



## 2024 3Q The Book of Mark Lesson 3 Controversies

by Tim Jennings

### SUNDAY

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Read first paragraph,

- The man was paralyzed; his four friends, therefore, had to carry him to Jesus. After they tore through the roof and let the man down into Jesus' presence, Mark 2:5 notes that Jesus saw their faith. How can faith be visible? Like love, it becomes visible in actions, as the persistence of the friends openly illustrates. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 23).

I like the idea here that faith is displayed in action. This is the point that James makes, that faith without action is dead.

But how would you describe faith—what is it?

Is there a difference between faith and trust and belief? In the Greek there is only one word for all three English words, *pistis*. Do we assign different meanings in English to these three words? Do you hear them all the same?

What is the meaning of saving faith? Does it matter in what or whom we place our faith? Any examples of faith that does not save?

- Faith in any savior other than Jesus?
- How about faith in one's works?
- How about faith in a blood payment to pay one's legal debt to the cosmic king?
- How about faith in doctrines—in other words, having faith that one believes the right things and this causes one to have faith they have the truth and thus are saved? Such as having the right Bible, eating the right foods, going to church on the right day—just like the Jews who crucified Christ.
- Others?

Are we saved by faith? Or are saved by God, by Jesus, through faith—so again, what is faith?

Faith is more than belief, the devils believe and tremble, but they are not saved by believing Jesus is the Savior of the world. Saving faith is our trust in Jesus. We enter a state of salvation when our hearts are changed from distrust to trust.

In Scripture the natural, fallen, carnal heart is described as being at enmity to God (Romans 8:7). Our heart's attitude, motives, desires, toward God that we inherit from Adam is one of fear and selfishness, a heart that does not trust God.

Abraham experienced a change of heart from distrust to trust—that is when Abraham went from a state of being dead in trespass and sin, to a state of being set right with God, a state of being saved by faith, by trust, and the literal, real, actual change in Abraham's heart attitude toward God is justification. Abraham was set right or justified when He chose to trust God rather than distrust God

and that is why God recognized, accounted, or reckoned Abraham as justified or set right, because he was in fact set right by faith.

There is nothing legal going on in salvation, there is reality, we are really out of harmony with God. We are really infected with fear and selfishness. Our natural hearts really distrust God and act selfishly. It is a fact that we cannot do anything in our might or power to change the condition of our hearts. It is a fact that Jesus came and became a real human being, taking up humanity damaged and infected by Adam and overcame where we could not, purged the infection of fear and selfishness and restored God's perfect love into humanity and became the bridge between fallen humanity and God. And It is a fact that we can be reborn, recreated, renewed, have a new heart and right spirit, if we trust or have faith in Jesus, just like Abraham.

But some may ask, *why is faith or trust necessary for our salvation—why can't God simply save everyone—doesn't He have the power? Isn't He omnipotent?*

What does it mean to be saved? To be healed, but what kind of healing? It is healing of the heart and mind, of the preferences, of the attitudes, of the alignment of the desires, motives, methods, and principles of the animating energy that moves us to act—salvation is purging, eliminating, removing, the contaminating motives of fear, selfishness, lust, pride, envy, greed and all such elements from our being, from our hearts and minds, and replacing it with love, trust, selflessness, honesty, self-control, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness that our motivating energies are those of God and His kingdom, that we prefer the methods, principles, and design laws of God.

And this can only happen with our agreement, with our choice to say yes to God, to open our hearts and minds in trust—for if God were to use His power to make such a change in our being without our agreement—He would erase our individuality and create robots that do what He programs them to do, but such entities could not love, would not be free, and would not be you and me.

Thus, God presents the truth in love and leaves us free to choose. We must decide whom we will trust, will we trust God and open our hearts to Him, choose to stay faithful to Him when our feelings tempt us, when our friends and family mistreat us, when our church lets us down, when our nation betrays us, when the wicked assail us—will we trust Jesus with our lives, with the outcome of events, with the future—or will we choose to act to save ourselves, to protect ourselves through the methods, means, and motives of this sinful world?

Will we align with the powers of this world, governmental powers, church powers, and act to coerce others in order to protect ourselves? This is what the beast system will do, it will lead the world to join together to pass laws that are stated to benefit the world at the expense of liberty, of love, of truth, and of freedom of conscience. People will have to choose, do they go along with the law, with the state, with the church who tells them that it is not a religious issue to coerce the conscience of people on medical issues; or do they choose, in governance of self to be true to the principles of God?

Saving faith is a trust in Jesus such that we choose loyalty to Him in the way we live, the methods we use, the protocols that govern our being.

These friends of the paralytic had faith, they had confidence, trust, that Jesus could heal, could resolve the problem, so in faith they went to Jesus. That is what faith does, it acts to carry out what is in harmony with God's methods, purposes, principles and will. That is faith that works.

Read second paragraph,

- The man's obvious need was physical. However, when he comes into Jesus' presence, the first words Jesus pronounces refer to forgiveness of sins. The man speaks not a word during the entire scene. Instead, it is the religious leaders who object (in their minds) to what Jesus has just said. They consider His words blasphemous, slandering God, and taking on prerogatives that belong only to God. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 23).

Why did Jesus tell him his sins were forgiven? What was the common belief of the people back then about the cause of physical sickness? That it was punishment from God for sin, thus the man had the burden of not only being sick, but feeling under the curse of God for his sins. To be sure he is a sinner as we all are, but it is a false conclusion that sickness in this world always occurs because of individual sin. But this is what they believed.

The man needed healing of his soul as well as his body because his mind was infected with lies, particularly lies about God—**that God is the type of being to use power to inflict punishment for sin.** Jesus, God in human form reveals the truth that God is the source life, health, and healing and **God uses power to remove sickness and heal people**, not cause sickness as punishment for sin.

Sadly, I get emails frequently from people who sincerely believe that God's justice requires God to use His power to inflict punishment for sin. Why? Because they believe that while there is natural consequence for breaking the laws of health, these sincere souls also believe that there would be no punishment for breaking God's moral laws if God didn't inflict it, which means they don't believe God's moral laws are design laws, but functionally are no different than the laws humans make up. They have accepted Satan's lie about God's law and therefore God's character—that God runs His universe like a creature runs their domain—on made up rules that require external enforcement.

This leads them to believe and teach that God wields Satan's power. The Bible tells us that,

- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might **destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil** (Hebrews 2:14 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- Christ Jesus, **who has destroyed death** and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (2 Timothy 1:10 NIV84, emphasis mine).
- For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. **The last enemy to be destroyed is death.** (1 Corinthians 15:22-26 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Jesus is the source of life and destroys death, which is the power of the devil, and is the wages of sin, but sadly so many Christians continue to teach that God is the source of death inflicted upon people as punishment for sin. It is so sad.

What is forgiveness and how does it fit in with salvation?

- Can anyone be saved without God's forgiveness?
- Does God forgiving a sinner mean they are saved?
- Can someone be forgiven by God and still lost?
- What comes first God's forgiveness or man's repentance?

- Does God forgive people who do not repent? Consider those who crucified Jesus!

There are some versions of Christianity that teach Jesus died to pay our legal debt with His blood so that God could legally forgive us? Is this true? No, it is false. God forgave us before Jesus died, but God's forgiveness does not heal the damage done, it does not restore righteousness into humanity or eliminate the infection of sin in humanity.

The theology that teaches that forgiveness equals salvation is based upon human law and the belief we are in legal trouble and the obstacle to salvation is God's anger, or wrath, or unforgiveness, or the legal requirement the law demands in order to be pardoned or forgiven. However this idea is worded, the problem in this view is in God and God must be fixed in some way. It is all a lie.

The truth is that God is love and God forgives freely, but we are not saved, healed, redeemed, until we respond to God's forgiveness and repent, open our hearts in trust and receive the victory of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

- But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8 NIV84).

God did not wait for man to repent; He forgave instantly because He so loved the world that He sent us His Son.

While God's forgiveness is essential and required for salvation, for if God was unforgiving we could not be saved, we must recognize that God being forgiving, granting forgiveness, freely extending forgiveness doesn't equal salvation because the obstacle in salvation isn't in God, it is us and thus the change to achieve salvation must occur in humanity not in God. We must be won from distrust to trust so that we open the heart for God to heal us.

When Adam sinned God did not get changed and God's law did not get changed, Adam was changed. Thus salvation does not require anything to be done to God nor God's law, but requires something be done in humanity to fix what sin has done.

Jesus is the agent of the Godhead who carries out the purpose of the Father to deal with sin. Jesus became human for the purpose of eliminating sin from the entire universe, including humanity.

God's forgiveness is freely given and it is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance and it is in repentance that we receive into our hearts the Holy Spirit who brings us the life of Christ, the animating energy, desires, motives of love, truth, freedom and we begin acting, choosing, living these principles empowered by the Holy Spirit developing a character like Jesus.

Read fourth paragraph,

- These religious leaders lost sight of what really mattered: justice, mercy, and walking humbly before God. So obsessed with defending their understanding of God, they were blinded to God's working right before their eyes. Nothing indicated that the men changed their minds about Jesus even though He gave them more than enough evidence to know that He was from God, not only by letting them know that He could read their minds (no simple feat in and of itself) but also by healing the paralytic in their presence in a way that they could not deny. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 23).

The religious leaders lost sight of justice? Didn't the religious leaders object because they wanted justice? Didn't they object because they thought the law was being broken and to break the law is unjust, and justice requires law keeping? And when the law is broken justice requires inflicted punishment. Weren't they upset with Jesus because they viewed Him as the unjust one?

Why did they think this?

Didn't we see the same issue during COVID when many religious leaders lost sight of justice?

How would you describe justice to someone?

And the lesson points out that they couldn't see the truth of reality which was being manifested before them because they were so obsessed with defending their understanding of God. That means they were blinded by their religious beliefs, their doctrines, their theology rather than leading them to know God obstructed them from knowing God.

And this has been one of Satan's primary traps throughout all human history—false systems of theology, beliefs, that trap people into mindsets that obstruct them from seeing truth. And the core lie through them all is God's law is imposed and God's justice is inflicting punishment—sadly this core lie still infects all of Christianity, including our church.

## MONDAY

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Read first three paragraphs,

Tax collectors in Jesus' day were civil servants under the local or Roman government. They were unpopular among the Jewish population in Judea because they often exacted more than required and became rich off their countrymen. A Jewish commentary on religious law, the Mishnah tractate Tohoroth says, "If taxgatherers entered a house [all that is within it] becomes unclean."

Thus, it is not surprising that the scribes inquire disapprovingly, "Why does He eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

How did Jesus respond to their question? He doesn't reject it. Instead, He turns it on its head, indicating that people who are sick, not who are healthy, need a doctor. He thereby claims the moniker of spiritual doctor, the One who can heal the sin-sick soul. And should not a doctor go where the sick are? (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 24).

Jesus said,

- "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2:17 NIV84).

What is revealed by Jesus' answer? Is Jesus merely, only, justifying why He interacts with what the religious leaders consider the dregs of society, or does His answer have additional truths that we might overlook in the context of what His critics are doing?

What was the basis of Jesus answer? Were any principles involved in Jesus answer? Did His answer not only justify His actions in His associations, but simultaneously include deeper truths that were a direct refutation to Satan's imposed law penal/legal kingdom?

Why didn't Jesus answer by saying, "It is not those who are legally correct who need a lawyer, but those in legal trouble who need a lawyer. I have not come for those who are legally right, but for those who are legally condemned."

Wouldn't such an answer have justified His association with the dregs of society? But it would have misrepresented God and His kingdom to be like human kingdoms based on imposed law. Don't you find it significant that Jesus did not answer with a legal description but with a medical healing description, upon design law?

Sadly, the legal system continues to infect the thinking of far too many and leads to the same disastrous outcomes as it did for the Jews 2000 years ago when their law-keeping prevented them from accepting Jesus.

Read the last paragraph,

- Jesus continues with two illustrations that highlight the contrast between His teaching and that of the religious leaders—unshrunk cloth on an old garment and new wine in old wineskins. What an interesting way to contrast the teaching of Christ and the religious leaders. It shows just how corrupted the ways of the teachers had become. Even true religion can be turned into darkness if people are not careful. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 24).

Do you think the authors of the lesson would believe Jesus' words apply to what is taught in our quarterly, that the teachings of the lesson are the old wine in old wineskin and we need to reset it with new wine in new wineskins?

Back in 2019 we posted a guest blog from one of our class members entitled [New Wine in Old Skins](#) and I want to share some of those insights today.

*The blog describes the difference between the container—which is thinking style/worldview/governance system preference and the contents—the actual values/norms/mission of an individual or group.*

*For example, the Marine Corps and organized crime groups share the same container: Loyalty, command and control, clearly defined behavioral norms and punishment for transgression, well-defined hierarchy and decision rights, enforced rules of engagement, and so on.*

*Now consider the vast difference in the contents—the missions and values of the two organizations.*

*The tensions in the church today are thought to be rooted in disagreement around the contents (doctrine, norms, and practices). However, I suggest the root of the tensions goes much deeper and is really about the container.*

*Christianity's container has changed very little since Constantine co-opted the fledgling theology in a shrewd political move. He took the governance approach of imperial Rome (which had worked very well for centuries) and filled that container with Christian theology; he replaced the pagan metaphysics with fresh, new Christian theology.*

*But the new theology was tainted by the old container—fundamentally changed (adulterated)—so that it could be successfully held within the imperial mindset. The promise of Christ's*

*message to the world, in the form of Christian theology, was soured because it was held within a human-governance worldview.*

*The imperial governance container reused by Constantine was... authoritarian, hierarchical, based on the rule of law, self-serving, and self-protective. Emphasis was placed on behavioral right and wrong, group norms, compliance and punishment, the human need for justice, and a focus on the visible (hand) instead of the invisible (heart).*

*Jesus used the metaphor of filling an old wine skin with new wine, something the people of his day clearly knew to avoid. New wine continues to ferment, and a new wine skin will stretch to accommodate the pressure produced by the carbon dioxide. The new wine skin takes a particular form due to the maturing of the new wine.*

*New wine, placed into an old wine skin that has stretched once and hardened, will burst the old skin and waste the wine. Or the new wine will be contaminated with bacteria and turn to vinegar.*

*Jesus was trying to get his listeners to grasp the unavoidable outcome of placing truly new light within an old-thinking container. And he had a great example of a reused wine skin at his disposal: the theocracy of the Jewish governance system—largely self-serving, self-protective, authoritarian, and hierarchical; that is, a rule-of-law governance model.*

*The reason that the metaphor of the wine skins is so powerful is that we have a very difficult time seeing the problem: our human tendency to ascribe to God the system of governance that we use to survive in this fallen world.*

*The rule of law is the most effective governance system ever developed. But the problem is that this adaptation is profane; it works, but it is also of this world and a direct result of our sinful condition and the forces of chaos we face. This old wine skin, formed by the human need for authoritarian governance in response to survival-of-the-fittest dynamics is not a part of God's design, as clearly illustrated in the life of Christ.*

*Many praise the Reformation and laud the new wine. Martin Luther dumped out a portion of the old wine of Catholic theology and norms, but because he continued to use the old Roman Catholic container, he contaminated the new wine with the old. Protestant theology was adulterated by contact with the old wine skin.*

*We Adventists are satisfied that our church founders dumped a portion of old wine from mainline Protestant theology and replaced it with new wine. But the new wine, pressed in the excitement of the Awakening, was also contaminated by using the old wine skin, which has been passed down from pagan Rome.*

*And our message to the world is still not truly new wine, and it smells of vinegar. All this is due to using the old container—creating God in our image, believing that God's governance of the universe mirrors human systems of governance that emerged due to our sinful condition.*

*The rule of law evolved for one purpose: group survival. By dampening intragroup conflict and chaos, the group is strengthened against external existential threats. And as such, when intergroup conflict grows, those given leadership positions are expected to apply a heavy hand, "for the good of the organization." Does this sound familiar?*

*What would a new wine skin need to look like to hold the new wine that Jesus referenced? Think about the Good News without the contamination of the Roman wine skin. This is hard for us to envision, because a human system of governance for a religious organization formed by the fermentation of truly new light has never existed, except for a short time during the life of Christ and possibly the very early church.*

*In his understanding of reality, Christ saw past the profane usefulness of human governance systems based on group survival. He valued the progress of the individual and the value of the individual over the integrity and safety of the system. He understood, because of his divine perspective, that earthly group success and survival were temporal and not important compared to the healing of the individual character.*

*He was an outspoken critic of the use of coercion by those in positions of authority focused on behaviors, conformity, and group norms. And this was because these rules/norms/policies/enforcements evolved to protect the system and the collective, rather than out of concern for the spiritual health and well-being of the individual. Jesus was also notorious for non-compliance with the Jewish rule-of-law theocracy.*

*We have yet to see a new wine skin emerge that will successfully hold and protect the Good News, while it completes fermentation and maturity. That container, patterned on the life of Christ, will not look like the familiar kingdom-of-man container, which every historical theocracy and all successful contemporary denominations have adopted. When we refer to God as king, lord, judge, or ruler, we reinforce our mental model of a god created in our image.*

*The true kingdom-of-God container (wine skin) on this earth will take form based on the fermentation and influence of truly new wine. That form of governance, worldview, leadership, and organizational design will emerge based on the living and active nature of the new wine.*

*For this to happen, Christ's life must be the template for the system of governance. And the eternal good of the individual must always outweigh the perceived threats to the integrity and security of the system. If this principle is not reflected in form of the container, then we are destined to use an old wine skin to carry the good news to the world. This has been and will be ultimately futile.*

## **TUESDAY**

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The lesson focuses our attention again on the Sabbath and Jesus claiming to be Lord of the Sabbath. Let's revisit last TUESDAY's lesson on page 17 of the adult study guide and read first four paragraphs:

- After the amazing synagogue service, Jesus retires with His small band of disciples (Peter, Andrew, James, and John) to Peter's home, evidently to spend the rest of the Sabbath day in a friendly meal and fellowship.

But a note of concern overshadows the scene: Peter's mother-in-law is ill with a fever, which back then meant you either got better or died. They tell Jesus of the sickness, and He takes Peter's mother-in-law by the hand and raises her up. She immediately begins to provide for their needs. What a powerful example of the principle that those who have been saved, healed, by Jesus will minister to others as a result!



Throughout Mark it is often the case that Jesus heals by touching the affected person (see Mark 1:41; Mark 5:41), though other times no touch is mentioned (see Mark 2:1–12, Mark 3:1–6, Mark 5:7–13).

Jesus was not done with ministry that day. After sunset many came to Peter's house for healing, no doubt from seeing what happened at the synagogue that day or from hearing about it. The fact that the Gospel writer does not tell his readers that people delayed because of the hours of the Sabbath indicates that he expected his readers to know about the Sabbath. This feature of Mark is consistent with his readers being Sabbath keepers. (Adult SS Guide 3rd Q 2024, The Book of Mark p. 17).

Does this description raise any questions in your mind? What?

- Why did the people wait until after Sabbath to come to Jesus?
- Were they taught something about the Sabbath that was an actual barrier, hindrance, obstruction keeping them from coming to the Lord of the Sabbath? What?
- Could it be that they believed that the Sabbath is a rule made up that requires legal enforcement and there are all types of behaviors one is forbidden from doing on the Sabbath and thus, they were afraid of breaking the Sabbath law by going to Jesus?
- What about today is it possible to present the Bible Sabbath in such a way that it actually makes it harder for people to come to Jesus? Any examples?
- What are we forbidden from doing on the Sabbath?
  - Work—which is defined where in Scripture? It isn't!
  - Is that all we are forbidden from doing? What about disliking the Sabbath? Isaiah 58
  - Isn't true Sabbath keeping when one delights in the Sabbath, so wouldn't that mean we are not supposed to dislike it?
  - And then does the imposed law view, with all its rules and threats, become the cause of many people disliking both the Sabbath and the god of the Sabbath and could it be **that legal Sabbath keeping is the very cause of Sabbath breaking**, as it changes one's heart to something other than love and trust.
- Was Peter's mother-in-law breaking the Sabbath when she began working and serving them? Why or why not?
- What about Jesus, did He break the Sabbath when He healed her? The people were waiting until after the Sabbath to pursue getting healed, should Jesus have also waited to heal Peter's mother-in-law?
- Why did Jesus perform so many miracles on the Sabbath, remember the man who was a paralytic for 38 years (John 5)? Jesus purposely healed him on Sabbath, this wasn't an acute sickness, it was a chronic condition, one more day wouldn't have mattered, or Jesus could have gotten there on Friday—why did Jesus choose the Sabbath to perform His healing?
- What is the purpose of the Sabbath?
  - Why did God create the Sabbath as a gift for human beings?
  - What is it to reveal to us?
  - What are we to remember when we remember the Sabbath? Aren't we supposed to remember the truth about God—that God rested, that God stopped using power, that God did not enforce His law that God did not use power to punish Lucifer and the rebellious angels? And therefore we are reassured to know that God does not force people today into compliance, that God leaves us free! Thus the Sabbath is God's sign to us that He will heal and save all who trust Him, through His methods of truth presented in love. It is the only way to save any sinner, because the use of might and power to change minds destroys individuality. Thus the Sabbath is the sign of God's

character and methods, when God presented truth in love while leaving His creatures free—how reality works. The Sabbath is the sign that God makes us holy through the application of His design laws.

- But sadly, the legalists in the camp, those who have embraced Rome’s lie that God’s law functions like human law, teach the Sabbath is a legal test of obedience and teach that worshiping on the wrong day will be punishable by torment and death at the hands of God—the exact opposite of what the Sabbath reveals.

## WEDNESDAY

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Read Mark 3:20-30:

- Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.” And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.” So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house. I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.” He said this because they were saying, “He has an evil spirit.” (Mark 3:20-30 NIV84).

What does this mean? How do you explain it?

What do you think about his family saying Jesus is out of His mind? Are they saying the same thing the religious leaders are saying when they said Jesus was demon-possessed?

My view is that the disciples, His brothers and family, were all struggling to understand Jesus through the lens of this world’s laws and value system. It did not make sense to them that you get more by giving away what you have—no you get more by taking from others. It did not make sense to them that you get strength by service rather than be eating and rest.

His family and disciples recognized that Jesus was something different, that He was blessed of God, that He was a source of good and righteousness, but I think they thought Jesus was a little naïve and didn’t really understand the ways of the world, and needed some help from them. They may have looked at him like the absent-minded professor who is so focused on his research he doesn’t stop to eat and sleep or coordinate his shirt and pants etc. This is what I think His family was thinking, but the religious leaders thought He was actually working against God, was a heretic, was trying to overturn their faith, and thus they really thought He was from the devil.

And Jesus’ responses again, beautifully refutes their allegation by an appeal to reality, to design law, how things actually work, not to some claim, or proof text.

Let’s read these verses from the Remedy:

- Once Jesus returned home, a crowd gathered so quickly that neither he nor his disciples had time to eat. When those who considered themselves "close to Jesus" heard how the crowds were constantly pressing him, they thought, "He's not thinking clearly enough to handle all the fame," so they sought to manage Jesus' time and schedule. And the theology professors, who taught a legal religion, came over from Jerusalem and said, "He wants to be a celebrity, and just like the devil, he tries to make himself the center of attention. He uses Satan's power to drive out evil forces." So Jesus confronted them publicly with parables: "How can Satan enter into a person, and by entering, get rid of Satan? Think about it: It would be like using water to get rid of wetness. If a kingdom fights against itself, it collapses. If a family turns against each other, its cohesion is destroyed. If Satan opposes himself, he neutralizes his own efforts, his work collapses, and his effectiveness is ended. It is not possible to enter the domain of a strong man and take away his possessions unless one first neutralizes the strong man. Only when the strong man is restrained can one take his possessions. So here is the simple truth: Every sin — every deviation from God's design — can be healed. But anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit cannot be healed, either now or in the future, for it is the Spirit who works in the heart to administer the Remedy, and the Spirit only works in a willing heart. Closing the heart to the Spirit prevents healing and results in eternal sinfulness." He told them this because they were closing their hearts by saying, "He is working through an evil spirit." (Mark 3:20-30 REM).