

May 19, 2019
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Luke
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
© 2019 David J. Whitcomb

SATANIC OPPOSITION

Luke 11:14-27

Do you ever wonder why people lie to you, lie about you, attack your reputation, or just give you a difficult time by saying curt or nasty things about you? I'm not trying to give us all a martyr's complex, nor do I intend to set a negative tone for this sermon. However, chances are pretty good that you have faced this kind of response on occasion. And if you try to live like Christ, chances are even higher that you have been falsely accused. Or if you are in a position of leadership, trying to apply Bible principles in that position, and are responsible to correct others (such as the position of parent, employer, teacher, etc.), you almost certainly have faced this kind of opposition. Why the negative response when all you are really trying to do is help?

The answer is found in the beginning of human history. Satan hates God. Satan is the first sinner who offended God with his pride. Satan attacks God by chiefly attacking that part of creation that best illustrates God—people. God created Adam and Eve in His image. Early on in history, it would seem, Satan launched his attack against God by attacking God's image. And so it has been ever since.

People who are not regenerated and indwelt by God the Holy Spirit are easily pawns in Satan's hands. They often and unknowingly are used to attack God's image, especially those people God has chosen to be His own possession, His representatives, and His appointed authorities. Parents, that is why you are under attack from so many different angles, not necessarily by your children, but by your culture.

The story in our text describes the pinnacle of Satan's attacks against the image of God. Jesus of Nazareth, God the Son, was the

perfect example, the express image, of God to humans. Therefore, we are not surprised to discover that throughout His earthly ministry Jesus was subject to all kinds of lies, threats, slanders, verbal assaults and eventually torture and crucifixion. Satan recruited some of his best soldiers to attack the Christ. And probably most people were really confused about what was going on, because often the attackers were among the most respected, most religious, most theologically knowledgeable people.

In this story, Jesus demonstrates how we should handle these kinds of situations when we are being attacked by accusations. Notice that this time Jesus did not go after the sinners with a whip like He did when He cleared the thieves out of the temple (John 2). This time Jesus did not yell or cry out with a loud voice like He did at Lazarus' tomb or when He died on the cross. And this time Jesus did not walk away or give the sinners the silent treatment like He did when He purposely left the Jews and went into the wilderness for a time (John 11:34).

In response to Satanic opposition, Jesus demonstrated how His messengers are supposed to deal with the same kind of stuff. Paul, inspired by God the Holy Spirit, explained this same principle to pastor Timothy who was facing similar opposition in the church at Ephesus. He told Tim to respond like this: *“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching”* (2 Timothy 4:2). Luke recorded how Jesus demonstrated reproof, rebuking, exhorting with complete patience and with teaching based on evidence.

False Accusation (vv.14-20).

Religious people criticized Jesus for doing “good.” What did Jesus do that the religious folks didn't like? Jesus was casting out a demon. *Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled* (v.14). God the Son was busy doing what Isaiah promised He would do. We can remember from our previous studies that Jesus began His public ministry by teaching in the synagogue of His hometown (Luke 4:18), *“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to*

bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound” (Isaiah 61:1)

Having explained that He was on earth to proclaim liberty to captives and to open the prison to those who are bound, Jesus went about releasing demon-possessed people from their captors. There are nearly twenty separate references to Jesus casting out demons. And John indicates at the end of his Gospel that we know the New Testament record doesn't begin to tell the whole story.

In the case in our text, when the demon left and the mute man spoke, the people marveled. Of course they did. They should. But did they miss the fact that Jesus released victims from their demonic captors because He is compassionate. They were proving the fact that Jesus released victims from the demonic captors in order to attract attention to His teaching of the gospel. Furthermore, Jesus released victims from the demonic captors in order to prove that He has authority over the spirit world (as well as all authority over all things).

In response to Jesus demonstrating compassion and authority, “some of them” resisted Jesus. *But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons” (v.15).* The phrase “some of them” obviously draws a line of separation. Ultimately, there are only two groups of people in world, “Them and us.” There are those who are in Christ and those who are against Christ. There are those who are children of God and those who are children of Satan, deserving wrath. There are those who walk in the light of Christ and those who walk in the darkness of error. There are those who are righteous and those who are unrighteous. There are the inheritors of eternal life and the inheritors of eternal punishment. There are citizens of the kingdom of heaven and citizens of the kingdom of darkness. Or as John MacArthur put it, “The saints and the ain'ts.”

There are no other options. There are two groups and “some of them” were the opponents of Jesus who were outside the kingdom of heaven. They were people Jesus described when He taught: *“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20).* They lied about Jesus saying, *“He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons” (v.15).*

Let's admit that it sounds like those folks knew theology pretty well. Often the enemies of God and His people are very familiar with the truth of the Bible. But that truth has never changed their lives. So some of them who knew a lot about the spirit world accused Jesus of using the power of Beelzebul to cast out the demon. That name is actually a corruption of the title Baal-Zebul, the prince of Baal, the chief God of the ancient Philistines. The name most literally means “lord of the flies.” Not content to attribute Jesus' power and authority to cast out demons to other demonic power, these evil people claimed that Jesus was working through the power of the prince of demons, Satan himself.

This is not the first time people like this made the false accusation. Matthew (12:22-37) recorded a similar event that took place about a year earlier while Jesus was still ministering in Galilee. In that setting, Jesus warned that attributing His work to the power of Satan was to deny that He is God the Son, sent from God the Father, empowered by God the Holy Spirit. That was blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, which made it impossible for them to be saved.

Not only did some of the people falsely accuse Jesus but others put Jesus to the test, “. . . while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven” (v.16). Others of the “some of them” were demanding that Jesus do a sign from heaven. In a story we find in Matthew 16:1, it was the Scribes and Pharisees who demanded Jesus perform a sign from heaven. The sign of authority over demons (as well as authority over sickness and even death) was not sufficient for them. They demanded more. According to Jewish superstition, a demon could perform a miracle on earth but only God could perform miracles in the sky.

So this was a test. Probably the people giving the test were very sincere. They knew that God's law required that any prophet or dreamer who did a sign or wonder was to be put to the test to see if the thing predicted came to pass. No doubt these very religious people were convinced they were simply following God's rules. But in reality, they were putting God Himself to the test which God's law strictly prohibits. God also required, *You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah (Deuteronomy 6:16).* God's rule notwithstanding, “some of them” kept seeking a sign from

heaven when the greatest sign from God was standing in front of them. And they rejected Him.

At this point, we need to learn good lessons about how to respond to such false accusation. Jesus responded to resistance with perfect wisdom. First, He laid down a true principle. Divided kingdoms fail. *But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls" (v.17).* Jesus knew the thoughts of the "some of them" because He is omniscient. But Jesus also knew simply from precedence because these people had already revealed their character on many occasions.

Knowing what they were thinking, Jesus stated a very obvious fact. *"Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls" (v.17).* Here is a rule: Answer false accusation with clear facts. "This we all know is true!" The fact is that civil war destroys a kingdom and at the very least creates something different or new. In the height of our own civil war, Mr. Lincoln said that "this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom." After the war was over, our forefathers quickly learned that this "new birth" meant a huge, costly, intrusive government centralized in Washington.

Applied to the argument at hand, if Satan divides his kingdom, it fails. *And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? (v.18a).* Jesus applied the true fact to the false accusation. If Satan divided his kingdom it would fall. Though this is true, Satan will actually divide his kingdom (in a way) in order to appear to be an angel of light. He will use his people to literally cast demons out of people in order to deceive. This is like chess players who sacrifice a pawn to save a queen. Satan is the Master of deception.

Then Jesus made a direct application of the principle to His accusers. He affirmed the hypocrites' accusation with their own words. *"For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul" (v.18b).* Jesus simply repeated the hypocrites' words. Hypocrites hate it when you do this. But this was precisely their accusation, which was a lie and slander.

Having established what the hypocrites said, Jesus affirmed that the real evidence was about the hypocrites' own "sons." *"And if I cast*

out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges" (v.19). This is an example of the above assertion that Satan allows exorcisms among his people in order to appear as an angel of light. Another good example of that is Acts 19:13-16 where we learn that some Jewish exorcists even attached the name of Jesus to their incantations, much to their embarrassment and physical harm. That was a case of Satan casting out Satan.

Jesus highlighted a very important principle here also. Unrighteous people are very often inconsistent, contradictory, and dishonest in their accusations. This has to be the case because they are of their father the devil who is the father of lies (John 8:44). Lies will eventually prove contradictory. Be patient, tell the truth, and let time be the great revealer because time is always on the side of truth.

Finally, Jesus affirmed the truth of what actually happened. *"But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (v.20).* Jesus, as He always does, brought the sinners face to face with the truth. The people had only two choices, as do all people in life: Either acknowledge that Jesus is God, or deny that Jesus is God to their eternal destruction. They had to make their decision in the light of indisputable evidence. Jesus had demonstrated the "finger of God" power many times in the previous probably two years at this point. Devout Jews who read and knew the Old Testament would have been familiar with the "finger of God." *Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. (Exodus 8:19).*

Jesus had effectively refuted His false accusers. He had stated facts that not only proved they were wrong about the source of His authority, but had also proven that they and their sons were actually pawns of Satan. So were the hypocrites convinced? They seldom are. I have often thought that even in hell God's enemies will not admit they are wrong but will blame God for being unfair.

A Principle About Demons (vv.21-26).

Having refuted His false accusers, Jesus went on to teach that no one can be for truth and error at the same time. He did this by applying an

illustration drawn from the previous argument. *“When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil”* (vv.21-22).

In this picture, the strong man is Satan who is trying to protect his possession. Every person is born in sin and, therefore, as children of their father the devil. We are all children of darkness, children of unrighteousness, children who wander in the barren land of sin. But when God graciously opens our understanding giving us the gift of faith, He is the stronger man. Here Jesus is the stronger man who barges into Satan’s house and takes his victims out to freedom.

This is the same picture Jesus mentioned in Luke 10:18. *And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven”* (Luke 10:18). As the 70 messengers went out preaching the Good News of the kingdom and casting out demons, Satan and his power was falling over and over as victims were ripped out of his kingdom. Satan looked like lightening falling from the sky repeatedly. Praise God that Jesus ascended on high leading a host of captives He has freed from Satan (Ephesians 4:8).

So to whom do you belong? Are you still a captive to Satan or has Christ the stronger man broken in and released you? An answer to that question is demanded as Jesus made application to our relationship with Christ. *“Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters”* (v.23). There is no neutral ground with Jesus. The Pharisees and other religious leaders were clearly against Jesus. They were scattering the truth, kicking around the seed that Jesus sowed so that it would not produce a crop to be gathered.

The same two choices are still the only choices. You are with Jesus, in Jesus, through confession of your sin and full, complete trust in Him alone to forgive you and guarantee eternal life. Or you are opposed to Jesus and being used as an instrument in Satan’s hand to resist and try to undo Jesus’ work in the lives of others.

And it is incredibly dangerous to be an instrument for Satan. It is like being his house, because empty “houses” are prime real estate for demons. Jesus taught that demons look for places (people) in which to stay. *“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 from which I came.’ And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order (vv.24-25).

In the parable, Jesus told about a demon who had lived in the man who “cleaned up” his life. This was not a case of a demon influencing a person. That happens a lot. Rather this was demon possession, a demon indwelling the person. Why did it go out of the person? Maybe it was a case of Satan using his people to cast out a demon in order to appear as light and truth. Maybe the demon-possessed person was turning over new leaves of moralism and trying to live a “good” life and was making the demon uncomfortable.

At any rate, having left its home, the demon wandered about in the barrenness of sin in the world. Demons do not have bodies of their own. Therefore, they look to indwell someone or something. Not finding a comfortable dwelling, the demon decides to *return to my house* (the person in which it had lived). Lo and behold, because the person had turned to moralism and legalism, the demon found the house was clean and orderly. That is a good description of a Pharisee. It is a good description of a moral, religious person.

Another great danger is that demons apparently like company. *“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”* (v.26). This is the danger of moralism. Moralism looks real promising from the outside, but it leaves a void in the soul. Satan’s demons will fill the void so that the last state is worse than the previous state. This is what Peter warned against in his second letter. *For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first* (2 Peter 2:20).

In closing, let’s consider the fallacy of moralism which opens the door to Satanic influence if not outright demon possession. Moralism is the religion of apostate Protestant denominations, Roman Catholicism, Mormonism, Islam, and most cults. Al Mohler defined it like this: “Moralism promises the favor of God and the satisfaction of God’s righteousness to sinners if they will only behave and commit themselves to moral improvement. We sin against Christ and we misrepresent the Gospel when we suggest to sinners that what God demands of them is moral improvement in accordance with the

Law.” (www.albermohler.com/2009/09/03/why-moralism-is-not-the-gospel.)

Moralism refuses to acknowledge our spiritual poverty and need of the Savior. Moralism refuses to trust in Christ alone for salvation. Moralism is content to be measured by fellow peers. Moralism is eternally dangerous.

We will face attacks and accusations for being so narrow, so unyielding in the matter of the gospel. Nevertheless, we need to continue to appeal to truth, point out facts, uncover the reality of the sinner’s sin, and exalt Christ as God our only Savior.