

The Sin That Can't Be Forgiven – Mark 3:22-30

I. INTRODUCTION

A. “Turn It Up!”

1. It seems the young are forever doing foolish things.
2. The group I hung out with was no exception – we did some *crazy* things.
3. One of them was to listen to music *really, really loud*.
 - a. we loved concerts at the Forum, at the Anaheim Convention Center, & Long Beach Arena.
 - b. a solid wall of Marshall amps 15 feet high across the back of the stage was a must.
 - c. no matter how loud it was, we told them to *turn it up!*
 - d. we blasted the stereos in our cars and rooms until our parents told us to turn it down,
 - e. then we'd slip on the headphones and crank it to 10.
4. No wonder our parents thought we were ignoring them; we'd gone nearly deaf and couldn't hear them when they were talking to us.
5. Later we learned what all of that loudness had done to our ears.
 - a. it had *damaged* the hearing mechanism.
 - b. the tiny hairs that pick up sound in the cochlea in the inner ear had been sheared off and worn down – especially those hairs that sense higher frequencies.
 - c. it was this damage that caused a continual ringing & buzzing in our ears *for hours after* the concert was over,
 - d. and why we had to keep turning the hi tone knob higher and higher on our stereos.
6. *Repeated abuse* of our hearing led to the loss of its *ability* to function.

B. A More Dangerous Abuse

1. Just as constant abuse of your ears leads to a loss of hearing, the continual *abuse of truth* will lead to a *far more dangerous loss*.
2. We see that in our text today.

II. TEXT

A. Setting The Scene

1. Let's set the scene. Jesus has been working His way through the cities, towns, and villages of Galilee for several months now.
2. His power to heal and authority in teaching have been reported far and wide.
3. Vs. 7-8 tell us people were coming from many miles away to see & hear Him.
4. The religious authorities in Galilee grew gravely concerned about Jesus' rising popularity.
 - a. they had reason to be concerned –
 - b. in the years before Jesus came there'd been several false teachers & prophets who'd managed to raise a loyal following.
 - c. then they'd gone off and tried to defeat the Romans.
 - d. the Romans had always responded with yet another harsh crack-down on *all* the Jews.

- e. they would also depose the current Jewish rulers, saying if they couldn't keep the peace, they'd find men who could.
- 5. So as the Jewish authorities of Galilee watched Jesus, they began to worry He would turn out to be just one more rabble-rouser who'd end up as the cause of *their* being removed from their cozy positions of power.
- 6. They tried to squelch His popularity by asking Him some tough questions and challenging His practices.
 - a. but every attempt they made, backfired badly.
 - b. they came off looking like fools before the common people,
 - c. and this only served to elevate Jesus in the public's eyes.
- 7. So in desperation, the religious leaders of Galilee sent a call for help to their headquarters in Jerusalem.
 - a. that's where the heavy-weights of Jewish thought and teaching were.
 - b. Jerusalem had indeed heard about Jesus, and sent some experts in the law, to go investigate –

B. V. 22

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

1. As you look at a map, Jerusalem is 80 miles *SOUTH* of Galilee, so why does it say the scribes came *down* from Jerusalem?
2. While we think of travel in terms of map & compass directions, the ancients thought of it in terms of *elevation*.
 - a. Jerusalem was located in the central hills of Israel, some 3300 ft. *higher* than Galilee.
 - b. but even more importantly than Jerusalem's location was its *importance* as the City of God.
 - c. Jerusalem was exalted among the Jews it didn't matter where you went from there, it was *always down*.
3. As these scribes left their lofty perch of importance & privilege in Jerusalem, be assured they were quite smug in their sense of mission as they went to help out the poor, backward folk of Galilee.
 - a. oh yes, that's the way they saw the Galileans, as country bumpkins.
 - b. though Galilee was a gorgeous and lush area, the people who lived there were thought by the urbane and sophisticated people of Jerusalem to be a bunch of back-wood hicks.
 - c. they even had a funny accent.
 - d. remember at the high priest's house when Peter was charged with being one of Jesus' disciples, they said his *speech* gave him away.
 - e. these scribes from Jerusalem thought they were going to go and set the poor country-folk straight.
 - f. this upstart rabbi would be no match for their towering intellects and learning.
4. So they arrived and witnessed Jesus' power to heal and cast out demons from the possessed.
5. The miracles were *so obvious*, there was no denying them – but they weren't about to accept what the miracles gave evidence to – that Jesus was the

- Messiah.
6. Though that was the obvious & logical conclusion, it was not something they would admit.
 7. And since they're the experts and have to render some explanation – they latch on to this – “Uh, Jesus is *Himself* possessed.
 - a. “Yeah, that’s it. He’s possessed by a really powerful demon and is using *that* power to conquer lesser demons.”
 - b. they even had a name for the demon that was controlling Jesus – “Beelzebub.”
 - c. just as we know the name of some of the angels; Michael & Gabriel for instance – so they thought they had discovered the names of some of the chief demons who assisted Satan. This was one of them.
 8. Among the Jews, exorcism was something they practiced and saw a measure of success in.
 - a. Jewish exorcists would spend hours in elaborate rituals seeking to do one thing – discover the demon’s name.
 - b. they thought knowing its name was the key for casting it out, because then you could apply the authority of God to it *specifically*.
 - c. so they would try to trick the demon into giving up its name.
 9. Jesus’ method with the demon possessed was totally different – He didn’t need the demon’s name; He simply said, “Come out!” and the demon fled! This amazed the people for they had never seen or heard of such authority and power before.
 10. These scribes try to dispense with Jesus by saying that His power comes from the demonic realm – in fact, they’re so confident in their diagnosis of Jesus, they say they know the demon’s name.
 11. Now, if that were the case, then why didn’t they help Jesus out and deliver Him? After all, they have the demon’s name.
 - a. all that’s left is to follow through and cast it out. But they don’t. Why?
 - b. well, it’s because of one of two reasons
 - 1) either they were wrong! -or-
 - 2) Jesus is actually *doing good* by the power of a demon so it’s best to just let Him carry on ???
 12. They can’t admit they’re wrong, so it must be they think Jesus is doing good – and doing it by the power of a demon.
 13. Jesus shows them the *utter idiocy* of this reasoning . . .

C. Vs. 23-26

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.

1. Jesus shows the scribes there’s no logic in their position.
2. The devil is not at war with himself – he’s at war with God.
 - a. the battlefield is earth, and the prize is mankind.

- b. the devil hates man because he bears the image of God –
 - c. so he attacks humanity and seeks to deface it with evil, to mar it with sorrow and suffering.
 - d. sin, sickness, disease, possession, obsession, compulsion, illness; all these are the result of the long-laid diabolical plans of Satan.
 - e. where ever Jesus went, these things were *undone*;
 - 1) sickness was healed, disease was removed --
 - 2) obsessions & compulsions were broken --
 - 3) sin was forgiven, freedom from bondage was secured.
 - f. if Jesus was doing all of this through demonic power then it would mean a *civil war* had begun in Satan's realm – and that's *ridiculous*.
3. So, these lofty intellectuals from Jerusalem prove not to be so smart after all.
 4. Truly – if they were as wise as they fancied themselves to be, they would have accepted that Jesus was Who He was – the Son of God & their Messiah.
 5. After showing them the total illogic of their conclusions about Him, He makes clear to them what authority He *IS* operating in . . .

D. V. 27

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.**

1. If a thief wants to rob a house while the owner is there, the first thing he has to do is *restrain* the owner. If he doesn't, the owner will stop him.
2. Jesus came to Earth to reclaim mankind's lost dominion.
 - a. dominion of Earth had been given to Adam and then forfeited to Satan in the Fall.
 - b. Jesus came to free humanity and restore what had been lost.
3. The scribes believed that when the Messiah came He would remove the curse and break the devil's grip on Earth.
4. This is exactly what Jesus was doing – He'd entered the devil's domain and was breaking his power over the lives of men, women, & children – over all who came to Him.
5. This was something the scribes said they believed the Messiah would do when He came – but now as they see *Jesus doing it* they chalk it up to the power of a demon, which is a totally ridiculous thing to say – and they knew it!!!
6. Jesus *knew they knew it* and that's why He goes on to say –

E. Vs. 28-30

28 **“Assuredly, I say to you,**

1. We need to stop right there – that word “assuredly” is the Greek word, “amen” *ah-mane*
 - a. when used at the *end* of a saying or prayer, it meant, “May it be fulfilled.”
 - 1) it was the custom in the synagogue when a passage was read or a prayer said,
 - 2) for the congregation to voice their *agreement and participation* with the word “Amen – Yes, may it be so.”
 - b. when was used at the *beginning* of a saying, it was a way for the speaker to

arrest the attention of His audience and let them know an important truth was about to be spoken.

2. When Jesus says to the scribes, “**Assuredly, I say to you,**” He’s telling them He’s about to say something they need to pay the most earnest attention to because it’s something so true and important, their fate hinges on it.

28 “Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter;

3. Again, let’s stop right there and make sure we’re tracking with Jesus.
4. There isn’t a single sin that cannot be forgiven; **NOT ONE!**
5. Even the sin of *blasphemy* can be forgiven.
 - a. blasphemy means to speak ill of God. It’s speech which defames the glory of the Lord.
 - b. the scribes considered blasphemy the worst of all sins but Jesus said even *it* can be forgiven.
6. No matter what a man or woman has done, God’s grace finds in Christ’s blood more than sufficient atonement.
7. After making it clear that *no sin* goes beyond God’s forgiveness, Jesus then says -

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.”

8. While all sin can be forgiven by God, there is a condition to that forgiveness – the one needing forgiveness must not blaspheme the Holy Spirit.
9. Just what does this mean? In light of the seriousness of what Jesus says here, we’d better make sure we have a firm grasp on just what this unforgivable sin is.

E. The Sin That Can’t Be Forgiven

1. In John 16:8-11 Jesus said this to the disciples . . .

⁸ When [the Holy Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

2. The primary work of the Holy Spirit is to bring people to Christ.
 - a. He does this through *conviction*, by gently speaking to them of their *need of forgiveness*.
 - b. He shows them the error of their sin & causes them to feel the weight of guilt for it.
 - c. then He prompts them to see in Jesus the *remedy* for that guilt and the sin that causes it.
 - d. He presses upon them in the gentlest way that they need to repent and turn to the Lord, *and to do it now!*
 - e. conviction brings a *holy sense of urgency* to get right with God by putting one’s faith in Jesus.

3. In the process of conviction, the Holy Spirit brings much *evidence* to bear in seeking to convince a person to turn to Christ.
 4. That's why Jesus went on in the next verses to say . . .
 - 13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.**
 5. The Spirit's main tool in bringing people to Christ is **TRUTH**.
 6. But what happens (?) when a person is confronted with the truth time and again, and again, and again, and *refuses to respond*?
 7. What happens (?) when the Spirit convicts a person of their need for Christ and that person resists?
 8. They end up doing what the scribes did when challenged with the Person and power of Jesus – they look at the evidence and see where it leads, but reject it and instead grasp hold of foolish reasons and explanations for their rejection of Christ.
 9. The sin that can't be forgiven is to attribute the work of the *Holy* Spirit to *evil*.
 - a. it's to say that the *truth* the Spirit is bringing to bear is *false*.
 - b. it's to turn the loving, compassionate work of God wooing one's soul into a malicious attack.
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10. Think of it this way – What's the basis of all forgiveness? To believe in Jesus – that His death pays for our sins.
 11. If *faith in Jesus* is the key that unlocks forgiveness, what's the one thing God **CANNOT** forgive? A lack of faith in Jesus!
 12. Who is the *only One* who can bring us to faith in Christ? The Holy Spirit.
 - a. without conviction, no one would ever see their need or be compelled to come to Christ.
 - b. so the sin that can never be forgiven is to resist the conviction the Holy Spirit is working in us; to judge & condemn it as wrong, evil, to be avoided.
 13. That's exactly what the scribes were doing.
 - a. note once again that they couldn't refute or deny the evidence of Jesus' power – there was no doubt at all Jesus was performing miracles.
 - b. His authoritative teaching, endorsed by His power to work miracles led to one inescapable conclusion – He was the Messiah and they owed Him worship!
 - c. but that was something they simply *would not do* because it would mean changing the way they were living, and they just wouldn't go there!
 14. Look at v. 30 – "... because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit.'"
 - a. it ought to be translated this way "...because they kept saying, 'He has an unclean spirit.'"
 - b. Jesus warned them about the danger they were in because the scribes had *camped* on this excuse for their unbelief.
 - c. He didn't issue this warning to them the *first* time they suggested He was operating in the power of the demonic.
 - d. no, this had become their *settled conclusion*, not to be edited or changed.
 - e. they had dismissed Jesus, wrapped Him up neatly in their absurd explanations.

15. Like the host of *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*, Jesus said to them, “Is that your final answer? Because if it is, then know this – there’s no going back. Your fate is sealed – and you will perish in your sins.”

III. CONCLUSION

A. *The Power To Choose*

1. To be human means to have the power to chose.
2. This is God’s great gift to man – volition!
3. It’s something the devil would love to **take from us** & tries to steal by bringing us in bondage to sin.
4. God works to **empower** our ability to chose.
5. This is why the Holy Spirit **convicts** us.
 - a. really, He opens our eyes to the glorious **option** of a **whole new life**.
 - b. at the same time the Spirit speaks to us about the wonderful privilege and offer of choosing Jesus,
 - c. the devil tells us we don’t really have a choice;
 - 1) we’re stuck where we are.
 - 2) being a Christian means giving up so much.
 - d. to that the Holy Spirit says, “Yes, you can give up your **guilt**. You can give up the pain and sorrow your sins cause you and those around you.”
 - e. the devil gets desperate, “If you become a Christian and start going to church you’ll have to buy a big black Bible and carry it around with your wherever you go and people will call you a FREAK!”
 - f. the Spirit says, “You’re going to love My people and My word and if you carry a Bible around with you it’ll be because you want to.
 - g. the devil says, “You’ll be giving up all your fun!”
 - h. the Spirit says, “Fun? Yeah hell is going to be a pile of laughs! No, you’re **giving up** hell and **gaining** heaven in which is eternal pleasure & joy forevermore.”

B. *Resist No Longer*

1. Because God is a God of infinite love, I believe every person in this room today will experience the conviction of the Holy Spirit drawing us to Jesus.
2. Most of us have already responded to that conviction and have placed our faith in Christ. But others of us haven’t.
3. You’ve known the conviction of the Holy Spirit, showing you your need of Christ, but you’ve resisted.
4. Resist no longer – let this be the day you exercise your power to chose and respond to God’s offering of forgiveness.
5. If you find yourself more prone to resisting than responding, let me follow in Jesus’ example and warn you about the consequences.
6. In Genesis 6:3 God says, “My Spirit will not always strive with man.”

*There is a time we know not when, a line we know not where,
That marks the destiny of men between sorrow and despair.
There is a line, though by man unseen that once it has been crossed*

Even God in Himself and all His love has sworn that all is lost.

8. Every time you hear of the offer of God's forgiveness and reject it, every time you resist the truth the Holy Spirit shows you – you diminish your capacity to distinguish truth and know what you ought to do.
9. It's like the famous composer who'd heard the A note so many times as the orchestra tuned up he simply lost the capacity to hear it any longer.
10. Your rejection of truth, your resistance to the Holy Spirit, will result in your inability to discern the truth and to come to Jesus.
11. If you invite me to your house again and again, and each time I refuse and start calling you names and mocking you, eventually you'll stop inviting me.
12. At that point, I can't come to your house because you've withdrawn the invitation.
13. God invites you to His House. Jesus has paved the way there and the Holy Spirit brings the invitation.
14. Will you receive it – **NOW?**