

The Cross and Satan

by L.E. Maxwell

The Cross is the means by which Satan's head was bruised, and it is the ultimate judgment of the world and its prince.

Scripture: John 10:10, Romans 6:6, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 6:12, Colossians 2:15, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8, 1 John 4:4, Revelation 12:11

Topics: "Victory in Christ", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

L.E. Maxwell emphasizes the profound struggle between the believer and Satan, illustrating this through the experience of a missionary who faced immense personal tragedy. This man, initially dismissive of the devil's influence, found himself in a spiritual battle after losing his child, realizing that his own selfishness had allowed demonic forces to gain a foothold in his life. Through surrendering to the Cross of Christ and relinquishing his self-life, he discovered true victory over the enemy. Maxwell asserts that believers must first conquer their internal struggles before they can effectively combat external spiritual forces, highlighting the necessity of being 'crucified with Christ' to achieve triumph over Satan. The sermon calls for Christians to embrace their identity as soldiers of Christ, ready to engage in the spiritual warfare that lies ahead.

Transcript

THE WRITER has a very warm friend (by correspondence) on the mission field whose experience throws a flood of light upon the subject of this chapter. We think it best to withhold his name and field. He says there was a time when to him the biblical Satan was a joke. Then God in His great mercy permitted an awful trial to come into this man's life. He had been a Christian worker for many years, and had seen some fruit. But, when the people he wanted to help poisoned his precious little child, this poor man was devoured as by a thousand demons. Although saved, he was so completely defeated by a double-mindedness, that he could not possibly withstand the foe. His universe was shattered. With his back to the wall, he fought a losing battle. He had been living in "the natural." He was now called upon to go the second 'le, to love his enemies and to be thankful for the things that hurt him worse than death. But he could only cry: "What I would I do not." He says, "God knows the tears I wept. A desperate hope that would not die, a secret conviction that my Redeemer would somehow see me out of it all, kept me from utter despair and suicide, which Satan more than once whispered to me. But it was all for my good. God was preparing me for a full-orbed view of Calvary. I remembered that even one of the apostles had to be sifted like wheat by this same cruel monster, before he was in a position to really help his brethren. My

spiritual weapons in the face of these demon forces were as a toy pistol before a great battleship. Further-more to my utter dismay, I found that my own carnality and selfishness had given the ground they held to these monsters of hell. I myself had invited them in. I must get rid of 'self' that was as clear as the noonday sun. Else there could be no hope of final victory. These powers of darkness (demons are as real to me now as God Himself) which were oppressing me to the point of despair, were standing on the very ground which secret selfishness had conceded to them. How was I to get rid of this self-life, which had so long been standing out against Christ and making a way for the enemy to come in like a flood. It was then that God focused all my being upon the Cross of Christ, and opened up to me its wondrous meaning. The moment I took the place which all along God was assign-ing me; namely, a consent to die with Christ and to consign to my Redeemer's tomb my old life, the old man,--a new day dawned." It was then "the hosts of hellish spirits were driven from the field of battle and utterly routed."

In the first place it is evident from this man's experience that a believer knows little of the devil or his working, knows little of his mighty external enemy, until the "civil war" with self has been won. In Ephesians 6 Paul introduces the believer's fight with the enemy "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places."

Here is an aggressive warfare against mighty, but unseen foes, in the heavenlies. Into such a warfare the worldly and the self-centered cannot enter. However, in chapters one and three, Paul has prepared the believer for just such a warfare. In Ephesians 1 he shows us our place in the heavenlies seated in Christ far above this present evil world. In Ephesians 3 he shows us how we may be so strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. Note the order--we "in Christ" up there; then Christ "in us" down here. When Christ thus supplants self, terminates the civil war, and enables me to say, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20. A.S.V.), then I am ready to face the foe and, like a Christian soldier, driver souls "out of-the mouth of the lion." But to repeat, the believer has first of all to be delivered from the world (through being seated with Christ in the heavenlies, Eph. 1), and then delivered from the power of the flesh (through an experimental indwelling of Christ in his heart, Eph. 3), before he is ready to face the devil in open combat. As long as the believer lives for the world or the flesh, small harm he can do the devil. Until he thus becomes Christ's warrior, he is "easy meat" for the devil.

A great Bible teacher, who we fear had gone "soft," was expressing a syrupy sympathy for certain preachers who seemed to be so "tormented by the devil," as he put it. After he had so fully expressed this sentiment we could not but say, "But brother, why give place to the devil?" This teacher insisted, however, that all the blame lay at the door of the devil. Since that day we have often been inclined to ask: "Which devil do you mean?" William Law says, "Self is not only the seat and habitation, but the very life of sin; the works of the devil are all wrought in sell; it is his peculiar workshop." One of the most subtle forms of self, therefore, is to blame the devil. But why blame the devil when you give him place? His "bridge-head" is plainly the self-life which you allow to exist. Self can never cast out self, much less Satan. Paul says, "Neither give place to the devil." Concerning Satan, the Lord Jesus said: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Christ was sinless and self-less. Satan had no ground in Him. Jesus could there-fore say, "Get thee behind me, Satan." He resisted the devil, and He has told us to do the same. But if self is given any place in the life, the harmony with hell is established. Self must go to the Cross, before Satan can be bruised under our feet.

It is significant that James says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (jas. 4:7). Note here the divine order. Successful resistance to Satan can come only as one

submits utterly to God. As long as self plays a part in the life, resistance to the devil is sheer folly. The devil simply says, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" God's sure road to successful resistance of the devil is first of all to become "victim-victors." Only as we are first Christ's captives, can we stand with Him in conquest over the devil.

This brings us to consider just how Satan's head was bruised. Is Christ indeed the Lion of the tribe of Judah? Jesus plainly ascribes His victory over the devil to the Cross. His uplifting is the judgment of this world's prince. But how? Was he not crucified through weakness?—led as a lamb to the slaughter? Has the reader wondered how such a tragedy can be a triumph? The writer puzzled over this. He accepted it simply because the Bible said it. And that is always sufficient reason. But it seemed so utterly irrational. Did not the murderer and father of lies have all his own way at Calvary? Jesus said: "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." The twelve legions of angels He refused. But why turn Himself over to the devil and his dupes? Let the Almighty manifest His power. Send Satan to his own place. Thus reason raves.

But God's ways are above ours. Victories in the ethical world cannot be weighed in the scales of gross matter. Morals and might are not the same. A poor infidel lawyer asks, "If your God is omnipotent, why does He allow the devil to be loose in the world?" That may sound original and clever—as though ten thousand saints have not puzzled over this gordian knot. God's ways are past finding out. Satan will yet be bound for a thousand years and then again "loosed" as part of God's "ways." But his destiny is the lake of fire. God might have bound the devil to begin with? But why dwell upon "why"? The devil is a postmaster with if's and why's. Saints have learned to lean upon a God of infinite wisdom. They have found Him such. The Cross has already proved to them "the power of God and the wisdom of God." For them the Cross has cured sin, and has broken the grip of the devil in their lives. They have found that Satan is servant, that the Saviour is Master. Furthermore, they see that even now Satan's victims are being taken from him, right under his nose through Calvary's omnipotent attraction. But how? That is still the question.

Paul says concerning the Cross: "The hostile princes and rulers He (Christ) stripped off from Himself, and boldly displayed them as His conquests, when by the Cross He triumphed over them" (Col. 2:15, Weymouth.). As we face the mystery of this triumph, it is manifest that sheer force has neither part nor lot in the matter. Let us behold the Lamb as He ascends Golgotha's brow. He will go to the Cross undefended, and unresisting in utmost obedience to His Father. In a perfectly selfless humanity, He will meet the enemy in final awful combat.

Let him do his worst. Let him empty his last volley. But the last Adam will continue to love the Lord his God with all His heart and His neighbor as Himself. He will refuse to pity Himself, refuse to come down from the Cross, refuse to save Himself. When God, with averted face, smites His beloved Son as He bears the woes of the world, even in that dread-ful hour Christ will still say, "My God." His was an obedience unto death—even the death of the Cross. His victory carries Him to the throne of the universe.

The devil hasn't a leg to stand on. He has photo-graphed himself at Calvary. He is the father of lies. He is the murderer of souls, "coming to steal, to mutilate and destroy." He is a lying, deceiving serpent. Together with "the princes of this world," he has slain the holy, the harmless, the undefiled. Now is the judgment of this world. The prince of this world has been cast out. Christ is victor. He has shaken off the demon forces. He has displayed them as His victims. "Thus, through the triumph which Christ achieved in His death, the ultimate, absolute judgment of the world, the worldly principle, and its prince, potentially took place.

The Cross, as Christ viewed it, represented the last standard, 'the last judgment' before which all moral and spiritual principles will be brought for their final unveiling; and there He was victorious." (Dr. Mabie, quoted by Huelgel.) Let us hasten to believe, and bow down, and share in this mighty triumph over the prince of darkness. Through death our Lord Jesus Christ has destroyed him that had the power of death, and even today de-livers them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

What does it matter, then, if God allows the devil to waste our hedge and tear our world into shreds, as he did in the case of Job? The "thus-far-and-no-farther" of the Cross stands between us and the adversary. And as we stand crucified together with Christ, and hidden away in the wounds of the Redeemer, Satan is bruised under our feet. He can find nothing to lay hold on. In that position we may reverently say, "He hath nothing in me." In contrasting his former ministry with that of the present, F.

J. Huelgel says, "I look back over the years of missionary endeavor before God had opened my eyes to these facts (concerning the dreadful foes of darkness) and hang my head in shame; but I no longer wonder why they were so sterile. I know. Oh, the meager fruits of those years when I blindly beat the air! Yes, Christ was preached and some few brands were plucked from the burning. But there was lacking a vision of the actual nature of the conflict and the awful nature of the foe.

I often wondered why so little of the seed sown bore fruit. I never realized the meaning of the Saviour's words: 'Then cometh the devil and taketh away the word out of their hearts.' I wondered at the terrible death and stagnation which, in spite of years of preaching, remained unshakeable." Since those days of crisis, this man of God has witnessed mighty rivers of living water flowing out into the parched places of Mexico. Thousands of soldiers have come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

There has been a call to battle. The power of Satan has been manifestly dreadful. But God's truth marches on. "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty.... But thus saith the Lord, even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee." Realizing this eternal wastage of souls, and how the great Captain of our salvation is so straitened within the narrow confines of our self-centeredness, little wonder that this missionary from Mexico, with his eyes open to see the war on the saints, longs for the Church to become as "terrible as an army with banners," liberated from the "swaddling clothes of Christian babyhood."

Surely the lost chord in the Christian church is that of good soldiery. Of all the symbols employed by the great apostle to call the church to activity, this seems to be the uppermost. The Christian must be first and always a soldier.

must cease the civilian life of the worldling. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life." He is forever engaged in an aggressive, relentless and deathless warfare. Only the soft pussyfoot dislikes to hear about Christian warfare. But Paul talked in terms of the military. "His epistles bristle with figures drawn from battle." We make no apology for quoting further from Mr. Huelgel. He says,

How sweet to go on singing about God's love when the Cross is calling to sacrifice and suffering, and a bleeding ministry on behalf of dying souls--and how devilish! If there were not so many Christians being rocked in the cradle of the infancy of the faith, content with their own personal salvation, cooing to the sweet lullabies of spiritual babyhood, the world would not be reeling like a drunkard toward another international deluge. John 14 is your favorite chapter? Have you ever wondered if the devil would not have it so? Why not shake off the swaddling clothes and move on to Romans 6, Mat-thew 28:18-20, Colossians 1:24 and a host of similar passages that cut like a knife into our silly self-satisfaction.

Oh, the pity of it, the shame, the awful tragedy of it all! Emancipated, redeemed, and blood-bought, but still in bondage to the world, to the flesh, and to the devil. In retreat and defeat, flouted and routed! How long, O Lord, how long?

Soldiers of Christ, halt! About face! Claim your freedoms--crucified to "the world," crucified to "the flesh," crucified just where the serpent was crushed. Three glorious freedoms!

Now we are ready to fight the good fight. "And 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" (Rev. 12:11). Three all-sufficient weapons!

We plead the Blood to bind and foil the foe--to quench his fiery darts. Before the Blood he cannot stand.

We declare openly "the word" of our testimony. Only those who "say so" can slay the serpent.

We love not our lives unto death. Let the devil do his worst. We already stand in Death, where death was done away and the devil was destroyed. All-victorious "victim-victors!"

Having overcome all--Stand!

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