

# Binding the Strongman

by Anton Bosch

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*This sermon delves into Luke chapter 11, exploring the casting out of a demon by Jesus and the responses to this miraculous event. It emphasizes the importance of unity, the power struggle between God and the devil, the need to choose sides in the spiritual battle, and the significance of filling our lives with God's presence to avoid spiritual emptiness and vulnerability to temptation.*

**Scripture:** Luke 11:14, Luke 11:17, Luke 11:20, Luke 11:21, Luke 11:23, Luke 11:24

**Topics:** "Spiritual Warfare", "Filling Our Lives with God's Presence"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Amen. So let's turn to the Word. As Cedar announced, we will be serving the Lord's table at the end of the ministry.

So we're in Luke chapter 11, Luke chapter 11, and we'll read verses 14 through 26. Luke chapter 11, reading 14 through 26. And he was casting out a demon, and it was mute.

And so it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke, and the multitudes marveled. But some of them said, He cast out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons. Others, testing him, sought from him a sign from heaven.

But he, knowing their thought, said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls. If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say, I cast out demons by Beelzebub. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.

But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him, and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils.

He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest. Finding none, he says, I will return to my house from which I came.

And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that man is worse than the first.

So this is a difficult passage, because it contains a series of events and statements by the Lord Jesus, and they are sometimes difficult to understand, because they deal with demons, which is a subject on which there is a lot of false information. And so let's have a look at it, because it is important, you know. And as I was waiting on the Lord during this week on the passage, I was wondering, really, what is the relevance to us today? It's one thing to be able to expound scripture, but we always want to make it relevant.

We always want to be able to have something that we can take home. And I trust that we will find that in the passage this morning. And so he begins in verse 14, and he says he cast this demon out of a man, and he was mute.

The man was dumb, he could not speak because of the demon that he had. One of the other Gospels says that he was also deaf. So the man is controlled by this demon.

The demon obviously has the ability to limit his ability, or he's not able to speak, and Jesus casts the demon out. The Gospel writer doesn't go into any details as to how Jesus cast the demon out. It's just a statement of fact.

Jesus casts the demon out. End of the story. And we'll see the importance of that in a few moments.

But I believe that what Luke is emphasizing here is the responses more than just the fact that the demon was cast out. And there are three responses. The first is in this verse, and it says that the mute spoke, and the multitudes marveled.

So most of the people were amazed by what they were seeing. Clearly this man must have been known by them. Remember, Jesus's miracles are not the kind that we see with some TV preachers today, where there are actors and there are people who maybe were not really sick to begin with, or may not even be healed properly.

So this is a public miracle. They know this man. He is publicly healed.

He is able to speak, and they marvel at it. But not everyone does. But some of them said he cast out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.

And so, who were the some? Well, we know who some of the some were. They were the Pharisees, who didn't like Jesus, who believed that Jesus was fake, that Jesus was an imposter, that Jesus was not anything like what he claimed to be. And so, he casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.

Beelzebub is a name that comes from the Old Testament. It's connected with Baal. I'm not going to get into the whole history of the name.

But the Old Testament gives the interpretation, the Lord of the flies. You may have come across that term in popular literature today. The Lord of the flies.

This is just another name for the devil. And of course, it is an insulting name, in the sense that being the boss of the flies, it really is nothing. Now, we know that he is not just that, because in fact, we'll see in a few moments that Jesus calls him a strong man.

So, he is not to be played with. And in fact, the New Testament warns us about speaking evil of dignitaries. And when he speaks about dignitaries, he's not meaning political figures or even angels, but speaking evil of demons.

Demons are powerful, but they are not all powerful. And that's one of the points that we're going to see this morning. And so, obviously, this is... they're saying, well, Jesus is an agent of the devil.

And that's how he's able to cast out demons. And Jesus gives a response. But then there was a third group.

And we're going to look at this third group in more detail next week, because the next, the continuation of this chapter, deals with those who are seeking a sign. And you'll see later on in verse 29, and while the crowds were gathered together, Jesus said, an evil generation seeks a sign. So, this group we'll come back to later.

So, the passage now deals primarily with those who said Jesus has a demon. And Jesus gives his response in a very clear and detailed way. Verse 17, "...but he knowing their thoughts." In other words, they didn't necessarily say this out loud.

Oh, he's the devil. The devil is empowering him. But they were thinking it, and Jesus knew their thoughts.

And so, those who were seeking a sign, well, here's a sign to begin with. Well, Jesus had given a sign already by casting the man out, the demon out. Now he gives a second sign, in that he knows their thinking.

But this is the problem with signs, is that if you don't believe, it doesn't matter how many signs you get, you still won't believe. And so, it's really a pointless exercise. "...but he knowing their thoughts said to them, every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation or destruction, and a house divided against a house falls." Now, this is an important statement that Jesus makes.

It is a statement that is generally true, but he is obviously applying it specifically to Satan. Now I'm going to come back to that in a moment. Let's just talk about the general statement.

This statement is true for Christians and non-Christians. It is true in the world. It's true in politics.

It's true in families. It's true in marriage. That those houses that are divided, or kingdoms that are divided, cannot stand.

And so, one of the oldest strategies of the devil, and the oldest strategies in warfare, and even in politics, is to divide and conquer. If we can divide people, and we can get them to fight one another, well, then they will beat each other up, and we don't have to attack them, and we don't even have to go to war against them. And so, this is true on a national level.

This is true on a church level. And we know many churches that have been destroyed as a result of the house being divided against itself. And that's one of the reasons why we emphasize the need for unity, the need for us to maintain that unity which has been given to us through the work of the Lord Jesus at the

cross of Calvary, when, according to Ephesians, He baptized us into one body.

We have one Father, we have one baptism, we have one faith. And so, we need to guard and to protect that unity, because one of the strategies the devil loves to use is to destroy the church by bringing disunity within the body of Christ. But then, there's also the problem of disunity and of division within the context of the family.

Many families are divided. Some families and some marriages present or watching on video may be having problems right now. And if that internal thing continues, it eventually will shatter the relationship and will shatter the family.

And so, for the same reason, we need to guard against that kind of division that comes into all kinds of relationships and into families. But the statement is also true even within ourselves. Is it possible that I can be divided within myself? Yes, it is.

Many Christians find themselves divided in their loyalty. Part of them wants to serve the Lord, some part of it wants to serve the world. And there's this struggle.

Now, we know Paul says that there will always be the struggle between the flesh and the spirit. But this is more than that. This is really what James speaks about, about people who are double-minded.

They have two souls. They have one heart for God, and they have one heart for the world. And they can't choose between the two.

And they're constantly going from one extreme to the other extreme. It's not going to work. You can't survive that way.

I remember when I was a young boy, I was in a neighboring town visiting someone, and I had come home to the place where I was staying that night. And I came across a drunkard. And he was walking down the street with one foot in the gutter and one foot on the sidewalk.

And, obviously, it wasn't long before he fell. You can't walk with one foot in the gutter and one on the sidewalk. You need to decide whether you're going to walk here or there.

A house divided amongst itself or internally cannot stand. It eventually will fall. And you're going to find Jesus repeating a similar idea in a few moments.

And, in fact, part of the take-out or take-home of the passage is that we need to decide. Remember, right back, Israel had this problem. And they are called to choose who they're going to serve.

Are they going to serve God, or are they going to serve the idols of Baal and the idols of the nations? And so a house divided amongst itself or against itself cannot stand. It will fall. And so it's vital that we find unity in our own hearts in terms of where we're headed, that we're not trying to walk in two different directions, trying to walk two different paths, and constantly being at war with ourselves.

Because we can't make up our minds what we want to do and what we want to do, where we want to go. And so we need to find that unity. We need to make sure that there is no division within ourselves, within our families, within the body of Christ.

And that's as far as our responsibility goes. Beyond that, we can't do much more. All right, now verse 18.

If Satan... So now he's applying it to Satan. So that is true in every situation. But he's now particularly applying it to Satan.

And he's saying, if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say, I cast out demons by Beelzebub. Now notice he is saying, I cast out demons, not just the demon that he had just cast out, but Jesus was casting out many demons. Clearly, Jesus was at war with the devil and the kingdom of the devil.

And he was setting people free who were bound by demons, who were bound by sin, who were bound by sickness. And so Jesus was going about destroying the works of the devil. And Jesus saying, if you say I'm of the devil, well, then the devil is self-destructing.

It's not going to be long, then just leave me alone. And it's not going to be long, and the devil is going to be sorted out, because he's going to self-destruct. Now, obviously, the devil is not that stupid.

He's not going to self-destruct. He's not going to destroy himself. And so this is the first part of Jesus' argument.

So Jesus is saying, I can't be casting them out by Beelzebub, because then the devil would be divided against himself. Obviously, Jesus could say, well, because I'm God. That wasn't going to fly.

They wouldn't accept that. So he has to resort to other kinds of arguments. Verse 19, and if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Now, we know that casting out demons was common at the time, that it was something that the prophets did, and that the priests also did.

And so when he says your sons, he's meaning your people. So they were casting out demons. We don't know how lasting those exorcisms were, how effective they were, but clearly they had some kind of reputation.

It was clearly working for them to some extent or the other. And so Jesus' argument is then, what about your own people who cast out demons? If I'm casting out demons by Beelzebub, well, then that's what they're doing. And clearly, you know, the chickens come home to roost.

He turns it back on them. So by saying, well, Jesus, you're casting out demons by Satan, by the chief of the demons, well, then you're doing the same. And obviously, they were not going to go that way.

Now, he says then, but, there's that important word again, but if I cast out demons with the finger of God, this is just another statement about the power of God, by, you know, remember the scripture speaks about God's mighty hand, or his strong arm. But in fact, God doesn't even need a arm or a hand. Just the finger of God is sufficient to deal with these things.

And he's saying, if this is God's hand, if this is God operating, if this is God working, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. And that's where he stops. And it's interesting that he leaves them to make the conclusion.

Because what have they just done? So Jesus is saying, I'm not doing it by Satan, I'm doing it by the power of God. If I'm doing it by the power of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. And what have they done? They've rejected the kingdom of God.

They've made themselves not just rejecting, but enemies of the kingdom of God. They've set themselves in opposition to the work of God. And that's a very, very dangerous thing to do.

Now it's important for us today to have discernment and to understand when God is operating, and when other forces are operating. And remember that miracles that we see can be of all sorts of kinds. Remember the devil transforms himself into an angel of light.

The devil performs miracles also. But he does them to deceive. Some of the miracles are not really miracles.

They're simply illusions. They're fake. Some of them are mind over matter.

And sometimes it's important for us to understand what's going on, because it's easy to say, well, I'm going to follow this man, because he performs miracles. Well, it's not whether he performs miracles, it's whether he is performing miracles by the finger of God, by the hand of God, under God's power. If he is not, then we should not be following him.

And we'll talk about the signs in more detail next week. But in that process, one of the dangers in judging is the potential of throwing out a genuine work of God, because it doesn't fit my ideas. Jesus was the real deal.

Jesus was the Son of God. He's performing miracles by the power of God. And yet they're saying he has a devil in another place.

Here they're saying he's doing this by the prince of devils. And of course, that's blasphemy. That's very, very serious.

So when we judge, it's important that we judge righteously, that we don't attribute to the devil something which is the work of God. I fear, though, that the problem is really the reverse. That in modern times, more people are ascribing to God things that have nothing to do with God, and that really are from the devil, or that are fake.

But that's the problem, is how do I know the difference? And the difference with Jesus, clearly, if you just arrived, and you don't know Jesus from anyone, you just come on the scene, and there he is, he's casting out demons, and you say, well, you know, who's this? What's he doing? What kind of power is he doing what he is doing? But if you knew who you were speaking about, if you knew who you were dealing with, you would understand that he is not doing it by the power of the devil, he's doing it by the power of God. In other words, if you'd listened to his preaching, if you'd listened to, watched his life, and his testimony, and watched where he came from, and listened to what he says about God, what he says about the Word of God. And so the miracle is very difficult to judge on its own.

But the agent of the miracle, the one who causes or performs the miracle, can be judged by his doctrine, by his lifestyle, by his background. And when we look at all of these things, we can come to a clear conclusion. Don't just look at the miracle, or at the sign, and say, well, this is what it is.

There is no way you can say just by the sign. You have to look at the background of the person. And when you look at the background of Jesus, there is no question by whose power he is doing what he is doing.

And so the kingdom of God has come upon you. So now he uses another illustration to illustrate really the point of this whole lesson. And he says, when a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace.

Some translations use the word house. The word there really is a stronghold. It's more, and that's why this translation uses the word palace.

It's a fortified place. It's not just an ordinary house, but it's a fortified place, a place that is strong. So a strong man, he's fully armed, and he guards his stronghold.

His goods are in peace, meaning his goods are under his possession. In his possession, under his control. Everything is good.

But, verse 22, there's that word again. But, when a stronger, then he comes upon him, and overcomes him. He takes from him all his armor, in which he trusted, and he divides his spoils.

So he takes control of the man, the strong man, and he takes everything that is under his control. So who is the strong man? The devil is the strong man. Who is the one who is stronger than the devil? God or Jesus.

That's the point that he is making. He is clearly saying two very important things. The first is that the devil is strong.

He is not saying when a weak man is overrun by a stronger man. No, when a strong man is overrun by an even stronger man. So the devil is strong.

The devil has real power. But God is more powerful. God is stronger.

And it's easy to be dismayed. It's easy to become fearful of the power of the devil, when one looks at some of the stuff that goes on in the world in which we're living. And I'm not just talking about demon possession.

I'm talking about the proliferation of evil in our society. I'm talking about how our communities are breaking down, how sin and evil and wickedness is increasing at a most incredible rate. Every day you're seeing more sinful stuff going on, greater and greater evil going on.

Every day you hear about preachers doing the most terrible stuff. You say, what's going on? The devil is winning. Yes, the devil is strong.

But God is stronger. And God is able to control and he is able to gain the victory. That's the point that Jesus is making.

He's saying, yeah, the devil may be strong, but God is stronger. Let's not trifle with the devil. Let's be careful of calling him old Nick or names like that.

He is what the book of James calls a dignitary. He is powerful. I'm sorry, Jude and Peter.

He is powerful, but he is not all powerful. God is stronger. And what Jesus is saying is what you have seen here, when I set this man free, is that I took control of the devil and I was able to plunder his goods.

What was his goods? This man that he had taken possession of. Notice that he divides, he spoils the stuff that he has accumulated. And he accumulates souls of people.

But when Jesus comes, the devil's power is broken. And those who are bound by him are set free. And that's what Jesus is saying right there.

So what is Jesus saying in a way that we understand, but they would not understand? Jesus is saying, I'm God, because I'm stronger than the devil. There's only one that is stronger than the devil. There is no army in this world.

There is no government in this world that is stronger than the devil. There is nothing except God. And Jesus is saying, I've acted by the finger of God, by the hand of God.

And I have conquered the devil, and I have set his possessions free. I've made this man to go out free. And so that is something we must remember when we find ourselves wondering whether the devil is actually going to win this battle that's going on in America and going on in the world today.

When we see sin and perversion and all sorts of terrible stuff just getting worse and worse and worse, and it looks like the devil is going to win. No, he's not going to win. He is not all-powerful.

God is more powerful. And you remember the book of Revelation. In the end, Jesus wins.

Jesus wins. Now, before we move on, I must obviously speak about this passage because it is a very popular passage in certain churches today. And what it does is it says that we Christians are the strong man, or the stronger man.

And what we must do is bind the strong man. The book of Mark, I think I have it here for you. Mark chapter 3 verse 27.

No one can enter, this is Mark's version of the same story. No man can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house. And so, if you look up the phrase on the internet, binding the strong man, you will find this idea all over out there.

That what we need to do is that it is the devil who has possession of LA, that has possession of Sun Valley, who is in control. Yes, he is in control, in a sense, because he is the God of this world. So what we need to do is we need to bind the strong man.

We need to bind the devil. And then once we have bound him, then the gospel can go forth, and then the church can prosper, and things can move ahead. The problem is that we are not the one who is stronger than the strong man.

And I know they'll say, well, you know, with God we're stronger. No, it's not with God. We are not stronger than the devil.

We have no power within ourselves. Only God can bind him. In fact, the reality is that the devil has been bound a thousand times over the city of LA.

People have gone up to that hill up top there where the cross is, and they have prayed over there, and they bound the devil. But if someone said, well, I want to know who keeps letting him loose. Because clearly he's not bound.

Clearly he is doing better than ever. Well, the good news is that Jesus conquered him at the cross, and he's allowing him to continue yet a little while. But the day will come when he will bind him, and he will cast

him into that bottomless pit, and then ultimately into the lake of fire.

So he will be bound. He is not bound right now. But can he be bound? Can God bind him? Yes, he can bind him at any time.

Yes, he binds him in local situations at local time, and in specific situations. But as far as the city is concerned, as far as the state is concerned, as far as the country is concerned, no, he is very much free, and he's very much doing his thing. So we are not the stronger one than him.

We do not have any control or any instruction from Scripture to bind the devil. It's only God who can bind him, because God is the one. Remember the verse, When a stronger than he comes.

When a stronger than he comes. God is the one who is stronger than he. Now we get to the next passage, or the next part in the same passage.

Verse 23. He who is not with me is against me. Now the problem here is that we have to read this whole passage together, and in fact what we're dealing with next week is also part of this.

We tend to look at these verses in isolation, and of course we don't understand, or we get into wrong understandings. He who is not with me is against me. What is the context? What is he speaking about? He is speaking about the strong man and the one who is stronger than the strong man.

He's talking about the devil and God. Now he is saying, he who is not with me, in my struggle against, or my battle against the devil, against the strong man, he who is not with me is against me. In other words, you're either on the stronger man's side, or you're on the strong man's side.

You're either on God's side or the devil's side. There is no, as one commentator said, there is no Switzerland here. There is no neutral ground.

There is no neutrality when it comes to these things. You are either on God's side or the devil's side. And that's the point that Jesus is making.

And he is saying, you need to choose. Remember, the crowd is divided. Some are saying, this is a great miracle.

Others are saying, show us another sign so that we can get confirmation. Others are saying, no, this is from the devil. Jesus is saying, make up your minds where you're at.

Are you with me or are you against me? In fact, that's obviously the point that we need to decide. Remember, we spoke about the house divided against itself. And here we have exactly the same injunction.

And that is to make a decision. Are you with him or against him? Or are you going to, like that drunk guy, walk with one foot in the gutter and one foot on the sidewalk and think that you can somehow get somewhere that way? No, Jesus says there's only two sides here. God's side, the devil's side.

And if you're not with me, you're against me. This is just the problem today is that there are so many people and there are so many Christians who want to be neutral in the spiritual thing. Now, it's one thing to be neutral politically, but you cannot be neutral spiritually.

You cannot be and say, well, I'm not going to choose sides. Because I enjoy the world and the flesh and the devil. I enjoy those things, but I still want to go to heaven.

I want what God has. I want the peace and the forgiveness that comes from God. But I want to enjoy what the world offers.

Jesus says you can't have it both ways. Choose who you're going to serve. If you're with me, then you cannot be against me.

And he who does not gather with me scatters. What is Jesus gathering? He's gathering souls. Remember, he's preaching to build the church, to build the kingdom.

And he is gathering souls. He's gathering people, not just for the sake of people like modern preachers do, but souls for eternity, souls for the kingdom. And Jesus says if you're not actively working towards the gathering of souls, then you are scattering.

Now, that's a shocking thought. Because I think the vast majority of Christians say, well, you know, I'm not preaching the gospel, but I'm not preaching against the gospel. I'm not witnessing, but I'm not witnessing against.

And Jesus says, no, you need to decide. Either you're witnessing or you're not. Either you're gathering or you're scattering.

But clearly, he's saying there is no middle ground. There is no neutrality. Now, why does he say that here? Because it is in the context of the fact that we're involved in a spiritual war.

You see, when we're not at war, then there are all sorts of different rules. But when we're at war, and you recognize that the government has been saying for some time that this battle with COVID is a war. They're using wartime language.

They're using wartime legislation to fight this thing. In other words, what we have here is something which is at a different level to just ordinary day-to-day life living. We're at war.

Our nation is at stake. Our lives are at stake. The economy is at stake.

And the war is with the virus. Unfortunately, the war seems to have tended up between people. But you can... That's not the point I'm trying to make.

The point I'm trying to make is if we're in a war, on a war footing, if we're saying we're not in peacetime right now, but we're at war, there's an intensity. It means that resources need to be shifted from one area to another area. It means that there needs to be a focus and a dedication.

You can't go to war half-heartedly. You can't go to war and say... And you remember Israel tried that. They went to against the city called Ai.

And they said, oh, it's a small city. We'll just send out a couple of thousand guys. You know what happened? They got beaten up horribly.

War has to be an all-in effort. And Jesus is saying, we're at war. Not against COVID or against whatever.

We're at war against the devil. He's at war against us. He is plundering.

He's building His kingdom. He's gathering souls. And if we are not on Jesus' side, plucking souls from hell, plucking souls from darkness, from Satan's power, then we are on the other side.

There is no neutrality. The question is, where are you at today? Verse 24. Here's another event.

And again, we read these things in isolation. And I see I'm running out of time. Verse 24.

When an unclean spirit, a demon, goes out of a man, he goes through dry places seeking rest and finding none. He says, I will return to my house from which I came. And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order.

Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. And they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that man is worse than the first.

Now, I think you get the picture. I don't need to go into details as far as these demons are concerned. But again, we tend to apply this to demons only.

And yet there is a principle. And I believe that that principle is more relevant to us this morning than the specifics of a demon being thrown out and nothing being put in its place. Now, what is he... Let me just connect it with a previous story.

What is Jesus saying in the light of what has just happened? He's saying, I've cast a demon out of this man. If this man does not fill his house with something else, then the demons will come back. Now, what is it that this man needs to put in its place? Well, who was in his house before? His body.

Who was in his... Remember, body is temple, a house, a tent. So who was in his house before? The devil. Now he's thrown out.

He says he's going to come back. You better put something in his place. And it's no good putting another devil in there because he's not going to stand against another devil.

You have to put one who is stronger than he. In other words, you need to put the Lord in his place. And when the Lord occupies that house, can the reverse of the story of the strong man happen? If a stronger man occupies the house, can a strong man come and take possession of the house? No, he cannot because he is weaker.

And that's what Jesus is saying. Is this no good just casting out demons? But those people need to be inhabited by the Spirit of God. But I think that the principle applies not just to those of us who may have been demon-possessed, but those who are unbelievers, unsaved, who filled our lives with sin and with the flesh and with the things of the world.

And then we turn to the Lord and we repent of all of those things. We get rid of all of those things. But we don't fill the house again with the Lord.

So now the house is swept and it's clean and it's empty. We're not doing the stuff that we used to do, but the house is empty. The stuff will come back unless you fill the house with the Lord.

That's the point. And folks, that's why so many Christians struggle in their Christian life. Because, yeah, they turn away from sin and they, and often in their own strength, by their own willpower, are able to clean up their act, able to get rid of habits and addictions and stuff in the world.

But in fact, they've not filled their house, their life with God, with the Word of God, with the Spirit of God. And so the house is empty. And as much as the principle of a stronger man being able to conquer a strong man, here's another principle.

In the spiritual realm, there is no room for a vacuum. We know that that's a principle in natural science, that nature does not tolerate a vacuum. If you suck the air out of something, then nature will try to put air back or something back in there.

So you put the thing under the water and if there's a little hole, water will fill back in or air will fill back in. In the same as true spiritual, we cannot have a spiritual vacuum. And that's the problem as many Christians are living in spiritual vacuums, or they are spiritual vacuums.

Yeah, they've thrown out the bad stuff, but they've put nothing in its place. And what's going to happen is the bad stuff and even worse is going to come back again. We need to fill ourselves with the things of God.

You see, when we're struggling with specific issues, whether it be addictions or lifestyle or ways of thinking or whatever it is, you can stop thinking that way. You can stop living that way. But unless you fill your life with the Lord and fill your life with the word of God, those things will come back again.

When you wake up at night, those older brothers who struggle to sleep at night, and all sorts of thoughts come into your mind, it's no good pushing those thoughts out and saying, well, I mustn't think about this. I mustn't worry about that. I'm, you know, I must just push these things out.

No, it's no good pushing them out. You need to fill your mind. You need to fill your heart with the word of God.

And when He occupies the house, nothing else can come in. You see, we're tempted when we're empty. I'm sure we've all heard a thousand times you shouldn't go grocery shopping on an empty stomach.

Why? Because you're hungry. You're going to buy whatever you see. And folk, if you're going to get into the world tomorrow when you go back to work on an empty soul, you're going to buy whatever the devil has to offer.

But if you filled yourself with the word of God and with the goodness of God and with Him, you will have no appetite for those things. There is no vacuum because there's a fullness. I've come to give you a life and life in abundance to fill us with Himself, with His goodness, with His grace, with His love, with His mercy, with His word.

And when I'm filled with those things, there's no room for the stuff of the world. So many Christians try to stop doing certain things, but they love those things. Stop trying to stop doing things.

Now, I know there's a lot of noise, so let me say it again. Stop trying to stop doing things. Start doing the right things.

Start thinking on the right stuff. Start filling your heart and your passions and your desires with the right stuff. And if you do that, there'll be nothing left, no room left for what the world has to offer.

You see, I think that most of us spend, and I know I'm over time, I'm closing. I think that most of us spend so much time fighting the temptations, but in fact, we haven't dealt with the first problem, and that is that

there's something within us that makes us vulnerable to those temptations because there's an emptiness. I haven't been satisfied by Jesus.

My heart and mind is not filled with His word. He is not everything to me, and so I'm looking for something more. I'm looking for something else because I've not found it in Jesus.

No, He is everything. Don't just sweep your house. Fill it with the right kind of stuff.

Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that Jesus is the stronger than the strong man, that He is the one who is able to overcome. And Father, we thank you that you've given to us the means to overcome and to live lives of victory, that we don't have to be beaten up and driven by the devil and by temptations and by the flesh and the world.

Lord, that we can live lives of victory and overcoming when we're walking in you and walking in the Spirit, when we're filled with you and your word, with your goodness. Lord, I pray that you'd help us to deal with the vacuums in our own hearts, those vacuums, Lord, that we're trying to fill with worldly stuff. But Lord, help us to fill it with you.

Thank you, Lord, for the victory that Jesus gained for us at the cross of Calvary. Thank you, Lord, that He demonstrated again in this miracle and that He demonstrated in our lives His power and your power to overcome. And so, Lord, I pray that you'd help us to find this true in our lives, not just... And I know, Lord, maybe it's a little confusing because we've dealt with so many things this morning.

And I pray, Lord, that we may go home and meditate on these things and that your word may find its place in our hearts. And Lord, that it may find a place in our living. I pray in Jesus' name.

And so, Lord, as we come to your table, I pray for your presence. I pray for your blessing. And I pray, Lord, that as we remember what Jesus did, not just that He paid the price for our sin, but that He gained the victory over the sin, death and the grave and over the devil and that He is the one who is stronger and that He proved that by the resurrection on the third day.

And so, Lord, be present amongst us now as we come to your table, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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