

# MARK

## Chapter 3

**Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. 2 And they watched Jesus to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. 3 And he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come here.” 4 And he said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. 5 And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 6 The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.**

**3:1–6** A demonstration that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (see 2:28). (CSB)

**3:2** *they watched.* The Pharisees (v. 6; cf. Lk 6:7). (CSB)

Presumably, the Pharisees from vv 23–28, who accused Jesus’ disciples of breaking the Sabbath. (TLSB)

*to accuse Jesus.* Jesus’ presence demanded a decision about his preaching, his acts and his person. The hostility, first seen in 2:6–7, continues to spread. (CSB)

The Pharisees hoped to catch Jesus performing a healing and then accuse Him of breaking the Sabbath. In so doing, they would ironically prove the very point they were trying to deny, that Jesus was divine. (TLSB)

*to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath.* An indication that the Pharisees believed in Jesus’ power to perform miracles. The question was not “Could he?” but “Would he?” Jewish tradition prescribed that aid could be given the sick on the Sabbath only when the person’s life was threatened, which obviously was not the case here. (CSB)

**3:4** *to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?* Jesus asks: Which is better, to preserve life by healing or to destroy life by refusing to heal? The question is ironic since, whereas Jesus was ready to heal, the Pharisees were plotting to put him to death. It is obvious who was guilty of breaking the Sabbath. (CSB)

Rhetorical, since everyone knew that Jewish tradition allowed for the Sabbath to be broken if life was threatened. (TLSB)

*they were.* Shows the weakness of the argument by Jesus’ opponents. (TLSB)

**3:5** *anger, grieved.* Unlike Mt and Lk, Mk tends to emphasize Jesus’ emotions (cf 7:34; 8:12; 10:21). (TLSB)

*hardness of heart.* Jesus’ adversaries did not care for the disabled man. They were so intent on being right that they were dreadfully wrong. They would not see that Jesus had come to have mercy on all people, including them. (TLSB)

*restored.* Began to function normally. (TLSB)

**3:6** *the Pharisees ... held council.* The decision to seek Jesus' death was not the result of this incident alone, but was the response to a series of incidents (see 2:6–7, 16–17, 24). The plotting of the Pharisees and the Herodians is seen again on Tuesday of Passion Week (12:13). (CSB)

Pharisees would not normally ally themselves with Herodians, since they considered Herod's family to be an illegitimate dynasty. However, a shared hatred for Jesus drove these two parties together. (TLSB)

*Herodians.* Influential Jews who favored the Herodian dynasty, meaning they were supporters of Rome, from which the Herods received their authority. They joined the Pharisees in opposing Jesus because they feared he might have an unsettling political influence on the people. (CSB)

*counsel.* Gk *symbolion*, appears in Mk only here and in 15:1, when the Jews take counsel against Jesus on Good Friday. Note how quickly Jesus' enemies oppose Him in Mk! (TLSB)

*destroy.* Kill. (TLSB)

**3:1–6** Again, Jesus demonstrates His authority over the Sabbath, this time by restoring a man's hand. He knows all our burdens and desires to grant us rest. Call on Him in earnest prayer. When the Lord is for us, none can oppose us! • Lord, lead us to take Your Word to heart. By Your Holy Spirit, work in us a faith that knows You as the way, the truth, and the life. Amen. (TLSB)

*Crowds Follow Jesus*

**7 Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea 8 and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. 9 And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him, 10 for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. 11 And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." 12 And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.**

**3:8** Here we see impressive evidence of Jesus' rapidly growing popularity among the people. This geographical list indicates that the crowds came not only from the areas in the vicinity of Capernaum but also from considerable distances. The regions mentioned included virtually all of Israel and its surrounding neighbors. Mark tells of Jesus' work in all these regions except Idumea (see 1:14, Galilee; 5:1; and 10:1, the region across the Jordan; 7:24, 31, Tyre and Sidon; 10:1, Judea; 11:11, Jerusalem). (CSB)

*Idumea.* The Greek form of the Hebrew "Edom," but here referring to an area in western Palestine south of Judea, not to earlier Edomite territory. (CSB)

**3:9** The crowds, for all their affection, were about to trample Jesus. For His own safety, as well as for the welfare of those around Him, Jesus sought refuge in a boat. Cf Lk 5:3. (TLSB)

**3:10** *touch Him.* cf Mk 5:28–29; 7:33; 8:23. Jesus' touch showed His compassion and willingness to cross boundaries for the good of others. (TLSB)

**3:11** *You are the Son of God.* The evil spirits recognized who Jesus was, but they did not believe in him. (CSB)

**3:12** *not to make him known* – The time for revealing Jesus’ identity had not yet come, and demons were hardly the proper channel for such disclosure. (CSB)

**3:7–12** In contrast to the Pharisees’ and Herodians’ hostility, the crowds enthusiastically press around Jesus to listen and be healed. The mixed reaction to Jesus has not changed over the years. Many still reject Him, while others desperately seek His help. He nonetheless attends to people’s physical and spiritual needs. He continues to bless those who seek Him today. • Lord, draw us to You, that we might learn from You and be healed by You. Count us among the eager crowds who leave everything else to be near You. Amen. (TLSB)

#### *The Appointing of the Twelve Apostles*

**13 And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach 15 and have authority to cast out demons. 16 He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); 18 Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. 20 Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. 21 And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.”**

**3:14–15** *send them out ... cast out demons*. Because the disciples were given to share in Jesus’ ministry and its authority, they were even able to cast out demons. (TLSB)

**3:14** *that they might be with him*. The training of the Twelve included not only instruction and practice in various forms of ministry but also continuous association and intimate fellowship with Jesus himself. (CSB)

**3:16** *Simon*. Transliteration of Gk adjective *petros*, which is related to the word for “rock.” However, Peter was not always the stable fellow his nickname implied. He sometimes acts rashly (e.g., 14:29, 66–72). After the resurrection, however, Peter became much more of a bulwark. (TLSB)

**3:17** *Sons of Thunder*. Probably descriptive of their dispositions. (CSB)

**3:18** *Thaddaeus*. Apparently the same as “Judas son of James” (see Lk 6:16; Ac 1:13). (CSB)

**3:19** *Iscariot*. Probably means “the man from Kerioth,” the town Kerioth Hezron (Jos 15:25), 12 miles south of Hebron (Jer 48:24). For Judas’s betrayal of Jesus see 14:10–11, 43–46. (CSB)

*who betrayed Him*. This important detail reinforces that Jesus is a marked man, destined to suffer from wicked intrigues (cf v 6). (TLSB)

#### *Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit*

**22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.” 23 And he called them to him 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 will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. 27 But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house. 28 “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, 29 but whoever blasphemes**

**against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”— 30 for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”**

**3:20-35** In 3:1–6, the Jewish teachers continue their debate about the Sabbath in last week’s Gospel. Jesus’ encounter with evil spirits in vv 7–12 sets the stage for their accusation that he is in league with the devil. As Jesus calls his disciples (vv 13–19), he begins his ministry and mounts his attack on the Satanic forces which oppose him and those who are his. Following our text, the growth of the kingdom is chronicled in the parables of the sower, the lamp under a bushel, a seed growing secretly, and the mustard seed. These vividly illustrate Christ’s plundering of the house of the bound strong man, Satan. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

In his first three chapters, Mark has demonstrated the deity, the authority, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ through several healing miracles and especially through his ability to cast out demons. This power depends on his victory over Satan in the temptation, where he was put to the test. Mark’s readers know that Jesus was victorious because he immediately begins to preach the Gospel and announce the Kingdom. In his preaching tours, Jesus then heals and delivers the demonized from Satan’s power. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Woven into these accounts are three stories of Jesus calling disciples. The first (1:16–20) is followed by a dramatic exorcism account that takes place in the synagogue. A man with an unclean spirit “knows” that Jesus is the Holy One of God. With the four recently called fishermen as witnesses, Jesus silences the demon speaking through the man and commands the unclean spirit to leave. The calling of Matthew (2:13–17) illustrates what Jesus has just proven in the healing of the paralytic: the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. The last calling story precedes our pericope. Summoning whom he wished to a mountain, Jesus named twelve as apostles and sent them to preach and to have authority to cast out demons. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

How, then, does this account of Jesus’ concerned family and his discussions with scribes accusing him of demonic possession relate to what precedes: the calling and sending of the Twelve? The explication that follows will demonstrate that the pericope proclaims that Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit has overpowered Satan. This victory results from his right to forgive, with only one exception, all and any sin. The Church, as the heirs of the apostles’ commission to preach the Gospel and cast out demons, can do so with full assurance that Christ has bound Satan. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

**3:20** *home*. Probably the home of Peter and Andrew (see 1:29; 2:1). (CSB)

Not clear whether Jesus was in His own house or perhaps that of Simon Peter. (TLSB)

Only Mark gives us the details found in verses 20-21. But Matthew and Luke tell us that a devil-possessed man was brought to Jesus and Jesus freed the man. It is remarkable how the Synoptics embellish each other. (Buls)

Translators and commentators are divided over the question as to whether "house" means His home or simply a house. It is related to the question as to who is meant by "his family" in verse 21. (Buls)

Another question: what is meant by "they went" in verse 21? From Nazareth? These questions are not a matter of doctrine. (Buls)

"He and His disciples" in the NIV is "Jesus and those with Him" in AAT. (Buls)

Jesus apparently made his home in Capernaum at Peter's house (Mark 1:29; 2:1). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

*Again a crowd gathered.* The story begins with two simple facts that show the immense popularity of Jesus. He returns to a house in Capernaum from the mountain, where he appointed the Twelve, and a crowd gathers. The size and needs of the crowd prevent Jesus and his disciples from even eating. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

*could not eat* – Again, Mark emphasizes Jesus' popularity with the masses. The demands of the crowd hardly allowed Jesus and the apostles' time for a meal. (TLSB)

**3:21** *his family ... went to take charge of him.* No doubt they had come to Capernaum from Nazareth, some 30 miles away (see v. 31). (CSB)

They either heard wrongly or misinterpreted what they heard. (Buls)

Who are the "family"? It is translated three ways: "his friends," "his family," or "his own people." Are these the same people as mentioned in verse 31? If so, then their attempt in verse 21 failed and so they tried again. (Buls)

In any case, this is a sad occasion, for both those close to Him and those who openly opposed Him and accused Him of madness or devil-possession. (Buls)

"Take charge of Him" might also be "to restrain Him." "He is out of His mind" might also be "He has lost His senses." They want to protect Him from Himself. (Buls)

Most commentators believe that of *hoi par autou* refers to his family (so NIV) rather than simply his friends. V 31 confirms that Jesus did in fact have brothers, and some manuscripts also mention sisters. The parallel accounts in Matthew and Luke omit the reference to his family thinking he was "out of his mind," perhaps out of respect for them. Some wonder that Mary wasn't able to alleviate the doubts of his brothers (John 7:5). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

Jesus' family hears that he has arrived at the house and sets out. They are coming to take hold of him. Forms of the verb translated "to seize" (*kratēsai*) occur seven other times in Mark with the meaning "to arrest": e.g. 6:17; 12:12; 14:1 (Robert A. Guelich, Mark 1–8:26, vol. 34A in Word Biblical Commentary, David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, gen. eds. [Dallas: Word Books, 1989], 172). Their intended action introduces the first conflict in the narrative. They were saying that he had lost his mind. The word *existēmi* means generically "to become separated from something, to lose something." Here it means to "be out of one's senses" ("ἐξίστημι," Walter Bauer, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 2nd ed. [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979], 276). Gundry translates, "He has gone berserk" (Robert H. Gundry, Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993], 171). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Their assessment of him explains the relationship between the two different stories sandwiched together in the text. In the New Testament, to be out of one's mind and to be demon possessed, while entirely different, are sometimes seen together. In Jn 10:20, they were saying of Jesus: "He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?" Although John uses a different word, *mainomai*, it has the same lexical range of meaning as *existēmi* (Johannes P. Louw, Eugene A. Nida, eds., Greek-English Lexicon of the

New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, vol. 1 [New York: United Bible Societies, 1988], 353). The family seemed to be fearing that Jesus was oppressed by a demon. The scribes now accuse Jesus of actually being one. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Jesus' immediate family thought He was delusional. The cause of this concern is not clear. However, as firstborn son, He would have important family duties that may have fallen to His siblings. This would cause tension. (TLSB)

The Marcan term describes one who is ecstatic in the sense of psychic derangement. Reflection on Jesus' eschatological sense of mission, His urgent drive to minister, His failure properly to eat and sleep undoubtedly led the family to their conviction, but it reveals both misunderstanding and unbelief. The entire incident calls to mind passages in which the man of God is despised by family and contemporaries who mistake his zeal for God as "madness." (Lane)

Acts 26:24-29 <sup>24</sup>At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane." <sup>25</sup>"I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. <sup>26</sup>The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. <sup>27</sup>King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do." <sup>28</sup>Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" <sup>29</sup>Paul replied, "Short time or long—I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

It is unnecessary to suppose that Mary also suspected that Jesus had lost His grasp upon reality. Her presence with Jesus' brothers in 3:31, however, indicates that her faith was insufficient to resist the determination of her sons to restrain Jesus and bring Him home. (Lane)

**3:13–21** Even as Jesus seeks to expand His ministry by appointing and sending 12 apostles, His family comes and tries to make Him stop what He is doing. How ironic that those who think they know Jesus best are trying to stop Him from fulfilling His mission! Unfortunately, similar examples are still seen, as when lifelong Christians undermine sound mission strategies. But the Lord and His mission are not overcome by even this opposition. Jesus willingly faced death and conquered it for us. In Him is our hope of eternal life. • Lord, overcome our fear when we do not understand Your plans. Focus us instead on Your call to follow and Your gracious promise to lead. Amen. (TLSB)

**3:22** *came down* – He is in Capernaum at this time. The Bible scholars come all the way from Jerusalem and spread the story that He can cast out devils because He is working together with the devil. Note that they make two claims: He has Beelzebub and by means of the rule of demons He casts out demons. By making two statements they make the slander more vicious. (Buls)

It's important not to miss the detail that the scribes were "from Jerusalem." Mark is ultimately concerned with the cross, and Jerusalem represents the place of the final confrontation with the legal authorities and the crucifixion itself. Already the cross is casting its shadow. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

*Beelzebub*. They assert that Jesus "has" Beelzebub and casts out demons by their ruler. Beelzebub was originally a Philistine deity and is here the name for Satan. While the transition to this usage and to the word in the text, *Beelzeboul*, makes for interesting study, it is more important to note the expression "he has Beelzebub. They are accusing Jesus of being demon possessed. They say he has a demon to command and casts out demons by their ruler. "The emphatic positions of *Beelzeboul*, 'Beelzebub,' and

of *en tōi archonti tōn daimoniōn*, ‘by the ruler of the demons,’ stress the seriousness of the charges” (Gundry, 172). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

These scribes from Jerusalem had more authority than the local scribes. Their visit suggests that the Sanhedrin already was growing concerned about Jesus and his movement. They leveled two accusations against Jesus: (1) he is possessed by an unclean spirit, and (2) he drives out demons by the authority of the prince of demons (vv 22, 30). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

The name *Beelzebub* means “lord of the flies.” It appears to be a deliberate mispronunciation of the name *Beelzebul*, which means “prince Baal.” Canaanites worshiped the fertility god Baal using the epithet *zebul*, “prince,” as early as the time of the Ugaritic texts (ca. 1300 B.C.). The Old Testament writers sometimes substituted *bosheth*, “shame,” for “Baal,” as with Ish-Bosheth, “man of shame,” whose real name was Esh-Baal, “man of Baal” (compare 2 Sam 2:8 with 1 Chron 8:33). The change of “prince” to “flies” is similar, and likewise mocks the pagan deity. *Baalzebub* appears also in 2 Kings 1:2–16. This name for the chief god in the Canaanite pantheon came to be used for Satan, whose name means “adversary, accuser” in Hebrew, and whose activity in that capacity is illustrated clearly in Job 1–2. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

Because Jesus’ opponents could not deny His many miracles, they tried to impugn their divine origin, claiming that He performed exorcisms by the power of Satan. Satan, not Beelzebub, was the leader of demonic host. But Jesus’ adversaries were more interested in heaping scorn than in being precise. (TLSB)

**3:23** *called them* – “He called them and spoke” is used only in Mark. It is the same word used in verse 13 “Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him.” A beautiful touch. Jesus graciously summoned His disciples when He chose them. He graciously invited the scribes, who said awful things about Him, to point out their illogical thinking, to remind them of what He had done, to preach the Gospel (verse 28) and to warn them of their great danger (verse 29). (Buls)

With a note of authority inherent in *proskaleō*, Jesus summons the scribes to challenge their conclusions. He speaks to them “in parables,” a term that connotes judgment, as noted in the next chapter. The parable begins with a question: “How can Satan cast out Satan?” To paraphrase, one could say, “How can Satan, the ruler of demons, cast out his own demons?” Jesus implies that to cast out a demon is to cast out Satan. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

*parables*. In this context the word is used in the general sense of comparisons. (CSB)

Jesus often spoke in parables, thereby hiding his intent from his enemies. At the same time, he bolstered the faith of those who believed in him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

“In parables” is found only in the Mark account. AAT: “Pictured it to them in this way.” (Buls)

He now asks a question concerning the story they’ve been spreading about Him: “How can Satan cast out Satan?” Jesus is about to show how absurd their story is. (Buls)

Here it means something like “metaphor” or “illustration.” (TLSB)

*how can Satan cast out Satan* – Jesus addresses Himself to the charge of collusion with Beelebul through pithy proverbial sayings which expose the fallacy in the scribal accusation: Satan is not able to

cast Satan. By tacitly substituting “Satan” for Beelzebul” Jesus brings the controversy within the perspective of His mission as a direct confrontation with Satan. His argument is cumulative in its force: If what you say is true there exists the impossible circumstance that Satan is destroying his own realm. (Lane)

This is rhetorical. Jesus shows the folly of claiming that He defeated the demons by Satan’s power. Since the fall, Satan may properly be understood as “the ruler of this world” (Jn. 12:31). At the same time, his authority is only what God allows (cf. Jb 1:12; Jn 16:11; 1 Pt 3:18-19). (TLSB)

**3:24-26** Jesus points out that the argument of these Jewish teachers makes no sense. If Satan’s house was divided against itself, it would fall of its own accord. There would be no need for exorcisms. But that clearly was not the case. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

Keeping with the ruler motif, Jesus points to the impossibility of a kingdom continuing if it is divided against itself. Turning to the metaphor of a home—very possibly because Beelzebul can mean “master of the house” (ibid, 173), Jesus notes that the same is true for a home. A house divided cannot stand. Jesus applies the parable to Satan. “If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

**3:24** These are two examples. Both are axioms which answer themselves quickly. The doctors of the law were accusing Jesus of devil-possession. In actuality it is really they who are in league with Satan for their spread lies about Jesus. But their lies are not even logical. Satan would never fight himself or his kingdom would be destroyed. If a household of people are divided among themselves, they will destroy themselves. By the way, President Lincoln based his famous "House Divided" speech during the Civil War in the United States, in part, on verse 25. (Buls)

**3:25** *house divided* – For it is self-evident that a kingdom divided against itself will fall, while a house divided against itself cannot be established. (Lane)

Is it reasonable to suppose that Satan would cast out Satan? Would he be so foolish as to destroy his own kingdom by permitting divisions in the midst of his own armies! Would he permit the members of his own household to be at loggerheads with each other! Satan is far too keen and too prudent to bring harm upon himself and to destroy his own kingdom, for he knows that such a proceeding would signify and foretell the end of his reign. In a positive form, the defense of Christ was: Not by Beelzebul, but by the Spirit of God, I cast out devils. And this Spirit of God that spoke through Him and manifested Himself through Him, bore witness to the heart and minds also of the Pharisees. And yet they blasphemed and exhibited the poison of their heart by labeling the work of God as the work of the devil and hindering the spread of the Gospel. Similar blasphemies occur in the very midst of the so-called Christian Church to this day. The doctrine of Christ, the way of salvation as taught by Him, is blasphemed as a dangerous, harmful doctrine, and those that adhere to it in simple faith are adjudged undesirable neighbors and citizens. But the word of Jesus at this point may still be applied. (Kretzmann)

Repeats the point made in v. 24 (“a kingdom divided”) This is even more pointed within the context of the division within Jesus’ own family (v. 21). (TLSB)

**3:26** This is the application. Here we have a fact condition: "If, as you maintain, Satan has risen against himself etc." Jesus is following THEIR line of reasoning which proves to be absurd. (Buls)

"His end has come" is translated "but he is finished," in the NASB. (Buls)



**3:27** *enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions.* Jesus was doing this very thing when he freed people from Satan's control. (CSB)

Note the double negative which makes the negative most emphatic. (Buls)

Lenski: The TERTIUM is the thought that complete victory must precede the act of plundering. God's kingdom must first have come in its fullness before demoniacs could be liberated as Jesus was liberating them. . . . All that Jesus here says would be farcical and senseless, if Satan were not the personal being he is represented to be throughout the Scriptures from Genesis 3 onward, and if demoniacal possession, like the demons themselves, were ordinary mental ailments. (Buls)

Jesus' enemies had admitted that He had cast out demons. Jesus proved by axioms that the force which drove them out had to be one opposite to themselves. And in verse 27 He is plainly saying that the expulsion of demons is proof of the fact that He has already conquered Satan. (Buls)

Notice that they do not and cannot answer Him. He really muzzled them by the use of simple logic. (Buls)

By the way, when did Jesus conquer Satan? The same question is asked with reference to Luke 10:18. Satan has been conquered ever since Gen. 3:15 was spoken. All though the Old Testament we see the battle between God and Satan, between God's children and Satan's children. (Buls)

It would be foolish to enter a strong man's house to plunder it—unless the plunderer is stronger. This is Jesus' point; he is stronger than Satan (1 John 4:4). Whenever Jesus exorcised people (as he did in one-fourth of his miracles), he was plundering Satan's house, robbing Satan of souls and bringing them into the kingdom of God. The reason he was able to do so was that he had tied up Satan. Through his perfect life, innocent suffering and death, and resurrection, he destroyed the devil's work (1 John 3:8) and freed us from Satan's grasp. The word *deō*, "to bind, tie" occurs also in Rev 20:2. Our text affirms that Jesus bound Satan at his first advent. We are now in the "thousand-year" reign of Christ during which Satan's activity is restricted so that he cannot prevent the spread of the Gospel (Rev 20:3). Christ continues to plunder Satan's kingdom today by bringing people into the church. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

But if Satan cannot cast out Satan and since someone is casting out Satan, then there must be someone present who is stronger than the ruler of the demons, and Satan has therefore met his end. This conclusion underlies the next parable: "No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house." The "strong man" in the parable is Satan. The demon possessed are his goods. Jesus "binds" the strong man through his redemptive work. He carries off the "goods" of Satan by delivering them from Satan's power. In the ministry and work of Jesus, Satan has met his end. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

How did this binding take place? It was not a power encounter. Jesus first did what Adam in the Old Testament Reading had failed to do. He stood the test when tempted all alone in the wilderness. Jesus' victory began there (1:12–13). Then in a garden, in Gethsemane, he willingly accepted all of humanity's sin as his own. He was made to be sin for us. On the cross, he was treated as the only sinner in all the world, and God released all of his judgment for sin upon Jesus. The resurrection demonstrates that the sin is removed. He "was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25). Satan, the Accuser, no longer has a basis for accusation. He has met his end. The Deceiver, though consummately deceitful, is cast out by one word of truth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Satan is the strong man whose strength is evidenced in the enslavement of men through sin, possession, disease and death; the demons are his servants in this destructive work. He is like a champion who exercises his sovereignty in the sphere of death. Only one who is stronger than he can enter his realm, bind him and plunder his good. This Jesus has done. The expulsion of demons is nothing less than a forceful attack on the lordship of Satan. Jesus' ability to cast out demons means that one stronger than Satan has come to restrain his activity and to release the enslaved. The heart of Jesus' mission is to confront Satan and to crush him on all fields, and in the fulfillment of His task He is conscious of being the agent of irresistible power. (Lane)

**3:28-30** How complete is this justification? In the language of prophetic authority, "Truly, I say to you" (*Amēn legō humin*), Jesus makes in v 28 one of the most sweeping statements of absolution in Scripture. "All sins will be forgiven the children of man." The phrase translated "children of man" (*tois huois tōn anthrōpōn*) means "all humanity," based on Semitic usage (Guelich, 178). All are included. The sins will be sent away (*aphiēmi*) "so that they shall never be found again" (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel* [Columbus: The Wartburg Press, 1946], 154). Jesus assures repentant sinners that no sin exists that God will not forgive. "The range for pardon is indeed great since it extends over every sin, no matter what it may be, and includes even blasphemy, mocking and vicious utterances that are directly against God" (ibid, 153-54). God will forgive any sin. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Except one. "But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin." Calling the spirit at work in Jesus (v 30) a demonic spirit is a blasphemy that will never be forgiven. For emphasis, the unpardonable nature of this sin is restated. The person "is guilty of an eternal sin." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

What is this sin? The Gospels give the examples. Religious leaders were convinced that Jesus had performed miracles and cast out demons. They had the inner conviction that these were divine miracles. They instead called them satanic works. "The sin against the Holy Ghost is committed when, after the Holy Ghost has convinced a person in his heart of the divine truth, that person nevertheless not only rejects the truth he is convinced of, but also blasphemes it" (Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, vol. 1 [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950], 573). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

No doubt some listeners will be curious about this exception. Yet, the implication of Jesus' warning about the unpardonable sin has greater significance. Jesus implies that the one at work in him is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God, imparted at his Baptism, dwells in Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

**3:28** *truly I say to you*. A solemn affirmation used by Jesus to strengthen his assertions (see 8:12; 9:1, 41; 10:15, 29; 11:23; 12:43; 13:30; 14:9, 18, 25, 30). (CSB)

This is the first instance of the recurring formula of introduction, "Amen, I say unto you...", which in the NT is strictly limited to the sayings of Jesus. His use of "Amen" to introduce and endorse His own words is without analogy in the whole of Jewish literature and in the remainder of the NT. According to idiomatic Jewish usage "Amen" was regularly used to affirm, approve, or appropriate the words of another person, even in those few instances where it occurs at the end of a phrase (1 Kg 1:36; Jer 11:5; 28:6). Jesus' practice of prefacing His words with an "Amen" to strengthen the solemn affirmation which follows introduced a completely new manner of speaking. "Amen" denotes that His words are reliable and true because He is totally committed to do and speak the will of God. As such, the Amen-

formulation is not only a highly significant characteristic of Jesus' speech, but a Christological affirmation: Jesus is the true witness of God. (Lane)

*all sins...blasphemes* – With solemn emphasis Jesus gives the Pharisees this warning. Jesus knew that the scribes did not believe their own theory as to His ability to cast out devils. "You are not merely mistaken theorists, you are men in a very perilous moral condition. Beware!" 9) God's mercy is as wide as heaven and earth; His forgiveness actually embraces all sins, even the ordinary blasphemies, wherewith so many people continually offend against Him. (Kretzmann)

Two important statements follow: verse 28 is beautiful Gospel, verse 29 is starkest Law. KJV, RSV and NASB translate: "All their sins and their blasphemies will be forgiven to the children of men." AAT: "Anything that people do will be forgiven, their sins and their slanders, though they slander ever so much." (Buls)

Don't be afraid to stress the true meaning of "the sins and the blasphemies" in this verse. The first denotes the things man fails to do. The second, the slanderous things man says against God and what belongs to Him. This includes the sins of Christians. They are grievous. But they will all be forgiven. You can't preach Gospel rightly unless you preach Law correctly. (Buls)

Bengel: Ordinary sins are the sins of men; but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the sin of Satan. Verse 28 tells us two things: a) The sins forgiven to penitent sinners are grievous; b) But they are forgiven. (Buls)

*Blasphemy* is a word or act of irreverence toward God, (Ps 74:10, 18; 1s 52:5). False charges of blasphemy against Jesus (Matt 26:64–66) and Stephen (Acts 6:11) were never substantiated. The Jews correctly understood that Jesus claimed to be God (John 10:33), but did not believe he was, and so considered his claim blasphemous. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

*children of man*. Semitic way of referring to human beings (e.g., Ps 11:4; 12:1, 8; 14:2; 31:19). This phrase is also used frequently in the LXX. In the NT, it is used only here and in Eph 3:5. (TLSB)

**3:29-30** This famously difficult passage; equates blasphemy of the Holy Spirit with the unpardonable sin – unyielding refusal to believe the Gospel and a rejection of the Holy Spirit's work to create faith in Jesus. Guilt of this sin brings one into the everlasting condemnation and punishment established for Satan and his evil angels (cf. Mt 25:41). Luther: "He calls the sin against the Holy Spirit a mortal sin. All of this is tantamount to saying 'Whoever despairs in his sin or relies on good works sins against the Holy Spirit and against grace.' If course, I should intercede for such people and pray that they may be freed from that sin and be converted; but it is impossible that God's grace be of greater effect in their hearts than that sin, as is true of other sins...No, I must pray against that sin, as Moses did in Numbers 16:15, against Korah, saying" 'I do not respect their offering.'" For Korah, too, aspired to esteem before God by reason of his works, and so he sinned against grace. That is an intolerable sin. All other sins which let grace triumph and reign are forgivable." (AE 19:48-49) (TLSB)

**3:29** *whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven*. Jesus identifies this sin in v. 30 (cf. v. 22)—the teachers of the law attributed Jesus' healing to Satan's power rather than the Holy Spirit. (CSB)

Here is utter contrast which is frightening. Note that blasphemy, evil speaking, is common to both verses 28 and 29. The repetition of the article with an adjective in 29 lays stress on the adjectives: "The Spirit, the Holy Spirit." (Buls)

This is one of the proof passages for the sin against the Holy Spirit. Jesus is not accusing these people of having committed this sin, but He is sternly warning them. (Buls)

KJV: "Is in danger of eternal damnation." RSV, NEB, NIV NASB and AAT: "He is guilty of eternal sin." (Buls)

Ylvisaker: The words of Jesus to the scribes should be regarded as a warning, and not as an indictment or declaration of judgment . . . They were on the verge of committing it, and they would become guilty if they continued with their accusation . . . the sin against the Holy Spirit, for which there is no forgiveness, is not a sin against the PERSON of the Spirit, but sin against the Spirit and His ACTIVITY. The cause lies EXCLUSIVELY in man . . . God withdraws His hand from him. (Buls)

Fahling: The accusation just made against Jesus was really a sin against the Spirit of God, inasmuch as by discrediting and rejecting Jesus in the face of all evidence and better conviction they deliberately and blasphemously rejected the work of the Spirit of God. (Buls)

In the final analysis, the sin against the Holy Spirit amounts to the rejection of the forgiveness itself. It must be added here, as has been said so often, that if a person fears having committed this sin, he should be comforted with the fact that he has not committed this sin. (Buls)

Fear of having committed the unforgivable sin—the sin against the Holy Spirit—causes anguish and self-doubt among many Christians. This sin is persistent unbelief and life-long rejection of the work of the Spirit, which is to instill faith in Jesus Christ. Those who worry about losing their faith in Christ show that the Spirit is still at work in them—they have not committed the sin—while those like the scribes in our text who completely reject Christ probably do not worry about the sin. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

**3:30** This solemn and complete declaration was called forth by the charge of the Jews that Jesus had an unclean spirit. Thus the blasphemy was directed against the Spirit of God that lived in Christ, and hence His warning. If the scribes had been ignorant, or if they had misunderstood the Lord and had been seeking some explanation of His strange power over demons, that would have been a sin against the Son of Man, and therefore pardonable. But they spoke against better knowledge; their charge was a deliberate, malicious blasphemy, and therefore their charge cast mockery upon the Holy Ghost. (Kretzmann)

"He has an unclean spirit." Note that only the first part of the accusation, mentioned in verse 22, is mentioned here. (Buls)

Lenski: Where the Holy Spirit was active these Jews saw the devil. So close were these people to committing the unpardonable sin. (Buls)

They came from Jerusalem. Perhaps this means that they began spreading this lie already in Jerusalem. Compare John 8 in general and verse 52 in particular. (Buls)

It is simply awful and terrible to see nothing but Satan when one looks at God. That's what these scribes were doing. They had to admit that He drove out devils. That they could not deny. But in their madness they attribute the cause to Satan himself. (Buls)

**3:22–30** Those who refuse to recognize Jesus as God's Son and acknowledge His works as manifestations of the Holy Spirit remain under the dominion of Satan. But Jesus has overcome Satan.

Those baptized into Christ have received not only Him but also His promised Holy Spirit. • Lord, preserve us from the power of Satan. Remove any lingering doubts we might harbor, that we might be confident in the fact that You have bound him and rescued us from his dominion. Amen. (TLSB)

### *Jesus' Mother and Brothers*

**31 And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. 32 And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." 33 And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."**

**3:31-35** At this point in the story, Jesus' family members arrive and are standing outside. Their position gives more than a description of their physical location. They are outside the circle of those who have come to Jesus in their need and are seated around him. They send for Jesus in order to grasp him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

But Jesus responds to the conveyed request with a rhetorical question. "Who are my mother and my brothers?" As the question lingers in their minds, and as he looks around at the listening crowd, Jesus answers, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Jesus graciously elevates those who have been rejected by their families as he was and those who have left family to follow him to the level of his family. Even the once demonized are assured that they now belong to the very family of Jesus. The only criterion is that the person does God's will. Lenski helps us to keep from turning this promise into Law. "God's will is that by his grace we repent and believe, turn from our sins, and by faith receive his pardon in Christ Jesus. His will is our regeneration . . . our restoration to childhood and heirship. . . . We do this will of God when we let Jesus work all this in us and bestow all this upon us" (Lenski, 161). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Having answered the charges of His enemies, Jesus now directs attention to His family and their fears that He has lost His mind. (TLSB)

**3:31** *his mother and his brothers*. Between verses 21 and 31 there are only two possibilities: a) Either they are the same group who, for some reason or other were not successful in the first instance, or b) in verse 21 we have a group of close associates and in verse 31 we have Jesus' relatives. (Buls)

It really doesn't make that much difference. Our sympathy goes out for Jesus because not only were His enemies absolutely devilish toward Him, but also those close to Jesus were aiding Jesus' enemies rather than aiding Jesus. (Buls)

Many scholars today are of the opinion that Jesus' brothers (and sisters) were Mary's children born after Jesus was born. (Buls)

Bengel: The 'blessed among women' was not exempt from human infirmity. (Buls)

Lenski: It is certainly strange to find the mother of Jesus participating in this affair . . . We prefer to hold that she permitted herself to be drawn into it by the fears and urgings of others. (Buls)

Mary disappoints us here as does Peter by his denials later. Did she hear the words spoken by Jesus in verses 33-35? If so, the words must have made her think. Sometimes the good intentions of Christians aid Satan more than the person whom they are trying to help. (Buls)

**3:32** Note the irony. People who barely know Jesus are seated next to Him, eagerly listening, while His family is outside, trying to get close enough to make Him stop. (TLSB)

This suggests a parallel between the insensitivity and unbelief of the scribes and the attitude of those who should have been closest to Him. (Lane)

People in the crowd passed the word to Jesus. Here we have a direct quote. Note that they mention His mother first, but Jesus, in verse 35, places her last. (Buls)

Fahling: News had reached the family of Jesus, His mother and His brethren, of the dense throngs surrounding His person, of the strange and threatening words uttered by Him, and probably also of the presence of the spying delegation from Jerusalem. (Buls)

Lenski: The exclamation 'lo' draws attention to the strangeness of the circumstances . . . What these relatives wanted of Jesus has already been indicated in verse 21. They thought Jesus was losing his mind, i.e. was using himself up in his excessive labors, like one no longer acting rationally. While they failed to make Him stop, they hope to succeed with this their second effort. (Buls)

Ylvisaker is a bit doubtful: "Some believe that the mother comes to restrain the Son from what she considers a zeal bordering on distraction, Mark 3:21. Plausible but hardly susceptible proof." (Buls)

We cannot be dogmatic, but what follows in verses 33-35 is the important point.(Buls)

**3:33-35** While Jesus may have been disappointed over his family's lack of faith, he emphasized that his message transforms all who believe it into members of the family of God, the household of faith. Such faith is evidenced by good works. Recall that in last Sunday's Gospel, Jesus condemned the dead and empty rituals of the Pharisees (Mark 2:27-28). Works flow from faith, and not the reverse. Jesus' statement in Mark 3:35 relates closely to James 1:22, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." We are saved by grace, not by our works (Eph 2:8-10). Works are important, however, in that they demonstrate the faith in the hearts of those whose lips confess Jesus (cf. Matt 15:8). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

To be clear, Jesus is not despising family ties and their importance. Though earthly relations are crucial, one's relationship to God and His family of faith are even more important, since they form an eternal communion. (TLSB)

**3:33** *who are my mother...brothers* – "Here are my mother and my brothers" meaning the people who are sitting around Him in a circle. At least at this moment those sitting around Him were more interested in what He was saying than were His mother and brothers. (Buls)

**3:35** *Whoever does the will of God* – Membership in God's spiritual family, evidenced by obedience to him, is more important than membership in our human families (see note on 10:30). (CSB)

But the will of God may require that the relationship of blood, even the nearest and dearest relationship be denied in fulfilling His will. It may often take a great deal of spiritual knowledge and prudence, and at other times it may require an extraordinary amount of courage and determination, but the will of God

in the government and work of His Church must be the paramount issue in all instances. There can be no divided allegiance in this case, Prov. 23, 26; Matt. 10, 37. (Kreztmann)

This is an explanation. (Buls)

On "whoever" Lenski says: "Open to all and excluding none, yet embracing only those who become truly His." (Buls)

"God's will" means "that which God wills." And what does God will? That we be saved. That we believe in Jesus as the God-Man Who, as our substitute, redeemed all human beings. The context clearly indicates that. (Buls)

In verse 27 He assured His hearers that He had conquered Satan. In verse 28 He clearly says that all sins and blasphemies will be forgiven for the sons of men and in verse 29 He says that those who spurn and reject the work of the Holy Spirit are in the gravest of danger. (Buls)

Jesus is not belittling human relationships. But there is a bond which is more important than blood-relationship. It is a blessed situation in which the members of a family practice love. It leads to closeness. That is the picture which Jesus is drawing. The spiritual bond, made possible by Jesus Himself, transcends all human relationships, even the closest of them and goes on into eternity. (Buls)

**3:31–35** Loyalty to God takes precedence over loyalty to blood relations. This is still hard to hear today, as the temptation to put relationships with family and friends above God can be overwhelming. But the Lord wants us to have both relationships, and have them as healthy as they can be. He stands first in our lives because He placed Himself last, to humbly bear our sins and make us children of God.

- Lord, thank You for the privilege of being included in Your eternal family. Keep us in this faith and life forever. Amen. (TLSB)