

'And He Cometh Into a house.'- Mar 3:19 B

by G. Campbell Morgan

Jesus faced opposition from the Pharisees and His friends, but He responded with a powerful message about the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and revealed a spiritual relationship that is infinitely above the affinity of blood relationship.

Scripture: Mark 3:19

Topics: "Spiritual Relationships", "Opposition to Christ"

Description

G. Campbell Morgan explores the significance of Jesus entering a house after appointing the twelve disciples, emphasizing the dual nature of opposition He faced--from His own family, who thought He was out of His mind, and from the Pharisees, who accused Him of being in league with Beelzebub. He highlights the importance of understanding Jesus' motives and the spiritual relationships formed through obedience to God, which transcend familial ties. Morgan illustrates how Jesus' selfless service attracted crowds and provoked criticism, revealing the deeper spiritual truths about His mission and the nature of evil. Ultimately, he calls believers to embrace sacrificial service, even in the face of misunderstanding from loved ones.

Transcript

Mark 3:19b-35. (Mar 3:19-35)

THESE words separate and connect two paragraphs, the first recording the special setting apart of the twelve, and the second telling of some things following thereupon.

The twelve had been chosen, called, and appointed by the Lord. They were now to be with Him in a new and special sense before being sent forth to preach and to have authority to cast out demons. From this time there was most evidently a deeper note in His teaching, and His operations brought out into greater clearness the forces which were against Him, and His power over them. From this point in the narrative of Mark, to the sixth verse of the sixth chapter, (after which follows the account of the sending forth of the twelve), we find recorded, in sequence, some of the events in which these twelve were "with Him."

After the solemn ordination on the mountain, the Lord and the twelve entered a house, probably still that of Simon and Andrew, which He seems to have made His home and headquarters. The marginal reading of the Revised Version, suggesting that these words should be translated, "And He cometh home," is indeed an illuminative one, for the phrase literally translated is, "He cometh into house"; not the house, or a

house, but into house, It is a phrase suggesting the idea of home. The Greek word here translated "house" is one never used of a building merely. It was always used of a building inhabited; sometimes of the Temple as inhabited by God, sometimes of the dwellings of men as inhabited by men.

So the suggestion here is that He came home, and immediately the crowds congregated, and their demands were such that He and His disciples could not so much as eat bread. In that statement of Mark a there is a wonderful revelation, first of the attractiveness of Jesus; and then also, of His self-surrender. Wherever He was, they came with their sick and suffering, their sad and sorrowing; and He gave Himself to them.

Mark has not recorded for us all that transpired at that time. Other of the evangelists give more of His teaching. But Mark has given us the account of two matters which illustrate the opposition which Jesus encountered, on the one hand from His friends, well-meaning but nevertheless opposition; and on the other hand from His foes, by no means well-meaning, and quite definitely hostile.

It is important, therefore, in order to an intelligent study of the story that we observe the method of Mark, and the order of events. He records the fact that His friends, hearing of His doings, started out to find Him, and to put Him under restraint (verses 20, 21) [Mar 3:20-21]. This is a reference, undoubtedly, to His mother and His brethren. The literal translation of the words rendered "His friends" is, "They who were from beside Him"; that is, those who were related to Him. They, hearing of the unstintedness of His giving of Himself to the crowding multitudes, said, "He is beside Himself"; and they started to find Him, and to restrain Him; started probably from Nazareth, whither the news of Him and of His immediate activities had reached.

In the meantime, while they travelled toward Capernaum, both Matthew and Luke state that, there in the house, He healed a demoniac-Mark making no reference to the healing-and that gave occasion for the criticism of Himself and His work by the Jerusalem scribes, in which they declared that He had Beelzebub, and that by the prince of the demons He cast out demons. Then in the midst of His teaching, consequent upon that criticism, His mother and His brethren arrived. Matthew says "While He was yet speaking" His mother and His brethren came.

Let us observe then, the opposition which this paragraph reveals; dealing first with the opposition of His foes as revealed in the criticism of the Pharisees; and then with the opposition of His friends as revealed in the hour when His mother and His brethren arrived.

We have observed in a previous study the opposition that was offered to our Lord in Galilee. The first manifestation was in the house at Capernaum, when He had said to a man, "Thy sins are forgiven," they said, "He blasphemeth: who can forgive sins but One, even God." This was a perfectly sincere criticism, entirely justified if He had been such as they thought Him, merely a human teacher. None can forgive sins save God. That was the first manifestation of opposition.

The second manifestation was in Levi's house, when they criticized Him for consorting with sinners; and again, through His disciples, because they had not observed the fasts.

Then followed the opposition in the cornfields, when they charged His disciples with breaking the Sabbath, as they plucked the ears of corn on their journey.

That opposition culminated with the scene in the synagogue when they watched Him that they might accuse Him, and He gave them the opportunity they sought, as He healed the man with a withered hand. The result of that healing was that of the coalition between Pharisees and Herodians, and their taking counsel together, how they might destroy Him.

In the interval between the hour when that coalition was formed and this, great things had taken place. Multitudes had come from north, south, and east, from all the country side, and had followed Him. Great wonders had been wrought, and the special note which Mark perpetually emphasizes, and to which, we shall come for more particular consideration a little later on, was that of His power over evil spirits. There had been special and persistent exorcisms in the course of our Lord's ministry. Before thinking of the criticism offered and the opposition manifested, it is well that we remind ourselves that nothing new had taken place. Only one more demon was cast out, one more man healed, restored; there had been one other putting forth of power, not in violation of order, but for the restoration of order on the part of our Lord. Therefore in the criticism of the Pharisees at this point we discover no criticism proceeding honestly against some new difficulty, but criticism proceeding out of the hatred for the Lord which had taken possession of their hearts. They had been watching for the opportunity. These Jerusalem scribes now uttered their criticism.

Observe with care, moreover, in the reading of the story that their criticism was twofold. It is important to see this, because our Lord answered the two parts of that criticism quite distinctly. The form of the statement by Mark makes this quite clear. They said, "He hath Beelzebub," and, "By the prince of the demons casteth He out the demons." Their criticisms declared first something concerning Himself, and secondly something concerning His work. As to Himself, they said, "He hath Beelzebub." As to His work, that particular work which He had been doing in the casting out of the demons, they said, "By the prince of the demons casteth He out the demons."

In our Lord's reply He dealt first with the second part of their criticism, that of His work; and secondly and most solemnly, with the first part of their criticism, that of Himself.

There is no need that we should dwell at any great length upon their criticism. They said, "He hath Beelzebub." The exact significance of that word Beelzebub it is impossible to decide. It may have meant quite simply "the lord of the house,

From that criticism of Himself to the criticism of His work was an easy stage, the second being a sequence of the first. "By the prince of the demons casteth He out the demons." This was indeed a subtle word. They declared, in effect, that in all these exorcisms He was trifling with men and with evil spirits for personal ambition. They declared that there was no beneficence in His activities, no compassion in the things that He was doing; that He was not casting out evil spirits because He compassionated the men whom they possessed, but that He was acting in the realm of which He was a native, the underworld of uncleanness. In order to attract attention to Himself, and so to gain for Himself some passing popularity, He was trifling with men, and was trifling even with that very underworld of evil.

We turn then to the answer of Jesus, and look at Him, listen to Him, as the Servant of God, as He is supremely set forth in these stories. Dealing first with the second part of their criticism, that of His work, He answered them negatively and positively, showing first the falseness of their philosophy; and secondly making quite clear the secret of His own power.

Showing first the falseness of their philosophy, He declared the folly of their suggestion. They understood the motive of Satan, personal aggrandizement and ambition; but they were ignorant of his devices; they did not know his method. When they suggested that Satan was trifling with the underworld for purposes of personal aggrandizement, they were entirely ignorant of his methods. Our Lord's words-so familiar that we may miss the profundity of their philosophy-revealed His perfect knowledge of the subtlety of His foe. He reminded them that Satan does not fight against Satan, for in so doing he would bring his kingdom to an end, and would frustrate the purpose of his own ambition. If a house be divided against itself it cannot stand, and perchance in that very employment of the word "house" He was remembering the significance of what they had said, that He was in league with the lord of the house of evil. A house divided against itself cannot stand. "If Satan hath risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end." So He immediately showed the folly of their suggestion in that while assuming the motive underlying the mastery of the underworld of evil, they were entirely ignorant of the devices of Satan.

By that reply, moreover, the whole underworld of evil is set in the light. There came a day when Paul the apostle wrote, "We are not ignorant of his devices." These men were ignorant of the devices of Satan. But these devices were dragged into the light, and made clear before the eyes of men by the very ministry of our Lord. This is one instance in which we see Christ revealing the fact that through these very men Satan was attempting to deceive men about his own methods, in order ultimately to hold them within his grasp. In their suggesting that Satan himself had been working the wonders of demon exorcism he was deceiving men as to his devices. The earnestness and clarity of our Lord's reply was intended to silence opposition; and for evermore to set out in clear outline, the revelation of the fact that at the heart of evil is a perpetual untruth, and that Satan will for evermore proceed upon the basis of the lie that deceives and slanders men, and that slanders God.

He did not, however, leave His answer to this criticism at that point. In words, the ultimate value of which we shall only refer to, He declared the secret of His victories. Using a parable, He said that the strong man armed can only be defeated by one who is stronger than he. In that picture our Lord claimed that He was stronger than the strong man armed. The strong man armed is Satan himself, the master of the underworld of evil, holding its hosts of opposition under his control. But the One upon Whom they had been looking, to Whom they had been listening, Whose works they had been discussing, against Whom their hearts were now moving in hatred, because they were unable to understand Him, and were not honest enough to follow Him, claimed in that hour to be stronger than the strong man armed; and declared that every exorcism that He wrought was the result of His power, which was superior to the whole underworld of evil.

Then passing to the first part of their criticism which was far the more serious He uttered these words which are so full of appalling solemnity: "Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith so ever they shall blaspheme; but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty"-suffer a change in the word "guilty"-is held by an age-abiding sin"; and therefore cannot be forgiven. We have no reason whatever to imagine that these men had committed that sin, but they were in the danger-zone, they were approaching the sin.

Let us approach the meaning of our Lord here by an ordinary, every-day illustration. The ultimate sin which any man commits against his brother is that of the misinterpretation of his motive. The one sin against my brother that can never know forgiveness is that I willfully misinterpret his motive. If we could but remember that, from how many blunders should we be saved! A man may criticize my method; he may show how my action does not harmonize with my profession. I may attempt to show him how his method

does not harmonize with his profession. I may say of this man, who in the political or religious world differs from me, that I hold his policy to be entirely wrong but I have no right to say that his motive is impure or unholy or wrong. God is the God of motive. By Him alone are motives measured and weighed.

If this is a superlative fact in the realm of human interrelationships, then we begin to see what was happening here, and why our Lord's words were so severe. They were now attempting to account for His motive; they were invading that inner, secret, lonely, holy sanctuary of the reason why He did what He was doing. They did what men always do when they invade that sanctuary. They carried into it their own pollutions, their own distorted senses of values; and all unconsciously they read into the reason of the doings of Jesus, the reason that was prompting them at the moment. They, and not He, were in league with the devil. It is almost always so. I very rarely hear a man criticize the motive of another man without being at least suspicious that he is attributing to the other man the inspiration of his own activities.

These men had now invaded that realm. All their previous opposition had been against Himself, as to His methods, but this invaded the realm of motive where in His case the Holy Spirit was supreme. He had taken no journey and sought no rest, He had eaten no meal save in communion with God the Holy Spirit. He had healed no sick soul save as the result of unutterable and inexpressible anguish, the anguish of God which atones for human guilt. He had cast out no demons save by the finger of God. When these men suggested that the motive of His activity was that of league with unutterable filthiness, with the source and origin of all uncleanness, can we wonder that-not on His own behalf, but on behalf of eternal right, and the principles that must constitute the foundations of the Kingdom of God,-He made a protest so severe and so solemn. They were in the danger-zone, approaching a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which is only committed by men who have so yielded themselves to the mastery of unholy things, that they fail to detect good when they see it, and so attribute the results produced to a deeper evil, and declare that the producer is in partnership with Beelzebub. That is eternal sin, which in the nature of it never can be changed, and consequently for which there never can be forgiveness. We have no reason to believe these men had committed that sin in its finality, but they were coming into its region. Our Lord at that moment was looking on, as He ever was, to His larger day of ministry, to that ministry which should succeed His Cross, Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost, to that ministry in the midst of which we live our lives; rejoicing in the fact of the wider and more intimate and marvellous ministry that followed Pentecost, more intimate and more marvellous than that of the days, of His flesh. Jesus lifted His eyes, and looking to those days when the Spirit should be poured in fullness upon men who should continue His work in spiritual power and without geographical limitations, said, In that hour it will be possible for men to sin a sin for which there shall be no forgiveness.

We now pass on to look at the opposition of His friends. Quite literally, as we have said, the phrase "His friends" means "they that were from beside Him." Wycliffe translated with great accuracy, "His kinsmen"; and Tyndale, employing a colloquialism of the time, "they that belonged unto Him," His own blood relations, undoubtedly His mother and His brethren.

It is interesting to observe in passing that this is the first appearance of Mary since Cana, when Jesus had said to her, What is there between thee and Me; and indicated that there were things in Himself that she did not apprehend at the time. This is also the first appearance of His brethren since they travelled with Him from Cana to Capernaum in that early year of His ministry. Now they are seen coming to Him. Their complaint was that He was beside Himself. This was their interpretation of the ceaselessness of His activity. Their criticism was not directed against the particular work He was doing, but that He was doing so much. They were not concerned as to His motive. That, they were not questioning. They were there

believing that One Who would so give Himself to great motives as to have no time for eating or rest, must be beside Himself, and their intention was one of solicitude. They wanted to save Him, to restrain Him. In that spirit they travelled; how far we do not know; perchance from Nazareth. So far as we have any right to measure the emotion of Jesus by our emotion,-and we have some right, for He entered into our humanity-this opposition was surely harder to bear than the opposition of the Jerusalem scribes; more difficult to contend with. One was an opposition resulting from malice; the other, opposition resulting from love; the first that of those who were against Him because they were out of harmony with His purity; the second that of those who would try and save Him from folly, and take care of Him.

Jesus looked round about upon the twelve; upon those men who were with Him. Think what He saw. All the subsequent story will reveal it. He saw one man who, mastered by fear and saved by cowardice would swear in the darkness of the night that he did not know anything about Him; and He saw ten others who in the ultimate hours of His agony would run away. But He saw men who in the deepest fact of their lives that very realm of motive were consecrated to God and to Him. He saw all the possibilities of failure and knew how they were all to work out. But He found that central fact, the motive; He invaded that realm which none other could invade, and He said, Behold My brethren, born for My adversity. Behold My sisters, born for all sweet confidences and sympathy. Behold My mother, born for all comfort and solace. "For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

He thus revealed a spiritual relation so high as to be infinitely above the affinity of blood relationship. He declared that in these men He found His true comfort and solace; not in those who tried to save Him from the unceasing pressure of the path of duty, but in those who were going to tramp the pathway with Him; and who, even if for a little while they would leave Him, would come back again, and presently count it all joy that they were considered worthy to suffer shame for His Name. To this high relationship Mary and His brethren also came after a while, but not immediately.

Our Lord has passed beyond this opposition now, even with regard to His earthly ministry. In the light of the accumulating and accumulated testimony of two millenniums, no sane critic to-day suggests that He was in league with the devil; or that He was mad. Oh! there are other ways of dealing with the difficulties now. They get rid of the devil, and get rid of these stories of exorcisms! Yet mark it well, for it is a significant and valuable fact, that when those who are unable to believe the things that some of us verily do believe, when they have sifted and attempted to destroy the documents, the Lord emerges, and they still hold Him in reverence, and suggest no complicity with Satan and no madness.

But the principle of opposition revealed persists against His disciples to-day. The first of these lines of criticism is rarely if ever boldly advanced. We are not often charged definitely with being in complicity with the devil. But the same thought is subtly suggested even to-day when it is affirmed that the motive of Christian service is self-aggrandizement.

The second is more subtle, and is more persistent. Our friends still say "He is beside himself." What a remarkable fact it is that even within the Christian Church, ties of blood relationship constitute terrible hindrances to Christian service. Men to-day never seem to think that Out-and-out, passionate, and sacrificial devotion, suggests madness in any realm, except that of the spiritual. No man suggests that the scientist, so devoted to his science that he will give himself to its operations and shorten his life, is beside himself. No one suggests that the soldier who gives himself to the high places of the field, and sacrifices life in the interests of his country, is beside himself. No man thinks that the explorer who shortens life by his intrepid daring is beside himself. No one imagines that the commercial man who is so devoted to the

amassing of wealth that he shortens life, is beside himself. No! this suggestion is still retained for those who make their service for the souls of men sacrificial.

Let all such be comforted. They are in holy comradeship! At the same time let them endeavour resolutely to be of the number of those who have the highest affinity with the Son of man, because they are devoted to the will of God; who will not try to hinder Him in sacrificial service, or to save themselves therefrom, but walking with Him the rough road, will find larger life in the shortening of the present.

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