



Luke 11:14-23

"He Who is Not With Christ is Against Him"

14 And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled.

15 But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."

16 Others, testing Him, sought from Him a sign from heaven.

17 But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls.

18 "If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub.

19 "And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.

20 "But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

21 "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace.

22 "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.

23 "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

Have you ever been in a circumstance where someone despised you so much, that you could do nothing good in their eyes? No matter how obvious it was that you were doing a good work, they ran it down, attributed it to others, or did all they could to sabotage it out of malice or envy? Worse than that, has there ever been an occasion where you yourself refused to acknowledge that someone else had done something good and praise them for it because of your own bitter feelings about them?

Well if so, then you already have some insight into what is going on in these verses.

Jesus has done a great miracle here. He has cast a demon out of a man, a demon that kept him in bondage and unable to speak, and you would think that after doing that all men would speak well of Him. In fact, you would think that the people would say, this Jesus who John told us was the *Lamb of God who takes away the Sins of the World*, is the one who was to come – the Redeemer, the Messiah.

But instead, the Pharisees – for that is who Matthew tells you in Matt. 12:24 the "some of them" are – speak evil of Him. They can't deny that a demon was cast out, everyone has seen that, so they instead they say that Jesus was able to cast out this demon because He himself is working for *Beelzebub*.

Who is this Beelzebub? The first place we hear that name is in 2 Kings 1:3 where he is listed as the "god" of Ekron, a Philistine city. Baal-Ze-Bub literally means *Lord of the Flies* in Hebrew. Sometimes you'll see it rendered in some translations as Baal-Ze-Bul which means *Lord of Dung*.

Who would name their god that? Well, the answer is no one. The actual name for the God of Ekron was probably a Philistine title that sounded like the Hebrew for *Lord of the Flies* and the Jews called him that in order to ridicule their false god and expose him for who he really was. The bible tells you that "all the

gods of the peoples are idols, But the LORD made the heavens." (Psalm 96:5) so whether they are called Baal or Baalzebul or Zoraster or Krishna or Allah they are essentially the same – they are just tools used by the great deceiver, *Satan*, to lead people into Idolatry. The Jews realized that and after a while the ***Baalzebul*** just became a shorthand way of referring to the Devil who truly is the Lord of nothing but corruption.

So they are saying that Jesus is able to cast out demons because he is in league with the Devil. What hideous but sadly unsurprising blasphemy. To this day, the unconverted remain unshakeably prejudiced against Christ and His Kingdom. I myself remember only too well the many occasions that I saw Christians doing the work of advancing the Kingdom of God, spreading salt and light abroad, and I called it evil and spoke maliciously of it.

Others, we read saw this miracle and yet demanded more. That too is typical. You hardly need me to tell you that when someone is absolutely opposed to the Gospel **any** amount of evidence is going to be insufficient. I once had someone tell me that they would believe the Christian message if Christ came and told them it was true. But the fact is that *HE DID and they DIDN'T*. No amount of testimonies or miracles are sufficient to make men love and accept something they hate and deny. For that to happen the change has to occur *in here [heart] not out here [world]*.

Now, the argument that was put forward was pathetic and Jesus exposes it for the sham that it is. Satan is absolutely interested in keeping his property, and he is not going to give up so much as one person in bondage. Rather like Hitler, he would prefer to see his possessions utterly destroyed than liberated. He is also not stupid enough to wage war on himself, which is ultimately self-defeating.

Quick word of application here – I sometimes wish Christians would learn this as well. Far too often Christians attack the kingdom in the hopes of somehow advancing the gospel. For instance, they figure if they can just get the media to love them they'll be able to somehow use that to advance their message. So, for instance, after Franklin Graham told the truth about Islam following the 9/11 attacks the media was able to find plenty of Christian personalities who were more than happy to issue statements condemning him. Now if they think that the world is suddenly going to love them and the gospel because of that they are sadly mistaken. All they have done is to introduce division into the household of God. Don't you fall prone to that error – *a house divided against itself falls*. Condemn error, and heresy, and schism, absolutely, but remember that the kingdom of God is not advanced when its members rend and tear at one another in a vain attempt to please worldlings.

Jesus not only exposes how falacious their argument is He exposes their hypocrisy. When your children cast demons out it you said it was the work of God, but because I, whom you despise do this, you say that it is the work of the devil! ***Do you really want to carry on with this absurd argument that casting out demons is done by the power of Satan when your own children who have done this good work will immediately see it for what it is and judge you as a result? You fools are in danger of burning down the house just to make a bit of toast.***

Now at this point, Christ, far from simply condemning the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and moving on actually preaches the Gospel to them in verses 20-23! Far from hating them, His desire is still the salvation of all the children of Israel, even these Pharisees and certainly the others in the crowd.

So what does Jesus say: he tells them plainly that his miraculous casting out of demons is a sure evidence of the coming of the Messiah. Wake up O Israel! Good news! The KINGDOM OF GOD HAS COME NEAR! It is by the finger of God that Jesus does these things. There he is using a phrase that the scribes and Pharisees would immediately have recognized, it comes from Exodus 8:16-19

Exodus 8:16 So the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the land, so that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.' "

17 And they did so. For Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod and struck the dust of the earth, and it became lice on man and beast. All the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

18 Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not. So there were lice on man and beast.

19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had said.

What happened in that story? Moses performed a wonder before Pharaoh in order to prove that what he was telling him was the truth of God. The miracle was so great that even these pagan practitioners of the occult had to confess it was *The Finger of God*. But Pharaoh still would not listen and sadly neither are these hard hearted Pharisees. Both would rather be destroyed, that repent and believe the word of the Lord.

Jesus goes on in proclaiming the Gospel message. He talks about a Strong Man, fully armed, guarding his own palace, protecting his goods. The strong man is obviously Satan, but what is this palace? Well were do we find Satan dwelling in this fallen world? In the darkened and stony hearts of the unregenerate!

There he is secure, his goods are, so to speak, in peace. The unbeliever has no desire to be free from his dominion. He does not struggle against sin. He is a *slave to sin!* Paul puts it beautifully when he reminds believers that they were all in that condition at one time:

Eph. 2:1-2 "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience"

What can free someone from that terrible bondage? What can free you from the reign of the Strong man? Obviously you cannot free yourself, of yourself you have neither strength enough nor the desire to cast Him out!

How did Martin Luther put it in the hymn?

**For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.**

Who then can free us? Who is stronger than the strong man and able to overcome him, able to take the armor he trusts in, able to divide his spoil? Who can free the strongman's captives, and then make them something totally new and wonderful so that they will become gifts to the world. *There is only one who can do this:*

**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;**

What does John say is the reason why Christians were saved and can stand against their enemies? 1 John 4:4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, *because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

But will the Pharisees, have Jesus to be their Redeemer? No as Calvin puts it: they continue "in madly rejecting from the midst of them the inestimable grace of God. ... without any request from them, God appears as their Redeemer, while they do everything that is in their power to drive him away, and, when he is present and prepared for their salvation, refuse to give him a place."

Let me point out to you two different applications the last verse, the final gospel warning Jesus gives in verse 24 should leave you with. And let me plead with you on both these accounts:

- 1) Maybe you are hearing these words and thinking to yourself "Well I'm not a Pharisee, but frankly I just don't see any need to get all hot and bothered about Jesus. You can be a Jesus freak if you want to, but I'm just happy being sorta neutral" If so, I would urge you to look at the meditation in your worship folder:

"I would not like a bearer to go out of the place this morning without my having ... put to him the question, Are you treading in the old way which wicked men have trodden? "Ab!" says one, "I do not know." Do you want to know? I will help you to answer it. Are you travelling in the narrow way in which believers in Christ are walking? "I cannot say that," say you. Well, then, I can tell you without hesitation that you are treading in the broad way, for there are but two ways, the one the way of mercy, that leads upward to the chambers of peace, and the other the way of sin, that leads down to the gates of hell. Be not deceived, there are no neutrals here. Christ's word is, "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters." Do you say, "I take no part in this quarrel, I am not for God, and I am not against him"? Nay, then, out of your own mouth are you condemned. If you are not for God, who made you, then you have thrown off your allegiance and denied the rights of God to possess the creature which he himself has formed. You are in the wide and broad way. The Lord help you! But if you can not answer the question, I will help you in another way. Friend, did you ever experience a great change? Are you a new man? If not, you are in the old way, for the way of nature for every one of us is the old way, and none ever run in the way of righteousness, but such as are renewed by the interposition of the Holy Spirit."

- **C.H. Spurgeon**

Jesus makes it absolutely clear, you are either with him, or against him. There is no "none of the above" here. Its not an option God gives. God, the Son has friends and he has enemies, but he has no acquaintances. There is no spiritual Switzerland in between Heaven and Hell.

- 2) I have always wondered why so many Christians fall over themselves to be thought of as "moderates" when Jesus says he despises that more than anything else in the world: **"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth."** (Rev. 3:15-16)

Jesus wants, no much more than that, Jesus *deserves* fervent, zealous followers. He doesn't want half your heart – he wants all of it. Christians are you trying to serve two Masters? Jesus and the World? Jesus and the Flesh?

Luke 16:13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

What do you call someone who marries one individual and then goes after other lovers? Don't let the be the case with you:

love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength!