

## Spirit Warfare (Luke 11:14-26)

Sunday school April 2, 2017

I want to call your attention to **READ Luke 11:14-26**. This passage starts with Jesus casting a devil out of someone who could not speak, and in so doing allowing the mute man to once again speak. There is nothing unusual about Jesus casting out devils; He has done that many times in Luke already. When He sent first the 12 and then the 70, one of the things He gave them authority to do was cast out devils. So His disciples had cast out devils too, and casting out devils was just part of a regular day's work for Jesus and His followers. This time however, His casting out a devil stirs up opposition. In chapter 6, He drew opposition from the Pharisees, the Jewish spiritual elites. This time, it comes at least in part from the people at large. Notice the end of verse 14 says, "and the people wondered," and verse 15 starts, "But some of them said..." So it's not just the elites that are criticizing Him this time, although He deals with them again at the end of this chapter. It is members of the people at large.

The people who criticize Jesus in verse 15 basically accuse Him of being on the wrong side of the spirit war. The name Beelzebub has both Greek and Hebrew roots, and it translates to "Prince Baal." It refers to the ruler of the evil spirits, and therefore it is another name for Satan. So when they say, "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils," they are accusing Him of fighting the spirit war on behalf of Satan. It's interesting that they don't question the exorcism. They do not seem to doubt the fact that the devil was cast out, but they do question the source of Jesus' power. What follows is Jesus' comments on casting out devils specifically, or spirit warfare more generally.

You can't see spirit warfare like you can see physical warfare (armies moving around, killing people, breaking things, and taking land), but it is just as real. It's not an accident that these comments on spirit warfare come right after He instructs His disciples on prayer. If you are going to engage in spirit warfare, you have to know how to pray. Every Christian is engaged in spirit warfare in some way. Some Christians today are fighting spirit warfare by just going along with whatever the enemy wants, but if we are going to flee from sin and resist temptation as the Bible tells us to do, we have to know how to pray. So today we are going to look at three illustrations Jesus gives about the spirit war that He and we are engaged in.

**Transition:** Let me HAND OUT OUTLINES. First illustration...

**I. Divided Kingdom** In verses 17-20, Jesus gives three logical arguments (arguments based on thought and logic rather than emotion) to counter the claim that He is casting out devils by the power of Satan. We'll take them one at a time. The first one is...

**IA. Satan Attacking Himself READ v. 17-18** It's not surprising that Jesus starts His discourse on spirit warfare with kingdom imagery because most major physical wars occur between two or more kingdoms, or nations or governments in modern language. Jesus' point is that the leader of a kingdom at war never orders his army to attack his own kingdom; he orders it to attack the other guy's kingdom. *Ask military veterans if they were ever ordered to attack Annapolis, West Point, Colorado Springs, or Washington D.C.* You might have accidents happen (friendly fire, an oxymoron if there ever was one), or you might get infiltrated (like the Islamic terrorist up at Fort Bragg a few years ago), or you might have soldiers go rogue and start acting against orders, but no leader would ever order an army to attack itself.

Yet it's amazing to me how often Christians attack other Christians. Paul dealt with this issue in I Corinthians 1:10-16. The church at Corinth was a church with a lot of problems. Both of the Corinthian letters preserved in scripture were more or less written to address problems in the church at Corinth. Yet of all the problems they had, the very first one Paul addresses is unity, not attacking one another. I won't read the entire passage, but I Cor. 1:10 says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." There are many other churches in this area that I don't agree with on many things (that's one reason I joined this church), but if they are preaching a clear gospel and doing the work of the Lord, I have better things to do than criticize them. Leaders don't order their followers to attack each other; that includes God (in our case) and Satan in the point Jesus is trying to make.

**Transition:** The next logical argument,

**IB. Jews Attacking Their Own READ v. 19** The phrase "your sons" refers to Jewish exorcists, or Jews who did or claimed to do what Jesus was doing, namely casting out devils. They only appear a couple of times in scripture, but they were well-known in this time and region. If you asked the Jewish exorcists, "by what power do you cast out devils?" they would also say "by the power of God," the same thing Jesus claimed. So by condemning Jesus, these critics are implicitly condemning their own people (fellow Jews) because they did (or at least claimed to do) the same thing by the same power. So in launching this attack against Jesus, the Jews were implicitly attacking themselves.

**Transition:** Last logical argument...

**IC. God Overpowering Opposition READ v. 20** There are two important phrases in this verse, and the first one is “finger of God.” The important thing is: it’s the finger of God, not the arms of God or legs of God. Let me give you this illustration. *put marble in palm of hands* This marble is small relative to me. It is easy for me to move it around. I can move it with even my smallest finger. If I try to move a pew with just my finger, I can’t do it. It’s too big relative to me in order for me to move it with just my finger. I will need to use my arms, back, and legs if I want to move the big pew. God is a spirit being. He doesn’t have a physical finger like I do, so this is a metaphor. Jesus’ point is: casting out devils is easy for God. It is hard to impossible for us, but it is easy for God because He is much, much, much more powerful than the devils He is casting out. When Moses was before Pharaoh in Egypt and things started happening the magicians could not duplicate, they said “it is the finger of God;” that’s Exodus 8:19. If his God can do that, which we can’t duplicate, that is probably only a small demonstration of what his God can really do. Never forget how powerful of a God you serve.

The other important phrase there in verse 20 is the phrase “kingdom of God.” That’s one of the key phrases in the entire gospel of Luke; Luke uses it 33 times, some of which we have already seen. It’s a deep phrase with many facets. In Luke 4:43, the kingdom of God is the message Jesus has been sent to preach, namely the gospel. In Luke 7:28, the kingdom of God refers to the New Testament body of Christ: “he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than (John the Baptist).” Here and in a few other places, it refers to Jesus Himself. Every kingdom has a king, and when He is with them THE KING of the kingdom of God is with them. So Jesus shows them the logical errors in their accusation that He casts out devils through Satan, and then gives them the alternate correct explanation: He is the King of the Kingdom of God who is fighting and winning against the kingdom of Satan.

**Transition:** The first illustration of spiritual warfare is one of kingdoms. The next one...

**II. Fortified Palaces READ v. 21-22** In the historical context of Jesus’ time, the “strong men” of verse 21 with all the goods and palaces were the Roman governors. I’ve mentioned before that the Roman empire only cared about two things: power and money, namely their power and their money. Their governors typically lived in luxurious, strongly fortified palaces. One of the ways they maintained their power and their money was by keeping the people they ruled over (the Jews in this case) relatively poor and weak. The Jews were not going to be able to overthrow their Roman governor: his army was too large and defenses too good relative to theirs. The only way that Roman governor would get overthrown is if someone else, probably someone outranking him in the Roman government, showed up with a larger army and more money. Then the strong man, the Roman governor, would get displaced.

Much of the world is still governed that way today. The person in power is the one with the largest army and most money, and that person will stay in power until someone with a bigger army and more money comes along and displaces him. The United States is somewhat of an exception to that norm, or at least that is the intention. The people in power in this country are there because of the will of the people as expressed through elections. They have the consent of the governed, to borrow a phrase from our founding fathers. We have factions in this country who don't want that to be the case. They want a permanent, separated ruling class that, for practical purposes, controls all of the power and money. Fortunately, there are enough people in this country who still believe the government should have the consent of the governed that they haven't gotten their way, at least not quite yet.

In the casting out devils context of this passage, the entrenched strong man is Satan, the palace is the possessed man that the devil occupies, and the stronger is Jesus. In verse 20, Jesus says He casts out devils with the "finger of God," meaning He is much, much stronger than the strong man He is displacing. Notice that, when He displaces the strong man, He doesn't burn down the palace. He just overcomes the strong man ruler and divides the spoils. Colossians 2:13-15 talk about Jesus triumphing over Satan when a person trusts Christ. That's the more general application of this principal to spirit warfare rather than just casting out devils.

**Transition:** When that triumph happens, the result is...

**III. Cleaned Place READ v. 23-26** Verse 23 implies that there are no neutral parties in spirit warfare. You are either fighting for the kingdom of God or the kingdom of Satan. The kingdom of God is the one doing the cleaning; the kingdom of Satan is the unclean. If you have done any physical cleaning at all, one of the things you learn is that anything you clean will eventually need to be cleaned again. We have volunteers who are scheduled to clean the church and fellowship hall this month; we had the same last month. Why do we need to clean it again this month if we just did it last month? Because last month is last month; it gets dirty again. I clean my bathroom thoroughly about twice a year. I last cleaned it on Christmas Day, so it is starting to get dirty again. I'll have to clean it again after final exams.

Spiritually speaking, the cleaning here happens at salvation. There's the daily forgiveness and cleaning we need to maintain fellowship with Him as well, but Satan getting dethroned from my life happened when I trusted Christ. I Corinthians 6:11 calls us washed, sanctified, and justified. With that understanding, verse 26 when misunderstood can bother you. What keeps Satan from coming back in and cause me to be in even worse shape than I was before I trusted Christ? When Jesus cleans us, He doesn't just leave us empty and unlocked. He leaves the Holy Spirit, who indwells us and seals us. The Holy Spirit, being God, is much, much, much stronger than Satan, so Satan can't get back in because the seal of the Holy Spirit keeps him out. It's a real blessing when you realize what you have because you trusted Christ.

## **Conclusion**

As a final thought, in spirit warfare one of the reasons so many Christians surrender so easily to the evil forces' attacks is because the world looks very powerful. Relative to us, it is. We need to remember that Jesus cast out these devils with just a finger. He is much, much, much more powerful than the evil forces, so for Him it is easy. Sometimes I wonder why God doesn't do something I want Him to do. I may not understand His reasons, but it is never because He can't do it. Never forget how powerful of a God you serve.