

# Mark 3 - The Danger of a Hard Heart

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier  
Life Bible Ministry

Have you ever thought about what goes into a hard heart or what makes a heart hard? And by hard, obviously, we're talking about an attitude that we take on that makes us less teachable, less responsive, and less open, I suppose, to the things of the Lord. Sometimes it can be a real stubborn kind of refusal to follow God.

We dig in our heels and say, I'm not going. But other times, hardness of heart can come upon us in a very, I guess, unpronounced sort of way. I'm not sure if that's even the right wording, but I think you know what I mean. We aren't really trying to be contrary, but have you ever noticed when you get out of the habit of reading your Bible how difficult it is to pick it up and read it again?

Have you noticed that? Have you noticed that when you get out of practice of coming to church—maybe you just have an incredibly busy summer like many people do—then fall comes along, and it's time to go back to church, and you know it, but you're just like, ahhh! It's just getting back and doing it that is like pulling teeth, and we're talking permanent molars here.

Then you finally do come to church, and you kind of feel like you're standing there. Other people are kind of worshiping the Lord, and you're just like... it's almost like you don't belong. You do belong, but it feels like you don't because you've allowed this very simple process to begin taking place in your life. You've gotten out of the routine of hearing God's Word, hearing His voice, and responding to Him.

Now the whole church, Bible, praying, fellowship thing feels weird. It feels like something other than your normal life. Can I just suggest to you for a moment that the natural tendency of our hearts is to become hard if we don't keep up on the Word of God, fellowship, prayer, and connecting with other believers?

Can I just suggest to you—and I'm saying this so that you're not going to feel guilty about those times when you feel like there's been a hardening of your heart—that it's not a guilt issue. But you do need to understand the serious nature of it, and you do need to take steps to reverse it.

I want to just suggest to you that by nature, we don't stay connected to God. By nature, we don't stay sensitive to God. It is not natural; it is supernatural. So, if you're going to just allow the natural to take place, I'll tell you what's going to happen. There's going to be an increasing level of hardness in your heart that can eventually have some very serious consequences.

I bring this up because Mark chapter 3 is a reminder to us, in the whole chapter, about hardness of heart. We're going to see some extreme examples of hardness, and by the end of the chapter, we're going to see exactly what that hardness can ultimately produce.

Father God, speak to our hearts, Lord. You know we don't want to be hard. We want to be soft. We want to be responsive, and we recognize that it is through your Spirit, Lord, that the Word comes alive.

So even though there may be some of us here today who have not been in the Word like we should, and the frequency of our time in prayer and fellowship has not been good, Lord, I pray that you'd press through. That you would just break through the hardness of our hearts, and you'd speak to us today about the things we need to hear. We ask it in Jesus' precious name, amen.

Verse 1 begins by saying, *"Again, he entered the synagogue..."* So obviously, it's the Sabbath day because that's the day they would do that. *"...a man was there with a withered hand."* (ESV)

Now, Mark doesn't specifically tell us, but we know this man was a plant. He was put there by the religious leaders to see what Jesus would do on the Sabbath.

And it says in verse 2, *"And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him."*

The whole accusation thing—the whole Sabbath—we talked about that a lot last Sunday. If you missed Mark chapter 2, I want to encourage you to go back and listen or watch that one. It's on our website. I talked a lot about the Sabbath and Sabbath-keeping and where we as believers land on the issue of the Sabbath.

It's important to know that; otherwise, Mark is going to be a challenge for you because the Sabbath is a huge club that the religious leaders tried repeatedly to beat Jesus over the head with. They wanted to prove that he wasn't being true to the Sabbath.

What we're going to find is that Jesus helps us understand the true meaning of the Sabbath for the Jews. Let's keep reading.

It says in verse 3, *"And he said to the man with the withered hand, 'Come here.'"*<sup>4</sup> *And he said to them* (meaning the rest of the people, questioned now), *"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?"*

Now, all Mark tells us at the end of this verse is that they didn't answer Him. They were silent because they didn't want to answer. Every time they opened their mouths, it didn't go well for them. So, they decided they were just going to be quiet this time and try to let Jesus hang Himself.

They thought that if they could get Jesus to respond graciously to this man by healing him, they'd be able to say, see, this man doesn't keep the Sabbath. He works on the Sabbath. He obviously cannot be a true man of God because he's violating the command of the Sabbath.

Jesus begins to question them on the purpose of the Sabbath and how they apply it to their daily lives. He says, *"...Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath...?"* Is it okay to do good things on the Sabbath?

Now, again, Mark doesn't record for us the answer because they didn't answer, but Matthew, who also witnessed this event, tells us that Jesus gave the answer. He actually answered his own question. It's in Matthew chapter 12. Let's put it on the screen for you. This is Jesus responding:

**Matthew 12:11-12 (ESV)**

*He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep? So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."*

*He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep? (Here's his answer to the question) So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."*

There's your answer. See, here's the problem. God gave the Sabbath to the Jews as a day of rest. He said, take a day. Take a day and rest.

Now, the Jews decided they were going to add to it—which, by the way, is never a good idea—to add to God's Word. They came up with all kinds of sub-regulations and rules that went along with Sabbath-keeping. Oh, they came up with how far you could walk on the Sabbath. They called it a Sabbath day's walk. If you went one step past that, you were working on the Sabbath. It was ridiculous.

Jesus knew it was ridiculous. He's reminding them that the Sabbath was given to them as a day of rest, but they had added all these things. The point is that

ultimately the Jews came to see the Sabbath as or keeping the Sabbath as more important than people.

Guess what, guys—that's what happens when you get caught up in legalism. Some of you have been caught up in legalism before. You've gone to a legalistic church for a period of time or been involved in legalism. It literally creates this backbiting kind of thing where people are always looking down at others, always judging and condemning because they aren't keeping the rules the way they should, right? That's exactly what it produces.

Pretty soon, the rule becomes the greatest good. Keeping the rule becomes the goal. Are you keeping the rules? Whether it's the Sabbath or whatever. Pretty soon, people are just like dude, you're getting in my way of keeping the Sabbath, of keeping the rules. You're in my way.

Here's this man seated in the front row at the synagogue with a shriveled hand, a deformity of some kind. Here's Jesus—the compassionate, gracious, healing God we serve—facing this crowd of hard-hearted people who think it's wrong to do good for someone on the Sabbath, which is absolutely ridiculous.

Look at verse 5. It says, *"And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart (there it is), and said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was restored."*

Can you imagine what that would be like—to be in the room and see that happen? I'm assuming this probably isn't an enormous crowd witnessing this, but there's a crowd nonetheless. Jesus tended to attract crowds.

We don't know what the seating capacity of the local synagogue was, but here's a room full of people. There's a man in the front row with the deformity of his hand, and Jesus says to him, stretch it out. The man stretches it out, and as he does, it is literally made whole. The hand that was withered becomes full, healthy, and normal. Can you say, wow?

I mean, don't say it, but if I were there at the time, I'd be like, whoa! Did you see that? I'd be freaking out.

Now, check out what they did. Verse 6: *"The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him."*

Okay. What you've just witnessed here is hardness of heart—a hardness that is hard that these individuals could witness a supernatural miracle of healing that you just don't see happen on a regular basis, and it happens before your eyes, and your response is to walk out, call a meeting, and say, this man has to die. This man is dangerous, he needs to die.

That's hardness of heart, that's what you're seeing. I can't imagine somebody doing that? But we read about it right here.

The last thing I want to bring out here before we move. I want you to notice that the response of Jesus to the religious leaders upon them not responding to His question. Look at it again in verse 5: *"...He looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart..."*

Do you want to know what makes God angry? We Christians tend to point at the things that make God angry, and we talk about His wrath. We bring up some of the more notorious sins, wag our heads, and say, I'll tell you, those people... yeah, God's going to rain down fire. We get all hot and bothered about the wrath of God.

But my Bible says what makes Him angry and grieves Him is hardness of heart. That's what's kind of awakening about this. I've experienced hardness of heart as a believer.

As a Christian, I have hardened my heart against the Lord. I've grieved God. He's told me to obey Him, and I've dug my heels in and said, no. I'm not going to do that. Or He's told me something was wrong, that's bad for my life, or whatever and I've gone ahead and just said, well whatever, and done it anyway.

That's hardness of heart. I've done it. I've grieved God. That's a wake-up call. We're always pointing outside at all the sins of the world, but my Bible—your Bible—says we can grieve God's heart by hardening our own hearts against His Word and not being responsive to Him.

Boy, I thank God that on those occasions when I harden my heart, I thank God that He makes my life miserable in the midst of that hardness. Amen? I mean, it's just like when I do that and I brace myself and God just makes my life miserable. It's horrible. I finally come to that place realizing the gravity of my sin, and I repent, and get right with Him. It's like my connection with God is back on. Now we can talk and we can have a relationship.

But I didn't even notice... It's like the frog in the boiling pot scenario. I didn't really even notice that the phone was off the hook. I didn't even notice that the connection was broken. I didn't even notice I wasn't hearing because I wasn't listening. We weren't connected because sin was in the way, and hardness of heart had become a problem.

Verse 7: *"Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea <sup>8</sup> and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. (That's a way of saying people from all around the area were coming to hear Jesus) When the great crowd*

*heard all that he was doing, they came to him. <sup>9</sup> And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him,"*

Jesus liked to do this. He would get in a boat and pull off the shore just a little ways—maybe 20 or 30 feet—so the people wouldn't crowd around, and He could talk to them. It created a natural, very workable amphitheater sort of situation. It was more productive that way.

*It says in verse 10: "for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. <sup>11</sup> And whenever the unclean spirits saw him (that's the demonic spirits possessing people), they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." <sup>12</sup> And he strictly ordered them not to make him known. <sup>13</sup> And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. <sup>14</sup> And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach <sup>15</sup> and have authority to cast out demons."*

And by the way, in that description of what Jesus called them to do is the definition of the word apostle. The word apostle means, one sent forth with authority.

Jesus chose these individuals that He might send them out and give them authority. That's what the word apostle means. It's not a weird word or strange. It just means someone sent out with authority.

Can we have apostles today? Sure! We're not going to make a big deal of it, but yeah, we can send people out with authority and so forth.

*And it says, "<sup>16</sup> He appointed the twelve: (it names them here) Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); (call him Rocky) <sup>17</sup> James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); "*

You've got to know those guys were a piece of work. You don't just call somebody "*Sons of Thunder*" unless they're like a pill, you know what I mean? They're like a handful.

*Anyway: "<sup>18</sup> Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, <sup>19</sup> and (oh, look here) Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him."*

You read that, and you're reminded of something—Jesus chose Judas. There were a lot of people by this time who were following Jesus on a fairly regular basis, but He called twelve whom He chose to be the closest to Him. And there are some people who believe the reason He chose Judas was because Judas was

born to be a betrayer. In other words, they believe that Judas was simply destined to betray the Lord all along, and so Jesus chose him so that he could fulfill his destiny. I have a problem with that, I have to tell you.

Now, I believe Jesus always knew who Judas was. I believe that with all my heart. Jesus knew from the beginning who Judas was and what he was going to do. But I don't believe God's foreknowledge on a matter dictates the outcome. I just don't believe it. I believe that God always foresees everything, but I don't believe His foreknowledge makes it happen. He simply knows it's going to happen. But we are still the product of our choices.

And Judas chose repeatedly to harden his heart, to not change his life, and he paid at the end with his life. We know that Judas chose to dip into the money bag—he was kind of the treasurer of the group. He made the choice to lie and to steal. He made the choice to criticize Mary when she anointed Jesus prior to His death and burial. You remember that? Judas criticized her: Oh, that ointment was expensive! Should've been sold, and the money given to the poor. (John 12:4-6)

He didn't care about the poor. He cared about money. That was his choice. And he chose also—for thirty pieces of silver—to betray the Lord and give away His nighttime resting area so that the religious leaders could go and arrest Him under the cover of darkness. (Matthew 26:14-16) And so, Judas just made a series of choices in his life, just like we all do.

Did Jesus know ahead of time what he would do? Yeah, sure. Does Jesus' foreknowledge fix the events in such a way that you and I can't change them? I don't believe that. I do not believe Judas was created to suffer in hell. I believe he chose. He chose.

Verse 20: *"Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. <sup>21</sup> And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, 'He is out of his mind.'"*

The brothers of Jesus—by the way, the idea here in the Greek is actually could be translated as brothers and sisters—Joseph and Mary had other children. I'm sorry if the Catholic Church told you otherwise, but it's just not true. It is clear in the Bible that after Joseph and Mary, after Jesus had a regular marital relationship and had other sons and daughters.

And they didn't believe He was the Messiah, even in the midst of all He was doing. His brothers didn't believe. James, we don't think—who was His brother, did not come to faith until after Jesus appeared to him after His resurrection.

This is another form of hardness of heart. His family came to take Him in hand because they thought He was out of His mind. Pretty interesting, isn't it?

I want you to know something: Jesus is experiencing here what many of you are experiencing right now. He talked about it in Matthew chapter 10, where He said, on the screen:

**Matthew 10:36 (ESV)**

*...a person's enemies will be those of his own household.*

*...a person's enemies will be those of his own household.*

That doesn't apply to all of you. Some of you were raised in godly, Christian homes. There's a great blessing that comes from that. But many of you know what it means to be in a divided home.

Sometimes the most difficult thing about walking with Jesus is going home because there's someone there who's ready to make you feel stupid and small just because you believe the Bible is true and that Jesus is who He said He was.

That's hard. The pain of living in a divided home—or a divided marriage, for that matter. Some of you are living in a divided marriage. You're saved; your spouse is not. That's very, very, difficult because you are one flesh, yet divided because of your belief and their unbelief.

The pain of that sort of existence can easily cause an individual to begin throttling back as it relates to the level of commitment they might otherwise show in their Christian life. They don't want to ruffle feathers and they're tired of the drama. Just like, man, I go home, and there's drama. They're always asking questions, criticizing, and belittling me. I'm just tired of it. I'm going to stop going to church. I'm going to keep my Bible out of view of anybody that my family might see it. And you become this privatized version of what it means to be a Christian. Pretty soon, you've withdrawn to the point where there's something dangerous going on..

I didn't quote any further in Matthew chapter 10, but if you want to, you can read it. Right after Jesus made this statement here, He went on to say, unless you love me more than father, mother, sister, brother, the whole thing... (Matthew 10:37)

Jesus understood what it meant to be divided in your family. He experienced it. We see it right here. Yet, to hold the course, to be all that God created you to be, and to live your life out loud—I'm not talking about being boorish and dumb about your Christian life, but about not throttling back. I'm talking about being the person that God created you to be and letting the fallout be the fallout.



I understand how difficult it is—please, I do. But there comes a point in time where we have to make a decision: You know what? I’m going to live for Jesus. I’m just going to live for Him, and there’s nothing I can do except pray for these people. And I will—I’ll continue to pray that God would bring them to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

Christians throughout the centuries have found that living for Jesus is hard, and the opposition we face is part of the package of what it means to follow Christ.

Look at Jesus. I dare say your family probably hasn’t come to take you away with those little white things that tie in the back because they think you’re out of your mind.

This is what His family was doing. They're either like my... He’s obviously touched, we’re really about this. He’s making a big thing. All these crowds... He’s just a guy. We’ve come to take Him home.

And this stuff is going on and it’s funny Jesus doesn’t get all up arms over it and create a bunch of drama. He just keeps on doing what He’s doing just to serve the Lord. I mean, I need to keep giving my life away. We can spend so much time trying to defend ourselves.

Verse 22: *"And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, 'He is possessed by Beelzebul...' "* Beelzebul was, in fact, a bad rendition of another name—it’s Baal. It was a pagan god, deity I should say, a pagan deity. In fact, it literally means lord of the flies. The Jews adopted it as just another moniker for Satan. That’s all!

What’s going on here?: *"...and 'by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.'"* Here’s what’s happening: Jesus is casting demons out of people left and right, and they can’t deny it. They can’t deny it.

I don’t know if you’ve ever seen a demon-possessed person and seen a before-and-after picture, but it’s amazing because they’re, frankly, just whacked out at first—no control, blasphemous things coming out of their mouths, violent and strong and stuff like that. Then, the demons are cast out, and suddenly, they’re in their right mind, and they’re praising God. And you can’t deny that something has happened.

It would be ridiculous for the religious leaders to say, He’s not really casting out demons. People would respond, what are you saying? Look at these people—they’ve been transformed! Right? From bondage to freedom. What do you say? So, they couldn’t say that.

So, what were they going to do? They decided to spin it: Oh, yeah, okay, He's casting out demons, alright, but He's simply doing it by the power of the devil. And we all know it. So, it's just a big light-and-smoke show—it's a deception. And there you go, that's their explanation.

Now, noticed that Jesus responds in verse 23: *"And he called them to him and said to them in parables, 'How can Satan cast out Satan?' <sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup> And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. <sup>26</sup> And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. <sup>27</sup> 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.'"*

This is a great argument, basically because, again, what you and I don't see when we read this is the byproduct of people being set free from demonic possession. And what these people saw were people who were whacked out one minute and in their right mind the next.

So, what's happening here? People are getting set free, and so Jesus comes back, and He says, okay, so Satan's m.o. is to bind people and destroy their lives. But you're telling me now I'm setting them free through the power of Satan? That would mean Satan is in the business of binding, destroying, setting free, and giving life. That would mean his agenda is completely at odds with itself. There's a division in the kingdom. He says that's impossible.

In other words, you can't serve two masters. You can't go for the Vikings and the Packers at the same time. You just can't do it—it's just impossible! I don't know where that came from.

But there's this statement that Jesus makes here to the religious leaders as we move on that is very, very important. Look at verse 28: *"Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, <sup>29</sup> but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"*

These verses have challenged and perplexed believers for a great many years. They've caused a bit of fright to others. I've had the opportunity to talk to people in a state of panic who believed they had blasphemed the Holy Spirit and were therefore ineligible for forgiveness.

What's important for you and I to see in these verses is that they are given to us within the context of a chapter that's all about hardness of heart.

It begins with the first story, where the religious leaders watched Jesus perform a miracle and went out, saying, this man must die. We've seen what happened

with His brothers, seeing what they saw related to what Jesus was doing, and they were saying, He's out of His mind.

Now we come to these scribes and religious leaders who watched as Jesus supernaturally set people free from demonic bondage, and their response was simply, He's in cahoots with the devil.

The level of hardness of heart that is being displayed here for you and I is absolutely astronomical. But it ought to get our attention because this is what happens when hardness goes so far that it can no longer be reached by the Word of God. In other words, there's no turning back.

What is the unforgivable sin? Actually Mark tells us in verse 30. Look at verse 30, what is the unforgivable sin?: *"for they were saying, 'He has an unclean spirit.'"*

They're basically saying Jesus was doing these things by Satan. That's blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. First of all, it's witnessing the power of God being displayed through the person of Jesus Christ and crediting that power to the work of the enemy for the purpose of deception and confusion. That's what it means to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. Who would do such a thing? Who would say such a thing?

Listen—nobody does it by accident. I've talked to so many people over the years. I had a girl call me a number of years ago when we were up in Washington, just panic-stricken: I think I blasphemed the Holy Spirit. Are you kidding? You think you did?

Nobody ever blasphemes the Holy Spirit by accident. You have to have such a hard heart that not only did you do it, but you don't care that you did it. There's no concern. Listen, if anybody has any concern that they've ever blasphemed the Holy Spirit, you have not done it, because that shows a level of sensitivity that shows the Holy Spirit is still working on your heart. That hardness isn't there. You've got a soft heart because you're concerned that maybe you might have done it.

People who blaspheme the Holy Spirit aren't concerned because their hearts are so hard. They're so gone, and they don't care. Okay? So, please understand—don't worry about it, right? Don't leave this place and let the enemy play with your mind, get you somehow thinking, entertaining the idea: I think I might have let... No, you didn't.

How do I know? Because you care, and that shows a soft heart. To blaspheme the Holy Spirit, your heart has to be rock-hard, and that's what was going on in this situation.

Here's the next question that we need to answer, and that has to do with: Why is the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit unforgivable?

I mean, prior to saying that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was unforgivable, Jesus said, every other sin and blasphemy that is ever uttered by man will be forgiven. (Matthew 12:31-32)

But blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, uh-uh? Why? Well, to understand that, you've got to know the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Do you guys remember when you first heard the Gospel and you first were made aware of the fact that not only are you a sinner, but it was your sin that put Jesus on the cross?

Do you ever remember coming to that realization? It happened to me when I was a teenager. I didn't actually start walking with the Lord until I was in my 20s. But as a teenager, I heard the gospel, and I heard it very clearly. And I remember it hit me like a freight train. I suddenly knew and understood—not only am I a sinner, my sin put Him on the cross—and it hit me like a ton of bricks.

Guys, that's the Holy Spirit. That's the Holy Spirit doing what He does. And in order for that to happen, or in order for us to get saved, rather, that has to happen. The Holy Spirit has to do His work in order for us to get saved. Let me show you something Jesus said. It's from John, chapter 16, verse 8.

**John 16 :8 (ESV)**

*And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment...*

*And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin...* "That's what He does.

That's the role of the Holy Spirit—one of His many. But He will convict the world concerning sin. If you know today that you're a sinner, and if God convicts you on a regular basis of the things you do wrong, that's proof positive that the Holy Spirit is in your life.

If you can say right here, right now, I'm a sinner, and I need Jesus to save me from my sin, then you can only say that through the Holy Spirit. You can only be made aware of that through the Holy Spirit.

All right. So what happens when a heart is so hardened that they've just been shut off completely from God? They don't care, they're not listening, and they don't ever care to listen. What happens now? That person can't be saved. There's

no way they can come to a place of salvation because their hearts are so hard they're never going to be convicted of sin.

And the only people who prove that hardness of heart are the ones who would say something like this—something related to blaspheming the Holy Spirit. That's what it takes to do that.

Remember when Stephen was giving his speech in front of all the religious leaders? He was telling them truth after truth, after truth, after truth, and everything he said just made them increasingly mad at him—to the point where they finally just freaked out, picked up rocks, and killed him on the spot.

One of the last things he said that really angered them is recorded for us in Acts, chapter 7, verse 51. It says,

**Act 7:51a (ESV)**

*“You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in hearts and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit.”*

*“You stiff-necked people* (That is a biblical term to describe hardness of heart. He says, you're) *uncircumcised in (your) hearts and ears*, (and look at this) *you always resist the Holy Spirit.*” You always resist.

In other words, it's an unbroken expression of resistance. See, that's the scary thing. I know that I can resist the Holy Spirit—I've done it. I bet you have too, if you're human and fallible. But it doesn't go unbroken in our lives. He ultimately convicts us to the point where we break and we say, ah, you're right, forgive me.

But there's this condition that begins to come upon a human heart when it is given over and given over to hardness of heart—to such a point where now the word, and I believe this was inspired by the Holy Spirit when Stephen spoke to them, is, *“...you always resist the Holy Spirit.”* There's never a time in your life when you open your heart to what He wants to say to you.

The last few verses of the chapter—look at verse 31 in your Bible. It says, *“And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him.”* And these are the—yeah, the same brothers who claimed that he was out of his mind.

*“<sup>32</sup> And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” <sup>33</sup> And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” <sup>34</sup> And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>35</sup> For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”*

Stand with me, if you would, please. I want to just talk about this for a second as you stand. Go ahead.

At the risk of sounding repetitious, I'm going to say again: this last part of Mark, chapter 3, is a reminder to you and me that if you are a Christian today, you have not just been born again as a child of God—you've been born into a family.

Jesus said, you want to see my family? Look around. These are the people that want to know God, that want to do His will. These are my family. We are family in this room. You are my brothers and sisters, and I am your brother. I am not your sister. But we are family nonetheless, and we ought to treat one another like family.

Now, some of you didn't have a good family example while you were growing up. Some of you had a wonderful family example. But you know what? It doesn't matter whether you had a bad example or a good example—we all know what a good family is.

For those of you who had a good family, just do what you—just treat other people in the body of Christ like you were treated in your home. For those of you who had a lousy family upbringing, treat people the opposite of the way you were treated in your home. We all know what good is, because it's either the opposite of what we had or it's what we had.

And there's no excuse: Well, I never saw a good family, so I don't know how to do that. Oh yes, you do. Do the opposite of what you had. And that's how we're supposed to treat one another—not as strangers.

Have you ever wondered why we come to that time in the early part of our service, after worship, where we encourage you to greet one another? I know some of you hate it. It's like, I want to just stay out in the foyer until after people have greeted, then I'll come in. Guys, we're trying to get you to know one another a little bit, at least to acknowledge one another.

What ought to be going on in our hearts is looking at each other and saying, wow, you're family. You're my family. I don't even know you very well, but you're my family. You're my brothers, my sisters, and that is going to go on for eternity.

All these other blood relationships that I have—when the body ceases to function, those connections are no more. This connection in Christ—this one goes on forever. You better start getting used to it now. Start treating each other the way we're supposed to treat each other.