



Matthew 12:43-45

A Cozy Little House for Demons

43 " When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none.

44 "Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order.

45 "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. So shall it also be with this wicked generation."

Do you believe in demons? I absolutely do. Let me tell you why. It's not because of my personal experience or the stories that have been related to me by others. It is because Christ and his Apostles, not only believed in them, but spoke and taught about them, encountered them and cast them out, and I believe the testimony of my Savior Jesus Christ contained in Scripture.

It helps of course that my own personal experiences have only served to confirm the truth of what the Bible teaches about demons. Prior to becoming a Christian I was involved with the Occult, and Wiccanism, and I saw enough to perceive now how the people I associated with then were playing around with demonic and terribly destructive forces, all the while convincing themselves that they were doing good. As a gospel minister I've frequently dealt with people who showed every sign of being under the sway of demons. I've also spoken with missionaries and troops sent to areas of the world that have no significant Christian presence, and which have long been under dark veil of Satan's counterfeit religions. They've described the oppressive spiritual atmosphere and their own encounters with influences they've described as demonic, and I believe them.

You don't have to go to the far corners of the earth to encounter that kind of thing by the way. Here in Fayetteville, I've been through enough spiritual warfare over the last couple of decades, that I've really grown to appreciate the truth of what Paul said in Ephesians 6:12 when he warned the Church: ***"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."***

So when Jesus talks about unclean spirits here, I don't interpret it as a metaphorical reference to mental illness, or diseases, or even human evil, I understand that He is speaking of the Devil's fallen angels – demons. The same kind of demons whom He has been casting out. Incidentally, the “unclean” refers not to spirits that need a bath, but unclean in the ceremonial sense, unholy, fallen, degenerate, corrupt, wicked. In a word, evil, which is why the NIV has no trouble translating it evil spirits.

But why does Jesus mention evil spirits, demons, at this point? It is because He is in the process of warning his enemies, the Scribes and Pharisees about the spiritual danger they are in, and the terrible mistake they were making.

What was that mistake the Pharisees made? It's still common today, **it's thinking that religion consists solely in moral reformation**. Cleaning up your act. You know, if you're a drunk, getting religion consists in stopping drinking. If you're a gambler, getting religion means you give up gambling. If you're an adulterer, becoming religious means stopping committing adultery, the thief gives up stealing things and so on. According to this view, religion means being an outwardly moral person.

This kind of religion is a long string of negatives. It's seen in all the things we don't do. I don't do this, I don't do that. So with the Pharisees, I don't do this long list of things on the Sabbath, I don't touch unclean things, I don't speak with sinners, I don't, I don't, I don't.

Now we and the Pharisees make a terrible mistake in thinking that the devil doesn't like that religion. Quite the opposite, he is absolutely in favor of it. A religion that consists entirely of people trying to act moral and then thinking that by doing so, they are good enough to go to heaven is a religion he is behind 100%, because it puts people on a religious treadmill of works righteousness, but gets no one to heaven. And even better, it feeds pride and self-righteousness, and people on that path tend to despise people who are following God's way of salvation by Grace Alone, through Faith Alone, in Christ Alone.

Now here is the sad truth, in the case of an unbeliever, there is nothing to stop demons from occupying them. We usually think of demon possession as something that completely incapacitated people like the Gadarene demoniacs, but that wasn't always the case, in the OT we read about demons compelling otherwise normal seeming individuals to prophesy falsely, already in Matthew we've seen examples of possessed people whose indwelling demons caused them to be deaf and mute, later we will see the example of demons impelling the people they indwell towards great evil. But in this case Jesus says, that the reason that so many of the Pharisees hated him so intensely is that they are people who set themselves towards moral reclamation and their demons voluntarily left them. But with the intention of coming back, they left what they considered to be “their house” and took the key with them. Then while the Pharisee was striving to stop doing wicked things, these demons roamed throughout the desert places, places without water and without life, they feel more comfortable surrounded by death and barrenness because it is a consequence of the fall and their Master the devil's objective. He creates nothing, but destroys and parches everything he touches and his servants do likewise. It's why, for

instance, that the Jihadis take civilizations and turn them into barren wastelands filled with death. That's their master's objective. A happy village repulses him, but a landscape of severed heads and burned out buildings is a cause of great joy for him.

But you see what happens so often is that the evil spirit having left for a while waits until the person has begun that process of reformation, they quit many of their viler sins, but then the evil spirit comes back, there is nothing to stop him from doing so. And finding his house, the person, swept clean of much of its' inconvenient garbage, it does the equivalent of getting on the phone and inviting friends to come party with him. So the state of the person afterwards is even worse than before they tried to "clean up" – you see this cycle often in the case of addicts, they kick their present addiction using a twelve step or similar program, get clean for a little while and then the demon comes back and they are back to using, only this time, its worse than ever. As Charles Haddon Spurgeon put it, ***"Reformations which are not the work of conquering grace are usually temporary, and often lead up to a worse condition in after years."***

But in the case of the Pharisees, they followed the teaching of the Rabbis, they put off their outward and gross sins, but there was no new heart and no Holy Spirit within them, and then the demons came roaring back and there was a host of new sins, not the petty little ones, but this time the sins were teaching men lies, lust and envy, covetousness and the same kind of hideous pride that caused the son of man to fall, and oh a burning hatred for Jesus, the Son of God, and for His people. This is kind of "reformation" we see often in the case of prisoners who are converted to Islam. Before they'd been drug dealers, car thieves, petty robbers, but they stop, they clean that up, and they emerge from prison as potential Jihadis, filled with a spirit of "Do not" "Do not taste, do not touch, do not handle." And filled with a hate for the infidel so strong they can happily blow themselves up to kill them. That's the same kind of hate that screamed CRUCIFY, CRUCIFY when Jesus was paraded by Pilate before the people of Jerusalem. Ultimately, it's a demonic hatred towards GOD.

So Jesus comes and says moral reformation will never be enough. True Religion, can only come when someone is born again, when they have the Spirit of God enter into them. It doesn't start with me cleaning up my life, it starts with me realizing I can never clean up my life, and that I must flee to the Son of God, Jesus Christ if I am to be saved.

We see Jesus teaching this lesson in:

John 3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

8 "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

God had promised this in the OT:

Ezek. 36:25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

26 "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

Paul spoke about this change, for he embodied it par excellence, he too had been a Pharisee pursuing works righteousness, filled with hatred for Christians:

Titus 3:3 For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,

5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

1) One of the biggest mistakes that you can make is in thinking that Christianity is a religion of moral reformation, of “don’t do that anymore.” That’s not it:

"I don't smoke; I don't drink; I don't swear. Hallelujah, I'm a Christian." If a telephone pole could talk, it might say the same thing. But a series of zeros does not make a Christian. A million negatives do not produce even one positive. We pity the man with an empty mind. But what about the person with an empty heart ... and an empty life?" - William Hendriksen

You must be born again!

2) Spirit indwelt Christians cannot be indwelt by Demons

You cannot have GOD dwelling within you and demons.

But unbelievers can – but I’m safe I’m in church – I believe in GOD

Do you believe in God? Good

James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe -- and tremble!

So did the Pharisees!

The example of Judas John 13:27 Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly."

None prove so hopelessly wicked as those who, after experiencing strong religious convictions, have gone back again to sin and the world. – JC Ryle

Possibility of using the Franklin Graham example! “You offended me!” Why do we have so many young demons? Because we’ve cast out the only thing that can really turn people around.

Both teens raised by “Moral” parents.

{HARRIS AND KLEBOLD VIDEO} "Go Romans," Harris says later. "Thank God they crucified that a—hole." Then the two teenagers both chant, "Go Romans! Go Romans! Yeah! Who!"

Darrell Scott, who says his daughter Rachel was the only victim singled out in the tapes, believes the killers felt a deep antipathy for the things of God: "There seemed to be an extra element of hatred and vengeance there.

Cassie Bernall example