

Mark 3:20-30 — “Climactic Attacks on the Suffering Servant: Attributing Christ’s Works to Satan!”

“And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God has willed his truth to triumph through us.

The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure;
one little word shall fell him.”

— **Martin Luther**

● **How do people respond to Jesus?**

- ✓ The indifferent (Whatever!)
- ✓ The arrogant (I don’t need this!)
- ✓ The distracted (Not now!)
- ✓ The curious (I’ll listen as long as I like it)
- ✓ The defiant (No way!)
- ✓ The repentant (God be merciful to me!)

Background to Mark 3:20-30

- in Mark’s gospel so far, we’ve seen:
 - The **Preaching** of Jesus (ch.1)
 - The **Conflict** with the leaders (ch.2)
 - The **Rejection** of the Jews (ch.3)
- **But — some themes have emerged!**
 - the superficial faith of the crowds
 - the growing commitment of the disciples
 - the increasing hostility of the leaders**

THESIS — I want to show you the meaning of this account around 3 words:

1. The **Accusation** (20-22) – [Jesus works only by Satan’s power!]
2. The **Illustration** (23-27) – [A kingdom divided cannot stand!]
3. The **Condemnation** (28-30) – [Blaspheming the Spirit is Unforgivable!]

I. THE ACCUSATION: Jesus works only by Satan’s power! (20-22)

II. THE ILLUSTRATION: A kingdom divided cannot stand! (23-27)

- A. the theme: *the divided house*
- B. The **stupidity** of the argument (23-26)

- C. The **sovereignty** of the Savior (27)

I need scarcely remark, that the One "stronger than he" is the Lord of life and glory, the Prince of Peace, God's co-equal, co-eternal Son. But in what sense is he stronger than Satan? None can doubt that God is stronger than the devil. But in what sense is he stronger than he? And how does he conquer him? Is it by coming upon "the strong man armed" in all the majesty of Godhead, displaying the lightning of his vengeance, and withering him into hell? He did not overcome him so. He conquered him in weakness; he bruised him upon the cross; he destroyed him by dying. And thus the "seed of the woman"—wonderful mystery of grace and love!—bruised the serpent's head, though the serpent was allowed to bruise his heel. (JC Philpot)

III. THE CONDEMNATION: Blaspheming the Spirit is unforgivable! (28-30)

- A. the theme: *the unforgivable sin*

B. The sins that *CAN* be forgiven (28)

- **The Forgiveness of Christ is:**
 - a) Complete -
 - b) Comprehensive -
 - c) Cleansing -
 - d) Certified -
 - e) Comforting -
 - f) Changeless -

C. The sin that *CANNOT* be forgiven (29-30)

1. What is it? to blaspheme the Spirit means to live in ongoing, willful unbelief to the Spirit’s testimony of Jesus’ Person & salvation.
2. What is the unforgivable sin? the unpardonable sin? It’s when a person repeatedly, habitually rejects the truth that Jesus is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.

Note the glory of God’s mercy:

- his mercy is **WIDER**
- his grace is **GREATER**
- his love is **HIGHER**
- his forgiveness is **LARGER**
- his protection is **SECURER**.
- his salvation is **SWEETER**.
- his invitations are **KINDER!**

IN CHRIST ALONE

In Christ alone my hope is found;
 He is my light, my strength, my song;
 This cornerstone, this solid ground,
 Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
 What heights of love, what depths of peace,
 When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
 My comforter, my all in all—
 Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, Who took on flesh,
 Fullness of God in helpless babe!
 This gift of love and righteousness,
 Scorned by the ones He came to save.
 Till on that cross as Jesus died,
 The wrath of God was satisfied;
 For ev’ry sin on Him was laid—
 Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
 Light of the world by darkness slain;
 Then bursting forth in glorious day,
 Up from the grave He rose again!
 And as He stands in victory,
 Sin’s curse has lost its grip on me;
 For I am His and He is mine—
 Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death—
 This is the pow’r of Christ in me;
 From life’s first cry to final breath,
 Jesus commands my destiny.
 No pow’r of hell, no scheme of man,
 Can ever pluck me from His hand;
 Till He returns or calls me home—
 Here in the pow’r of Christ I’ll stand.

The Possession and Dispossession of the Strong Man Armed

Preached at Zoar Chapel, London, on August 9, 1848, by J. C. Philpot

But though he conquered Satan by the work of redemption upon the cross, though he there triumphed over principalities and powers, and having completely despoiled them, ascended to heaven leading them captive, chained to his chariot wheels, yet it is not to that part of the Lord's work that the text spiritually alludes. It is to the work of grace upon the heart—the incoming of the Lord of life into the soul; for we read, "when a stronger than he shall come upon him." Is not Satan firmly entrenched in the human heart? Is not that his palace about which he roams, and in looking at which, like Nebuchadnezzar of old, he takes infernal pleasure? Who then shall conquer this "strong man" in his very abode where he dwells, and where he has entrenched himself so firmly—his palace, up and down which he roams with infernal delight?

The "stronger than he" comes upon him at regeneration; when light and life shine into the heart; when the work of grace is begun by an almighty and invincible power; then he comes upon him as in a moment. Light and life suddenly flash into the soul—the harbinger and forerunner of the Son of God, the herald of his appearing. And when light and life come into the soul, it makes Satan quail and tremble. Nothing else can dispossess the "strong man." Your vows and promises; your resolutions and attempts to make yourselves better; your turning over a new leaf; your renouncing this and that sin; these are but stubble and rotten wood against this leviathan. He laughs at all these attempts to dispossess him. He retains a firm hold until "a stronger than he" comes like a flash of lightning upon him, and overcomes him and binds him in a moment. He is bound, when light and life comes into the conscience out of the fullness of the covenant head.

1. He takes the understanding, which before was involved in darkness; and which Satan from time to time effectually blinded. The Lord, in taking his share of the spoils, claims the enlightened understanding; according to those words, "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened." (Eph. 1:16.) He casts a holy light into the mind whereby truth is known to be truth, and error known to be error. He enlightens the understanding to see that he is God as well as man; and not only so, but the glorious God-Man. He enlightens the mind to see each blessed truth as it stands in God's word. He enlightens the understanding to see which are the people of God, and which are not. He enlightens the understanding to see Satan's delusions, temptations, and deceits. And thus a part of the spoils which he takes to himself is the enlightened understanding of a quickened soul.

2. He takes also the heart. His own language is, "My son, give me your heart." (Prov. 23:26.) Here Satan formerly dwelt; this was the citadel, where he lived, and ruled, and reigned; this is his headquarters, where he obtained and maintained full and complete possession. But when he who is stronger than Satan overcame him and deprived him of his armor, he took to himself, as part of his own portion of the spoil, that heart which belongs to him, which is given up to him, in which he works, in which he rules and mysteriously dwells, "the hope of glory."

3. But he takes also the conscience—that it may be an ever living witness for himself; that it may be tender in his fear; that it may feel the guilt of committed sin; that it may be sprinkled with atoning blood; that it may speak with his own voice, and bear its testimony against the insidious arts and arms of Satan. He not only takes but keeps possession of the conscience; for though it may be defiled with sin, it never relapses into the hands of Satan; never becomes dead as before; is never seared as with a hot iron; is never bribed or silenced; it tells no lies; but is an honest witness for the Lord against error, against evil, against the workings of sin, against Satan's delusions, snares, and temptations.

4. He takes possession too of the affections. They were once under Satan's power; they once flowed out unto the world; they once bowed down before the ash-heap gods; they once hewed out to themselves "cisterns, broken cisterns, that held no water." But when the Lord manifests himself with power; when he discovers his grace; when he sheds abroad his love in the heart, he wins the affections, and takes them as his own; and when he has taken, he keeps firm possession of them.

5. But, above all, he takes the soul. It was for that he bled; it was for that he died; it is that which he redeemed, and which he will take to eternal glory.

So that, all the valuable part of man—man's understanding, man's heart, man's conscience, man's affections, and man's soul; all that is precious; all that is valuable, being redeemed by blood, Jesus has as his division of the spoil, which he grasps with a fine hand, and claims as eternally his own.