

JESUS: THE SERVANT AT WORK

VOLUME ONE

STUDY THIRTEEN

Unclean Spirit—Unpardonable Sin

Mark 3:22–30

Criticism stings even if we know that the person who is doing the criticizing doesn't know what he's talking about. It's especially hurtful when criticism is unfair.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

A TEACHER gives us a low grade on our writing assignment. A spouse drops a not-so-subtle comment about our tendency to speed when rushed. An angry driver shakes a fist and honks at us when we accidentally make a wrong turn.

Critics come at us from all sides. Most are well-intentioned and have our good at heart, but some are plain mean-spirited. Regardless of the motive, though, *criticism stings*. And our default reaction is self-defense.

Critics swarmed like bees around Jesus during His earthly ministry. After He healed and forgave the paralyzed man, religious experts questioned His authority (Mark 2:1–12). A hive of Pharisees attacked Him when He healed a man's withered hand on the Sabbath (3:1–6). Even His own mother and brothers thought He was out of His mind and tried to take Him away. How that must have stung (3:21)!

Jesus responded to His critics by speaking the truth in love. He spoke truth by pointing to the condition of His critics' hearts and by revealing their underlying motives. At the same time, His compassionate, relentless love reached out to His critics, offering hope of redemption if they would only repent and believe in Him.

In the passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we'll see how the judgmental spirit of Jesus' critics had hardened their hearts. Jesus handled them perfectly by confronting their sin but also by throwing them a lifeline. Would they grasp it and be saved? Let's dive into God's Word and find out.



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Prepare your heart to receive the precious truths from God’s Word by taking the posture of humility. In your own words, recognize and express how much you need God’s assistance to study this passage, understand its meaning, grasp its timeless principles, and apply them to the different areas of your life. Use the space below to express your prayer and remain in this posture throughout the study.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In the previous passage, Jesus’ mother and brothers came to “take custody” of Jesus (Mark 3:21 NASB). Living in Nazareth, they had heard about His nonstop ministry schedule in Capernaum. Certainly, they loved Jesus, but they saw Him wearing Himself thin . . . and making a lot of dangerous enemies. Worried about His welfare, they came up with a plan to take Him home and, in their minds, rescue Him.

When His mother and brothers arrived at the house where Jesus was teaching and asked to speak to Him, Jesus, knowing their intention, answered that those who do “God’s will” were His true family (Mark 3:35). In that culture, His response was quite an insult to His family, but it was also an invitation. They could believe in Him and follow Him too, if they chose—which they did later. After the resurrection, Jesus’ brothers James and Jude believed in Him and became leaders in the early church (Acts 15:13; Jude 1).

Jesus’ response to a delegation of scribes from Jerusalem, however, was much more severe. It carried with it eternal consequences.



Observation: Jesus Responds to His Critics

Observation, the first step of the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, answers the question, “What does the Bible say?” Pay close attention to every word as you carefully and slowly read [Mark 3:22–30](#).¹

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Answering the Accusation—Mark 3:22–27

Imagine the frowning faces of the scribes standing in the crowd. No longer working behind the scenes to undercut His ministry, the scribes decided to go public. According to Mark 3:22, where were these scribes from? What was their accusation? Look at the third-person singular pronoun. Who were they talking to? What was their purpose?

According to Mark 3:23–27, what did Jesus do? Note the three conditional statements beginning with the word “if” (NASB). What was His response to His critics?

*Notice He called them to Himself and began speaking to them. So, they may not speak to Him directly, but He certainly is speaking to them. His words are meant to be heard by those who had said those things against Him.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Addressing the Issue—Mark 3:28–30

Look at the space following Mark 3:27. You can almost hear the silence of the scribes after Jesus’ response in 3:28–30. What hope did Jesus offer in 3:28? Note the very significant particle at the beginning of 3:29. What sin is unpardonable? Why did Jesus tell them about the unpardonable sin?

Sin becomes unpardonable when the sinner refuses to walk the path that leads to pardon. It is continuing in one’s rebellion or sinfulness and refusing to bow in submission before God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Interpretation: Jesus' Critics and the Unpardonable Sin

In [Mark 3:22](#), the scribes from Jerusalem kept saying that Jesus was casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul. Look up the article “[Beelzebul](#)” in the *Encyclopedia of the Bible* at [biblegateway.com](#). What is the meaning of their accusation? What was it designed to do?

They didn't deny His power. No one could deny the power necessary for the healing of a broken body, or giving sight to blind eyes, or the ability to cast out a demon. They were saying that the source of that power was the enemy himself. He operated in the realm of satanic power. The accusation was designed to discredit Jesus' ministry. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Look at Jesus' response to His critics in [Mark 3:23–27](#) in the MSG and J. B. Phillips translations. Explain His answer in your own words. What truth about Himself was He affirming?

Jesus used a political analogy, domestic analogy, and spirit analogy. In effect, He was saying this: “When I cast out demons, I've tied up the one in charge of the demonic household.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Review Jesus' teaching about the unpardonable sin at [3:28–30](#) in the MSG and J. B. Phillips translations. Consult Pastor Chuck's commentary, *Insights on Mark*, pages 100–101, or the online commentary, [Constable's Notes](#) at [netbible.org](#). What is the context of 3:30? What is the unpardonable sin? How does this passage apply to people today?

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What on earth would be this unpardonable sin? Well, let's begin with the word, blasphemy. Blasphemy means "defiant irreverence." No amount of reproof from even the lips of Jesus brought sufficient conviction for them to say, "We are wrong. We were sinful in making those statements, and we confess to You our sinfulness and our wrong." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Jesus' Way of Dealing with Criticism

Correlation focuses on the question, "What does the Bible say elsewhere about this topic?" Jesus' sacrifice is sufficient to grant forgiveness to all who come to Him through faith ([John 3:14–18](#); [Romans 3:10–30](#); [Colossians 2:13–14](#); [1 Timothy 1:12–17](#); [Hebrews 7:23–25](#)). How do these passages and the context of [Mark 3:22–30](#) confirm that forgiveness is always available through Christ?

Bring your sin before the Lord, and He will forgive it. Reject any idea that it is unpardonable. You know why? Because you're concerned about it. When a person is committing the unpardonable sin, he's not concerned about it. He finds delight in his sinfulness. His unbelief will be held against him when he faces his Maker. As a matter of fact, if you are concerned about your sin, it's a good sign. Conviction accompanies those who have not committed an unpardonable sin. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Compare our passage with [Proverbs 12:15](#); [27:6](#). What timeless principles can we learn from these passages about dealing with criticism when it comes from those who have our good at heart? How should we deal with critics who do not have our good at heart?

And so my counsel in most cases is to consider the criticism carefully. People who criticize correctly do it privately and they never do it to embarrass us. But the criticism bruises us. However, when the critic doesn't have your good at heart, you simply completely ignore it. Don't waste your time fighting back. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Application: Follow Jesus' Way of Handling Criticism

What practical insights have you gained from the life of Jesus that have given you some biblical perspective and wisdom on how to deal with criticism?

Talk directly with your accuser. If you can't talk to the accuser face-to-face or on the phone, write a letter and calmly attempt to set the record straight. However, don't try to do God's job. Don't try to change your accuser's mind or to change his or her heart. You can't do that. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Has a critic been hounding you? Bring this person before the Lord in prayer, asking the Lord to be your defense and to help you know how and when to speak the truth in love to your critic.

No amount of strong preaching will change the heart unless God ignites the change. So, you have to know when to back off and say, "I leave it with You, Lord." Trust the Lord to do what you cannot do in anyone else's life. You'll live a lot happier life. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

How about those sins that torment us? They are the worst sort of critics, because they accuse us of being unworthy of God's grace. However, every one of those sins, even the sin of blasphemy, is forgivable when you confess it. Come to Him now with your need and receive Christ's pardon that He secured for you at the cross.

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Every one of those sins you're troubled with because they recur, I want you to know that those sins are forgivable. You bring them before the Lord. He will forgive. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for the forgiveness that You have provided in Your Son, Jesus. Thank You for having turned my heart toward the cross to receive Your mercy and grace. Give me strength to press on despite the critical spirit of some, and help me follow Jesus' steps in the power of the Spirit. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page "*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*" at [insight.org](https://www.insight.org).

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2010, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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