

8. Jesus' Victory Over Satan

John 13:2; 1 John 3:7-8; Eph 1:19-21 & 2:6; Mark 16:17; James 4:7; Eph 6:10-17
Trinity Baptist Church. Andy Banks. Sunday 5th July 2020

Good morning. We're continuing our series exploring the benefits of Jesus' resurrection, with a look at his victory over *Satan*. We'll be moving around the Bible a bit, but let's begin with a word of prayer.

[Pray]

Satan, also called "the devil", "Beelzebub," "Beelzebul" or "the evil one," is generally not taken seriously today. In common parlance he has been reduced to little more than something potentially a bit awkward ("the devil is in the detail"), or a bit difficult ("between the devil and the deep blue sea"), or unhelpful ("the devil on my shoulder"). In popular culture and advertising he is often either a figure of fun, or the giver of our "guilty pleasures," like chocolate or fine wine ("wine from the devil's cellar"), or a bit of a laugh to mess around with at Halloween or in so-called games, like Ouija boards.

The *Bible* portrays a very different reality, though it is deliberately vague about Satan's origin and nature (we know only what we need to know). He is *created*, not eternal, and not an *equal* and opposite force to God – most likely he's a fallen angel, who rebelled against God's choice of *humanity* to rule over the world, and so was cast out of heaven. But the Bible says he prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour, he is the accuser of God's people, a liar from the beginning, and the thief who comes to steal, kill and destroy. In short, he and his army of demons are a powerful malevolent force, sowing disbelief and lies about God and all sorts of evil into the world, in a vicious, continual onslaught on humanity.

So, we should take him seriously. But not *too* seriously. We should not afford him power that he does not have, nor a fascination that he does not deserve. For, the Bible is absolutely clear that Satan was defeated through Jesus' death and resurrection. As John declares, "The reason the Son of God appeared was to *destroy* the devil's work" (1 John 3:8). He, himself, has not been destroyed yet (though he will be when Jesus returns), but his power *has* been broken for any and every disciple of Jesus, through the Easter events.

In his allegorical story, *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, C. S. Lewis captures an often-missed truth about the limit to Satan's prior understanding of those Easter events. After Edmund treacherously entrusts himself to the Witch (the representation of Satan), instead of to Aslan (Jesus), the Witch invokes the Emperor (God)'s Deep Magic (or rules), instituted from the creation of Narnia, that all traitors belong to her, to destroy as she chooses. It's an attempt to thwart Aslan's plan to free Narnia from her grip, which requires all *four* children, Peter, Susan, Lucy *and* Edmund to rule over the land. Aslan, to satisfy the Emperor's magic, offers *himself* for death in place of Edmund, and the Witch gleefully accepts, and then betrays her ignorance in her taunts as he lies bound on the stone table:

"And now, who has won? Fool, did you think that by all this you would save the human traitor? Now I will kill you instead of him as our pact was and so the Deep Magic will be appeased. But when you are dead what will prevent me from killing him as well? ... Understand that you have given me Narnia forever, you have lost your own life and you have not saved his. In that knowledge, despair and die."

But, of course, Aslan rises back to life, and when Susan and Lucy see him, they ask him what it all means. Aslan replies, "It means ... that though the Witch knew the Deep Magic, there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of Time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read there a different incantation. She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards."

The Bible is clear that *Satan* prompted Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus to his death (John 13:2). Surely, he would not have done so if he had known that that very death would ensure his own demise! I believe Satan assumed that he could *destroy* Jesus by killing him, and thereby retain his own grip on the world. I don't believe he realised what Jesus' death would accomplish, quite possibly because he did not expect the resurrection! And it is the resurrection that completely turned the tables on Satan's schemes. For it is the resurrection that turned Jesus' sacrifice from a tragic defeat into a glorious victory.

Hence, when the Risen Lord Jesus met Paul on the road to Damascus, and appointed him as a witness of his resurrection to his own people and to the Gentiles, he could say to him with absolute truth, "I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and *from the power of Satan to God*, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 26:17-18).

"I am sending you ... to turn them ... from the power of Satan to God." Satan is defeated. Otherwise, Jesus wouldn't be able to turn people from his power! And, in those verses, we get a glimpse into some of what this means. It means reconciliation "*to God*." It means "*forgiveness of sins*" – from a life lived without God and from all the ways we hurt him because of it. And it means "*sanctification*," being made holy, pure, set apart for God's purposes, like Jesus was. Now, that's a process. But it's a process that Jesus *will* complete in us, and *can* complete in us, because he has won the victory over Satan.

Further, sanctification – being made holy – is not *just* a process. It is also a change in status that has *already happened*. The word "sinner" is only ever used in the New Testament of people *before* they come to faith in Jesus. *After* people come to faith they are described by a different word: "saint," or "holy one." That doesn't mean that we are perfect yet – far from it! But it does mean that we are not striving to become something different from who we are; we are simply seeking to live up to who God has made us through Jesus.

Paul knew that we need help to get our heads around this. And so he shared something of his prayers for the Church (Eph 1:18-21):

"18I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, 19and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength 20he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come ..."

If that doesn't sound like victory, I don't know what does! Christ is seated with God in heaven, *far* above *all* rule and authority, power and dominion. Including Satan's rule and dominion! And what's even more astounding is that Paul goes on to say in Eph 2:6: "And God raised *us* up *with Christ* and seated *us* *with him* in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus." It's already happened. Through Christ, we have the same rule and

authority over Satan, and over every power that sets itself up against God, as Christ does. The power that raised Christ from the dead is available for *us* who believe. *Christ's* victory over Satan can be *our* victory over Satan in our day to day living.

Now, that has *some* application in the realm of healing and releasing others from Satan's grip. Hence, the Risen Jesus told his disciples (Mark 16:17), "these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons ..." among other things. Demons, or evil or unclean spirits, are essentially Satan's minions. And the Bible speaks of some people, who have so permitted demons access to their lives that they have come to be demonised – a demon has come to live in them. Often this can result from dabbling in occult activities, or worshipping things that are not God, or perhaps from losing control of our minds through drugs or alcohol abuse. Which is why these things should not be played around with! For the effects of demonisation can be catastrophic for a person's life. This is real, despite Western scepticism about it, although we certainly shouldn't go looking for demons in every corner!

But the good news is that they are defeated. And Jesus has also given his *followers* complete authority over them. It's not even a big deal! He said to his disciples: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority ... to overcome *all* the power of the enemy ... However, do not rejoice that the *spirits* submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:18-20). So yes, we have the power to free people from the terrible oppression of demonisation and, if they are willing to submit to Jesus' rule, that freedom can become permanent.

But that is a mere byword compared to the main joy, which is that *our* names are written in heaven. Therefore, we can be sanctified and set apart from Satan's influence in our own lives: from unholiness, selfishness, hatred, fits of rage, jealousy, lies, sexual immorality, greed, pride, gluttony ... you name it! Christ's victory over Satan through his resurrection grants *us* victory over his temptations, moment by moment, day by day. As James wrote, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. *Resist* the devil, and he *will* flee from you" (James 4:7).

We have that power available to us – if we choose to exercise it. In a sense, there is a negative implication of Jesus' victory over Satan, in that when we sin, we cannot plead powerlessness to resist. Our only option is to accept that it is wholly and completely our fault. There's a line in Sara Groves' song, *Generations*, which makes clear this truth, "To say that the devil made me do it is a cop-out and a lie. The devil can't make me do anything when I'm calling on Jesus Christ."

But that's only negative if our desire is to *sin*. If we desire holiness, then Jesus' victory over Satan is incredibly positive. We do not have to sin. We can *choose* to live as God wants and so please him instead. And we have even more help at our disposal, as Paul outlines in Eph 6:10-18, with which I will close:

"10Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11Put on the full armour of God, so that you can *take your stand against the devil's schemes*. 12For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and *against the spiritual forces of evil* in the heavenly realms. 13Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that *when* the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist [*believe God's truth, especially about Jesus Christ, which holds everything else in place*], with the breastplate of righteousness in place [*live a godly life*], 15and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of *peace* [*be ready to embrace and share the good news of Jesus*]. 16In

addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can *extinguish* all the flaming arrows of the evil one [*actively trust in Jesus*]. 17Take the helmet of salvation [*appropriate to yourself God's salvation, and know that you are secure in it*] and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God [*read the Bible daily, which, among other things, will feed you truth with which to counter the devil's lies*]. 18And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests."

By doing this we can share in Jesus' victory over Satan, won through his death and resurrection. Is that something you want for your life and our life together?