

## Yes, It Can Get Worse

Over the past several weeks, our "Call To Worship" has asked and answered the question, "Is our salvation simply a matter of our walking forward and praying a 'Sinner's Prayer', or is there more that has taken place, especially on God's part"? And we have said that our praying of that prayer is a right thing to do, but that it is not our efforts that bring us to salvation. That our salvation is a gift of God given to us through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus, that while "Yes", our walking forward is a good thing, so much, much more must also have taken place in those mysterious realms of God.

And that was part of a late-night conversation that took place between Jesus and a man named Nicodemus, one of the leaders of the Pharisees. In that conversation, Jesus said to Nicodemus that he would need to be "Born Again" before he could ever hope to see the Kingdom of God.

Nicodemus, though he is thought to be the most learned of the teachers within the Jewish leadership, the Sanhedrin, he wasn't able to understand the words that Jesus was saying to him.

Thankfully, you and I have these scriptures to explain to us the reason why such very learned people as Nicodemus could not understand Jesus' words. We're told in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, that it is only the indwelling Holy Spirit who can bring understanding of such things to our minds and to our spirits.

And so, this dear man, who earnestly wanted to know the truth from the Lord Jesus, was left, at least for the time being, without understanding.

Thankfully, we do see that later Nicodemus did finally understand. We know that because we see him openly helping Joseph of Arimathea to bury the Lord Jesus.

A question . . . what has to take place before a person can go from the condition that Nicodemus was in, to a real saving understanding of the words spoken by the Lord Jesus? It will be as Jesus said. A person must be "Born Again", "Born from above".

And those words don't just mean a simple reciting of some words that we like to call the "Sinner's Prayer". It may be that, yes. But it is so much, much more. It

requires a complete surrender of a person's soul to the Lord Jesus, and a complete "Rebirth". The bible scholars call it "Regeneration", a change that takes place within our souls that makes us a whole new person. Listen to these words given in 2 Corinthians 5:17.

<sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

This folks, is being "Born Again", a whole new "rebirth", "Regeneration". And this must take place before a person is truly and eternally saved from their sins.

In today's passage, we'll read about a very unfortunate person who apparently did not go through all those blessed steps of salvation. Yes, they probably had what some might call, "A spiritual experience", an experience perhaps very close to salvation, but still falling just short of the real thing. And here, in this passage we'll see the devastating effects that take place when a person does fall short of true salvation. Here in Luke chapter 11, verse 24, Jesus said,

<sup>24</sup>"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.' <sup>25</sup>And when he comes, he finds *it* swept and put in order. <sup>26</sup>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." (Luke 11:24-26)

We know that all over this world, there are people who hurt, and are in all sorts of misery, but with no answers and no relief in sight. And they cry out for help, but they find none. And if we could hear their many cries of desperation, we would, no doubt, hear the words, "can my life get any worse than this"?

What is the cause of such pervasive misery? The cause will most often always be the same. It is "sin". And it emanates out from the "pits" of the world, the flesh and the devil.

It is those unholy three that are the well-spring of all that is evil, the antithesis of all that is good. And they do their work really well, spewing forth an endless stream of misery and strife.

But again, this question being bewailed by so many, "can my miseries get any worse" . . . Unfortunately, that question has a sad and despairing answer, because the reality usually is, "Yes, yes a person's miseries certainly can get

worse, and they most likely will, especially for those who would once dare to cry out to God for help, but then turn back away from Him."

But why? And How? The answer is here in these words. Listen again!

<sup>24</sup>"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.' <sup>25</sup>And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. <sup>26</sup>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." (Luke 11:24-26)

We aren't given many of the details here. But because of what takes place next and because the demon still claims the person as belonging to him, we are left to assume that an "incomplete work" of salvation had taken place in the person's life. They might have walked forward at an altar call, but then did not follow up in giving their whole heart to the Lord.

Perhaps this man or this woman had experienced the "seed" of God's word falling upon the "soil" of their soul, as in the "Parable of the Sower". The Sower has sown his seeds. But their soul could not receive it. Listen to some of the words of that parable given in Luke chapter 8.

<sup>11</sup> Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. <sup>12</sup> The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. <sup>13</sup> And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. <sup>14</sup> And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. (Luke 8:11-14)

Often, as a person experiences the miseries of their sin, they cry out to God for relief. And in His mercy, God will shower them with a provision of His precious word, making it very uncomfortable for any demon that lives within that person.

And as with this person that Jesus is speaking about, the demon leaves them to try to find "rest". Verse 24,

<sup>24</sup>"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest. (Luke 11:24)

But there is never any “rest” for those evil demons. God’s word within the person he just left had tormented the demon and made him miserable. But being outside of that person was no relief to the demon either. And so, the demon sought to return to the place most “restful” to him, back inside the man. Verse 24,

<sup>24</sup>seeking rest; and finding none, he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ (Luke 11:24)

If we will consider these words carefully, we’ll find that hidden within them is a special, up-close view of the battle that probably most often takes place within our souls in those first moments of our conversion.

Many of our evangelical scholars equate the word “conversion” to mean exactly the same as “salvation”, but some do not.

Oswald Chambers believed that, yes conversion and salvation can take place at the same moment, but not always. He believed that “conversion” is simply the “first step” towards salvation, a turning to hear and to see and to taste of the salvation of Christ, but still prior to the full and complete step of “salvation”, of “rebirth”.

Following that line of thought then, as the seed of God’s word falls upon the soil of an unbeliever, that person is at first “converted” or “turned” to it, “drawn” by God’s Spirit to Christ. But as the “Parable of the Sower” tells us, the soil of their soul may still be too hard and rocky and they are still able to turn back away.

Now, while we can’t know the exact condition of this man that Jesus is speaking about here in this passage, we will assume that he has been in a place where he has received God’s word and has, at least for the moment, desired more from God. The evil spirit within the man, being tormented by the presence of God’s word, leaves out of that man to try to find “rest” somewhere else.

But unfortunately, from these next words, we can conclude that the man’s conversion to salvation did not go forward as it should have. His soul was “swept clean” but nothing was put there to replace the vacancy that the demon left behind. The man had not allowed the Holy Spirit to come and to fully abide within his soul.

And with the vacancy still available, the demon knew that he still had his house to go back into. And he did, and this time, he brought with him seven more demons even more evil than himself. Listen again!

<sup>24</sup>"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.' <sup>25</sup>And when he comes, he finds *it* swept and put in order. <sup>26</sup>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." (Luke 11:24-26)

And here also, we're given even more insight into the hidden workings of the demonic world. A demon, no doubt, lives a wretchedly miserable life. But these words imply that a demon can find some measure of rest when he comes and inhabits the soul of a man or woman.

And it's evident from these words that a demon can see if our soul has the Holy Spirit indwelling within us. And if our soul does not have the Holy Spirit within it, then there is an open invitation for the demon, and his friends, to come and take possession of us.

Another insight about the demonic kingdom, can be seen back in verse 14 that we studied about last week, and that is that some demons have certain specific abilities, as took place with that particular man, to make him mute, speechless.

Using that demon as an example, if he was first driven out from a man, and that man had not gone on forward with His salvation, then that demon would be able to return to the man and again take away the man's ability to speak. But not only that, this demon would also bring seven more demons with him, each with their own abilities to indwell and to control the nature and physical condition of that man, making the man's condition far, far worse than before.

And each of those seven demons would have their own specialty of misery. Perhaps they would bring with them, alcohol or drug addiction, perhaps they would bring with them an insatiable desire for pornography, or a spirit of unfaithfulness and adultery. Perhaps they would bring with them a spirit of fear, or a spirit of worry, or perhaps a spirit of hopelessness. Perhaps one of those demons would be a spirit of pride and self-centeredness, or perhaps a demon of arguing and unhappiness, or a demon of envy, or of slander. Perhaps they would be demons of selfish ambition and greed, or of violence and hatred.

Can you imagine, all those demons coming to live within a person. It does happen. And it will happen. Jesus Christ, the God of heaven and earth has said these words and they are absolutely true.

So then the question again, "Can our life get any worse than it is?" The answer is "Oh yes", yes it can get, a lot, lot worse, and it will most certainly get worse if that vacant place within our souls is not immediately filled with God's Holy Spirit.

And herein is the reason for the deep and demanding need for "discipleship." As a soul receives the word of God, that word is powerful and effectual. Within God's plan is a needful demand that the Body of Christ reach forward to do its part, that of "discipling" each other with the Word of God, and especially, to disciple those who are new in the faith.

God's command to "Go ye and make disciples" is not just one of the options available to us as believers, it is an absolute necessity.

Folks, we need to understand that we cannot know when full and complete salvation takes place within any person. With myself, I asked Christ over and over again for many months to come in and save me before He really and finally did.

Why it took so long and so much pleading from me, I don't know. But I do know that the key to my part in my salvation was "surrender". And it took a long time for me to do that.

And I am so very thankful that seven demons did not come in to take back control of my soul during those intervening months. I would not be here today.

It was, no doubt, the protection of Christ that preserved my weak and wretched soul through those many months.

. . . But continuing on, may I carry this consideration and this analogy one step further? If, in fact, all of us in this room are truly saved, if we have truly moved on forward through our conversion into full and complete salvation, then we each do have the Holy Spirit indwelling within us, keeping the many demons from coming back in to corrupt our souls.

But does that leave those seven demons, and the many, many other demons without an ability to harm us. No, it does not! We can still be vulnerable to their attacks.

Those demons are like the prince of demons, satan. They are crafty and clever. They cannot come in and possess us, but they are able to see other opportunities that might come available to them. They are especially able to see any open area of our body, soul and spirit that is left unprotected, and they will attack those areas and bring any harm they can inflict upon us.

That is made evident to us by the command from God for us to put on, and to keep on, the "full armor of God". Listen! Ephesians 6,

<sup>10</sup>Finally, my brethren,(and remember that brethren are fellow believers like you and me) be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup>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*. <sup>13</sup>Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup>Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup>and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup>above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. <sup>17</sup>And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; <sup>18</sup>praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— (Ephesians 6:10-18)

This is God's answer for your and my protection against the many demons that will, this day, attack us. Unless we are fully covered by the full armor of God, we will have an open area, which the demons can quickly see. And they will attack, with full force.

In a book by Rick Joyner, "The Final Quest", he envisions us Christians walking through life in a wounded condition, simply because we do not, every moment of every day have on the full armor of God. And where we might have neglected to put on a part of God's armor, we are exposed. And there a

demon can attack and grab hold onto us and plague us with whatever abilities it has.

Again, it might be a demonic spirit of pride and self-centeredness, or perhaps a demon of arguing and unhappiness, or perhaps a demon spirit of unfaithfulness and adultery, or a demon spirit of fear, or a demon of worry or hopelessness.

Imagine this for a moment folks, because this is exactly why God commands us to put on His full armor. If we carelessly leave one small area of our body, soul or spirit exposed and unprotected, the demons will surely attack and they will dig their claws into us and not turn loose.

And the longer we leave those demons there, the deeper their claws will dig into us and the longer and harder it will be to ever get them off us.

Our only protection is the "Whole Armor of God". It is God and God alone who can protect us from the wiles of the devil. Listen, as we close!

<sup>10</sup>Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. <sup>11</sup>Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup>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*. <sup>13</sup>Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Ephesians 6:10-13)

Let's pray.