

Luke Chapter 11 – John Karmelich

1. My title for this lesson is the words, "prayer, power and warnings". The first part of chapter gives us what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer. Then it explains the power that Jesus has and the power that we have as His followers. Finally, Jesus gives a series of warnings against those who trust in their ability to please God based on their works without His power to do so. OK, assume that those of reading this lesson believe Jesus is God; we can recite the "Our Father" prayer off the top of our heads and know the consequences of turning from Him. Why should we read further?
 - a) The answer is we need to constantly remind ourselves of who is in charge of our lives. It is way too easy to get our focus on our own issues and forget that God wants to guide us through whatever we're dealing with in our lives at any moment. Sometimes when our lives get impossible, that's when we have to remember that God is bigger than whatever it is we have to face at the moment, and He can provide us the power to face it.
 - i) That is why we are called to pray regularly and often.
 - ii) That is why this chapter is full of examples of His power so we can see how we can harness that power to deal with our own lives.
 - iii) Finally, that is why this chapter is full of warnings of the danger of trying to rely upon our own power in order to be pleasing to God. This chapter is also in effect one big reminder that our trust is in Him alone to provide us with that power so that we can make a difference for Him in the world around us.
2. With that said, I want to keep my introduction brief this week as it is a long lesson. If you don't want to read any further, just know that this lesson explains what it is about the Lord's prayer as a model of how to pray, not as an exact set of words to recite. It's a model of how we can harness His power to make a difference in the world and a warning about how not to live trusting in our own goodness in order to be pleasing to Him. That's the whole chapter in a few sentences.
 - a) Suppose we think, I know all of that. The danger to all of us is constantly forgetting that God wants to guide our lives for His glory. The mistake we easily make is trying to rely upon our own power to make a difference for God. That's the big mistake that we read about in this chapter and the warning given to all believers.
 - b) With that stated, let's get started with the verse-by-verse commentary and hopefully learn a few things on how God wants us to live as we make a difference for Him.
3. Chapter 11, Verse 1: One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."
 - a) Picture adults who grew up in a Jewish religious culture asking someone to teach them how to pray. They probably figured that if Jesus is the promised Messiah and He'll rule over the world one day, they should learn His way to pray. They also knew of John the Baptist instructed his disciples on the proper way to pray. We don't read of John in any of the Gospels leading others in prayer. Still, if John was drawing people to the middle of nowhere to teach them how to draw closer to God, it'd make sense that John taught them how to pray. We also suspect that one of the apostles (Andrew) was a disciple of John the Baptist at one time. (See John 1:40) Therefore, it's logical to assume that some who are on the road with Jesus at that time were familiar with how John prayed.
 - b) With that said, let's backtrack a little to read where we left off: The last we read in Luke's Gospel, Jesus and presumably the apostles were at the home of a woman named Martha as guests. At this point in the Gospel accounts, Jesus is traveling to the towns around the area near Jerusalem. Think of this trip as Jesus approaching Jerusalem, for what would be His final journey there before the crucifixion. We don't get Jesus' exact location here, but most likely, he left Martha's house and is on the road again. Now at this point, we get the disciples asking Jesus about the topic of prayer.

- c) Consider that the disciples have been traveling with Jesus for now most likely was about three years. So why ask Him now, if they've been with Him for a long time period? What I suspect is that they heard something different in the way that Jesus prays versus the way they were probably taught to pray as children. My guess is Jesus prayed in a way where it was personal versus just reciting some long memorized prayer. That type of prayer is what got everyone's attention.
 - i) I still remember when I first got saved and was asked to give the blessing at an extended family meal. That was the first time where someone ever complimented me on my prayer. It was as if others in the room had never heard anyone pray like it was heart felt versus something memorized. My point is not about how we pray publicly, but if that we have a heart for God and are given an opportunity others will pay attention to how we pray in a non-memorized fashion.
 - d) With that said, we are now going to get into the "Lord's prayer" or as many of your bibles will list it as "The Disciples Prayer", as it's not a prayer for only Jesus to say, but more like an outline of how God wants us to pray to Him. One of the great things to consider about this prayer is it is not meant as a prayer to memorize as much as it is an outline of things to think about as we pray to God. OK then, time to talk about the prayer itself.
4. Verse 2: He said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. ³ Give us each day our daily bread. ⁴ Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation. "
- a) Stop for a second and consider that the entire prayer is three verses. A classic question to ponder is how long does God want us to pray when we pray? If we are praying publicly I take the view that one should not pray longer than to lose everyone's attention, so in those type of situations I try to keep it brief and to the point as Jesus does here. When we're by ourselves praying, my view is that we pray as long as it takes to communicate whatever it is we want to say. In effect, I want my life to be one continuous prayer. That doesn't mean I'm praying every moment of the day. However, I do try to keep in mind as much as I can that God is watching whatever I do, and therefore, since I'm living to use my life to make a difference for Him, in effect, I want to communicate with Him on a very regular basis.
 - b) The closest I can describe it, is a like the main character on "Fiddler on the Roof" if you've seen the play or movie, is regularly talking to God or thinking about Him as that character goes through His life. My point is I try to talk to God as I go through my life realizing He is always willing to listen to whatever it is I'm dealing with at the moment.
 - c) Stop and consider for a moment what is the most valuable thing you own? If you said, for example, your house or your car or some object, you are wrong. Far and away, the most valuable thing you own is your time. All of us have a limited unknown amount of time to live on this planet. The secret of life is to realize that time is limited and the greatest use of that time is to use it for God's glory. I state that here to consider that if we desire to use it for God's will, we need to regularly be in communication with Him for guidance. It's not for His sake that we pray often, but for ours. Our problem is our minds wander easily. A life of regular prayer is about reminding ourselves that He desires to guide our lives and be in charge of it. My favorite prayer is often, "God make it obvious to me what is Your will at this moment". At that point I like to say, "Go do what you want", knowing that He is watching us and wants to guide us for His glory.
 - d) That little speech leads me right into this prayer itself. It is best to think of this prayer not as a set of verses to memorize and repeat, but more as a guideline of what to think about as we pray. OK, enough of all of that, onto the prayer itself.
 - e) The first part is Jesus saying, "Our Father". That word for Father is a personal word like "Daddy". It's a reminder how much God cares for us and wants a close relationship with us. Also notice the "our". It doesn't mean we have to only pray this prayer as a group. It is just a reminder that He cares for us as He cares for all believers who trust in Him.

- f) The second part is "Hallowed be thy name". If you read this prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, it was given on a different occasion and mentions "who are in heaven". To paraphrase all of this, think of saying, "Hello loving daddy, who at the same time I realize You rule over all of the universe. May your name and our relationship always be special to me and may I never treat my love for You lightly." My idea is this prayer doesn't have to be stated word for word. The idea is to simply think about one's prayer and convey it in a way where we realize how much He loves us and at the same time realize how special it is to personally be in touch with the God who created everything and still cares for us.
- g) Remember how I said earlier that at larger family gatherings, I often get asked to pray? It isn't because I'm closer to God than others, it is just that others can see us praying to God as if we have developed a personal relationship with Him and it can make others wonder how they too can have that close personal relationship.
- h) That little comment leads me to the next line of the prayer, "Your kingdom come". The idea is that we want God's will over our lives. Remember how I said the most important thing we own is our time and the greatest thing we can do with that time is give it back to God for His use? In effect, those three words are a summary of that request. It is saying we want God's will done for our lives now as it will occur in heaven. Yes it is a prayer for Jesus to return to set up the eternal kingdom, but at the same time, it's about our desire to do what it is God wants us to do at that moment.
- i) As I love to state, pray that prayer, then go do what we want knowing it is our desire to please God with our lives. Personally I've found that when we put our lives in His hands, He can't resist answering that prayer as to guide our lives for His glory. In find that God makes it obvious as to what is His will on His timing.
- i) In summary, my point is don't just pray lines "Your kingdom come", but consider what God is trying to say to us through that line. Pray lines like in our own words to communicate back to God that we understand He wants to work through us.
- j) The next line is about giving us our daily bread. Notice that God not only cares about our eternal salvation, but about our lives here and now. The text does not say to give us years of bread, but just enough for today. Does this mean we should not desire to be financially successful in life? Of course not. Those words are simply a reminder that are trust is not in our financial success but in Him to provide for us as well as guide us. It reminds us all things come from Him and we need to be grateful of that fact. During those times where I am struggling, that is when I pray for my trust in Him to increase. God says He'll never forsake us and during tough times, praying for increased trust gets us through such times.
- k) Now we get to Verse 4: It reads, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us." Pause to consider is that this is the only verse in the prayer that requires us to do something. Everything else in this prayer is about God doing things for us. In this verse we ask God to forgive us as we are to forgive others. The prayer of the second part is about God giving us the strength to let go of how others have hurt us. If you read this prayer in Matthew 6, that is the only line that Jesus comments upon after He finishes that prayer. It's relatively easy to ask God to forgive us of our sins. The tricky part is to let go of ways others have hurt us.
- l) Does that mean for example, if someone robbed us, we should just let him or her go free? Of course not. God ordained government and one of their functions is to punish those for the sake of society. The issue isn't justice. The issue is holding on to that hurt. If we don't let go of such pain, we continue to let them hurt us. I'm well aware that this takes time, as we often hold onto pain for years. I'm also thinking of those who have to live crippled for life based on things others have done to them. The issue is do we sit around and fell sorry for ourselves, or do we forgive and use what time we have left in life to make a difference for God? That's what forgiveness is all about.

- m) This is why Jesus ties God forgiving us to us forgiving others. If we desire God to forgive us of our sins, He wants us to have that same attitude about others. Again, the issue is not to pray this line word for word, but to keep in mind that we are not perfect people and as imperfect people we ask God to forgive us and us to forgive others. As I heard recently, our world is nothing but sinners marrying other sinners producing sinning children. The point is to realize that as we are not perfect, neither is anyone else. Again, we're to forgive others as to not let them hurt us anymore just as we ask God to forgive us so we can let go of how we have hurt God by our own sins.
 - n) OK, enough of all of that. Time to finish the prayer. The last line given in the text is "And lead us not into temptation." All of us deal with temptation. What may be a big negative temptation for us may be nothing for someone else and vice versa. I've found the way to overcome temptation is through regular prayer for God to protect me from it as well as to get my focus on other people. It's hard to sin when we're caring about other people and the possible ramifications of those sins.
 - i) I have to admit, I'm endlessly fascinated by the fact that before Jesus was arrested to be crucified, Jesus asked Peter three times to pray with Him. All three times, we read of Peter falling asleep. Then we read after that of Peter denying he knew of Jesus three times. Is there a connection? Of course. My point is one way to deal with temptation is pray regularly and constantly for God's protection against it. (References: Matthew 26, Mark 14 and Luke 23.)
 - ii) The other way is to get our focus on others. Am I perfect at this? No, and I have my own struggles with temptation like anyone else. I'm not claiming in any way to be better than anyone else. I just realize that a reason Jesus taught all of us the importance of praying this line is that God guides us away from temptation when we keep our focus upon Him and think about the consequences of those actions.
 - o) I admit, I spent a lot of time on these three verses. However, it is important to understand these verses not as a prayer to memorize and recite, but as something to think about. That is why I covered them as detailed as I did. The good news is we can move on now.
5. Verse 5: Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, ⁶ because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'
- a) It helps to keep in mind that Jesus was just asked by the disciples how to pray. Now that Jesus has finished the "model prayer", the next point that Jesus wants to get across is how often God wants us to pray. Jesus answers that question, by giving a parable that we read from Verse 5 to Verse 10. Therefore, as I discuss these verses, keep in mind that they are given as a parable to consider and not a true story.
 - b) To explain, first I should explain a little about houses in the Middle East in that culture. In effect, poor and middle class people lived in one-room houses. Part of that room had an elevated floor where the family would all sleep together. There may even be a fire pit in that part of the room to keep warm. The part not elevated may be where animals such as sheep and goats may sleep. One has to remember that Israel at that time was mostly a farming community. Desert climate means cold nights and animals had to stay next to the warm fire as much as people do.
 - i) I give all of that background so that we get the idea when someone is knocking at our door in the middle of the night, for us to get up would not only mean to wake the family but everyone and everything in that household.
 - ii) With that said, remember that this is a made up story. Jesus point here is simply that just as someone is desperately trying to seek help from his neighbor in the middle of the night, we should pray as if we have that same type of desperation. Let me at this point give the next few verses and that will verify my point.

6. Verse 7: "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.'⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.
- a) I always liked David Hocking's description of this scene. He said, "Here take my bread, take whatever you want. Just leave me alone so we can all get some sleep". Most of us have been in situations where someone or something is keeping us awake. We're doing all we can to end the situation so we can sleep. That's why this makes a great illustration, as we can all relate to it.
 - b) As we're about to read, the point of this illustration has nothing to do with getting a good night's sleep. The issue is persistence. Just as the man knocking on the door was full of persistence to get what he wanted, so God wants us to be persistent in our prayer life.
 - c) So why be persistent? Doesn't God hear us pray the first time? Of course. It is essential to remember that the answer to all prayers is either "yes, no or not yet". One always has to be grateful for prayers not answered. Ruth Graham, the wife of Billy Graham made a comment that she was grateful that God ignored her prayer requests for four other men that she thought she would marry before meeting her husband. My point is the reason why God wants persistence is that it gets our focus right. If God is not answering our prayers the way we want Him to, that rejection gets us to change our focus and ask for different things.
 - d) To put it another way, the way God answers is our prayer is to have us ask over and over again as it gets us to better focus our questions and try different avenues. That is the way God often answers our prayers by having us repeat our requests in ways that makes us redirects our questions in a way that is what He desires for our lives at the moment.
 - e) To give an example, as of the time I'm writing this, God is closing a lot of doors in my life. I don't know why or what He wants me to do. However, this is getting me to change the focus of my prayer life to figure out His will for my life. As I love to tell others, "Help me God to learn what it is You want me to learn from this so I can trust You more". If we do pray consistently over an issue, it helps to get our focus on what God wants as opposed to what we may want for our lives. Remember that prayer is not about getting our will done but His will for our lives.
 - f) Bottom line here? Be bold in prayer! Not sure what to do in a given situation? Boldly go before God's throne and ask over and over again for His will in our life. Don't be afraid to go try different things to see if that is God's will for the moment. God promises that He'll direct our paths, (See Proverbs 3:6), however, in order for God to guide us, we have to in effect keep moving. Speaking of keep moving, let's move on to the next set of verses.
7. Verse 9: "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.
- a) Well, I may have beaten the point to death about keep on praying about a situation if we haven't gotten the point, yet, but Jesus wants to drive it home in these verses. With that said, I want to point out something about Verse 10. It says everyone (that's you and me) who asks, does receive. No it doesn't mean the answer to every prayer is yes. It just means that God answers all of our prayers with yes, no, or not now.
 - b) I heard a wonderful paraphrase of Verse 10 I want to share: It is in effect, "We should be able to sue God based on His word." His word says that if we ask hard enough and long enough, God will answer our prayers His way and on His timing. It doesn't mean He is going to speak to us out loud, but if we look for the answer we seek, we'll find it. Kind of like Ruth Graham's desire for a husband. After praying for four different men she dated at different times in her life, God answered her prayer His way, by bringing her husband into her life.

- c) I'm reminded of the story of one of my wife's girlfriends many years ago. She was a very strong Christian who was frustrated that she couldn't find a husband. It wasn't until she literally let it go and was ready to go on a foreign missionary trip. Then of course she met a wonderful man to whom she's still married to, at this time. My point is God's more than willing to answer our prayers, but often we have to let go of the timing and let Him work on His timing.
- d) So, why'll we finish knocking on God's door, let's read Jesus' next point on this subject.
8. Verse 11: "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"
- a) As a parent, the only fish my girls ever asked for was as a pet. They've never once asked for an egg. However, Jesus' illustration was about the times. In those days at that time, fish and eggs were common items to eat. The point is if one's children asked for food, we would not give them something that would hurt them.
- b) The point is if we know how to give what is appropriate for our own children, don't you think God the Father would give the Holy Spirit, to those who ask Him? That mention of the Holy Spirit is a lecture all unto itself. The best way to describe it is the power of God directing us what to pray. The bible doesn't talk very much about the Holy Spirit. That's because His function is to bring glory to God the Father and God the Son. Think of the Spirit as God dwelling within us. Like the mystery of the Trinity itself, it is one with God but still a separate entity all to itself. Jesus point here is simply that if we don't get what it is we pray for, God gives us the Spirit of God (another name for the Holy Spirit) to guide our prayer life with the goal of lining up our will with His will for our lives.
- c) To sum up this section, know that Jesus is saying that God desires His will on earth and He chooses to work through people to get His will done. Since we don't know what His will is, we're free to ask Him anything we want. Then if we choose to submit to His will for our lives, He, through the Holy Spirit guides our prayer life to get our prayer in line with His will. That's why Jesus says "keep on knocking" so that we can get our prayer to be in line with what He desires for our lives.
- d) Believe it or not, this section on prayer leads us right into the next section dealing with the issue of doubts over Jesus' power. The underlying point of the next section is about those who have doubts that Jesus' miracles are God based. Before I get into all of that, I want to make the connection to this section on prayer: That is, if we believe God answers prayer and we believe Jesus is God, a major point of this book is that Jesus is who He claims to be. Therefore, we can trust Him to guide our prayers to do the Father's will for our lives.
9. Verse 14: Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. ¹⁵ But some of them said, "By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons." ¹⁶ Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven.
- a) The first question one should ask here, is why is this story here at this spot? We just had a nice talk about prayer and all of a sudden, the topic switches to a miracle. The reason it is here is not so much for the miracle itself, but for the discussion that takes place in the next set of verses. In fact in Verse 15 we get the local "scuttlebutt" that some believe Jesus was casting out demons by Beelzebub who apparently is the leader of demons.
- b) Before I explain, consider the fact that nobody ever doubted Jesus ability to do miracles. We don't read of anyone questioning Him on that issue. None of the writings of the early church ever questioned that issue. In the Gospels we read of the people who don't believe in Jesus asking him all sorts of things, but the miracles themselves are never questioned.
- c) I bring that up here, as in order to explain the miracles, those who didn't believe in Jesus started spreading the rumor that Jesus was doing miracles by the prince of demons.

- d) With that said, let me explain the word "Beelzebub". It's originally based on a nickname for the ancient false deity worshipped in Israel called Baal. If you've studied 1st and 2nd Kings, you should be familiar with that word as the Northern Kingdom of Israel went into idolatry for worshipping Baal. The word literally means "Lord of the flies" or even "Lord of the dung". In other words, Beelzebub was a cuss word associated with Satan.
 - e) This leads back to the accusation about miracles. Since the crowds couldn't deny any of Jesus' miracles, they had to spread the rumor that Satan was behind Jesus' power.
 - f) That leads to Verse 16: Some in the crowd demanded a sign from heaven. It strikes me as funny as they witnessed miracle after miracle and still demanded more signs. Yes, the resurrection of Jesus will be the ultimate sign. Still, to attribute Jesus' work to Satan or to demand more miracles are both cases of people looking for alternative explanations as to not accept the simple fact that Jesus was telling the truth that He is God and we have to look to Him for the forgiveness of sins, and not our own ability to please God.
 - i) Let me put it this way: I'm convinced that if God wrote across the sky that Jesus is God (then or now) people would still say it's a trick and not believe it. God wants us to come to Him out of our own free will, not out of force, or say, not because a giant 100-foot tall Jesus told us too. I don't think there was any sign that God can do that would violate our free will and still make this or any crowd believe Jesus if they couldn't accept the miracles that He was doing.
10. Verse 17: Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. ¹⁸ If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub. ¹⁹ Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. ²⁰ But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.
- a) The first thing to notice here is that Jesus was aware what they were thinking. He knew that some were thinking that He had sort of demonic power. Even though the growing rumor was just that, Jesus as God knew their thoughts.
 - b) The way Jesus responds to that false charge was that He states a "self-evident" truth. Kind of like the idea of telling kids they shouldn't go play on a busy street, because the odds are good a car would hit them. That self-evident truth is that if any organization is divided, it will eventually lose. Consider the American Civil War, as it literally almost destroyed the United States as we know it. If it weren't for the loss of multitudes of many lives it would not have survived. Jesus point is if He's casting out demons, wouldn't that cause Satan to be divided against himself?
 - c) Now consider that one never reads of anyone having a demon cast out suffering again of that same problem. That leads to Jesus' second point. He says that some Jewish people did go through elaborate ceremonies to cast out demons. Yet, I'm willing to bet that they were not successful in terms of permanently driving out demons. Let me explain::
 - i) The only biblical story of Non-Christian Jews trying to cast out demons is in the Book of Acts where seven sons of a Jewish Rabbi tried casting out a demon by invoking Jesus' name. The short version is the seven sons lost that battle badly. (See Acts 19:14). The point is if Jewish exorcists could not easily cast out demons. That is your proof that what Jesus is doing to permanently and easily casting out demons is God oriented and not Satan ordained.
 - ii) So how do we know other Jewish exorcists were successful or not? What I suspect but can't prove is that demons may even leave someone for awhile in order to give the Jewish exorcist some credibility, but because they were not 100% successful at this endeavor. That is Jesus' proof that what He is doing is God ordained. In fact, my proof of that theory is coming up in Verse 24. First, however, we have three other verses to discuss. Speaking of which:

11. Verse 21: "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. ²²But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.
- a) These verses give another "self-evident" truth: That is if there is a strong person guarding something. Then someone even stronger comes along, that first strong person will lose. This is one of those illustrations that is so self-evident, then issue is not what does it mean, but why is it here? So glad you asked! Remember that the accusation Jesus faces was that He was in "cahoots" with Satan and that's why Jesus could cast out demons. What Jesus is saying here is in effect, "What good is Satan if something stronger than him, stands right in front of him?" Jesus is still trying to end the rumor that He is using demonic powers in order to cast out demons. First Jesus disproves it by saying, "any divided house will fall". Now Jesus is proving with the simple statement that who cares how strong Satan is, if one who is stronger than him is right here in front you!
12. Verse 23: "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.
- a) Here is Jesus' final statement on the issue of who has the power to overthrow Satan. What I see in this verse is in effect Jesus dividing the world into two groups: Those who are for Him and those who are against Him. It implies there is no middle ground with Jesus. We can't say, "He's a great teacher, but not God". Either we believe Jesus is who He claims to be, one who has the power to overthrow Satan and claim He is God, or we're against Him.
 - b) To put this concept another way, either we believe Jesus is in charge of our lives and God the Father raised Him from the dead, or we're in that same category as the worst sinners we can possibly imagine. There is no middle ground. What about those who lived and died with no knowledge of Jesus? The answer is God will judge them fairly which is why I believe there are non-Christians in heaven, but that's God's problem to sort out.
 - c) Meanwhile, back to the issue of Jesus and evil spirits:
13. Verse 24: "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' ²⁵ When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. ²⁶ Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first."
- a) I am the first to admit, that these verses have confused me for years. The idea here is that when evil spirits come out of a person, they seek dry places to rest. When they can't find a dry (arid) place, they go back to where they originally came from.
 - b) To understand this, all we have to do is understand the purpose of demons. God created all angels with the purpose of serving Him. However, some angels chose to rebel against God as I suspect they didn't like the idea of being subservient to believers. The same way many people don't want Jesus to be in charge of their lives, demonic creatures exist who don't want to live "God's way". We have to accept that demons are rebellious creatures who don't want to do God's will. They also realize that their time on earth is limited and as soon as the number of believers hits an unknown magic number, their time is up.
 - i) So if demons are "orthodox" in that they understand their time on earth is limited, why live that way? The same reason most people want to prove their own worth to God or don't care about Him. In other words, they would rather live as long as they can in rebellion to God even if they know their eternity destiny.
 - c) All of that theology does lead me back to these verses. What these verses do imply is that demons can leave a person anytime they want to. No one is forcing them to live inside of a person. Back in Chapter 8, Jesus cured a man who had a legion of demons living in his body, so we know more than one demon can embody a person.
 - d) If the goal of demons is to delay God's judgment as long as possible, then they'd want to discourage people from turning to Jesus. That is why demons embody people in the first place. That's another reason why I believe a demon cannot embody a Christian believer because it's too late for them to embody that person.

- e) That does lead me to these verses: They say if demons choose to leave a person, that man or woman they left is now more likely to draw close to God as the demon is not pestering them anymore. That is what the expression, "swept and put in order" means in Verse 26.
 - f) That leads me to explain what Jesus meant by "arid places" in Verse 24. The word "arid" refers to dry. As most of us know, our bodies are mostly water. When a demon leaves a person, they are no longer within something that is essentially all water. I don't believe demons need water to live. That's why I believe "wet places" refers to people they want to embody, with the purpose of discouraging them and others from drawing close to Jesus.
 - g) You may recall a page back I stated that I didn't believe Jewish exorcists were completely successful in removing demons. I'd even bet sometimes demons left during some of those ceremonies in order for people to think being Jewish keeps demons away from them.
 - i) If you think about demon-possessed people, they were in synagogues as the bible mentions such accounts (See Luke 4:33 for example). That's why Jesus makes the point that sometimes after demons leave a person, they can return and bring more demons with them when they return.
 - h) So why is Jesus stating all of this? Because the religious leaders accused Jesus of being in cahoots with Satan in order to cast out demons. That's why Jesus makes the argument here that when other exorcists cast out demons they can return as they desire to be within people to keep those people from drawing close to God. However, only when Jesus tells a demon to leave, they must leave permanently because Jesus is God and they have to obey Him even though they don't want to. Further, when we choose to obey Jesus, I do believe demons can work to turn us from Him, but that's a whole lot different from actually being inside of us as described in this book and even as described earlier in this chapter.
 - i) The really good news is I'm done discussing demon theology. However, as I stated back in my introduction, this lesson is about "Prayer, power and warnings". We've now beaten to death discussions of prayer and power (both God's and demons' power), so now we're down to the third topic, which is "warnings". Believe it or not, this topic will begin with someone blessing Jesus' earthly mother Mary.
14. Verse 27: As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you." ²⁸ He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."
- a) In these verses an unnamed woman compliments Jesus mother. Notice Jesus does not say that Mary isn't blessed. Jesus point is simply that a greater blessing belongs to those who hear Jesus' words and believe them. Let me explain further:
 - i) I believe the point is we've just read a whole bunch of verses about people who are convinced Jesus is working with Satan in order to cast out demons. Yes Jesus gave a whole bunch of arguments in order to disprove that theory. Now in effect, Jesus is saying, "Hey, you want a blessing? Then do not focus on the woman who gave me birth, but instead focus on the words that I say."
 - ii) In fact, the next set of verses are going to make that same point with illustrations:
15. Verse 29: As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰ For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. ³¹ The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here. ³² The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here.
- a) If you who don't know who Jonah is, there's an Old Testament book called Jonah and that is who Jesus is referring to here. Before I begin, notice that Jesus is indirectly verifying the fact that Jonah was a real person and not a made up story. There is a similar passage to it in Matthew 12:39-41. Between those two accounts, Jesus is validating Jonah as a prophet.

- b) The point here is in the book of Jonah, he was sent to the capital of a foreign empire to go witness about God's judgment against them. When people ask me do I believe that Jonah really survived three days in a big fish? I love to respond that the greatest miracle in that story isn't Jonah's survival, it is that an entire large city repented and turned to God.
 - i) Jesus' point is simply that while a foreign nation repented at Jonah's preaching, the nation of Israel collectively refused to accept Jesus as their promised Messiah.
 - ii) That's why the last part of this chapter has to deal with warnings about a coming judgment. Jesus is making the point that the residents of Nineveh repented after hearing Jonah preach and they will condemn the Israelites who lived at the time of Jesus' simply because they had a lesser witness (Jonah) and they believed him.
 - c) All of that leads to the story of the "Queen of the South". During the reign of Solomon, a story is told of a visit from "the Queen of Sheba" which is probably modern Yemen. This queen was impressed with Solomon a thousand years earlier. Yet the Israelites who saw Jesus do His miracles were not impressed even though they couldn't deny the miracles. All they could do is accuse Jesus of being in cahoots with Satan. (All from 1st Kings, 10.)
 - d) Jesus point by mentioning two characters from Israelites' history is that the evidence that He presented is far greater than the evidence of Solomon's wisdom or Jonah's preaching. Yet, there is no repentance.
 - e) OK John, why should we care about all of this? It is to understand that there is no middle ground with Jesus. Either we commit our lives to serving Him or in effect we're no better than these Israelites if we reject Him as both our savior and who's in charge of our lives. As I love to preach, if we do believe Jesus is God, we should want to do something about it. That's the underlying message to you and me through all of this. Believe it or not, that exact argument leads very well to the next set of verses:
16. Verse 33: "No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light. ³⁴ Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. ³⁵ See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. ³⁶ Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you."
- a) Jesus is using another simple illustration to make His point about being a witness for Him and what that means. That illustration centers on the fact that when people use a light (in those days, oil lamps) they don't hide the light, but put in a place where it's useful to see.
 - b) These verses are here to talk about our witness for Jesus. Let me explain:
 - i) The point is these verses are about being a witness for Jesus. It's not about having lights in one's house. The way to get "full of light" is about filling up our life with Jesus teaching and applying it to our lives. Remember what Jesus has called us believers to do: Be a witness for Him to all people. (See Matthew 28:19.) In order to be a witness for Him, we need to learn of Him. That's what the "light" refers to in this paragraph. Teaching us the way to eternal life is to trust in Jesus for our sin payment and use our lives for His glory. On that positive note, Jesus is about to give us the alternative and warn of the dangers of turning from Him for the rest of this chapter.
17. Verse 37: When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. ³⁸ But the Pharisee, noticing that Jesus did not first wash before the meal, was surprised.
- a) One thing I've noticed for years is that Jesus never turned down a free meal. Despite all of the accusations Jesus made to the religious Jewish leadership (that is, those who belonged to a sect called the Pharisee's), Jesus never gave up on them and agreed to eat with them. I have several clients who are devout (Orthodox) Jews. I know from my meals with them that they have elaborate washing ceremonies before a meal as described here.

- b) Remember that the knowledge of germs didn't exist back then. They just washed before meals based on their own interpretation of bible laws. Jesus who grew up in watching all of these rituals didn't participate in that ritual before He ate. Since Jesus is God, wouldn't He know about germs? The answer is of course, but the issue isn't being clean, the issue is making up laws that God never intended us to obey in the first place. Among all of those commentaries on the bible is an elaborate set of eating oriented washing instructions
 - c) Now the important question: Why is this story here at this point in the text? Remember I said the third part of this chapter is about warnings? Jesus is going to use this occasion to warn us about how God feels about non-biblical based rituals. I love to teach the idea that if we are Christians we should do something about it. That something is not to make up rules that are not in the bible. God doesn't give us credit for strict obeying of His laws. What He wants is us to turn from sin and use our time to make a difference for Him. That difference is not about strict observance of laws and rituals. It's about using our time and our resources to make a difference for Him with the time we have to live.
 - d) With that background stated, let's read Jesus' own comments on their rituals:
18. Verse 39: Then the Lord said to him, "Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰ You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹ But give what is inside the dish to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.
- a) To state the obvious here, Jesus is not being literal. The Jewish washing ritual included the plates and cups they ate out of. What Jesus is referring to is our hearts. For example, we can put on a great show on the outside and do good works, but we all know that on the inside, we still desire to sin at times. So is Jesus saying to give of ourselves to whoever is poor around us and then we'll be acceptable in His sight? No. The issue is our hearts. What Jesus is saying is that if we care about the cleanness of our hearts as much as we care about how others see us, that is how we get right with God.
 - b) Let me explain this better: There is obviously nothing wrong with doing good things in order to help others. As to these rituals, they performed them as they thought that's what they had to do in order to please God. The point here is to care about others as much as we care about ourselves. The problem is that these religious leaders were more concerned with how they looked then actually making a difference in the lives of other people. Jesus point is all our hearts are incurably wicked and have to turned to God for "replacement". Just doing rituals doesn't cure our inborn desire to sin. We all have to trust Him for every aspects of our lives. That includes what we think as well as whatever rituals we perform.
19. Verse 42: "Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.
- a) If my last set of comments were confusing, don't worry. Jesus gives us examples over the rest of the chapter of what is unacceptable behavior with God. Verses 42 through 44 give us a set of "woe's". The point is if we want to live a life pleasing to God, Jesus gives us a few good examples of behavior to avoid here in these verses.
 - b) As to Verse 42, understand that God's laws required Jewish people to give 10% of all that they earn to God. In order to show "perfection", these people would even count out small little bits of garden herbs in order to give that 10% to God. It is probably best if I first talk a little about Christians and giving. I disagree with some Christians on the idea that we as Christians are required to give at least 10% of our income to God. I believe all that I have is in effect His, as my life belongs to Him. However, Christians are not bound by the Old Testament laws in the sense we are only saved by our trust in Jesus and not by trying to keep some or all of those laws. Does that mean we can steal and cheat all we want? Yes we can, but why would we want to? If we do believe Jesus is God, why would we want to disappoint Him and act that way?!

- i) My point here is simply that if we care about God, we would want to give of both our time and our resources to make a difference in the lives of others. At the same time, I don't believe we are required to give 10% of our take home income, as that binds us under the law and not under God's grace. To put it simply, I do believe Christians should want to generously give, but we're not required to give say 10%.
 - c) That little lecture leads me back to the issue of religious Jews giving 10% of their herbs. In these verses, Jesus is not condemning the idea of giving 10%, but condemning not giving their hearts to God by caring for the lives of others as much as caring about themselves.
- 20. Verse 43: "Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.
 - a) In ancient synagogues like many churches there were a special set of seats for the leaders of the church to sit in. The point is not about having our leaders sit up front. It is about their love of being noticed. It builds our ego if we know others are watching our behavior as a model for others to live. Jesus is not condemning being a leader. He's condemning if we care about being seen as being more important than how we act around others.
- 21. Verse 44: "Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it."
 - a) According to Numbers 19:16, everyone who touched a grave was ceremonially unclean for seven days. For this reason, the Jews sought to mark graves clearly, usually using whitewash, so everyone would know where they were and would avoid them. (David Guzik's commentary on this verse.) Jesus point is again, we try to do rituals thinking we are pleasing to God by those rituals, but inside of us, our hearts are not right with God.
 - b) The only way to get our hearts right is literally by trusting Jesus for every aspect of our lives. That does not mean we have to think of God every moment of the day. It means we realize that He's watching all aspects of our lives and even cares what we think as much as He cares about what we do. It's about trusting God with every aspect of our lives.
- 22. Verse 45: One of the experts in the law answered him, "Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also." ⁴⁶ Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.
 - a) Before I talk about this, stop and consider that Jesus was either still eating dinner at the house of Pharisee or just finished. Wherever they were, Jesus was speaking to a bunch of people who belonged to this group and even in that room were "experts of the experts" in understanding Old Testament laws. That's the teachers as described in these verses.
 - b) With that said, Jesus is not through giving "woe's" to the crowds. Since Luke records all of this year's later, I suspect some of Jesus' disciples were there in the room. Whoever did relate this to Luke remembered the points so well that he told them as if it just happened.
 - c) All of this leads to the text itself. Jesus point is these bible experts love to tell others how to properly interpret the bible, but they never make an effort to actually help others. It'd be like always lecturing others on how to live, but never actually helping others with their issues of the moment. The point isn't that doing good works saves us. The point is if we do care about others, we would volunteer to help how and when we can. That's living in contrast to telling others what to do, but never helping. OK, onto the next one:
- 23. Verse 47: "Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your forefathers who killed them. ⁴⁸ So you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. ⁴⁹ Because of this, God in his wisdom said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.' ⁵⁰ Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, ⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.

- a) In order to explain these verses, let me give the conclusion first: Jesus is condemning the Israelites who lived at that time, because they didn't recognize Him as the long-promised Messiah despite all of the miracles performed. The point for us is simply that there's a big price to pay for not using our lives to make a difference for Jesus. Now for the details:
 - b) A practice of the Jewish "lawyers" back then was to build big moments dedicated to those who wrote the Old Testament and major characters in those books. Verse 51 gives us two examples, one from Genesis when one of Adam's sons killed his brother. The other was from near the end of the Old Testament (chronologically) when Zechariah requests that his "blood" (murder) be remembered. (Sources: Genesis 4:10 and 2nd Chronicles 24:22.)
 - c) The point is these bible experts thought they were better than the "average Jewish people" because they performed elaborate acts in order to try to please God. This reminds me of why Jesus didn't pick any religious people to be His disciples. You cannot please God by doing all sorts of good things. Yes we should do things, but not to earn points with God but only because that's the best way to live one's life. These religious leaders thought they were saved because of the works they did. The Old Testament prophets regularly warned the Israelites in the past to not try to please God by their efforts, but simply to trust in God and obey His commandments not to earn favor with God, but only out of gratitude for the fact we and then are chosen to be His followers.
 - d) That lack of simple trust and the fact they tried to prove their worth to God is why Jesus is being so hard on them. That's the key point of this section.
24. Verse 52: "Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering." ⁵³ When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, ⁵⁴ waiting to catch him in something he might say.
- a) I can sum up the last section of this chapter by stating that the religious leaders not only prevented themselves from being saved by trusting in their ability to please God by what they do, but they've lead others away from God.
 - b) Instead of the religious leaders thinking, "Hey maybe we're wrong, Jesus has the power of God, so maybe we should take Him seriously and listen to Him. Instead they were trying to catch up messing up so they could continue life as is.
 - c) Here's how I summarize this whole chapter on prayer, power and warnings: God's given us the power to seek Him for guidance, and the power to overcome not only demons but also those who teach us to trust in our own ability to please Him. What God wants of us is a relationship with Him and relying upon His power to make a difference.
25. Let me wrap up this overly long lesson in my closing prayer: Father, we need to constantly learn how helpless we are without You. Trying to make a difference for You based on being "religious enough" is a waste of our lives. What You desire of us, is to seek You regularly, often, personally, and in group format. Help us to trust in Your power, so through that power we can face any issue or obstacle we have to deal with. Yes life can be overwhelming. Help us to remember that we are never ready on our own to face what life throws at us, but through Your power we can make that difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.