



Luke 11:24-26

We Need More Than A Change of Habits

Luke 11:24 " When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'

25 "And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order.

26 "Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

Today is the 60th Anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy, that fateful day when the process of driving the Nazis out of Western Europe began.

But imagine if you will what would have happened if 2 days before the landings, the Germans had simply up and left France, slipped away in the night back over the border into Germany, so that the French woke up and found themselves free of the German occupation. Let us further imagine that De Gaulle, ever the fervent French nationalist and already deeply irritated at having to be liberated by Americans and Brits then wired Eisenhower and insisted that the invasion be called off as the Germans had left. So the French begin to rebuild their country, the infrastructure is revitalized, industries are started again, all the treasure ferreted away is brought out of its hiding places. And now – happy once again – they try to return to their pre-war existence. Then just as suddenly, the Germans are back, they've regrouped and they are worse than ever. There are no allied armies to stop them at the border, so they run rough-shod over the country wreaking havoc and exacting a terrible revenge. In this hypothetical scenario, the French refused to have the Allies as their liberators, so they were inevitably reconquered.

Perhaps you're thinking at this point, "Well Andy, that's a stupid scenario. Who on earth would pridefully refuse to accept the only power that could assure their freedom merely because their enemy had left for a while?" To that I'd give two answers:

- 1) You are obviously unfamiliar with the French
- 2) That is exactly the situation that Jesus is dealing with in the narrative & it continues to occur right up to the present moment

You remember last week that Jesus had warned the people listening to Him, that there was no possibility of neutrality when it came to making a decision about Him. What did He say? "11:23 "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters." Now he is warning them further, that if they will not embrace Him as the promised Messiah and their Lord and Savior, then nothing will stop the Devil from having his way with them.

Now many of Christ's hearers that day, no doubt had heard the message of John the Baptist to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" and they'd left off of their grievous sins. They'd gone out to the

Jordan to be baptized and they had confessed their sins. Perhaps they'd given up being extortionists, or prostitutes, drunkards. They'd done a work of moral reformation.

But remember why John said it was time they repented? The kingdom of God was at hand. The Messiah had come, the Lamb of God who takes away the Sins of the World. He was the one John had come to point them towards, but when they met the Messiah, they were unimpressed. He simply wasn't who they were looking for.

By now they thought they were pretty good, and they knew who the real problem was – the Romans and all those other social parasites, sinners and undesirables. What they needed now was a glorious King like David, a "Maximum Leader" who would bring in the sweeping political changes that were so badly needed. But instead they are confronted by a lowly carpenter's Son, who in His preaching kept asserting their own sinfulness and their need of salvation through believing in Him.

You can imagine the indignation this is causing: *"Why do you keep telling us that our works aren't good enough to save us? Why do you keep calling all these deeply religious Pharisees self-righteous? Why is it every time you preach you make it sound like the only way we can be accepted before God is to accept, receive, and rest upon you for salvation?"*

What is with all this ""No one knows the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" and "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" stuff? Didn't we clean up our lives and start living right? That should be enough!

What Jesus is telling them is that moral reformation is not enough. Yes, the Devil may have left them alone for a while, especially because of the presence of Christ in their midst, but if they do not accept him, their hearts will remain the "home" of the Devil and sooner or later the Devil will say "I will return to my house from which I came" and their condition will be far worse than it was originally.

The only way that this can be changed is by getting a real work of grace in their hearts. **If termites are eating a home, a new coat of paint is not going to save it, although it may hide the reality of the situation for a while.** A few outward changes will not remove the inner corruption of their hearts or free them from the bondage to Satan.

Matt. 23:27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

28 "Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Only if the Holy Spirit regenerates a heart and then permanently indwells it, will that heart cease to be the home of the Devil. Only then can they truly be delivered from all fear of being reoccupied. For no one can be simultaneously occupied by the God and the Devil. As Paul put it: "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

But if they stubbornly persist in rejecting Christ, then they have not the Spirit within them. They make a pretence of being "neutral" but in fact they are dead in their trespasses and sins. Oh sure they may look good outwardly, but inside they are rotten.

Let me suggest one general and then several specific applications of what Jesus is teaching here:

- 1) The first is that true Christianity is not simply a program of moral reformation and we are not true Christians merely because we have exchanged bad habits for good ones. This is critical. Unless you are born again, you are not really a Christian you are yet in your sins, you have not been saved, regardless of how you act. Jesus labored that point with Nicodemus: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

I am constantly amazed sometimes at how few people out there realize this. While I was working in Washington D.C. I was constantly talking to nice outwardly moral people who honestly thought that Christianity was all about *acting* good and endorsing "family values." A Christian is not merely someone who has gone through moral rehab. They are sinners saved by Grace only through faith alone in Christ alone.

Yes there are definite changes in the behavior of born again believers, but those changes are outward manifestations of inner heart change.

Western Society made the fatal error in the 19th century of thinking that it could have Christian Morality without real faith in Jesus Christ. Liberal Theologians began simultaneously pouring derision on the deity and miracles of Jesus (**just as the Pharisees did**) while teaching that we could build the Kingdom of God here on earth by being Moralists. ***Brothers and Sisters, we are living in the midst of the wreckage of that abominable theory!*** Pick up a newspaper and you can read exactly what happens to societies where the Devil returns with seven other spirits more wicked than himself.

- 2) Unfortunately you will find many rehabilitated but unconverted individuals within the Church! As Spurgeon puts it: "There are some persons who appear to be converted, who think they are so themselves and therefore make a profession, and are cheerfully received into the Christian Church because their outward life gives evidence of a very great and remarkable change. I could now picture some who, to my great grief, come under my tearful observation, some who were once with us, but have long since arrived at the last end which was "worse than the first." When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, he is quite different from what he used to be. Very likely the shop that was open on the Sunday is now shut up; he turns his footsteps to the place where God's people meet for worship. He begins to pray, even sets up family prayer; he attends prayer meetings, feels some sort of enjoyment in the excitement of religion; he goes where the saints go, and to a great extent in life he acts as they act. The unclean spirit is fairly gone out of the man, and he is another man though not a new creature in Christ Jesus. But I have said there was no struggle about it; it was on a sudden that the spirit went out, and the man jumped into religion. There was no repentance, no conviction, no struggling against depravity, no weeping before the Lord in prayer, and no looking up to the crucified Savior and reading pardon in his wounds; no agonizing struggle after holiness, no wrestling with evil; joy came on the sudden, and the man thought himself saved. The man was a sinner yesterday, and he appears to be a saint to-day, nobody knows how. You talk to him about the work of the Spirit in his soul, convincing him of sin, breaking him with the hammer of the law or by the power of the cross, pounding him in pieces, compelling him to feel that his righteousness is rags; he does not understand you. The unclean spirit is gone out of the man, and that is all."

Now why would the Devil leave a man for a while and allow him to go through a process of reform and enter the church? Do you really need to ask? So that they might be his agents to work dissension, and schism, and heresy and uncleanness through the body. Who do you think the Devil takes more

delight in? An abject Atheist like Bertrand Russell or Madelyn Murray O'Hare who attacks the church from without, or a Joe Smith or David Koresh who start cults from within and lead countless professing Christians astray into damnable heresy. False prophets have always been the devil's favorite approach.

- 3) The danger of working on this kind of "Moral Reformation Only" with your children should be easily apparent. You can easily raise children who are moral outwardly but do not have a real work of grace in their hearts, who behave, but who do not honestly love Christ. "I don't understand it", we say, "they were never a problem at home," but when they got to College they went crazy and now they are living lives of worldly dissipation. How did they leave the faith? Brothers and Sisters, they did not *leave the faith*:

1 John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

The emptiness of their profession simply became apparent. Struggle not so much to conform your child's behavior as to lead them to Christ. Far too often, we feed our children a steady diet of gospel-less moralism and then we are surprised that we end up with nothing but rebels or worse - Pharisees.

- 4) Lastly, let me plead with you not to be content with outward moralism yourselves. If you have never closed with Christ, if you are wearing religion as a mask, I beg you to consider your peril. Both in this world and the next. Inevitably there is a breakdown, an eruption of sin and then you are worse off than when you started. Inevitably such a person is usually harder and more depraved than when they started.

2 Peter 2:20 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.

21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.

22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

Oh, but if you continue in your state of comfortable stupor, till the end, things will go very badly for you at the throne of judgment. You will be like the wedding guest in the parable who glibly barged in wearing his own filthy rags of self-righteousness instead of the spotless garments of the lamb – remember this was one of the many "compelled to come in" to the church, not an atheist. And yet he ended up "cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Why will you perish? Moral reclamation cannot save you, but "if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

10 For with the **heart** one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."