

Mark 3

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon explores the transformative nature of grace through Jesus' ministry and the rejection of traditionalism by the Pharisees.

Scripture: Matthew 9:35-38, Matthew 12:22-32, Mark 1:32-34, Mark 3:1-12, Mark 3:20-35, Luke 6:12-16, Luke 11:20, John 1:17

Topics: "Grace vs. Law", "Authority of Jesus"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the arrival of grace through Jesus, who demonstrates God's love by healing on the Sabbath, contrasting it with the Pharisees' rigid adherence to tradition. He highlights the rejection of Jesus by the religious leaders, who conspire with their enemies to plot His death, marking a significant shift from the law to the grace of Christianity. The sermon illustrates the power of Jesus' ministry, as crowds flock to Him for healing, while evil spirits recognize His authority but are silenced. Darby notes the importance of prayer in Jesus' life, especially before appointing His apostles, and the authority He grants them to continue His work. Ultimately, the sermon concludes with Jesus redefining familial relationships based on obedience to God, signaling a break with Israel's past.

Transcript

Grace had come (John 1:17), God Himself was present in grace; and this grace was free to do good on the sabbath. The Lord's true rest is the exercise of His love in the midst of evil. The Pharisees thought nothing of doing evil provided that their traditions were observed. God held Himself at liberty to do good; and for this reason the Lord heals the withered hand, calling the Jew's attention to this great principle in a formal way.

The Pharisees consult with the Herodians (who were their enemies) to find out how they might put Jesus to death; and the Lord departs. So the dispensation of the law is set aside by Christianity, which cannot be introduced into the old Jewish forms; and at the same time the rights of divine love, that is, the rights of God Himself are maintained. Thus the true character of the Lord's service is clearly set forth. Here the direct unfolding of the Lord's ministry ceases. That which follows consists of parables and facts, which develop it and shew clearly the relationships in which the Lord found Himself with the Jews. He withdraws Himself from the hatred of the rulers of the people, in order to carry on His service of love.

248 A great multitude from all parts of the country follow Him, having heard of the marvellous things that He did; we have here a living picture of the effect of His ministry. The Lord finds Himself obliged to have a

little ship upon the lake, so large was the crowd that pressed upon Him wishing to touch Him to be healed. Also evil spirits when they saw Him, fell down before Him, saying, "Thou art the Son of God." Remark here, that which we often find in the Gospels, that evil spirits possessed people so completely, that their acts are attributed to the spirits; and the demoniacs said that which the spirits made them say, as it were of their own accord. The mind and body were so completely in possession of the spirit, that the possessed person thought that that which the spirit inspired was his own thoughts. The possession was complete. "Thou art come to torment us before the time . . . I know thee, the Holy One of God" - it is often thus. But the Lord would not receive the testimony of demons, nor allow them to make Him known.

He goes up a mountain that He may get away from the crowd for a little, in order to be alone; and calls to Him those He will, who come to Him. In Luke's Gospel we read that He passed all the night in prayer before naming the apostles. In Luke we find much more of the Lord's humanity, most important in its place. He prayed when heaven opened to Him; He prayed when He was transfigured; and when in agony in the garden, He prayed more earnestly. Here we have rather the progress of His ministry: He associates with Himself other servants to continue and extend His work. They were to be with Him, and then they are sent to preach the gospel with power, to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils. Remark here, that Christ not only does miracles Himself, but that He can give others the power of performing them. The apostles could lay their hands on a man that He might receive the Holy Ghost; but they could never give to others the power to perform miracles, and to cast out demons. This is something much more than performing miracles; it is the power and the authority of God. He gives names also to some of His disciples - mark of supreme authority - and according to the knowledge He had of their character, before He had had any experience of it.

At the same time we see how the Lord's testimony is received: His own friends think Him mad; and the leaders of the people ascribe His wonderful works to the power of Satan. O what a world we live in! Man can see nothing in the activity of divine goodness but madness and the work of the devil. But surely Satan does not cast out Satan: it is this that is real folly. If a strong man's goods are taken from him, it is clear that a stronger has come and has bound him. May God be praised! But this sin - blasphemy against the Holy Ghost - cannot be pardoned. Whilst they said, "We do not believe: this man does not keep the sabbath, he deceives us," although it was bad enough, it was pardonable; but the scribes recognised the power - a power greater than that of demons, and, instead of owning there the finger of God, they ascribed it to the prince of the demons - called the Holy Ghost a demon. It was the end of all hope for Israel, as regards his responsibility. Grace could forgive the nation, and will do it when the Lord shall return in glory; but now, as a responsible people, their story is ended.

249 It is for this reason the Lord renounces all relationship with the people according to the flesh. His mother and brethren come to call Him, but the Lord will not recognise them. He brings in the word to form new links with souls, but every link with Israel is broken. His mother has no claim upon Him, He refuses to own her call: "Who is my mother or my brethren?" He says; and looking round upon those about Him, "Behold my mother and my brethren: for whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister and mother." Here we find the break between the Lord and the people. The patience of the Lord continued to shew forth God's goodness, until the last Passover; but all was really over for the people; its condemnation could not fail to be pronounced; He no longer seeks fruit in His vineyard.

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