

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: May 24, 2009

Dealing With Misperceptions, False Reports and Accusations in Ministry

by Dan Trygg

"And He came home, and the multitude gathered again, to such an extent that they could not even eat a meal. ²¹ And when His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, 'He has lost His senses.' ²² And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, 'He is possessed by Beelzebul,' and 'He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons.' ²³ And calling to them He began speaking to them in parables, 'How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ And if ever a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if ever a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished! ²⁷ But no one can enter the strong man's house and thoroughly-plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will thoroughly-plunder his house.' ...³¹ And His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him, and called Him. ³² And a multitude was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, 'Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You.' ³³ And answering them, He said, 'Who are My mother and My brothers?' ³⁴ And looking about on those who were sitting around Him, He said, 'Behold, My mother and My brothers! ³⁵ For whoever might do the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.'" Mark 3:20-27,31-35

It is interesting that **this section follows immediately after Jesus had chosen his twelve apostles.** If they were going to be representing Him, they needed to see how He reacted under the same kinds of challenges they would soon be facing. **Being "promoted" to being an apostle, or representative, of Jesus did not mean they could rest on their laurels.** It meant that the challenges and opposition they would deal with had just been ratcheted up a notch. James wrote, "Let not many become teachers, knowing that as such we will incur a *stricter judgment*" (3:1). **When we become known as disciples of Christ, people will watch us more closely, and judge more strictly what we say and do.** The enemy will also increase his level of attacks and harassment, as well. The apostles had little perception of all this, however. Although they continued to think of leadership as having to do with "greatness" (Matt. 18:1) and "sitting on thrones" (Matt. 20:20-28) for some time, their training should have told them different. **Ministry with Jesus was not at all an ivory tower kind of thing.** Jesus did not set up an office and schedule appointments for counseling. **Being in demand was not a comfortable way to live.** It meant people were demanding His time and attention. Mark's gospel, once again, gives us a glimpse into the hectic, high-pressure nature of Jesus' preaching and healing ministry. **If the apostles were to learn anything, it was that ministry was hard work, and often inconvenient.**

Jesus returned from the relative privacy of a mountain setting, where He had chosen His twelve trainees. He came back to town (Capernaum?), entered a house (Peter's?), and a crowd immediately came together. **The ministry must have been intense and protracted, because Mark mentions that none of them had the opportunity to even take a break for a meal.** Apparently, like before (Mk. 2:2), the house was filled with people. The apostles had seen Jesus bypass a meal before, for the sake of a ministry opportunity. In Jn. 4, they left Him by a well, going into a Samaritan village to get something for lunch. When they returned, He was finishing a discussion with a woman, who left upon their return. When lunch was ready, He declined. They were confused by this, so He said that He had food to eat that they did not know about. They thought, "Has someone given Him something to eat?" He said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work" (Jn. 4:34). Then, He directed their attention to the people coming out to Him from the village, ...the result of the woman's testimony! **Talking about His Father, and doing the work of ministry took precedence over food. When the ministry opportunity was there, that was the priority.**

Somehow Jesus' family and friends got wind of all the ministry activity which He was involved with, and the schedule He was keeping. They thought He had lost His senses, that He had somehow gone off the deep end, and needed to be rescued. **They decided to come to take custody of Him, and take Him away from all the activity.** They probably intended to keep Him in seclusion until He could come to His senses. This is another indication of the radical change in Jesus' life. He had lived a quiet life before. Now, He was at the center of activity, commotion and was always going to meetings. **Do not be surprised if your family and friends are alarmed at dramatic changes in your life. A true change in your life means that your life patterns will be different.** People will not understand.

Meanwhile, some scribes from Jerusalem (some 80 miles to the south) had come to observe what Jesus was doing. They would have been quite noticeable, since scribes and rabbis' typically wore elaborate robes all decked-out with religious paraphernalia. **They started sowing discord and attacking Jesus' credibility, saying to those around them (not to Jesus directly), "He has Beelzebul!" and "By the ruler of the demons He casts out the demons!"**

How did Jesus handle this? He addressed the objection on the spot. He often did this. He responded to questions, and things that He observed, or overheard His opponents say (e.g., 2:6-8,16-17,18-20,24-28). When you respond to someone's question, you usually have their attention, and often the attention of others in the group as well. If

you answer well, people often remember. They will remember your *demeanor* when you are under fire, as well. If you are angry and defensive, they notice. Keep your peace. **Calling to them, He began to speak to them using parables.** This is important. Here, Jesus used word pictures to make His point. There was no way to *definitively prove* His point from the Scriptures, or from any source they would agree upon. So, *He appealed to common sense*, based upon life experiences which they all shared. **Jesus met their challenge head on by posing a question to expose their faulty reasoning.** He said, “**How, or in what way, is it possible for Satan to cast out Satan?**”

He gave some examples from life to show the unreasonableness of their accusation:

“If ever a **kingdom** might be divided against itself, that kingdom is not able to stand-firm.” In other words, if a kingdom has civil war going on, it is not able to endure.

“And if ever a **house** is divided against itself, that household will not be able to stand-firm.” If there is infighting in a family, the family will become fragmented and fall apart.

“And if the **adversary** rose up against himself and is divided, he is not able to stand-firm. Rather, he has a termination.” **If the kingdom of darkness had a rebellion within its ranks, it would soon be finished.**

“BUT, no one is able to enter the house of strong man to thoroughly-plunder his goods, unless first he might bind the strong man, and then he will thoroughly-plunder his house.”

What is this last statement? How does it fit with Jesus’ argument? Someone might creep into the house of a strong man and steal something, but *no one could ever systematically go through all the strong man’s possessions and take everything he wanted, unless the strong man was rendered powerless.* **The Lord is inferring that the thorough routing of the enemy’s demons, and the extensive amount of healing and freedom from emotional, spiritual and physical bondage that these scribes could witness happening before their eyes is only explainable if Jesus had the power to bind the enemy.** In other words, it *may* be conceivable that Satan *would* give up a demon here and there to put on a show, in order to fool people into thinking that a person has power over demons (That is the claim of witches, witch doctors and shamans all over the world. They cast spells, do rituals, and *seem* to get some results, but in the end the demon either comes back, or the person is more severely demonized in some other area.), but *he would never do so on the wholesale, extensive level that Jesus was demonstrating.* **The only reasonable explanation for the extensive and lasting deliverance and healing ministry of Jesus was that Satan’s power was overwhelmed, and he was bound by the power of God.**

Jesus then sealed His argument by a very strong warning. Whenever you see the phrase, “truly, I say to you”, understand that this was a well-known idiom for “very important statement coming up”. It was tantamount to saying, “Listen up!” After this call to attention, **Jesus solemnly and strongly warned about the seriousness of attributing the activity of God’s Spirit to Satan.** We have a bit of trouble with this passage, because we do not use the word “blaspheme” in our everyday speech (at least, I don’t). **To “blaspheme” was to say something insulting, harmful, injurious, slanderous or demeaning about someone’s character, person or reputation.** Thus to “blaspheme the Holy Spirit” was to say something insulting, harmful, demeaning or slanderous about Him. In this context, it referred to the danger of knowingly attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. **If a person knowingly attributes the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan, he or she is held to a sin which has no forgiveness or release unto the age.** In order to make this even *more* clear, so there would be *no mistake* about what this “unforgivable sin” entailed, Mark adds, “*Because* they were saying, ‘He has an unclean spirit.’ They were *saying* that Jesus had a demon, and His works were of the devil. In so doing, they were not only insulting Jesus, but also the Holy Spirit (Heb. 10:29).

At that moment His mother and brothers showed up outside. They sent word to Him, to ask Him to come out to talk with them. If they had come from Nazareth to Capernaum, they had been walking all day, nearly 20 miles. Nevertheless, when they asked for Jesus, **He chose not to go out to them. He was in the middle of His ministry work, and was not going to be pulled away from the activity of God, even for family expectation.** Because of the packed house, the message that they were there was publicly yelled across the room to Him, “Hey, Jesus, your mother and brothers are here, looking for you.” **What He said and did next was done to drive home an important lesson,** something consistent with His teachings on other occasions. Later, He would *clearly teach* that those who follow Him must prefer Him *above all else*, including the closest relationships of family (Matt. 10:37; Lk. 14:26). Jesus would warn that He would be the cause of division in families. Families *would* be split in two over their beliefs concerning who He is (Matt. 10:34-36). This began with Jesus’ own family! “And answering them, He said, ‘Who is My mother and My brothers?’ And looking around at the ones sitting around Him, He said, ‘Behold, My mother and My brothers! For **whoever might do the will of God, this one is My brother and sister and mother.”** He did not get pulled into arguing with His family. He made clear, however, that **following God was more important than anything else.**