

Luke 11:14-32

“The Danger Of Reformation, The Need For Regeneration”

Wherever there are people there are problems. Because as people we have problems; individuals have issues, perhaps various addictions or compulsions. But we are a culture (as is mankind in general) that's all about reformation; cleaning up our act and setting things in order. The problem however with reformation is that although it may accomplish a great deal of good on a moral level, it still leaves one vacant and vulnerable on a spiritual level. Because the human heart is like a vacuum of sorts; there's an emptiness there that's always seeking to be filled and though reformation may clean out the old junk that was in your life (my life) it does nothing to fill the void that's now left as the result of that cleaning. The net effect being that that vacuum is now active and seeking to pull something, someone into your heart and life in order to fill the void; you're vacant, you're vulnerable. God isn't looking for reform. He calls upon us to repent; He's not an advocate of reformation but of regeneration; because regeneration doesn't simply clean out your closets; it fills them with a new wardrobe altogether. Regeneration clothes you in the righteousness of Christ and fills your heart/life with the Spirit of God and through the power of God in your life you are able to overcome those problems, those issues, various addictions or compulsions. In today's text Jesus emphasizes the need not for reformation, but for regeneration.

Vs14-16

Ok, 1 miracle 2 general responses. Jesus has just given His disciples a pattern for prayer. He's encouraged them with the nature of our heavenly Father who wants to give us good things, and wants to equip us and enable us through the power and Person of His Holy Spirit to lead a holy and righteous life; to lead a life that though in the world is not of the world. Now we find the pendulum swinging to the other extreme. We go from the good things of the Holy Spirit in a person's life to the destructive nature of a demonic spirit in a person's life. Jesus begins to minister to a man who is possessed by a demonic spirit; and evidently this spirit has arrested some aspect of his motor skills because it had caused him to be a mute; unable to speak. Now this created a problem for the average exorcist of Jesus' day because they believed that in order to take authority over a spirit you had to invoke its name. By calling the spirit out by name you could take authority over it; that's one reason we see the multitudes marvel here because by all accounts (according to their way of thinking) this demon was impossible to cast out because it made the man unable to speak thereby safeguarding his name. Jesus didn't care about any of that, nor did He give way to superstition He just took care of business and cast this demon out and when He did the man began to speak and it blew the people's minds.

1 miracle, 2 reactions; neither one of which we really want to see and the one we want to see we don't see. What was the response, what were the reactions? Well, since the miracle was undeniable (happened right in front of them) some of them said, "This guy's in league with the devil! He's casting out demons through the power of the devil..." Others said, "Hey, I'm not so sure about that but I need to see more than that to be convinced that You're the Messiah." The one reaction we want to see, (the people praising God, getting on their face and giving their lives to Christ) we don't. What we have on the scene (no different than we do today) are skeptics and cynics... The 1st accusation (that He's league with the devil) He answers in Vs 17-26; as for the reservations of the others, He addresses those in Vs 29-32.

Here's what I want you to see and it's something that I point out from time and again and that is this: miracles will not convict people of sin nor will they generate saving faith in anybody. Miracles may cause people to marvel and understandably so, but they don't conjure up or create saving faith in anyone. What it does is wet the insatiable appetite for more, something greater; prove to me that that was real by doing something else (kind of a mentality). Some people immediately dismiss this activity as satanic; others say they need to see more in order to believe. Here's what we can't forget as we isolate these little vignettes found in the scriptures. Jesus was working miracles and performing signs all the time. We have a few written down for us. But John informs us, "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;" John 20:30 he goes on to say, "And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." John 21:25 So Jesus had done tons of signs by this point. I guess what I'm saying is that there comes a time whereby you just have to make your decision; you need to open your eyes and acknowledge Jesus for who He is. Look, He's cleansed lepers, opened blind eyes, made the lame to walk, He's healed the sick, walked on water, fed thousands from few loaves and raised the dead...at what point do you go, "Ok, we get it. You are the Messiah," miracles won't cause faith to manifest; it's the hearing of God's word that does that. Taking in thinking through and resting on the word of God causes faith to germinate and grow in the heart of man, miracles won't do that.

Vs17-20

Vs 17 is the rationale and quite frankly Jesus is saying, "Look your reasoning is ridiculous". Vs 18-20 is His explanation and Vs 21-22 is His illustration and in Vs 23 He brings them to the realization or we might consider it clarification concerning His position.

Vs 17; I called it the rationale; it may be better to simply recognize its reality. "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls." Jesus says, "Hey guys; think your position through a little bit. If I'm an agent of Satan and I'm working against Satan, that means that civil war has come to his kingdom and his kingdom will not stand. It's simply not logical for Satan to fight against himself."

One thing I think we should at least point out in passing is the fact that Jesus acknowledges that Satan does have a kingdom. Jesus referred to him as the “ruler of this world” (Jhn 12:31, 14:30, 16:11), the book of Eph states, “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,” Eph 2:1-2 So Satan has a kingdom, however as we’ll see momentarily Jesus has invaded and overcome having conquered his kingdom.

Jesus goes on to say, “By the way, if I’m casting out demons through the power of Satan by whom do your own sons cast them out, what do you say when they cast out a demon?” He says, “But if I cast out demons with the finger of God; then how can you deny that the kingdom of God has come upon you through Me?” Ouch! Jesus had a way of pinning these guys down and making them squirm and believe you me when I tell you that they didn’t like that at all! Btw, notice that God gives Satan’s forces the boot with a mere movement of His finger. Don’t think that God and Satan are equal opposites, they’re not. Satan is a created being, a fallen angel (powerful? Yes.) God however is the Creator, eternal and all-powerful in nature.

Ok, thus far we’ve stuck to the interpretation of the observation in this text. However I want to make an application beyond the current context and that is this: Vs 17, “a house divided against a house falls” Jesus is applying this to the need for spiritual forces to be united to stand strong. However don’t think that this principle doesn’t ring true across the board; this same principle is true of your home (your family and mine); a husband and a wife become divided, the house falls apart, we talked a bit about divorce Wednesday evening. People not allowing the Lord to build the house and their efforts are in vain; unwilling to seek the Lord together, to prioritize the kingdom and their house, their home is brought to desolation. It’s also true of our church family, the corporate assembly. That’s why Paul the apostle wrote, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” Gal 5:14-15 We’re exhorted as a body of believers (including cellular level of our homes) to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3).

So Jesus says, “I’m not in league with the devil, I’m against him and I’m proving that I’m stronger than him.

Vs21-23

Here’s the short. Satan is the strong man, Jesus is the One stronger than he is who has come upon him, has overcome him, has taken from him all he trusted in and does what He wants with his stuff (meaning He can take from him those who are enslaved by him). So Jesus has not only defeated Satan, He’s disarmed him as well. Col 2:15, “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it [the cross].”

Here's what we need to see; Jesus readily acknowledges the fact that Satan is powerful, that he is strong. This is why we need not try to take Satan on, on our own. It's critical that we always keep Jesus between us and the enemy, that our strength is found in the Lord and in the power of His might (Eph 6). God has equipped us, He's given weapons of warfare to us; we're to be responsible to arm ourselves accordingly. Again read Eph 6:10-18, read 2 Cor 10:3-5; God has armed us, He's equipped us that we might stand strong and wage wise warfare in the Lord. That's what Jesus is pointing out here, that there is a battle going on between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. The kingdom of darkness is strong; but the kingdom of God is stronger. There are only 2 kingdoms therefore we have a decision to make; they're both seeking to win your allegiance but you can only make your stand with one of them. Jesus says in Vs 23 that if you're not with Him you're against Him, and if you're not gathering with Him you're scattering against Him. There's no such things as neutrality as it pertains to your position on Jesus Christ, you can receive Him, or you can reject Him, but you cannot remain neutral regarding Him.

Vs24-26

This is the picture of the person who tries to remain neutral; of reformation apart from regeneration. They've "cleaned up their act" but they haven't given their lives to Christ; they haven't surrendered to Christ. Oh they're not doing drugs anymore, not partying or living promiscuous lives, just swept up and put in order. Not for Christ, but not leading a wicked life either; just trying to be a "better person," wanting to save your marriage or quit drinking or whatever. You tried religion, or AA, motivational messages or medications, different programs, whatever. Sometimes those things work; you get cleaned up, remarkable reforms take place, the problem is that your heart is still empty, still vacant and still vulnerable. In the end (ultimately, eternally) even if you maintain that reform your entire life the latter end will be worse because you'll be separated from God throughout all eternity.

Contextually Jesus is saying; just casting out a demon in someone's life isn't enough. Because the heart of man is like a vacuum that longs to be filled; and if you empty your heart of evil but don't fill it with Christ; that evil will come rushing back in with a ferocity that's way worse than it was before. It's not about being reformed, but reborn; born again as by the Spirit of God.

Jesus is saying here that He's not merely here to fight evil, but to bring God's goodness to the hearts of man. That the human heart needs not only to be emptied of the flesh, the filth of the world and of Satan, but also to be filled with God's Holy Spirit.

Vs27-28

An early attempt to exalt Mary; and truly she was blessed among women we'd never take away from that. She bore the Son of God, took care of Him tended to Him as He was growing in physical stature and strength. It's difficult if not impossible for us to comprehend such a thing. Yet Jesus says that there's an even greater blessing available to anyone and it's reserved for the one who will hear the word of God and keep it, that is, do it! More blessed than Mary are those who hear the word of God and keep it. How is that possible??? Jesus is saying that the bond that's created through the blood of Christ and the Spirit of God is even greater than that of physical family. That being related to someone physically pales in comparison to being a child of God spiritually.

In keeping with the "house divided" type picture here there's a great blessing to be found in simply working on your marriage as opposed to abandoning it. On loving your wife as Christ did the church giving Himself for her; on submitting to your husband as the church of Jesus Christ Not only in hearing the word of God but in doing it. Hearing doesn't really do much for you if you're not willing to do it...

Ok...Jesus answered to the accusation, now He speaks to the reservations; people wanting some sort of spectacular sign from heaven.

Vs29-32

The bible says of God, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Heb 11:6 Yet where is the faith in the demand of a sign? You see it's an evil generation who seeks a sign as opposed to believing God by faith. On top of that the truth of the matter is the difficulty of believing is rarely one of the intellect (needing more proof), but rather it's a matter of the will; people don't want to believe so they look for excuses not to believe. When someone is ready to repent of their sin they have no problems believing God; but until then it's like Jesus said when He wept over Jerusalem, "How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" Matt 23:37 It's a matter of the will; people want to sin more than they want a Savior.

So no sign, with the exception of 1; the sign of the prophet Jonah... What is that? In Matt Ch 12 we have a few more details and there Jesus makes it clear that the reference is to His death, burial and resurrection. Jonah gave his life to appease the wrath of God coming upon others (the sailors), but after 3 days and nights of being imprisoned in the depths (in the belly of the great fish) he "surfaced" alive and after that God's salvation visited the Gentiles (Ninevites).

The Queen of the south (1 Kings 10) was also a Gentile who believed upon hearing the wisdom of Solomon yet they were hearing the wisdom of God Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ and were refusing to believe. She traveled a great distance to receive it yet Jesus was right there in their neighborhood.

The Ninevites got limited information at best, “40 days and judgment is coming” yet at hearing that they repented in sackcloth and ashes. These guys have had the gospel given to them for yrs and have been taught by the Son of God Himself yet refused to repent and believe. Nineveh repented at bad news, Israel refused to turn toward the good news. Neither of them asked for more proof or sought a sign, they heard and believed the word of God.

Ok, couple quick points and we’re done. 1st of all we have kind of an interesting picture of the judgment painted here don’t we. As if (and possibly will) witnesses will be called to testify against those who’ve rejected Jesus Christ When the people of Jesus’ generation will be judged evidently the Queen of Sheba and the men of Nineveh will be called to the stand to testify how she sought out Solomon or how they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and they had an opportunity that was so much greater, so much more gracious and yet rejected it. Btw she’s still the Queen of Sheba (no reincarnation in view here; she’ll be recognized and stand in the resurrection as the Queen of Sheba).

The final note? Greater privilege always brings greater accountability. To the degree of opportunity and exposure we receive, to that same degree we will be held accountable. You and me in the information age in which we live really have no excuse when it comes to the things of God. How many bible translations do you want; how many bible studies would you like to hear? They’re all but a click away.

We don’t need signs, don’t need to reform; we need to repent, to be reborn... There’s danger in reformation; the safety, the security; the certainty is found in regeneration... That happens when I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God; and that His sacrifice (the shedding of His blood and laying down of His life, His resurrection from the dead) is sufficient for me to forgive me of my sin and make me right in the sight of God. That’s not reformation my friends, that’s regeneration, that’s a new creation, old things passing away, behold all things are made new. Not just emptying my life of the old sin, but filling my heart and my life with the Spirit of God...

Prayer Points:

Lord increase our faith; may we enter consistently/persistently into the blessing found in hearing and keeping Your word. We praise You for the work of regeneration/transformation that You cause to take place in our lives by Your Spirit. I pray that You would help us to be a unified body, that’s made up of unified families; God I pray for the families in this fellowship, fortify and unify them in You.

If you’ve yet to experience the regeneration of the Holy Spirit in your life; you’ve not been born again as by the Spirit of God than I want to invite you to receive Jesus Christ today. You cannot be neutral concerning Him, to be undecided is to be decided against. His sacrifice is sufficient for you, believe it, and receive it today...