literally in front of these leaders, visibly performing miracles that could only be attributed to the power of God. The Holy Spirit enabled these men to recognize the truth. They knew it and yet, they rejected it instead of receiving it.

The Holy Spirit has an unusual work in our lives. If you are without Jesus Christ, it is the work of conviction; it is the work of proving, in your heart, that you need Jesus Christ. You can ignore it and refuse it, or you can accept it. The Holy Spirit is at work, even now.

I read a story of a European man, by the name of Dr. Webster, who was a well known, scholarly professor. Dr. Webster committed a terrible murder and was thrown into one of the worst dungeons in France. Three days later, he called to the jailer and said, “Please, take the man out of the cell next to me and put him somewhere else. All night he is saying, ‘Dr. Webster is a murderer. Dr. Webster is a murderer. Dr. Webster is a murderer.’”

The jailer looked at him and replied, “Sir, the cell next to you is empty.”

No one had to tell me that I needed Jesus Christ. When I heard the gospel, the Holy Spirit used that truth in my life, and enabled me to recognize that I needed Him.

The Holy Spirit enabled these men to recognize that Jesus was who He said He was, and they refused it.

What is the unpardonable sin?

Let me give a definition of the unpardonable sin. Are you ready? What is the unpardonable sin? What was it to the people in that time, and how can we translate it through time to us today, if possible?

The unpardonable sin is:

Recognizing the truth of who Jesus Christ is and refusing to receive the truth in the person of Jesus Christ.

It is not necessarily one act; it is a lifestyle of rebellion. It is a lifestyle that says, “No,” to God. It says, “I don’t want Jesus Christ. I know He’s true and I know He’s who He says He is, but I don’t want Him; I refuse Him.”

One man wrote, “The unpardonable sin is the sin that you will not confess.”

Repentance has to be our part. Forgiveness is God’s part. He will not automatically wipe all of our sins, as unsaved individuals, under the carpet. He will not say, “Okay, I’ll blink and you slip into heaven.” That does not happen. There has to be something done on our part, and that is, simply going to Him and instead of refusing, receiving.

Jesus Continues to Invite

Notice, in Mark 3:31-35, Jesus continues to invite. I love this. It is as if He just told the people what they needed to do to go to hell – they needed to refuse Him. Then, He turns around and says, “Now, if you want to go to heaven, this is what you need to do.” Look at verse 33.

Answering them, He said, “Who are My mother and My brothers?” Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, “Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

In this context, what is doing the will of God? Doing the will of God, in this passage, is receiving the person of Jesus Christ for who He says He is. Jesus is saying, “If you do that; if you do the will of God in receiving the person of Christ, you are then included in My family. You then, are My brother. You then, are My sister. You are My mother.”

There is a kinship because you have received, and that is the will of God.

The family of God consists of people having several things in common. These include:

- an experience – they have received Christ;

- an interest – they are promoting Jesus Christ;
- a goal – they are becoming more like Jesus Christ.

If you have accepted Him, then you are part of the family. There is a kinship that transcends any family tie. It is stronger because we belong to Him.

Conclusion – Two Questions That Demand Answers

Now, there are two questions, in closing, that demand answers. I would imagine that you are probably thinking of these questions.

1. Number one, “Is it possible for a Christian to commit the unpardonable sin?”

Is it possible for you, as a believer, to commit the unpardonable sin? The answer is, “No.”

You, as a believer, cannot commit the unpardonable sin because when you accepted Jesus Christ, your past sin, your present sin, and all of your future sin is under the blood. You will never stand guilty before God. You are justified – it is as if you never sinned; you are justified in your standing. It is a judicial act; He declares you righteous.

You might ask, “I do sin, don’t I?”

Of course. That forfeits future reward; that forfeits the abundant life, but it will never forfeit your eternal home.

So, it is impossible for a Christian to commit the unpardonable sin. As Romans 8:1 tells us,

. . . there is . . . no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 5:1 says that,

. . . we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

There is a peace treaty that has been signed and God will never erase His name. Nothing then, can separate us from the love of the person of Jesus Christ.

I will say this cautiously because I do not want you to misunderstand. As a seventeen year old boy, I was rebelling against the Lord; against the truth that I knew about Jesus Christ, and I was unsaved. I had heard a preacher preach that it was possible to commit the unpardonable sin and that the unpardonable sin was cursing the Holy Spirit.

It says in Mark 3:29 that you “blaspheme” the Holy Spirit. I am telling you that the word

“blaspheme” is a general term that refers to “a lifestyle of rejecting Him”. That is the blaspheme of the Holy Spirit.

Now, in my rebellion, I can remember going into my bedroom, shutting the door, and thinking, “If there is the possibility of sealing my doom, I will do it. God will never have me and I will never have Him.”

I then, thought of every possible word I could think of and I cursed the person of the Holy Spirit.

The wonderful thing is that the Holy Spirit never let go of me. He kept working. One year later, in that same room, I can still remember climbing out of my bed and getting on my knees and receiving.

As long as I was in that rebellious state, I was living the life of an unpardonable sin. That was because I was refusing the person of Christ. However, the moment I accepted Him, He forgave me.

2. Number two, “Is it possible for an unsaved person to commit the unpardonable sin?”

The answer to that is, “Yes.” It is unpardonable as long as you refuse to repent.

My friend, as long as there is breath in your life; as long as you are alive, you *can* come to Christ and be forgiven. As John 6:37 tells us,

. . . the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

I read a tragic story recently, of a man who had committed many crimes. He was, in fact, a serial

murderer. He was placed in prison and was doomed for the electric chair.

His brother, however, was a very powerful politician in that town, and very wealthy, as well. So, in the last hour of the man’s life, his brother got, from the governor of the state, a pardon.

This brother stuck the pardon in his pocket and headed for the prison. Then, he thought to himself, “Perhaps, my brother has not changed. Maybe, there is a chance that he still has murderous intent.”

So, instead of going to the authority, this brother went directly to the man’s jail cell. He said, “My brother, listen, if you got out of here today; if somehow you could get out, what would you do?”

The man, still seething with anger and hatred, said, “If I got out of here, I would kill every witness against me. I would make sure the prosecutor was dead tonight.”

So, his brother, with the pardon in his pocket, turned and walked out of the jail. The murderer died.

That is a classic illustration of the person of Jesus Christ coming to you with a pardon. He is the pardon. All He wants you to do is be in such a state that you will say, “Yes, I am willing to repent. I am willing to receive the person of Christ into my life.”

The moment you simply receive, you then move from the state of an unpardonable sin into the family of God.

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