

Jesus has become famous and people were flocking to him from all over for healing. Other things have happened during this period of Jesus' life that aren't recorded in Mark.. There is no conflict here. The Spirit simply chooses what to tell us in each gospel to point to and connect various incidents, events, statements and "sermons" in the Lord's life to present Him from a specific viewpoint. Mark's version is largely chronological. He is not alone giving in detail the specific designation of the twelve disciples and Jesus calling, charging, empowering and sending them forth to preach on His behalf.

From the beginning Judas is marked as he "who also betrayed Him." While the disciples (even Judas) did not know then that he would betray Him, Jesus did. Why did Jesus introduce an unsaved man into His circle of friends and disciples? And the more so, why, if He knew the outcome? His interactions with Judas display the whole gamut of God's dealings with unregenerate men. Judas is placed in the most intimate contact with the very Son of Man, following and obeying His commands and receiving and exercising God's power to preach, heal and to exorcize evil spirits. Yet he never comes to the point of receiving Jesus Christ as his own Savior and Lord. He is lost, who never was saved. The other disciples never suspected this of him. The Lord granted him every favor He could grant him. He counted him as a close friend. He entrusted Judas with the His funds. Right to the end He gave him many opportunities to repent. Twice a direct challenge, "one of you will betray me" (Matthew 26:21,23; Mark 14:18; John 13:21-30). Then He gave him the sop (a choice morsel demonstrating affection) from the Passover supper. (This affection was real.) Judas heard all that Jesus taught, saw all that Jesus did, but his greed and personal ambition overcame any idea of repentance that may have crossed his mind. "He went out and it was dark."

What do we learn from this man's story?

1. A man can profess to be a Christian and not be saved.
2. His closest associates can be fooled.
3. The Lord isn't ever fooled.
4. Even though Jesus as God knew Judas' heart, as Man He went on with what is knowable by ordinary spiritual children of God.
5. Similarly we are to regard a person's profession of Christ and subsequent conduct just as Jesus and his disciples did, 2Timothy 2:19.
6. Judas' iniquitous heart did not become known to the disciples until he led the soldiers and rabble to arrest Jesus in Gethsemane.
7. An unbeliever may preach, prophesy, and have power over demons and to heal illnesses and deformities. These activities do not make one a believer or declare him to be one, Matthew 7:21-23; 13:24-30; Luke

13:23-28; John 11:52. On the contrary Jesus clearly has stated that in the end He will tell some "I never knew you."

8. These kinds of conduct may attract us to see if such an one is one we should be associated with. But be especially careful for the last days are characterized by men deceiving and being deceived. After we are gone a great deception will be sent, Matthew 24:5,11; 2Thessalonians 2:1-12. Lay hands (express fellowship) suddenly on no man, 1Timothy 5:22. On the other hand don't forbid them, Mark 9:39; Luke 9:50.
9. God's sovereignty is clearly demonstrated in His creation and allowance of Judas to betray His Son triggering the events leading to His crucifixion. Judas has no excuse for his wilful actions and decisions given the privileged place God gave him. He spent over three years close to Jesus who called him, gave him authority and power, trust, responsibility, safety, friendship, blessing and multiple opportunities and appeals to repent up to the very end.
10. Yet Jesus says:

Matthew 26:24 The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

This is getting beyond my depth. "Will not the judge of all the earth do right?" Genesis 18:25.

Of the other disciples we know but little, except their names and remarks they made from time to time. We do know quite a bit more about Peter, James and John, the three whom the Lord drew into an inner circle of confidence. They became leaders after the resurrection. Although James was soon martyred by Herod, Peter served as an apostle for forty years after his initial calling on the shore of Galilee, and John for around seventy years. Both were given a prominent place in the ministry of the gospel to the lost and truth, comfort and encouragement to the believers. It was left to Paul, called separately, to reveal the Mystery of the Body of Christ and the Rapture, things Peter says are hard to be understood 2Peter 3:15,16. While Jesus' step-brothers were not saved until after He rose from the dead they each authored an inspired epistle, James and Jude. This James was prominent in the early Church in Jerusalem.

Jesus' conduct and behavior led his friends and family to come and seek to "rescue" Him from the dangerous situation they saw He was getting into. Or was it because He was embarrassing to them?. They apparently did not believe Him as to Who He really Is. They are naturally concerned for His safety and well being and perhaps for their own as well. His enemies were not noted for their compassionate consideration of anyone who threatened their power and status.

These enemies are so incensed by His claims to be God and the notoriety of His supernatural powers they travel 80 miles from Jerusalem to confront Him. They accuse Him of hosting Beelzebul (Satan) in His body casting out demons by the power the prince of demons. He confronts them about this dreadful blasphemy directly face to face. He quickly exposes the utter foolishness of their accusation. Why would Satan cast out his own minions? (His enemies admitted the reality of the demons and the fact they were indeed being cast out by His word.) And furthermore, Jesus points out no one could cast them out without binding their leader. Obviously the householder, Satan, has been bound if his household is being looted. Jesus is looting it two ways. He is casting out the demons once in control. Then He is taking lost souls and releasing them from bondage to Satan, to sin and to the fear of death. Now they are His and following Him safe from demonic control.

Next Jesus declares the **“unforgivable sin”**. This expression strikes terror into hearts of believers unsure of their standing before God. Many believe they can be lost if they commit the unforgivable. Too many preachers further this disabling Satanic deception. One common source of this false teaching is from the idea that we must control believers’ behavior by holding over them a continuing threat of hell. This denies God’s acceptance of the value of the blood of His Son to cover our sins past, present and future. All of our sins were future when Christ died for them.

But is there an unforgivable sin? Sadly, Yes. If you refuse the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior and die in your sins you are lost forever. No second chance. That certainly is the unforgivable sin. In the case before us in Mark 3 the Jews attributed the power of the Holy Spirit to Satan. But Jesus is perfectly subject to His Father’s will and perfectly dependant upon the Holy Spirit dwelling in the temple of His body. To attribute anything Jesus did to Satan was a sin against the Holy Spirit. Now an accusation made attributing something I have done to Satan is not a sin against the Holy Spirit for I cannot claim I am perfectly dependant upon God. Since Jesus is no longer walking here on earth no one can sin against the Holy Spirit, as the Jews did then.

Some will cite 1John 5 as supporting the idea a believer can be saved and later lost if he commits a sin unto death..

1John 5:16 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. 17 All unrighteousness is sin:

and there is a sin not unto death

But this passage simply states a believer is not to seek to intercede with God on behalf of another who has committed a sin unto death. God may, in His disciplinary love, take a believer’s life from him. He may act through illness, “accidental” injury, even by legal execution by duly constituted authorities of the land.

Romans 13:4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

An example of believers committing sin unto death include Ananias, with Sapphira, Acts 5. A believer who partakes of the Lord’s Supper unworthily, 1Corinthians 11, may have his or her life on earth cut short under God’s chastening and cleansing government, but they personally are not lost. In fact their spiritual well being is mentioned there.

1Corinthians 11:32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

God will not, cannot, let an erring saint be lost. If all disciplinary measures fail to bring repentance, He takes him home. The Father will not let him go so far as to be lost. He has been redeemed by the shed blood of the Lamb. He is as precious to God as Christ Himself. This is why there is no unforgivable sin for the believer. He (Christ) “bore our sins in His own body on the tree,” 1Peter 2:24.

If there is no unforgivable sin by a believer before God it follows there is no unforgivable sin between one believer and another. There is no act against a believer that cannot and should not be forgiven. “Father forgive them for they know not what they do,” Luke 23:34. “Lord lay not this sin to their charge,” Acts 7:60. Even adultery? Even murder of a beloved spouse or child? “Cross that outraged love Paternal” (197, *Hymns of Grace and Truth*). Even child molestation? Better a millstone and drowning than to sin against a little one. But forgiveness is not ruled out! God will judge on behalf of the widows and orphans and helpless. Yet God may indeed act in His grace to bring such an offender to repentance and eternal life.. The Lord’s instructions in Matthew 18:15-20 are based upon this principle of forgiveness. We could not approach an offender seeking his repentance and restoration without first forgiving him in our heart. Lord, give me grace and help in time of need if I should ever be put into circumstances like those mentioned that would call for me to practice this principle of forgiveness.

By Ron Canner, December 13, 2006