Bind the strong man

"How can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house." (Mt. 12:29)

The Lord Jesus spoke these words to the Pharisees in explanation of His miracles. But they were also spoken for His disciples to learn some of the ways and means of spiritual warfare for the extension of His Kingdom throughout the world. This instruction that the Lord gave to His disciples while on earth applies equally to all of us in this 'age of grace'. (Mt. 28:20) Yet few believers listen to what Jesus said (above) and few obey His instructions. God gives us various commands in His Word with regard to our attitude to Satan and all his demonic forces. **We need to obey if we are to overcome**.

As believers we delight to share about the finished work of our Lord Jesus on the Cross. We love to talk about pardon for sin, the provision of a pure heart by grace, power for life and service through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus and the presence of the Holy Spirit. But we forget that the Lord Jesus submitted ***"Himself … so that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death – that is the devil – and deliver all those who, through fear of death, were subject to lifelong slavery"*** (Heb. 2:14-15).

All of us have repented of our sins before God and have forsaken them and our own way and accepted the Lord Jesus as Saviour and wholly surrendered to Him. We have been made ***"new creations".*** (2 Cor. 5:7) We have experienced the joy and rest of a "clean heart" and we have been filled with the Holy Spirit (1 Jn. 1:7; Eph. 5:18; Ezek. 36:25-27).

Even though God is real to us and we know we are greatly loved and though our service for the Lord Jesus is often a real delight and we see some fruitfulness, yet there is also a good deal of **frustration**. Such a lot of time is wasted together with strength and opportunity. Where there **should be** breakthroughs and victory there is defeat! Is this the kind of life that God wills for us? Surely not! It is written, ***"In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us".*** (Rom. 8:37)

So let us consider **one** of the causes for our failure. We will look at:

- Satan's Position
- God's Purpose
- The Promise of the Lord Jesus
- Faith's Victory

Satan's Position

We need to remember daily that this world is Satan's territory. ***"The whole world lies in the power of the Evil One".*** (1 Jn. 5:19) The Evil One is ***"the prince/ruler of this world".*** (Jn. 12:31) He deceives with promises of satisfaction and allures with the pleasures of sin, holding in captivity all who will not obey God. Again, he is ***"The God of this world".*** (2 Cor. 4:4) With his various religious and other systems he still says – as he did through his agents of old – ***"Peace, peace, when there is no peace".*** (Jer. 6:14) His great objective regarding us – disciples of the Lord Jesus – is to draw us away from the Lord by one means or another, thus rendering us impotent in our life and service. Instead of being the glorious heralds of the Lord Jesus, storming enemy strongholds and setting prisoners free, we find ourselves cowering at the rear or at best being defensive. As a result ***"the strong man"*** is keeping all he has got – ***"his goods"*** – and he continues to ***"hinder us"*** (1 Thess. 2:18) and to hinder God's purposes because we have failed to do what we have been commanded to do – ***"Bind the strong man"***.

The ways Satan uses to defeat us vary and so do the methods he uses to prevent people being saved. How often he stirs us up through jealousy, love of pre-eminence, pride, selfishness or some characteristic of the old nature to wear out fellow workers and so hinder or prevent the carrying out of God's will in a particular situation. So we who should be living

in love and warm worshipful fellowship are kept in a state of fear or reduced to silence in order to keep the peace with other believers.

Again, Satan seeks to stop prayer. Knowing that God's promises work in answer to the prayers of His servants, he works with all his ingenuity and power to prevent blessing through this means. He causes apathy, wondering thoughts, interruptions, a sense of oppression or vague fears. Satan truly is the source of such hindrances. (Eph. 6:12)

God's Purpose

From the Bible we know that all of us ***"Should serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days"*** (Lk. 1:74-75) and that we should be filled with joy and peace in believing (Rom. 15:13) as we overcome the world, the flesh and the devil.

If we are not living like this, but in fear, misery and anxiety, then we are **not** in the will of God. The Lord Jesus died to deliver us from such bondages and to give us victory love and peace. Why are you not experiencing victory? It may be that you have been cleansed from sin and filled with the Holy Spirit, but you don't yet accept and believe the promises of the Lord Jesus about the way of victory over Satan, all his forces and all his evil strategies and plans.

When Jesus sent out His disciples to preach (and this includes us), they went not only with the assurance of His command, but also with the power of His authority. For he said, ***"I have given you authority … over all the power of the enemy…."*.** (Lk. 10:19)

But what is the use of authority if you don't use it? The Lord Jesus said, ***"How can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house".*** (Mt. 12:29). Can these words – these "goods" of Satan – be destroyed – the strife and tension among us – the hindrances to prayer and restlessness of spirit? Yes, they can indeed be destroyed if only we will use the authority that is ours in the Lord Jesus.

The Promise of the Lord Jesus

Jesus never hid from His disciples the fact that for them life on earth involved pressure, stress, conflict and constant self-denial for which no natural courage or strength or devotion would suffice. But He told them, ***"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth".*** (Mt. 28:18) He has delegated His authority to His disciples. ***"Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*** (Mt. 18:18)

A young girl who was demon-possessed came to an orphanage. Soon after her arrival frequent rapping was heard and footsteps were heard on the stairs although no person was there to cause them. There were other satanic manifestations. The workers began to seek the Lord and His power in a fresh way to deal with this situation that was affecting all the children.

He revealed to them His command and the way of deliverance. ***"Bind the strong man"***. Together and separately they claimed Matthew 18:19 and took the victory over Satan and all his hosts, as well as over all his works. (Col. 2:15; 1 Jn. 3:8) They used the authority the Lord Jesus had given them and in His name – Jesus (the name above every name) they ordered Satan and his forces not to make noises or stir up confusion and to leave the little girl and completely leave the orphanage and the children. As it was when Jesus was on earth, the satanic forces retreated before "the Holy One of God".

"Jesus is stronger than Satan and sin, Satan to Jesus must bow."

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever". (Heb. 13:8) So whenever Satan uses his instruments and strategies to produce strife or any hindrance to God's work and will, the Lord's people can ***"bind the strong man"*** and do so in the way that Paul did (Acts 16:18), charging him in the name of the Lord Jesus not to stir up the situation and so prevent the Holy Spirit from prevailing in that place.

Sadly we, like the disciples, often have to say, ***"Why couldn't we cast it out?"*** We need to hear the Lord's reply, ***"Because of your little faith".*** (Mt. 17:19-20). The faith **to use** the name

and the victory of the Lord Jesus over Satan and all his forces and devices only comes through the stimulating power of the Holy Spirit received through prayer and relying on the Word of God. ***"Faith comes from hearing and hearing through the Word of Christ".*** (Rom. 10:17) This prayer may need us to 'set aside other things' – abstinence, fasting from 'other matters'.

In the case of the sons of Sceva [Acts 19] we see the disastrous results of using the name of Jesus over demons apart from submission to His Lordship and apart from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, ***"I, by the Spirit of God, cast out demons …".*** (Mt. 12:28) Notice too, that the Lord Jesus gave the promise of the Holy Spirit and authority to bind and loose simultaneously. (Jn. 20:22-23)

Thousands of hours are wasted among us every year in disagreements and in seeking the settlement of misunderstandings and conflicts. Much of this could be prevented if only we would – in the power of the Holy Spirit – "bind the strong man" charging him in the name of Jesus not to stir up a particular person and cause anger and discord.

If we, as God's children, would **refuse** the "naggings" that come from Satan – the temptation to irritability, to be censorious, to pride or whatever fiery darts the enemy might be hurling at us, we would be preserved from defeat and from grieving the Holy Spirit.

"Resist the devil and he will flee from you". (James 4:7) '**Resist'** is something **we have to <u>do</u>** through the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Here we are **not** told to pray to God to deliver us although there may be many times when the Holy Spirit guides us so to pray. Here we are commanded to resist the devil ourselves and having ***"put on up the whole armour of God"*** we shall be able ***"to quench all the fiery darts of the Evil One"***.

Faith's Victory

If we ***"walk in the light as He is in the light"*** and **if** ***"the blood of Jesus is cleansing us from all sin"*** – cleansing us moment by moment as we trust and obey [1 Jn. 1:7]; and **if** ***"we are filled with the Spirit"*** (Eph. 5:18) and **if** we are obeying the Lord's command to ***"bind the strong man"***; does it **necessarily** mean that the devil will always be immediately and obviously (to all) defeated and driven from the scene of battle?

What do we see in the life of our great example the Lord Jesus? We see a traitor in the circle of His immediate disciples and friends. We see that traitor stealing (Jn. 12:6), cruelly deceiving and betraying. Yet we also see **that satanic agent** not only bringing about the conditions for the fulfilment of prophecy and the eternal purposes of God, but by the darkness of his own evil nature and character, throwing into greater prominence the glory of the Light of the World!

Again, it could have looked at one time as if the Evil One had won and had triumphed over the purposes of God when, after the arrest in the garden and the desertion of all His disciples, the Lord Jesus was unjustly tried and ignominiously put to death with cruelty and mocking. But we know now that God was in complete control of the whole situation and of every individual present. ***"The peoples … were gathered together … to do whatever <u>Your</u> hand and <u>Your</u> plan had predestined to take place".*** (Acts 4:25-28).

Frequently during the life of the Lord Jesus one or another had sought to arrest Him or to stop His witness and work, ***"But no-one laid a hand on Him because His hour had not yet come"*** (Jn. 7:30). So, far from hindering God's purposes, the devil and all his hosts were unable to do anything but **help** to bring them to pass! See Psalm 29:10 ***"The Lord's sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as King for ever."***

But the Lord Jesus did God's will only because He **always resisted** the devil. He triumphed over all His temptations. ***"He did not allow the demons to speak." "He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men"*** (Eph. 4:8). He gave us the gift of His Holy Spirit, the gift of His name and of His victory so that we, His disciples and friends, might ***"Reign in life"*** (Rom. 5:17) and ***"might have authority over all the power of the enemy"***.

"And they have <u>conquered</u> him (the accuser) ***by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony for they loved not their lives unto death."*** (Rev. 12:11)