

Whose Side Are You On?

Jesus' Power and Authority are Unmatched

The Greatest Opportunity Series – Part 8

Mk 3:22-35

May 11-12, 2024

Introduction

- **Understanding Power Structures¹** – It's a **modern concept** to be arrogant enough to think that **we are** most important and that we are the **ultimate authority in our reality**. For thousands and thousands of years, mankind knew instinctively that there were forces beyond us, outside of us, above us, that were moving things far too great for us. That realm we call the supernatural realm, meaning outside of our natural systems. It wasn't until the **Enlightenment period** that mankind shifted into the general consensus that we, people, are the highest authority. So, it **begs the questions: Are we? Does it matter?**
- **It Matters** – it matters **a lot**. **Whoever is in charge is ultimately pulling the strings. Whether that authority is good or bad makes all the difference.**
- **Visible or Invisible** – the **most brilliant forms** of authority are those that guide without being overtly seen. Why? Because **an unseen authority is an unchecked authority**. In other words, if you don't know it's there, you won't resist it and it has free reign to do what it wants to do with you.
- **Motive** – motivation of an authority is of utmost importance. If it is a **good** entity, then **blessings** flow. If it is a **bad** entity, **damage** ensues. If the authority structure isn't visible then lots of things are happening without our knowledge and that could be **for our betterment or our destruction**.
- **Options & War for Human Hearts** – We know, according to the Bible that there are seemingly only **two superior powers to us**. Although they are **not equal** by any stretch of the imagination, they are both superior to us and that makes them **significant**. Those powers are **God and Satan. In reality there is the Supreme Deity that is God, and a created being, Satan.**
- **Actual vs. Acting** – **God is always in charge. Period.** He is the actual authority over all things. He is the ultimate string puller. However, **He allows an amazing latitude for governance in His jurisdiction**. In other words, He gives a lot of room for other authorities to act underneath His. What this means is that although He is ultimately in charge, other authorities may be in charge of us, and we may be in charge of things we have no business being in charge of.
- **The War for Human Hearts** - God has allowed Satan to have tremendous authority and influence in this earthly world. **In the great war for our hearts, God has limited Himself to fight on a much more even ground against Satan. Whoever we empower to influence our lives the most has most of our heart.** One desires our best and the other desires our worst.
- **Power to do real things** – One other important note to make is that **our authority is the power by which we do real things**. Since the **supernatural reality is more real and more valuable than our visible earthly reality, only power that flows from there can get anything real done**. In other words, all the things that ultimately matter are shaped by power and

¹ See endnote about 'Who's in Charge'

authority from another realm. For **example: love** isn't from here. It's not simply neurons. It's a **spiritual reality**. Relational connection, human life, meaning, value, are the same way. The transformation or salvation of a person cannot be done by earthly methods, it must be catalyzed by another dimension. **Therefore, anything that we do that has lasting impact, or matters, comes from superior powers to us.**

- **Choices create alignment** – in the current earthly sphere, **choices create alignment in a significant way**. What we focus on, what we allow, what we follow, what we worship, what we encourage, what we submit to, what we value, determines who our ACTING authority is.

Align Yourself With the RIGHT Authority

- **Recap** – Last Week **Pastor Brian** told the story of how **Jesus' ministry so massive** due to His healing and casting demons that **crowds** were pressing him to the point that he had to preach from a boat so he wouldn't be crushed. He also told us the story of Jesus **selecting 12 Apostles** out of his many disciples after a long all-night prayer session seeking the Father's direction. It was going to be these 12 that were going to take over the entire ministry in a few short years.
 - **He challenged us** by saying that **everyone worships**, there's no such thing as not worshipping. The only question is what or who are we worshipping. In a similar way he asked: **who are our teachers** who are shaping our lives?
 - **He challenged us** to consider **whether we are living out our discipleship** of Christ instead of just thinking good thoughts.
 - **The Essence of discipleship:** He explained that the essence of discipleship back in the days of the Apostles is the same as today: **We spend time with Jesus; we share His good news to those around us; we oppose evil wherever it may be found.**
- **Context** – **Jesus is famous**. Jesus is known for power and preaching. This **rattled the current authorities**. They are coming at him again today. **What's it this time?**
 - **Turn in your Bibles to Mark**, chapter **3**, verse **22** -

Lesson

- **Them's Fightin' Words**
 - **Religious leaders call Jesus demonic**
 - **Mark 3:22²** – *“And the scribes who came down [in elevation] from [the southern city of] Jerusalem were saying, “He [Jesus] is possessed by Beelzebul [Satan],” and [they were saying] “by the prince of demons [the devil] he casts out the demons.”³*

² The ESV Combo account I created has been parsed out to each corresponding area for study. The whole story of this attack on Jesus is told in Matthew 12:22-32; Mark 3:22-30; Luke 11:14-23.

Scriptural Color Key: Luke is black; Matthew is orange; Mark is green

³ A United Enemy? (Demons casting demons) – Pagan/Satanic/ Witchcraft methods would tell you that you can cast out demons with demons. They would suggest that you grab a more powerful demon and you can cast out a lesser demon. I don't know if this is true. Although they say that it works, I always doubt the 'Father of Lies' and can't trust anything his worshipers believe. I'm sure that it looks like something is happening and I'm sure there is a difference, but don't you think that Jesus knows what He's talking about? Perhaps there is a rearranging of things in the demonic, so that if the person is going to invoke a more significant demon to cast out a lesser, then Satan is going to make that trade up. Sure he will. But that doesn't mean that it's "cast out" and things are better. It means that there was a switch and the condition is worse. When Jesus casts, it is for the detriment of the enemy's camp, to wreck what he's trying to do in a person or in a scenario (area).

- **The Scribes** – who are they again? They are the **experts in the Mosaic law whose job it was to assure that the Jewish people were tracking on the heart and will of God as revealed in His Word** (revelation). Unfortunately, they were anti-Jesus.
 - **Came down from Jerusalem⁴** – that’s a long way away. Jesus is in the North, right? How do you ‘come down’ when you are going north on a map? It’s **elevation**. They are coming ‘down’ to try to shut this famous guy down. It’s not risen up the chain to the big dogs from the capital and holy city of Jerusalem. The power center.
 - **Why did they show up at this particular time?** – if we look at **Matthew and Luke’s accounting** of this story we see that **Jesus had just healed a mute demon-possessed man** (which was deemed impossible by the ancient Jewish people due to believing that someone had to self-proclaim them out) and it caused the Jewish people to say, ‘**could this be the Son of David**’ (a reference to the Messiah). They were **triggered by the Messianic references** toward a man they were already against and wanted to shut it down.
 - **ESV combo account** – *“Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke and saw, and all the people were amazed/marveled, and said, “Can this be the Son of David?”*
- **They were saying, ‘He is possessed by Beelzebul’⁵** – Beelzebul means Satan, so they are saying He is demon-possessed by Satan himself!
 - **ESV Combo account** - *“But when the Pharisees and the scribes who came down from Jerusalem heard it, they said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul. He only casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons,” while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven.”*
 - **What’s Beelzebul mean?⁶** – Here’s the weird thing, there is **no use of Beelzebul in Jewish writing**, so we are guessing as to what it means. Perhaps it was a local descriptor or they were making it up for the situation to insult Jesus as well as tie Him to Satan. **Be’el means ‘lord of’ something**. For example: Beelzebub means ‘lord of the flies’. Zebul doesn’t mean anything so it could be a mistranslation or misstated word. It could mean ‘Beelzeboul’ which would mean either ‘Baal the prince’ or ‘lord of the temple’. So it’s all complicated. The only key things that we know is that **Be’el is a form of Ba’al**,

⁴ “The arrival of a delegation of legal specialists from Jerusalem suggests that the Galilean mission of Jesus had attracted the critical attention of the Sanhedrin. The scribes know that Jesus has a considerable following and that he possesses the power to expel demons. It is possible that they were official emissaries from the Great Sanhedrin who came to examine Jesus’ miracles and to determine whether Capernaum should be declared a “seduced city,” the prey of an apostate preacher. Such a declaration required a thorough investigation made on the spot by official envoys in order to determine the extent of the defection and to distinguish between the instigators, the apostates and the innocent.” William Lane, NICNT

⁵ The first charge is echoed in John four times: Chs. 7:20; 8:48, 52; 10:20.

⁶ “The name “Beelzebul” occurs in no other Jewish writing, which may indicate that it was a passing colloquialism for a demon-prince. This is suggested both by the scribal reference to “the prince of demons” and by the general reference to possession by an unclean spirit in verse 30.” William Lane, NICNT

Who’s Beelzebul? – It’s Satan. Commentaries argue about how this name got in here and how it became popular, but the answer seems to something like: in the Hebrew there was a Canaanite deity called Baal (big deal in Philistine culture – city of Ekron specifically) which started a lot of pagan names for demons an Satan with Baal, or Beel in it. It could have been that when they were making fun of Baal and called him ‘Lord of the Flies’ (Beelzebub) that it stuck. Or the name is actually Beelzeboul which would mean ‘lord of the dwelling place/temple,’ or ‘Baal, the prince’, although no one can corroborate either one. Regardless it means ‘lord’ of something (baal means master/lord), and it was applied to Satan, the king/chief of the demons. (other names for Satan are: Devil, Belial, Beliar, Mastema & Azazel).

which is an ancient pagan false god that seems to be **Satan's primary manifestation in the Old Testament**. So we know they were linking Satan to Jesus. Secondly, we know that it means 'lord' of something, indicating authority. So, **we are left with demonic authority**.

- **Isn't this a big accusation?**⁷ – It's huge. They are not just insulting Jesus and trying to get the crowd to distance themselves from Him (which they were), but they were actually attributing His power and thereby His authority and motivation to being demonic in nature, or anti-God. This is incredibly dangerous. They were calling God, demonic.
- **Why would they say this?** – They had **two primary reasons**: 1.) They believed that he was **blasphemous for suggesting that He was God incarnate/Messiah**. In other words, they thought He was working for Satan to **deceive and trick** people into thinking He was the Messiah. 2.) **He clearly operated with supernatural power** that was undeniable, and there are **only two sources of power**: God and Satan. If they didn't think that He was on God's side, He was clearly (in their mind) on Satan's side.
- **By the prince of demons, he casts out the demons** – What does this mean? It means that the **demons are obeying Him because He is a higher authority than them in the demonic realm**. In other words, a higher ranking demon is telling the smaller demons to go away for a greater purpose. Satan, who seems to be the boss of the other demons, can tell them to go away. Therefore Jesus is operating in the authority of Satan.

- **Parable #1**

- **A House Divided Can't Stand**

- **Mark 3:23-26** – *“And he called them [the scribes] to him and said to them in parables [analogies], “How can Satan [accuser]⁸ cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom⁹ is divided*

⁷ “By their accusations the scribes brand Jesus’ work as unlawful, and consign him to the category of a magician. The related charge of sorcery became widespread and is attested both in the Talmud and early Patristic literature.” NICNT

⁸ “In the Old Testament Satan, or rather ‘the satan’ (The adversary), is chief prosecutor in the heavenly court, and when he fills this role he does so in the presence of God and his angels (Job 1:6-2:7; Zech 3:1-5)...It should be understood that ‘Stan’ is not primarily a proper name. It is a Hebrew common noun meaning ‘adversary’. When it appears in the Old Testament preceded by the definite article, it means ‘the adversary’. In the story of Job, for example, where Satan (better, ‘the satan’) is said to have represented himself at a session of the heavenly court (Job 1:6), the expression means ‘the adversary’ or, as we might say, ‘counsel for the prosecution’. This is the regular function of this unpleasant character in the OT. Every court must have a prosecutor, but this prosecutor enjoys his work so much that, when there are not sufficient candidates for prosecution, he goes out of his way to tempt people to go wrong, so that he may have the pleasure of prosecuting them (cf. 1 Chron 21:1). His role as tempter is thus secondary to his role as prosecutor. The Greek work corresponding to Satan is diabolos, meaning ‘accuser’ (it is the word from which our ‘devil’ is derived)...The downfall of Satan may be regarded as the decisive victory of the campaign; the campaign itself goes on. Hence Jesus’ further words to the exultant disciples: ‘I have given you authority to tread upon serpent and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall hurt you’ (Luke 10:19). The ‘serpents and scorpions’ represent the foes of evil: thanks to the work of Christ, his people can trample them underfoot and gain the victory over them. The imagery may be borrowed from Psalm 91:13, where those who trust in God are promised that they ‘will tread on the lion and the adder’. Paul uses a similar expression when he tells the Christians in Rome that, if they are ‘wise as to what is good and guileless as to what is evil,’ and the God of peace will soon crush Satan under their feet (Rom 16:19-20). The wording here harks back not so much to Psalm 91 as to the story of man’s first disobedience, where the serpent of Eden is told that its offspring will have its head crushed by the offspring of the woman (Gen 3:15).” F. F. Bruce, *Hard Sayings of Jesus*.

⁹ Understanding “Stan’s” actual power (Satan vs. God & the War of Hearts) – Satan is not an equal superpower that God is struggling against, he is a created being, albeit beautiful and the pinnacle of God’s creation, he is limited and not even close to being a challenge for God. Then why is it called a war? If it was a skirmish, then let’s call it what it is, why make it out to be a dramatic war? Because it is a war, but it has little to do with the actual power of Satan. It has to do with winning a war of hearts and how big of a deal we make Satan. For example, let’s say that I am on one team (I get to be God on this one), and a guy named Stan (playing for Satan) is on the other and our job is win over the hearts of Bridgeway. I could be the biggest, baddest, most perfect guy in the world, but if you empower Stan and believe him that he’s the big, bad guy

against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end.”

- **ESV Combo account** - *But he, knowing their thoughts, called them to him and said to them, in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and casts out Satan, he is divided against himself, how then will his kingdom stand? He cannot stand, but is coming to an end.”*
- **He called them to him** – Jesus is going to confront these vicious rumors head on. They were going around talking about Him behind His back. It was time for another public showdown.
- **He said to them in parables** – remember why Jesus used parables? Because **stories are more powerful than a list of facts**. Facts tell you points, while stories paint a picture that people can reflect back on in their mind. It tells a ‘world of knowledge’ in one sitting.
- **How can Satan cast out Satan?** – Jesus is calling them to think through what they are saying. **How can an authority undermine itself? It wouldn’t make any sense.**
- **If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand¹⁰** – **An internal division in a kingdom will ruin it. It will crumble because there is no integrity to it. There can be no trust to it. There can be no structure to it. It would fall like a house of cards. That’s why unity is so critical in the House of God. If there is backbiting, or undermining, it will undo whatever has been done.**
- **If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand** – the same is true of a house for a family. If they are divided, not only can they not advance, but they are being torn down even as they exist. They will become less than they were.
- **If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end¹¹** - Jesus brings it back home to the main point and spells it out in case they aren’t tracking on it. If Satan is fighting demons, then his kingdom is

with all the treats, then what am I to do? You have empowered him, not me. You have made him a ‘god/idol’, not me. And yet, now in my struggle for your hearts, he is a true and powerful enemy.

What Kingdom does Satan Have? – It’s a bit confusing as to what Satan actually rules here on earth. We know that he was once in heaven and then was cast down to earth and has been here ever since (although the book of Job indicates that for a time he was showing up in heaven for roll call – unk if he still does that). But as far as his kingdom here, it’s muddy. We know that prior to the arrival of Jesus on earth Satan had a ton of power (although one of the key reasons Jesus came was to destroy the works of the devil per 1 Jn 3:8). We know Satan had major rule because of the desert temptation (Mt 4:8-11) where Satan was able to offer to Jesus ‘all the kingdoms of the world and their glory’. It wouldn’t have been a true temptation if Satan didn’t really have that authority to give it (the Father would have notified the Son of that fact). Again in John 14:30 Jesus called the devil, ‘the ruler of this world’ (who had no hold on sinless Jesus btw). But then we see things shifted when Jesus Christ died on the cross. Jesus said that the ‘ruler of this world will be cast out’ and will be ‘judged’, speaking of the coming cross (Jn 12:30-33; 16:7-11). It seems that the cross was a striking blow that broke the full hold Satan had on the world (Col 2:13-15 spell it out – Jesus nailed the record of debt we had to the cross and disarmed “the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.”) and began to carve out portions of the world that were now under the kingdom of God (once again). Later references to Satan call him, ‘the god of this world who has blinded the minds of unbelievers,’ which indicates that his realm is now only with non-believers in full reign. However, he’s still down here. In Revelation 2:13 it says that Satan has his home and throne down here still. (Mt 4:8-11; Jn 12:30-33; 14:28-31; 16:7-11; Col 2:13-15; 2 Cor 4:3-4; Rev 2:13; 1 Jn 3:8-10)

¹⁰ “If what you say is true there exists the impossible circumstance that Satan is destroying his own realm. For it is self-evident that a kingdom divided against itself will fall, while a household divided against itself cannot be established.” NICNT

¹¹ “If your accusation is factual, then Satan has become divided in his allegiance. This should mean that he has become powerless. *Yet this is clearly not so.* Satan remains strong, and this fact exposes the fallacy of your charge.” NICNT

divided. There is no way that he can withstand that, but it would all start to fall apart. Why would he do that? He wouldn't.

- **Parable #2**

- **The Binding of the Strongman**

- **Mark 3:27** – *“But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.”*

- **READ: Important ESV comb account¹²** - *“For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore, they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God, by the Spirit of God, that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? No one can. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. Then indeed he may plunder his house.”*

- **The finger of God¹³** - This phrase that **Luke** uses in his gospel account is a reference to the **Moses and the plagues story**. At the beginning of Moses' miracle evidence to Pharaoh, the black arts magicians in Egypt were able to duplicate many of the signs, until it came to a certain limit. When they hit the limit of their magic, they said, 'this is the finger of God' doing this, meaning this is beyond us and it's from the ultimate God above. Jesus is using this phrase that they would know to point out that **it was truly the power of the Almighty that He was wielding**.

- **No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods** – Although this seems like a fancy analogy with a certain character called the strongman, like we use to talk about the big dude in the circus, it's actually a very practical and

¹² Color-coded **ESV comb account** - *For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore, they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God, by the Spirit of God, that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? No one can. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. Then indeed he may plunder his house.*

¹³ Jewish exorcist techniques – much more magic and incantations which apparently God allowed due to the rebellion of the leaders barring the people from proper leadership of God (God still loved the bound and oppressed people so He would set them free). They would invoke the name of God, which sometimes worked. Ancient sources describe ancient Jewish exorcism customs such as: using an alleged magic living root in the ground that can kill or free from demons; burning fish liver and heart to scare the demons away; etc.

The Finger of God Story – The phrase 'finger of God' was pulled from the story of Moses and the plagues in Exodus 8:16-19. Moses confronted Pharaoh about the imprisonment of the Jews and God let him do mighty miracles/plagues to prove his point. At first it was turning the Nile to blood, which Pharaoh's black magic magicians duplicated. Then it was calling frogs up into the land, which they duplicated again. But then the miracle was turning dust into gnats (that's a creation miracle of life – which Satan doesn't have the power over), and the magicians couldn't duplicate that miracle (and stopped trying on the rest, they knew who they were up against). The magicians described what they saw as 'the finger of God.' It became then a Jewish way of describing the active power of God on earth.

How Jesus' 'technique' was Different – Jesus' style was not with any incantations or fancy words. It was not with magic or formulas. It was not calling out to God in a distant way. It was clean, clear, authoritative and direct from Him. He didn't have to invoke the name of God, He is God. What He says goes. In the same way we, as believers, have the indwelling Holy Spirit now, so when the Holy Spirit says 'go' the demons have to flee. It's not about drama. Drama usually comes with lack of authority (although Jesus did have a couple situations that got a little more dramatic and there were some sticky demons here and there).

The kingdom of God is here – Jesus is warning the religious leaders that God is present. Though veiled, He is here and they are not engaging with Him rightly and they are dishonoring the true King of the world. The evidence is there, they better straighten up.

simple analogy. If you want to break into the house of a guy who is tough and could harm you, what do you need to do first?

- **Unless he first binds the strong man¹⁴ – Tie the dude up!** Otherwise, he is going to mess you up. You can't just talk this guy down, he isn't going to sit there and take it while you steal from him. **He is going to defend his property** and you may be injured or killed in the process.
- **Then indeed he may plunder his house – Once he is limited or incapacitated then you can do what you came there to do.** Odd to get robbery advice from Jesus.
- **Where did this analogy come from?** – It's from **Isaiah 49**. Isaiah is writing down the words of **God** who **is assuring Israel that He is an able deliverer and that when it's time he will set free even the captives of the mighty for He is mightier, Almighty.**
 - **Isaiah 49:24-26** – *“Can the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of a tyrant be rescued? ²⁵ For thus says the LORD: “Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken, and the prey of the tyrant be rescued, for I will contend with those who contend with you, and I will save your children. ²⁶ I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine. Then all flesh shall know that I am the LORD your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.””*
 - **Who, what, where, when & How?** – **The strong man is Satan, who runs a kingdom on earth. He binds/traps/enslaves people** (via: sin, sickness, possession & death) and **demons help** him do that. **God has bound him in such a way as to allow his kingdom to be ‘plundered’ by His people (soldiers).**
 - **When did this happen?** 1.) the desert temptation?, 2.) the coming of Christ?, 3.) the Big battle of heaven? 4.) The cross and resurrection? 5.) final shut down point in end times? Yes. In a sense all of this is true to varying degrees. **What Jesus is pointing out HERE is that since He's shown up on earth He is limiting Satan's power (partial binding) in certain spheres. What He is alluding to is that in a short amount of time he is going to die on the cross and render Satan and his camp neutralized to a SIGNIFICANT degree, especially in how they deal with His people.**
 - **The Stronger one than the Strong Man – Jesus is the stronger one that defeats the strong man.** We must always remember that, **‘greater is He that is in us (Jesus) than he that is in the world (Satan)’.
 - 1 Jn 4:4 - “Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”**
- **How Bound is Satan and His Forces?** – **Post-cross, the main defense of the enemy is broken, and the rest is skirmishes and maintenance (Satan's**

¹⁴ “With verse 27 he directs himself also to the accusation that he is demon-possessed. Satan is the strong man whose strength is evidenced in the enslavement of men through sin, possession, disease and death; the demons are his servants in this destructive work. He is like a champion who exercises his sovereignty in the sphere of death. Only one who is stronger than he can enter into his realm, bind him and plunder his goods. This Jesus has done. The expulsion of demons is nothing less than a forceful attack on the lordship of Satan. Jesus' ability to cast out demons means that one stronger than Satan has come to restrain his activity and to release the enslaved. The heart of Jesus' mission is to confront Satan and to crush him on all fields, and in the fulfilment of his task he is conscious of being the agent of irresistible power.” NICNT

left with rebellious, guerilla & terrorist-type warfare) until the final shut down happens when Christ returns. Until then Satan is allowed to retain whatever crown the world is willing to give Him (again, see the discussion on the war of hearts). Jesus will consistently invade those and break up strongholds to keep him off balance and not let him gain too much ground, but won't ultimately shut him down until the end. Jesus is still using him as a foil to His plan (i.e. another option: good vs. evil; tree of knowledge v. tree of life; right v. wrong; selfish vs. surrender, etc.) therefore he is still useful and remains. The minute that Jesus is done with him, he's gone.

- John 12:30-33 – “Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³ He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.”

- **What is Jesus stealing from Satan's house? – what could Jesus possibly want from Satan's house?** What's the plunder that He's stealing? It's **people**. Satan's possessions are **enslaved** people. Jesus wants those and sets them free.

- **The Unforgivable Sin**

- **The Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit**

- **Mark 3:28-30** – “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin” — ³⁰ for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

- **ESV combo account¹⁵** – “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. Therefore, truly, I tell you, every sin (all sins) and whatever blasphemies they utter will be forgiven the children of man (people), but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³² And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven (never has forgiveness), either in this age or in the age to come but is guilty of an eternal sin - for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”

- **Truly, I say to you** – This is where Jesus is getting their attention that He's about to say something important that they need to pay close attention to.
- **All sins will be forgiven the children of man** – This is part of a warning but for those of us who love God it's actually a really freeing and comforting statement. It talks about the **extremity of grace**.

¹⁵ Color-coded **ESV combo account** – “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. *Therefore, truly, I tell you, every sin (all sins) and whatever blasphemies they utter will be forgiven the children of man (people), but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.* ³² *And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven (never has forgiveness), either in this age or in the age to come but is guilty of an eternal sin - for they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”*”

- Whatever blasphemies they utter** – Blasphemy¹⁶ is an elastic word and concept. It initially and most basically means to say something untrue about God on purpose to insult Him. But the first use of it seems to be in the 10 commandments when it says not to profane/misuse/take the name of God in vain. Vain can imply ‘empty or meaningless’, which is rereferring to always needing to use God’s name with respect and honor. It can also mean to say something ‘false or deceptive’. Official public blasphemy was a capital offense in ancient Israel (Lev 24:10-23). Even today Jews won’t utter the name Yahweh (tetragrammaton) or write God (they write G-d), to avoid the chance of blasphemy. The New Testament also talks a lot about blasphemy.¹⁷ Jesus was ultimately killed on the cross due to the charge of blasphemy (Mt 26:65-66; Jn 19:7). Within the concept of blasphemy are the following concepts. Although not every one of them has to be used to make it blasphemy, portions of these and mixtures of these give you the idea:

 - Insult, act unholy
 - Dishonor, lack of respect, treat/esteem lightly, belittle
 - To curse, defy, slander, malign
 - To treat with contempt (see no value in, despise & feel superior to)
 - Say something untrue or deceptive – false representation
 - Taking a false oath in the name of God
 - To renounce dedication to (1 Tim 1:13)
- But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit** – **How is blasphemy different** when it’s done against the Holy Spirit, than against the Father and the Son? Although no good answer has ever been provided for me, there are a couple of things we can glean from this: **1.) The Father, Son & Holy Spirit are not simply the same person** wearing different role-hats. They are distinct persons of the Godhead with different roles and interactions with mankind (even though they are of the same essence as ONE GOD). **2.) Their distinctness leads to different relationship and interactions:** The Father was deeply known by the Jews. He was seen as the Creator and Sustainer. They would lash out at Him for what they perceived was injustice. That would be considered blasphemy. The Son, Jesus was knew to the Jews in the New Testament. They didn’t know what to do with Him and in their ignorance they blasphemed Him continually. But **the Holy Spirit is the closest representative to the very essence of God in their mind.** He was the deepest emanation that didn’t have a lot of human trappings around Him (e.g. physical descriptions, images in people’s minds, voice that Moses heard, physical interactions and manifestations, etc.). Therefore, in a way they would have thought of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God, **the core of God. To blaspheme that is to blaspheme the essence of God as a whole** (not judging what He does). **There is no deeper rejection of God than this.**

¹⁶ See Lexham Bible Dictionary for more information

¹⁷ The Lexham Bible Dictionary notes that the Greek word for blasphemy (blasphemeo) is used 56x’s.

- **Never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin¹⁸** – This is a weird phrase because there is no indicator, no comment anywhere that suggests that something would be unforgiveable in an eternal way. So, whatever this is it's of the highest seriousness. It is due to this seriousness that scholars have done their best to reason out what this could mean. It tends to fly in the face of all the extreme grace and elimination of sin scriptures in the Bible (e.g. no stain that God can't get out). Their reasoning is that there is only ONE reason that God wouldn't forgive or cleanse something and that's unbelief/rejection of the Savior. We'll talk about that in a moment.
- **For they were saying, 'He has an unclean spirit.'¹⁹** – To me this is a critical piece of the puzzle. The **CONTEXT** of Jesus referring to the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is that they just blasphemed Him by **saying He was demon-possessed**. In other words, **it was a direct rejection and attack on His nature that catalyzed this conversation. It was not a disconnected theoretical conversation about not believing in Christ**. So, it seems somehow it has to do with attributing God's to Satan. In other words, **it's calling what is Godly, demonic, or saying what is ultimate good, ultimate bad. It's a reverse of reality as well as an insult and defying of authority of God**.
- **Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit²⁰** – Understanding this is difficult and super scary sometimes. Let's see if we can break down this concept to not only understand it, but to be more accurate and healthy in our thinking about it:
 - **The Revelation of the Holy Spirit at that time** – We must remember that **Jesus was talking pre-Pentecost**, therefore the concept of the Holy Spirit was different than it is now. Although the **Holy Spirit** is the same, **He operates differently** post-Pentecost. So what does that mean? In the ancient Jewish mindset the Holy Spirit primarily brought God's truth to man as well as helping them understand it. This would mean that **the religious leaders were being held accountable for blocking the revelation of God's word to God's people by the leaders and they were getting busted for it to some degree**.

¹⁸ "Jesus affirms that all the sins of men are open to forgiveness, with one fearful exception. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit forever removes a man beyond the sphere where forgiveness is possible. This solemn warning must be interpreted in the light of the specific situation in which it was uttered. **Blasphemy is an expression of defiant hostility toward God**. The scribes were thoroughly familiar with this concept under the rubric "the profanation of the Name," which generally denoted speech which defies God's power and majesty. The scribal tradition considered blasphemy no less seriously than did Jesus. "The Holy One, blessed be he, pardons everything else, but on profanation of the Name [i.e. blasphemy] he takes vengeance immediately." This is the danger to which the scribes exposed themselves when **they attributed to the agency of Satan the redemption brought by Jesus**. The expulsion of demons was a sign of the intrusion of the Kingdom of God. Yet the scribal accusations against Jesus amount to a denial of the power and greatness of the Spirit of God. By assigning the action of God to a demonic origin the scribes betray a perversion of spirit which, in defiance of the truth, chooses to call light darkness. **In this historical context, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit denotes the conscious and deliberate rejection of the saving power and grace of God released through Jesus' word and act.**¹⁰¹ Jesus' action in releasing men from demonic possession was a revelation of the Kingdom of God which called for decision. Yet **his true dignity remained veiled, and the failure of the scribes to recognize him as the Bearer of the Spirit and the Conqueror of Satan could be forgiven. The considered judgment that his power was demonic, however, betrayed a defiant resistance to the Holy Spirit**. This severe warning was **not addressed to laymen but to carefully trained legal specialists whose task was to interpret the biblical Law to the people. It was their responsibility to be aware of God's redemptive action**. Their insensitivity to the Spirit through whom Jesus was qualified for his mission exposed them to grave peril. Their own tradition condemned their gross callousness as sharply as Jesus' word." NICNT

¹⁹ "The admonition concerning blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is not to be divorced from this historical context and applied generally. Mark emphasizes this by terminating the incident with a reference to the specific accusation that Jesus was possessed by an unclean spirit. The use of the imperfect tense of the verb in the explanatory note, "because *they were saying* that he is possessed," implies repetition and a fixed attitude of mind, the tokens of callousness which brought the scribes to the brink of unforgivable blasphemy." NICNT

²⁰ See my lesson entitled, 'Finger of God' from part 54 of the *Being Jesus* series.

They had shut down God's voice and truth and wanted it only their way. This is unacceptable.

- **Accountability for what you know** – There is a premise in Scripture that I believe is significant. It has to do with what we are held accountable for. **When it comes to salvation, we are held accountable to that which we would be expected to know.** When it comes to **sin** the premise is the same, we will be held accountable to what we know (the Old Testament sacrificial system was divided into intentional and unintentional offenses). Therefore, **the greater the revelation** (revealing of information by God), **the greater the accountability.** This is a vital part of understanding the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. It has to do with **those who are supposed to know better and yet are willingly defying the Holy Spirit, with contempt (that's key), intentionally, over a period of time.**
- **Context Check: Is it Rejecting Christ?** – Most every commentary and modern day teacher seems to deal with this passage in a logical way (what it 'must be' in light of all that we know). The problem is that it seems to violate the context, in my opinion. Here's the main argument from most. The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. This means that it won't be forgiven, ever, which means that someone who commits this won't be admitted to heaven and will thereby be cast from the presence of God forever. **Since we know that all sins are forgiven by Christ's death on the cross, then it can't be anything but rejection of that salvation.** Therefore 'blasphemy of the Holy Spirit' must be rejection of salvation in Christ Jesus. Perhaps this is correct. It's certainly the most popular. However, I am not convinced it's accurate. 2 commentaries aligned more with my thinking (NICNT – see below; and the NIV).
- **Why it's different than Blasphemy against Christ** – There can be a couple different reasons: 1.) **Jesus was not fully known** for who He was. He partially veiled His claim to deity and Messiah on purpose, so to misunderstand would be partially excused. (lack of evidence; Luke 23:34; Isa 53:2) 2.) The Son was the second person of the Trinity to engage with man and only so from the outside, whereas the Holy Spirit would confirm internally with people. Additionally, the Holy Spirit confirmed who Jesus Christ was by both the cross, resurrection and Pentecost so people were without excuse (too much evidence). 3.) Jesus didn't mean blasphemy against Himself, but against any 'son of man' meaning any other human being. (humans vs. God). 4.) This person would have reached the end of the line: they killed the forerunner of the Messiah (John the Baptist). They would have killed the Son of God (Jesus). They would have killed the Apostles (i.e. Stephen's martyrdom and Peter's condemnation that they had 'resist the Holy Ghost' (Acts 7:51) who had worked through them and confirmed at Pentecost His presence. So they were at the end of the line. There was no more proof coming (until it's too late with the visible return of Jesus Christ at the end of the world).

- **Can it Happen Today?** – some say that it cannot because they believe that it was specific to the earthly ministry of Jesus demonstrating the Power of the Holy Spirit personally and THAT was rejected (i.e. blasphemy of the Holy Spirit). I am not so sure on that since I believe that the Holy Spirit is still actively doing miracles through Christ's body, the church. So, yes, I believe that it can happen today, but remember how I defined what it was, so **it's not very common or likely and will certainly not be done by the Lord's children.**
- **Not Just Words (fruit of the heart)** – Remember in our context Jesus talks about how the words we say are indicators of our hearts. So, **merely saying something but not believing it in your heart is not binding (i.e. saying you are a Christian but not believing in the gospel) as something you truly live out and believe.** IN the same way so is blasphemy a matter of the heart. The Pharisees weren't just saying something, they absolutely believed in their heart that Jesus was wicked and that although it's possible that God was moving through Him (although they doubted it), they were so filled with hate that they didn't care and were casting the whole thing into the devil's lap.
 - **What about witchcraft and Satanism renouncing** – probably the one area that I've heard the most people talk about this are those who were involved in the occult and were led to believe that true adherence to Satan would be renouncing God and intentionally blaspheming the Holy Spirit, which they would do in a ritual and verbally. While this is perhaps one of the worst things that someone can do (the level of insult and arrogance is mind-boggling), I question the validity of it. Here's why – I think people are stupid and don't know what the heck they are doing. These tend to be the same people that think they can 'sell their soul to the Devil'. Which is complete garbage and absolutely anti-biblical. I think that 99% of people who would do this in the occult are ignorant and doing something they don't understand and are too ignorant to actually do it. It doesn't matter how much they meant it, only whether they actually had access and authority to do something like that. God is really nice to stupid people.
- **What is it Actually?** – **Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, in my opinion (from research) is: a persistent, willful decision after clearly seeing God's work and yet reject God - knowingly. It's a whole behavior, not an isolated incident or a phase. It's a commitment to shut down God's work and attribute it to Satan (choosing sides cleanly and clearly and defiantly). You have to clearly know the source (Pharisees knew that it was Jesus) and reject that source.**(not an accidental rejection of what you thought was Satan and not God). The Pharisees were in danger since they knew it was God's power coming through Jesus but because they didn't want Jesus, they turned their back on God's power and thereby turned their back on the Holy Spirit of God who was the power source.

- **We Are Family**

- **Who are my spiritual family?**
 - **Mark 3:31-35** – *“And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. 32 And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.” 33 And he answered them, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” 34 And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.”*
 - **A very important verse (context)** – Last week Pastor Brian covered the verses Mk 3:20-21. It’s here that we see the catalyst for this conversation about family and the motivation for Jesus’ family looking for Him - *“Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. 21 And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, “He is out of his mind.”*
 - **Jesus’ mother and brothers came, standing outside** – Jesus’ mom seems to be highly questioning if Jesus is legit but we know from other evidence that Jesus’ brothers certainly didn’t believe He was so He said He was. They came to get him.
 - **Joseph’s death assumed due to this verse** – It is verses like this that lead all scholars to believe that Joseph, Jesus’ stepdad was dead by this time. He is never referenced outside the initial story of Jesus’ birth and then His 12-year-old story. He would have been mentioned a lot and especially in key stories like this. It would have been his responsibility to get his son, but he’s absent. Why? Likely he’s gone.
 - **They sent to him and called him** – **They were trying to get his attention to get control over Him. This is what Jesus is about to resist.**
 - **A crowd was sitting around Him and they said, ‘your mother and brothers are outside, seeking you.’** – They got the word through and up to Jesus who was at the center of the crowd. Remember, all these people knew each other very well and they would have played telephone with the message up to the front. **It was stated publicly so Jesus needed to respond publicly.**
 - **And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, ‘here are my mother and my brothers!’** – Jesus is saying that His spiritual family sitting around him, **interested in the things of the Father, are his closest connections.**
 - **For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and my sister and my mother** – This is a statement of **loyalties and allegiances**. It was very serious in the Jewish culture because of how much they valued family.²¹ **Jesus is saying that something is more important than blood family.**
 - **How does defining the church as family affect our perception of one another?** – This is supposed to create unity within the Body of Christ and respect for one another. The attention that we give to other things and other

²¹ In first-century Graeco-Roman and Jewish society, a person’s family primarily determined identity and social standing. Jesus’ teaching radically modifies this custom by prioritizing participation in the kingdom of God (Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., Whitehead, M. M., Grigoni, M. R., & Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Mk 3:35). Lexham Press.)

people around us are recalibrated in light of how we think of each other and treat each other. If true believers are the greatest allegiance and loyalty, then investment in one another takes precedent over earthly endeavors.

Conclusion

- **Alignment Matters** – who are we aligning with for power and authority? Who are we aligning with for family and influence. Those decisions need to be revisited consistently for us to be healthy and whole. Who & what is defining us? What's shaping us? Is it God? Is it healthy Godly people? If not, we are headed for disaster.

- **Who's In Charge?**²²
 - **Angels Work for Jesus** - Matthew 1-2 – Angels heralded Jesus' arrival and instructed His family.
 - This shows connection that angelic (spiritual) beings work with Jesus and do His bidding and announce His arrival.
 - **Satan Shows Up for Work Before God** - Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7 – The line up
 - Sin in the presence of God - Suggests that Satan and demons can or could stand before God when called. Shows that they are on a tight leash and only allowed to do things if God says it's okay.
 - **The World is Satan's but We are God's** - 1 Jn 5:18-19 *"We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one."*
 - Victory for believers – We see again that Satan cannot harm those born of God, due to the protection of God.
 - Whole world under Satan's control – This was written after the cross so there is some credence to the idea that Satan still has some control running around out there.
 - **Satan's On the Way Out** - Jn 12:31-33 – *"(Jesus said) Now is the time for judgment of this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." He said this to show the king of death he was going to die."*
 - When Satan was driven out - This adds to the intricacy of trying to find out when Satan was kicked out of ruling this earth (the cross, at the initial fall, at the end?). Christ is discussing the cross in the context and therefore lends credence to the idea that the judgment of the world and the driving out of the prince of this world, was then. This would suggest a dethroning but not a destruction, which we know is later, at the end of the world. Notice as well that the term is "prince" as opposed to "king." I think that significant. There is only one king of the world and that has always been God.
 - **Satan Can Stop Christian Work** - 1 Th 2:18 – *"For we wanted to come to you, certainly I, Paul, did, again and again – but Satan stopped us."*
 - Satan can stop Christian work - Suggests that Satan does have the power to stop Christian work (only of course if God allows such a thing, but apparently He does so), and that his goal is to do so.
 - **Christ Took Death From Satan** - Heb 2:14 – *"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil..."*
 - Christ took death from Satan - Suggests that the devil has/had the power of death (fear of death primarily). This means that either the devil had the power of death before the cross and now does not (Christ took the keys to death and hell), or it means that he still has them but Christ will crush him in the end and it is pretty much a done deal.
 - **Jesus Broke Up Satan's Work** - 1 Jn 3:8 – *"He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."*
 - Jesus broke up Satan's work - Suggests that when someone is rebelling against God is jumping on the devil's team. It also suggests that the devil has been continually

²² Notes from my 2003 series on the book of Mark

rebelling since he first fell, there was no repentance. It also suggests that one of the reasons that Christ came was to frustrate and destroy what the devil has been doing to mankind all this time.

- Commentary on this passage – *“In this short letter John says much about the devil: 1. He is called ‘the devil’ (here) and ‘the evil one’. 2. He ‘has been sinning from the beginning’ (here), i.e., from the time he first rebelled against God, before the fall of Adam and Eve (Jn 8:44). 3. He is the instigator of human sin, and those who continue to sin belong to him and are his children. 4. He is in the world and has ‘the whole world’ of unbelievers under his control (5:19). 5. But he cannot lay hold of the believer or harm him (5:18). 6. On the contrary, the Christian will overcome him (2:13-14; 4:4), and Christ will destroy his work.”* NIV Commentary.
- **Jesus Has Keys & Victory & Gives Them to the Church** - Matt 16:18-19 – Jesus calls Simon, Peter and says that he will give them the keys of the kingdom of heaven: gates of hell won’t overcome; binding and loosing. (Mt 18:18 binding and loosing reference again)
 - Binding & Loosing - We do not fully understand the concept of binding and loosing. The Charismatic movement thinks that this means that we have all types of authority in the spiritual realms and maybe they are right. But, due to their other unusual and unbiblical practices it makes it hard to follow them there. Yet, there is some indication that when a believer speaks in the power and authority of Christ, spiritual stuff happens.
 - Keys to the kingdom - We also don’t fully understand what the keys to the kingdom means. Although we do know that gates is plural and keys are plural therefore for every gate there is a corresponding key. We do know that the gates of hell won’t overcome that which Christ has built, so if it is, then we have a question as to the builder.
- **Believers Have Victory** - 1 Jn 2:13-14 – *“I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one...I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”*
 - Young men in victory – Why young men are pulled out here is unknown to me. I can only speculate that they are the warriors protecting the other two groups mentioned. But regardless we see a statement of victory. This is of course not situational but the big picture. But notice that the reason they survive is (assumed) the word of God lives in them.
- **The Enemy’s Task At Hand**
 - **Satan is About Hindering & Killing Seekers** - Matt 13:19 – The enemy snatches away the word from those that hear the message about the kingdom and does not understand it.
 - Suggests to me that Satan is all about chasing after ‘seekers’ (either him or his horde) and stealing away the word from them so they don’t understand it and can’t get saved or grow.
 - **The Enemy is Messy & Sneaky** - Matt 13:24-30; 36-43 – The enemy sows weeds among the wheat.
 - Suggests to me that the enemy is about messing things up but not really drawing clear cut lines in the sand. He is much more effective by intermixing and laying low. Also there is a tremendous inability to separate out those who are of the devil and those who are of God (at least from our vantage point, and even the angels, only God can discern).

Info on the Prince of Darkness Himself – Satan/devil/Lucifer

- **Where He Hangs Out**
 - **1st See Him in the Garden of Eden** - The Serpent in the Garden – Gen 3:1-5, 13-15

- Tools of Satan - Craftiness, temptation, partial truth & doubt.
- **Satan Lives in Pergamum (or did)** - Rev 2:13 – *“(Jesus to the church of Pergamum) I know where you live – where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city – where Satan lives.”*
 - Satan’s hometown – We have a couple of options here: 1.) John really had the scoop that Satan lived in Pergamum the city (as we know that Satan is not omnipresent). 2.) Satan used to live there but now lives somewhere else. 3.) John was merely using the phrase as an analogy that the city of Pergamum was clearly under Satan’s dominion. I would favor the fact that Satan was probably really there but has moved on.
- **Satan’s the Morning Star?**
 - Is 14:12 – *“How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations.”*
 - Satan as morning star - This morning star (little m) is mentioned as falling and being cast down to earth. I don’t think we can read it any other way than Satan and the battle in heaven that rages. It may be a double prophecy about someone current in Isaiah’s day and age, but it was also clearly referring to Satan ultimately.
- **Christ is the Morning Star?** - Rev 22:16 – *“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”*
 - Christ as Morning Star - We see that Jesus is the true Morningstar and that Lucifer was originally beautiful insofar as he looked like Christ. Also it shows the pattern that Satan tries to follow.
- **Who He Is & What He’s Like**
 - **Satan is an Accuser** - Zech 3:1-2 – the accuser – *“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The LORD said to Stan, ‘The LORD rebuke you, Satan!...’”*
 - Satan is an accuser - Suggests that Satan is an accuser by nature and title and that he is clearly under God’s jurisdiction.
 - **Satan is Sneaky** - 2 Cor 11:14 – *“Satan himself masquerades as an angels of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness.”*
 - Satan is sneaky - Suggests that Satan is low enough to trick and in fact relies on half truth and lulling to destroy many.
 - **Satan is a Deceiver** - 1 Ti 5:5 – *“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.”*
 - Satan deceives - Suggests that Satan’s primary means of destruction is deception and false teachings. In order to teach such things they need physical teachers who have had their consciences seared and are hypocritical liars (human agents).
 - **Satan is a Liar** - Acts 5:3 – Ananias & Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit about the money for the sale of their house given in offering. Peter says, *“Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?”*
 - Satan lies - Suggests that Satan is about the task of filling peoples hearts with lies and treachery so as to test the Lord and His people. It shows that he can fill a persons hearts with so much that they don’t see straight any more.
- **Satan’s Tricks of the Trade**

- **Satan Uses Deceit** - Mt 5:37 – beyond this comes from the evil one – deceit
 - Suggests to me that anything that has to do with deceit or trying to manipulate comes from the devil. This would indicate that the devil does this kind of stuff, pushing things beyond limits, manipulating and such.
- **Satan Uses Pride** - 1 Ti 3:6 - *“(An overseer) must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.”*
 - Satan’s end pronounced - Suggests that Satan is already under judgment by the Lord for his pride and rebellion.
 - Satan uses faults to win - Also it suggests that the devil can use a poor reputation to lure and trap believers that enter into leadership. He can create something present from the past.
- **Satan Uses Division** - 2 Ti 2:26 – *“And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.”*
 - Satan is out to divide - Suggests that the devil is all about causing division and destroying the work of the Lord. His concern therefore is to use quarrels to divide and separate. He must blind the people and trap them into arguing and shutting their hearts in order to get a winning team.
- **Satan Uses Unchecked Passions** - Jas 3:15 – *“But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven, but is earthly, unspiritual, of the evil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.”*
 - Satan is about unchecked passions - Suggests that the devil is all about envy, selfish ambition, boasting and denying the truth. The ways of the world around us are the ways of the devil as he rules here. Indeed it also has had an effect on him, I would imagine, in that those things lead to disorder and evil practices. How does the devil control his camp?
- Rev 12; 20:1-3, 7-10 – sort through

Limits to Satan & Protection to Saints

- **Eph 6:10-18 – The Armor of God** – *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”*
 - **Be strong** – We are called to be strong in the Lord, not afraid or weak. He has mighty power and we have a share in that power and authority as children of God.

- **Put on the armor** – What this means is up for debate. Is this a one time event? Is this a daily thing. Due to the “helmet of salvation” I would suggest this is a one time event and make sure you have all of your clothes on and don’t take em off. If it’s a daily thing, what if you forget? Not good.
- **The real struggle** – The real struggle is not other people although sometimes the messenger carries the same sneer. Our struggle is against: 1.) the rulers, 2.) authorities, 3.) powers, 4.) spiritual forces of evil, all of which are found in this dark world and gain power from “the heavenly realms. What I find interesting is that they are not named but given a general title that suggests the power and influence that is wielded down here on earth.
- **Defensive or offensive** – There is some question as to whether or not the armor of God is only defensive. Surely, the sword is offensive? Or is that in defense? We clearly see that we are to take a stand and to raise up a shield. This indicates that we are to be on the alert and that things are coming at us all the time. Perhaps there isn’t really enough time to go looking for a fight with all the opposition that is already here. Our at least two strike back weapons are the Word of God and prayer. Let’s use them.
- **God Will Crush Satan for Believers** - Ro 16:20 – *“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”*
 - The final end of Satan - Suggests that the crushing is the permanent removal of Satan and laying him low before believers just as he currently is under God’s feet. This is a reference to Satan’s final doom in the lake of fire.
- **Pray for Protection from “Dad”** - Matt 6:13 – *“(Father) lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”*
 - This always struck me as a strange phrase. It seems that, of course, our Father would want to protect us from the evil one and will deliver. But then again He promises to give us daily bread and yet we pray for that too. There must be something to the communication about it so that He gets the glory due to the constant reminder of our inability. We do know however, (another odd thing) that God doesn’t lead into temptation due to James 1:13
- **Satan Needs Permission** - Lk 22:31 – *“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”*
 - Satan needs permission - This passage suggests that Satan has to ask permission to touch God’s anointed (like Job) and that they cannot just come and go as they please. Is this true? Also it suggests that Jesus doesn’t keep them away but strengthens the believers to withstand the attack (cf Jn 17:12, 15). This builds character, faith and maturity.
- **Demons Can’t Take Away God’s Love** - Ro 8:38-39 – *“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons...will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
 - Limits to demons on believers - With all the power demons and angels have they cannot do some things, like take our salvation from us, or separate us from the love of God. They can influence, nothing more.
- **Satan Can Be Resisted** - 1 Pet 5:8-9 *“Be self controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith...”*

- Resisting Satan is possible - There are many readings on this passage. One says that lions don't roar if they are hunting, they merely roar to scare out little prey if they are starving. If that is the case then Satan is desperate. If the view of the passage is that the lion is showing his power and roaring to frighten, then we have a different story. Either way he is going around looking to eat people and that is never good. Our job is not to go out and look for him and fight him on that ground, but to be alert and resist him when he comes. Our way of fighting is clinging to Christ, abiding in Christ and standing firm in the faith.
- **God Protects but Doesn't Deliver (Yet)** - 2 Th 3:3 – *“But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.”*
 - Reassurance of protection not avoidance – This is a tender and kind verse that shows the heart of God. God is faithful to watch over us and we don't have to be afraid that we are not under the guard of God, even if the enemy takes us off guard. Likewise, the verse shows that God doesn't take you out of the fight but strengthens you and protects you in the fight.
- **Paul Was Protected & Safe** - 2 Ti 4:16-18 – *“At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*
 - Paul protected & safe – Paul shows a few things that are wonderful here. He says that not only was he protected during a tough time when everyone deserted him and only the Lord stood by his side, but also he has confidence that the Lord will rescue him from every evil attack and bring him safely to heaven. What is interesting is that Paul was, according to tradition, martyred. Was that a evil attack? Was he kept safe? Not in our terms, but all Paul cared about was heaven and Christ, so in his mind it was a full and faithful promise.
- **Satan's Tricks Can Be Known** - 2 Co 2:10-11 – *“I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.”*
 - Satan can be known - Suggests that although Satan is a criminal mastermind, he is not beyond knowing. He has common tricks and traps that we can know about and avoid. We do not have to fall prey to the enemy.
- **Unbelievers are Unsafe, Believers Are Safe** - Acts 26:18 – *“I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”*
 - Believers protected - Suggests that unbelievers are completely under the power of the enemy, but once they become believers, they are under new leadership.
- **Satan Needs a Foothold** - Eph 4:27 – *“Do not give the devil a foothold.”*
 - Limits of Satan - This suggests that in general the devil is kept out of believers lives and must receive some type of foothold in order to gain access and work his way in. He is to be resisted.
- **Some Demons in Abyss Already** - Jude 1:9 – *“And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home (reference to Nephilim issue?) – these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day...In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander*

celestial beings. But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!' Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand..."

- Some demons gone already - Suggests that Judas (Jude) clarified that in the past some demons violated boundaries that God set up and are now bound in darkness for their eternal judgment. That means they are not out and around causing trouble. Likewise, it suggests that we need to have a healthy respect for angels and demons. Even the chief angel (post Lucifer), Michael, handled the devil with only the words of the Lord and not arrogance.
- Commentary on that passage – *“According to several church fathers, this verse is based on an Apocryphal work called The Assumption of Moses...Such usage in no way suggests that the quotation, or the book from which (it) was taken, is divinely inspired. It only means that the Biblical author found the quotation to be a helpful confirmation, clarification or illustration.”* NIV Commentary.

God’s Use of Satan & Evil

- **Evil Spirits Sent by God** - Jdg 9:23-24 – *“God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem, who acted treacherously against Abimelech. God did this in order that the crime against Jerub-Baal’s seventy sons, the sheddings of their blood, might be avenged on their brother Abimelech and on the citizens of Shechem, who had helped him murder his brothers.”*
 - Evil spirits sent by God – Was this a mood or attitude? Was this a literal spirit? I don’t know the context is not clear. However, I don’t find it at all out of the realm of God using an actual demon to go about and stir up trouble. God has a history of using the enemy to do His bidding.
 - *“Evil spirit – Perhaps a spirit of distrust and bitterness. The Hebrew for ‘spirit’ is often used to describe an attitude or disposition.”* NIV Commentary
- **Evil Spirit Sent by God** - 1 Sa 16:14-16, 23 – evil spirit from the LORD tormented Saul.
 - *“Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him. Saul’s attendants said to him, ‘See, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the harp. He will play when the evil spirit from God comes upon you, and you will feel better...Whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave.”*
 - Evil spirits sent by God – Again we have the questions: Was this a mood or attitude? Or was this an actual demon that tormented Saul? I again favor the fact that this was an actual evil spirit. It could have been a depression of sorts but the outcome was the same. The reason we argue this is as to whether or not it happens today. Are some moods caused by evil spirits that are actual or metaphoric?
- **God Used Satan for Census** - 1 Ch 21:1 & 2 Sam 24:1 – God & Satan rose up against Israel and incited David
 - God uses Satan to do His will. cf. Ex 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4; Jos 11:20; 1 Ki 22:22-23; Job 1:12; 2:10; Eze 3:20; 14:9; Act 4:28) (
- **God Used Satan to Humble Paul** - 2 Co 12:7 – *“To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.”*

- God uses Satan - Suggests that God uses Satan to do His will. Also suggests that Satan will use pain and persecution to try to destroy the will and spirit of Christians.
- **God Uses Satan's Lies** - 2 Th 2:8-12 – *“And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who were perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.”*
 - Satan uses deception - Suggests that Satan is about the work of counterfeit, deception and evil as well as the supernatural.
 - God uses Satan - Also it suggests that God and Satan work together in a way as well (of course God is merely using Satan to do His bidding).
- **Paul Uses Satan for Church Discipline** - 1 Ti 1:19b-20 – *“Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.”*
 - Paul uses Satan - Paul is using Satan to do his bidding as well in the pattern of God.
- **Paul Used Satan for Church Discipline** - 1 Co 5:5 – *“Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.”*
 - Paul uses Satan - Suggests that just as the Lord uses Satan to accomplish His purposes (using Satan's own nature), so too does Paul do the same thing by casting someone out of the church so that when Satan beats up on them, they come running back in repentance.
- **Devil Tests By Persecution (God Tests Too)** - Rev 2:10 – *“(Jesus to the church in Smyrna) Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days...”*
 - Same tests (God & Satan), Different Motives – We think, in the Christian mindset that tests are for our good to make us stronger. But if the devil is putting us to the test he is looking for weakness. God may burn us with fire to see what survives so that it can be built on, but Satan tests us with fire to see if we will fail. Same test, different motives.