

Freedom Series

9. Freedom from Evil - part 2

Last week we looked at the truth of scripture that we have an enemy and that enemy desires

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 desires to take us back into bondage***

We were formerly in bondage - slaves to fear. Why? Because we were locked out from the truth by our sin and rebellion towards God. And what did Jesus do on the cross: *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.*

Jesus has freed us from that prison. He's freed us from a lost eternity. We have been declared free. We should serve the Lord. But satan is crafty - he tries to trick us to go back into bondage with him. And that bondage is fear - fear of death, fear of evil.

Let's see how the Bible describes him

2 Tim 2: 25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

1 Pet 5:8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

He's out to get you and make you bondage to him again. He'll either do it himself or by his agents, demons. Like I said last week, satan uses daft pictures to make himself and his demons objects of ridicule.


And as I've gone through my life, I've seen so many defeated Christians and churches. People who once ran well but now have fallen away, or who practice a nominal kind of Christianity.

It's even been worse as we have seen the church in this country decimated, with even the leaders of churches and denominations having no expectation of change.

How does satan take us into bondage? By getting a foothold.

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body. 26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.

That foothold is an opened door for him to cause mischief - or worse.

 through lies and accusation

Satan is a deceiver and chooses to sow deceit. As with all of these, satan uses what's already in the world to deceive us, so it is as much our sin as it's his. The lies can be anything about Christ. In our reading last week we discovered this about satan:

Rev 12: 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. 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

He's the accuser. So we start to doubt our faith. We start to doubt the goodness of God. This is where the world and our flesh come into it. It is through people that satan works most commonly. We become discouraged by what people say. We become pressurised by what the world presses in at us. In these things, it may be satan who is the cause or it may not. Usually it is the mixture. We need to be aware of satan - the accuser - but we also need to recognise that we have some responsibility.

It's been said that satan never comes into a church, he's brought. And it's God's people that often bring him in. When we have a dispute with our brother or sister in Christ, they may well have brought him in but we are responsible for our behaviour and they are responsible for their sin. But it gives satan opportunity.

 through our sin and other people's

But satan is the tempter too. We remember when we had the sermon on temptation that again we are responsible for our sin. I remember that in my last church there were a few people that took this too far. They blamed satan or demons for everything. The problem was THEY were as much to blame for their sin. You don't have to fall to temptation - God provides that way of escape.

 through our human weakness and ignorance

The last way is through our own human weakness and ignorance. Satan has some more obvious ways in which we can open ourselves to being troubled by demons. We have looked at this passage before in relation to temptation. But we get the clear command - Flee from idolatry. Idolatry, then as now was literally anything associated with the worship of gods other than the only true God. Paul is emphatic. Why.

If you know your 1 Corinthians there was an issue about eating meat offered to idols. Meat offered to the Greek and Roman gods could be cheaply bought after the event at the market - which really helped poorer families - and the richer ones too. It was like going to the supermarket and buying meat from the frozen cabinet. It's cheaper than fresh, but fine if you're on a budget.

Some Christians were looking at it and saying - it's been offered to idols - it's wrong for Christians to eat it. This was particularly true for people who had been practising Jews. On the other hand, there were those that said - these are only gods of wood and stone - there's nothing in it. We're strong Christians and frankly it doesn't bother us. Besides, we can eat any meat. Remember the story of Peter in Joppa. It's lawful for us to eat it. Paul reminds them that just because something is lawful doesn't mean it is expedient to do it.

22 "Everything is permissible"--but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"--but not everything is constructive.

Just because I can drive at 30mpg through Swaffham Market Place on Saturday doesn't mean I should as it's too crowded and I may run somebody down. We might think it OK to do something but if it makes another Christian stumble - then that's not desirable.

A significant verse in scripture about satan is 2 Cor 11:14. You'll find it appears whatever else I say about the influence of satan this morning. The things I am going to mention just seem OK and a good thing.

"Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

Satan uses scripture and our Christian faith to suggest how it's OK to do things. If it's lawful to do something - then it's OK. But what if we stumble a weaker brother or sister? Is that their problem? Or is it ours? 1 Cor 10:22 is quite typical of the section in 1 Corinthians on it. It may be lawful but it's not expedient. We are going to look at law next week and I think we may re-visit this passage. Adherence to God's law - or what we perceive it to be - without love or compassion is just as bad as not keeping it at all. Morality without love is no morality at all. Strange phrase you may think. Come next week and find out more about it.

let's get back to 1 Corinthians though. So here we have people saying. I'll eat meat offered to idols because they are only lumps of wood or stone so it doesn't matter does it?

But Paul raises another important point in Chapter 10 of 1 Corinthians. The idols my not be real gods, but behind them are real powers - demons.

14 Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. 15 I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. 16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. 18 Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? 19 Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. 22 Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he? 23 "Everything is permissible"--but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"--but not everything is constructive. 24 Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.

The sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons. ***If that is what you understand***, then to have any participation in eating such meat is participating in that. You are sharing in the invoking of demonic powers. You might not have been there when the meat was dedicated, but you know what it was dedicated to so by implication you participate. It's just meat, but by using it knowingly we condone what it was used for. *No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons.*

He gives us the example of communion. When we come to communion, we are dealing with something profound that has been given us. We are signifying our participation in what Jesus did for us on the cross. We are identifying ourselves publicly and with Him in fellowship with other believers. It's true that the bread and wine are just bread and wine - but it's what it signifies - we have used this opportunity to commune together with the living Christ.

Paul is saying here that you can't do that on one hand and then be in fellowship with the demonic. That makes God angry! The people of Israel when they resorted to idolatry debased themselves by being involved in it and coming under the influence of the demonic - and it brought through the wrath of God.

Before you start worrying about getting yourself involved in something demonic, Paul gave this piece of advice to those who would now go down to the market and wonder where their meat came from

25 Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, 26 for, "The earth is the Lord' s, and everything in it." 27 If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. 28 But if anyone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience' sake-- 29 the other man' s conscience, I mean, not yours. For why should my freedom be judged by another' s conscience? 30 If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? 31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

In the end food is food. Give God thanks for it because God created it and provided it for your stomach and recognise that over what may have happened to it.

But if you know the origin and you know God doesn't get the glory - steer clear even if you consider that you are free and satan can't get you for it. But don't go over the top.

When some Christians get to this passage they look for demons in everything. We live in a fallen world and you can't avoid sin or satan. So if you're looking for demons you'll find them. But we should recognise we are God's people and give Him thanks for the way His kingdom is being extended in our lives. Satan wants us to be preoccupied with looking for him so that we don't recognise what God is doing - which is far more!!

Why do I say all this? It's because in all innocence we indulge in things that have very unworthy origins and in this world it's most things.

Although we should not get paranoid about it, we should be able to recognise those things when they are in our face. After all, we are commanded to flee from idolatry. If we spot it, we flee. We involve often ourselves in activities that have an idolatrous past, we have artefacts in our homes that may be idols, we indulge in practices dedicated to idols.

By and large in ignorance, I believe God gives us protection, but when we dabble we involve ourselves in powers of darkness we don't understand. The message of scripture is clear - don't! Once we know, we steer clear of them and get ourselves released from the bondage they bring.

The occult is an abomination to God and we should not be involved under any circumstances. That was the message to the people of Israel - and it's our command too.

Lev 19:31 "Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.

So what kinds of things are occultic, idolatrous and therefore demonic. Unfortunately the media present the occult as entertaining, even good. The wizard Harry Potter does good things not bad. Harry Potter? That's just for

children. Children's story, yes. But the basis of the spells are genuine occultic.

“Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

So what things should we be wary of?

Anything associated with the occult

mind reading
clairvoyance
crystal ball gazing
ouija board
tea leaves
astrology
horoscopes

Fun or genuine? They all have origins in the occultic.

Other religions

new age or wicca
freemasonry
eastern religion - hindu gods and pictures
laughing buddha
any images of idols
participation in any cult - Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Moonies

All lead us away from the living and true God. To this end, you'd be surprised how many of our superstitions have their background in the occult or paganism.

Non-Christian faith healing and well-being

acupuncture
reflexology
reiki
yoga

Martial Arts

Harmless? When you understand the background then you realise the dangers.

This is idolatry - flee from idolatry. It's one thing to be ignorant - but when you know it's idolatry and how much God hates it then it should not be a part of your life - however free in Christ you think you are. You probably aren't!

The worse thing about idolatry is that it confuses the truth. It allows satan a or his demons way in to our lives. And when he gets there he pollutes and destroys. He has that foothold. It starts off as that little incident but turns to consuming anger. It starts of with that little drink and turns to alcoholism. It

starts with that interest in the occult or with other religions and ends up in backsliding. It always ends up in grief for you.

And your heavenly Father?

Challenge. You know now. We are always commanded to flee from idolatry

he cannot oppose the authority of Christ

This is the good news. Satan has no way of opposing the authority of Christ. He is beaten. By allowing Satan a foothold, you are giving credit to a beaten enemy that by definition cannot have any power over you - unless you give him that right through sin. So what should we know about dealing with the devil apart from not giving him a foothold?

Remember


 *as Jesus' disciples we have authority over demons in Jesus' name*

This is one truth that we sometimes don't grasp hold of. Liberal theology has told us that demons don't exist. Or worse, that this somehow lapsed over time. Well, Satan hasn't stopped working.

Luke 9:1 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

Luke 10:17 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."

If you ever come across something of Satan or demonic, in Jesus' name, the authority is there to command them to go. Use it. It works. But there's more to this authority.

 *resist Satan and he will flee from you.*

1 Pet 5:8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

James 5:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you

Resist the devil and he will flee. He won't go grudgingly or with difficulty. He'll flee. Why? You are a child of God and you operate in the name of Jesus. Remember that one too.

🌈 *we are protected by God's armour, but only if we wear it!*

If we remember back to Ephesians 6 we read *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.*

We need to recognise that and protect ourselves with the armour of God. We looked at this a few months ago. We are protected by the armour of God - but only if we wear it! We are fully protected against everything that satan can throw at us. But only if we protect ourselves with the armour of God.

The trouble is that too often we walk with our armour off.

🌈 *the blood of Christ cleanses us from that which has polluted us*

Have you realised that there are things in your life that satan has polluted and you've just started to realise it. Well you now know you have the authority to tell him to clear off. But realise too that Jesus died for you and for your cleansing. After all, satan may have caused you to be tempted, he might have led you into things by your ignorance, he caused you to sin by other people's actions - but the sin is still yours.

Hebrews 9: 13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

In Christ our sin is dealt with. Remember that. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.



Where have we got to? Satan gets to us in ways that are subtle to take us into bondage again and stop us reaching our potential as God's people.

What can we do this morning.

1. resist him and in Jesus' name make him flee
2. put on our armour to stop him being able to attack us effectively - be on your guard.
3. recognise that although Satan may have caused you to sin, that sin is your responsibility. You did it. But in Christ is forgiveness. You are the child of God.

Prayer

Father,

I thank you that in Christ, Satan is conquered
His shed blood is sufficient to cleanse me from all sin
I have been freed from bondage
I want to serve You alone

I renounce all those things in my life that have not been of You
I confess that I am a sinner
And I thank you that the blood of Jesus cleanses me from my sin
I pray that by Your Spirit that you will show me the parts of my life that Satan has polluted
That I may know Your cleansing and freedom.
By the power of your Spirit I pray that I may be delivered from any demonic forces that hold my life in bondage.
That I may resist Satan and he will flee as You promised
That I may be free in Christ as I should be.
Because in Christ Jesus I am not condemned.

Lord Jesus, I want to walk in the power of Your Spirit
That I may give glory to the Father.

I ask this in and through the precious name of Jesus
Amen



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