



[Where Is Your Faith? Mark 3:22-30]

Have you ever had something happen to you, something said, or an event and your immediate reaction was, “I will never forget.”

Even more, have you ever had something happen where you think “I will never forgive ___X___. Today we look at an action that Jesus Christ himself says if you do this you will never have forgiveness because it is an eternal sin.

Read [Mark 3:22-30]

A Question About Authority (3:22-23)

Immediately following Jesus’ family saying “He is our of his mind” (and you thought your family was dysfunctional) we find our loveable friends, the scribes, jumping into the action.

Scribes Notice the **geography**. This group does not live in the area, they have come down from Jerusalem. **Scribes were learned men and influential interpreters of the Torah in the NT.** They must be part of an official delegation from the capital of Israel: the location of the Temple and the central command post of power.

Presumably Jesus ministry of exorcism and miracles is so transformative that news has reached the higher ups. The scribes represent a semiofficial **investigation** of the power of Christ first hand. **They have not come to observe but to offer their voice of authority!** **No one comes to Jesus Christ empty handed or empty hearted.** Why have you come to hear Jesus, the Word of the Lord today? Are you interested, devoted, or ready to give your voice of authority?

Say (in the **imperfect tense**) The charges they are making against the Messiah are distinct and **constantly** being made. What is the charge? **That Jesus is a Satanist.** The hope of this ridiculous challenge was to **discredit** his ministry and **distance** the general populace from hearing His message.

Apparently, the scribes have seen and heard first-hand the awesome power of the Messiah. **Here is the warning.** **Some in our time argue this point: If I have proof of God, if I have scientific evidence that Jesus is the Messiah then I will believe.** Let me **make 2 points.** First, what can be known about God is evident among you because God himself has shown it (Rom. 1:19) clearly in creation (all the proof you will ever need, you already have). Secondly, there is a mistaken view that **undisputed proof forces belief.** No! the scribes have such evidence and do not believe. **It is by faith you are saved.** If

you believe with your heart. **Evidence demands a decision from the beholder as to its source and significance.**

Beelzebul

The scribes offer their **expert opinion**: this man is possessed by Beelzebul. It seems clear that Mark understands Beelzebul as an alternative name for Satan. The message is clear, **Jesus is on team Satan and not the Son of God**. The word Beelzebul is a combination of the name for the Canaanite storm God (Baal) and the Hebrew epithet zeboul which possibly means “house.” Jesus, picking up on house comment decides to tell **a story about a satanic house**.

A Story About Authority (3:24-27)

And Jesus called them to him. The scribes were talking about Jesus and discussing to **others**. Jesus then **speaks directly** to them. Now we have a direct confrontation. **It’s one thing to speak about Jesus**. This is the essence of *cultural Christianity*, a population who speaks about Christ. Jesus flips the script. We often speak about him, he speaks directly to us.

How does Jesus respond? He tells a story- particularly a **parable**. **This is a word that Mark almost always uses in the context of controversy with the scribes**. I’m sure the scribes were thinking, not another “parable.” In each case, the meaning is clear and provocative but the language indirect.

Here’s the story

Beelzebul Jesus skips directly past second temple demonology and immediately confronts Satan. It is as if Jesus proclaimed, “**you call me a demon, let’s talk about the leader**.” Satan as the figurehead contrasts the elaborate system of demonology developed in second Temple Judaism (see 1 Enoch for example). Logically, Satan will not drive out Satan. **For the wisdom of the world is foolishness in God’s sight (1 Cor. 3:9)**

Satan’s House No one can enter a strong man’s (Satan) house and plunder his possessions unless he ties him up. What is Jesus saying? Although the story is hypothetical (if), the narrative has major implications.

Satan’s house (kingdom) is **under attack**. But it is not under attack from the **inside** (Beelzebul) but from the **outside**. And this enemy points to Satan’s downfall. **Because of Christ, the kingdom of Satan is crumbling**. And the Lord is using His covenant community to wage warfare against the kingdom of darkness. **Listen carefully, Satan will fight you with everything he has because if Christ lives in you, you are a threat!** There are no neutral observers in the spiritual battle. So who’s side are you on? Expected a fight from the strong man if you follow the strongest Son of Man!

There is no suggestion that the outcome will ever be in doubt, but victory in principle must still be implemented in reality through real conflict. –R.T. France

Jesus is stronger Jesus recognizes the strength of the adversary. He calls him strong and mighty. And no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his possessions **unless what?** Unless He is stronger. Jesus proves that He has subdued Satan. In Christ, the power of Satan is plundered and the kingdom of God is being established. **God’s kingship renders Satan ultimately powerless to oppose God’s will or to harm His people.**

Binds In this brief but nuclear parable Jesus recalls the mission of the messianic high priest to bind Satan: “And Beliar shall be bound by the messianic high priest, and he shall grant to his children authority to trample on wicked spirits (T. Levi 18:12). One of the chief roles of Jesus’ earthly ministry was to bind the Adversary and announce a new and greater kingdom. Who has authority? **His name is Jesus.**

A Crisis of Faith (3:28-30)

Can you imagine hearing this story? Basically, **Jesus told the scribes who chose the most despicable insult they could, Beelzebul, that he wasn’t a demon. And he wasn’t the leader of the demons. He was ever greater!**

And at this moment, those who heard had a **crisis of faith**. A crisis of faith is the moment you seriously question whether what you believe is true.

How you **respond** to the Messiah will determine whether you believe or not. By narrating this event about a strong man’s house, Jesus turned the story around. You don’t have a clue who my power and authority.

Blasphemy Jesus now calls for a response. The Messiah has a way of not focusing on general “sins” but on the specific blasphemy. We often want to **ignore our specific** transgression and look at the generic sinfulness around us, as if God will ignore our infidelities when we *get lost in the shuffle*. **Heb 9:27 And just as it is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment**

In classical Greek, blasphemeo implies **irreverence** toward the gods and enmity against men. In Judaism and Christianity the term has an increased sense of arrogant defiance of God. **Jesus is saying, lets talk about your prideful arrogance.** The scribes knew well that blasphemy was a capital offense in early Judaism. **And they NEVER fathomed this charge could be levied against them.**

What Jesus is talking about is no accidental sin but a **willful perversity** which calls the work of God’s spirit the work of the devil.

Eternal Sin Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. *Blasphemy against the HS denotes the conscious and deliberate rejection of the saving power and grace of God released through Jesus’ word and act – Lane*

To reject Jesus is to reject the eschatological saving activity of God. **The scribes were rejecting the saving grace of Jesus for others and for themselves.**

Anyone who is worried about having committed the sin against the Holy Spirit has not yet committed it, for anxiety of having done so is evidence of the potential for repentance.

Forgiveness Notice that Jesus warns even the scribes against this sin, which suggests they were not past the point of no return and Jesus did not wish for them to commit a spiritually fatal error.

Mark signifies the unique pitfall that this sin can pose for religious people. **Sinners and tax collectors are less likely to commit this sin than are the learned, religious, and moral** (Edwards, 123).

There is a sense in which v.28 is a sentence of great hope. All sins are forgiven save one—

What is this eternal sin? It is not cursing God underneath your breath. *The eternal sin is anything, sin-thought-action-attitude that keeps you from repenting.* You see, when the scribes rejected Jesus as Lord, they were denying and rejecting the one place where hope is found.

Luke 13:3 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as well.

There is no record in Scripture of anyone asking forgiveness from God and being denied it! (Edwards, 124).

Conclusion

Andrew Jackson was the 7th president of the United States. During his presidency, George Wilson, a postal clerk, robbed a federal payroll from a train and in the process killed a guard. The court convicted him and sentenced him to hang. Because of public sentiment against capital punishment, however, a movement began to secure a presidential pardon for Wilson (first offense). The president has the power to offer a pardon, **absolute forgiveness** for a federal crime. Eventually Jackson intervened and issued pardon.

Amazingly, Wilson refused it.

Since this had never happened before, the Supreme Court was asked to rule on whether someone could indeed refuse a presidential pardon.

Chief Justice John Marshall handed down the court's decision: "A pardon is a parchment whose only value must be determined by the receiver of the pardon. It has no value apart from that which the receiver gives to it. George Wilson has refused to accept the pardon. We cannot conceive why he would do so, but he has. Therefore, George Wilson must die."

George Wilson, as punishment for his crime, he chose to die. Pardon, **must not only be granted, it must be accepted.**

Jesus forces to choose. Is he satanic or is He God? If He is God, you have forgiveness of sins if you accept His pardon.

There is more grace in God's heart than there is sin in your past. Erwin Lutzer

Does Jesus have authority? If He is God, he has complete authority in your life. What will you choose today?

Listen carefully, Satan will fight you with everything he has because if Christ lives in you, you are a threat! Because of Jesus, Satan is ultimately powerless to oppose His will or harm his people. This is the definition of strength, this is the definition of trust.

Notes

Mark 3:22 The scribes who had come down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and, “He drives out demons by the ruler of the demons.”

Scribes

Presumably the ministry of exorcism in Galilee had attracted the authorities in Jerusalem, who sent a semiofficial investigating team from the Sanhedrin (ABC).

The inclusion of “came down” indicates these are not scribes who happen to live in Galilee but rather a newly arrived delegation from the capital (NIGTC). Their immediately hostile accusation does not suggest a neutral fact-finding visit; they are looking for a fight (NIGTC, 169).

They have already recognized his power to perform miracles and exorcisms. The malicious judgment of the scribes is evidence that faith and unbelief are not the result of proofs (Edwards, 119).

There is a mistaken view abroad that if only we saw the undisputed miracles of Jesus we would believe—or believe more. The scribes have such evidence and do not believe.

Evidence demands a decision from the beholder as to its source and significance.

Said

Imperfect tense. The charges were distinct and constantly being made (ABC).

The function of such a charge was to discredit Jesus and distance the general populace from him (BWIII, 157).

Beelzebul

Name means “Baal the prince.” This was the title of the god of Ekron but in the Canaanite epic he was Zubulu (prince, Lord of the earth). In later Jewish demonology he became chief of the demons (ABC).

It seems clear from this identification Mark understands Beelzebul as an alternative name for Satan (NIGTC, 170).

The word Beelzeboul is a combination of the name for the Canaanite storm god and the epithet zeboul which possible means ‘house.’ Jesus use of the house divided metaphor is especially apt (BWIII).

Mark 3:23 So he summoned them and spoke to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? **24** If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

Summoned

First the scribes were speaking about Jesus, now we have a direct confrontation

Parables

A Markan word that almost always occurs in context of controversy with the scribes (NIGTC, 171). In each case the message is plain and provocative, but the language indirect.

Satan

Jesus now speaks entirely of Satan himself, not of any lesser demon.

Jesus idea of Satan as the figurehead contrasts the elaborate system of demonology developed in second Temple Judaism (see 1 Enoch for example).

25 If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. **26** And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand but is finished. **27** But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house.

Jesus rebuttal remains hypothetical more than predictive, but has a major implication. The exorcisms show that Satan’s kingdom is in fact under attack, if this is not from the inside, then he is facing an external enemy, and the successes of that enemy point to his downfall, not through civil strife but through conquest by a stronger power (NIGTC, 172).

Strong man

Certainly identified as Satan

One who enters

Jesus proves that He has subdued Satan. In Christ, the power of Satan is plundered and the kingdom of God is being established.

God’s kingship renders Satan ultimately powerless to oppose God’s will or to harm His people (NIGTC, 174).

House

There is no suggestion that the outcome will ever be in doubt, but victory in principle must still be implemented in reality through real conflict (NIGTC, 174).

Binds

In this brief but nuclear parable Jesus recalls the mission of the messianic high priest to bind Satan: “And Beliar shall be bound by the messianic high priest, and he shall grant to his children authority to trample on wicked spirits (T. Levi 18:12).

Mark 3:28 “Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for all sins and whatever blasphemies they utter. **29** But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” **30** because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

Blaspheme

In classical Greek, blasphemeo implies irreverence toward the gods and enmity against men. In Judaism and Christianity the term has an increased sense of arrogant defiance of God (ABC).

The focus is not on general ‘sin’ but on the specific blasphemy (NIGTC, 174).

Blasphemy was of course normally a capital offense in early Judaism (Lev 24:16).

What Jesus is talking about is no accidental sin but a willful perversity which calls the work of God’s spirit the work of the devil (BWIII).

Never has forgiveness (has no forgiveness to the ages of ages)

The never is emphatic, and Mark’s phrase is an attempt to render Matthew’s text even more emphatic (ABC).

Notice that Jesus warns even the scribes against this sin, which suggests they were not past the point of no return and Jesus did not wish for them to commit a spiritually fatal error (BWIII, 159).

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To reject Jesus is to reject the eschatological saving activity of God (BWIII, 159).

Eternal Sin

That is, a sin with an eternal consequence (Edwards, 122).

Anyone who, willingly or not, cannot distinguish evil from good and good from evil, darkness from light and light from darkness, is beyond the pale of repentance (Edwards, 123).

There is a sense in which v.28 is a sentence of great hope. All sins are forgiven save one—blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (BWIII).

Mark signifies the unique pitfall that this sin can pose for religious people. Sinners and tax collectors are less likely to commit this sin than are the learned, religious, and moral (Edwards, 123).

Anyone who is worried about having committed the sin against the Holy Spirit has not yet committed it, for anxiety of having done so is evidence of the potential for repentance (Edwards, 124).

There is no record in Scripture of anyone asking forgiveness from God and being denied it! (Edwards, 124).

Illustrations

There is more grace in God's heart than there is sin in your past. Erwin Lutzer

If a sin makes it impossible for you to repent, then this same sin makes it impossible for you to receive forgiveness as repentance is necessary for salvation.

Application

Jesus knew that the only lasting cure for physical ailments was not the temporary reprieve of a healing but resurrection—the putting of humankind into a condition where they are immune to disease, decay, and death and no longer subject to the ravages of sin (BW, 106).