

Title: The Book of Mark: Part 9, Satan: What the Bible Says

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Passage: Mark 3.13-35

Big idea: Consistent spiritual victory requires that we understand the enemy we face.



Before you begin reading this transcript. Take a look at the image to the right. Consider what this image makes you think of and allow it to prepare your mind for this exposition of Mark 3.13-35.

There are three sections to this passage of Mark.

In the first part Jesus selects the 12 Apostles.

In the second part Jesus rebukes the religious leaders who say that the reason Jesus can cast demons out of people is because He was possessed by Satan himself. Jesus rebukes them with 3 illustrations in response to their accusation.

And in the third part we see that some of Jesus' family came to get Jesus because they thought he was crazy.

This message will focus on the middle section of this passage, looking at this topic that you probably have not heard many sermons on, the devil and demons.

In the West, unfortunately, we have dumbed down who Satan is.

We have painted him as a harmless, mischievous, red-suited guy like this:

He makes a little trouble for us, but not too much. He whispers in our ear to eat one more of cookie, or 10 more. For many the devil is pretty harmless.

I'm going to date myself a bit. In the 60s and 70s a very popular and really funny US comedian popularized a saying. His name was Flip Wilson, and the saying was this, "the devil made me do it" ... the 'it' was something small like spending too much on a dress or eating the whole carton of ice cream.

So, in the western world, for many Satan is not that big of a deal. In fact, in a survey of 1000 Canadians in 2004, only 37% believed in a literal devil. I'm sure that number has decreased in the past almost 20 years.

In reality, Satan is a literal, person, spirit, being, committed to defeat, discouragement, condemnation, and destruction of you.

- He hates anything good because he hates God.
- He compounds the problems we face in this world.
- He is behind every evil act done in all of history.
- He is ultimately behind every personal problem we face because he brought sin and disobedience and alienation from God into the world.

So, even though this is a seldom-preached topic, it is wise for us to understand who he is and how he works. It is like in times of war, the more the good guys know about how the bad guys work, the better prepared they are to defeat the enemy, the bad guys.

I will interchange three titles scripture use for Satan: Satan, the devil, and the enemy. And when I use those terms, I'm also including malevolent spirits that follow Satan that the bible calls demons.

I can only scratch the surface on this subject.

BIG IDEA

Consistent spiritual victory requires that we understand the Enemy we face.



1. What Jesus said about Satan.

Mark 3:13 -15, “Afterward Jesus went up on a mountain and called out the ones he wanted to go with him. And they came to him. 14 Then he appointed twelve of them and called them his apostles. They were to accompany him, and he would send them out to preach, 15 giving them authority to cast out demons.”

So, He picks the 12 men by name and designates them as his apostles, His inner core that would be left to spread the gospel after Jesus died, rose, and ascended to heaven. This group included

- 4 fishermen,
- a hated tax collector,
- a member of a radical political party, the Zealots, that espoused rebellion against Rome,
- and six that we don’t know much about.

These apostles had 3 responsibilities:

1. live/travel/converse with Jesus
2. preach this new Kingdom of God
3. cast out demons

In verse 20, Mark records that after Jesus entered a house and because the crowds had gathered around Him once again, the disciples were so busy they did not have time to eat. And in verse 21 we see something very interesting:

Mark 3:21, “When his family heard what was happening, they tried to take him away. “He’s out of his mind,” they said.”

When they heard about Jesus extreme busyness, that he apparently wasn’t taking care of himself, they planned to go get him and bring Him back home to Nazareth to lessen the strain on him. The “out of his mind’ reflected their conclusion that all the stress must have affected Him mentally.

Side note: One strong evidence about Jesus’ resurrection is in the shift in Jesus’ family in how they viewed Him. Early on, they thought he was crazy. But after his three years of ministry and his resurrection, they were fully convinced that he was indeed the Son of God, the Savior of the world, that He was who He said He was.

Jumping to the third section of the passage, Mark adds this about His family. When Jesus’ mother and physical brothers showed up later, somebody in the crowds told Jesus that they were outside and wanted to talk to

Him. Jesus responded, probably in reference to the 12 sitting close to him in a semi-circle, “Look, these are my mother and brothers. Anyone who does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.” (Mark 3.34-35)

He was telling the 12 that they had responded to His call and their relationship with Him would be like a family with blood ties. And, he was saying that Jesus’ true family would not be limited just to the 12, but to those who believed in Him.

Meaning all who believe in Him are his mother and brothers, a part of His eternal spiritual family.

Now to the middle section.

Mark 3.22-23, “But the teachers of religious law who had arrived from Jerusalem said, ‘He’s possessed by Satan, the prince of demons. That’s where he gets the power to cast out demons.’ Jesus called them over and responded with an illustration.”

Jesus actually uses three illustrations. He tells the Pharisees to come closer, and he poses this question to them.

“‘How can Satan cast out Satan?’ he asked. ‘A kingdom divided by civil war will collapse.’”

Jesus was simply using logic here by saying that when a nation fights against itself, civil war ensues, that will lead to the collapse of that nation.

By the same token, it does not make any sense for you Pharisees to say that that I am possessed by Satan because if that were true, Satan would be casting out Satan and his demons, and that would mean civil war in that kingdom. If I’m doing this by Satan’s power, then Satan is working against himself. How logical is that?

He then adds some more illustrations.

Mark 3.25-27, “Similarly, a family splintered by feuding will fall apart. And if Satan is divided and fights against himself, how can he stand? He would never survive. Let me illustrate this further. Who is powerful enough to enter the house of a strong man and plunder his goods? Only someone even stronger—someone who could tie him up and then plunder his house.”

Jesus’ point here is that He is not empowered by Satan. Rather, His power comes from God who is the One “even stronger” than Satan who enables Jesus to cast out a demon. Jesus came to deliver people from bondage to Satan because he is stronger than Satan.

Then Jesus refers to what is called the unpardonable sin.

Mark 3.28-30, “‘I tell you the truth, all sin and blasphemy can be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. This is a sin with eternal consequences.’ He told them this because they were saying, ‘He’s possessed by an evil spirit.’”

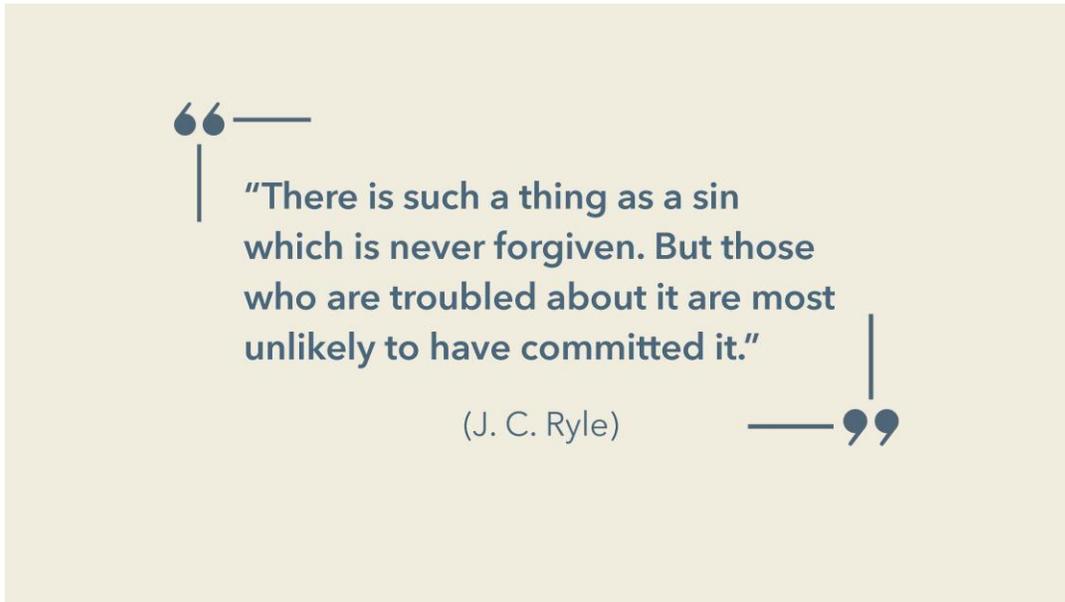
Jesus is not equating sin against the Holy Spirit with someone being possessed by an evil spirit. Remember, Jesus cast out many demons and those people then believed in Jesus. They were forgiven.

Rather, Jesus is referring to their hearts being so hardened that they would make this wild accusation against him.

Here is what I believe about the unpardonable sin. I believe a person commits this sin when over a long period of time they repeatedly and consistently sin, reject God, and refuse to repent and turn to Christ.

As a result, the Holy Spirit no longer draws them to Jesus. They are now destined to eternity without God in an actual place called hell and between now and then they will have no other chance to turn to Christ. They have committed the unpardonable sin because they have hardened their hearts to God to the point of no return. We can’t make that designation about a person. Only God truly knows a person’s heart.

And if such a person cannot be forgiven, it is not so much that God refuses to forgive as it is that the sinner refuses to allow Him to forgive. And if you worry about having committed this sin, that is a sign you haven't committed it.



On the other hand, those who actually do commit the unpardonable sin are so dominated by evil that it is unlikely that they would even be aware of it.

2. The Enemy's origin.

Scripture progressively gives us insight about Satan. No passage gives a single comprehensive explanation, but when we look at Scripture as a whole, we are able to understand more about Satan.

- We first see him embodied as a snake in the garden of Eden in the book of Genesis,
- then Job and other Old Testament books give further insight
- then Jesus is tempted by Satan before He begins His public ministry
- then the Gospels explain more
- And finally, we learn more in the later books in the New Testament after the first four Gospels.

Two Old Testament passages, Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 speak of two kings of ancient cities, Tyre and Babylon and many scholars see glimpses of insights into Satan through prophecies related to them.

Ezekiel 28 tells us that before the creation account in Genesis, God created Satan as a beautiful angel, full of wisdom and beauty, and given great stature, perhaps next to the Trinity. Before he fell, he was holy and blameless.

Isaiah 14 gives us what Billy Graham calls 'Satan's 5 I will's' that indicated what happened in his heart and lead to his downfall.

Isaiah 14.12, "How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!"

Here are these 5 "I wills".

Isaiah 14.13-14, "You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly... I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

1. I will ascend to heaven- he was discontent as a subject
2. I will raise my throne above the stars of God - he had an unholy ambition to be God
3. I will sit enthroned on the mount of the assembly - he thirsted for God's power
4. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds - he was jealous for God's glory
5. I will make myself like the Most High - he wanted to be worshipped

The bottom line was that Satan wanted to rise above his purpose for being created which was to serve God. That is the essence of sin, to rise above our purpose for being created, to serve and worship God.

God would have nothing to do that. When that cosmic mutiny took place, God kicked him out of heaven along with 1/3 of all angels that were committed to Lucifer. They are now called demons. They were judged and sentenced to death row. Satan was defeated at the cross with the final judgment yet to come.

In the meantime, He is causing as much havoc as he can.

- He masquerades as an angel of light by making that which is sick, sinful, and dangerous look enticing.
- He is jealous because God has something he can't have, to be worshipped.
- He hates God.
- He is fueled by this unrelenting hatred of God and all goodness.
- He cannot get to God, so he gets back at God by attacking his children.
- Although he is very powerful, he along with his demons are limited in their authority, knowledge, power, and presence.
- He is not omni anything as God is, but has so many followers, demons, he may seem to be omni present for his influence is practically worldwide

Demons are not superstitions or spirits of the dead, but fallen angels well organized with the same goal as Satan and directed by him. They are bodiless, invisible spirits with personality. We know them by the pain they cause. They are powerful, influence our minds and bodies, and they tempt us to do wrong,

3. The Enemy's Ploys

Let's take a look at the first example in the Bible when Satan tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as he appeared as a talking snake.

Genesis 3.1, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. 'Really?' he asked the woman. 'Did God really say...'"

Ploy #1. Tempt us to doubt God at his Word.

"God is restrictive...did he really say that...hmmm"

Ploy #2. Tempt us to distort God's Word.

God did not say 'do not eat from any tree'. He said do not eat from just one tree in the whole Garden. You can enjoy all the rest.

God is all about rules. He is a God of prohibition. Satan tempted her at the point of the one prohibition, even though God allowed for all the other trees to be enjoyed. Innate in us is a draw to that which is prohibited, like the sign that says,

Genesis 3.2-4, "The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' 'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman."



Ploy #3. Tempt us to deny God's Word.

God did not say do not touch it but rather, he said do not eat it.

Genesis 3.5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Ploy #4. Tempt us to accuse God of unworthy motives.

God is holding you back. He's keeping you from achieving your fullest potential.

Satan is called a liar and the father of lies.

Genesis 3.6, "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom"

Why it looks so fresh and tasty. If it looks good, it must taste good, and if it tastes good, it must be good.

Satan makes what is bad look good.

Genesis 3.6, "So she ate some of the fruit. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her. Then he ate it, too."

Ploy #5. Tempt us to rationalize our sin.

At that moment sin entered the human race, it messed up everything. That is why Jesus came. To restore and redeem broken humanity caused by sin through His death and resurrection.

Temptation comes via three pathways: appetites (good for food), sight (pleasing to the eye), pride (desirable for gaining wisdom) which can come through material things, status, image, success, or educational attainments.

We can justify and rationalize our sin in the craziest of ways. I've known people who have left their spouses for someone else with the reason, "It just feels so right,"

Five ploys of satan

Ploy #1- Tempt us to doubt God at his Word

Ploy #2- Tempt us to distort God's Word.

Ploy #3- Tempt us to deny God's Word.

Ploy #4- Tempt us to accuse God of unworthy motives.

Ploy #5- Tempt us to rationalize our sin.

4. Our Responses.

These responses we might call 5 counter measures. Remember Satan's 5 I wills that got him thrown out of heaven. Well, these are our own "I wills" that can counter the enemy's ploys.

To counter doubting God's Word...

I will choose to believe God has my best interest in mind.

God is for you. He is on your side. His bent is to love and bless you. He is not a taker but a giver. He wants us to prosper in the truest sense, at the very core of our being to experience what the Hebrew word *Shalom* means: wholeness and completeness.

To counter distortion of God's Word...

I will spend time in his Word.

God's word is His love letter to us. It is the instruction manual on how to do life best. And because Satan distorts God word, the more familiar with its contents, the less we will be sucked into his distortions. That means building into your spiritual routine time to engage the bible by reading it, listening to it on your phone or an mp3 player (there are lots of free online sources), come to church to hear it taught, studying it on your own, and by being with other believers who live out God's Word.

I recommend www.Youversion.com as a resource that gives lots of bible reading programs.

To counter denying God's Word ...

I will yield to his promptings.

"Yes Lord"

I've shared before something profound that my wife Sherryl taught me about obedience many years ago, and something that I really admired in her. It is developing the attitude of 'Yes Lord' even before you know what he is to ask of you.

It is the position of your heart to already have decided that when God prompts us through His word or His Spirit to do something or refrain from something, you have already decided your answer which is Yes Lord. It is carrying around in your heart, yes, Lord, yes Lord, yes Lord.

To counter accusing God of unworthy motives...

I will choose to believe God has my best interest in mind. (Same as response #1)

To counter rationalizing sin...

I will consider the consequences of any potential sinful choice.

If I do this, what will it impact? My reputation, my family, my kids, my relationship with God?

Final practical suggestions

1. Avoid preoccupation with satan and demons.
2. Place Christian images in your home.
3. Promptly confess any sin.
4. Get a prayer partner.
5. Keep your focus on Jesus.