



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Mark 3:20-35 Mark

Mark

“Beelzebub's House and Christ Family”

TRANSCRIPT

Mark chapter 3, and if you have your Bibles, follow along with me as I read from verses 20 through 35.

[Prayer] “And He came home, and the multitude gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. When His own people heard *of this*, —” and that expression refers to his immediate family. “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, and 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 multitude 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 on 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.’ ” May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Let’s bow now in a word of prayer.

Our heavenly Father, we do thank You for this time of study together and in Your providence for leading us together this morning to study this passage. And we pray You’d bless us in that study because we recognize that apart from Your teaching ministry, that quiet, invisible teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, apart from that, we cannot understand the truth unless You open our hearts and our minds to the reality of your revelation, we remain in the dark. And so we pray that You would minister to us this day and teach us and build us up in the faith. Prepare us for the week to come that we may be well fit, well equipped for the task that we have. We do have a task to perform for You, every one of us, young and old, regardless of our position in life, our employment. Father, You have called us into Your service to be lights, and we pray that You would help us in preparation for that and give us boldness, that we might serve You well and serve You faithfully.

And we will meet opposition. That’s clear from the things that we study this morning, Father, but help us to put that in perspective, and even as the apostles were able to do to rejoice in it. What a privilege it is to be able to be able to face the kind of opposition that our Lord faced. And yet, we’re weak and we tend to shy away from that. Help us to be bold because, Lord, all these things are Your work and we pray You’d bless. We desperately need Your blessing. Everything that we have comes from You. It is in You that we live and move and have our being, and so every possession that is ours, life itself is a gift from You.

And so we pray that You’d meet our needs physically as well as spiritually. We are a people with many physical needs. We have friends outside of this church that have many physical needs. We pray that You would give blessing, extend mercy, that You would give healing and encouragement to those who are sick, who are in the hospital, and to their families. We think of those whose names are listed on our prayer requests. Pray that You’d give blessing to them. Pray for those with financial

needs, those who are in need of employment, we pray that You’d provide for their material needs.

And Father, we pray that You’d bless us spiritually and bless this church that it would grow spiritually. Give us a spiritual appetite for Your truth and diligence and discipline in the study of Your truth, and in our prayer life, and in our encouragement for one another. Bind us together because as we are reminded in this passage we study, we are a family, and a family that is far more significant than the natural families of which we come. So, Father, help us to minister to one another in exhorting one another and encouraging one another, and blessing one another through the ministry of the Word. Build us up in the faith, not only in this church, but in those that are meeting throughout this land and throughout the world on this, the Lord’s day, we pray that You’d build them up in the faith, equip them and prepare them for the week to come. Bless us to that end this evening as we meet together again to remember the Lord’s death and anticipate His return. We pray that it would be an enjoyable time of fellowship this evening and a time of worship for You.

And finally, Lord, we pray for our nation as we face a time of decision. As that day grows closer we pray that You would bless this land with leaders that seek to at least live according to principles that are found in Scripture. We pray for wise men to govern us and for good principles to be implemented in this country. Most of all, we pray that You might move across this land, quicken hearts and bring souls to Jesus Christ. Use us in that great ministry. Prepare us now for it as we sing our final hymn. Prepare our hearts. And as we look into the Scriptures, guide us and direct us in that thinking and in that study. We pray these things in the name of the Savior, Amen.

[Message] At Believers Chapel, we seek to teach the Scriptures consecutively. I don’t think that’s a surprise to most of you, but those of you who may be visiting, that is our goal and has been for some 30 years, to teach through the Scriptures, verse by verse, expounding the Word of God whether the passages be easy or difficult. That’s our goal. And yet, when one does that, whether it be here or somewhere else or be a Christian who is simply seeking to make a statement of faith at work, that divides men.

Paul speaks of that in 2 Corinthians 2:14 and following. He says, “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.” The Word of God, the testimony of Christ is a “sweet aroma,” he says. And yet he goes on to state that it’s not a sweet aroma to everyone. “For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?”

Well, the Bible divides. To some, it’s an aroma from life to life, to others an aroma from death to death. The Bible can be a very unsettling book to read. It begins with the statement that all things were created by God, and that doesn’t go down well in an age committed to the doctrines of naturalism and evolution against the modern current of relativism. It declares that there are moral absolutes in this world. There is right and there is wrong, and all men are sinners. And all of that in the first two books of the Bible. The person who leaves the law and the prophets for the gospels finds then even more challenging, more disturbing, because there he confronts a man who talks as if He’s God, claiming to forgive sins, saying He’s always existed and that He is coming again at the end of history to judge the world.

Well, what do you do with such a man? What do you make of Him? Amazingly, some accept Him as a prophet. Many as a great moral teacher. But C. S. Lewis puts the problem in perspective in his book Mere Christianity when he wrote, “A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said wouldn’t be a great moral teacher. He’d be either a lunatic on the level with a man who says he’s a poached egg, or else he’d be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God, or else a mad man or something worse.”

That’s a very biblical analysis because in our passage this morning, two of the three options are expressed: one that He was mad, and the other that He was a devil. And that in conjunction with the statement that was made earlier in 3:11 is interesting because the devils of hell themselves said that He was that third option, the Son of God. We’re only in chapter 3 of Mark’s gospel and it’s already easy to see why Isaiah said that He would be a man of sorrows, a man acquainted with grief. He has

been opposed by the religious leaders of the land, the very men that should have recognized Him, should have supported Him, should have known Him, and yet they oppose Him. And now, a new burden is added to that when He faces difficulty from His own family, the very ones who should, you would expect, give Him comfort.

But again, as we’ve seen so often in this book, it’s a case in which controversy brings clarity because it becomes an opportunity for Him to define who He is more carefully, and just who His true family is. The Lord is back in Capernaum. He has been out ministering in the regions of Galilee, and you’ll remember last week He had gone up into a high mountain, and there He had commissioned His disciples to minister into the far corners of that land. Now He has, as verse 20 states, come home. And He was just relaxing when the crowds again begin to form outside of the house demanding more ministry from Him, more teaching, certainly more miracles, more healings. In fact, the crowd was so demanding that He couldn’t even finish His meal.

Well, this drew a response from His own people, that is from His family. They were saying, “He has lost His senses.” He’s out of His mind. And so they came to take Him home, take Him back to Nazareth. His mother, Mary, was in this group and she was probably concerned that He was working too hard, overexerting Himself. It’s doubtful that she questioned His divine origin. She knew that well. But under the influence of other people in the family, she probably did think it’s time to remove Him from the public eye, to get Him home, get Him some rest because He was behaving strangely they thought. His brothers, evidently, though, were not quite so kind. They did think He was unstable.

We know from John 7:5 that at this time they weren’t believing in Him, and in that passage they weren’t sympathetic with Him. In fact, they were skeptical of Him. They were in unbelief, and that comes through in this passage, the idea that their own brother, one they’d grown up with thought that He was the Messiah and that He could forgive sins. Well, that was just too much for them. In addition, His controversies with the religious leaders, the respected rabbis of that day made Him seem a little extreme.

So that they were uncomfortable with what was going on, and He was becoming something of an embarrassment to them, and so they concluded that Jesus

had taken leave of His senses, and the one who was calling Himself the Son of Man was a madman, and if He was just a man like you or like me, then that’s not an unfair conclusion. It’s a conclusion that many have made, not only about Him – well, perhaps not many have made that conclusion about Him, but many have made that conclusion about His people, about those who live openly and consistently with their beliefs.

We see it in Paul’s experience when he was delivering his defense of the faith before the governor Festus and King Agrippa and Agrippa’s wife Bernice in Caesarea. He stood in the midst of this hall filled with an august company: governor, king, a princess, military officials, great fanfare, pomp and power; and there’s Paul, a small, Jewish man bound in chains. And he gives his defense of the faith. And as he comes to the subjects of the cross and the resurrection of Christ and the gospel that was going out to the Jew and the Gentile alike, Festus suddenly cried out in a loud voice, “Paul, you’re out of your mind. Your great learning is driving you mad.” It was Festus that was mad. It was Festus that didn’t see the truth, that was blinded to the truth. But that was evidently a very common charge that was made against the apostles. Second Corinthians 5:13, he writes, “if we are beside ourselves, – ” that is, if we are mad “ – it is for God;”

We can go beyond the apostles and see the same kind of thing said about others who have defended the faith. When Luther defended the supremacy of the Word of God over the traditions of the church, he was regarded even by some of his former sympathizers as a fool and a man possessed of the devil. And if you stand for the truth, if you seek to live a life that is in conformity with the Word of God, and you speak the truth of the Word of God, then you can be assured that you are going to be received by the world the same way as our Lord was received, as His apostles were received, and other great men of the faith were received. You will be rejected. You will be slandered. Numerous examples that can be given.

John Bunyan evidently experienced much of that himself because when he writes his great allegory, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, it begins with a scene very similar to that. As Christian sets out on his pilgrimage by fleeing the city of destruction on his way to the celestial city, two friends come out of the city to grab him and turn him

back from what they considered a foolish journey. And when they come, he explains to them, Obstinate on the one hand and Pliable on the other, that he was seeking an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, laid up in heaven. And when he says that, he gives a Bible to Obstinate, who rejects it, turns away, and calls Christian and those like them, “Crazy headed cock combs.” Now you probably won’t have anybody call you that, but you’ll have them call you something similar to that, or at least think that.

And as I reflect upon this, I can’t help but think of young people, some of you in this audience who are maybe in junior high or high school or college. And I guess I’m impressed with that because I know that at that age, you’re very impressionable. We all were at that time. In fact, I think, to be honest, we still are. We face peer pressure at every age, but that seems particularly acute at that young age. And if you stand for the faith, you’re going to experience a kind of hostility. There will be a division among men. And you will face the difficulties that our Lord faced. You’ll face the difficulties that the apostles faced. Many will say, many of those who are perishing, they’ll look upon you and they will consider you as “an aroma from death to death,” as Paul said. But not all, because those who are being saved will consider you and what you stand for and what you do as an aroma from life to life, and you will be an instrument of the Lord to bring them into an association of friends that is far more significant than the association on the drill team or the football team, or whatever else you may be associated with into a family that is eternal, that our Lord speaks of in a moment.

Know this, that if you do experience difficulty, you experience nothing that our Lord didn’t experience. He experienced it from His own family. They thought that He had lost His senses. Now all of this would have played right into the hands of the scribes and the Pharisees, but they made an even more serious charge. A group of scribes referred to in verse 22 came down from Jerusalem. They were evidently representatives of the Sanhedrin, the great governing body of the Jewish people, experts on the law, some of the most influential leaders in Israel.

Word of our Lord’s teaching and His miracles and the great influence that He was having throughout the land had spread and they had heard about these things. And so they had to face the reports that they were hearing and had to decide for

themselves what they were to do with this man, what they were to make of Him. Now they had pondered the question of how He could do miracles without being the Messiah, and they don’t question that He did miracles. That’s not the issue. They recognized that He did miracles. But doing miracles and not being the Messiah – because they didn’t believe He was – how do they reconcile these? So they had pondered that and they’d come up with the answer. He was a devil who worked black magic.

We know from Matthew’s account in Matthew chapter 12 that before this exchange between the scribes and the Lord occurs, the Lord had healed a demon-possessed man who could neither see nor speak. And when He did that, the people were amazed and were asking. “This man cannot be the son of David, can He?” They’re not certain about it. That statement involves some question. And so as they ask that question, the scribes quickly move to put an end to this Messianic speculation. And they answer, “No. He’s not the Messiah. He is possessed by Beelzebub and He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.”

Now there’s some question as to which is the original name, Beelzebub as you have in the Authorized Version or Beelzebub as we have in the New American Standard Bible. Beelzebub is more familiar to us, and I think that is because of the Authorized Version. It means “lord of the flies” and it is the original name that you find in 2 Kings chapter 1, the name of a deity, a false deity. But the manuscript evidence for Beelzebub is much stronger. Evidently the same false god, but for some reason there is a difference in pronunciation by the time of the first century. Either one is a name that is a variation on the god Baal, and whichever name we choose, both refer to the same person. In this context, it is a reference to Satan.

And they were making two accusations here. First, that He was possessed by Satan, and second, He cast out demons with Satan’s help. So He wasn’t the Messiah. He was a magician in league with the devil. And that was their answer. And it was an answer, it was a set of charges that show how desperate these men were. They couldn’t deny the miracles. They never attempt to deny the miracles. But they refuse to yield to the miracles. They refuse to yield to what the miracles were saying. They refuse to yield in their opposition to Him.

That would have meant giving up their religion. That would have meant giving up their system of works and ceremonies, and when a person has lived for an idea or for a system, has devoted themselves to that and propagates that system or that idea, it’s very very difficult to give it up, even when faced with overwhelming evidence to the contrary. So they don’t plan on giving it up. Rather than yield to our Lord, they oppose Him. They attack Him personally with charges that are absurd, charges that are logically inconsistent.

And the Lord responds to them by exposing the inconsistencies of these charges that they’ve made. He begins in verse 23 with a rhetorical question. “How can Satan cast out Satan?” In other words, if what they were saying were true, that He was doing Satan’s work, then how was it that Satan was destroying his own realm? That doesn’t make any sense. He can’t increase his power and his influence by diminishing it, by destroying it. If there is civil war in Satan’s kingdom, then the devil is finished. And He develops that point in verses 24 through 26. “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!” All of this was an answer to the second charge they had made, that His ministry was satanically energized.

Verse 27, He answers the first charge, the charge that He was possessed by Satan. And the thinking, or the reasoning behind His statement in verse 27 is something like this, that if that were so, if He were possessed by the devil, then He would be less strong than the devil. At best, only as strong, but He wouldn’t be stronger. The one who possesses Him would be stronger than Him, and yet all His deeds demonstrate that He was overpowering Satan, He was destroying Satan and his kingdom. We read in verse 27, “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.”

Satan in this analogy is the strong man whose strength is evidenced in the enslavement of men through sin, possession, disease, death. Satan has great power. The Scriptures are very clear on that. In fact, our Lord not only attributes great power to Him here, but elsewhere in John’s gospel, He calls him “the prince of this world.”

He’s a prince. He has authority. He has power in this present age because long ago he usurped that power and that authority through the temptation in the garden. When Adam sinned and fell, Satan picked up his scepter and gathered the whole world into his house, so to speak.

And there he holds men captive. Not as unwilling captives. Men don’t struggle to be free. They struggle. They go through difficulties, that’s true. But they’re not struggling to be free of Satan’s power. They willingly participate in Satan’s deeds. In fact, they don’t even realize that they’re captives. Most probably don’t believe in Satan. The nature of the spiritual conflict is that it is invisible. Satan stands behind the world’s system and influences men through their sin nature, holding men captive by their pride, by their appetites, through the lie by which he blinds men to the truth.

But whether they realize it or not, fallen, unbelieving men are slaves. They are captives and cannot free themselves, don’t know to free themselves. And if they are to be free, then they must be freed. They must be set free by someone who is stronger than the one who binds them, stronger than the devil. And by His miracles, the Lord demonstrated that He was stronger. He wasn’t possessed by Beelzebub, He was plundering his house. He was freeing men. He was delivering them of demons and healing them of their diseases. And all of these miracles were defeats for Satan because at each point, God, the Son of God is meeting Satan’s power. He is coming up as it were against His fortress, and He is defeating him at every point, destroying his power at every point that He meets it. And all of these miracles were simply a foreshadowing of the deadly blow that the Lord would deliver at the cross when in the imagery of Genesis 3:15, He would crush the head of the serpent.

That’s a very significant aspect of the doctrine of the atonement, its relationship to Satan, and the demons, and their power, and their influence in this age over men. The essential point of the atonement, of the work of Christ on the cross is that it satisfies divine justice, that in the cross, the Lord met all of the demands of God’s holiness against the sinner. He dealt with all of the sins of the broken law that men are guilty of. But He also dealt a fatal blow to Satan.

Paul develops this. In Colossians chapter 1, he talks about how God through His Son has transferred us who believe “from the domain of darkness, – ” the influence and the power of Satan “ – into the kingdom of His beloved Son.” And then over in 2:15 of that book, he writes of how through the cross, “He has disarmed the rulers and authorities,” the demonic powers. He’s disarmed them. That is part of our Lord’s work. Part of His ministry was to destroy the works of the devil. And so He was demonstrating that through the miracles that He had performed and, as a result, the charge that the Lord’s miracles were evidence of collusion with the devil, those charges were illogical.

What those miracles proved was that He was Satan’s conqueror, not his comrade. He acted not through the power of Beelzebub. He acted through the power of the Holy Spirit. And that fact underscores the seriousness of the charges that they made, and it leads the Lord to issue a warning, a warning about the unpardonable sin. Every sin committed by a person can be forgiven, He says in verse 28, even all kinds of blasphemies. But one sin never has forgiveness. It’s an eternal sin, He says. That is it is a sin that has guilt that is eternal, that is never removed.

Those are troubling words and they have caused a great deal of anxiety for people, particularly those who have fallen into serious sin and have been grieved by what they’ve done, have seen the damage that it’s caused and under the burden and the weight of the guilt that they experience, I can’t imagine how God could ever forgive them for what they’ve done. And something comes to mind as they agonize under this sense of guilt and they remember that there’s somewhere in the Bible this statement about an unpardonable sin, and they conclude, “I must have committed that sin. There’s no forgiveness for me. This is such a heinous crime that I have committed, such a terrible sin.” Causes a great deal of anxiety and yet oftentimes it goes undefined as to what this unpardonable sin is. So that’s a question that we want to deal with to some degree this morning.

And let me say that, first of all, it is not a sin of immorality, of gross immorality or not so gross immorality. It’s not that kind of a sin. Nor is it a sin of murder, a sin of theft or deceit, the kind of sins that we consider particularly bad. The things that stand out in our mind that we might be drawn to as the answer to what is

this unpardonable sin. It’s not those because that’s clear from the context. The men who are guilty of this sin were the scribes. They were religious men. They were men of at least outward integrity. Inwardly, that’s a different story. But these men could all say, I’m sure as Paul says, that as to the law, he was found blameless. As to the external acts of the law, he had not done any of those things. These were moralless. These were moral men. So He’s not speaking of that in terms of them, but we know that also from the rest of Scripture.

David, for example, committed adultery, had his hand in the murder of Uriah, was guilty of deception, and yet he was forgiven. Peter committed what really is an even graver sin when he denied our Lord three times and he sealed those denials with curses, with profanity. He cursed the Lord at the end of it all, and yet he was forgiven. The sin that’s committed here is committed by religious men, by moral men, and sin committed against the Holy Spirit. So the Lord defines it in those terms, and that’s what it has to do with. And we read in verse 29, “but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.” So it is the sin of blasphemy, but blasphemy specifically against the third person of the Trinity, against the Holy Spirit, attributing His work to the devil.

Now why is that so serious? Well, obviously that’s a terrible sin. All sin is terrible, but other sins of blasphemy, they can be forgiven, even according to Matthew 12:32, blasphemy against Christ Himself. Now why is it that that sin can be forgiven, the the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit can’t? The reason is because this sin against the Holy Spirit was committed against an obvious display of divine power. The miracles of our Lord were prophesied in the Old Testament, and these men, these religious men were very familiar with the Old Testament. They read those prophecies in Isaiah. They knew that the Messiah when He comes will do miracles. The purpose of those miracles was to authenticate both His identity as Messiah and His message as the Messiah. And the miracles that He performed, they never harmed people. They were always a blessing. They’re not characteristic of the deeds of the devil, which was to enslave and to destroy and to inflict cruelty and deception.

And so the idea that they were the product of Satan not only flew in the face of Scripture and the prophecies of Scripture, but in the face of logic, as well. In other

words, there was no excuse for rejecting this revelation of power and it’s somewhat, I suppose, understandable to go back to that statement in Matthew about forgiving the sin of blasphemy against Christ, against the Son of Man, when we realize that one in that day who struggled with the identity of Christ was struggling with the identity of Christ in His humiliation, through His incarnation, His divine glory was veiled. His identity was hidden. And so as wrong as it was, it’s somewhat understandable that men in that day would struggle with recognizing God in man in the Lord Jesus, failure to see it in light of His humiliation. But to fail to see the power of God, the work of the Holy Spirit in doing good and fulfilling prophecy and driving back the satanic realm is inexcusable.

You see this somewhat in John chapter 9 where this blind man is healed. Now, He doesn’t know who Christ is. They try to tell him – the religious authorities try to tell him – that He was a sinner, this man who healed him. And he says, “I don’t know whether He’s a sinner or not, but what I know is whereas I was blind, now I see.” And the force of that argument is, say what you will, a blessing has been given to me. And he doesn’t write Him off as a sinner, certainly not as a blasphemer, as a worker of satanic miracles. He knew that what had happened was good and was of God, and he came to an understanding of his identity from that.

But these, they reject the source of the blessing. They reject the Holy Spirit. And so this sin that they committed first was committed by those who were in close contact with the Holy Spirit. They had seen power and miracles worked by the Holy Spirit. And secondly, they hold all of that revelation. They hold that light in contempt and they reject it. When against all evidence moral values and logic a person elects to call light darkness and good evil, then there is potential for the unpardonable sin.

But there is one more feature to this sin which is given in verse 30, and that is persistence in sin. In verse 30 we read, “because they were saying, ‘He has an unclean spirit.’ ” Now that verb “were saying” is in the imperfect tense, and it suggests repeated action, repetition. They didn’t simply say this once and thereby seal their fate so that try as they may, repent of what they’ve done, pray about it and seek God’s forgiveness. It’s too late. They’ve crossed the line and there’s no going

back. No. These men persisted in saying this, persisted in saying that He has an unclean spirit, which reflects the nature of their hearts. It shows that they had a fixed attitude of mind. They were hardened to the truth. They were unwilling to repent.

This is something they persisted in in spite of what our Lord said. That’s very important. They had no interest in changing their view. They weren’t disturbed by the Lord’s warning. They didn’t believe it. And so a characteristic of committing this sin is unbelief and a lack of fear, a lack of concern. Those who are troubled by sin, who worry about having committed this sin grieve over it and are concerned about their eternal destiny. They evidence by their concern that they have not crossed the line of no return. Concern about sin is perhaps the greatest evidence that one has not committed the unpardonable sin.

But further, the fact that this sin was committed against the Holy Spirit in light of His miracles during our Lord’s incarnation, and I think from Matthew chapter 12, that’s a very important point in understanding this sin. It occurred in this time of veiled glory, that those who committed this sin at that time, it suggests of them that that was a sin of that day, the circumstances of which cannot be repeated in ours. That has support, as Dr. Johnson has pointed out, by the fact that our Lord spoke only once of the unpardonable sin and the apostles never mention it at all. Something that we would expect would be continued on in teaching, but it’s not.

That, however, should not give the unbeliever a sense of relief. Nor does it empty the Lord’s warning of its continuing force in principle because elsewhere in the New Testament, we have warnings against hardening the heart to the truth and crossing the line, so to speak. In Hebrews chapter 3 – in fact the whole book of Hebrews is filled with serious warning passages – but in Hebrews chapter 3, the author warns his readers, today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. In chapter 6, he warns of those who have enjoyed all kinds of spiritual blessings “have once been enlightened,” he says, but then fall away from those blessings, from that light. And of them he writes, “it is impossible to renew them again to repentance.”

Well, you might ask, “What if a person sins against the light, but then they do repent? Will they be forgiven?” If a person repents, then they haven’t committed the sin of falling away in Hebrews chapter 6, or they haven’t committed the unpardonable

sin of Mark chapter 3 or Matthew chapter 12 because such sinners don’t repent. Whenever a person repents, they are received and they are forgiven. Our Lord makes that very plain in John chapter 6. “The one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out.” But for those who resist the truth, who sin against the light, who harden their hearts against the revelation of God, there is the warning that a person can cross the line from which it is impossible to repent.

So those who hear the truth of the gospel, who believe that truth, who know that they’re sinners, who struggle with that sin, who even stumble and fail, those are really not the people that come under the warning here. It is those who hear the truth, don’t believe it, aren’t troubled by sin, aren’t concerned about an unpardonable sin. It is those to whom this passage gives a warning and those that ought to be concerned. And interestingly enough, it’s the religious leaders, the men of that day who taught the Word, who knew the Scriptures, and the same would apply today. That men who are associated with great light, they are the ones that are to take heed from the warning that our Lord gives.

Now following this exchange, the scene shifts back to the Lord’s family. They are standing outside of the house, trying to remove Him from the public eye and give Him some rest, or at least remove Him from what was for them or for many of them an embarrassing situation. They can’t get into the house because the crowd is so thick, and so they send word to Him that they are outside and they are waiting for Him. In verse 32, the message is passed to the Lord, the message, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.”

And the Lord uses this interruption to good advantage. He frequently does that, and we read in verses 33 through 35, “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.’ ” Who is the true family of the Lord? It is his disciples, those who follow Him, those who believe in Him, those are the true family of our Lord in every age, in that age and this age, those who put their faith in Christ as Lord and as Savior in so doing do the will of God. They represent the true family, the true kinship of Christ.

And that comes not through anything natural in a person. That comes by faith through grace, not by natural birth. John makes that very clear for us in John 1:12-13, where he writes, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God.” So through faith, through receiving Him, by believing in Him, we become children of God, we become members of His household, members of His family. Even to those who believe in His name “who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” In other words, the birth that we experience spiritually is a supernatural birth. It has no connection with natural things through blood relationships. It’s not something that we of ourselves independent of God choose to do. It’s not of the will of man. It is a work of God. It is a spiritual work.

And the new birth and the faith that it produces forms a spiritual community that is stronger and closer than any natural family. It’s a family that will endure for eternity. And so that underscores the reason why each and every one of us should be very concerned about one another. We’re going to be with one another forever. You may not be with your natural brother or sister past this life. You may if they’re saved and they’ve put their faith in Christ, but the person sitting next to you, if he or she is truly born again, that is your brother or your sister forever. That’s the nature of the family that we’re a part of, and what a privilege, and what a statement of grace that he extends here in that statement, “Behold My mother and My brothers!”

He said that to his disciples, perhaps some others beside the 12 that were there, because He had many other followers besides the 12 men. But to this company of people, He says these great words at a time when they weren’t strong in the faith. They weren’t mature in the faith. They were men and women of little faith who would stumble frequently, who would disappoint Him many times. They didn’t progress as rapidly as they should have. And yet knowing that, knowing the kind of people they would be, the way they would act, nevertheless, He calls them “brothers.” He calls them His family. All of us, regardless of our maturity in the faith and our achievements in the faith, some great, some not so great, but all of us are equally precious in the eyes of our Lord. He loves us all alike, equally and infinitely. And He loves us regardless of who we are. It is whoever does the will of God: male and

female, slave and free, Jew and Gentile, educated or uneducated, harlot or Pharisee, it doesn’t matter. Whoever believes is our Lord’s brother, our Lord’s sister. That’s the grace of God. That’s the nature of the church. It is a family, a spiritual family, an eternal family with closer bonds than a natural family.

This is a great message for our day for a number of reasons, but in an age of broken homes and single parent families, the promise is that for all who turn to Him, there is a family better than any natural family, one that can never be shaken with a Father who will never leave, never abuse, a family in which Christ is to carry out the analogy, our elder brother, who is always with us, always caring for us. The Father is no longer our judge. He is now our Father. And He provides for us as a Father. He protects us and He makes provision spiritually and materially so that we’ll never want. He’s always concerned and caring and we are in a family that is a fortress. It can never be shaken and we can never be removed from it.

So as we conclude, I ask you the question, are you part of that family? Or are you still in the house of Beelzebub? There’s no middle ground. There’s no neutral zone. You are either for Christ or against Him, part of His family or a member of Satan’s household. If the latter, the way out of that evil house is through Christ. He is the door. He is the way to life and to peace and to eternal joy. All a person must do is believe in Him. We can’t go through that door. We cannot enter into God’s family through our good deeds. That’s part of being born again. That’s part of being a redeemed man or woman. We live a life that’s consistent with our profession of faith. But that comes as a result of faith in Christ and trusting in Him. All one must do is simply believe in Christ, trust in His work on the cross as the necessary and sufficient payment for sin regardless of how great your sin may be, how deep the stain of that sin may be, the blood of Christ removes every sin. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they will be white as snow,” Isaiah writes.

But to find that forgiveness and to enjoy that cleansing, you must decide what you will do with Christ. You can’t say, “Well, I’m going to follow Him as my example, as a moral teacher.” He doesn’t give you that choice. We really have only three options. We can dismiss Him as a lunatic, or a devil, or accept Him as the Son of God. Those who believe in Him as the Son of God receive the forgiveness of sins

and enter into His family and into life everlasting. May God help you to do that and if you’ve done that to rest secure in the fact that you are in His family that can never be shaken, a family that is a fortress, a family that’s eternal. Shall we stand now for the benediction?

Gracious heavenly Father, we do thank You for the truth that we find in this passage, passage that sets forth Your Son as greater than any enemy that we can ever face, and that tells us that we are secure in Him. We have eternal security in Christ. And yet, a passage that also issues a solemn warning, a warning against sinning against the light that one receives. And we pray that if there be any in attendance this morning who have not believed in Christ that they would not harden their hearts to the Word of God, but would accept it. They would receive it. They would believe it. Trust in Jesus Christ as Savior. Help them to do that. Give them no rest or peace until they do that. We pray these things in our Savior’s name, Amen.