

Matthew 12:44

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.

Analysis

I will return into my house (ἐπιστρέψω εἰς τὸν οἶκόν μου, *epistrepsō eis ton oikon mou*)—The demon claims ownership: 'my house.' Without Christ's possession, we remain the devil's property. **Empty, swept, and garnished** (σχολλάζοντα σεσαρωμένον καὶ κεκοσμημένον, *scholazonta sesarōmenon kai kekosmēmenon*) describes moral reformation's fatal flaw.

Scholazō means 'vacant, unoccupied'—the house is clean but untenanted. Sarōō ('swept') and kosmeō ('garnished/decorated') suggest external improvement, even religious activity, but no new Master. Nature abhors a vacuum; so does the spiritual realm. The reformed but unregenerate person is worse than the openly sinful—more deceived, harder to reach.

Historical Context

First-century Judaism emphasized ritual purity and moral codes but often lacked heart transformation. Jesus warns that self-improvement programs without Spirit-indwelling create ideal conditions for greater demonic bondage—religious pride compounded by deeper deception.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Is your spiritual life characterized by Christ's presence or merely the absence of obvious sin—swept but empty?
2. How does this verse challenge modern therapeutic and self-help approaches to life transformation?

Interlinear Text

τότε	λέγει	ἐπιστρέψω	Εἰς	τὸν	οἶκόν	μου	ὅθεν
Then	he saith	I will return	into	G3588	house	my	from whence
G5119	G3004	G1994	G1519		G3624	G3450	G3606

ἐξῆλθον·	καὶ	ἐλθὼν	εὕρισκει	σκολάζοντα
I came out	and	when he is come	he findeth	it empty
G1831	G2532	G2064	G2147	G4980

σεσαρωμένον	καὶ	κεκοσμημένον
swept	and	garnished
G4563	G2532	G2885

Additional Cross-References

1 John 4:4 (Parallel theme): Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

1 John 2:19 (Parallel theme): They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

1 Corinthians 11:19 (Parallel theme): For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

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