



THE PARABLES OF JESUS

THE PARABLE OF THE STRONGMAN

Before Life Group

Read [Mark 3:20-35](#)

From all accounts of scripture, Jesus had just cast out demons from a man with multiple ailments. The man had been blind and unable to speak and had been healed by Jesus miraculously. After all, Jesus is a God who came to heal people and bring them to restoration. Most people would view this as a good thing for a man to have physical ailments be brought to restoration. Others, for whatever reason, viewed this as a threat to themselves and what they were doing.

First, Jesus' family, His brothers likely, came to bring Him home to keep Him under wraps. With the stories of Jesus spreading quickly across the land, His connection to the family became apparent, and most likely some of His brothers were becoming embarrassed of Him. Others, like the Pharisees, saw the apparent disruption to their religious system. To do the things Jesus was doing would mean they would need to radically change their own system of thinking. It would mean that, not only was the Messiah here and the power and authority should were His, but also that they would be shown to be false in a few of their beliefs. The addition of regulations, rules, and requirements that had been heaped upon the people would ease with this message of grace for the people. In their minds, the only way to squelch this man Jesus would be to accuse Him of being demonic in nature.

This accusation, though, did not make sense and Jesus spoke to them in parables to teach them. He told them a story of plundering the house of a strongman. Before coming to Christ, we were under the oppressive reign of Satan. We sought self-pleasure, fleshly gains, and everything counter to God. The strongman was our sin and Satan's dominion over our lives. Clearly, we were in need of plundering out from under the oppressive heal. The only way for someone to come out of this oppressive reign would be for someone stronger to first tie up the strongman. This is where Jesus enters. Jesus represents himself as stronger than the strongman and His actions greater than our sins. To say these are the acts of a crazy person or of a demoniac would contradict what Jesus was doing.

Satan seeks destruction and death. For Jesus to bring someone out of destruction and death would make no sense if he himself was demonic, but would make absolute sense for Jesus to be divine. Jesus being crazy was also not a logical possibility either, unless we are all crazier than Him. These labels are the tools of the enemy that cause people to doubt their faith and the saving power of Jesus Christ. There are many things the world will attempt to label Jesus as in an effort to discredit Him and His work. Faith is expressed by believing that He is who He says He is, and by allowing the transformative and redemptive power of the Holy Spirit to consume us fully.

The Pain of Sanctification

The spiritual battle between good and evil is a battle of who gets to control the house. Before Christ, the house was controlled by the strongman. Typically, we would read that as a positive quality in a person. But strength is morally neutral and dependent solely on the heart behind the strength. Greatness and strength can be applied for both great good or great evil. When we ask Jesus to come into our lives, we are inviting a saving invasion. The current strongman rules in subjugation over the people, keeping them oppressed and burdened. Yet, with the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, His strength quickly overpowers the oppressive reign of spiritual sin and darkness. Jesus is able to tie up the strongman and make light work of him. He is our salvation and our freedom, and He sanctifies us even of the remnants of our previous inhabitants.

Yet, sanctification is not a painless process. For too long we have allowed the oppression of sin to run rampant throughout the course of our lives. Things we would usually consider normal when met with the light of God are now seen for what they are—sin and decay. Furthermore, removing these from your life can be a painful process. The Bible often talks of this process as the “refiner’s fire.” While a necessary process as we step into our new lives with Christ, it is a painful process. It painfully burns away the impurity and decay that was caused by our sin. But when the process is completed, we are left with a better, purified self, all by the hand of God.

The pain of sanctification is not a process of the devil or a sign that you are not doing the right thing. It is a putting to death of the flesh and a smashing of false idols. We hold tightly to things that seek only our destruction, but with Christ’s appearance in our life, we are free. The pain will only grip us tightly if we hold onto our past. When we release our grasp of the past, we are free to take hold of the eternal future that Christ has for us. Jesus has taken hold of the authority in both the spiritual and physical world and seeks to redeem all. He desires our safety and sanctification, burning all unrighteousness and removing the past from our grips.

Release your sins. You are no longer ensnared by their oppression. The strongman of the enemy is tied up. No longer do you have to remain as if you still lived under that oppressive reign. Instead, you have been set free. However painful it may be to change your habits, understand your life is made new and you are a new creation, and this new creation cannot reside with the old. There will be new friends, new places for you to go, and new habits for you to build, as you allow the Spirit to sanctify you, continuing to work through the painful process. This is not a process of the man who oppresses but the man who frees the oppressed. A demon would not cast out a demon, only one who is stronger than demons, only the One who has defeated death and the grave.

Blaspheming the Holy Spirit

It is the following passage in Mark that is one of the most controversial and misunderstood scriptures throughout the body of scripture. Jesus very clearly states that there is one sin that is unforgivable. “Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.” ([Mark 3:29, NIV](#)) Throughout my life, I have heard numerous explanations for what this sin is exactly and how one would commit it. Yet, none of them seemed to make sense. Sure, they were definitely sins and in some cases egregious sins, but they all seemed to conflict with the central idea of the Gospel, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners and all who would receive Him. Limiting this unpardonable sin to a specific action would seem to contradict His forgiveness for our actions.



Blaspheming the Holy Spirit goes much deeper and is much more obvious than we think it is. We understand that not all people will be saved in the end. This fact should drive us to weep for the loss of human life; and may it never be said that I am the cause of someone's failure to come to Christ! Yet, the sad reality is that some will not see eternity. The witness of the Holy Spirit and the things truly committed in the name of God will go intentionally ignored or, worse, be ascribed to demonic powers. This is the blaspheming of the Holy Spirit. The gift of God given by the sending of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit is tacitly rejected by the individual. Where there is no Holy Spirit there is no life.

While many of us may have at one point been scared of committing this sin, this fear oftentimes is a fairly good indicator that we are not. Those who have flatly rejected the Holy Spirit's saving grace are not concerned about their right standing with God. They are content to drift away while remaining entrenched in their life with no remorse or regret for the status of their soul. Their hearts have hardened and they no longer wish to receive the gift of eternal life. They sacrificed the gift of eternity for the temporary pride of self-idolatry.

However, we, as those seeking to follow Christ, should be on guard to recognize the hand of the Holy Spirit in our lives. There is not only an understanding that Jesus died on the cross for the sins of mankind, but also an understanding that we put those ideas into practice. Our lives reflect those that have been changed by a redeeming God, and the Holy Spirit is invited to take up residence in our heart. Whatever sins or struggles we face, we allow the Spirit of God to forcibly remove them from our lives and we rest in the saving grace of Jesus Christ. The hand of God will be forceful and strong; but it is, above all, loving and extended openly for His people to return to Him.

Discussion Questions

Read [Mark 3:20-35](#)

1. What reasons does Jesus' family give for trying to bring Him home? What were they observing in Him that lead them to be concerned? Were there any physical conditions that lead to their concern for Jesus?
2. Why did the Pharisees respond in the way they did regarding Jesus casting out a demon? What changes would occur to their way of life if Jesus were allowed to continue? How does this reveal their heart and motive?
3. What does it mean to blaspheme the Holy Spirit? How do you interpret this in the light of this passage? What does the Holy Spirit do in the lives of believers?
4. Jesus used the example of tying up a strongman. Who is the strongman in this parable? Why must he be tied up first? Who is tying him up? Where are we in this parable?
5. If we look honestly at our lives, which areas are we hesitant to release? What are the things that we want to cling to rather than let go?
6. Why does the process of sanctification often feel like a painful process? What is the outcome of making it through this process? Why does Jesus want to take us through this process?
7. How do we as Christians help each other through the process of sanctification and stepping into our new lives? How do we support one another through being sanctified?



About the Author.

Pastor Daniel Burton lives in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. In May 2015, Daniel graduated from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary with his Master of Divinity. It was here that he began to explore his passion for Theology and deeper exploration of the word of God. Daniel believes that, at its core, Theology should be fun. Check out more of his work at <http://thegospeloutpost.com>

