

Stronger than the Strong Man

Gospel According to Luke

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I'd like to invite you to look with me in Luke 11, and I'm going to read for you from verse 14 down to verse 26, and speak with you about "Stronger Than the Strong Man." This is an interesting title, born out of a parable that our LORD Jesus Christ gave upon the deliverance of a man who was possessed of Satan, the devil. We don't hear much talk today about what it is to be possessed of Satan, at least not in the right biblical sense; there's a lot of talk about it in religion, but not much understanding as to who Satan is, nor the work of the LORD Jesus Christ when he came to this earth and what he accomplished. As Brother Bob just read for us in Hebrews 2, 11 Satan's been handled. A lot of people don't know that. They go around acting like he's still somebody they've got to try to defeat. And I've often said that if he brought man down in his best state, which he did, Adam and Eve, who are we to think that somehow we can take him on? And yet, people foolishly, you've seen it on TV, you hear about it, they organize deliverance meetings to try to chase the devil out, and when you tell them that that is fruitless activity, if you want to see people possessed of Satan, just try telling them that. They become upset.

But this matter was settled for the LORD's people back when Christ came the first time. On the eve of his death, he says, "Now is the prince of this world cast out." Judgment's been rendered. There was a defeating of Satan through the work of Christ and his death accomplished. Not for everybody, but for those that he came to redeem, this is a settled matter. Don't you like settled matters? It's a settled matter. Yes, he goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may destroy, but we have the same comfort and confidence as what the LORD said to Peter when he said, "Satan has desired to sift you," and I love those words, "as wheat," not as a tare, but as wheat. But what did he say? "I'll pray for you." That's where our salvation is. It's in this person of the LORD Jesus Christ and that work that he came to accomplish. And that's what we're reading about here in Luke chapter 11. He's stronger than the strong man, however strong Satan is, and he is. I heard a preacher say one time, we're not to ignore him because he is a vital enemy, and yet we're not to fear him. Don't give him too much attention because he's not the king. He might be the prince of this world, but he's not the God of this world. There's one God of this world, that's the LORD Jesus Christ. And so I find comfort in that.

But let's read this, Luke chapter 11, beginning with verse 14 down to verse 26. "And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered." That means that his control, his effect over this one was that he could not speak. He was mute.

"But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils." Imagine this slander being addressed to our LORD, what hardness of men's hearts to consider that here's the God of this world in the flesh, doing his work, and they say, "Well, he's got a devil himself."

"And others, tempting him," you see, there's no faith here, believe me, this is the hardness of men's hearts, tempting him, "sought of him a sign from heaven." What did our LORD say about those that seek a sign? It's an adulterous generation.

"But he," interestingly it says, "knowing their thoughts." Here's God in the flesh, not even their speaking, but their thoughts, "said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation." In other words, if you're saying that I, by the devil, am casting out devils, what kind of logic is that? That would be like a house divided. "And a house divided against a house falleth." Talk about stating the obvious, but how blind men are. They'd rather believe a lie than to believe the truth.

"If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils," I love our LORD's way of teaching. He turns it right back on him. "By whom do your sons cast them out?" In other words, they had, just like we have today, people in religion going about pretending to be able to deliver people from Satan. In fact, our LORD said, "Many will say in that day, LORD, LORD, have we not done many mighty works and have we not cast out devils? And I'll say unto them, I never knew you." People get all excited because they see people exercising the devils out of people, supposedly, and yet as we read in scripture, unless it's a work of grace, all that does is empty the house and those devils, when they come back, the end of that individual is worse than the beginning. Twice blind.

But he asks them this question, "if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges." Here's the important verse 20, "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you." Oh, that men would read this who still await some future kingdom of God to be established. Here he said, "If with the finger of God I cast out these devils," this is the testimony, "then no doubt," it might be a doubt in men's mind, but no doubt according to the truth, "the kingdom of God is come upon you."

And here's the verse from which I take the title, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." There's a whole gospel message right there in verse 22 as to the work that the LORD Jesus Christ came to accomplish as a victorious Savior, to the point of stripping the armament from the enemy. You stop and think about all that stood against us as his people, that the LORD has come in as the strong, the stronger than the strong man. Whatever you can think of as being standing between you and a holy God, as a child of God, consider that every obstacle has been removed, stripped and the spoils divided. And we're gonna look at a couple of scriptures in a minute.

But verse 23, "He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." It's interesting how that word's put, because a lot of people say, "Well I'm not against Christ." Well, you're not for him. You're acting like you can be neutral in this matter? It's like one old preacher said, he preached every time for a verdict, some get glad, some get mad, but there's no middle ground. And that's what our LORD said, "He that is not with me," that's all it takes is just not to be with him. There were many Pharisees that were concerned about even being judgmental of Christ, but not being with him, they were still against him. "And he that gathers not with me scattereth."

Verse 24, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out." See this is the problem with just works religion, all these healing mediums. People say, "Well something happened." Yeah, temporarily. But by putting your confidence in that man that laid hands on you, and whatever took place, even that is a strong delusion the LORD sends to those that do not believe the truth.

And in the end, verse 25, "when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished." That's not conversion, that's man-made cleaning and cleansing.

"Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." I will tell you that this is a description of modern day works religion in the name of Christ, in Christendom, that's going on. We have many, as Christ said of the Pharisees, that cross land and sea, that's the missionary movement, going land and sea and to make one proselyte, not converts, but proselytes, converts to their religion, to their denomination, to their way of faith, and yet are made twice full the child of the devil than before. Why? Because no longer do they even have any consciousness of being a sinner. They presume that because someone pronounced a blessing on what they've done that somehow they're the LORD's, and then it's twice full because now they presume that in that profession they have a good standing with God. Try shaking that out of people today, when you get down to what is their profession, on what it's based. If it's not on Christ and his finished work, it's false. There is no other foundation that can be laid than that which has been laid, and that is Christ Jesus, his person, and his work, his death.

And so you can see here how our LORD speaks to them in parables. You might ask, "Well, why did the LORD speak in parables?" Well, we know why. If you look over in your Bibles in Mark 4:10 through 13, our LORD purposely was making a distinction here, a difference among his hearers, and does so today. There are many that read this book, God's word, and yet read it blindly, not ever seeing or hearing or understanding, and the LORD has so purposed it.

Here in Mark 4, and verse 10, it says, "And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable." He had just given the parable of the sower and the seed, and how many different interpretations have you heard of that? Men will take this and interpret it. "And he said unto them," verse 11, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables." Again, a parable is a literal, visible object or truth or story that has as its purpose to reveal a spiritual truth. Men can pick up the story. They can talk about it. I had a whole course on parables when I was in graduate school years ago, and I remember going through that and trying to find the lessons, but I was doing it as a blind man. No one ever brought out that it all had to do with Christ and his kingdom come, the one that has already come in his kingship. We interpreted variously and got grades on it for answering it the way the professor wanted us to, but that's not to know the truth.

Here our LORD said, "Unto you it is given," verse 11, "to know the mystery of the kingdom of God." A mystery is something that has to be revealed. You're not going to find the answer lying on the surface. You're not going to find this with natural intelligence or eyes. It's revealed.

"And unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables." Why? "That seeing they may see, and not perceive." That word "perceive" is the word our LORD used that unless a man be born again, be born from above, he cannot see, apprehend the kingdom of God.

"And hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." You see, this is where men get their back up because they say, "Well, that's not fair. If God hadn't been blinding them, then they would believe." Oh no, it's God leaving them to their own reprobate mind and that darkness that's already there. And that's his prerogative. By leaving men to their own depraved hearts and minds, he does no injustice. He's just in doing so. It's a mercy and grace when he is pleased to reveal unto them the LORD Jesus Christ and they be converted because their sins have been forgiven them through the work of the LORD Jesus Christ.

So understanding the scriptures, dear friends, is not related to high intelligence. In fact, it's revealed to the lowly. I wonder if we can take our place there, the ignorant, the dumb, the ones that apart from the deliverance of Christ could never, that he brings, could never

know him. Men pride themselves in being able to figure this out but I'll tell you, unless God by his grace reveals Christ in you, this parable will just be that, just a story that captures attention for a while and is of interest but alas, you'll move on to something else in no time. It's not based on any kind of advanced religious credentials or years of studying in a seminary. I find it interesting that men beg you to believe them because they have studied Greek and Hebrew and the original languages and Latin. They use that as their strength. They put Dr. after their name and they want people to be impressed. Well, these were doctors that our LORD was dealing with. You talk about linguists and knowing the original languages, they could speak it. Most of the ones that claim to know the original languages today, they've got to look up words, parse them, and try to figure it out. They have lexicons. These men that Christ was dealing with, they were the wisest of the wise as far as men go, well educated, prominent, doctors, leaders in their communities, and yet, missed Christ.

That's not how it is that we enter into who Christ is and what he came to accomplish. It's by revelation. It's the LORD revealing it in his own. One can only truly be brought to see these scriptures that we're looking at when the heart, that's where the LORD brings this word, home to the heart. And that's my prayer for all of us here, even myself, that this not just be a word that passes through our ears and our minds, but that the LORD be pleased to open the heart, give eyes. Not physical eyes, we read it. Problem isn't with physical eyes, but spiritual eyes, being born from above to perceive and see these things that pertain to the glory of Christ.

We can even come away with true facts as to who he is and still be in bondage. It's seeing his glory. It's like this dumb man delivered. Talk about a work of grace that the LORD should pass his way and deliver him. And you know when it says there in verse 14 of Luke 11, coming back there, that the dumb spake, what do you suppose he was speaking of? He's talk about stating the obvious. If someone has just passed your way and delivered you from the devil and your tongue is loosed to speak, read through the scriptures every time the LORD by his Spirit loosed the tongue of someone to speak, they spoke of Christ. "Oh for a thousand tongues to sing," what? "My great Redeemer's praise." And you know, that's what made these Pharisees mad. It wasn't a miracle. You stop and think about, "Well, he's starting to talk again. Oh, I bet his family's happy. Oh man." That's not what made them mad. They weren't against social services. They weren't against God, Christ going around healing. What they found offense in is that he said he was God in the flesh, that you being a man make yourself equal with God.

This is what the issue was and that he should deliver sinners and pronounce them forgiven based upon his word without any of these ever going through the religious training and proselytizing and catechisms that they had, their system. That's what made them mad because they could never pronounce a person forgiven just like no works religion. Do you realize that's the one thing about the gospel that is different than any other world religion is to be able to say to a sinner your sins are forgiven once for all in the person and work of another, a substitute? There's no other religion that even comes

close to that. Why? Because that's natural man thinking there's always works. Always something more to be done. It's a ruthless taskmaster, works religion, and it stands opposed to the work of grace. That's what this is about, that this one should come and declare himself God and by his work and by his word to pronounce forgiveness of sins to sinners and deliver them once for all.

If we're the LORD's, we've been delivered from the power of Satan. That's what Brother Bob read there in Hebrews 2. Look back with me there real quickly. Hebrews 2. Is this an ongoing work? Do we need to be meeting here and thinking in terms of penance and other things that we need to do to ward off Satan and fight sin within us and do all these things that the world does? Look at verse 14 of Hebrews 2. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." You know, These Pharisees that stood against him here to the point of pronouncing him to be the son of Beelzebub, a devil, it wasn't out of ignorance. That was out of rebellion that they were saying it. They would not have this man to have the glory and honor. But as they looked upon him as a man, he looked no different than any other Jew of the day. There wasn't some halo following him over his head that said to them, "Well, if you could just see the light above his head, a little aura coming around, you could see that he's..." You can't. No.

He partook with his children, even as the children, he's talking about the children that God gave him, that's up there in verse 13, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me." It's not everybody. But "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." And it doesn't mean just having the physical appearance of a man but who is it that he came and identified with? Sinners and the wretched of the wretched. There wasn't anybody that gave any consideration in his day and religion of this dumb man, of this man who couldn't speak. In fact, religion had already written him off. You can go back and read in the annals of who was allowed into a synagogue and who wasn't, who was allowed into the temple and who wasn't. There wasn't going to be any invalid that could ever come in. That's why you found them sitting outside often begging alms and these religious people would walk by and give them alms as if, "You poor person. You're a condemned person. There's nothing we can do for you but here's a little chump change to help you get through your day."

That was their attitude and yet here was our LORD Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, coming to this man who was dumb. That could be Ken Wimer, was Ken Wimer. I didn't know how to speak of the glories of Christ. My lips were sealed. I spoke of a lot of other things, made all kinds of sign language, learned a lot of things from man until it pleased God to pass my way in the person of his Son and identify with this poor wretched sinner. And to find out that he'd identified with me from eternity, did not leave me in that state but was pleased to reveal himself in me. When I tell you it's by revelation, I'm speaking from experience. I can say with Paul, no man taught me this. I didn't learn this in cemetery, it's what I call seminary because it's a burial ground. It's death. Dead men walking. You can have all the degrees in the world but it's not what qualifies a man to stand here and preach

the gospel to you. If Christ has not been revealed in that heart, anything he says, it's just a sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal.

But here in verse 14 of Hebrews 2, "he also himself likewise took part of the same," he didn't become a sinner, but he was flesh and blood, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." That would still be our state had he not delivered. There's some that will be forever in that bondage. They'll die as they've lived because God has purposed it. It's like we read, these things pass in parables, that seeing they see not, hearing they hear not lest they be converted and their sins forgiven them.

But it says, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels." You talk about sovereign grace. There was no redemption ever purposed for fallen angels else he would have taken on the nature of angels, but he didn't. "He took on him the seed of Abraham." Again, this takes spiritual eyes. He's not talking about being a Jew. If that were the case, I don't know as I could be the LORD's. I don't know if I've got any actual Jewish blood in me. But that doesn't matter. When it says took on him the seed of Abraham, it's talking about that seed that God way back then promised would come from Abraham, that is, Christ. So he took on him the seed of Abraham. He took on him exactly what God said would happen, that this seed would come in the flesh. He took on that flesh. We don't need to doubt.

"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren." I wrote that in a paragraph one time for one of my classes that I was taking a couple years ago for business, and someone said, "That's an old English word. You've got to use another one than behooved. We don't talk like that today." Well, you know what? The Bible does. It behooved him. It was necessary for "him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." If there was in any way even a small aspect of our LORD Jesus Christ that was less than him being a man, I don't mean being a sinner, he didn't become a sinner but being a man. You talk about perfect humanity. The perfect human. Everybody's trying to figure out a way to create the perfect human through genomes and all this stuff today. Cloning. But the perfect human has already been created, if you will. He came as a man. He was born as a man. He is that new man. He is that new creation by which God now has already saved a people from every tribe, nation and tongue. We don't have to be going about trying to perfect ourselves. He is that perfect man.

"It behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." There's not a thing that you or I can ever live or face that he has not already endured that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest. Don't you like to have somebody that understands what you're going through because they've already been through it? Not just that they can empathize or sympathize but they actually when they say, "I understand," they've been through it. And that's who our LORD Jesus is as the merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God. That's why he's our salvation. He's our justification.

And notice his person, "that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest." He is all that the sinner needs before a holy God, "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." That reconciliation has been accomplished. He's not now doing that every time someone believes, "Okay, then you're reconciled." No. We've been reconciled if we're his.

"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Help them is what that word means.

I'm thankful that's the case, and that's what this man back here in Luke 11 by God's grace was privileged to experience. You see, salvation is purposed from eternity but it's accomplished in time. It's like Christ came in the fullness of the time. He came and was born of a woman and made under the law that he might redeem those that were under the law. And what's the effect of that? That in sending forth his spirit now into the hearts of his children, that spirit of adoption. We're not sons of God by nature. We're not born that way but by adoption we cry unto him, "Abba Father." That's a term of endearment, "Daddy."

We could never say that. You talk about a loose tongue where the dumb are made to speak. There again, religion, man-made religion you don't find that kind of expression where you can address God and come to him and call him daddy. That's an amazing thing. We're talking about the holy God. We're talking about one who created the universe. And there is in religion plenty of teaching about just keeping men in subjection and in fear. I was raised under that kind of teaching. "Oh, you better watch what you do." There's a fear of God without any comprehension of all of his holiness. And I know that as the LORD opened my heart and eyes and mouth like this dumb man to see, that was what was weighty on my mind, to think that here's a holy God and yet all of this matter with regard to my salvation has been settled. There was a trembling, yes, and a fear but then suddenly to see that, no, this was a work of grace unlike anything I'd ever heard or seen. Why? Because to that point it hadn't pleased God to reveal Christ in me.

But now you can never take it away from me. People can argue with you all they want to about the death of Christ and what he accomplished, but I just know what he's done to this poor sinner and for this poor sinner. And they tried to rationalize and reason around the LORD delivering this man here instead of rejoicing. You can see there in verse 15 the immediate reaction. The people wondered. There was a wondering. That word "wonder" is a word of amazement unlike anything that you would ever know or experience that a man or the flesh could produce, and certainly that's true of salvation. When the LORD's delivered, there's no earthly explanation as to why the LORD delivers one and not another other than it pleased God for it to be that way. And the Father thanked, Christ thanked the Father that it was so. Let men cavil, if they will, it doesn't change who Christ is and the work that he came to accomplish.

But the people wondered. The sense is there they admired this power of God, and don't you know that's what provoked this jealousy too because works religion where's all the attention? It's on the preacher. Many today use Christ's name to promote their own organizations, their own so-called "ministries." They're not in it for the glory of Christ because the reality is when the LORD crosses the path of one of their converts and delivers them out and they renounce that former religion, all of a sudden that one individual that had been under their power for a time now the LORD's delivered them out, suddenly now they're angry. I've seen it. You've seen it. Most of us here, if not all of us, have come out of religion and when you bring up how the LORD was merciful in delivering you from works religion, they get mad because they're still in it and they don't like the fact that you're talking about being delivered because what that means is they're still in bondage. But that's what the LORD was saying by delivering this one and then passing them by, leaving them to themselves.

So there was a jealousy there but the people wondered who is this one that without pomp and circumstance, without doing anything like they were accustomed to seeing from their religious leaders, sounding the horn, but even that was a fulfillment of what Isaiah said that he'd not raise his voice in the street. He wasn't going to draw attention to himself. He just went about delivering everyone that the Father had given him. He knew who they were. They just found out about it, just like us. If you'd asked me, I thought I was a child of God based on my profession as a little boy, as a child, and when God caused his grace to pierce through to my heart and reveal Christ in me, I found out, no, this thing was not settled in any profession, it was settled in God from eternity purposing that Ken Wimer should be saved and Christ paying his debt, and in time by his Spirit drawing me.

But there's some that will be affected by these things and they'll observe and they'll wonder and yet even that's not salvation, and then others are going to be offended and the reason they're offended as you see here in verse 15, some wondered, some marveled, verse 15, "some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils." Why on earth would they say that of a man who has just delivered a man who all his lifetime couldn't speak? That's a good work. You'd think they'd be rejoicing. Well, if it was one of them, they would have said, "Whoa," because they would be giving themselves the power.

But here's one outside of their parameters and the reason they're offended is to justify themselves. Do you realize that this is the reason why men in religion are who they are and why they get offended over the message of the gospel of grace and of Christ and his death, is because they'd rather justify themselves and their profession and their works than to justify God. And that shows you just right there just how evil this heart is because we'd be right in there with them, and we were, such were some of you until it pleased God to reveal Christ in us.

To say of Christ that actually this work he was doing was by virtue of a league with Beelzebub, don't be surprised when men, as Christ said, persecute you and say all manner

of evil against you as it says in Matthew 5, for what reason? For righteousness' sake. He says theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Those are the true children, when men speak evil of you. If they call Christ the devil, they're going to call you a devil. They won't hesitate. And I'll guarantee you, the only reason they don't call you a devil is because you're sitting on it, you've got the lid on it. But I promise you, you cannot believe this gospel, believe this Christ and have had him do a work of grace in your life and not speak of him distinctly in a religious, in a wretched generation of religious works and it not leak out on you.

You are in league with the devil himself because that's what the LORD said, "If a man is not with me." That's a strong statement. Go think about it. "He is against me." There's no silence when it comes to who God is, who Christ is.

Now do we go around beating people on the head and trying to wedge it in? No. I get people asking me all the time when you are out in the business world all the time, you are dealing with all these different types of people, I'm not beating them over the head with what the LORD has taught me of Christ, but I'll tell you, when they ask me a question, I don't hesitate to tell them I have nothing to be ashamed of. I'm ashamed of works religion but as Paul said, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to them that believe.

So that's the introduction. I planned on preaching all the way down through here but looking at the clock our time is gone. I want us to, by God's grace, think about this, weigh it, let's read it, there's a lot here and, LORD willing, we'll come back to it the next time if he so wills, so directs. But that's the stronger than the strong man, that's Christ, his work that he accomplished on behalf of his people.