

Freedom Series

8. Freedom from Evil - part 1

You'll remember when we looked at Spiritual Warfare that we perceived that there are three things that prevent us from reaching our potential in Christ, the world, the flesh and the devil

● The World

By the world I mean those things in this world which cause us to stumble and even fall as God's people. It's usually the way in which the world or circumstances associated places fear in our hearts and stops us from functioning as Christians. We'll look at these in more detail in a few moments.

● The Flesh

By the flesh I mean our own human nature. Our own sinful nature. You'll remember when we did Freedom from Condemnation right at the beginning, we saw how our sinful nature drags us back and makes us frustrated. We want to do things God's way, but our own flesh contends against us. Next week we're going to explore the frailties of the flesh as we deal with such issues as temptation and see the ways in which we become fearful and we fail.

● The devil

I left this one until now. We are contended against by the devil, satan, and his forces. Perhaps it has surprised some of you that I would believe in such a person as the devil or his demonic forces. It was fashionable a few years ago to suggest that the devil just represented forces of evil and was not a personal adversary of God and God's people. Therefore they would suggest that when the Bible refers to people who were demonised, they were just mentally ill or something like that.

Scripture teaches the reverse of this. There is a spiritual enemy and he does try to prevent us from being the people we should be. He is capable of messing up our lives and as we saw in Ephesians 6, he fires his fiery darts at us. In fact Paul says in that chapter that there's hosts arrayed against us *11 Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For 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.*

In the Bible and the New Testament in particular, Jesus opposed satan and cast out demons and gave his disciples the authority to do the same.

It's remarkable that in the century that men and women most denied satan's existence was characterised by two world wars when probably more people died in that century in war than almost all the other centuries put together. Someone once said, "*Why does the modern world doubt the existence of satan when he's the only rational explanation for it's existence!*"

People in this camp say - how can we believe in a character with horns and all that sort of stuff. And he's got a whole host of demons - mmm now what do you think of when we use that word. He's an object of ridicule. Actually, the Bible gives no description of satan but as we shall see in a few moments, has many aliases. Ridicule is sometimes the evildoers best defence. Think of all the great dictators. Hitler for example - what a silly looking man. He looked so much like Charlie Chaplin that Chaplin made a comedy film about him! In the war, British propaganda mocked him. But yet he was the worst mass-murderer of the 20th century.

There is the other pole of course. You'll find in some societies that the influence of the occult is much more emphasised than in ours so that the whole world will be seen in terms of a cosmic battle and Christians will see demon in everything whether there actually is one or not.

Both camps suit satan. On the one hand he gets a free run at Christians who don't believe he exists, and on the other if Christians blame him for everything they don't take responsibility for their own sin and therefore don't repent and will not reach their potential.

What do we need to know about the devil?

- he exists
- he opposes God
- he's beaten
- he desires that we fail in our desire to please God
- he cannot oppose the authority of Christ

● *he exists*

The writers of the Bible affirm the existence of an adversary who opposes God, the people of God and the ways of God. He's a created being who at some point in the past decided to oppose God as we read in the passage from Revelation this morning. In the early chapters of Genesis he's portrayed as a cunning serpent who deceived Eve into eating the forbidden fruit and the rest as they say is history.

He's powerful in some respects. In John 14:30 Jesus says this. he's the ruler of this world. He regards this territory as his. To be a ruler, it's not just a case of occupying a plot of land, but having the consent to do so. As you know, Rhiannon and I own our little piece of England - the funny shaped plot

of land called 8 Coronation Grove. We acquired the land because Peter and Kath Hey sold it to us. So then we said - it's ours. But there's another reason it's ours - because the authorities say it's ours and our names are written in the Land registry to prove it. It wouldn't matter how much we may have paid Peter and Kath to have the house if they did not own it. If it belonged to someone else we would be squatters. But it would remain in our possession and people in Coronation Grove would accept us as owners until the real owner came back to evict us.

It's the same with satan. He claims to own this world and people follow after him or even if they don't recognise him, they recognise his rule and ways - sin, selfishness, violence, godlessness and as we shall discover next week, he has subtle ways of maintaining his hold. But he may think himself the ruler of this world, or the prince of the power of the air or whatever he calls himself today, but the Earth is the Lord's and everything in it. satan is a squatter and he only manages to exercise rule because men and women let him - like Eve let him. And as already mentioned, he has forces we are barely aware of to back him up.

The trouble is, he has no problem in deceiving the human race and again as we shall see next week - he has no problem in deceiving the people of God too. He has many names as part of this great deception. Here are a few and if you aren't reading this on the net, then I can give you the scriptures for them if you want later on:

SATAN Matthew 4:10
ACCUSER Revelation 12:10
DEVIL Matthew 4:1 & John 8:44
ENEMY Matthew 13:39
DRAGON Revelation 12:13 - 17
BEELZEBUB Matthew 12:24 - 27
THIEF John 10:10

👉 *he opposes God*

Satan opposes God and the things of God and he desires to bring down the people of God - and that's you and me. It was through his activity that sin came into this world and I've referred to that already.

Revelation 12:7 And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 9 The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

And what does he do - he puts people into slavery - bondage. Let's have a look at part of the Hebrews passage that was read to us

Hebrews 2:14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death

We were held in slavery by fear of death. Why fear of death. we've dealt with it over the weeks. If death is a great unknown then people don't just live in fear of it but they will try everything find a way of looking through the veil of death. They'll hunt for every way. They will worship all kinds of gods. They'll try to live forever - extend their lives as long as they can. They'll live in denial of it. satan has them in fear! And it's that fear that drives men and women from God. Did you know that people think that we are a strange cult. They are afraid of us. satan has them in bondage to fear. It's his biggest control. And in their ignorance and fear they do not enter into the truth of Christ. And it's all lies. The most astonishing thing about God is that he gives people eternal life.

And it's that fear that have kept people in their sin for generations. It's that fear that men use to rule nations, to wage wars. It's the basis of dictators and terrorism. It's the fear of violence and death that keep people off the streets at night. Fear.

When we came to Christ we were free from that fear. Made free. That's been my consistent message in my first year here. We have assurance of salvation. We are free from that fear. But satan desires to put us in bondage again. To make us afraid that if we fail God will condemn us. *Now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* Those were the words of the first sermon in this series. Just those words themselves are liberated but read on in Romans 8 *15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory*

We are free from fear. He can't snatch our salvation from us. But in war, you don't have to kill the enemy to neutralise him - just wound him enough to render him non-combatant - and that's what satan wants to do to you. He wants to destroy your witness, to disrupt your Christian life so that you are of no use to God. And he does that through fear - whether its caused by illness, by broken relationships, by distracting you from the ways of God. We looked in previous Sunday mornings on how we can be put in bondage by fear of the world or fear of the flesh - but satan is usually right at the bottom of it.

And don't I know. Just to get this far we have felt under constant oppression by satan this week. Why? Because as we look at God's word, the works of satan are exposed. All his lies, deceptions - exposed.

👉 he's beaten

But the greatest truth I want to get across to you this morning is that satan is a beaten foe.

Hebrews 2:10 In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. 11 (C) Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. 12 He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises." 13 (C) And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." 14 (C) Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

satan has been beaten. That is the word of encouragement to you this morning. satan has no power over you this morning. He is destroyed. Finished. So why is he still at large?

So that God can extend his day of grace and allow more people into heaven - true. The passage in Revelation gives us more.

For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. 11 They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. 12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."

As far as we are concerned, the accuser, the devil has been hurled down. But he's still active because his time is short. I think I can best explain this by the recent war in Iraq. The regime of Saddam Hussein was swept out of power by massive force and the Americans and the British are in control of the country. Yet Saddam is at large and because he is, people in Iraq aren't safe. Soldiers must keep on their guard. One day Saddam will be defeated and there may be more peace. It's there the analogy stops. Jesus is going to return and there is going to be a day of reckoning and satan and his cohorts are going to get their just desserts.

Until then men and women still have their opportunity of following Jesus.

How defeated are we this morning. may we feel oppressed on all sides. Maybe we've been in a bad situation, anger with somebody, unforgiveness, health probs, questioning God, feel distant from God.

Satan is beaten! He's a liar and a deceiver. Your problem isn't impossible to solve. Your situation isn't beyond redemption. You don't have a spirit of fear

- but a Spirit in you - the Spirit of God who cries Abba Father. And as we sang this morning

Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

That's a message for you this morning. Jesus wants to free you this morning from those things that are binding you and holding you captive. He wants to comfort you in your mourning. He wants to make you glad and put on praise like a garment.

So let's cry out to Him this morning. Let's not let satan hold us in bondage.

Father God

I affirm that in Christ I have been set free from the law of sin and death

I affirm that I am Your child

I affirm that I have the Spirit of God indwelling me

I affirm that there is no condemnation for these who are in Christ Jesus

I am an overcomer by the blood of the Lamb.

I affirm that satan cannot destroy me

Father, I pray that by Your Spirit You will reveal to me those areas where I have fallen for satan's lies

And those areas where he has put me in bondage to fear

In the name of Jesus, I pray that those be loosed and I be filled again with that hope that only comes from the Holy Spirit.

And in the name of Jesus and the power of His blood we call on satan or any being associated with him to be gone from our presence.

Father may we be free to worship and serve You as your victorious people. people

We'll look at the rest next week when we'll see how satan deceives us and conspires to destroy our lives and our witness. We'll also see how to combat that in our lives day by day.



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