

## **Sermon 212: Romans 16:20: Victory over satan**

### **OUTLINE**

God of peace  
Defeat of satan

### **INTRODUCTION**

This is the first and only mention of satan in the book of Romans. Why talk about him now? Paul has been giving his love to the church and encouraging love between people and churches. He naturally moves from the unity of the church to the enemies of that unity warning about those false teachers who have a different gospel and who cause divisions. That is why Paul is talking about satan. The book of Revelation reveals that satan is thrown down to earth and is waging war against the church. The prophecy reveals satan using persecuting power, the first beast, false religion, the second beast, and seduction, the harlot against the Church. The church in every age faces these three enemies, we in NZ are facing more of the harlot and the second beast than the persecutions of the first beast. The church in Rome likewise was facing the attacks of satan, she was suffering from persecution, we know that the Christians had been kicked out of Rome for a while; they were under attack from false religion, the presence of the false teachers makes this clear; and they were bombarded by the temptations of the permissive societies around them. The war is felt, the enemy is real, but we see in this encouragement the victory is guaranteed. Romans 16:20, 'The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.'<sup>1</sup>

This is a promise for all believers in all times. Today as we look at it we want to consider the two main characters mentioned—God and satan.

### **God of peace**

One commentator points out that there are three surprises in this statement. Firstly, it is a God of peace who is also a skull crusher. Secondly, the defeat of satan is underneath the feet of believers. Thirdly, this crushing will take place soon. We want to dwell for a while on the notion that the God of the Bible is a God of peace and a God who wages war.

Today whenever anyone thinks of the God of the Bible, the God who is love, they usually caricature God as a pacifist. This is the God of Liberal theology, the God who never sends anyone to hell, whose business it is to forgive, who is for inclusion not exclusion, mercy not justice, but this is not the God of the Bible. So when we read these words, 'The God of peace,' we must read them in light of the whole Bible. Some might have a notion that the God of the OT was a warrior God but the NT God is one of peace, this too is a Liberal notion that has no fear in making the word of God contradict itself. The NT is clear that when Christ returns He will return to do final battle and to put all His enemies under His feet, Rev. 19:11-21. His coming with the clouds, Mark 13:26 is the typical OT way of speaking of God coming in judgement to do battle on behalf of His people, Dan. 7:13, Nahum 1:3, etc. one of God's names is LORD of hosts, this literally means God of armies. He is the general that leads His saints, the head of the spear in holy warfare against sinners in judgement. In the children's book the Chronicles of Narnia, the children enter a new world called Narnia where there are talking animals, and the king of that land is Aslan who is a Lion and who is a

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1 [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ro 16:20). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

deliberate picture of Christ. The children have to go and meet him they are terrified and so they ask, 'is he safe', and the answer comes back, 'of course he is not safe, but he is good'.

For many the forced choice is between a God who is holy and who will act in holy vengeance against sin on the one hand, and on the other an indulgent and less stringent God who is all about love and peace. For many the idea that God can be holy and just and a God of peace does not fit and so they cut away the parts they think don't fit and remake God according to their imaginations and do not submit to what God has revealed of Himself. The question we want to ask is, how can God be a God of peace while at the same time crushing the wicked?

In order to answer this question we need to look to Paul to see what he means by peace. The book of Romans records how God brings about His peaceful disposition towards us. You will remember in Rom. 1:17 that Paul spoke about the gospel being all about God's power to save those who believe by giving to them a gift of righteousness, not a righteousness that we accumulate by our deeds, but a gift that is received by faith. Then in 1:18 Paul set out to show why all, both Jews and Greeks need a gift of righteousness. In chapter 1 Paul shows how all people outside of Israel suppress the truth of who God is that is known through nature and are under the wrath of God. Chapter 2 shows how Jews, even though they have the law are likewise under the condemnation of God so that all stand guilty before God, 3:19-20. So at this point in Romans God and sinners are not at peace but at war, and worse as sinners we are under the certain condemnation of God with no ability within ourselves to pay for sins or to stop sinning. God was our enemy and we were His. But then because God is gracious and loving and merciful, He provides for us what we could not provide for ourselves. He makes a way that we are no longer sinners in His sight liable to be judged for our actions. He does this not by ignoring our sins but by paying for them.

I remember having an email exchange with a Muslim and this is the main difference I highlighted between Christianity and Islam, in Islam Allah can merely forgive, but in Christianity, God does not ignore justice He satisfies it. The gospel makes it so that God is both Just and the Justifier. He both satisfies what His holiness requires, but He also satisfies His love towards His people by saving them. But He does not save us at the expense of His justice but by fulfilling it. How does He do this? By Jesus Christ taking our place, suffering our punishment and paying in full all that our sins deserved. And then when we trust in this provision of God in Christ and we come to Him for the mercy that He freely offers to all. God takes the innocence of Christ, the righteous record of Christ law-keeping, both in the death paid and the life lived and credits it to us so that we are seen to be as holy as Jesus in the sight of a holy God. God poured out all of His wrath towards your sins upon His own Son. He has bought peace not merely declared it. The peace between sinners and God is no slight thing but bought at the cost of Christ's life. The King and Creator paid in suffering that there might be peace between sinners and a holy God. Now you might be able to appreciate how serious a sin it is to reject God's overtures and invitations to be saved.

So Paul puts it this way in Romans 5:1, 'Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'<sup>2</sup> Since we have believed and received the gift of Christ's righteousness, now we are at peace with God. But for those who have not believed, for those who have not yet paid for their sins by the payment God is offering you in Christ, the guilt of your sins is still yours and God's wrath and holy ire against sin still burns against you. If you do not belong to Christ then God is not a God of peace but war.

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2 [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ro 5:1). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

He is offering you peace, He is willing to forgive your war crimes if you will lay down your arms and declare your loyalty to Him, but as long as you reject His gifts and Lordship and terms there is no peace and at the end of time when Christ comes to judge His enemies you will be amongst them.

What is interesting about Paul's statement is how he says we will have the victory, God will crush satan under our feet. Let's dwell on this notion of God winning the war for us for a moment. Today there is a movement in spiritual warfare that is all about the latest techniques in the Spirit to get the upper hand over the devil and win the victory. There is intercessory prayer as type of heavy artillery whereby we are called to bind satan and speak against principalities and powers and order angels into strategic positions. There are books being written by these experts teaching you the special techniques and words giving the impression that it all depends upon you. The Word of Faith teaching works on the assumption that God has no legal right to work in the world because He gave that right to Adam who then sinned and gave it to the devil, and now the believer has to act like a mini-deity who through words of faith and give God the right to act in the world and to speak against the devil directly. This is not Paul's vision of spiritual warfare. He sees it as a mostly indirect thing and God as the one who gives the victory.

### **Defeat of satan**

We have addressed the surprise of the God of peace acting in war, now we want to investigate the defeat of satan under our feet. This question is further complicated by the timeframe that Paul indicates, 'soon.' Some have looked at this word 'soon' as a mistake on the part of Paul. They accuse him of thinking that the second coming of Christ was going to happen any day now in the first century, and the soon indicates this expectation. There are various ways we can account for what is meant by soon. Firstly, soon could mean the next big event on God's calendar. The next main event on God's calendar is the second coming of Christ to judge the world. There is nothing that needs to happen first, this event has been foretold to come unexpectedly like a thief in the night. In this way soon could mean next. Though I do not believe that this is what Paul means. Secondly, soon could mean soon on God's timetable and not our own. Peter when dealing with the delay of the second coming of Christ makes allusion to this notion, 2 Pet. 3:8-9, 'But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.'<sup>3</sup> Soon for God and soon for us feel very different. But this is also something I don't think Paul intends here.

In order for us to appreciate what Paul means we need to consider the crushing of satan more generally and then it will become clear what is meant by soon, and how we are also involved in the crushing of satan.

The beginning of this notion is found in a promise in Gen. 3:15, 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.'<sup>4</sup> The devil has caused the curse of God to fall upon His creation and the entrance of sin and death. These are the works of the devil. It all

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3 [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (2 Pe 3:8-9). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

4 [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ge 3:15). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

seems so dark and irretrievable and then God comes to the rescue and He gives a promise. And the first preaching of the gospel, the first promise of a coming Saviour, the first foretelling of one who would come who would overcome satan and reign in victory is preached to satan himself. This promise foretells the birth of a son of Adam and Eve who would overcome the devil by crushing his head. We know that Jesus is the one being promised and who has overcome satan by His dying on the cross. Jesus is the one who has defeated the devil. Now, just as we speak of our salvation as past, present and future, we also need to speak of the defeat of satan as past, present and future. You were saved when you were called by God, regenerated, believed and were justified, adopted and filled with the Spirit. But you are also being saved as you are being sanctified, as you do good works and as you persevere. But you will also be saved when satan, sin and death are finally removed in the final day and you are swept into the New Creation in a new body. Our salvation though real and secure from the first was not completed and consummated all at once. In the same way the devil was defeated but the victory over him comes in stages. Let's map these three stages out and you will see how the problem of soon and the problem of us being satan crushers is answered.

Past: Col. 2:13-15 gives us a clear picture of how Christ dying on the cross was a great triumph over satan, 'And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, <sup>14</sup> by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.'<sup>5</sup> V15 describes three actions against the satanic powers, they are disarmed like prisoners of war, they are openly shamed like a defeated foe being dragged behind a victorious general's chariot in when he returned to Rome, and He triumphs over them, victory! How does the cross of Christ accomplish this? Well, what is satan's power? He is known as the accuser. He stands before God as a prosecuting attorney to charge you with your sins. The cross we are told in v14 cancels the record of our debt, and all the legal implications and demands that go along with it. Jesus takes the guilt of my sins and He pays for them fully satisfying all the law demands. The case has been closed there can be no reopening of the case because there is no double jeopardy with God, or as Paul puts it in Rom. 8:33-34, 'Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.'<sup>6</sup> Rev. 12:8 tells us that as a result of Christ's finished work satan is thrown down to earth and there is no longer any place for him before God to lay charges against us, the court is closed.

This means he has no grounds to accuse us for God the judge has ruled and no one can overturn His ruling, not even our doubts. Not only that any authority the devil had over us as a type of prison warden is gone, we are now citizens of heaven. We are under the the protection of God. We have political immunity as ambassadors of heaven and any satanic activity in our lives is by God's will for our good, like what we see with Job.

But that is the past victory of satan, there is now an ongoing application of this victory in our lives. You see now that the strongman has been bound, we are now able to rob his house. All authority belongs to Christ in heaven and earth and He has given us the

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5 [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Col 2:13–15). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

6 [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ro 8:33–34). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

command and the authority to go and preach the gospel, and anytime a soul is saved, the devil is robbed of another soul. And so by evangelism we crush satan under our feet and reinforce the victory of Christ over him.

He stills acts as a deceiver who tries to divide and pollute the church with wolves in sheep's clothing spreading his deceit, but every time we practice church discipline and are discerning and avoid error we free ourselves from his influence and crush him under our feet.

He still tries to lure and tempt the Christian into sin and away from obedience to Christ. But when we stand strong in the armour of the Spirit, in other words when we remember the truth, the righteousness of Christ, pursuing holiness with all our hearts, when our minds are set on the hope we have in the gospel and in hope we are willing to endure suffering and say no to sin, when we have a readiness to spread the gospel because the peace we receive from the gospel makes us ready to go, when we fend off wrong thoughts and philosophies by taking thoughts captive to the word of God, and when we pray in Jesus name for the spread of the gospel, in all of this we are crushing satan. The bible tells us that if we resist him he will flee from us. For greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.

When you refuse to be divided against another brother or sister you are overcoming him. He is a divider who seeks to make us fixate on each other's sins and to imitate the way he accuses us by making us accuse each other. When we choose to forgive, when we choose to see God's grace to us as unworthy sinners as the model to follow in continuing to love the unworthy we are crushing him under our feet.

Rev. 12:11 tells us how we overcome satan, 'And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.'<sup>7</sup> The blood of Christ overcomes satan because it atones for the sins he wants to accuse us of disarming him. The word of our testimony overcomes him because when we preach the gospel others are saved and he is robbed of souls. And even death itself is a conquering of satan because when we die we go to our reward and beyond all temptation and interference into the very presence of God awaiting our guaranteed resurrection.

This is the future crushing of satan. When Jesus comes again, He comes to judge the living and the dead. On the top of His judgement list is the greatest rebel, satan. And all who followed him in his rebellion against God as the King will suffer in his fate. Rev. 20:10, 'and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.'<sup>8</sup>

So when Paul says soon he is probably talking about the church age when Christians who are in a spiritual war overcome satan by resisting sin, by applying church discipline, by forgiving others by prayer, and most importantly by preaching the gospel. And when he talks about satan being crushed under our feet it is by our obedience and testimony and purity and resistance that we do this. The victory is guaranteed, but the fight is bloody and terrible. We are in a war, it will be tough but the end is not in dispute, we are more than conquerors in Christ. All of our enemies have received their death blow and are in their final throws of death. It is our job to be faithful until the victory is consummated.

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7 [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Re 12:11). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

8 [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Re 20:10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.