

CHRIST AND KINGDOM CONTROVERSY PART ONE LUKE 11:14-54 REV. CHARLES R. BIGGS

As Jesus teaches his disciples about what it means to love God and neighbor as oneself (10:25-42); as he teaches them how to pray (11:1-14), he begins to face greater controversy from the crowds and especially the teachers of Israel as he draws near to Jerusalem to die (9:21-22, 44).

Dr. Luke arranges his historical material in such a way to emphasize that as Jesus nears Jerusalem, so the opposition, particularly from the teachers in Israel increases and multiplies.

Jesus counters unbelief from the crowds in the first portion of our text (11:14-23) where men have the audacity to say essentially that He is the son of Satan rather than the Son of God. Jesus counters this blatant unbelief by teaching them the importance of a regenerated and believing heart through the work of the Holy Spirit (11:24-28). The crowds also ask for a sign and he tells them that the only sign that will be given will be the sign of Jonah and the Queen of Sheba (11:29-32).

The important implication of this passage for all people is that no one can remain neutral with regard to their opinion about Jesus. He is either the Lord of heaven and earth, the only hope of salvation sent from the one and living God, or he is of the devil because he was a liar and false prophet.

All who hear Jesus and witness his revelation (in person or through the Scriptures today) must recognize him through faith as the Lord that he is- -or be opposed to him and his Kingdom purposes with only judgment to anticipate in the future.

At the end of the passage, the teachers of Israel (the visible church of Jesus' time) are "lying in wait" to catch Jesus saying something that they could use against him in order to rid the world of him (11:53-54). As the Kingdom looms nearer Jerusalem in the Person and Work of Christ, so the controversy and opposition against it (HIM!) increases (11:29-54).

Let me say it again: ***No one can be spiritually neutral toward Jesus***; everyone must decide who he is and this passage in Dr. Luke's gospel is presented with that purpose or goal in mind for everyone. In addition to asking "***Who do you say that he is?***" is the related question of "***Who do you serve; God or Satan?***" Let us look at our passage together to find out why these two questions are very closely related.

I. “Son of Satan” or “Son of God”?

In previous sermons from Luke’s Gospel we have seen that a primary way of revealing that the Kingdom had come in Jesus was through **exorcisms**. Here we have yet another exorcism, but we dare not miss the point Dr. Luke is making in his repetition. Jesus’ Kingdom has come in power and authority from God and he is releasing the captives, the prisoners, those who are oppressed from Satanic bondage to sin, hell and death.

Jesus is revealing his absolute sovereignty and supreme sovereign reign over all things in the heavenly places and upon the earth. Because of the fall of man, the creation was subjected to corruption and futility and awaits the full restoration when Jesus returns. Jesus in his miracle-signs is showing that the restoration of creation is beginning now that the Kingdom of God has come in him! As the Apostle Paul teaches in Romans 8:19-23:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

CREATION BONDAGE UNDER EFFECTS OF SIN → MANKIND BONDAGE UNDER EFFECTS OF SIN → RESTORATION FREEDOM AND LIBERTY FROM THE EFFECTS OF SIN IN CHRIST!

Dr. Luke has just recorded for us Jesus’ teaching on prayer, and how our Lord ended with the glorious words:

^{ESV} Luke 11:13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Now Dr. Luke takes us to another scene where Jesus teases out the meaning of what it means for the Holy Spirit to be given to those who ask him. The Holy Spirit is given to men to make them alive while they are dead, to give them eyes to see and ears to hear, to unite them to Jesus Christ releasing them from their former bondage to sin, death and the devil, and to transform God’s people into the likeness of Christ. Let us read on.

^{ESV} Luke 11:14 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 Beelze-bul, the prince of demons," ¹⁶ while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven.

Here in the crowd’s response we see unbelief mixed with marvel, confusion mixed with misdirected hope to see more evidence of Jesus’ identity through signs. Compared to earlier occasions when the crowds have responded with marvel to Jesus’ exorcisms (Luke 4:31-37; 8:26-39; 9:37-42), now the crowds are increasingly more hostile to Jesus.

After many years of silence a man who was possessed by a demon that made him dumb or mute was able to speak! One wonders what were the first words out of his mouth (v. 14)?! Jesus has compassion and reveals the power and authority of the Kingdom that he is from God. Matthew records in his gospel that some ask if this is this the Son of David:

^{ESV} **Matthew 12:23** And all the people were amazed, and said, "*Can this be the Son of David?*"

But while some saw clearly what had happened and began to wonder if this could indeed be David's Son or the Messiah-Christ of God, for the majority of those in the crowd there was still great unbelief among the people (Matthew says that it was the Pharisees in the crowds who were blasphemously calling Jesus a son of Satan, cf. Matt. 12:24).

Some in the crowd said the miracle was performed by a demon (v. 15) while others sought to test him and ask him for more signs like this one (v. 16). In part one today we will consider Jesus' response to the claim that he performed miracles by Beelzebul and in part two we will consider Jesus' response to the request for signs and his response to the Pharisees, lawyers and scribes.

What was the purpose of Jesus' signs and miracles?

Let us be reminded of the purpose of Jesus deeds of signs and miracles in his Messianic-Ministry. The deed-miracles of Jesus were for the purpose of making the Kingdom known in the midst of a world (creation and mankind) affected by sin and misery. As we have learned in past sermons, the miracles showed that God is working through Jesus with power and authority to bring in the Kingdom: to release the prisoners from captivity and darkness, hell and the devil himself (cf. Luke 4:18-19; 10:17-20; Acts 10:38).

The Messianic deed-miracles or signs of Jesus from heaven were to manifest God's Kingdom rule and sovereignty over his creation. God was manifesting his sovereign rule over creation by beginning the restoration of all things that had been corrupted by the fall - beginning with mankind. The sign-miracles were to be a multi-media display of God's beginning of restoring mankind to fellowship with him and putting creation back in order.

In Jesus' first sermon (see sermon from Luke 4), we learned that Jesus' Messianic-Mission was about proclaiming liberty and setting free God's people who had been held in captivity by sin and misery.

^{ESV} **Luke 4:18-19:** "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*"

Jesus' Messianic-Mission is to "proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (To give freedom where there is slavery and bondage!) Yet many in the crowd here are not seeing this powerful witness

to His Messianic Kingdom, rather they are declaring that this is merely a diabolical trick of Beelzebul! As many did with John the Baptist before Him!

ESV Luke 7:33 For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.'

It is most important to understand that this is a threat to Jesus' true identity. Is he truly a prophet that has been sent from God to the people? Is this ministry of exorcism from God?

Beelzebul, or "Lord of the Flies"? Or "Lord of Heaven and Earth"

Beelzebul or "Baal-zebul" is the name of the god of Ekron in the Old Testament (2 Kings 1:2, 3, 6, 16). This is translated as "Lord of the Flies" and the name "Baal-zebul" was also used as the name of a Canaanite deity whose name meant "Lord of the Dwelling" or "Lord of the High Place".

In the Jewish Rabbinic writings called the *Mishnah Ba'al Zebul* had the meaning "Lord of the house" and this explains Jesus' use of "divided house" (v. 17) and the reference to Satan as "Master of the House" (cf. Matt. 10:25). By Jesus' time, the Israelites used the name to refer to a very prominent "Lord Demon" or to Satan himself.

If Jesus is not who he says he is, if he is not performing the powerful exorcisms by the power of God, then the warnings and instructions of Deuteronomy 13 are probably in some of the minds of the people (this also helps us to better understand Luke 11:53-54 where Luke records that the teachers of Israel are "lying in wait" to catch Jesus in something he says; they are seeking to find some way to charge him with blasphemy or false prophecy in order to have Mosaic means to put him to death):

ESV Deuteronomy 13:1-5: "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, ² and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' ³ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴ You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him. ⁵ But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery, to make you leave the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

If Jesus is NOT performing these miracles by God's authority and power, then he is doing these sign-miracles as a false prophet; this is the implication in the crowds' comments about Jesus doing these miracles through Beelzebul.

As Deuteronomy 13 teaches, if a false prophet performs signs and wonders and then teaches the people idolatry, then that prophet should be put to death because he has taught and led the people in rebellion against YHWH (which reminds us that Satan can perform "magic tricks" or counterfeit miracles; he also counterfeits Jesus' miracles so well that

without God's help even the elect could be deceived as other New Testament texts teach us, Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:8)!

The people do not deny here that Jesus is a *good* prophet and they do not deny that he is performing mighty miracles of healing and exorcism, but some are ascribing this power to one other than God the Father- - namely the Devil.

Here Dr. Luke shows this incident so that all men will ask is Jesus liar or Lord? Is Jesus false prophet or True Prophet of the Living God? Is Jesus lying about who he is (Perhaps he is a deceiver from Satan?!) Or, is Jesus the LORD whom the Living and True God has sent to make his Kingdom rule known, and proves it through his signs and wonder-miracles that only the LORD could do?!

All men must come to this place with Jesus. One cannot remain neutral; you are either for him and trusting him, or against him, turning away from him.

The Kingdom of God has come with power and authority in Jesus and men must submit to him as Lord and King. Jesus is the only hope of man and men cannot remain neutral with regard to him: They either believe and put their trust in him or they do not believe. To say Jesus is merely a good teacher or a powerful prophet (as some in the crowd were doing) is to miss the point that Jesus said clearly that all he did was from God and revealed the Kingdom of God (as C. S. Lewis pointed out so eloquently in *Mere Christianity*).

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.

It is especially interesting to note that in response to the crowds' unbelief, Jesus shows a sign-miracle of which they all seem to be unaware (and he does not mention it either). Simply this: Jesus "***knowing their thoughts***" responds to them (v. 17). Jesus reveals his omniscience or ability of knowing all things as one equal with God here, yet they do not realize it because their eyes are blinded and their minds are affected by sin that they do not recognize in themselves, and therefore cannot see Jesus for who he is.

Jesus is asking here in response to their comments about him doing miracles through Satan: "If I am casting out demons and destroying the works of Satan, and I too am part of Satan's Kingdom as you suggest (a mere witch or magician), then what would be my purpose to oppose demons when those are the fallen angels who hold man in Satan's bondage through their powerful oppression?"

In Greek, Jesus' response is called a "first class condition", that is, Jesus asks: "If this is really the case [that I am casting out demons by Beelzebul], then think what that really means" (Bock, pg. 318).

If I am the “Son of Beelzebul” or the “Son of Satan” or I am sent by Satan because I am casting out demons by Beelzebul (or I am trying to get you to follow a mere false god or idol), then why would I be performing an exorcism, destroying the kingdom of Satan that I supposedly represent?

Why would I be restoring the image of God in mankind that God has granted to man in order to glorify him, but has been affected by sin and misery?

Why would Satan himself endorse a civil war in his own domain (Green, pg. 456)? The forces of evil would not attempt to destroy their own evil kingdom that is bent on destroying all good- -not liberating men from bondage so that they can speak, and reflect God’s glory as they had been created to do.

We should recall that since the formal anointing of Jesus by the Holy Spirit at his baptism (3:21-22), Jesus’ Messianic-Mission was to face Satan and the minions of his Kingdom, releasing sinners from their oppression while opposing Satan’s Kingdom in order to establish His Kingdom in its place. As you might remember, Jesus’ first assignment on his Messianic-Mission was facing the devil in the wilderness to stand where Adam had failed in the garden (Luke 4:1-15).

Some implications of verses 17-23 that should be pointed out are that **Beelzebul is Satan**, Lord of the demons; that Satan is the head of a kingdom of evil, and that this evil kingdom is unified against the LORD and his purposes revealed in His Anointed One (Psalm 2).

Although Satan’s battle is a losing one, he nevertheless goes on seeking to establish the stronghold of his Kingdom until God intervenes finally to destroy him once and for all and to sentence him eternally to the lake of fire and brimstone (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:9).

In verse 19, Jesus pushes his argument further by saying that if even other Israelites who are disciples of Jesus destroy the evil works of darkness through exorcism (as they had been commissioned to do, see Luke 9:1, 49; “sons” in v. 19 has the sense of fellow Israelites who are Jesus’ disciples), then *they too* are in league with Satan, and of course the people would not have wanted to admit this association (they would all be false prophets according to Deuteronomy 13). It was understood at this time that when rabbis or other Jews performed exorcisms that it was a sign that God worked through them (Geldenhuis, pg. 329).

²⁰ ***But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*** 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 makes a clear statement that **he is from God** and therefore the kingdom of God has come upon the people; that is, God’s sovereign rule is being established by His Messiah-

Christ, and one way this is powerfully and authoritatively manifested is through demon exorcisms, giving proof of his power over the devil (cf. 10:9, 11, 18-19).

But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. - v. 20

Jesus is using the language of the “finger of God” as God showed forth his power in the Exodus. As YHWH delivered the people from bondage to Pharaoh, so Jesus is liberating the people through deliverance from bondage to Satan.

ESV Exodus 8:19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

As Pharaoh’s magicians knew that the finger of God was being revealed in Moses and the Exodus, so One Greater than Moses is revealing the finger of God in this ultimate and climatic Exodus from the bondage of sin and Satan. As the finger of God released the Israelites from Pharaoh’s oppressive slavery, so now the finger of God is releasing God’s people from one greater than Pharaoh, the evil one who holds God’s people in oppressive slavery to their sins.

In Psalm 8 there is also a reference to God’s “creative” fingers as Creator. By using this language of the “finger of God” Jesus is revealing himself as none other than the Creator and Redeemer of mankind.

ESV Psalm 8:3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place...

In essence, Jesus extends a clear call to repentance to the crowd: “If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons...” If I am NOT a liar, but I am the LORD himself, the Messiah-King-Anointed One, the long-anticipated hope of the Old Covenant, then know that the Kingdom has come upon you and you must repent and bow in submission to me.

Satan has bound sinful man to slavery and death. Jesus has come to set the captives free! The Book of Hebrews tells us more of God’s purposes in the Incarnation:

ESV Hebrews 2:14-16: Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,¹³ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Jesus’ Messianic-Mission was to bind the strong man, destroy his works, and rescue-redeem God’s people from slavery-bondage to sin, death, and hell. Bock writes: “What is at stake in Jesus’ ministry is a cosmic battle displaying the right to rule. Like a great war, the combatants are facing off with everything at stake...Jesus’ exorcisms signal the arrival [of God’s Kingdom rule in Jesus]” (NIVAC, *Luke*, pg. 318).

...But when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. -v. 22

Jesus has come to overcome the strong man and his enslavement of God's people (v. 22). It is interesting to note that the mansion and property that Satan guards and claims possession of (v. 21), and which Jesus must overcome in his God-given authority and power, is a human being. Humans created in God's image have become through the Fall the "mansion, house, castle, or claimed-property" of Satan, and must be delivered through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

Because the Kingdom has come there are only two allegiances: one to God and one to Satan; no man can be neutral (v. 23): "***Whoever is not with me is against me...***" Jesus is saying clearly here that one is either a son of the Kingdom of God, or a son of the Kingdom of Satan; one is either a child of God, or a child of Satan. As the Apostle Paul says more fully in Ephesians 2 describing fallen man:

^{ESV} Ephesians 2:1-4: And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience- ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us...

Those who are not with Christ are against him, and they are actually busy scattering souls and making them prey to the devil's wicked kingdom of bondage, oppression and death. In this passage, Jesus demonstrates clearly for all to see that He is who he says he is- -the long-awaited Messiah-Christ-Anointed One, the very Son of God and son of David (Luke 3:23ff) promised in the Old Covenant.

As I. Howard Marshall commented in his teaching on Luke's Gospel: "In this situation to refuse support to Jesus was not to take a position of neutrality but to join the opposition" (*The New Bible Commentary, Luke*, pg. 906).

"Whoever is not with me is against me..."

Geldenhuis wrote: "In the conflict against the powers of darkness there is no room for neutrality. He does not believe in Christ and follow Him, who does not along with Him oppose the powers of Satan; he is against Him and therefore a collaborator of Satan. Those who are not cooperating with Jesus to gather people into the Kingdom of God are engaged in scattering souls and thus letting them become the prey of the Evil One" (*Luke*, pg. 330).

In this passage, Jesus clearly demonstrates his sovereign power that only God has over the satanic demonic realm. Jesus shows his great power, but also his great omniscient wisdom as one who knows the thoughts of his people and can answer them wisely as he continues to do in the next few verses.

II. The Work of the Holy Spirit in Unbelieving Hearts

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."

Jesus teaches in this parable of the Kingdom that it takes more than a mere change of mind to be a disciple-follower in His Kingdom. Jesus teaches that it takes more than a mere exorcism of a demon to be a disciple-follower; it takes a work of God's Spirit.

One must have the Holy Spirit residing in them, and their house put in order permanently.

This reclaimed "property" or "house" must be filled with God's Spirit and power that has overcome the power of the evil one, and that will continue to help God's people to resist temptation and grow in our obedience to God through grace.

In the context, Jesus is saying that because there are only two kingdoms to which one is aligned: the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Satan, it takes more than a mere moral reform of "turning over a new leaf" to be delivered from bondage. One must literally be cleansed, and inhabited by *another*. The Holy Spirit must come and live in a person so that the person can be completely delivered from the evil master.

To illustrate this important regeneration-transformation rather than a mere moral reform, Jesus speaks of an evil or unclean spirit that departs from a person for a season, but still has access to return, and the ability to bring more horrible spirits of bondage with him (verses 24-26).

Jesus is illustrating that without God's sovereign power and authority over evil, not merely dumb-mute people are affected horribly by Satan's rule, but every human being who does not have the Holy Spirit is in danger of wicked bondage and slavery (e. g. Satan entered Judas Iscariot, and he filled the heart of Ananias). We should remember that every picture of sin's affects upon mankind whether it be lameness, or sickness or demon possession is a picture of the devastating effects of sin's bondage upon mankind.

Rethinking Demon Possession

We might want to rethink demon possession in light of this text and Jesus' "Demonology 101" in verses 21-26. Considering the topic of demonology might seem to be strange or "spooky" and I definitely want to say that this passage has not been given to us merely to satisfy our curiosity of demons. ***But what these scriptures teach us about man's sinful condition and the power, authority and glory of Christ's redemption should not be missed!***

Let me ask you: What do you imaginatively conjure up in your mind when you think of demon possession that is obvious for all to see? I will let you imagine and will not describe all of the things from films and pop culture that might go through your minds; stuff such as heads spinning, foaming at the mouth, or whatever (...Ok, I will)?!

If the devil masquerades as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:4, 14), if he can perform counterfeit-miracles (2 Thess. 2:8-11) and deceive many as the Master Deceiver (2 John 1:7; Revelation 12:9), can he not possess human beings in a way that would not be so obvious to others and definitely not look like what pop culture and film demonic possessions look like?

Could this Master Deceiver not possess some who show only subtle manifestations of evil that would fool others into thinking that their condition is not so bad? Or perhaps the manifestations would not be seen at all except in their neutrality toward Jesus Christ and His Kingdom?

We can conclude from this passage of Scripture that everyone who is not aligned with the LORD and his Anointed One Messiah-Christ, no matter how much they seem to have their lives in order, and their minds at peace and no matter how nice and religious they may seem; they can be potentially possessed because their allegiance is not to God's Kingdom! Even Dylan knew this basic Demonology 101:

*You're gonna have to serve somebody,
Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody.*

According to Jesus, you don't have to have a spinning head, to be obviously out of your mind necessarily, or foaming at the mouth to be possessed by a demon! Think about the term "possession" without the modifying "demonic" before it. What is possession? You can possess something that is not yours for example. Jesus uses a house for an example (vv. 17, 24): ***"I will return to my house from which I came."*** One can possess a house, that is, one can live in a house and not necessarily own it. Now all analogies are imperfect, but I hope this is helpful.

God has created every human being who has or ever will live. Every human being is God's creature; all mankind ultimately belongs to God. It is clear in Scripture that Satan is not equal with God, he is a created being.

According to God's sovereign purposes however, he has *allowed* Satan and his minions to 'possess' or occupy humans who do not rightly belong to him through faith. Satan lays claim to fallen mankind because of man's defiant opposition and rebellion against His Creator.

This does not mean that sinful man is not to blame for his sins, because he is still guilty against God for his sins. Why? Because sinful man actively and defiantly opposes His Creator with unmitigated rebellion according to Psalm 2:1-3; he willingly joins in demonic rebellion against the LORD. Sinful man desires to burst the bonds and cast away God's rule over them:

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his anointed, saying, ³ "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."

We must understand that part of God's present judgment upon unbelieving sinful man in his exchanging the truth of God's revelation in creation and redemption with a lie is "possession" or lordship of the worst sort! Remember Paul's teaching in Romans 1:24-32:

Romans 1:24-32: *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. ²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. ²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.*

What do you think this judgment upon God presently upon sin is? Is it not a possession of the worst sort- -a life that is lived in rebellion against the Creator and Lord of Heaven and Earth!? Romans 1 says that God "gave them over" in their rebellion, and they even know that their sins deserve judgment from God, but not only continue to rebel, but approve of other sinful rebels (v. 32). Sinful man is guilty before God for their sins, they cannot simply say that the "devil made me do it"- -but he is involved in their rebellion.

Romans 1 reveals a thorough, deliberate, well thought out and executed, sinful diabolical united effort of rebellion with the goal of dethroning God and opposing his Anointed One! This is mankind's seeking continuously to be "like God" as Satan promised our first parents they could sinfully strive to be!

Let me be clear as possible here: All you need to be potentially possessed is to reject Jesus Christ; let me say it in a softer manner: all you need to be potentially possessed is a disinterest of Jesus Christ; let me say it in an even softer manner: all you need to be potentially possessed is to think of Jesus as a nice teacher or prophet, but not follow him as God in the flesh himself, loving and obeying him by His grace; let me say it in an even softer, softer manner: all you need to be potentially possessed is to be a nice religious person (as the Pharisees were and that Jesus will later rebuke in Luke chapter 11).

This picture of demon possession (as well as the other pictures in Luke's Gospel) is for the purpose of revealing that God in his power and authority has come in Jesus Christ to release slaves from bondage! Are you enslaved?.

This picture of demon possession is also to display the heinous reality of who people really are as slaves to sin and death, in bondage to Satan, when they are still in their unbelief and sins, and have never believed upon the Lord Jesus Christ- -the only Deliverer-Redeemer of mankind!

Geldenhuyts wrote: “Such neutrality [toward Jesus and His Kingdom] is impossible; the human heart is inhabited either by Christ or by Satan, and cannot remain empty. The result is that, when the man does not set his life open to the Spirit of God, he practically invites the exorcised spirit to come back” (*Luke*, pg. 330).

Again as the Apostle Paul describes clearly this demonic possession of even the “nicest neighbor down the street who does not care so much for the gospel of Jesus Christ but does nice things” (whose head may not be spinning) in Ephesians 2:1-3:

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

The Apostle Paul calls mankind outside of Christ in this way:

- 1) Dead in trespasses and sins (not alive to God or righteousness).
- 2) Walking on the course of this world as a disciple-follower of the prince of the power of the air (that spirit that possesses or is “at work in the sons of disobedience”).
- 3) Because of bondage to the devil, they live in the passions of their flesh (they do what their hearts want them to do with no thought about the will of God).
- 4) They are by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

This predicament is known historically in Reformed theology as the biblical teaching of the depravity of man. This doctrine is sometimes misunderstood to teach that man is as wicked or bad as he could be; this is not the truth of this doctrine.

The doctrine of total depravity teaches that man is not necessarily as wicked and evil as he could be, and there are some more wicked and evil than others, but all men because of Adam’s sin are children of disobedience, and from the deepest parts of their hearts they are disobedient to God and fall short of his glory; they are servants of sin.

The *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 6 is helpful here:

WCF 6.2 By this sin, they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God,(1) and so became dead in sin,(2) and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body.(3)

(1)Gen. 3:6,7,8; Eccl. 7:29; Rom. 3:23. (2)Gen. 2:17; Eph. 2:1. (3)Tit. 1:15; Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10-18.

WCF 6.3 They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed,(1) and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation.(2) (1)Gen. 1:27,28; Gen. 2:16,17; Acts 17:26; Rom. 5:12,15,16,17,18,19; 1 Cor. 15:21,22,45,49. (2)Ps. 51:5; Gen. 5:3; Job 14:4; Job 15:14.

Perhaps it would be helpful to state this doctrine of total depravity or radical depravity more positively (if stating total depravity can be stated positively!). Man by nature does not love God and does not love his neighbor as himself. Sinful man does not seek after God, and he falls short of his glory. Man's best works of righteousness are as filthy rags and tainted with evil motives (Romans 3:9-26). Man was created to glorify God and enjoy him forever and he does not because sin has tainted his heart (affections), mind (intellect), and will (ability to choose that which is godly).

Man's only hope is God's mercy found in Jesus Christ alone! Man's only hope of redemption from his total or radical depravity is through a sovereign work of power and authoritative grace like Jesus reveals in the man who had a mute demon.

As Jesus powerfully and authoritatively releases the man from demonic possession, so he also powerfully and sovereignly by his grace regenerates us and makes us alive while we are still dead and demonically "possessed".

This demonic-depravity predicament should make us all glory in the power and authority and "Christ-ness" of Christ! Jesus is the King of Glory, one with the Father, Lord of heaven and earth, and all authority in the heavens and upon the earth has been given to him (Matt. 28:18-20) so that he might continue to release the captives, the prisoners, yea those "possessed" and bring them back to peace and communion with God – released from sin's dominion, fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15), and the devil's oppression. As Paul goes on to say in Ephesians 2:4ff:

ESV Ephesians 2:4-10: But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved- ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Only JESUS can bring about this permanent change from within man- -only Jesus can release the captives from this strongman's grip and hold upon them! Now this might paint a bleak picture of humanity under the bondage of sin, and it should (total depravity or radical depravity is not pretty or popular!); but it should also paint a glorious picture of Jesus Christ his love, power and authority over the forces and stronghold of one we could not face in our own strength. As Martin Luther said eloquently in 'A Mighty Fortress Is Our God':

*Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing,
were not the right man on our side,
the man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabbaoth, his name,
from age to age the same,
and he must win the battle.*

Only an authoritative and permanent rebuke of evil by Lord Sabbaoth Jesus Christ will put a person's "house" in order and prevent man from becoming even more evil. Until Jesus takes lordship over a person through the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit, the person is still the slave possession of the evil one (cf. Matt. 16:23; Mark 4:15; Luke 22:3; John 13:27; Acts 5:3)! The Apostle Paul uses the language of a Kingdom transfer in our redemption found in Jesus:

Colossians 1:11-14: May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,¹² giving thanks to the Father, *who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.*¹³ *He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,*¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The Apostle Paul before King Agrippa describes his ministry in this way remembering and testifying to this Damascus Road revelation (Acts 26:15-18):

And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'¹⁶ But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you,¹⁷ delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles- to whom I am sending you¹⁸ to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Luke teaches in the Book of Acts, chapter 26, verse 18 that God delivers or redeems his people releasing them from the power of Satan in order to serve God so that they may be sanctified by faith!

The Bible teaches that God releases a sinful prisoner from captivity, once he has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, he seals that person with the eschatological down payment of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14) and that person is a Temple of the Holy Spirit (that is they are "possessed by the Holy Spirit) with no possibility of ever becoming inhabited by evil demonic possession again!

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 6:19-20:** *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

^{ESV} **Luke 11:13** *If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

These scriptures today in our sermon reveal yet another aspect of God's all-comprehensive and gracious gift of his Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). God through His Spirit regenerates those who are in bondage to death, hell and the devil and makes them alive while yet dead, and unites them to Christ and sits them victoriously with Christ (**safely**) in the heavenly realms! This is salvation by grace and not by works that can merely lead to more demonic oppression and sinful bondage!

What do I mean by this? This passage teaches that sometimes men's best moral reforms will last only a season with additional evil that can manipulate and make the person twice as bad as before. As the Apostle Peter wrote about those who had experienced great works of God in the covenant, but had not been regenerated:

ESV 2 Peter 2:20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

As theologian Leon Morris warned soberly about this passage: "When anyone gets rid of an evil spirit but puts nothing in its place, he is in grave moral danger. No one can live for long in a moral vacuum. The kingdom of God does not bring about such a vacuum but a victory over evil such that evil is replaced with good and with God" (Luke, pg. 218).

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!"

ESV Luke 11:28 But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

Conclusion

When we as God's people realize the great power and authority of Jesus in our salvation, our gratitude for his grace increases as we live. When we realize that our condition was just as bad if not worse than the demon-possessed mute man, and that we had no power to change ourselves, then we understand just what the gospel is all about. We begin to understand the depth, and width, and height of the love of God in Christ together with all the saints (cf. Eph. 3:18), and the unbelievable great power to those who believe!

There have been books written in history of those who have known oppressive servitude and slavery, and have experienced a redemption that is beyond belief.

These people in these real stories have lived their entire lives appreciating the freedom or liberty that has been granted to them knowing what it was like to be in bondage. These people reflect upon and are grateful to those who rescued and redeemed them. This is how the Christian community is to believe and live.

Through the Word of God we are told the story of how we were slaves, the very children of the devil himself, and God in Christ so loved his people that he sent his only begotten

Son to rescue and redeems us from a power and authority that was holding rightful claim and possession of us.

We too, should live our lives gratefully considering the great Exodus of Redemption that we have experienced in Jesus Christ. How we who were dead in trespasses and sins have been made alive while yet dead (Eph. 2:1-10). How we who were enemies of God, while still his enemies, was reconciled and peace was made because of Christ (Rom. 5:1-11). How we who were in dark bondage and deep slavery to sin, death and the devil, the Light of the world shone into our hearts and gave us Life and life more abundantly in Jesus (Heb. 2:14-15; John 1:4-5).

How we who were not seeking God, when our throats were open graves, our tongues deceived and the venom of asps was on our lips, while we were swift to shed blood and knowing no peace with God and man, and had no fear of God, God provided the righteousness he required of sinful man in Jesus Christ; God put forth Jesus as a propitiation for our sins in his precious blood (Rom. 3:9-26). How we who were part of the kingdom of darkness by virtue of our birth were transferred by God's power and authority into the Kingdom of His Beloved Son (Col. 1:13-14).

It is through the Word of God and through the keeping of God's teaching in his word that we are saved by Christ. It is through the hearing of the Word of God that the Spirit uses to regenerate sinful and depraved mankind and bring them into a glorious communion of love with God the Father and His Son.

It is through the Word of God and our obedience to it that God continues to work in us what is good and pleasing and to make us more like Christ. As we are released and redeemed in our once and for all regeneration and justification by faith alone in Christ alone, so we are continually released and redeemed from our bondage to sin as we hear and obey the Word of God rather than our fleshly desires and whims of our former evil master.

Jesus says that the greatest blessing for all people to understand is that "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

When Jesus tells the story of slavery to the Pharisees elsewhere in John 8, they are unaware of their sinful bondage and even have the audacity to say to him (apparently forgetting the Exodus from Egypt): "***We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?***" (cf. Luke 3:7-16)

Jesus responds by reminding them of the truth of their bondage and point them gracious to their only hope:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

³⁷ *I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.*

³⁸ *I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."* ³⁹ *They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be*

doing what Abraham did,⁴⁰ but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.⁴¹ You are doing what your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father- even God."⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.⁴³ Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?

⁴⁷ Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

Who is Jesus? Who do you say that he is? Just as importantly: Who do you serve?
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Scripture Lesson

^{ESV} **Matthew 12:22-32:** Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. ²³ And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." ²⁵ Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. ²⁶ And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷ And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁸ But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ Or 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. ³⁰ Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me

scatters.³¹ Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.³² And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

Luke 3:7-18: He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"⁸ Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.⁹ Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?"¹¹ And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."¹² Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"¹³ And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do."¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."¹⁵ As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ,¹⁶ John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."¹⁸ So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people.