

Satan's Defeat

*“And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves saying, “What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him” (Mark 1:23-27).*

“What new doctrine is this?” “For with authority commandeth he the unclean spirits and they do obey him. “ It was not the doctrine of the existence of demons that was new: that was common knowledge at that time, however doubtful it might be I this “enlightened” age of rationalism and anti-supernatural unbelief. Exorcism of demons was not in itself a new doctrine, for it has been practiced, not only among the heathen, but the Jews themselves (Acts 19:14). What was new was His method. There were no rituals, no hocus-pocus, no mumbo-jumbo. He simply spoke the authoritative word and the demons had to obey. That was a new thing.

Nor was this new thing restricted to Christ only. The twelve apostles were sent to cast out demons (Matthew 8). Nor was this power invested by Christ only in the twelve Apostles. He appointed seventy others (Luke 10:1), and gave to them a similar commission. They returned with joy and amazement that demons were subject to them through the Name of Jesus. Nor did this power over unclean spirits cease with the Lord's ascension. Acts 8:7 testifies of unclean spirits crying with loud voices coming out of people through the ministry of Philip the evangelist.

The amazement has not ceased. The questions, “What is this? What new doctrine is this?” are still with us. All of this has provoked much thought and speculation on the time, the extent and the nature of Satan's defeat: bound, spoiled, cast out, fallen, delivered from, captive, overcome. Before attempting to exegete these passages on the evidences contained in the text and immediate context, it will be wise to first affix in our minds what is called in hermeneutics the “analogy of faith”. By this we mean that no particular portion of scripture may be interpreted so as to contradict the whole. We can allow no interpretation of an issue to conflict with what has been soundly established as Bible truth. There are certain foundational truths in the Bible around which the whole of Biblical revelation revolves. All must be viewed in the light of them.

The great governing truths of the Bible are those that reveal the doctrine of God, the doctrine of man and the doctrine of salvation. And the fall in that order. The Bible is primarily God's revelation of Himself. The doctrine of man must, then, bow to what is established truth about God. We cannot have God's creature putting limits and bounds on his own Creator. The doctrine of salvation, in turn, must be consistent with what the Bible says about God and man. Demonology, or the study of the devil and his angels falls subject to the doctrine of God, Creator and Ruler, as does the doctrine of man. And since the devil was the effective culprit in the cause of man's fall, any study about him and fallen angels must be in accord with Biblical Soteriology. Since salvation has the culmination, or end of all things in view, eschatology (the doctrine of last things) must be compatible with, and dependent upon, Biblical theology and Soteriology.

It should be evident from this that that a given system of demonology or eschatology is suited to a corresponding system of theology, and compatible with no other. A system that has free-will men running around matching their wits and expertise with a free-will devil, overcoming him by their personal holiness and acquired skills, does not belong to a theology of Sovereign Grace. It belongs to Pelagianism. A system of eschatology that has a free-will devil running loose unchecked until he is overcome and chained by a more powerful free-will angel, does not belong to Grace either. It fits better into a non-Christian dualism or an extremely degenerate Arminianism. Furthermore, a system of Soteriology calling itself Sovereign Grace that denies the believer's authority over demonic activity in his personal life through the Name of Jesus, that denies resources through Jesus Christ for a believer to extricate himself from demon-energized sin bondage, Satanic evil, oppression and obsession, does not belong to Christianity at all. It fits better into the fatalism of the Moslem.

If we are to exegete passages of scripture dealing with Satan's fall or defeat, we must first determine the theological bounds within which we may work. We will consider first what is known of God, of man, of Satan, and then, of salvation.

1. **God.** Without going into a long confessional statement, we will observe that the Bible reveals one God, infinitely wise, good and gracious, Who is the Creator of all things, both good and evil alike (John 1:1-3, Isaiah 45:7), that He does all things sovereignly according to His Own good pleasure (Isaiah 46:9-10, Ephesians 1:5), and that He works and orders all circumstances according to the purpose of His Own free will (Ephesians 1:11, Amos 3:6, Romans 8:28). He rules in every detail of each and every event in the universe.
2. **Man.** The Bible reveals man to be created in God's image in a state of true holiness, under absolute law to His Creator. He was guaranteed eternal life and bliss on the condition of continual fidelity and obedience to God. Man subsequently fell from his happy state by willingly yielding to Satan's challenge of God's truth and believing his lie. He thus forfeited eternal life, died spiritually and became a captive of Satan's will and his own depraved desires (Genesis 1:27, 3:6-24, Romans 5:19, Ephesians 2:1-3, 2 Timothy 2:26, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4). He became “Satan's meat” (Genesis 3:14,19). He became blind and deaf to truth, dead and insensitive to God, incapable of doing good and likewise incapable of turning from his evil ways, even in the face of the promise of God's certain eternal punishment for them.
3. **Satan.** The Bible reveals a personal devil. This creature, like all God's angels, was created good, was “perfect in his ways from the day of his creation until iniquity was found in him”. This Satan, or Lucifer, seems to have had the position of highest power

and authority in the angelic order. In his rebellion against God, he sought to overthrow and usurp the throne of the Most High, and succeeded in drawing a large host of lesser angels with him (Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:12-19). These fallen angels or evil spirits provide the best explanation for the activities of demons on earth. Though fallen, Satan nevertheless yet possesses great power, both on earth and in the angelic realm (Revelations 12:7, Jude 9). This power is his, not by his own conquest or merit, as Dualism would teach, but granted him by God (Luke 4:6, John 15:30). It is part of his lie, and a part which is widely believed, however, that he possesses this power in spite of God, and uses it to overthrow the purpose of God. That is a lie which we must not believe any part of. This dominion he has over the world of unbelievers is granted because of the judicial sentence of death against all who sin. The devil, then, becomes simply an instrument in the hand of God to execute judgment. He is God's jailer. Nor has his dominion ever been absolute and unqualified. He can go no further than the Sovereign Governor of the Universe will permit. In the realm of believers, he must have express permission from God to touch them (job 1:10-12, 2:4-6, Luke 22:31). And we can be certain that when the devil is permitted to touch us, God has a definite purpose in it.

4. **Redemption.** If man is to be saved, the work of redemption must effectively accomplish four things: 1) A life of perfect obedience and submission to God must be lived to merit eternal life. 2) Satisfaction must be rendered to the person of God for man's offense. 3) The ground of Satan's God-granted dominion over man must be removed so that the captive may be liberated. 4) Life must be restored to the dead, spiritual sight, hearing and response to spiritual truth must be restored, so that they who fell through unbelief of the truth may now believe the truth and reject the lie. Otherwise, they will repeatedly give themselves to satanic bondage in the practical issues of life. With this spiritual hearing and believing of the truth comes the ability to walk in holiness and overcome temptation.

There is only one event in time and eternity that will effect the above terms perfectly and completely. That is the life and death of Jesus Christ, God's divine Son, God's sinless Man, our Priestly Substitute Who offered Himself a complete and adequate atonement for all our sin. In His life, He earned for us eternal life by a life of perfect obedience to God. In His death, He bore the punishment for our sins and justified the righteousness of God and His law. In His Cross, He took the old man, Adam, to death and the grave, canceling the claim Satan had over us through our sins. In His resurrection, He raised us from the dead to live in the power and victory of the New Creation in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit through the gospel applies these truths to our minds and hearts, and makes them operative experimentally.

This event, then, the substitutionary life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is the dynamic, the cause, and the execution of our justification, Satan's defeat, and our liberty. All scripture passages dealing with this matter must take the Cross into account.

We are now ready to examine the passages in question.

**Matthew 12:29:** *"Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? And then he will spoil his house."* This passage is taken by some as a means of getting the gospel through to some who seem to be uncommonly bound up by the devil. It is thought that release of the victim's mind, and enablement to hear the gospel is attained by saying certain words, such as, "I bind you in the name of Jesus." Notwithstanding the *apparent* effectiveness of such a practice, I do not think that this is a proper application of scripture. Jesus is simply stating a matter of fact. You cannot take a powerful man's possessions while he is free to stop you. If you are going to take them away, he is going to have to be stripped of his ability to resist. The implications of this fact are evident in its context. Jesus had been casting out demons and was accused of doing it in the power of the prince of demons. He demonstrates the absurdity of Satan casting out Satan, and asserts that if Satan is being spoiled, you can be sure that he has been rendered helpless to prevent it. In the light of what we have learned above, the only event that can "bind" Satan and render him unable to hold his captives, is the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on the Cross. The Lord Jesus has judicially bound Satan in His death. It becomes operatively real to us when we believe and proclaim it as gospel truth.

**Luke 11:21-22:** *"When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."* This passage is similar to the one above. Satan is a strong man. He holds men securely. He is not in the least threatened with their escape. There is no possibility of loss. But when Christ, the stronger than he comes, he overcomes him, robs him of his weapons of warfare, and takes away all his goods. Again, Christ alone qualifies for the "Stronger than he". In His death He robbed Satan of his claims on captive men and set them free.

The Lord elaborated further in this illustration. He goes on to speak of a man from whom the demons departed *voluntarily*. They were not forced out by the authority of Christ. They left voluntarily, therefore there was nothing to keep them from returning. The poor man who had experienced a short season of man-centered reformation soon finds himself in a worse condition than before. Such is the sad experience of all who have not been delivered from the strong man by the Stronger Man, Jesus Christ.

**Revelation 20:1-3.** *"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled."* Those who insist on a literal interpretation of this passage run into all sorts of difficulties, and ultimately wind up with only a thousand literal years. In the first place, if Michael the archangel could not even rebuke the devil, what angel exists powerful enough to wrestle him into a pit? Secondly, what sort of chain is it that can bind an angel? Can matter bind spirit? Thirdly, what sort of pit will hold spirits? Whether we like it or not, we must consent that the Lord is teaching us a particular aspect of Satan's defeat, not prophesying a literal future event. Only one person in the universe is big enough to handle the devil, the Lord Jesus Christ. And He has handled him once and for all in His death and triumph on the Cross. He said as much in **John 12:31:** *"Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out."* When the Lord spoke those words, He had the Cross in full view. It was the immanence of the Crucifixion that made "Now is the prince of this world cast out" a present tense event.

Now, what is the particular aspect of Satan's defeat which is in view here? It is not his "chaining", for there never has been a time since Satan's rebellion that he has not been "chained" by God's will in some way. Our wise and gracious God would never turn that mad dog loose to wreak whatever havoc he pleased. He was certainly chained when he encountered Job. God simply gave him enough slack to first take away Job's substance, and then to afflict his body; but his chain would not allow him to take Job's life or Job's faith. The chain is not new. What is new is the length of the chain, "that he should deceive the nations (Gentiles) no more." A remarkable thing happened in the world after Jesus' death and resurrection. Gentiles, by the thousands, began to believe upon Israel's God and Saviour through Jesus Christ the Lord. That is what confounded the Jews all the way through the book of the Acts. The prophecy which promised that God would bring the Gentiles out of their darkness into Israel's Light was being fulfilled.

There is one future aspect of Revelation 20:3. That is a time when Satan will be loosed for a little season to once again blind the nations. I am not altogether sure that that time is not upon us now.

**Revelation 12:7-17** This passage pictures a war in heaven being waged between Satan and his angels and Michael and his angels, ending in Satan's being defeated and cast out of heaven into earth, where he persecutes the people of God. The significant points to be learned from this picture are: 1) The assured superiority of God's angels over the devil's; 2) The overcoming of Satan by the "brethren"; 3) The attempt of Satan to "swallow" the people of God by a flood of false doctrine; and 4) God's succor, provision and refuge for His people from all that Satan does.

"They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony: and they loved not their lives unto the death" deserves some special attention, for people believe that they have warrant to "use the blood" in some way to combat demons. It is true that it is through the blood that we overcome Satan, but only in the sense that Christ shed His blood in His death to take away our sins. We who believe this, confess it and give testimony of such faith in our lives, no matter what the consequences, are indeed they who overcome Satan. Once again, it is all in the Cross.

**Luke 10:18** "*And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.*" To the seventy who returned rejoicing that even the demons were subject to the Name of Jesus, the Lord replies that He has seen the fall of Satan from heaven much in the same way a bolt of lightning streaks from the clouds to the earth. It is no wonder, then, that if the prince of demons has been dethroned, that his followers are powerless to resist the authoritative Name of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

**Colossians 2:15** "*And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*" The spoiling of principalities and powers is doubtless a reference to the devil and his angels, both great and small. The Stronger Man has overcome the strong man, taken away his armour and robbed him of all his powers. It is significant that the Apostle makes this declaration on the heels of his reference to the Cross in verse 14. The "show" made of Christ's triumph over the devil is a reference to His demonstrated authority over them in His life time, and His triumph over the last enemy in His resurrection.

**Ephesians 4:8** "*Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men.*" From the subsequent verses, it is plain that ascending refers to Christ's resurrection as well as His ascension to the Father. In His death and resurrection He led our captor (Satan) into captivity and let his captives go free. That this is a proper interpretation of that figure of speech is clear from Deborah's song (Judges 5:12), "*Arise Barak, and lead thy captivity captive.*" Not only has our Lord bound and imprisoned our cruel jailer and led us out of the dark dungeon; He has bestowed us with wonderful spiritual gifts and robed us in the royalty of the King's House and made us to be priests showing forth the praises of Him Who has brought us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of the passages of scripture dealing with Satan and his defeat, but enough, we trust, to firmly establish the fact, its dynamic, and prepare us to live and wage spiritual warfare in the light of it.

This as well as any other portion of the gospel is proclaimed to our minds, our intellects, and calls for an understanding and hearty assent to its truth; an assent that is not confined to the mind, but commits the whole man and demands a confession in word and in deed. What the Lord did for us at Calvary must be believed and counted upon. If we do that, we shall have *no* fear of the devil or demons. The person who fears them is as big a fool as the person who denies their existence. The former fears another god, and the latter is an infidel. If we fear and serve our great God, we need fear nothing else. So when we encounter demonic opposition (and if we serve the Lord, we certainly shall), it shall be our duty and privilege to proclaim the truth of their defeat through the blood of the Cross! And it will be our assured joy and delight to see that they are still subject to HIS NAME.

- C. M.