

The War on Evil

Galilean Ministry Part 5

Mark 1:34b 11/4/2017

Summary: Jesus' confrontation with demons highlights the collision of two kingdoms – a conflict Jesus wins easily, proving who he is. That should strengthen our faith, not create doubt (belief in demons is rational). Casting out demons was the sign, the part that is passed along to us is the substance: preaching the gospel. Demons were silenced because they used truth about Jesus in a way that didn't bring repentance and faith (beware of truth out of the context of the gospel). Application: look to Jesus to drive evil out of your heart and use the gospel as the means of bringing his grace to bear on the problem of evil in you and others.

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Mark 1:32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. 33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

Introduction

Jesus Christ is full of surprises. There are so many times when he says or does things that leave us scratching our heads. And I'm really glad that's the case. If Jesus spoke and acted like we would expect, it would be hard to believe that he's really a divine being. Someone who really is eternal God in human flesh, you wouldn't expect him to think and act like typical, sinful, limited, finite human beings. You would expect him to be full of surprises, which is exactly what we see in this text.

Mark 1:34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

You might expect that he would not let them speak because they were liars. Or he would not let them speak because they were up to no good. Or he would not let them speak because he wanted to show his power over them. I can take a lot of good reasons to not let the demons speak, but the last one I would've thought of would be this one. He wouldn't let them speak because they knew him. That's kind of strange, isn't it?

37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

That's good news, right? So what does he do?

38 Jesus replied, "Let us go... somewhere else

Strange.

38 ...to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."

What? That's why you came? You ask any OT expert back then, "What is the Messiah going to come into this world to do?" and none of them would have said, "Be a preacher." You ask people today – "Why did Jesus Christ come into this world?" Nobody's first answer is, "Oh, he came to preach."

Such unexpected responses. And Mark is not only admitting that Jesus spoke and acted in these strange ways, but he makes a point of it. He puts it front and center because he wants to teach us the reasons why Jesus did and said these things. And when we understand that, then we will understand the nature of the war we are in, and how to conduct spiritual warfare so that we defeat the enemy rather than becoming casualties.

I think we can organize what Mark teaches us in this section under two main headings: The Winner and the Weaponry. First, the winner.

The Winner

Letdown of the Ages

We left off last time with Jesus in Capernaum, where he blows everyone away with his authoritative preaching, and then has a showdown with a demon right there in the service. The showdown was a bit of a letdown. You would think this would be quite the conflict – the most powerful evil beings in existence against the Messiah – the heavyweight bout of the ages.

When I was in college I remember the media had a huge buildup promoting the big heavyweight boxing championship match between Mike Tyson and Michael Spinks. Both boxers were undefeated, it was the fight of the decade - some people paid over a thousand dollars for a seat at that fight. The fight lasted 91 seconds. It wasn't quite the epic battle it was billed as – it lasted 91 seconds. Can you imagine shelling out a couple thousand dollars for tickets, and you're putting your jacket down and getting settled, and all of a sudden you hear the bell and you're saying, "Wait, what? The fight's over? I missed it?"

If the fight of the decade was a letdown, this fight of the ages was really a letdown. Spinks lasted 91 seconds against Tyson – that's about 90 seconds longer than this demon lasted once Jesus gave him the boot. And Jesus remains undefeated throughout the gospel, and to this day.

There is a philosophy known as dualism that holds that there are two essentially equal forces: good and evil. Like in Star Wars – the good side and the dark side of the force. One thing we learn in the Bible is that reality is nothing like that. You can take all the strongest powers of evil and have every one of them marshal their forces against Jesus Christ at his weakest, and he can annihilate all of them with a single thought. In fact, later in this book we'll see 2000 of them gang up on Jesus, and he sends every one of them into the abyss with a word.

And that power Jesus has to defeat evil is a very important theme in Mark. It's an important theme in this passage. Look how many times he mentions demons just in this little section.

25 "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" 26 The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

27 ... He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him."

32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed.

34 ... He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

So you can see this is a major emphasis.

Opposing Kingdoms

And the thing Mark highlights most in this encounter is the confrontational and combative nature of the encounter. Jesus and the demon are representatives of two rival kingdoms. And everything the demon says highlights that conflict. He makes three statements. The first sets them at odds in their purposes. "We don't have anything to do with each other."

The third statement shows their opposite natures. Notice – instead of calling him a demon, Mark calls him **an unclean spirit**. Then look at what the demon says about Jesus: "**I know who you are, the holy one of God.**" Holiness vs. uncleanness.

The middle statement is the most obvious display of the conflict. **You have come to destroy us.** The good news Jesus preaches to men is lethal news to the demons. They can immediately sense in his presence a threat to their very existence.

All of this is important for the gospel writers to make clear right at the outset when they tell us the story of Jesus, because the people back then had such a minuscule conception of what the Messiah would come to do. They just wanted him to come defeat Rome. They needed to understand that the war is on a much, much bigger scale than that. It's a cosmic struggle against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms that are behind nations like Rome or Babylon. Like in Daniel when we read about the Persian Empire, but then we find out about the demon who is the real king of Persia. God sent an angel to answer Daniel's prayer, but that demon was able to detain the angel for 21 days, until the archangel Michael came and helped.

Those powers are much, much more powerful than any human being, we have no natural weapons that can even begin to engage them, and they are behind the organization of the system of evil that dominates this world and holds all of us in captivity. So they must be defeated.

We think our biggest problems have to do with hardship and suffering. And so we want Jesus to come and address that. But a much bigger problem is evil. Far more important than getting rid of hardship and trouble is driving out evil. Jesus will eliminate suffering one day, but that's just a byproduct of eliminating the real problem, which is evil.

So the gospel writers have to correct people's small expectations. The Messiah didn't come to mess around with some local conflict and bring peace between countries in the Mideast. He came to bring decisive victory in a cosmic conflict, drive evil out of this world, drive evil out of the hearts of men, and bring peace between men and God.

One of those powerful, demonic beings was living in Capernaum – living inside one of the members of the synagogue. And that demon was able to maintain his composure and keep a low profile week after week in the synagogue, until one day when this young guy from up in the hills and starts preaching his gospel. And as the sermon went on, this filthy spirit exploded into panic, which is what demons always do when they encounter Jesus in the Gospels.

Proof or Problem?

So all that to say, in this war, Jesus is the clear winner. And the goal in making such a point about that is to provide proof of who Jesus is. It's to strengthen our faith and help us believe.

But as I was studying this passage, and reading the commentaries and hearing preachers preach about it, it struck me that the historical information that we're given about Jesus and demons seems to have the opposite effect on a lot of people today. It doesn't make it easier for them to believe the Bible. It makes it harder. Instead of strengthening their faith, it seems to weaken their faith.

I hear pastors preach on these texts, and they are almost apologetic – like their embarrassed to have to preach about demons being real. A lot of people in our culture put demons in the same category as Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny, and so anyone who believes in demons is considered superstitious, simplistic, primitive, and, worst of all, unscientific.

You asked them, "What about all the historical accounts of demon possession?" And they say, "Those people back then didn't understand about mental illness or modern medicine, so they just reverted to their religious beliefs and attributed everything to demons. But now, with our modern knowledge, we have it all figured out. We know that it's just a physical issue."

Every era has a tendency to think that everyone prior to them were ignorant and they finally have definitive knowledge. But let's just take an objective look at whose approach is more sophisticated and whose is more simplistic.

Is it really true that the ancient people didn't understand the physical nature of disease so they just assumed sickness came from demons?

34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons

Two separate things. And you will find throughout the gospels that clear distinction. Some people were sick and needed healing; other people were demonized and needed the demons driven out. Sick people and demonized people are spoken of differently, they act differently, they have very different reactions to Jesus, and they even speak to Jesus differently. Sick people refer to Jesus with terms that would be used for human beings, like Son of David, Master, Teacher, or Lord.¹ Demonized people always refer to Jesus with divine terms, like The Holy One of God, Son of God, or Son of the Most High God.²

¹ 10:47-48, 10:51, 9:17, 7:8..

² 1:24, 3:11, 5:7.

And not only did the people back then distinguish between sickness and demonization, but they also distinguish between insanity and demonization. Again, critics will say, “Those ancient people didn’t know about mental illness, so they just always assumed it was a demon.” Not true. Here Jesus’ family have a disagreement with the Scribes in their assessment of Jesus.

Mark 3:21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." 22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."

The Scribes said, “He has a demon,” and his family said, “No, it’s not a demon. It’s just insanity.” They knew those were two different things.

So all that to show you that in NT times they would differentiate – this is a physical problem, this is a mental, sanity issue, and this is a spiritual phenomenon. They would assess all the behaviors and symptoms and make a judgment as to which of those categories was most likely.

What do the secularists do today? “Everything’s a physical issue. Every single problem is attributable to some defect in the brain – some chemical imbalance, neurotransmitters – something physically wrong with the brain. That’s their explanation for every problem. What if there isn’t any evidence of a brain defect or chemical imbalance or any physiological issue? Doesn’t matter. It doesn’t matter if there is any evidence that points in that direction nor not, because the dogma of their religious belief system dictates that there are no demons, there can be no spiritual aspect to anything – the only thing that exists is matter, period. And so that is going to be their conclusion regardless of where the evidence points. To me, that sounds a lot more simplistic, a lot less sophisticated, and less scientific than what we see the people in the gospels doing.

Is it unscientific to believe in something you can’t see? What about the human mind? The human brain is a physical thing that you can observe, but the mind isn’t. The mind is immaterial. You can’t study it with any kind of empirical observation. It’s beyond the reach of science. And yet, we know for sure it exists because you need it in order to doubt it’s existence. If you question whether your mind exists, you have to use your mind to do that questioning.

Mental vs. Moral

And one other thought on that before I move on. I just want to remind you of what I said a few weeks ago about mental problems vs. moral problems. Again this week – the day after the Wal Mart shooting, I heard a newscaster say that “obviously” that shooter had a mental problem. As much intelligence as exists in our culture, still, they seem to be incapable of differentiating between two very different things: mental problems and moral problems. And not only is that naive and simplistic, but it’s incredibly insulting to mentally disabled people. “Oh, that guy’s a murderer? He must refer to developmentally disabled people.” Why assume that? Are people with mental problems really more evil and wicked than everyone else? No – there’s no evidence that mental deficiency causes increased evil in a person. None.

They see an evil act and assume it’s a mental issue even though there’s no evidence of that, and we see evil acts and we assume there is an evil force behind it, and we’re the ones being irrational? There is nothing irrational or unscientific about believing evil beings exist. Nor is there anything irrational or anti-scientific about believing there is more to this world than matter. That there are spiritual realities and entities.

Go With the Evidence

The way to evaluate a truth claim is not to just ask, “Can I see it or touch it?” The way to evaluate whether something is real or not is by considering all the evidence. There are other forms of evidence beside empirical observation. For example, reliable testimony. The vast majority of the things you believe, you believe not because of empirical observation, but because of reliable testimony. The vast majority of the things scientists believe, they believe not because they observed them, but because of reliable testimony.

So when it comes to demons - what evidence is there that they exist? Jesus believed they exist. Are you going to argue with Jesus Christ? I’m not.

Whose testimony do you think is more reliable? Which makes more sense when it comes to information about the spirit world – to believe a naturalistic scientist who has absolutely no way to examine anything other than the physical world? Or the Son of God, who came from heaven and who has existed forever and who is omniscient and who has never been shown to be wrong about anything and who created everything that is in existence?

And how about the psychologists? They say, “It’s not demons. It’s just dissociative identity disorder – multiple personalities.³ But if you do a little research and look at the success rate psychologists tend to have with that problem, and then you look at Jesus’ success rate, how do they compare? The success rate of psychotherapy is close to zero. Jesus’ success rate was 100%. So who are you going to look to as the authority? What’s the rational thing to do? Does it make more sense to trust the person who can do something about the problem, or the people who can’t?”

Demonic Fear

So I just wanted to take those few moments to point those things out, because the whole purpose of telling us about what Jesus did with the demons is to strengthen our faith. It’s to show proof of who Jesus is. So it’s important that we see it as proof, and not a problem. I made the case last time that these accounts were written by reliable men, they are verified, the documentation is preserved – we know for sure these things happened. The consistent response of demons to Jesus was, more than anything else, fear. In Luke’s account of this incident in the synagogue, the demon starts with the word Ha! All the other wording is identical.

Luke 4:34 “Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

That word translated “ha” is not really a word. It’s just a sound that comes out of someone’s mouth when they are terrified with fear. And the reason for the panic is they are afraid Jesus is there to **destroy** them. Here they use the word *destroy*, later on (Mk.5:7) they use the word **torture**. The fate of Satan and his demons is described in Rev.20:10.

Revelation 20:10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

The lake of fire will be a place of eternal, day and night torment. And demons are absolutely terrified of that place. That’s why James 2:19 says the **demons believe and shudder**. That’s worth pointing out because you may run into people who try to say that there is no ongoing punishment in hell. They say God will just snuff the wicked out of existence, they will be burned up and gone – no ongoing punishment at all. And their argument is that fire burns thing up. I don’t think demons would be this terrified if their fate were to just go out of existence someday. They are deathly afraid of something that is incredibly severe.

And unbelieving human beings will share that same fate.

Matthew 25:41 Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

Hell was not created for human beings, but human beings who refuse to bow the knee to Christ will go there nonetheless.

Demons know about that place, and it terrifies them. When they encounter Jesus, their words are laced with the language of defense and resistance. There’s always some kind of panicked attempt to gain some kind of footing in their struggle against this awesome, dangerous opponent. But it never works. They are utterly powerless against Jesus. And it astonished the people who were there. Demons didn’t fight or resist – they just begged Jesus for mercy. These people had never seen demons beg for anything. Jesus is not like that angel in

³ I did a little reading this week on multiple personality disorder. What I found was fascinating. It’s not like other psychological disorders. You all probably know I have a very low opinion of most psychotherapy. But there is a legitimate aspect to the discipline of psychology – serious scientists who do careful research of human behavior, and I find that research fascinating, and very helpful in some cases. And among those researchers, about a quarter of them doubt whether MPD even exists. It’s a very controversial area – even among secular psychologists.

For that reason it has now been lumped together in the broader category of dissociative identity disorder. Other aspects of DID have very little controversy. But multiple personalities is a problem that has been documented from ancient times – one of the disorders that goes back farther in history than most any other disorder. And yet many experts in the field don’t even believe it exists. Part of the reason for that is that it is so different from typical emotional or cognitive problems. The symptoms are different from culture to culture. And from decade to decade. When they first started diagnosing MPD, convulsions were a major symptom; now they aren’t. This is a disorder that changes from place to place, culture to culture, and time to time.

Why would it be so different from other emotional or cognitive disorders? Perhaps it’s because many cases of MPD are caused by demons, and demons do different things in different situations.

I’m not suggesting that all MPD cases involve demons. One reason for the professional skepticism for this problem is the multiplied examples of therapist-induced MPD. So it’s something highly suggestable people can be talked into, especially under hypnosis. But that does not appear to be an adequate explanation for all cases.

Daniel 10 that the demon got the best of. He can easily overpower the strong man, Satan, and take anything out of his house that he wants.

And because of that, we can know for sure that Jesus Christ has the power, not just to help us in our suffering, but to drive out the real problem: evil.

The Weaponry: Truth

Okay, so I told you we would look at 2 main points that Mark is teaching us about the war on evil. Point #1: The Winner (Jesus) Now point #2: The Weaponry

Truth

Jesus did not finish off evil at his first coming. The war is ongoing today (obviously). And we are engaged in that war – the war on evil.

And so the big question for us is, “How are we to go about fighting?” What’s the strategy? What are the weapons that we should be using?

Someone might say, “Oh, that’s easy. Just do what Jesus did – cast out demons. Have a deliverance ministry where you do exorcisms.”

The problem with that conclusion is when we look in the epistles, we find zero instructions on how to cast out demons. And the number of times were commanded to cast out demons is also zero. We are never told to do it, nor we given any instructions on how to do it. There are passages in the New Testament about how to carry out spiritual warfare. The most obvious one is Ephesians 6 where we are told exactly how to go about wrestling with Satan and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. We are to use the spiritual armor. And the spiritual armor is truth, righteousness, and prayer. Another important spiritual warfare passage, 2 Corinthians 10, the weaponry is truth. We take wrong ideas captive and force them into obedience to Christ.

So in the epistles, our weaponry is primarily truth (as well as righteousness and prayer). So what are we to make of Jesus example?

The answer is this: the example that Jesus gave us, and the substance of his ministry, was truth. I’m going to try to show you that in Scripture, and you can see if you agree. The *substance* of his ministry was preaching the truth. The *sign* of his ministry was casting out demons and other miracles. His ability to cast out demons and do other miracles were signs that proved him to be God in human flesh. And that’s why the epistles teach us to imitate the preaching, but not the driving out demons and other miracles. The signs stand throughout history as proof of who Jesus is. The substance of his ministry – preaching, is the example for us to follow.

And a lot of this we’ve already covered. Did Jesus present his work of casting out demons as an example for us to follow, or as a sign that proved who he was? Jesus taught us exactly how to view his work of casting out demons in Mark 3. He’s in a discussion with the Scribes about his ability to cast out demons, and he says this:

Mark 3:27 no one can enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house.

Jesus’ activity of driving out demons was to prove he had the ability to overpower the strong man - Satan. It was a sign – proof of who he is.

Luke 11:20 if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

Driving out demons is not some commonplace thing that any Christian can do. The seven sons of Sceva tried casting out a demon in Jesus’ name.

Acts 19:13 ...“In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.”

15 ...the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?” 16 Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

Casting out demons is not an ability Jesus passed on to us. He did it to prove he was from God; he gave the Apostles the ability to do it and other miracles to prove they were speaking for him, but nowhere does it say we have that ability.

But what was the substance of Jesus’ ministry? That we’ve already seen back in v.14.

Mark 1:14 ...Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God.

And we see it again in v.38.

38 Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.”

That’s the substance of his ministry, and that’s the part that gets passed down to all of us. Everywhere in the epistles we are told over and over to minister the Word of God to one another and to the lost. And that’s why the spiritual warfare passages focus on truth rather than on miracles. The truth of the gospel is the weapon Jesus gave us to fight this war. And Jesus’ miracles, such as driving out demons, are the proof that gives us confidence that Jesus has the power to make our use of the gospel effective in the battle.

Silencing The Demons

Ok, so with all that background, now we’re in a position to understand the seemingly strange behavior of Jesus in this passage. What was the first thing Jesus said to the demon in the synagogue? **Be quiet.** What had the demon been saying? ...**Jesus of Nazareth, I know who you are – the holy one of God.** Is that true? Is Jesus the holy one of God? Yes. Jesus says, “Shut up.” Now look at v.34.

34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

Mark 3:11 Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." 12 But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.

Why? If what they’re saying that Jesus is true, why not let them speak? The commentaries go on page after page with all the various theories of why Jesus wouldn’t let them speak. But we don’t have to theorize or guess – Mark gives us the answer in verse 34.

34 ... he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

It was because of their knowledge. The reason Jesus would not let them speak is because of the knowledge they had about Jesus. Why is that a factor?

Why Do the Demons Want to Speak?

As I was studying this, I actually came at it from a little different angle. Because when I read this, the first question I have is not, “Why doesn’t Jesus let them tell who he is?” What I wonder is, “Why do they *want* to tell who Jesus is?” Why are demons so interested in letting everybody know that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God, the holy one of God? What are they trying to accomplish?

Danger of Disconnected Doctrine

The me ask you this – do you think they are trying to bring people to repentance and faith in Christ? No. That demon in Capernaum portrayed Jesus as someone who came to destroy, not as someone who came to save. What he said was not technically false, but it definitely wasn’t the message of the gospel. Whatever the demons were trying to accomplish, we know that it definitely wasn’t the same thing as Jesus came to accomplish – bringing people to repentance and faith through the gospel.

Do you think it would be safe to say that the demons’ objective was most likely the opposite of Jesus’ objective? I think that’s a safe bet. The demons’ objective is to deceive people. And what is the most important tool for deceiving people? Truth. One thing you notice about the most effective deceivers is that they speak mostly truth. If everything they say is a lie, they are too easy to spot. They don’t fool anybody. But most of what they say is really good, then they can slip in just enough error to lead people astray without people picking up on it.

I don’t take it’s a mystery why Jesus didn’t want them to talk. Suppose a guy showed up at your church who was a known human trafficker. That’s how he made his living – kidnapping girls and selling them into sex slavery. And he asks if he can speak to the junior high Sunday school class. Or he comes to you and says, “Can I just talk with your daughters for a little while?” Would you say, “Yes, but I’m going to monitor what you say”? No. You would say the same thing to him that Jesus said to these demons. The answer is no – shut up and get out of here and don’t come back.

But what if he got into that junior high class and started telling them some things that were true? That's even worse, because now he's gaining their trust. And that's the last thing you want to happen. You see, evil beings can't be trusted with truth. Truth, taken out of the context of the gospel, can be one of the most damaging, deadly things in the world.

So Jesus muzzles the demons because of their knowledge. Isn't knowledge one of the primary things Satan uses to attract people into Satanism? You talk to someone who gets into witchcraft or Satanism or the occult, and you ask what drew them, and it's always the same thing: power and knowledge. Demons will give them special knowledge – things that couldn't otherwise be known. Knowledge that gives them power over people and things. That's one of Satan's big tools. And so it was because of the demons' knowledge that Jesus would not allow them to speak.

And there's a lesson for us in that. The lesson is: beware of truth out of the context of the gospel. Beware of disconnected doctrine. Beware of theology for the sake of theology, or Bible knowledge for the sake of Bible knowledge. The purpose of theology and Bible knowledge and truth is to move people's hearts to repentance and faith in Christ. Truth about God that is disconnected from that can be deadly.

You've heard the saying *all truth is God's truth*? Is all truth God's truth? Yeah, except for the truth that is daemonic. Not all truth is God's truth. A lot of truth is ripped out of the context of the gospel and used by the devil to destroy people.

Conclusion

So what can we take away from this tonight? Two things. First, in the war on evil, Jesus is the winner. I know that doesn't sound like an earth-shattering new insight, but it's important for us to constantly remind ourselves of that, not only so we can have hope in the Second Coming when Jesus will eradicate evil altogether, but also for your hour by hour battle against evil tonight and tomorrow.

If Jesus had the power to drive out demons, the great spiritual powers behind world empires, then he must also have the power to drive evil out of my heart, right? And that's what I need more than anything. I need that more than I need money or physical health or anything else. I need evil driven out of my heart, and I have proved again and again that it's way beyond my capability. I can't drive evil out of my heart any more than a leopard can change its spots. But Jesus proved that he can.

In your struggle with sin, don't rely on techniques. Don't rely on self-discipline or willpower. Don't rely on other people or circumstances. Look to Christ. He does supply grace to defeat sin through some of those other means, but it is his grace alone that has enough power to get the job done.

And how do I gain access to that evil-killing grace for my life? That's the second point of application. It comes through the truth of the gospel. Seek to encounter Christ through his Word.

And how do I deal with evil in my spouse's heart? My kids? People at work, people at church? The gospel. Apply the truth of God's Word to the hearts of men and women, and that alone will bring the power of Christ to bear on the problem of evil wherever it exists.