

The Stronger One

Mark 3:20-30

- We are continuing our look at the book of Mark this week, although we will take a couple of weeks off as we take time to celebrate Easter and Jesus' resurrection together.
- We are looking at the Gospel of Mark, which is one of the four books of the Bible that tell us about what Jesus did and taught while He was on earth.
- So far, we have seen Him start His ministry, and He has been going around teaching and preaching, healing the sick, and as we will see today, casting out demons.
- All of this has ruffled the feathers of the religious leaders, known as the scribes and the Pharisees, whose ideas about who God is and how we honor Him didn't match up with what Jesus has been doing.
- So, as we have seen, He has been butting heads with them, and every time, He has silenced His critics.

- After taking a break from the conflict last week, we dive right back in today.
- Let's set the scene for what is taking place. Start with me in **Mark 3:20-22**.
- Jesus has been ministering for some time, and the crowds are getting worse and worse.
- We are not sure if he is back at the one of the disciples' houses or just in a house somewhere.
- Regardless, the crowd is so massive and the needs are so great that he can't even slow down to eat.
- His family shows up, and they are ready to carry Jesus off by force if necessary, because they are convinced that he is losing his mind. We will talk more about Jesus' family in a few

weeks, but can you imagine how frustrating that probably was for Jesus?

- The religious leaders recognize that something more is going on, something that can't be explained simply by a crazy man.
- You see, demons are getting cast out of people. We have seen that already in **chapter 1** as Jesus cast the unclean spirit out of the man and then was healing those who were demon-possessed in the crowds that were coming out to him.

- That may be a tricky thing for you if you are newer to Christianity, so let's go back a bit and talk about the Devil, or Satan, and understand what he is up to.
- You may be tempted to ignore this section or any references to spiritual beings like this as superstitious or old-fashioned, but the Bible clearly indicates that it is very real.
- Pulling together passages from throughout the Bible, we find that Satan was likely the most powerful angel God created.
- He got jealous of serving God and decided he wanted to be God, so he started a rebellion in heaven, and 1/3 of the angels sided with him.
- God cast Satan and his followers, who we now refer to as demons, out of heaven and down to earth. Ever since then, he has been trying to destroy God's work on earth.
- The biggest part of that involves us, because people are the only beings created in the image of God. Out of all of the living things God made, we are the only ones Jesus died to save and the only ones that enjoy fellowship with God, so Satan works extra hard to distract and destroy us.
- In fact, the name "Satan" means "accuser", which is one of his main jobs—accusing us of sin and accusing God of unfairness.

- Jesus is actively fighting and destroying Satan's hold on people as He casts out demons, freeing them from slavery to sin and bringing them back into right relationship with God.
- However, the religious leaders aren't willing to acknowledge that Jesus is actually God, so they say, "It has to be the work of the devil! He is possessed, and that's how he can do all this."
- That's who they are referring to when they say "*Beelzebul*"
- They refuse to believe that Jesus is God and that He is doing things only God can do, so they have to come up with some alternative explanation.
- In his response to them, Jesus proves that he, as God, is the only one who could do what He is doing.
- As we will see this morning, Jesus is infinitely stronger than Satan, and He has the power to destroy what Satan is up to.
- We see that anytime we see God doing things only He can.
- What are some things only God can do? Well, I'm glad you asked!

Things Only God Can Do:

- 1) *Draw people to Himself.*
 - 2) *Cause people to seek Him.*
 - 3) *Reveal spiritual truth.*
 - 4) *Convict the world of guilt about sin.*
 - 5) *Convict the world of righteousness.*
 - 6) *Convict the world of judgment.*¹
- Here's what is incredible: Right now, we are seeing God do many of these things in our church body and in the lives of those around us.
 - God is at work, and it is incredible to watch!
 - He is drawing people to Himself, causing us to seek Him.

¹ Blackaby, Henry & Richard, and Claude King. *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*. Nashville: Lifeway Press (2010). 83.

- He is teaching us truth that we couldn't understand about who He is and who we are and what is wrong with our world.
- Through our lives and our testimonies, God is working in beautiful ways.
- Others might try to dismiss it, but we cannot deny that God is at work.
- Jesus presents those there that day with two basic options of how to explain what we are seeing.
- After laying out the options in **verses 23-27**, he issues a very strong warning to the scribes who heard him that day and to us as well.
- That's how we are going to address the text this morning: two options and a warning.
- If you walk out of here with nothing else this morning, I want you to remember that God is stronger than anything that opposes Him.
- **The first option Jesus presents to explain what is going on is:**

1) Satan is fighting himself.

- To address their concern, Jesus plays out the logic the scribes have been using.
- If Jesus is possessed, then Satan is fighting himself.
- Read with me **verses 23-26**.
- Jesus gives a few short parables to make a very interesting point.
- First, he says that Satan fighting himself would be like a kingdom embroiled in a civil war.

- Think about how much damage a civil war does to a nation.
 - Instead of focusing outwardly, the kingdom has to turn all its resources inward to try to hold things together.
 - It devastates that kingdom or country. In fact, most countries that face civil war fall apart as a result.
 - If Satan was fighting himself, it would be a civil war that would only damage his kingdom and be the beginning of the end for him.
-
- From there, Jesus turns to the family. Look back at **verse 25**.
 - When a family gets to the point where there is constant fighting and bickering, it is often an indication that family unit is not going to last much longer.
 - Unless God intervenes and the family changes, that fighting can signal the beginning of the end.
-
- It wouldn't make sense for Satan to fight against his own interests like that, so there's no way this is happening.
 - But Jesus actually takes the line of reasoning a step further.
 - In **verse 26**, He makes an interesting point.
 - Remember how Jesus, when he healed the man with the withered hand, left the Pharisees speechless because they were caught?
 - He did it again here.
-
- Let's assume for a second that Jesus really was possessed like the scribes thought.
 - If that's the case, then Satan's kingdom is falling and God's is being issued in.
 - Satan would be fighting an all-out civil war, and he wouldn't be able to recover from it.

- So, even if the scribes were right, they were still wrong!
- From the very beginning, Jesus had been declaring that God's kingdom was coming to earth.
- if he was possessed, he was still doing what he said he was in bringing in the kingdom.
- Isn't it interesting to see that Jesus never swerved from his concern that the kingdom be declared?
- He would even use the objections raised against him as a way to keep the message in the forefront.
- Now, we know that Jesus wasn't possessed, and he wasn't really suggesting that he was.
- Instead, He was proving that God is reestablishing his rule over humanity whether the scribes liked it or not.
- **That's what Jesus points out in the second explanation he highlights:**

2) Jesus is stronger than Satan.

- Read **verse 27**.
- This is something that you and I have seen played out in the news over the last few weeks.

Did you hear the tragic story of the young man in Oklahoma who shot and killed three people who were attempting to burglarize his parents' home?

The getaway driver, who drove away as soon as she heard the gunshots, thought the house was empty.²

² <http://www.newser.com/story/240622/alleged-getaway-driver-in-fatal-burglary-i-dont-blame-him.html>. Accessed 1 April 1, 2017.

Had she known there was an armed man in the home, she would likely have gone somewhere else.

- Let's apply this to Jesus and Satan.
- Satan, as we said, is a powerful being.
- Jesus acknowledges that when he calls him a "*strong man*".
- He is so powerful that even the other angels are cautious of how they deal with him:

But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 9, NASB95)
- Yet, Jesus has essentially marched right into Satan's house and rescued people out from under his grip.
- How can he do that?
- Because Jesus is the stronger man.
- Never, ever, ever lose sight of the fact that God is infinitely more powerful than Satan and all his followers.
- This is not a dualistic battle of two opposite but equal forces; it's not even close.
- Satan is limited by time, space, power, and knowledge, none of which are limits for God. He is not all-powerful, all-knowing, or present everywhere.
- Yes, he has power and ability, but he is a dog on a short leash, unable to do anything unless God allows him to.
- That's why we can hold tightly to the passage that says:

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. (1 John 4:4, NASB95)
- Jesus was not bringing about the kingdom by Satan's power; he was using his own. He has come into Satan's house, if you

will, tied him up, and is releasing the people Satan held captive for so long.

- He is freeing them from their sin, releasing them from Satan's grasp.
- He is reasserting God's rule and reign over every aspect of creation.

- Also, note that Jesus is the stronger one, not you.
- You are not called to bind and rebuke Satan; even Michael the archangel wouldn't do that.
- The Bible tells us to resist him, not try to restrict him—that's up to Jesus.

- Do you acknowledge that Jesus is the only one who can free you from Satan's schemes?
- Last week, we talked about the call to be a disciple of Christ, to learn from Him and represent Him to the world.
- Satan doesn't want that to happen, so he is actively working against you to keep you from growing in Christ.
- He doesn't want this church to make disciples and grow in Christ-likeness.
- He is tempting you, distracting you, and throwing up whatever obstacles he can to keep you from turning your life completely to Jesus.
- You can't beat Satan on your own; only Jesus can, because HE is the strongest one.

- Jesus demonstrated that in the ultimate way by taking our place on the cross.
- As He died, He paid the penalty for our sin, removing any ground Satan might have to accuse us before God.

- When He was raised from the dead, Jesus dealt Satan a mortal wound because He proved that not even death itself could defeat God.
- Satan is still around, and he is still fighting, but he is facing his ultimate defeat.
- God is stronger than anything in the world that could ever come against him.
- So, if Jesus is bringing about the kingdom of God by defeating Satan and rescuing people from his clutches, then what is our danger?
- Look quickly with me at **verses 28-30**.
- This is what some have called “the unpardonable sin”, and it is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus says that the person who does that never has forgiveness and is guilty of an eternal sin.
- There has been a lot of confusion about this verse, so let me try to explain what Jesus is saying.
- First, if you are concerned you have committed the unpardonable sin, you haven’t.
- How can I say that? Because of what this verse is actually talking about.
- Because this is a tricky passage, let me ready you what another Bible commentator has said about it:

...this refers to an attitude (not an isolated act or utterance) of defiant hostility toward God that rejects His saving power toward man, expressed in the Spirit-empowered person and work of Jesus...Such a persistent attitude of willful unbelief can harden into a condition in which repentance and

*forgiveness, both mediated by God's Spirit, become impossible.*³

- The unforgivable sin, then, is the defiant sin of never acknowledging who Jesus is.
- It is an eternal sin because those who continue in this will never receive God's forgiveness.
- The scribes that day were close to committing it, which is why Jesus issued this warning.

- What about you?
- Are you dismissing all this as fairy tales and myths, or are you willing to acknowledge that God, through Jesus, is the only one who could save you?
- If you are saved, do you remember that we are in a spiritual war, or do you try to ignore all this?
- Or, are you on the other end of the spectrum--are you fearful of Satan?
- Remember, although Satan is strong, God is infinitely stronger. Satan is a defeated foe.

³ Grassmick, John D. "[Mark.](#)" *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck. Vol. 2. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985. 117. Print.