

Sandwiched by Opposition

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 February 2025

Preacher: Lee Roberts

[0 : 00] We have a large block of Scripture to cover tonight. Mark chapter 3, starting with verse 20 all the way to the end of the chapter. That's verse 35. Those verses belong together. Let's go ahead and read them. Here are Mark chapter 3, verses 20 through 35.

Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, He is out of his mind. And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, He is possessed by Beelzebul, and by the prince of demons he cast out demons. And he called them to him and said to them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand but is coming to an end.

But no one can enter a strong man's house.

His mother and his brothers came, and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, Your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you.

And he answered them, Who are my mother and my brothers? And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.

[2 : 15] Here's the main idea for tonight's passage. Facing opposition from both family and foes, Jesus emphasizes that obedience to God's will is the distinguishing characteristic of Jesus' true family members.

Once again, facing opposition from both family and foes, Jesus emphasizes that obedience to God's will is the distinguishing characteristic of Jesus' true family members.

Here's why the title of the lesson is sandwiched by opposition. And the same reason is why we need to cover the verses as one big block.

Mark chapter 3, verses 20 through 35 is our first opportunity to see one of Mark's sandwiches. A sandwich is a literary technique in which an author begins with one story and ends with that same story or a corresponding one, but something else is sandwiched in between.

And the middle story helps interpret the story at the beginning and the end. In our verses tonight, a story about the scribes accusing Jesus of being possessed by a demon has been inserted into a story about Jesus' family to show that Jesus' family, as well as the religious authorities, misunderstood and opposed Jesus.

[3 : 38] Mark portrayed opposition by one as serious as opposition by the other. Many of you probably have heard C.S. Lewis' famous quote that only three logical conclusions can be made about Jesus.

He said people can conclude that Jesus is a liar, they can conclude that Jesus is a lunatic, or they can conclude that Jesus is Lord. Several commentaries used that quote about our passage tonight. John MacArthur even borrowed Lewis' quote for the outline of the passage. MacArthur broke tonight's passage down into sections with the headings of lunatic, liar, and Lord.

Because so many people referenced Lewis' famous quote, let's hear from C.S. Lewis himself for more detail about why he made that statement. He said, I'm trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Jesus.

They say, I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher.

[4 : 56] He would either be a lunatic, on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse.

You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let's not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher.

He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. Let's start digging into our text now and begin looking at the sandwich that Mark has for us.

And if you want to sound official and use what Pastor Mike would call the fancy pants theological term, that term is intercalation. So we'll spend tonight by looking at those verses in three sections, starting with verses 20 and 21.

Those verses have the bottom bun in the passages sandwich. And in those verses, we see a false impression. So a false impression is your first heading.

[6 : 08] That false impression is held by Jesus' family. Some of Jesus' family members have decided that Jesus is a lunatic.

Here are Mark chapter 3, verses 20 and 21 again. Writing about Jesus, Mark says, Before we get into the substance of the text, we need to talk about some translation differences.

Some of you have the King James Version. And in the King James Version, the first sentence of tonight's text actually is part of verse 19. Here's how the corresponding passage appears in the King James.

It says, And they went into a house, and the multitude came together so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard of it, they went to lay hold on him, for they said, He is beside himself.

Combining the King James rendering with the ESV's rendering gives us the best translation of what Mark wrote in the original Greek. The King James more correctly says that they went into a house.

[7 : 27] And the ESV's phrase, he went home, literally means he came to a house, and may refer to the home of Peter and Andrew. Most commentators assume that the house was in Capernaum.

Mark omits that detail, and the location of the house is unimportant to the main message of the text. The ESV better translates verse 21.

The ESV says that Jesus' family came to seize him. The King James says that Jesus' friends came to lay hold on him. We know that Jesus' immediate family was the group who came searching for Jesus because of two reasons.

First, verse 31 confirms that the people who came to seize Jesus were Jesus' mother and brothers. And second, verse 34 confirms that Jesus' friends already were with Jesus inside the house.

The ESV also better translates the phrase to seize in verse 21. Of the 15 times that phrase is used in Mark, 8 refer to Jesus being seized, including his arrest.

[8 : 35] The phrase also is used of the seizure of John the Baptist when he was arrested and imprisoned. We see that Jesus' family was intent on rescuing him by force, if necessary, from the oppressive multitudes that threatened to smother Jesus.

His family may have even thought that they needed to rescue Jesus from himself. Picture the scene going on here. As normally happened when Jesus entered the city, the crowd gathered again to such an extent that they, meaning Jesus and his disciples, could not even eat a meal.

Throngs of people pressed into the house where Jesus was staying. His ministry of healing was unlike anything the multitudes had ever seen, and it drew people in droves from all around Israel to witness his supernatural power and to hear his extraordinary teaching.

It was common for leading rabbis to have a small band of followers, but no one had ever come close to rivaling the massive popularity of Jesus.

Commentators have used lots of ink speculating on why Jesus' mother would have joined with the half-brothers' effort to rescue Jesus. After all, Mary knew better than anyone else on earth that Jesus was who he claimed to be.

[9 : 55] Mary had the visit from the angel Gabriel, and she knew firsthand that Jesus had no earthly father. So how could Mary possibly think that Jesus had lost his mind?

Well, most likely, Mary was part of the rescue mission because, like any good mother would be, she was concerned about Jesus' safety. From a human perspective, why would Jesus want to help others so much that he would jeopardize his own opportunity to eat if he had been thinking clearly?

Another possibility is simply that Jesus' half-brothers didn't want to leave Mary at home alone, so Mary had no choice but to come. Regardless, we know from verse 31 that Mary was part of the rescue mission.

We more easily can understand why Jesus' half-brothers would have thought that Jesus was out of his mind. We know from Scripture that Jesus' half-brothers failed to believe that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God until after Jesus' resurrection.

Listen to John chapter 7, verses 1 through 5. John 7, verses 1 through 5 say, After this, Jesus went about in Galilee.

[11 : 11] He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. Now the Jews' feast of booths was at hand. So his brothers said to him, Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing.

For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world, for not even his brothers believed in him.

Think about how difficult it would have been for Jesus' siblings to grow up with Jesus as their older brother. If Mary's favorite water pot got broken, Mary and Joseph would never have suspected Jesus of doing it.

Jesus never sinned. Jesus always did and said the right things. So how annoying would that be to sinful kids? How many times do you think that Jesus' siblings heard from the parents and others, Why can't you just be more like Jesus?

His siblings had to deal with the pressure of being compared to a standard to which they could never measure up. So we can imagine some of the conversation that Jesus' half-brothers may have had during the journey to where Jesus was.

[12 : 27] Perhaps one of them said, I knew something was different about Jesus. Nobody can be as perfect all the time as he is. The poor guy finally cracked under the pressure, and now our own brother thinks that he is God.

So we can understand how at least some of Jesus' family would have thought he was a lunatic, but they were under a false impression. Let's move now to the second section of the lesson.

In Mark chapter 3, verses 22 through 30, we see a foreboding interchange. So a foreboding interchange is your second heading.

That foreboding interchange is between Jesus and the scribes, and it serves as the filling of our sandwich tonight. We know from past passages in Mark that the scribes already think that Jesus is a liar for claiming to be God.

This time, though, the scribes make far worse accusations than calling Jesus a liar. We'll look at verses 22 through 30 in chunks, starting with only verse 22.

[13 : 33] So here is verse 22. It says, And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, He is possessed by Beelzebul, and by the prince of demons he cast out demons.

The first part of verse 22 gives an indication of how famous Jesus was becoming. Notice that these scribes came down from Jerusalem.

The scribes that Jesus silenced in the Capernaum Temple and in the four conflicts before that most likely were local scribes. But the scribes we see here came from Jerusalem, headquarters for the Jewish religion.

Perhaps the locals called in reinforcements to try to trap Jesus, or perhaps the Jerusalem scribes were arrogant enough to think that they could handle Jesus better than the locals.

Look again at what the Jerusalem contingent had to say about Jesus. They said, He is possessed by Beelzebul, and by the prince of demons he cast out demons.

[14 : 38] Israel's religious elite, those scribes who came down from Jerusalem, also had a keen interest in finding Jesus, though not with the interest of saving his life.

Their short-term strategy was to slander Jesus, to turn public opinion against him. Ultimately, we know from Mark 3.6 that they wanted him dead. Knowing they could not deny the reality of his miraculous supernatural power, they devised a smear campaign that would call into question the source of Jesus' power.

The parallel passage in Matthew chapter 12 fills in some of the backstory here. Matthew chapter 12, verses 22 through 24, tell us what happened just before the religious leaders accused Jesus of being possessed by a demon.

Here are Matthew chapter 12, verses 22 through 24. Then a demon-oppressed man, who was blind and mute, was brought to him, that's Jesus, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed and said, Can this be the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man cast out demons.

[16:02] As he'd done many times before, Jesus demonstrated his authority over both the spiritual realm of demons and the physical realm of disease in this one dramatic act of healing.

The results were immediate, complete, and undeniable. A formerly blind, mute, and demon-possessed man was instantly cured.

The crowd, astonished by the display of supernatural deliverance, could not help but ask the obvious question, openly wondering if Jesus was indeed the messianic son of David.

Unable to deny what Jesus had just done, the apostate religious leaders attempted to discredit Jesus by attributing his power to Satan.

Going back to our Mark text, English translations differ about what exactly the religious leaders said regarding the source of Jesus' power. Some Bible translations say that the scribes used the word Beelzebub instead of Beelzebul.

[17:03] Regardless, by the time the scribes said either word, both words had come to be synonymous with Satan. Quite likely, the scribes did say Beelzebul like the English Standard Version renders it.

Beelzebul has better manuscript support, and it originally meant in Greek, Lord of the dwelling place or house. Keep that Lord of the house meaning in mind.

Jesus will allude to that in one of his responses to the Pharisees' allegations, and we'll see that shortly. Mark chapter 3, verse 22, says that the scribes were saying two accusatory things about Jesus, and the Greek word translated were saying uses the imperfect tense.

It has the sense that they were repeatedly accusing Jesus of those two things. Once again, we see evidence of the pure hatred that the religious establishment had for Jesus.

They said that Jesus was either possessed by Satan or that Jesus casted out demons by Satan's power. Jesus refutes both of these allegations in verses 23 through 27.

[18:14] Let's look at those verses again. Mark is talking about Jesus here as he starts verse 23. And he called them to him and said to them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. 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.

Jesus dealt with the second accusation first by showing the absurdity of their underlying assumption that Satan acts against himself. He used two illustrations to make the self-evident point that if a kingdom or a house is divided against itself in purpose and goals, it cannot stand.

It was impossible to believe that Satan would rise up against himself and seek to destroy his own kingdom. To do so would mean an end to his power over mankind. Regardless of whether, as in earlier Mark passages, the scribes interacting with Jesus were local scribes, or whether, as in this passage, the scribes are from Jerusalem, the scribes never learned their lesson.

[19:43] Every time that they attempted to discredit Jesus, Jesus used perfect logic to refute their claims. Instead of the scribes admitting defeat, their accusations keep getting more and more outlandish.

Mark 3, verse 27, is where Jesus deals with the first accusation from the scribes, the accusation that Jesus was possessed by Satan. Listen to verse 27 again.

Jesus said, 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.

In verse 27, Jesus referenced Satan as the strong man. Jesus suggested that it took someone stronger than Satan to cast out Satan.

By Jesus' actions, he was proving to them who that someone stronger was. Jesus' power and authority were freeing people from their enslavement to Satan and his demons.

[20:47] In the short parable of verse 27, Satan's house is the realm of sin, sickness, demon possession, and death. Satan's possessions are the people who are enslaved by one or more of these things.

Demons are Satan's agents who carry out his diabolical activity. No one can enter Satan's realm to plunder his possessions unless he first binds the strong man, Satan, and shows that he is more powerful.

Then the stronger person can plunder the realm, releasing the enslaved victims. At his temptation and through his exorcisms, Jesus demonstrated over and over again that he is the stronger one, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' mission is to confront and overpower, not cooperate with Satan, and his mission is to deliver those enslaved by Satan. Beelzebul may have thought he was lord of the house, but Jesus was stronger than Beelzebul, and Jesus evicted Beelzebul from that house.

Jesus shows that he is waging a heavenly war, not a civil war, coming from within Satan's own camp. God's kingdom is being built, and Satan's kingdom is being plundered.

[22 : 05] Someone stronger has come, and that's God himself. Satan, the strong man, has been bound, and so now his house is indeed being plundered. So why did Jesus use this image?

Well, it could be because Isaiah chapter 49, verses 24 through 26, already has used a similar image to speak about the mission of the servant of the Lord.

Listen to Isaiah chapter 49, verses 24 through 26. Can the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?

For thus says the Lord, even the captives of the mighty shall be taken, and the prey of the tyrant be rescued. For I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children, then all flesh shall know that I am the Lord, your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

Before we leave these verses, let's consider both of Jesus' rebuttals together as a group. As usual, Jesus expertly refuted the scribes' accusations.

[23 : 18] Jesus exposed the scribes' bad theology and their faulty logic. If it was by the power of Satan that he had cast out demons, then Satan was fighting against himself.

This meant that Satan's house and his kingdom were divided and therefore on the verge of collapse. Satan had been guarding the demon-possessed man carefully because the devil does not want to lose any of his territory.

The fact that Jesus delivered the man was proof that he was stronger than Satan and that Satan could not stop Jesus. Having refuted the religious leaders' arguments, Jesus goes even further.

Look at what Jesus said in Mark 3, verses 28-30. Jesus continues to hammer the religious leaders by saying, Truly I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man and whatever blasphemies they utter.

But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin, for they were saying he has an unclean spirit.

[24 : 29] The ESV in verse 29 refers to an eternal sin. That is the sin more commonly known as the unpardonable sin. We will dig deeper into what Jesus means and what Jesus does not mean by the unforgivable or unpardonable sin.

But if you catch only one thing about the unpardonable sin from our discussion tonight, let it be this. If you are concerned about whether you have committed the unpardonable sin, that concern is a sure sign that you have never committed such a sin.

So let me say that one more time. If you are concerned about whether you have committed the unpardonable sin, that concern is a sure sign that you have never committed such a sin.

That concern also is a sign that you likely never will. Too many Christians have spent too much time worrying about whether they have committed the unpardonable sin.

True Christians are unable to commit such a sin. And let's dig into the verses and find out why that is. Jesus' meaning is obvious.

[25 : 37] He clearly communicates the impossibility of a true Christian committing the unpardonable sin. Look at just verse 28 again. Jesus said, Truly I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man and whatever blasphemies they utter.

There is no sin that is unpardonable if people repent and turn to faith in Christ. The phrase, if people repent, is critical to the statement that no sin is unpardonable.

1 John 1.9 is one of many places in which we can turn in Scripture to prove that all sins are forgiven if people repent. Here is 1 John 1.9.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Listen to this quote from Jeffrey Grogan about Mark chapter 3, verses 28 through

30.

He said, Do not focus so much attention on verses 29 and 30 that you overlook the glorious statement in verse 28. How wonderful!

[26 : 54] Here is a gracious promise from God to be said alongside passages like Isaiah 1.18 and Jeremiah 31, 33 and 34, Hebrews 8, 11 and 12, Hebrews 10, 14 through 18, and many others.

Let's look now at what we can learn from verses 29 and 30 of Mark chapter 3. Here again is what Jesus said there. He said, But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin, for they were saying he has an unclean spirit.

The unpardonable sin he's talking about here is to knowingly, willingly, and persistently attribute to Satan the works of God done by and in Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit, who testifies to these truths in your heart.

That short definition was from Daniel Akin. He then made several observations about the unpardonable sin. He said, It is a sin of full knowledge.

It is an ongoing disposition of the heart that resists the conviction of the Holy Spirit. It is a verbal act that attributes the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan.

[28 : 12] It is a willful rejection of God's grace in Jesus. It is rooted in unbelief. It is a sin a Christian cannot commit. And it is a sin not committed by one who is concerned that he may have committed it.

Akin summed up his thoughts by saying this. He said, If someone speaks against the Holy Spirit verbally and continually with willful and malicious intent that reveals a hardened heart beyond the possibility of repentance, there is no forgiveness, and they are guilty of an eternal sin.

John Grasmick put it this way. He said, All the sins and blasphemies, which are derogatory works against God, of people, are open to God's gracious forgiveness with one exception, blasphemies against the Holy Spirit.

Then he goes on to say, This refers to an attitude, not an isolated act or utterance, of defiant hostility toward God that rejects his saving power toward man, expressed in the Spirit-empowered person and work of Jesus.

It is one's preference for darkness, even though he has been exposed to the light. Such a persistent attitude of willful unbelief can harden into a condition in which repentance and forgiveness, both mediated by God's Spirit, become impossible.

[29 : 41] H.A. Ironside said, These verses were never intended to torment anxious souls honestly desiring to know Christ, but the verses stand out as a blazing beacon warning of the danger of persisting in the rejection of the Spirit's testimony of Christ until the seared conscience no longer responds to the gospel message.

Jason Meyer had a succinct definition. In the book of the unpardonable or eternal sin, Meyer said, The eternal sin is perpetual unbelief that refuses to call what Jesus does good and calls it evil instead.

In that state, forgiveness can never come because forgiveness is only found by embracing Jesus as the Son of God. Meyer also said, Scripture has no record of someone who has genuinely repented and sought forgiveness being rejected and denied.

In fact, this passage has good news. All other blasphemies can and will be forgiven. And of course, we see that in verse 28. Now that we've heard many statements clarifying what the eternal or unpardonable sin is, let's consider how Jesus' words specifically apply in our passage tonight. Here, Jesus shows the grave implications of the scribes' interpretation of how Jesus has been performing such mighty works. The scribes are saying repeatedly that Jesus is motivated by evil rather than good, by Satan rather than God, by an unclean spirit rather than by the Holy Spirit.

[31 : 22] In this sense, they are the people Isaiah warned about when he said in Isaiah 5.20, Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness.

Think about the stunning irony here. The official recognized spiritual leaders in Israel are so blind that they cannot tell the difference between the work of God and the work of Satan.

They have zero discernment. They're unfit to lead God's people. And the even greater irony of this story is that the scribes who accused Jesus have themselves become aligned with Satan in opposing Jesus.

In the sections of our passage tonight so far, we've seen two things. We've seen the false impression of Jesus' family.

His family, or at least his half-brothers, thought Jesus was a lunatic. We've seen the foreboding interchange between Jesus and the scribes. The scribes thought Jesus was a liar.

[32 : 24] And even worse than that, those scribes asserted that Jesus was possessed by a demon. This brings us to the third section of tonight's passage. In Mark 3, verses 31-35, Mark resumes talking about Jesus' physical family.

And by returning to the topic of Jesus' physical family, Mark gives us the top bun in the sandwich that he prepared for us tonight. So in Mark 3, verses 31-35, we see a fitting identification. A fitting identification is your third heading. The fitting identification comes from people who recognize Jesus as Lord. In these verses, Jesus tells us who his true family members are. And with unmistakable clarity, Jesus says that those who obey God's will are Jesus' true family members. Listen to verses 31-35 again.

And his mother and his brothers came. And standing outside, they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him.

[33 : 34] And they said to him, Your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you. And he answered them, Who are my mother and my brothers? And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, Here are my mother and my brothers.

For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother. Intend on rescuing Jesus, his mother and half-brothers have found where Jesus is.

Because Mary's husband Joseph goes unmentioned in this passage, and because Joseph goes unmentioned at events that happened after this, most scholars assume that Joseph already was dead when these events happened.

We see in verse 32 that the crowd sitting around Jesus lets Jesus know that his mother and half-brothers are waiting outside. And he gives a response in verse 33 that must have stunned the crowd when he says, Who are my mother and my brothers?

But without waiting for an answer, Jesus answered his own question. His question was not born out of ignorance. He obviously knew the identity of his earthly family members.

[34 : 46] Nor did it intend any level of disrespect or antagonism toward his mother and his brothers. We know from other passages in Scripture that he clearly loved them. Jesus simply used this real-life interruption to teach the spiritual truth to his followers who were gathered around him.

Jesus established a new priority in family. He stated that blood relationships are not enough, just as he declared in Matthew 3.9 that being a child of Abraham is not enough.

His mother and brothers are those who do the will of God, those who believe in Jesus and put their trust in Jesus. The Bible is full of verses that emphasize the necessity for believers to do God's will. Here are just a few verses from the New Testament. Romans 12.2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

How about Ephesians 6, verses 5 and 6? Ephesians 6, 5 and 6 say, Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart as you would Christ, not by the way of eye service as people pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

[36 : 14] Peter echoed the same thing. Here are 1 Peter 4, verses 1 and 2. Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking.

For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh, no longer for human passions, but for the will of God.

Now here's 1 John 2.17. The Apostle John said in 1 John 2.17, And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

1 John 2.17 is such a great verse. Listen to it one more time. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

From just these verses, you can see that the New Testament writers, some of whom were present when Jesus spoke the words of Mark 3, verse 35, eventually understood Jesus' point when he said, For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.

[37 : 29] Notice that Jesus also expands it and puts sisters in there too. The New Testament Gospels were written to demonstrate to any reader that Jesus Christ was neither a lunatic nor a liar.

Lunatics cannot heal sick people or raise the dead. Frauds cannot perform miracles, and Jesus performed undeniable miracles. Nor would someone empowered by evil spirits use that power to cast out demons.

The Bible leaves its readers with only one alternative. That alternative is that the Lord Jesus is the Messianic King, the Son of David.

As Ephesians chapter 3, verses 20 and 21 say, Jesus is the Lord and Savior, whom God the Father raised from the dead and seated at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

The eternal destiny of every sinner is determined by what that person does with Jesus Christ. Those who ultimately regard him as either a lunatic or a liar will spend eternity apart from him in hell.

[38 : 49] But those who do the will of God by embracing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are promised eternal life in heaven. There, as members of the family of God, they will worship their risen King forever.

You may have one other question in mind that we haven't answered yet tonight. And even if you don't have that question in mind, let's put that question in your mind so that we can ponder the answer together. That question is this.

How should we treat an unbeliever who appears to be unreachable with the gospel? How should we treat an unbeliever who appears to be unreachable with the gospel?

The only sin today that God cannot forgive is the rejection of his Son. When the Spirit of God convicts the sinner and reveals the Savior, the sinner may resist the Spirit and reject the witness of God, but that does not mean he has forfeited all his opportunities to be saved.

If he later will repent and believe, God can still forgive him, and God will forgive him. Even if a sinner so hardens his heart that he seems to be insensitive to the pleadings of God, so long as there is life, there is hope.

[40 : 07] Only God knows if and when any deadline has been crossed. You and I must never despair of any sinner. That answer came from Warren Wiersbe.

Listen to that last part again. He said, Even if the sinner so hardens his heart that he seems to be insensitive to the pleadings of God, so long as there is life, there is hope.

Only God knows if and when any deadline has been crossed. You and I must never despair of any sinner. Think about this.

Jesus' own half-brothers originally fit the category of people who seemed insensitive to the pleadings of God. They initially rejected their idea that the brother could be God, but God changed their hearts and revealed the truth to them.

And at least two of Jesus' half-brothers, James and Jude, became leaders in the church later on. Any unbeliever may repent while that unbeliever is still alive on earth.

[41 : 14] That is good news for Christians concerned about the eternal destiny of unbelievers. And every Christian should be concerned about the eternal destiny of unbelievers.

If you are an unbeliever, though, pay attention to this warning in the verses. Daniel Akin said, There is a boundary of sin where once passed, there is no possibility or hope of return.

Do not even think of going there. Instead, run to Jesus in faith and repentance. You will find open arms there. You will find forgiveness free and eternal.

Today, do not delay. Run from any and all sin and instead run to Jesus. When you do run to Jesus for forgiveness from sin and for salvation, He will give those things to you.

We know that from several places in the Bible. Here's just one such passage. Romans 10, verses 9-13 say, If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

[42 : 26] For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, Everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame, for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek.

For the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing His riches on all who call on Him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the reminders that we see in these verses. We thank you that even though some people thought Jesus was a lunatic and others thought He was a liar, we see undeniable proof here that Jesus was and still is Lord.

Help us always remember that and help us proclaim that. Help us continue to proclaim that even when we run into people who may seem to us to be beyond the point of salvation.

We know that as long as they still are alive, you may save them. And Lord, we pray that you will. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. I'm I'm I'm I'm I'm