

## Prayers

### **To God**

Your provision and Your love, Lord Jesus, surpass every dream we have had, every desire we maintain, and every hope for which we long. For You know us through and through, and You confirm Your love for us each and every day by providing for us, sustaining us and leading us forward. Come, Lord Jesus; do Your work in us, and may Your Kingdom be found in us this, and every day. AMEN

### **For myself**

*Give thanks to God for each member of your family, and give Him your thoughts and feelings about difficult things that have happened in the past. Pray for a brighter future.*

### **For others**

Weekly theme: those at sea

*Pray for those who are involved in the commercial world of sea travel, living their lives on container ships delivering goods around the world.*

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## Meditation

Look at the people who honour God's Name,  
Who give Him their worship in spirit and truth:

See those who stand firmly on the rock of Christ,  
Who share their testimony for the benefit of all.

See those who give their lives in loving service,  
Who follow their Lord faithfully, whatever the cost.

See those who study God's Word in earnest,  
Who teach it to others with consummate care.

See those who pray with love and compassion,  
Who intercede for others before the Throne of Grace.

See those who yearn for God's Kingdom to come,  
Who live by faith until Christ Jesus returns.

Praise God for the people who honour His Name  
Who give glory to Jesus and inspire us in faith.

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## Bible Passage

### Luke 11:14-26

<sup>14</sup> Jesus was casting out a demon that made a man deaf and mute. Now when the demon came out, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowds were amazed; <sup>15</sup> but some of them said,

*“He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons!”*

<sup>16</sup> Others put Him to the test by asking Him for a sign from heaven, <sup>17</sup> but Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them:

***“Any kingdom divided against itself will be laid to waste, and a house that is divided will fall. <sup>18</sup> So then if Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub! <sup>19</sup> But if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by what authority do your followers drive them out? Now they will be your judges! <sup>20</sup> But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the Kingdom of God has already come amongst you.***

***<sup>21</sup> “When a strong man is fully armed and guards his own house, his possessions are safe. <sup>22</sup> But when one who is stronger attacks and overpowers him, he strips away the trusted armour and shares out what he has stolen.***

***<sup>23</sup> “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.***

***<sup>24</sup> “When an evil spirit leaves someone, it travels through parched deserts seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says,***

*‘I will return to the house I left.’*

***<sup>25</sup> When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and well presented, <sup>26</sup> so it goes and invites along seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they come in and live there. Then the last condition of that person is worse than the first.”***

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## Review

This is an extraordinary passage of Scripture, and the most substantial passage of teaching about ‘deliverance ministry’ in the Gospels. But we should not lose sight of the fact that here in Luke (and in Matthew 12), Jesus has just turned His back on His ministry in Galilee in order to go to Jerusalem and face His ultimate test. He knows the stakes are high and has already spoken to the disciples about His coming death (9:22,44), and it is not surprising that we now begin to hear about other people criticising Jesus’ teaching and ministry.

Our passage begins with Jesus continuing to do what He had done since the beginning of His ministry (Luke 4:33f.). He cast out a demon that was causing physical impairment, in this instance, a man who was ‘deaf and mute’ (there is one word for this in Greek, meaning both deaf and mute, see ‘Going Deeper’). As with the story of the boy with epilepsy, from whom Jesus cast out a demon (9:37-42), we would generally not reckon now that someone with such problems had a demon. But we would be unwise to cast aspersions on Jesus’ discernment of the role of evil in sickness, or His ability to deal with it. We need such gifts

today, to be aware of them and to seek them. Not everyone who is ill can be 'cured' by the medical profession, and we need a greater understanding of the spiritual realm to add to the undoubted successes of medicine.

When they saw Jesus cast out a demon, some responded just as people had done throughout Jesus' ministry. They were amazed at His power and authority (11:14, 5:26, 9:43). Yet others were not so sure, and Jesus' critics now raised their heads. While some wanted to test Jesus further (11:16 – and see our next study, 11:27-32), others sought to attack Jesus' integrity (11:15), and they questioned Jesus' right to cast out demons.

The direct accusation against Jesus was this. Some believed that He was only able to cast out demons because He was in league with the devil and therefore had authority over his hordes (the name Beelzebul was a popular name for the devil – see 'Going Deeper'). How tragic that anyone would think that healing someone from a life-limiting condition was a manipulation of evil rather than its defeat! Jesus' response to this astonishing slur is both swift and lengthy (see 11:27-32). He knew people's thoughts because of their attitudes, and He knew He had to counter the evil thrown at Him swiftly.

The arguments Jesus used against His accusers are penetrating and insightful. His first attack uses the idea of a house tragically divided against itself (11:17-20). Whatever 'house' we may think of in human terms, whether this is a family, a dynasty, a company or government, or even a church, division and strife are obvious enemies. But is evil subject to this principle of failure by division? The answer must surely be 'Yes', and for two reasons; firstly because this is what we observe about the nature of evil, which in this world is often highly organised, for example, when fraud is committed, or when pornography abounds on the internet. Such things can be brought down by attacking the organisation and structure of evil. Secondly, because evil is essentially at war with good, and war requires unity and focus. Jesus is the ultimate victor in this battle, though the devil fights on.

In our passage, Jesus' question is this, '*if Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand?*' (11:18) His argument is that evil is organised, how can its aims be so confused that evil and good can be mixed up? Evidently, He has done good for the man who was mute and deaf, not evil. Jesus had trapped His opponents, for some performed deliverance themselves, and He therefore challenged them about the source of their authority (11:19). He then turned the argument around with a characteristically deft touch, using the opportunity to declare the arrival of God's Kingdom, '*but if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the Kingdom of God has already come ...*' (11:20). His words were a full frontal attack on the evil in the hearts of His opponents, identifying Himself as the Messiah who could point '*the finger of God*' at them, and announce that God's long hoped for Kingdom had already come, as demonstrated by His miraculous deeds.

The parable of the 'strong man' (11:21-22) has a straightforward meaning (for alternatives, see 'Going Deeper'). Jesus wanted His hearers to understand that in the battle against evil, He was the 'stronger' man who would overpower the enemy! Today, by His rising from the dead, Jesus has stripped away Satan's defences to give His followers the power to damage and defeat Him, and the right to redistribute what the enemy has stolen. Christian ministry is about delivering true health and wholeness, as well as dignity, wealth, justice and much more. The battle lines are drawn up and decisions must be made; Jesus calls, '*He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.*' (11:23).

Our final verses (11:25-26) are a salutary warning about the nature of evil. They affirm that demons and evil spirits can indeed be evicted, but are not necessarily destroyed, for there is always a danger they will return. However, Jesus' mini-parable about the spirit that returns with seven others to make things worse (11:26) can be misunderstood, especially when people claim that Jesus was here warning against doing deliverance ministry. This is nonsense, because Jesus commanded His followers to do this more than once (e.g. 9:1f., 10:1f.)! We must therefore look again at Jesus' picture here. Jesus describes a house swept

clean and 'well-presented' has been prepared for occupation (11:25), and the question is this, who will occupy it? All that is needed is an invitation to Jesus to occupy the house, and then no evil spirit will be able to return! We are therefore reassured, for Jesus' abiding presence will prevent the enemy taking advantage of an individual or any particular part of our lives.

This passage deserves our careful attention, and the principles we have dealt with here are important. We should make a mental note not to forget the lessons we have learned here, and moreover, we might benefit from returning to study it again.

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## Going Deeper

### **Notes on the text and translation**

#### **V14 'a demon that made a man deaf and mute'**

Other translations:

'a demon that was mute' (NIV)

'a demon that caused muteness' (CEB)

The Greek says 'a mute demon', meaning not that the demon could not speak but the consequences of demon possession were that someone was both mute and deaf, hence my translation. The Greek word for 'mute' is used in the new Testament to cover both conditions, deafness and lack of speech. They seem quite different to us now because of our medical understanding of these conditions and the many different reasons why someone may suffer like this. In the ancient world, the two conditions were thought to be related.

#### **V15 'Beelzebul'**

Other translations:

'Beelzebub' (NIV)

The word 'Beelzebul' means 'Lord of the Flies' and was one of many words used by Jews of the first century to describe the prince of demons, otherwise called in the Bible, 'the devil' (Luke 4:2) or 'Satan' (Luke 10:18).

#### **V24 'parched deserts'**

Other translations:

'arid places' (NIV)

'waterless regions' (NRSV)

The colourful language of the Greek here does not always come through in the English, and nearly every different translation has its way of presenting this phrase. It is obvious however that Jesus was speaking of uninhabitable and waterless desert regions, so I have used the simple term 'parched deserts'.

#### **V25 'When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and well presented'**

Other translations:

'when it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order' (NIV)

'when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished' (KJV)

There are two small points here. Firstly, the last words usually translated '*put in order*' are rather lacking. The Greek word does indeed mean 'garnished', as the King James version translates, but the best way of saying this about property today would be to say that it is 'well presented', in all its features and content.

Secondly, the version of this passage found in Matthew's Gospel (12:44) has an additional word in this phrase, giving, '*when it arrives, it finds the house **empty**, swept clean, and put in order.*' Moreover, this is one of those places in the Gospels where the Greek text is virtually word for word the same in each Gospel. It is not surprising therefore that there is some textual evidence in the ancient manuscripts that the word '*empty*' has been added as a correction to the manuscript here in Luke; but no one knows whether this was indeed the original, or the word was added here in Luke on the basis that it should be the same as Matthew!

## **Further Comments**

### ***The parable of the 'strong man' (11:21,22)***

Some people view this parable as a warning from Jesus about how evil works. The theory goes like this. The strong man with his house represents the Jewish people with their rich heritage of being God's people and their sense of duty in guarding God's Law and His presence in the world. The 'stronger' man is therefore Satan, who is attacking the Jewish people and indeed, destroying their heritage and handing this out to others (11:22). The theory suggests that by talking about a 'stronger' man (11:22) who will come (Satan), Jesus leaves room for the One who is 'strongest', that is, Himself. He alone will come and deal with Satan at the end times. The problem for this interpretation is that its last part, which is so important, is not represented in the story, and without this, Jesus' words sound like a counsel of despair.

The only other interpretation is that you or I are represented by the 'strong man', and the parable warns us simply of Satan's power. However, after Jesus has just spoken strongly about the coming Kingdom of God, it seems unlikely that Jesus would give such a dour message without also speaking of either redemption or salvation in some simple but relevant and powerful way.

Clearly, I believe that Satan is the 'strong man' and Jesus the one who is 'stronger', as discussed in the Review'.

### ***The wandering spirit***

Jesus speaks in verse 24 of a spirit that wanders around in 'parched deserts' (otherwise translated 'waterless places'), having been evicted from someone. It is a fascinating picture.

Firstly, it tells us that evil spirits are not destroyed after they are cast out of people, things, or situations. The Bible presents us with a clear understanding of this, for the devil and his hordes are finally defeated by God at the end of time (Revelation 20), and only then are they thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10).

For this reason, we must countenance dealing with evil spirits between now and then. In reality, the only guarantee against demonic activity is the presence of the Lord Jesus and His Holy Spirit, and as we have seen, Jesus invites us to see this truth within the story He has given us.

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# Discipleship

## ***Application***

### ***Identifying the evil in our midst***

Any talk about evil and Satan in the Bible is difficult for us, because we do not normally speak about evil. Neither do we speak easily about demons affecting things in our personal lives, perhaps our illnesses, and we do not like to think that there might be evil at work in our institutions, work places, homes or organisations. We need to shed our reticence however, especially in the light of the evils that have plagued parts of the banking system in recent years and are now coming to light. We should also be more discerning, especially when the evidence is that large numbers of people suffer because of rampant evils, such as 'anti-women' attitudes amongst peoples and countries, the evils of bribery that squander life-giving Aid, apart from the evils of unresolved illness and unchecked disease (such as HIV).

The Bible offers us a great deal if we want to understand how evil works and deal with it, and our primary example is Jesus. Perhaps our first prayer should be for the courage to discern evil, not to trumpet our gifts and have power over others, but to assist the body of Christ in its duty of care for both its own members (1 Cor 12) and also for all people (Leviticus 19:18).

### ***Being 'with Christ'***

There is no substitute for remaining close to the Saviour. This is the only place where the Christian is safe, having invited Him into our lives. All too often, the natural course of life for many will lead them into territory that is uncertain and uncharted. This is where the devil springs traps, where he will try to arouse our more carnal thoughts and feelings, and where he will attempt to slide into any open door in our lives where we have not allowed the Saviour access.

Jesus' call, '*he who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.*' (11:23), is perhaps a sentence we do well to remember in the midst of the stress of life, when a thousand things call for our attention and we have to prioritise. If we keep close to our Lord, then He will help us with our priorities and assist us as we face our challenges. This is a daily challenge, and one that can revolutionise our lives.

### ***Doing deliverance ministry***

Most people are somewhat scared by the thought of casting out demons. The starting place of course is to recognise evil and know what must be done, and I suggest we should look at ourselves before we cast our eyes at the evils within others. For example, if evil is present within us, perhaps in the form of some un-forgiveness we cannot bring ourselves to deal with, then we do well to take Biblical examples of deliverance prayer. So, when we are truly ready to do God's will and deal with such a problem, then we need to speak out a prayer that simply dismisses the evil spirit 'with a word', as Jesus did; we have the authority. Try saying 'get away from me, you evil', and you may well find that saying this out loud is profoundly effective. Words well chosen and well spoken can be very powerful.

## ***Ideas for what to do***

- Reflect on the idea that evil is organised, and requires its Kingdom to be united and disciplined. What does this mean, and why did Jesus place so much emphasis on this here? Look carefully through this passage and make sure that you understand what it says, and can remember its salient points.

- Ask yourself whether there is anything in the life of your church or your home that is evidently evil. It may well be a deeply personal judgement, but perhaps a necessary one. What do we do with such difficult issues? The right thing to do is to pray about them and then talk with trusted friends. This sounds simple, but we need to do this.

### **Questions (for use in groups)**

1. Discuss verses 17 to 20. What is Jesus trying to tell us in this parable, and why does He conclude it by speaking about the Kingdom of God?
2. What do you think Jesus means by the parable of the 'strong man', and how does this affect us today?
3. If evil spirits seek to return whence they came, why should we be concerned to send them packing? Is the danger of return a reason to stand back from deliverance ministry?

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## **Final Prayer**

Thank You Lord Jesus, for You have defeated the Evil One, evicted Him from my life and won my salvation! I praise You for this and I invite You into my life, for ever, and for good! Guide my life, I pray, so that no evil spirits find me attractive or seek to mess up my life again, and lead me in paths of righteousness. AMEN

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