

Sunday, January 21, 2024 | The Road to Redemption

Week 9 | Luke 11:14-28 | "Liberation vs. Subjugation"

Last week, we finished unpacking a *two-part* sermon on the perfect prayer. In part one, we learned the seven *principles* that make it up: the *Benevolence* Principle, the *Reverence* Principle, the *Acceptance* Principle, the *Sustenance* Principle, the *Repentance* Principle, the *Lenience* Principle, and, lastly, the *Guidance* Principle. And then, in part two, we studied the two primary features of the perfect prayer: a correct *disposition* before God—i.e., prayer ought to be bold—and a correct *perception* of God—i.e., when we pray, we ought to think of God as our Father.

Today, we'll be talking about *exorcisms*. Hollywood has some faulty assumptions when it comes to this sort of thing. Movies so sensationalize exorcisms that they make it seem like the Devil and his demon horde are on *equal footing* with God and the angels. In reality, Satan has *never* once triumphed over the Lord. Since Christ's arrival, he's lost many to God's unstoppable forces. Time and again, the Kingdom of God has infiltrated the kingdom of Satan and rescued soul after soul. Thus, contrary to what might be portrayed on screen, biblically speaking, exorcisms are *undeniable proof* that the powers of darkness have been *decimated*.

But if that is so, why are so many still *enslaved* to the dark? Because humanity loves darkness rather than light (Jn. 3:19). Though Satan cannot hope to win against Christ, mankind is still prone to embrace unrighteousness, sinfulness, and wickedness. And so, while the forces of darkness could be easily defeated by God, we often sabotage his rescue operations. Though the door of salvation is open to all, sadly, many choose *subjugation* over *liberation*.

Which will you choose?

Two kingdoms are being contrasted:

i. **God's kingdom liberates. Satan's kingdom subjugates.**

READ: Luke 11:14-20 (ESV)

¹⁴ Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. ¹⁵ But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons," ¹⁶ while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven.

¹⁷ But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. ¹⁸ And if Satan also is divided against himself,

how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. ¹⁹ And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁰ But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Notice that Jesus' ability to cast out demons was not questioned, even by his enemies.¹ Remarkably, however, you had those who questioned Jesus' character, but then, on the other hand, some demanded more miracles. For some, the miracles were fine, but the miracle worker was not, whereas, for others, the miracle work was fine, but the miracles were not. Was there ever a more divided group of people than these?

Where does "Beelzebub" come from, and what does it mean? There's a close parallel in 2 Ki 1:2-12. However, in that context, the word is actually 'Baal-zebub,' explicitly referring to a Canaanite god. The Hebrew that makes up the name, literally translated, means the 'lord of exalted dwelling.'² The Jews' word for "flies" sounded similar, and so they started calling the Canaanite's god *Baal muiōn* "lord of the flies" or "lord of the dung heap," an obvious way to demean their idol.³ Regardless of its etymology, the term was used by Jews as another way to refer to Satan. Thus, the point in saying that Jesus was casting out demons by the power of "Beelzebub" was to accuse Jesus of being in cahoots with Satan.

But Jesus points out logical fallacies in such an accusation. **First, it is illogical to claim that Satan would ever perform exorcisms.** A house divided cannot stand. **And second, it is irrational to argue that the Devil would use, of all people, Jesus Christ.** That would be like employing a flashlight to make it *darker*. "Why would Satan deputize Jesus to wreak havoc in his own domain? It should be obvious that exorcisms are evidence of God's assault on Satan's powerful grip on human beings."⁴

The same "finger of God" that enables their "sons" (a reference to the apostles and the seventy-two disciples—e.g., Lu. 9:1-9; 10:17-20; cf. Mat. 19:28) to cast out demons enables Jesus. These exorcisms prove that the "kingdom of God has come upon [them]." If others were performing miracles for God, who's to say that Jesus was not? If you cannot deny the

¹ Morris, Leon, *Luke*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, (Grand Rapids, MI; InterVarsity Press, 1988), p. 215

² Garland, Clinton E., *Luke*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 2011), p. 481

³ Edwards, James R., *The Gospel According to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), p. 342.

⁴ Garland (2011), p. 482.

exorcisms of the disciples, you cannot refute the exorcisms of the one who commissioned the disciples.

Thus, since exorcisms prove that God's kingdom has invaded the Devil's domain, how will they respond? To answer that, Jesus gives his audience a parable about a “strong man” and “one stronger than [the strong man].”

ii. **Citizens of God's kingdom gather. Citizens of Satan's kingdom scatter.**

READ: Luke 11:21-23 (ESV)

²¹ When a **strong man**, fully armed, guards his **own palace**, his goods are safe; ²² but when one **stronger** than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. ²³ Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

Jesus words here in Luke 11 allude to Isa. 49:24-26:

²⁴ 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.

In the Luke passage, the Devil is the “strong man, fully armed” who “guards his own palace,” whereas Jesus is the “one stronger than [the strong man].” In the Isaiah passage, the Devil is the “mighty” and the “tyrant,” whereas the Lord is the “Savior...Redeemer, the Might One of Jacob.” With these exorcisms, the Lord is showing the people of Israel that Satan's power has started to crumble.

Paul put it this way in his letter to the Colossians:

READ: Colossians 2:15 (ESV)

He [Jesus] **disarmed** the rulers and authorities and put them to **open shame**, by **triumphing** over them in him.

Though the Devil stood as the mighty one, pillaging and plundering wherever and whenever he wished, One mightier than that old servant has come, and his name is Jesus. The Kingdom of God has invaded Beelzebub's domain, freeing the captives.

Consequently, anyone who opposes Jesus opposes God's rescue efforts. They were like the German collaborators who sold out their Jewish neighbors to the Nazis, effectively signing their executions in the process. People like the cynics who've questioned Jesus' exorcisms do not "gather" to save people; they damn them by "scatter[ing]" them. To be against Jesus is to actively oppose the most significant force of good the world has ever known.

So, what's the takeaway?

By disobeying God's word, we become a haven for devils.

READ: Luke 11:24-26 (ESV)

²⁴ When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' ²⁵ And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. ²⁶ Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first."

By obeying God's word, we become a home for blessings.

READ: Luke 11:27-28 (ESV)

²⁷ As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!" ²⁸ But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

When Jesus purges an "unclean spirit" from a person, they become (like a house purged of an unruly house guest) "swept and put in order"—e.g., Maniac of Gadara (cf. 8:25). But should the owner of that house not replace the vagrants with some other, more worthy tenet, those who were kicked out will, like the Sand people of Star Wars, "soon be back, and in greater number." Jesus' point here is that just because someone has been rescued from Satan's grips does not mean they cannot be enslaved once again. The only way to ensure that doesn't happen is to invite the one who was "stronger than the strong man" to make his abode. As Edwards explains, "Discipleship is not simply about eliminating bad habits, but about filling the void with Jesus himself. Hearing and obeying the word of God as it is present in Jesus transforms life according to the criteria of the kingdom of God—and where the kingdom is present, there is "No Vacancy" for other kingdoms, dominions, and lords."⁵

⁵ Edwards (2015), p. 349.

To be genuinely free from Satan's vices, we must be in-dwelt by Jesus Christ; he must make his home in us and we in him. Or, as the Lord would later say to the Eleven in the upper room, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing... As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." (Jn. 15:4-5, 9-11).

Freedom from evil spirits is only achieved by dependence on the Holy Spirit. True and lasting blessing comes only from obeying God's word daily.

Video Description:

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SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here:

Grace Pointe Baptist Church

12029 Eastern Ave.

Baltimore, MD 21220

Contact: info@GracePointeLife.com

Website: <https://www.gracepointelife.com>

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