

EFFORTS TO HINDER

Mark 3:20-35

Inasmuch as I preached on the subject "Set Apart for Service" ten days ago, I am omitting the study of verses thirteen to nineteen.

After leaving the mountain on which Christ had called the Twelve, He was found again in a house. As before, the multitude congregated there, so that He and His disciples were not able to eat. Such was the interest that His presence excited. However much He sought retirement, He did not obtain it, for the crowd pursued Him, whether to the wilderness, the lakeside or into the house. Those who had need of healing rejoiced at the power which He could put forth and sought it earnestly.

Those who were closest to Christ, heard of His doings, started out to find Him and to put Him under restraint. Hearing of the unstintedness of His giving of Himself to the crowding multitudes, those who were related to Him said, "He is beside Himself," "He is standing out of Himself," or "He is out of His senses." Why was it said that He was out of His mind? Because He was too busy just then to find time to eat. How often men and women, who have been all out for God, have been called crazy! People may get as excited as they like about something, regardless of what it may be, but they are not crazy. But just let someone get enthusiastic about God's love and work, and become enterprising in winning souls to Christ, and immediately people say he is out of his mind. Note that it was those who were closest to Him who charged Him with being out of His mind. The contempt of a foe is hard to bear, but the misunderstanding of a friend or relative is harder.

Thinking that He must be beside Himself, they went out to lay hold on Him. What they said is not told us. The Lord, it would seem, did not interfere with their judgment. Perhaps He ignored it. Even though they went out to check the movement, yet it was continued. Beside himself! Had they asked the cleansed leper, what would he have said? Had they questioned those who had been restored to health, and those delivered from the power of the demons, what would have been their judgment of Him? Had they taken counsel even with those whose families had been gladdened by their sick being healed, would they have agreed that He was beside Himself? No. When they went out to lay hold on Him, they failed in their self-appointed mission.

Another attempt was then made. If the Lord could not be stopped by His relatives and friends, the enemy decided to do his utmost to have Christ condemned in the eyes of the people, and for this purpose his tools were selected from the teaching class, the scribes. To such a class the people were directed, and they gave their judgment, saying that the work was Satanic. In the eyes of the scribes Christ was an irregular and unauthorized preacher and worker. He had not graduated from any accredited school. His miracles no one could dispute, but the power by which He worked them was another matter. Of that they had no doubt. His words had been spoken and His works had been performed all over the land, so they had to account for them in some way or another, and they did so by saying that Christ cast out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons. Such was their recorded judgment, and they were scribes from Jerusalem. They said it was Beelzebub working, rather than God.

Hitherto the Lord apparently had not taken any notice of their efforts to stop Him. Now He speaks, and demonstrates the folly of His accusers. He asked them, "How can Satan cast out Satan?" The very idea was absurd or preposterous. He went on to show them that a divided kingdom cannot stand; a divided household cannot stand; and a divided devil cannot stand. The illustration which He used in verse twenty-seven was to the fact that before the goods can be plundered the owner must be bound, for he will not stand by and see his house ransacked. It was noticeable that Christ's opponents did not deny His miracles, but they attempted to discredit the miracles and the miracle-worker, on the ground that they were wrought by collusion with Satan.

What the scribes had said was more than absurd. It was criminal and soul-destroying. Christ wrought by the Holy Spirit, and all the evidences were to show that He did, yet these men said that the source of His energy and authority was Beelzebub. They declared that Christ was possessed by and under the mastery of Satan. Christ performed His works by the power of the Holy Spirit, so to declare that He performed them by the power of the devil was to blaspheme the Holy Spirit, or to commit the unpardonable sin.

In all the catalogue of sins which men or women can commit, there is only one which puts a person beyond hope. There is only one sin that people commit which makes pardon and salvation impossible. There is only one sin that man can commit which is unpardonable. From the moment of its committal it is forever without a possible remedy.

The unpardonable sin is a subject which is greatly misunderstood. Many erroneous ideas are abroad as to what it is. It is not murder. As desperate and terrible as murder is, it is not unpardonable. Many who have stained their hands with human blood have afterwards found pardon and received eternal life. The Bible tells us of numerous people who were guilty of murder, and yet received forgiveness - Moses, David and Paul.

The unpardonable sin is not unbelief. The very moment that one believes on Christ as a personal Saviour he receives a full and free pardon. Every Christian was formerly an unbeliever, but has been saved by Christ.

The unpardonable sin is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. There were those who had seen the miracles of Christ and in them had recognized the clear evidence that He was the Messiah. In their determination not to accept Him as such, they deliberately attributed His work in casting out a demon from a man, which they knew to be the work of the Holy Spirit, to the devil. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is knowingly, deliberately, wilfully and maliciously ascribing to Satan the work which is wrought by the Holy Spirit. Blasphemy is a sin of the tongue. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is ascribing His grace and holy activities to the devil. It is an act of the unregenerate only, and never of the saved. Christ said, "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness."

They decided to make another attempt to stop the Lord Jesus in His work, perhaps His mother and His brethren to interpose effectually. They thought that, if His mother and His brethren came to Him, He would give heed to them. They put forward natural claims to take precedence over the carrying on of God's work.

When Mary and the others arrived at the house, they could not get near to Christ because of the crowd assembled around Him. So standing without, they

sent a message to Christ that they wanted to see Him. When someone on the inside interrupted His discourse and told Him that they wanted to see Him, His reply silenced His relatives and they went back to Nazareth without seeing Him. Christ did not come to destroy natural relationships but He came to show that spiritual relationships are sovereign. Natural kinship is temporary, but spiritual kinship is eternal, and the latter must always take precedence over the former.

The claims of God upon us are greater than the claims of home. Christ did not despise His mother, but He placed His Heavenly Father above her. Doing the will of God is the test of our relationship to Christ.