

What Jesus' Healings Mean

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[0 : 00] Take out your Bibles with me, please, and turn to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 11. We've been camped here for a while, looking at the Lord's prayer, or the disciples' prayer, and now we come to the next section.

Very interesting, as we're singing, I'm recognizing in these quote-unquote Christmas carols, because the theme of many of them relate to exactly the text we're dealing with today.

Fascinating. The last hymn we sang, written by Charlie Wesley, or Charles Wesley, if you don't know him as well as I do, he is such a wonderful writer, the way he puts the words together, and the theological depth with which he writes as well.

But come thou long-expected Jesus, born to set thy people free, which is exactly what we're going to be talking about. Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king, born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring, which is again what Jesus is going to explain by what he does in casting out a demon, which raises a controversy, which gives us the opportunity to ask the question, which Jesus will answer for us, what do his healings mean?

What do his, when he casts out demons, what is it, what does it mean? Jesus is saying it means much more than you think. And so that's what we're going to be looking at.

[1 : 54] We want to read the text first. I guess I'm supposed to douse the... so our candles don't take us hostage.

If you have Luke chapter 11, if you're able, please stand as I read from Luke chapter 11. We're going to read from verse 14 through verse 28. It's not the whole section.

The whole section goes through the end of the chapter. We're breaking it up here a little bit. Going to deal with one issue at a time. Luke chapter 11, verse... from verse 14 through 28.

Now, he, speaking of Jesus, he was casting out a demon that was mute or that caused muteness. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke and the people marveled.

But some of them said he casts out demons by Beelzebub or Lord of the Flies or more literally Lord of Dung, which attracts flies.

[3 : 00] So Jews are making fun of Satan. He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, the ruler of the demons. While others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven.

But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided house falls.

So, if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebub.

If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore, they'll be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods or his possessions are safe. But when a stronger man, a one stronger than he, attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.

[4 : 26] So, whoever is not with me is against me. And whoever does not gather with me scatters.

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 which I came from.

And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself. And they enter and dwell there.

So, the last state of that person is worse than the first. 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.

But he said, Rather blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.

[5 : 33] So reads the word. Let us pray. Father, guide us today. Some mysterious words here. Some things difficult to grasp at first.

But grant us eyes to see. Grant us words to explain. Help us to see what Jesus' point is and what his healings mean.

How significant they are. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. Signs, signs.

Jesus talks about signs. When Jesus did a miracle, it's called a sign. When Jesus cast out demons, it was a sign. A sign is something that signifies something.

The Gospel of John is written around that whole theme. John gives seven signs that Jesus performed that point to the fact that he's the Messiah.

[6 : 32] And not only the Messiah, but that you might believe in him and have life in his name. So the signs, in other words, lead to life if you read them rightly.

Signs. Signs. So I came across some signs this week. They give info. They give direction. You know, you read signs on the highway. It tells you to exit here. It tells you to slow down here.

It tells you don't go faster than this. And do we pay attention to those? I don't know. But sometimes signs are amusing. Outside of a car wash, it said wash and vacuum.

Senior citizens. Fifteen dollars. It's a good deal, I think, for some senior citizens. Another sign said restroom out of odor. That's probably good.

Another sign. Someone was putting something on the side of the road. The sign said free bed. Free one night stand as well.

[7 : 33] Night stand. Yeah, but it said night stand. Okay. Another sign said anyone caught exiting through this door will be asked to leave. So there. Don't do it.

Another sign kind of mixed up the words and said school free drug zone. I think it's the other way. Read a sign that said fishing for children only.

Limit three. No exit from burial site. Now that's true. No exit from burial site. Another one. I don't know if it was real, but it showed a lady holding up a sign.

And she was probably fighting for the green rights and all that kind of thing. It said stop killing volcanoes to make lava lamps. So, you know, that's a serious issue.

Signs. Sometimes they're silly and amusing. A sign signifies, like I said. John, as I said, the gospel of John talks about signs.

[8 : 38] The sign where Jesus raises a paralyzed man or feeds the 5,000 or walks on water or heals the blind man or the lame man or raises Lazarus from the dead.

All of those were true healings and miracles, but they were pointing to something greater. When he can make a blind man from birth see, he can make us who are spiritually blind see.

When he can make a lame man walk, he can make us who are unable to walk by God's word, able to walk by God's word through his spirit. When he can raise a man dead, four days dead from the grave, he can raise us who have been dead in our trespasses and sins to life.

Those are what the signs signify. And so we come today to a sign that Jesus does. And there's a question and a controversy. There are skeptics.

There are those who say we see that Jesus, Luke quickly records the miracle in verse 14. Doesn't give a lot of detail. Simply says he casts out a demon.

[9 : 43] The demon affected muteness in this person, limited him, held his tongue captive from speaking. When Jesus cast him out, his tongue was now loosed. The demon was cast out and man was able to speak.

People marveled. But there's two groups that had a problem with this. So you have the skeptics. They don't deny the miracle. They don't deny that Jesus cast out the demon.

There was no way to deny it. They can't. It happened. It was real. It was powerful. It was evident. But they do detest Jesus. And so they deny that this power came from God.

They attribute it to Satan. The issue here is not, is exorcism real? Are miracles of Jesus real? The issue is, does his power come from God or from Satan?

And it is clear from the scriptures that Satan can imitate. He can counterfeit miracles. They're not the same, but he can counterfeit.

[10 : 52] Remember the plagues of Egypt? They could copy and imitate a lot of the plagues. But then all of a sudden they got to some. They said, nope, this is the finger of God. Can't do it.

Over our heads. Right? So, in this case, I want you to note, he's not just talking about miracles, but here we're talking about an exorcism. An exorcism is different.

Satan might copy some miracles. He might copy types of extraordinary things. He can manipulate the environment.

Look at the life of Job, what Satan could do. Right? He can manipulate things. He has power, but he cannot do what God can do. So, here in an exorcism, it's different.

Casting out Satan. Casting out a demon. Jesus argues that's simply illogical. Why would Satan fight against himself? Why would he cast himself out? That's not deceptive in any way.

[11 : 51] That's harmful to him. Why would he give up the position that he had? Why would he give up the authority that he had? It's silly. So, the sign here is evidence that Jesus is from God.

Yet for many, though the sign shows it, for many, they will be skeptical. They will deny. They will dismiss it. They will say anything else but accept that Jesus is truly from God.

It's just like God has given evidence that he exists. God has given overwhelming evidence that he is creator. And yet, people will dismiss it.

They will deny it. They will hang on to other foolish speculations to try to argue against it. But Romans 1 says they are without excuse.

You cannot deny the evidence. You can try to explain it away. You can say you're an atheist or an agnostic. God doesn't believe you. Because you're not.

[12 : 55] You're simply suppressing the truth. So, same thing happens with these miracles. People don't want to say who Jesus really is. Because if he is who he says he is, that makes a big difference for my life and my destiny.

Huh? Okay. So, what do healings mean? So, let's get into this. So, how does Jesus answer this? And notice it says in verse 17, he knowing their thoughts.

So, they're just thinking this and Jesus knows. We often come across that phrase that he knows what they're thinking. How does he do that? How does he answer their unspoken things?

He knows. So, what does it mean that he casts out demons specifically? What's the significance? So, Jesus in essence gives two answers here to this skeptical question.

He gives an answer, first of all, in verse 14 to 22, that is a picture. He gives some parables. He gives some pictures. He talks about a kingdom. He talks about a strong man.

[13 : 59] All right? So, he gives some pictures that show us that it's a picture of salvation. When he is casting out a demon, it is a picture of his salvation, of his kingdom coming and taking from Satan's kingdom and rescuing those captives.

As we sang, right? Set thy people free. Born to thy people to deliver. Born to bring a kingdom. He comes as a king. Right? And so, he's coming into Satan's territory and he's plundering.

He's casting Satan out of one person after another after another. We think, why doesn't he just do it all at once? Well, no. That's not how he's going to work.

He's going to work one person at a time. Thank God he has worked in our lives. So, secondly, first answer is about the picture.

And then the second answer from verse 23 to 28 is a warning. It's really a warning. If you're not listening to me, if you're not applying my word, if you're not with me, you're against me.

[15 : 03] So, there's a second answer that really, one picture is positive about salvation. The other picture is, hey, if you deny this, if you're not with me, then you are against me and that's not a good place to be.

Because the unclean spirit can come back and bring seven others. If you're just cleaning up your own life and you don't have Jesus in your life, you're in a vulnerable position.

So, okay. Let's look at these one by one. First meaning, it pictures salvation. His response verse 17 to 22. It's a picture of salvation.

Picture of Jesus rescuing captives from Satan. Remember back in Luke chapter 4 when Jesus went into the synagogue and he took out the scroll of Isaiah.

He read Isaiah 61, which talked about he has got the spirit upon him. He's come to set captives free. Remember, that's his mission.

[16 : 07] He comes to set captives free. How does he do it? He does it by preaching and by invading Satan's territory and capturing lives, rescuing lives from Satan's hold.

Okay, so that's what this picture is. So, we see in verse 14, there's several, there's responses. He does the miracle. At the end of verse 14, it says people marvel. They're amazed.

They're wondering. They're surprised. Wow. So, that doesn't necessarily mean it's a positive thing that people marvel. They're just marveling. Wow. Ooh, wasn't that pretty? Isn't that nice?

Doesn't necessarily mean they're accepting Jesus. In fact, we find in verse 15 and 16, there's two other responses. Verse 15, there's those that slander him, that it's by Satan that he's doing this.

And then verse 16, there's others that are skeptical because they want more signs. That's not enough. They want more. In fact, for these people that seek signs, they'll all, it's never enough.

[17 : 05] They would want God to come in bodily form and show himself, and then they wouldn't believe it because he did that. It'll never be enough. They don't want to believe.

They refuse to be convinced. So, that question from verse 16, he's going to answer in the next section, verse 29 following. He's talking about the people with the signs.

Here we're dealing with those who slander him. So, how does he answer it? Verse 17. How does he refute this charge that he's doing it by Satan?

Well, he refutes it, first of all, by stating a general truth, a proverb, verse 17. He says, every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls.

That's just a general truth. That's just logical. If a house is divided against itself, it's not going to stand. That's silly. You can't have disruption. Abraham Lincoln used part of that phrase to talk about, let's get united.

[18 : 02] We can't be divided. We will tear ourselves apart, right? So, based on that, now he uses a logical argument. Imagine that. Jesus is going to use reason and logic.

He's going to talk about what makes sense. Let's think now. And I think if we read Jesus' words carefully, he's always making us think. In fact, by some of the words he's going to use, we've got to put our thinking caps on because this is kind of hard.

But at first he just says, hey guys, verse 18. So, if Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? If I'm casting out demons by Satan, that means Satan is casting out Satan.

That's silly. It's absurd. It's illogical. It's flawed reasoning. So, he goes on. Verse 19. Let's make a comparison.

If you're saying this is true, if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? In other words, you can't have it both ways, guys. You can't say I'm using Satan, but your sons are using God.

[19 : 12] If demons are cast out, let's be consistent. Who's going to cast out demons? Not demons. They're not going to work against them.

They're not going to destroy themselves. They're not going to cause their house to be divided. Satan doesn't work that way. He is deceptive, yes. He can counterfeit miracles, yes.

But he's not going to give up ground that he has. He's not going to give up captives that he has. Why would he do that? It makes no sense.

So, if he wouldn't do it, then how do your sons cast him out? Because there were Jewish exorcists. There were Jewish exorcists, and they were casting out demons too. It was a prevalent problem.

It's why they called Beelzebub, the gods of the other nations, were simply gods, not infected, well, infected, infused by demonic powers.

[20 : 14] Paul talks about that. When we offer things to, when we get involved in idolatry, we're actually getting involved in demonic activity. In our day and age, we don't want to deal with demons.

We don't want to talk about them because that's primitive. That's somewhere else. And so, Satan has blinded our eyes from seeing how much influence he really does have. And by the way, it's not something that we fear.

It's something we must be alert to and must guard, but there's not something we as Christians fear. Greater is he who is in me. He's not going to come and invade me, but he can deceive me.

He can lead me astray if I'm not alert and watch and have my armor on, right? The shield of faith. He throws the darts. What do I do? I believe what God has said. Okay? So, he talks about the inconsistency, and then verse 20.

Okay, so let's look at this logically. If Satan's casting out Satan, how shall his kingdom stand? If I'm doing it and your sons are casting out, then who's with God?

[21 : 25] How can you even determine that? So, finally, the other option is, what if I cast out demons by God? You want to explain it away, but what if it's real?

What if my power and my authority come from God? If I cast out demons by the finger of God, and this would get their attention because that's language from the Exodus, right?

As I said before, remember, God was doing the plagues, and then the magi, the magicians, those who had demonic powers, were copying some of those plagues, right?

Remember, they were copying them, which didn't make things better, by the way. You know, more frogs even. And so they got to one, and they couldn't do it.

They said to Pharaoh, it's the finger of God, which meant it's over our heads. Which plague was it? Anybody know? Gnats. They couldn't copy gnats.

[22 : 30] Weird. Weird. Weird. But that's the idea. If it's the finger of God, then here's the thing. If it is real, and if what Jesus has done is real, if Jesus really casts out demons, if Jesus is really who he says he is, and he has the power of God, what's that mean?

What's the conclusion? He says in verse 20, then the kingdom of God has arrived. It has come. It's not coming.

It's here. The kingdom has invaded. The king is here, and he's taking possession. That's what it means. If I'm casting out demons, that means I'm here, and I'm taking rule.

Every time Jesus did that, he's taking rule. He's saving somebody. And he's casting out the power that held them captive, and now he is ruling.

Come to rule in every heart. So what does all that mean? If the kingdom has arrived, what does it mean?

[23 : 39] If the kingdom has come, like we pray, thy kingdom come, cause thy kingdom to come, cause thy kingdom to intervene in our lives, right? Cause the power of your spirit to come.

Cause the power of your word to change people's lives. Cause your kingdom to come and rule in our hearts and change our hearts. What does that mean?

It means God is, Jesus is invading Satan's kingdom. Here's the next picture he gives, verse 21. He tells another parable. This applies to the same thing.

This is not something different. It's in the context of casting out demons. So listen to this parable. Verse 21. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe, or his possessions are safe.

What? The things that are his are safe, as long as he's guarding his palace and he's fully armed. But, verse 22, when someone invades, when a stronger man comes, when someone stronger than him comes and overpowers him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.

[24 : 59] Strong man and a stronger man. A strong man who has, who has control over his things. Someone else comes and invades.

Who's the strong man and who's the stronger man? I don't know. In the context, Jesus has just cast out a demon.

He, the stronger man, has just come and taken away the power of the strong man who was holding this mute man captive.

That's the context. The strong man is Satan. And as long as he's fully armed, what he holds, what he controls is safe.

That's true. But when a stronger man comes and attacks him, every time Jesus casts out a demon, he's attacking.

[25 : 58] And every time he takes, when he silences the demon, he overcomes him and he casts him out. What does he do? He takes away his power.

He takes away his arms. He has disarmed him. Jesus is the stronger man.

It is a picture of salvation. It is a picture of Jesus rescuing captives from Satan. Satan is overrun. He is disarmed and his spoils are divided. Listen to Colossians 2, how Paul describes our salvation.

Colossians 2, 13. You, you believers, who were dead, who once were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you were dead.

God made you alive. He woke you up. He saved you. He brought life where there was no life. He made you alive with him. Speaking of Christ, how did he do that? Having forgiven us all our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with this legal demands.

[27 : 09] We have failed the law. We have fallen short. We cannot keep the law. And so he's forgiven us. He's canceled that debt. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

Watch this. When he nailed those things to the cross, we are forgiven. Our debt is canceled. We are saved. But he did something else.

Watch what Paul says. Nailing it to the cross, having disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in Christ.

Who are the rulers and authorities? Who's the ruler of the demons? Beelzebul. The Lord of dung. That's not a flattering title, by the way.

You've heard Lord of the flies. Right? That's how it sometimes is translated. Lord of the flies. Which means what attracts flies? Dung.

[28 : 18] Right? Dead things. That's Satan's realm. That's how the Bible thinks of Satan. He's powerful, yeah, but he's just the Lord of dung.

To speak it rudely, they're calling him a turd. Wow. I kind of like that, though.

I kind of, I think that's, he's not someone, he is not someone to be afraid of. We can resist him. Now, we don't taunt him, but we can speak truth.

So, is this your experience? Has God made you alive? Has he rescued you?

Has he set you free? Do you experience new life? Have you been free? Hear this. This is what God promised in Messiah.

[29 : 21] Let's, let's take the Old Testament. What does the Old Testament say about Messiah? What will he do? How does it relate to what Christ is doing? Listen to Isaiah 53, the last three verses of that great chapter.

Isaiah says, Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief, speaking about his servant, speaking about the Messiah. When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring.

He shall prolong his days. The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul, he shall see and be satisfied.

By his knowledge shall the righteous one my servant, watch this, what will he do? He will make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

He does a legal act. He makes them to be accounted righteous by bearing their iniquities. Therefore, I will divide him.

[30 : 26] Watch this now. Here comes the language. Therefore, I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong. Remember that spoil?

What is it? Because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors, yet he bore the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors.

Speaking about Messiah who makes a substitutionary death, he dies on the behalf of others. He bears their iniquities. He bears their sins. By bearing their sins, he makes them righteous.

He takes away their sins and gives them his righteousness. And he divides the spoil. So remember the picture back in verse 22?

When the stronger man attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides the spoil. What's the spoil? According to Isaiah 53, the spoil is bearing your sin and making you righteous.

[31 : 32] That's what he does because he has taken you away from Satan. Colossians 1 also talks about when we're saved, what does the Father do? The Father transfers us.

He delivers us from the authority of Satan and transfers us into the kingdom of his Son. So we need to understand that salvation is an act of war.

Salvation is a saving not just from our sins but from our, the hold that Satan has on us in unbelief. He has a hold.

We don't necessarily know that. We don't think that. We don't know that we're held captive. We don't know that we're following, as Paul says in Ephesians 2, that we're following the prince of the power of the air. We don't know that we're doing that.

We think we're making our own choices but Satan has blinded us and so Christ's saving act is to come and rescue us from the domain, the authority that Satan has over us when we are unbelievers.

[32 : 39] So that's what Jesus is saying. That's why I cast out demons. This is war. The kingdom has come and the king is here and he's not going to let the other little king continue to vanquish and ruin people's lives.

So Messiah's victory is not an earthly kingdom. It's an eternal kingdom. It's a kingdom that is won at the cross. Through death, his spoils are that he bears the sin of many and he makes many to be accounted righteous.

So what does healing mean? First of all, it's a picture of salvation. Jesus rescuing captives from Satan's hold. I hope you get that. His healings aren't simply just he's having mercy on people.

He certainly is doing that. But his healings and his, because remember, he didn't heal everybody. And he doesn't cast out every demon.

But when he does, it reminds me of that commercial. But when I do, when he does, it makes war on Satan.

[33 : 55] So here's the second meaning as a warning in verse 23 to 28. A warning of unbelief. And basically, Jesus draws a line in the sand and says, if you're not with me, you're against me.

It's not even safe to be neutral when Jesus comes and he speaks to us. When we hear his word, we have a choice to make. Because it's not a word that comes from a simple man.

It's not a word that comes from simply a point of view, a worldview. It's a word that comes from God himself. Okay? It's like the word that he cries out from the heavens.

The heavens declare the glory of God. And if we don't see that and we don't hear it, we are denying what's really there. And so when Jesus speaks, what he's saying is, when I speak, it is the word of power.

And if you deny it, if you dismiss it, if you think, I just don't want to believe that, you're not safe. You can do that with other people. You can do that with other things, but you cannot do that with Christ.

[35 : 08] That's what he's saying. It's a warning against unbelief that disregarding his word will create ruin in your life. Here's the issue. Verse 23.

The issue, Jesus draws the line. He says, how you respond to his word means you are choosing a side. If you're not with me, you are against me. How interesting is that that he says that?

If you're not with me. It's not just that you like me, but if you're not with me, you're against me. If you deny me, reject me, dismiss me, even if you ignore me, even if you're neutral about who I am, what it really means is you're opposed to me.

If you're not with me, you're against me. If you're not gathering, in other words, if you haven't joined with me, you're scattering. Wow.

Who has the gall to say something like that? Who has the right to say that to us? I can do whatever I want. Well, when it's Jesus, that's a different deal.

[36 : 17] if Jesus is truly the Son of God, if he is truly the voice of God, if he's truly the Word of God, then everything he says matters. And I believe when that Word is spoken, when the Holy Spirit pierces with that Word, it creates a conviction.

conviction. And what you do with that conviction, if you dismiss it or you accept it, it's a life-changing decision.

That's how real it is. Satan does not want us to think how real this is. Have you noticed here in Luke 11, Jesus is getting a little bit more serious?

Kind of just not, okay. So he gives another illustration. Okay, this is a hard illustration. Verse 24 to 26, the whole unclean spirit thing.

It's kind of weird. It's kind of weird. But it's a parable. He's given a picture again. So he says, look, let's read it. Verse 24, when the unclean spirit, which is another term for a demon, okay.

[37 : 33] Jesus casts out demons. He casts out unclean spirits. Unclean in contrast to holy. We have a holy spirit. We have unclean spirits, right?

Defiling spirits, disobedient spirits. So when an unclean spirit, a demon has gone out, notice it doesn't say cast out. Simply says it's gone out of a person.

It passes through waterless places. Don't ask me what that means. I have no idea what waterless places is. It passes through waterless places seeking rest.

That's the point. He's looking for rest. He's looking for a place to settle down. He's looking for a home where he can indwell. Okay?

He's seeking rest. He doesn't find any. Finding none, it says, I will return to the house from which I came. I need a house. I need a place. I'm going to go see how that place is doing.

[38 : 28] I'll go back there. When it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Oh, it's better than I left it. 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. obviously, seven times worse. What happened? What does that mean?

Well, in general, Jesus is revealing the nature of demons, what they do, how they work, what they're seeking to do. They seek rest. They seek to have an abode in which they can make their home.

And he says, now this is a place where he, for whatever reason, the demon went out and looking around, going around, doesn't find anything, comes back.

He comes back and he finds it, what? Swept and put in order. What happened? Well, swept and put in order is whatever that person did.

[39 : 33] That person cleaned up their life. That person reorganized their life. That person, maybe for religious reasons, maybe because their life was falling apart, they said, I got to get my act together.

I'm going to clean up and I'm going to get reformed. I'm going to get my life in order. I'm going to get it all done. I, I, I, I, I. And a person who does all that, cleans up their life and does all those good things, but doesn't bring Jesus into their life, doesn't bring a real power into their life, leaves themselves vulnerable to that demon coming back, in fact, bringing more in because, oh, we got more room.

He cleaned up the closet. Let's get somebody in there. Clean up the back bedroom. Let's get somebody in there. What's the picture? Why does Jesus tell this strange picture?

I think the point is, because the point is the last state has become worse than the first. So the first state was the man who had a demon. Bad.

But the demon leaves and he cleans up his life, gets it all in order. But because he's done that without transformation, without a new power, without the power of God in his life, because he's cleaned up his life on his own, maybe he's a religious person, maybe he's just a, I got, you know, it's New Year's, I got a new resolution, I'm going to get everything in order and do things right, my life's a mess, I'm going to get it all fixed.

[41 : 06] And people do that. And they got it all in order, they got it all good, but they don't have Christ. What happens? They're vulnerable.

What Jesus is telling us is, here's what can happen if you clean up your life without me. You can't leave the house in. It might look all nice and pretty.

And good for you, you clean up your life, good for you. But it's just you. You haven't put up a guard.

How do I guard? Well, I can't, unless I have Christ. Without inner transformation, without the work of the Holy Spirit, I am vulnerable.

Now, if you're a believer, if you have the Holy Spirit, if you've been born again, you're not vulnerable. Okay? To this. Satan cannot come in and possess you. Greater is he who is in you.

[42 : 12] If you have the Holy Spirit, you're protected. But you're still vulnerable to what? Deception. He can't control you, but he can deceive you.

Right? He always says, don't be deceived, don't be deceived. Think, think, think. Watch, watch, watch. So, what difference does all this make?

So, look at verse 27, 28. What's the, what's it come down to? What's his point? He's made one point about, if you're not with me, you're against me.

Okay, that's a warning. What's the, what's the, how can I apply this? Verse 27. He said, 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.

Blessed is who? Mary. Oh, blessed Mother Mary. These words actually, I was reading, I think Sproul, Sproul said these words are actually in the rosary.

[43 : 19] Blessed are the womb or whatever, I don't know, whatever. Well, what does Jesus think of that blessing? Blessed is your, you know, blessed is your mom, Jesus.

She must be really blessed. Oh, good for your mommy. Nice sentiment. Jesus, by into that, verse 28, but he said, rather, let's get things proper.

Rather, blessed are those who hear the word and keep it. What's he saying? What's the point? The point is how you respond to Jesus.

How do you respond? Is your response to Jesus mere sentiment? Is your response to Jesus simply outward admiration? I like Jesus.

I appreciate Jesus. I think he's great. I think he's wonderful. You know, I like to read his words once in a while. I like to talk to him once in a while. I don't go to his church because, you know, those people are nuts.

[44 : 22] But I like Jesus. I like Jesus. He's a good guy. And blessed is his mother.

Oh, I like that. I like Mary. See, is that, is that it? Is your response to Jesus basically superficial, outward sentiment?

Or, is your response to him what Jesus seeks? To hear and keep.

To apply the word. Not just hear the word, but to apply the word. To do the word. To guard it. To protect it. To watch it. To sustain the word in your heart. In other words, I take his word.

Do I really, do I really keep it? Am I putting it to my mind? Am I memorizing it? Am I claiming it? Am I reading it over and over? Am I meditating on it?

[45 : 24] Am I thinking about how does this apply in my life? Remember the builder of the house, right? He's the one who hears and does the word of God. He's the one that digs and then he digs deeper, right?

So I get the word. I don't just take the surface of it, but I take time to dig into it a little bit. I dig a little deeper. I ask the Lord to open this passage to me that I might understand, that I might see what the psalmist is saying and I might see what Jesus is doing here because he seems to be saying something really important.

And for some reason that doesn't grab my heart. So Lord, help me see the difference between hearing and keeping.

Do you keep it? Do you keep it? Do you treasure it? Do you act upon it? See?

So how does this warning apply in our lives? what is so serious? Why is Jesus using some words that are very confrontive and dividing?

[46 : 40] It's not nice to draw lines, is it? It's not nice to say some people in or some people are out and yet that's what Jesus is doing. If you're not with me, if you're not gathering with me, can I hear that?

So what is he saying? Well, Peter, 2 Peter 2, listen to these words because Peter gives a very strong warning. In 2 Peter 2, 19, he says, they promise them freedom.

He's talking about false teachers. Right? Christian, supposed Christian teachers that are leading people astray. Right? They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption.

So in other words, they're hypocrites. For whatever overcomes a person to that, he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, okay, let's stop right there.

Who are those people? They have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those are people who have come to know in some way Jesus.

- [47 : 57] They have come to understand Jesus and through that experience of coming to know Jesus, they have escaped the defilements of the world. They've cleaned up their act.
- They've swept and ordered their life. But then something happens. Peter says, if after they've escaped this, they are again entangled in them, these defilements, and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.
- That's exactly the words Jesus just said about the unclean spirit. In other words, what does it look like in our life?
- It looks like if I get religious, if I get Jesus on some level, most obviously a superficial level, if I get going to church, I get whatever it is, if I get all this cleaned up and I get religious and I get ordered and I get swept and I get all that, you know, life's going well, but then something happens.
- I don't know what. Something happens and I return to the old stuff and I not just return but I'm entangled in it and I'm overcome by it, which means I'm captive to it.
- [49 : 19] Then the last state has become worse than the first. Peter goes on, he says, for it would have been better for them to never have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.
- What the true proverb says has happened to them. The dog returns to its own vomit. I don't know. And the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.
- What a strong warning. What a strong warning. It's a warning of danger. It tells us this, dear folks.
- It tells us this, let us examine our conversion. Let us examine our faith. Let us make sure that our faith is real. Let us make sure that our conversion was a genuine conversion and not simply an emotional response or a simply, I made a decision that sounded good.
- Make sure that my conversion was not something that I am trusting in something that I did. Well, I walked the aisle. I prayed that prayer. I raised my hand. All fine things.
- [50 : 39] But it's just what I did. And I, that's where I was for years. For years. I can't tell you how many times I walked the aisle. I can't tell you how many times I raised the prayer so that the pastor said, I see that hand.
- They felt, okay, good. I'm good. I can't tell you how many camps I threw the stick into the fire. Recommitted my life.
- Now it's going to come together, isn't it? It's all stuff I did. I genuinely wanted those things. I think God was working. I was convicted. I knew I needed to change, but I couldn't make it happen.
- I prayed for it. I asked for it. It happened for other people's, not for other people's, not for me. Why? Because I must be really bad. God didn't want me.
- That's my only conclusion. I trusted my pastor. I trusted Billy Graham. They weren't trying to deceive me. They were trying to give me to Christ. And they did what they said and it didn't work.
- [51 : 45] Why? Because I did it. And you say, well, you have to respond. Yes. Yes. Yeah.
- What I did wasn't bad things. It was genuinely seeking God, but I couldn't make myself born again. So examine, let us examine our conversion.
- Was it true? Was it a true act of God? When I was truly converted, it was something that happened to me, not that I did. I was praying hard with some other buddies because we were scared.
- Oh, it was a demon thing. That's right. I forgot. We were camping. There was a demon in one of our kids. One of the kids in my cabin, I was freaking out. What's that? So we went out and prayed and we're scared to death.

We're praying, go, God, help us. And it was in the middle of that experience that something changed in me. Something changed. Now I knew, it wasn't that I had to obey God's commandments.

[52 : 51] It wasn't that I had to do these things out of guilt or shame. It was because I, all suddenly, I wanted to do that. Where did that come from? I wanted to honor him. I wanted to obey him.

I wanted to love him. I didn't hate him anymore. How did that happen? I didn't do that to me. Something changed. Let us examine our conversion.

Is it real? Was it just emotional? Was it just temporary? Did I just clean up my life for a while? Was I simply trusting in myself for a while? True conversion is a transformation.

It's a new heart. It's a new heart that has new desires, a new seeking of God. Now, I'll tell you, as a converted person, we still struggle, don't we?

We still struggle. Of course we still struggle. I'm not in that glorious body yet. I still struggle. I still have the old sin nature there. It's still dragging that doggone thing away.

[53 : 53] I wish God would cut the chain off on that thing. I hate what that old nature wants to do and gets me to do when I don't activate my faith. I have to, as Paul says, I've got to put off the old, I've got to do this renewal over and over.

I've got to activate my faith. So I still struggle, but at heart, I always love Christ. I'm not entangled again. I fall, but I'm not entangled again.

I'm not turning back. True conversion is not temporary. True conversion endures. It grows. It learns to gradually overcome the old habits.

When I fall, I return to the Lord. I confess to Him. I repent. I seek renewal. I activate my faith. And I'll tell you, I do all those things, not because I am so spiritual.

I do it. You want to know why I do it? He does this. Bill. Sometimes it's not so gentle.

[55 : 05] But He seeks me, doesn't He? He still seeks me. You're wandering, buddy. Come on. All right, I'll let you go down that hole, but you can get it.

It's kind of like Peter. Peter's fall, right? I prayed for you, Peter, not that you would not fall. I prayed for you that after your fall, that your faith wouldn't fail, and then out of your humility, you'll strengthen your brothers, because it won't be all about I, I, I.

It'll be about Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. So, what is your response to Jesus' word?

That's the bottom line. What's your response to Jesus' word? Whatever that word is today, what's your response?

Do you hear and keep it, or do you dismiss it? I'm good. And if you think you're good, you're in a dangerous place.

[56 : 09] Let us pray. Father, we thank you for your word. Thank you. Though it's hard, though it's hard, though the pictures Jesus gives are not kind of easy to wrap ourselves into, they are disturbing, but they're necessary.

Thank you, oh Father, that you show us in Scripture a son of yours who is real and who uses logic and who uses power and who uses his words to pierce our hearts.

This we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.