

HOW TO BIND THE STRONG MAN

Watchman Nee:

(The following is a booklet by Jessie Penn-Lewis. It was published by The "Overcomer" Office, Leicester, England.)

(Matt. xii. 29.)

"And He was casting out a demon which was dumb. And it came to pass, when the demon was gone out, the dumb man spake; and the multitudes marvelled." (Luke xi. 14, R.V.m.)

It was upon this occasion that the Lord Jesus in answer to the charges of the Pharisees, said: "How can one enter into the house of the strong man...except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house." This is not the only place where the Lord plainly described a man as a "house" or habitation of the evil one. In the same chapter He speaks of the unclean spirit cast out, and, finding no other habitation, saying, "I will return into my house," and because no other had taken his place, he is able to "enter in and dwell there" with seven others more evil than himself.

The "strong man" is Satan who possesses, or works in human beings by means of his wicked spirits. Satan is as clearly a person as the Lord Jesus Christ is a Person! The Lord Jesus Christ dwells in those He redeems by His Spirit, Who imparts to them the very life of the Son of God, thus making them children of God. In the same way the prince of darkness possesses or controls the fallen race of Adam (1 John v. 19, R.V.) The Apostle says he is "the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience" (Ephes. ii. 2), and the Apostle John emphatically says, "He that doeth sin is of the devil" (1 John iii. 8)—is a partaker of his nature; whilst James writes, "jealousy and faction...is earthly, natural, DEVILISH" (James iii. 14, 15 R.V.m.)

Satan is a prince—the head of an hierarchy of evil—ruling countries by means of his dignitaries (Dan. x), and entering into, or controlling, the fallen race of Adam by means of multitudes of wicked spirits. The margin of the R.V. gives the right word—demons.

We must clearly distinguish between Satan as "the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience," and the actual inhabiting of men by spirits of evil. In the one it is the prince of the power of the air influencing and working in men through the lusts of the flesh, and of the thoughts, and in the other it is a wicked spirit—or it can be many (Matt. xii. 45)—entering in, and manifesting direct Satanic control of the man.

The Lord describes the strong man's attitude when in possession of the man. "FULLY ARMED" HE GUARDS HIS COURTS, and keeps his goods in peace (Luke xi. 21)! How true this is of all who are in the kingdom of darkness! Paul the Apostle describes one way in which the strong man guards his house, when he writes: "The god of this world hath blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel should not dawn upon them" (2 Cor. iv. 4, R.V.m.)

Until we recognize the strong man "fully armed" at the back of all darkness of thought, and blindness to the Gospel, we shall not do much toward bringing men out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And until we know how to take heed to the Lord's warning and "FIRST bind the strong man," the attempts we make to "spoil his goods" will only enrage him, and enable him to strengthen his armour, and guard his palace in peace.

But there is a "STRONGER THAN HE!" The Lord says, "When a `Stronger than he shall come upon him,' then `He taketh from him his whole armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils'" (Luke xi. 22).

There is no difficulty in recognizing the "Stronger than he!" The prophet Isaiah described Him as one with a face more marred than any man's—a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He depicts Him as a "lamb led to the slaughter," and says that "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb...He opened not His mouth." This One—a Lamb—would "divide the spoil with the `strong'..." (Isa. liii.) The "Stronger" than the strong man is the God Man manifested as the Lamb of Calvary. The Lord Christ was the "Stronger than he" before He went to Calvary! He cast out the spirits with His word. Unclean spirits fell down before Him, crying out, "Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Matt. viii. 29). But not until He went to Calvary's Cross did He make it possible to take away the "armour" whereby the strong man keeps his goods in peace. These "goods," in human beings held by the "strong man," consist among other things of a man's love of sin (John iii. 19); his enmity against the God Who loves him (Rom. viii. 7); the lusts of the flesh and of the mind (Ephes. ii. 3); the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life (1 John ii. 16).

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At Calvary the Lamb laid down His life to ransom the captives of the "strong man," and through death bring to nought the works of the devil (Heb. ii. 14). He carried the sins of the sinner—the "goods"—and the sinner himself, to the Cross, so as to take away the "armour" wherein the strong man trusted. On the Cross He provides a way whereby a man's love of sin and his enmity to the God he has rebelled against can be removed through the substitutionary death of his Redeemer. There, as he moment by moment appropriates the death of Christ as the death-blow to his old man (Rom. vi. 6) the desires of the flesh and of the mind are experimentally crucified, and the love of the world, with the vainglory of earth, swept away. Yea, in His own Person the Saviour carried the sinner to the Cross with Him (Rom. vi. 6), redeeming the captive from the "strong man" and taking the "goods" out of the strong man's power!

All who thus know the way of victory through the Cross are then sent forth by the Conquering Lord to deliver other captives from their bonds; to "BIND the strong man," and then "spoil his goods"! Breathing into them the very same Spirit of the Lamb which led Him to Calvary, He says: "Behold I send you forth as lambs...I have given you AUTHORITY TO TREAD upon serpents, and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall in any wise hurt you" (Luke x. 3, 19).

Servant of the King, thou art sent forth by the Deliverer to do His works! (John xiv. 12). He bids you do what He did! "First bind the strong man" ere you point the captives to Calvary, where the strong man's armour wherein he trusts shall be taken from him.

But how? We must first see that the "strong man" has no "armour" covering us wherein he may trust, and for this we need to lay hold of the utmost deliverance from sin and Satan which the Lord wrought out on Calvary for us. Crucified with Christ we have died to sin (See Rom. vi. 1 to 13 for the fullest light on this.)—for sin is the strongest armour wherein the strong man trusts, for all sin is of the devil. "How can Satan cast out Satan?" (Mark iii. 23) said the Lord. If Satan has any hold of you, servant of Christ, you cannot deliver others from his power. Crucified with Christ we have died to sin, and died to the world lying in the evil one (1 John v. 19). But this blessed fact of faith needs carrying out in the keenest practice by constant action of the will in refusing to "let sin reign" in our "mortal bodies." To tamper with sin of any kind will quench the power of the Holy Spirit in us, by which alone we can "bind" the operations of the "strong man" around us. The believer must, therefore, make an entire cleavage with sin on the ground of Calvary (Rom. vi. 6-11), and set his choice to serve God at all costs.

As we account ourselves crucified with Christ, and constantly refuse to let sin reign, the whole armour wherein the strong man trusts is withdrawn from him. The all-conquering life of the Risen Lord can then enable us to triumph over the Adversary. Joined to Him in spirit, we are brought into vital union with the