

# Mark

## Chapter Three

### Introduction

The devil is alive and well, and loose on planet earth!

The devil has been *defeated* by Jesus, but not yet *delivered* to his final *destiny*.

His defeat came at the Cross, at Calvary:

John 12:31 "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."

Colossians 2:15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in [the cross].

Defeated at the Cross, he awaits his final destiny:

He will be *cast* out of heaven in the midst of the future seven year, Great Tribulation,<sup>1</sup> *confined* to the bottomless pit for the one thousand year kingdom of heaven on earth,<sup>2</sup> then *consigned* to the Lake of Fire for all eternity.<sup>3</sup>

We live between the devil's defeat and his final destiny. During this time he is alive and well and loose on planet earth. The Apostle Paul calls him "the god of this world."<sup>4</sup> The Apostle Peter describes his activities as "...a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."<sup>5</sup> James, John, and Jude all speak of his continuing opposition to Christ and to Christians. Unbelievers are said to be "...taken captive by him to do his will."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Revelation 12:7-9

<sup>2</sup>Revelation 20:1-3

<sup>3</sup>Revelation 20:10

<sup>4</sup>2 Corinthians 4:4

<sup>5</sup>1 Peter 5:8

<sup>6</sup>2 Timothy 2:26

What we need is a biblical strategy to defy the devil and to deliver those held captive by him. What we need is in Mark chapter three!

Jesus tells the parable of the strong man and his house. The devil is the strong man, and his house is the world in which we live. It is the realm of sin and sickness, of disease, demons and death. The strong man's possessions are the people who are held captive by the devil. Jesus has bound the strong man and plundered his possessions; he has defeated the devil, making it possible for those held captive to be set free.

Jesus set captives free. He also commissioned His disciples to set captives free. *That includes you and I!* Jesus entered the strong man's house and plundered his goods; you and I are sent into the strong man's house to plunder his goods!

#1 Your Savior Entered The Strong  
Man's House And Plundered His Goods  
(3:7-12 & 3:20-30)

Thousands, perhaps even tens of thousands, of people were coming to Jesus.

Mark 3:7 ...Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea

Mark 3:8 and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him.

These multitudes had "heard how many things He was doing." You can understand this, because you live in small communities where, it seems, everyone "hears" what is going on! We need to ask ourselves: What do people hear? What do they hear about your life? What do they hear about our corporate life as a church? They ought to hear "how many things" Jesus is doing!!

Mark 3:9 So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him.

This would be a small lifeboat, what we would call a dinghy. When the crowds began to threaten His safety in their zeal to

approach Him, Jesus could stand in the dinghy, out from shore, and continue to minister.

In your serving the Lord, there are many dangers. The common strategy is to get burned out, then quit serving. Jesus shows you the correct strategy - Take precautions so you can go on serving the multitudes!

Disease and demons held the people captive. Jesus delivered them.

Mark 3:10 For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him.

Mark 3:11 And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God."

Mark 3:12 But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known.

The word translated "afflictions" in verse ten comes from a Greek word that described the whipping criminals received from the Romans. The idea here is that these people were being whipped and scourged by the devil. Disease is not always to be attributed to the direct activity of the devil; but, in this case, it was. Mark is showing you what it is like to be in the strong man's house.

There were many cases of demon possession in this multitude. People always wonder why we see so few cases of demon possession. I think what we see is far worse! The demons are called "unclean spirits." *Unclean* means morally vulgar and filthy. Our culture is largely morally vulgar and filthy. The effect of demons at large is today greater than the effect of demons possessing individuals.

Jesus warned the demons not to make Him known. Truth spoken by liars is always confusing. In today's cults, much of what is said is truth from God's Word, the Bible. But it is spoken by liars who either add to or subtract from the authority of God's Word and the deity of Jesus. The result is confusion that has many on the broad way to hell.

Skip down to verse twenty for a moment. In verses twenty through twenty-nine Jesus puts into perspective for you His ministry of deliverance.

Mark 3:20 Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

Mark 3:21 But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, "He is out of His mind."

We see at the end of this chapter that "His own people" were His mother and step-brothers and sisters. They thought He was working too hard. They thought that He was a religious fanatic who needed to slow down and live a more balanced life.

Many kinds of zeal are promoted and expected. Consider your zeal at a sporting event for an example..."Sports fan" is short for sports *fanatic!* If you have that same zeal for Jesus, you are considered "out of your mind."

The religious leaders went a step farther: They said Jesus was possessed by the devil!

Mark 3:22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons."

One of the meanings of "Beelzebub" is *ruler over the house of the demons*. They reasoned that Jesus had power over demons because He was possessed by their ruler.

In verses twenty-three through twenty-six, Jesus shows this accusation isn't even logical:

Mark 3:23 So He called them to Himself and said to them in parables: "How can Satan cast out Satan?"

Mark 3:24 "If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

Mark 3:25 "And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

Mark 3:26 "And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end."

Faced with a decision about Jesus, people say the stupidest things! Or they react with strong and resentful emotion towards you. Don't be too discouraged when people do this; remember, they are the devil's captives.

The scribes accused Jesus of being the ruler over the house of demons. Jesus uses this same image in the parable He tells:

Mark 3:27 "No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.

As we said earlier, the devil is the strong man and this world is his house. His possessions are people who are held captive by him - captives of sin, sickness, disease, demons and death. Instead of accusing Jesus of being this strong man, they should have seen in His ministry of deliverance that He had bound the strong man in order to release his captives! Jesus was plundering the devil's house.

This matter of "binding" the devil comes up in prayer and in preaching. The Bible says that the devil *was* bound, and that he *will* be bound! He *was* bound by Jesus in His earthly ministry; an angel from heaven *will* bind him after the Great Tribulation. Should we pray that he be bound today?

I think of the devil more in terms of boundaries than of binding! God has chosen, for His eternal purposes, to allow the devil to go on opposing the kingdom of heaven. God, though, sets clear boundaries, past which the devil cannot go. I see the devil as *bound* within God's *boundaries*. I have no need to bind the devil since he is already bound by God's boundaries.

The next words of Jesus about the unpardonable sin have caused considerable difficulty for believers:

Mark 3:28 "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter;

Mark 3:29 "but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation";

Mark 3:30 because they said, "He has an unclean spirit."

Notice that these men had not yet committed the unpardonable sin! Otherwise Jesus would never have warned them. By His own words, there is no use warning someone who has committed the unpardonable sin; that person is already beyond help. They cannot be forgiven.

What, then, is the "unpardonable sin?" It is against the Holy Spirit, Whose ministry is to testify about the Person and work of Jesus. The unpardonable sin is to ultimately and finally blaspheme the Holy Spirit's witness of Jesus. It is to ultimately and finally reject Jesus as Savior. When someone ultimately and finally rejects Jesus, there can be no hope of forgiveness. These scribes were on their way toward ultimately and finally rejecting the Lord. They were rejecting the Holy Spirit's witness by ascribing Christ's works to the devil.

It has been truly said that if you are worried about committing the unpardonable sin then you aren't committing it! Why not concentrate on these words of Jesus: "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter..." Instead of fear, marvel at His forgiveness!

Sin and sickness, disease, demons and death hold men captive in the strong man's house. Jesus entered the strong man's house, and He plundered his goods - setting the captives free. He expected then and He expects today that His disciples will do the same.

## #2 You Are Sent Into The Strong Man's House To Plunder His Goods (3:11-19 & 3:21-35)

You live between the devil's defeat and his final destiny. He has been judged at the Cross, but not yet cast down to earth, confined to the pit, or consigned to the flames of hell. He holds people in terrible bondage...But you can set the captives free!

Jesus appointed twelve men to go out and do what He Himself was doing - plunder the strong man's house. Their preaching and their power were in some ways unique; but, by the end of Mark's gospel, *all* disciples are commissioned to preach with power. While in some ways the apostles were unique, they were also examples for all disciples - examples of how to go about plundering the goods in the strong man's house!

Let's look briefly at the twelve apostles, then at their example for all disciples.

Mark 3:13 And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him.

Mark 3:14 Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach,

Mark 3:15 and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons:

Mark 3:16 Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter;

Mark 3:17 James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, "Sons of Thunder";

Mark 3:18 Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite;

Mark 3:19 and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house.

Twelve is a significant number. There were twelve tribes in Israel; now there were twelve apostles. This was the establishing of a new nation, a spiritual nation, of all those from all nations who would trust Jesus as Savior. The apostles would, by their preaching, establish the foundation of this new nation that we call the church:

Ephesians 2:19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

Ephesians 2:20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone,

Ephesians 2:21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

Ephesians 2:22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

I am always struck by Jesus' use of nicknames. Peter, the "Rock"; he was anything but stable when Jesus called him this. The "Sons of Thunder"; men with difficult dispositions.

Nicknames speak of intimacy and endearment. What would Jesus nickname *you*?

Mark, in verses thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen, tells you how these apostles were enabled by Jesus to go into the strong man's house and plunder his goods. It is the same enabling that Jesus makes available to all of His disciples; it is the same enabling available to you and I today. All around us people are held captive by the devil to do his will; we need to understand how to go into the strong man's house to set them free.

The first thing you are told is to *ascend the mountain*:

Mark 3:13 And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him.

Mark 3:14 Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him...

They "came" to Jesus "up on the mountain," and their most important priority was to simply "be with Him." Dr. Alan Redpath liked to talk about your devotional life in terms of making an ascent up a mountain, comparing the fortitude and determination of a Christian to that of a mountain climber. All of the witnesses who have gone before us testify that their secret devotional life is the secret of life!

*You are appointed to a mission:*

Mark 3:14 Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach,

Preaching the gospel is the mission of the Church, and we are each a part of its successful accomplishing. There are relatively few pilots in the Navy; yet the guys and gals in the Navy tell me that everyone works together to get those aircraft off the deck and into the air. Everyone is a part of each successful launch.

You are appointed to a mission that helps to spread the gospel. Look first at your calling. What are you? Are you a father? A mother? A son? A daughter? Do these as unto the Lord!

Then look at how Jesus has gifted you. Stir up your gifts!

*You have authority to minister:*

Mark 3:15 and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons:

The word translated "power" means *delegated authority*. The apostles had unique authority to preach infallibly, and to perform miracles. You, too, have authority:

Mark 16:17 "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;

Mark 16:18 "they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

All "those who believe" are authorized to minister in ways similar to the apostles. Again, many ask why we don't see more

healings, more exorcisms ...We do see them! How many are necessary for some people to be satisfied? God *is* sometimes pleased to have the sick recover; other times, He is glorified as we minister to them in their suffering. God empowers us to oppose the work of the devil and to set his captives free; just look at our own church. Many captives have been released over the years. They weren't demon possessed, but they were in terrible bondage to sin. Jesus has released them!

You have authority to minister. Pour out your life for others, and leave the results to God.

As the chapter closes, another of God's enablings is presented. The world all around you is the strong man's house, a place of sin and sickness, disease, demons and death. But within it *you* have a house - the household of faith.

*You are accepted as a member:*

Mark 3:31 Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him.

Mark 3:32 And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You."

Mark 3:33 But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?"

Mark 3:34 And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers!

Mark 3:35 "For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."

You are not alone in plundering the strong man's house! You are a member of God's household of faith. You have a huge family to support and encourage you.

Conclusion

You might still be wondering why we don't experience more of the kinds of things reported in the gospels. Why aren't more of the strong man's captives being delivered?

A large part of the answer to that question has to do with the sovereignty of God, with His eternal purposes.

But part of it might have to do with our own perspective. Churches have a natural tendency to look inward, to focus on themselves and on their own needs. While it is essential that we build up the church, looking only inward leads to problems.

We need to really understand that all around us there are people who are taken captive by the devil, who need to be delivered. God does not call those people to come to church; He tells the church to go to those people! The needs of the captives all around us should keep us looking outward.

I believe that we will experience more of the kinds of things reported in the gospels when we maintain the proper perspective. We are a household of faith within the strong man's house. People outside are perishing; our own "needs" are often less significant.

Let's ask God to renew our perspective!