THE ENMITY

Part Three: The Strong Man

Captivity Is Not Ownership

A Devotional by Pastor Carl Toti

Date: _____ Day: _____

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 12:25–29 (NKJV)

"Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house."

Key Verse: *"Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house." (v. 29)*

REFLECTION

There is a kind of robbery where nobody knows they have been robbed. Picture a house at two in the morning — lights off, doors locked, alarm set, everybody sleeping peacefully because everybody believes the same thing: we are safe. But someone else is already inside. He isn't breaking a window or tripping the alarm. He's moving quietly from room to room, taking a little here and a little there — the warmth out of a marriage, the courage out of a heart, the hunger to pray. And nobody wakes up saying, "We've been robbed." They just make coffee, go to work, come home, and call it Tuesday. That is not merely a crime story. That is the human story. Before Christ, we were not neutral people making a few bad choices — we were living in a house occupied by a "strong man." And the most sophisticated captivity is the kind that feels like freedom. The enemy doesn't have to wreck your life with rebellion if he can simply satisfy you without God. Jesus, however, did not come to make us more comfortable in captivity. He came as the Stronger Man — to bind what we could not bind, and to carry the captives out.

1. The Room — You Can Live in Captivity and Call It Home

The tragedy is not simply that the strong man has a house. It's that people can grow so accustomed to that house that captivity starts to feel normal. You don't have to be an addict to be captive. You can be moral, successful, educated, happily married, and financially secure — and still be living without Christ. The devil doesn't need to destroy you if he can satisfy you without God. The most dangerous captivity is the one you've lived in so long you've renamed it normal.

Big Takeaway — The Room: You may have been in his house, but you were never his to keep. Comfort is not the same thing as freedom — and normal is not the same thing as free.

2. The Rope — Somebody Stronger Has Entered the House

Jesus never denies that the strong man is strong. He simply announces that Someone stronger has arrived — and bound him. The issue was never whether the enemy has power. The issue is whether that power has been restrained by a greater power. From Bethlehem to the wilderness to Galilee to Calvary to the empty tomb, Jesus moved through enemy territory not to negotiate, but to conquer. Christianity is not God teaching the hostages how to overpower the kidnapper. Christianity is the Stronger Man entering the house.

Big Takeaway — The Rope: The Gospel is not primarily about how strong you become. It's about how strong Jesus already is. First the rope, then the rescue — we don't defeat the enemy so Jesus can win; Jesus has already won, and we stand in His victory.

3. The Rescue — Jesus Bound the Strong Man Because He Came for You

Nobody ties up a strong man just to leave the house untouched. On D-Day, the war was far from over — Hitler was still alive, men still died for another eleven months — but the trajectory of the war had changed forever. That's the ministry of Jesus. Bethlehem was a beachhead. Calvary was victory through apparent defeat. The resurrection was heaven's declaration that death could not hold the invading King. We live between D-Day and V-Day: the decisive battle is won, the final consummation is still coming, and the strong man has been bound even though you can still hear him rattling the door. A child yanking on a locked cabinet doesn't mean the lock has failed — it means the lock is working exactly as it should. Stop confusing rattling with reigning. Stop confusing noise with authority.

Big Takeaway — The Rescue: Jesus didn't enter the house because He wanted the house. He entered because He wanted you. The plunder is liberation — addiction, shame, fear, bitterness, and self-sufficiency may have held you, but what held you does not own you.

BIG IDEA

The devil may have held you hostage, but he never had the right to own you. Jesus came to bind the strong man, invade his house, and carry the captives into freedom. You were trapped in the Room. Christ brought the Rope. And now you are living in the Rescue.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank You for entering the house I could never break out of on my own. I confess that I have, at times, called captivity 'normal' — settling for comfort instead of contending for freedom. Thank You that You did not come to negotiate with the strong man but to bind him, and that Your victory at the cross and the empty tomb is already decisive. Where I still hear the enemy rattling the door — in my thought life, my relationships, my habits, my fears — remind me that the noise is not the same as authority. I was never his to keep. I am Yours. Carry me further out of that house today, and make me someone who helps carry others out too. In Jesus' name, Amen.

ACTION STEP & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Where in your life has captivity quietly become "normal" — a room you've furnished and settled into rather than one you're asking Jesus to free you from?
2. What is "rattling the door" in your life right now — a temptation, a fear, an old pattern — that you've been treating as reigning rather than merely rattling?
3. This week, take one concrete step that lives out "I was never his to keep" — a conversation, a confession, a boundary, or a habit you replace with prayer.

NOTES & JOURNALING