

when those with Him heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself. And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the demons casteth He out demons. "When those with Him heard," meaning His own family, or perhaps those of His own city, or even His own brothers, "they went to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself," that is, He has a demon. For when they heard that He was casting out demons and healing the sick, out of envy they thought that He had a demon and so was beside Himself. So they wanted to "lay hold on Him" in order to tie Him up, as was done to those who were demon-possessed. "Those with Him," meaning, His own family, acted in this manner; but the scribes from Jerusalem thought the same as well, and said that He had a demon. Since they had nothing to say against the things that He did, they found another way to slander the miracles, saying that He did these things with the help of demons.

23-27. And He called them unto Him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a household be divided against itself, that household cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and plunder his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will plunder his house. By means of irrefutable examples, He stops the mouths of those malevolent Jews. How is it possible, He asks, for a demon to cast out demons? As we can see in the case of a household, if those within the house are at peace with each other, that household is united and strong. But if they are divided against each other, the household falls apart. Or how is it possible, He asks, to steal a strong man's goods, unless they first tie him up? What He means is this: "the strong man" is the demon, and his goods are those persons in whom he dwells. Therefore, unless one first binds the demon and destroys him, how could one steal his goods, that is, those who are demon-possessed? Since I am stealing his goods, that is, I am freeing men from demonic possession, it follows that first I have bound and destroyed the demons, and that I am their enemy. How can you say, therefore, that I "have Beelzebub," that is, that I am a friend of demons and a magician? For I cast out demons.

28-30. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme; but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is liable to eternal damnation. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit. What He is saying here is this: whatever other sin a man may commit, he will perhaps have some excuse and obtain forgiveness, since God is forbearing with human weakness. For example, when they said that the Lord was a glutton and drunkard and a friend of publicans and sinners, they will be forgiven for this. But when they see Him working extraordinary miracles and then blaspheme the Holy Spirit, that is, blaspheme the miracles that took place through the Holy Spirit, how will they then obtain forgiveness, unless they repent? For when they took offence at what Christ did in the flesh, they were forgiven this even without repenting, for what they saw scandalized them as men. But when they saw Him doing the works of God and still blasphemed, how will they be forgiven while remaining unrepentant?

31-35. There came then His brethren and His mother, and, standing without, sent unto Him, calling Him. And the multitude sat about Him, and they said unto Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren without seek for Thee. And He answered them, saying, Who is My mother, or My brethren? And He looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother. The brothers of the Lord out of envy approached to lay hold of Him as one who was "beside himself" and demon-possessed. Vainglory perhaps had taken hold of His mother, and she came to draw Him away from His teaching, thus showing the multitude that she could lead around the One at Whom they marvelled, and even make Him leave His teaching. The Lord therefore replies, "My mother will derive no benefit from being My mother unless she has the other virtues as well; likewise, neither will kinship of the flesh benefit My brothers." For Christ's true kin are they who do the will of God. By saying these things, the Lord is not thereby denying His mother, but He is showing that she will not be worthy of honor only because she gave Him birth, but because she also possesses every other virtue. And if she does not have these virtues, others will be shown greater honor for their true kinship to Him.