

Christ and Family Relationships

Text: Mark 3:31-35

Introduction:

1. In this section of Mark's Gospel reveals the conflict our Lord faced on several fronts. He was: Maligned by His Foes & Misunderstood by His Family.
2. In our last lesson we looked at the hostility of Christ's enemies and their blasphemous suggestion that He was under the control of Satanic power. In this lesson, we will look at a test in our Lord's life of a more subtle kind. No doubt this test from His family was a greater challenge to our Lord than the test with His foes. "In the incident recorded...we have a superlative revelation of the most subtle form which opposition to the work of the establishment of the Kingdom of God ever takes." (G. Campbell Morgan)
3. Like our Saviour, each one of us will come to cross road experiences in our Christian walk where we are faced with a decision between staying in the center of God's will, walking the consecrated, crucified walk, or moving out of that place of consecration to accommodate the wishes of family. There will be times where there is a clash between emotional and spiritual priorities, between natural affection and the will of God.
4. Our Lord's example will serve to both inspire and instruct us on the importance of faithfulness to the will of the Father in such circumstances. We will consider this theme in three parts.

I. The Perspective of our Lord's Family (Vs. 21)

A. The Occasion motivating the family (Vs. 20)

1. The Lord and His disciples had a busy ministry schedule to the multitudes.
2. Their commitment to the service of God was such that they were even willing to forego a bodily appetite (need for food) in order to serve.
3. Christ was walking the crucified, selfless walk in the center of the Father's will.

B. The Opinion of the Family (Vs. 21)

1. The word 'friends' is literally "those from the side of him" and speaks of His closest acquaintances. From Vs. 31-35, it would appear that it was primarily family.
2. "heard of it" = the report of Vs. 20. This is what stimulated his mother and brethren to travel from home town Nazareth to Capernaum (Compare Vs. 21 & 31 - "they went...there came then").
3. "beside himself" – out of one's mind. That felt Christ was not acting rationally, that He was being unbalanced. There was an error in their thinking that lead to an error in judgment and action.

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4. This form of opposition is more subtle and more difficult to discern and deal with than malicious opposition like that of the Pharisees. The Pharisees were motivated by a desire for Christ's destruction. His family on the other hand seem motivated out of care for His wellbeing. It is particularly hard when you are serving in the centre of God's will and those you love seek to stop you out of misguided love. Serving the Lord faithfully often requires us to bear the cross of misunderstanding with the closest of earthly ties.

II. The Pressure from our Lord's Family (Vs. 31-32)

A. The Relatives Involved (Vs. 31a)

1. His Mother
 - a. Mary was a good and godly woman but sometimes her natural affections and emotions caused her to err in judgment.
 - b. Mary was a deep thinker, inclined to ponder over things in detail (Luke 2:51)
 - c. Mary's motive was undoubtedly honourable but she was still wrong!
 - d. Challenge: As parents we need to be careful that OUR will becomes an obstruction to GOD'S WILL in the lives of our children.
 - e. Illustration: Even at the age of 12, our Lord had to remind his mother that the Father's will must reign supreme in His life. Luke 2:49 *"And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? **wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?**"*
 - f. Challenge: Walking the crucified, consecrated walk will at times bring us into conflict with the strongest of human ties. The bond between a mother and a child is one of the most powerful ties on earth. Christ had tender affection for His mother. We find Him making provision for her safety and well-being in His dying moments on the cross (John 19:26-27). No doubt her presence and pleadings would have tugged at His heart. His dedication to the will of the Father at this time was causing her anxiety and grief!
 - g. The moment we say "I will not allow my obedience to Christ to cause suffering to those I love," we have left the Calvary road. (Pastor I. Western series on the cross).
 - h. Illustration: Abraham and Isaac. We must place our loved ones on the altar of surrender.
 - i. Illustration: When Isobel Kuhn disclosed God's call to China as a missionary, her mother warned her: "If you ever go to China, you will go over my dead body." And she did. On her deathbed the mother confessed: "Daughter is right; I have been wrong." How sad to be forced to take the divine order in death! The mother died: her daughter went to China. The great refiner and Purifier of silver sat over against the crucible of her death-bed and skimmed off "the grey scum of selfishness" until mother ceased to be a hindrance – albeit through the doorway of death. (L.E. Maxwell – Born Crucified Pg. 97-98)
 - j. "We prove our distance from Him when in the fellowship of Mary

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and His brethren in the day so of their limited understanding, we attempt to dissuade those who are in closest fellowship with Him, from such sacrificial service as demonstrates their nearness to Him.” (G. Campbell Morgan)

2. His siblings
 - a. Christ had brothers (four) and sisters (Mark 6:3) At this point in time, they did not believe in their older brother’s claims as the Messiah (John 7:3-5). There was probably a touch of scepticism in their approach to the Lord, even opposition. They honestly thought their brother had lost control of his senses and needed help!
 - b. Challenge: Unsaved or even carnal siblings will often misunderstand your consecration to the Saviour and His service and can be an obstruction. Don’t underestimate the power of a siblings influence for good or evil!
 - c. “We should certainly be inclined to say that it was easier to resist the definite hostility of those who were in open rebellion, than to stand firm against suggestions which came from those who loved Him, and who, according to the measure of their light, were acting in his interest. Nothing other than the clearest vision of the will of God, and the most perfect acquiescence (submission) therein, would be equal to victory in such an hour of crisis. (G. Campbell Morgan)

B. The Request Involved (Vs. 31b)

1. The position of their request – “standing without”
 - a. At this stage, they were on the fringe, the outside. They were not yet a part of our Lord’s inner circle of loyal, consecrated disciples.
 - b. Challenge: Before allowing yourself to be moved by emotional pressure, pause and consider where that family member is positioned in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. Are they walking the consecrated, crucified walk and therefore giving you Spirit-filled advice? Watch their feet more than what they say!
 - c. Note: Praise God Christ’s mother and brethren would later become consecrated followers. James would write the Epistle of James and pastor the Jerusalem church. Jude would write the Epistle of Jude. We find both Mary and Christ’s siblings in the Upper Room in Acts 1:14. Our hope, desire and prayer should be that all our family be consecrated disciples of God. But if for the time being, they are not, you dare not move out of the centre of God’s will!
2. The plea of their request = “calling him”
 - a. Their plea was for him to leave the place of consecrated, selfless service.
 - b. Their plea was for him to take a rest when it was God’s time to labour; to put the temporal over the eternal, the carnal over the spiritual.

C. The Repeaters Involved (Vs. 32)

1. ‘behold’ = the crowd try and draw Christ’s attention to the fact of His family’s presence.

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2. Sometimes others (often ignorantly and innocently) become the bearers of these carnal messages from family. This adds to the pressure!

III. The Principle applied to our Lord's Family (Vs. 33-35)

Our Lord's response to this difficult situation is both inspiring and instructive and provides a good example of how we need to respond in similar circumstances.

A. Christ Embraced a Spiritual Family (Vs. 33-34)

1. A Startling question (Vs. 33).
 - a. Christ is Omniscient, He knows all things. So, when He asks a question like this it is not because He is trying to gain knowledge or information. The question is intended to be of benefit to His hearers. "The question was intended to call attention to the fact that, in His work, there were ties that were higher than those of flesh and blood." (Hiebert)
 - b. What a rebuff this question was to the family! When the will of earthly family ever was in conflict with the will of the Heavenly Father, Christ is quite abrupt in His responses. Compromise will not be entertained! E.g. Christ's words to his mother in John 2:4, "*Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.*"
2. A Significant answer (Vs. 34)
 - a. Christ's look – "he looked round about on them" Mark particularly highlights some of these looks of Christ.
 - b. Christ's gesture – "he stretched forth his hands toward his disciples" (Matt. 12:49)
 - c. Christ's answer – "Behold my mother and my brethren!" Christ demonstrated that if His natural family was in conflict with His spiritual family, He would choose His spiritual family. He demonstrates that spiritual ties go beyond natural ties.

B. Christ Maintained a Spiritual Priority (Vs. 35)

1. 'for' = further explanation as to why Christ referred to His disciples as His "mother and brethren"
2. "whosoever shall do the will of God" = Matthew says "the will of my Father" (Matt. 12:50) and Luke says "these which hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:21)
 - a. The deepest bonds of unity are spiritual bonds forged in a common salvation and a common pursuit of the will of God.
 - b. Christ's supreme passion was obedience to the Father's will; obedience to the Word of God in company with other like-minded disciples.
 - c. "In the question He asked, and the declaration He made, He gave fresh evidence of the fact that the supreme passion of His heart was that of the accomplishment of the will of God. Such accomplishment He made the standard of His judgment, and the gauge of His relationships. Every other interest, however near, or however sacred by all the laws of human interrelationship, He counted secondary, and without hesitation or tremor, broke with them completely when they threatened in any measure to

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- interfere with that supreme matter.” (G. Campbell Morgan)
- d. The cross will at times cut across family ties and we will be faced with the test of true discipleship, to either put Christ of family first. Read Matthew 10:34-39.
 3. Challenge: How many children have in practice, loved their parents more than God and been moved out of the place of victory, service and blessing? How many parents allow themselves to be thwarted in their Christian priorities due to allowing natural affection to overwhelm and override the Spirit-filled, crucified walk? To love a family member more than God is to make that family member an idol.

Conclusion:

1. Are you obstructing a loved one in their obedience to God's will? Are you allowing yourself to be diverted by a loved one from God's will?
2. Who has your supreme love? Christ or family? Who is first in your life in practice, not just word?