

FOES AND FAMILY

Mark 3:22-35

Intro: The passage that we come to today is not unrelated to the last verses that we considered together last Sunday. I am referring to verses 20 and 21 where the Lord again was surrounded by a multitude of people who evidently had come to hear Him teach as well as to receive healing either for themselves or for others for whom they were concerned. Verse 20 tells us that the Lord and His disciples were so busy with the people that they did not have time to “eat bread,” or to take time away from the people so that they could care for their own physical needs. And when they tried to get Him and His disciples to stop doing what they were doing, they said that it was because, “He is beside himself” (Mark 3:21b). This meant that they felt that He was at the breaking point because of the constant pressure He had been under to meet the needs of the people who came to Him. It seems that they were prepared to take Him away by force if there was no other way to get Him to come away with them.

And then at the beginning of our text for today we are told of:

I. THE LORD’S FOES (Mark 3:22).

The scribes, the enemies of our Lord, were not simply saying that He was demon-possessed; *they were saying that He was Devil-possessed*. They said that “He hath Beelzebub,” and this meant that our Lord had entered into some kind of an alliance with “the prince of the demons” to cast out demons.

No one really knows the origin of the name, “Beelzebub,” but scholars believe that the correct spelling is *Beelzebul*, but why and when it was changed, no one seems to know. Originally it probably was the name of a heathen deity which the Jews had adopted as a name for the Devil. Even that is not really know, and its exact meaning is uncertain. It has been suggested from the Syriac translation that it means *god of filth*, or *dung*. But it was a most degrading charge to say that our Lord *had* Beelzebub because it meant that all of the vile things you could say about Beelzebub could also be said about the Lord Jesus Christ. And one commentator said that it amounts to the same that we have in mind when we speak of someone being *in Christ*, or *in the Holy Spirit*. (Cf. the ICC on Mark, by Ezra T. Gould.) And it would imply also that the relationship between Jesus and Beelzebub could never be broken. And so this would add to

their case that the only solution to the problems caused by our Lord, would be to kill Him.

But how did the Lord react to this charge?

II. THE LORD'S RESPONSE TO THE SCRIBES (Mark 3:23-30).

The Lord knew what was in the hearts of these men. He knew that they were looking for anything would make them feel justified in putting Him to death. He knew that they knew that He was not in league with Beelzebub. And yet He answered them. Don't miss this evidence of our Lord's patience with evil men, evidence of His grace toward His enemies. He felt responsible to answer their charge. And He did it, our text says, "in parables."

Now the usual idea we have of a parable is that it is usually a story taken from what could actually happen, and often did happen, in real life, to illustrate some divine truth, or truths. But a parable is an analogy. What is an analogy? It is a likeness between two things which are similar and yet different, but their relationship with each other tends to prove or disprove both of them.

The scribes said that the Lord was casting out demons by the prince of demons. The Lord responded by asking, "How can Satan cast out Satan?" It He, the Lord, were casting out demons by the prince of the demons, *i.e.*, with Satan's full cooperation, then what our Lord was asking, "How can Satan cast out Satan?" Wouldn't Satan be working against Himself to join with the Lord in casting out demons? Or, as the Lord said, "How can Satan cast out Satan?" It really doesn't make sense, does it? Satan, which means *adversary*, the Lord's adversary, would be joining with the Lord to defeat himself. Such an idea is ridiculous.

But then the Lord went on to illustrate it in other ways. Look as verse 24. And now He was not asking a question; He was stating a truth which everyone with any sense at all would recognize as the truth. The Lord said, "And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand." If a king discovers that certain ones in his kingdom are seeking to overthrow him, and to assume power for themselves, he will use all of the power at his command to destroy the opposition. If he doesn't, he will be destroyed. Or his kingdom would be divided, and he would only have a part of the people over whom he formerly ruled. This is self-evident

truth. So on that basis, what interest would “the prince of the demons” have in joining with the Lord in overthrowing the demons? He would have none at all.

I often think about this in our own country. There is so much hatred among our leaders that it threatens the very existence of our country. And most of it seems to be on one side of the government. They fight for what is despised by God, and will tear anyone apart, at least verbally, who dares to stand in their way.

But the Lord made a second statement. See verse 25.

Just as a kingdom divided against itself, cannot stand, the same has to be said about “a house,” *i.e.*, by which the Lord meant, *a home*. When the Lord brought Eve to Adam, and established the first home, He said, among other things, “And they shall be one flesh.”

Right here in the Gospel of Mark, John Mark quoted what our Lord said after the Pharisees asked Him if it were lawful for a man to put away his wife. They asked him this question, tempting Him, hoping He would say something that would incriminate Him. They raised the fact that Moses permitted them to divorce their wives. But then the Lord responded with these words which we find in Mark 10:5-9

5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

8 And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

A husband and wife who cannot get along in harmony and love, but are constantly differing about anything, especially about their children, are slowly but surely destroying their home. In Proverbs 14:1 we have this proverb from Solomon, but ultimately from God:

1 Every wise woman buildeth her house; but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands (Proverbs 14:1).

Nothing is more important in any home than that a husband and wife remember that in God’s sight they are one, and they are to act as one, not two.

So you can see how the Lord took this false charge that the scribes had brought against Him, to teach a very important lesson to many different people.

In verse 26 the Lord drew the conclusion. (Read.) It would be good if Satan would do this, but he is too smart for that. But his intelligence does not keep him from bringing a false charge against the Lord. And this is what he was doing through the scribes.

But when we move on to verse 27, we see the truth of what the Lord was doing in casting out the demons.

The strong man in this analogy is Satan. The thief who would take away his possessions, his tools and instruments with which works, must first bind the strong man, and then the thief will take what he wants. So the thief is not on the strong man's side, but is his enemy, his adversary. Some in explaining this verse make the word "goods" refer to the demons, but we have to remember that not every point in a parable applies. What the Lord was showing was that in casting out the demons, He was showing Himself to be concerned about defeating Satan, not teaming up with him.

Our Lord's final words to the scribes are a warning, introduced by the word, *Amen*, "verily." The scribes were a bunch of unrighteous liars who had brought a false charge against the Lord, that He performed the miracle of casting out the demons by "the prince of the demons." But what actually was the truth about how His miracles were being performed? To answer that question please turn with me to the Gospel of Luke chapter 3.

In Luke 3 Luke tells us that when the Lord Jesus was baptized "the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him" (Luke 3:22). All three of the other Gospel writers tell us the same thing. But the Apostle John added this important statement which we find in John 1:32-33:

32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

In other words, the Holy Spirit did not just come upon the Lord, and then leave Him. The Holy Spirit came upon Him *and stayed!*

Now read Luke 4:1 and 2a. Then read Luke 4:14 how the Lord's return to Galilee is described following His temptation. And then read what the Lord read when He was in the synagogue in Nazareth. Read Luke 4:16-22a.

And then listen to these words spoken by the Apostle Peter in his message delivered on the Day of Pentecost, and recorded for us in Acts 2. Notice how Peter referred to the miracles of our Lord in verse 22: “a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs *which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.*”

Now apply this to verses 28 and 29 in our text. How thankful we can all be for the truth of verse 28. *But now look at verse 29. What is it to blaspheme the Holy Spirit? One way is to say that He cast out demons by the prince of the demons, when in actuality He case them out by the Holy Spirit! To put any other interpretation upon the miracles which the Lord performed, and not recognize that all Members of the Godhead were involved in the ministry of our Lord, “hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation”* (Mark 3:29). To blaspheme God is to speak irreverently of Him, not to honor Him as God, or to attribute His work as a mere human coincidence, or to deny them altogether. To attribute the control of the weather to a non-existent “Mother Nature” is a form of blasphemy.

The Lord did not say that the scribes could not be saved, but He said that they were in danger of eternal damnation because they said that He had an Evil Spirit, Beelzebub, instead of the Holy Spirit.

I feel sure that you will agree with me when I say that this is a very, very important passage of Scripture, and a very solemn passage. How people treat the Lord, and His Word, especially the Gospel, is the most important matter any person can ever face. So we say to all, “Beware.”

But now the chapter closes with an emphasis upon:

III. THE FAMILY OF OUR LORD (Mark 3:31-35).

As I have already mentioned, these last five verses of Mark 3 need to be

tied together with verses 20 and 21 of this same chapter, Mark 3. Only this time we read that the Lord's brothers, and his mother came seeking Him, and we know that they were concerned about their Brother and Son.

We know that our Lord's mother was Mary. And we know that she had at least six children after she gave birth to our Lord—four sons and at least two daughters. Luke 6 beginning with verse 3 is one place where our Lord's biological family is mentioned. His brothers names were James, Joses, Juda (or Judas), and Simon. We don't know the names of his sisters, but they are referred to in the plural, and so we know that there were at least two of them, and maybe more than two. Actually they were half brothers and half sisters of our Lord. Mary was the mother of all of them, but Joseph was the father of all but our Lord. He had been conceived by the Holy Spirit.

I think we would all agree that it would have been wonderful to be a member of that family. It would even have been a great privilege to know them, and to have been able to visit with them. Probably there were many women who were envious of Mary because she was Jesus' mother. In fact, you probably remember that when the Lord was teaching in a certain place, a woman spoke up and said this: "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts which nursed you" (Luke 11:27). She probably wished that she had been the Lord's mother. And you can't blame her. That was a distinct blessing for Mary the mother of our Lord. The angel Gabriel told her that she was blessed among women. See Luke 1:28. And even Elisabeth, the mother of John the Baptist said to Mary, "Blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1:42). And she was honored that the mother of her Lord would pay her a visit.

But when the Lord was told that His mother and His brothers were outside waiting to see Him, His response seemed almost disrespectful. He said, "Who is my mother, or my brethren?" Now we should not think even for a moment that our Lord did not honor His mother, loving her very deeply. Nor should we think that He did not have the deepest affection for His brothers. You can be sure that He loved them all very much.

But the Lord was making a point. Mary was not saved because she gave birth to our Lord. None of our Lord's half brothers or half sisters were on their way to heaven because they had some of the same blood in their veins that He had in His. It definitely would have been a special gift from God to be in that family, to be a son or daughter of Joseph and Mary. But

that would not have gotten any of us to heaven. And the Lord made that very clear in the words that He spoke to those who told Him that His mother and His brothers were waiting to see Him, probably because they, too, felt that He was wearing Himself out preaching and healing. I read again verses 34 and 35. (Read.)

Do you remember the answer that the Lord gave to the lady who said, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that nursed you”? He responded by saying, “Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it” (Luke 11:28).

Concl: Isaac Watts, in one of his many wonderful hymns, asked the question:

Why was I made to hear His voice,
And enter while there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?

And then he answered his own question:

'Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly drew us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.

The Apostle John expressed it this way:

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (1 John 3:1-3).

Yes, it would have been wonderful for any of you ladies to have given birth to the Lord Jesus Christ. And it would have one of the highest of all honors to have been a half brother or a half sister of our Lord. But by the Lord's own words, we have been honored above either of those. If the Lord Jesus is your Savior, as He is mine, He has bestowed upon us the highest of all honors: He chose us, then He called us, and He saved us, and He is keeping us, having made us members of His family forever. There is no greater honor than that. So let us praise Him as we remember that He died, and how He died, to bring us into His heavenly family.