

# THE BINDING OF THE STRONG MAN

Pastor Lucas Almeida—Central Baptist Church—September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## TEXT

### Mark 3:22-30

(ESV)

[22] And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.” [23] And he called them to him and said to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? [24] If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. [25] And if 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 is coming to an end. [27] But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

[28] “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, [29] but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”—[30] for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

## INTRODUCTION

In 1857 an ancient Roman building was unearthed. This building dated back to the second century AD. In this building a chamber was found containing a Roman *graffito*. A *graffito* is an archeological term for an image etched on a surface, in this case plaster, communicating something.

This specific *graffito* depicted a young man worshiping a figure on a cross. The young man was dressed as a roman guard, and his left hand is raised towards the cross as a sign of worship. On the cross we find a strange creature; its body is human, but the head is one of donkey.

Underneath the picture the words in Greek read, “*Alexamenos cebete theon.*” “Alexamenos worships his God.” This *graffito* is known as “*Graffito Blasfemo*” or “Blasphemous *Graffito*.”

This is one of the earliest, if not the earliest depiction of Jesus’ crucifixion we know of. This historical artifact is such a clear reminder of what Paul said,

**1 Corinthians 1:18**—*For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

The cross stands before us today either as power or folly, there are only two options. Our lips either move to bless God or to blaspheme God. We are either for God or we are against him. Christ is the rock of salvation but he also is the rock of stumbling.

Friends, opposition to Christianity is not a new thing. It's been going on since our Lord set foot on earth. Today I want to remind you that **the world will reject Christ, but Christ matters to us infinitely more than the world.**

## **1) THE SCRIBES REJECT JESUS (V. 22)**

We've seen over the past several weeks, the opposition towards Jesus increase.

- 2:6-7—The Scribes question in their hearts, not audibly, why Jesus declares the paralytic forgiven of his sins.
- 2:16—The Scribes, now verbally, ask Jesus' disciples why Jesus eats with tax collectors and sinners.
- 2:18—The disciples of John the Baptist question Jesus directly about his own disciples' spiritual practices.
- 2:23—The Pharisees question why Jesus' disciples pluck heads of grain in order to eat on the Sabbath.
- 3:6—The Pharisees plot together with the Herodians in order to kill Jesus.

But Jesus' fame was also growing exponentially. We saw last week that all kinds of people were coming to him. People from Jerusalem, people from Idumea, people from Tyre, people from Sidon. Jews and gentiles alike.

Well, this fame reached the ears of the high religious echelon also. So, now we see in verse 22, the big guys coming. The Scribes from Jerusalem come to Jesus, and they say, "He is possessed by Beelzebul."

Beelzebul means "Master of the House," and it had become a common way to refer to Satan. This was a wicked accusation. It aimed to completely discredit and humiliate Jesus. They were saying that Jesus power to perform miracles came from Satan, and not from the Holy Spirit.

Now, notice that their denial is not that Jesus performed miracles. No, those were public and undeniable! **The Scribes did not deny Jesus' power to perform miracles, they denied that his miracles were from God.**

This is a good reminder to us that **faith does not come from evidence, faith comes from regeneration.** Sure, "*We tear down arguments and every presumption set up against the knowledge of God...*" We are "*always prepared to make a defense to anyone for the hope that is in us.*" But no one is saved on the basis of evidence.

**Romans 1:20**—*[20] For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. [21] For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

It wouldn't matter how many miracles Jesus performed before these Scribes; they would never believe him because their hearts were hardened.

A few weeks ago, a group from our church was sharing the gospel with a group of college students. And we asked them, "If you had irrefutable proof that Christianity is true, would you become a Christian?" And their answer was, "No." That's shocking, isn't it? Christianity is never rejected on the basis of evidence; Christianity is always rejected on the basis of unbelief.

So, if you are seeking to evangelize someone, the best tool you have is a clear presentation of the gospel, bathed with prayer!

Parents, your children need you to help them with the deep questions of the faith, but they need you to pray for their regeneration more.

## **2) JESUS REFUTES THE PHARISEES (VS. 23-27)**

In these five verses Jesus proposes three short parables to demonstrate how illogical the Scribes' arguments are.

A parable is simply a story that proves a point. I think of parables as windows into the truth. Think of an enclosed room where secrets are concealed, parables open a window into that room. Those who are interested in the truth will look through that window; those who are not, will ignore it. We'll learn more about parables as we dive into Mark 4.

But Jesus calls the scribes to himself and exposes their folly. "*How can Satan cast out Satan?*" In other words, how can I both work for Satan and against Satan?

Verses 24-26 basically state the same thing. Do you see how the conjunction "and" connects verse 24 to verse 25, and again verse 25 to verse 26? In verse 24 Jesus compares Satan's sphere to a house, in verse 25 he compares it to a kingdom. In verse 26 he explicitly mentions Satan himself. And Jesus is basically saying that Satan can't be both successful and divided at the same time.

Jesus' power over demons was obvious. He had by this point already cast out several demons in his ministry.

Back in chapter 1 verse 24, when Jesus was in the synagogue, an evil spirit cries out to him, "*What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?*" He is speaking here on behalf of the entire demonic realm! And the answer is, "Yes! He did come to destroy them!"

**1 John 3:8**—*The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.*

So, friends, Satan is our great enemy, but Jesus is our great defender! And to confuse the two of them is a foolish mistake. To conflate Satan and Jesus is to conflate good with evil.

**Isaiah 5:20**—*Woe to those who call evil good and good evil...*

So, when God says that marriage is the union between a man and a woman, he calls it good, we agree with him, we call it good! When God says that every life is fully dignified from womb to tomb, he calls it good, we call it good! When God says that we should make no distinction among people and show no favoritism towards others, he calls that good, we call it good!

Friends, we cannot, at any level, attribute to the devil the goodness of Jesus, or attribute to Jesus the wickedness of the devil. Lest we ourselves, our house, our very kingdom be divided. Friends, Christianity is not a religion that we customize to ourselves, to our liking, to our morality. Christianity is a religion that we conform to. Jesus is King and we are not. What he says is true, what he says is right, what he says is good, we receive and make it our own.

Now, look at verse 27. Verse 27 is connected to the other verse with a different conjunction—but. Jesus shifts his point now. In verses 24-26 Jesus describes the reality of the satanic sphere. But now, Jesus emphasizes his victory over Satan.

Notice that Jesus returns to the imagery in verse 25. Again, Jesus refers to Satan's realm as a house. He describes Satan as a "strong man." But he, Christ has plundered the strong man's house. He has taken his goods. And how does he do that? He binds Satan.

Friends, the reason why Jesus is able to destroy the works of the devil is because he has restricted the power of the Devil. He enters Satan's house and has bound him.

Let me answer a few questions that this verse raises.

1) How did Jesus bind Satan?

By overcoming his temptations in the wilderness. We saw that back in chapter 1 verses 12-13. Satan had never met a man who was not deceived by him. Every man who he had ever tempted had succumbed to his temptation, but that not the case with Jesus.

Now, Jesus would finalize this binding on the cross. When Jesus cried out, "It is Finished," one of the things he was declaring was his definitive victory over Satan.

2) Is Satan still bound today?

He absolutely is! None of Jesus' works have been undone. If he bound Satan, Satan is bound!

**Colossians 2:15**—*He (God) disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him (Christ).*

Now, bound does not mean powerless. Bound means restricted. Satan's power of deception was once great, but now it is diminished because of the triumph of Christ.

So, we should have great confidence that Christ can help us overcome the works of the Devil. When Satan is attempting to destroy us, discourage us, disillusion us; we must be reminded that Jesus has already bound Satan. The Ancient Serpent is not dead, but it is "defanged."

Also, it's important for us to consider that the Bible tells us that, although Satan is bound today, a time is coming when he will be loosed. A time that he will wreak havoc in the world, and especially among the church. And the time to prepare for that time is right now. But his time will be short and his condemnation will be sure.

### 3) What are the goods Jesus plundered?

Us—those who were once held captive by Satan. We were a people who walked in great darkness, with no hope, no promises from God, no covenant. But the glory of the nations now has come to Christ! We belonged to Satan, but now Jesus is redeeming men from every nation, tribe, and tongue to himself!

Jesus' work was one of restoration. He is the second Adam who redeems the results of the fall, of the sin, of the rebellion of the first Adam. In Adam we were all bound to sin and death. In Adam we became slaves to Satan, but in Christ we are redeemed, restored, renewed.

**Ephesians 2:1–2, 4–5**—*[1] And you were dead in the trespasses and sins [2] in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience...[4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved...*

### 3) JESUS WARNS THE PHARISEES (VS. 28-30)

So, we get to the warning as we finish this section. Jesus says, [28] *"Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, [29] but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin..."*

These verses have been the source of great debate in the church over millennia. It's understandable, this is a strong warning. Perhaps more importantly, these verses have been a concern for many throughout church history. Many have asked the question,

“Have I committed the unpardonable sin?” In a room this size, certainly many of us have asked this question and are perhaps even asking this question today.

Let me comfort you. The mere fact that you are asking this question is evidence that you probably have not committed the unpardonable sin. If you are coming to Christ in faith and repentance he will receive you.

**John 6:37**—*All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.*

But what is the unpardonable sin?

Put it simply, is to intentionally give Satan credit for the things the Holy Spirit has done. Isn't this what the Scribes were doing? Jesus lived his human life in the power of the Spirit. But the Scribes attributed his work to Satan. Verse 30 tells us that this specific sin related to this specific situation.

At the heart of the unpardonable sin there is faithlessness. You cannot believe the Holy Spirit, and attribute his works to the devil at the same time. It is by faith that we are saved, and the faith that we have is not only in the person of Christ, but also in the work he performed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, I don't want you to miss the weight of this warning. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is ultimately the rejection of the work of Christ, and if we don't believe in the work of Christ, we don't believe the gospel. And friends, if we don't believe the gospel, none of our sins will be forgiven.

But I want you to notice an important detail that is often overlooked in this passage. Did you hear what Jesus said in verse 28. “*All sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter...*”

And how can I receive this? How can I receive this forgiveness? Through repentance. Jesus said, “Repent and believe the gospel.”

**Acts 2:38**—*And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

If we repent and we turn to the cross of Christ all our sins will be forgiven. If we look at the cross of Christ, and like Alexamenos we see in it the joy of our salvation, the world may oppose us, the world may mock us, the world may cancel us, but God will never cast us out.

In the chamber adjacent to where the depiction of Alexamenos was found, there was another chamber. This chamber also had writing on the wall. This one, no depiction, just

words. In this chamber someone wrote in Latin the words, "*Alexamenos fidelis.*"  
Alexamenos, the faithful. May these words be one day said of you and I.