

(The Full Gospel) 12. a Church Triumphant Over Satan

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen emphasizes the church's authority over Satan, the necessity of divine revelation, and the importance of maintaining purity and unity to triumph over spiritual forces.

Scripture: Matthew 16:18

Topics: "Authority of the Church", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the church's authority over Satan, highlighting that Jesus spoke of the church's battle against spiritual forces in Matthew 16 and 18. He stresses the necessity of divine revelation to understand Christ's true nature and the importance of maintaining purity within the church to resist Satan's infiltration. Poonen warns against the dangers of jealousy, pride, and discontentment, which can lead believers to become agents of Satan. He encourages the church to remain united in humility and to engage in spiritual warfare through prayer and thanksgiving, ensuring that no place is given to Satan. Ultimately, the church must strive to embody the spirit of praise and gratitude to overcome the enemy.

Transcript

There were only two occasions when Jesus spoke about the church - in Matthew 16:18 & 18:17-20. And on both these occasions He spoke about Satan battling against the church. In the first reference, Jesus spoke of Satan attacking the church directly through the forces of spiritual death - through evil spirits. In the second instance, He spoke of Satan trying to corrupt the church indirectly through a brother whom he deceives and captures, and who unconsciously becomes his agent.

But whichever method Satan adopts, the Lord has given us the authority to bind Satanic workings, and to release those who are captured by him (Matthew 16:19; 18:18; 2 Timothy 2:26). We must exercise this authority in the church with all boldness.

The Importance of Divine Revelation

Jesus told Peter here that HIS church was going to be built on the Rock that Peter had just confessed - "the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:16). Peter got that revelation on Jesus from the Father (verse 17). We need revelation on Jesus too.

A knowledge of Christ that comes merely through the study of the Bible, or by hearsay, is not enough. "No-one knows the Son except the Father" (Matthew 11:27) - and only the Father can give us that revelation. Only then will we be able to build the church on the same foundation that the apostles built the church in their day.

Only the Father can show us that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Who has triumphed totally over Satan, and Who now has all authority in heaven and earth, all things being placed in subjection under His feet.

Only the Father can show us that Jesus Christ came in our flesh, was tempted in all points as we are, and yet did not sin, but overcame the world totally, giving us the hope that we too can walk on earth as He walked (1 John 2:6).

Any amount of human argument and reasoning can never be a substitute for Divine revelation.

Preserving the Church from Satan's Agents

Jesus said that the church He builds has one identifying mark: It overpowers the gates of hell (the forces of spiritual death). On the other hand, if a church is itself overcome by the forces of spiritual death - that is, by jealousy, or strife, or a competitive-spirit, or by honour-seeking, or immorality, or the love of money, or worldliness, or by bitterness, or pride, or arrogance, or Pharisaism, etc., then we can be certain that that is NOT the church that Jesus is building.

There are carnal believers in every church who are slaves to these sins. But they must forever be kept on the periphery (in the outer court), so that they are given no ministry, or responsibility, or power in the church. None of us should ever be a part of any church that does not seek to battle these evils constantly.

Satan perpetually seeks to destroy the church. And most of the time, he tries to do this by infiltrating into the church through his agents. Jude speaks of "certain people who have crept into the church unnoticed" (verse 4). Like the Gibeonites who deceived Joshua (Joshua 9), there are many today who have deceived the elders and pretended to be disciples and crept into the midst of the churches unnoticed. But how did these people manage to deceive the elders? Perhaps because the elders were overawed or bribed by their wealth or their worldly position. In all Babylonian denominations, it is the people who have worldly position or wealth who are able to influence the decisions taken in their group, even if they are not elders. But it must never be so in our midst. If we are not careful however, the Gibeonites will come into the church too.

God may sometimes allow these people who have "crept in unnoticed", to be in the church for a period, to give them time to repent and to be converted. At times, He may also allow these infiltrators to fulfil the task that Lucifer fulfilled in the third heaven ages ago. Lucifer dragged away one-third of the angels with him, when he rebelled and fell away (Revelation 12:4) - and thus the third heaven was cleansed of all rebellious elements. So today also, the Lord allows self-seeking people to come into the church, so that when they leave, they can take other insincere people along with them, and thus cleanse the church of all rebellious elements! This is part of God's wonderful wisdom.

We can see an example of this, from what the Lord has done again and again in the churches in India. He has wonderfully and deftly arranged circumstances, and exposed and removed from our midst those who sought position in the church, and who had a divisive and a controversial spirit (See Romans 16:17). He has caught the clever people and the big people who came into our midst "in their own craftiness" (1

Corinthians 3:19) and thus frustrated their secret plans to "hijack" the church!! This is a mark of the Lord's care for us, and of His intense desire that there should be a pure, untainted testimony for His Name in our land.

We praise the Lord that He watches over us constantly to preserve us from such Satanic attacks. "Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchmen keep awake in vain" (Psalm 127:1) It is only where brothers dwell together in unity that the Lord can command His blessing (Psalm 133:1) - and only a united church can triumph over the gates of Hell. So the Holy Spirit works mightily in our midst, to preserve us in that unity.

Now we must be alert and pray that the Lord will continue to do this work in the future too. His perpetual promise to us is: "I will remove from your midst the proud, exulting ones,and I will leave among you a humble, lowly people, who take refuge in the Name of the Lord" (Zephaniah 3:11, 12). The church can be built in unity only with humble, lowly people.

It is not our task to drive anyone away from the church with human zeal - for "the anger of man cannot achieve the righteousness of God" (James 1:20). No. Our task is to receive all who come to us, and to show them the way of life. But the Lord is jealous to preserve His church in purity, and so He Himself will expose and remove self-seeking people in His own way and in His own time, just like He drove the money-changers out of the temple at the right time.

Jesus spoke in Matthew 18:17-20 of a brother who sins and thus brings defilement into the church. We must remember that such a brother is usually not aware of the fact that he has become a tool in Satan's hands. Jesus therefore said that we must go and speak to him privately at first, in order to WIN HIM. That is always our aim: To win the brother - to win him away from Satan, and for the Lord and for His church. If he does not listen, we must try to win him again, this time with one or two more brothers. If he still does not listen, then we must tell the church about him. And if he does not listen even to the church, then he must be put out of fellowship, so that he can see his own need and repent, and so that others are not defiled by his spirit.

We must be strong in the Lord to pray and bind these workings of Satan, so that God's work in the churches in India proceeds unhindered. We must also learn to forgive every brother quickly and totally, so that Satan does not get any advantage over our own lives (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Knowing Satan's Tactics

If we are to wage effective spiritual warfare, we must not be ignorant of Satan's schemes, devices and tactics.

From the way Satan tempted Jesus with food in the wilderness, we conclude that Satan will seek to tempt us also through the legitimate desires of our bodies. Jesus spoke to His disciples to beware of being concerned too much about food and clothing. If food or fancy clothes have a hold on us, Satan will certainly have power over us, for our kingdom will then be of this world. We have to be careful that we don't train up the young girls in our churches to be taken up with pretty dresses, lest they grow up to be captivated by Satan.

Lucifer became Satan when he (as the head of the angels) began to consider himself as someone important among the angels (Ezekiel 28:11-18; Isaiah 14:12-15). It is thus that Satan enters the hearts of many believers too. Whenever a brother begins to think that he is somebody important in the church, it is

clear that he has been infected by the spirit of Satan. Then he will be ineffective for spiritual warfare, even if undiscerning believers around him feed his ego by making him feel important!!

When a brother speaks for a long time in the meetings, beyond the measure of his spiritual content, and vomits out his Bible-knowledge on the poor long-suffering, brothers and sisters in the church, that is a clear indication that he begun to feel that he is somebody important, and that he is superior to others. That is the spirit of Satan. And yet, we have often found, that such a brother does not even have victory over such an elementary matter as getting offended. If he is exhorted after the meeting to be brief, he gets offended. It is clear that such brothers are not living in a constant self-judgment, for if they were, they would have felt the Spirit convicting them of their pride and their arrogance.

It is such brothers whom the Devil makes his agents. But we have to preserve the church in purity, and so we must keep on exhorting such long-winded brothers to be brief - even if they keep on getting offended with our exhortations. Those who have bitterness and sourness in their spirits should not speak in the church-meetings for more than one minute. And in that one minute let them confess their hope that they will become wholehearted quickly and get rid of their sinful attitudes.

When Jesus warned His disciples against the use of titles, He was warning them of this very same Satanic spirit that seeks to exalt itself above others in the church. A "Reverend" is greater than an ordinary brother. A "Pastor" is also greater than an ordinary brother. But Jesus said that we were all to be just ordinary brothers. Let the Babylonians keep their titles. Let us avoid them, even in spirit. Always seek to be the junior-most brother in the church, in your spirit, and you will not only be safe yourself, but also effective in your battle against Satan.

Lucifer was also discontent with the circumstances that God had placed him in. That was how he became the Devil. This spirit of discontentment is what Satan is now spreading in people's hearts around the world. And many, many believers have picked up this infection too.

There is nothing wrong in improving your earthly, material circumstances. But when you see another brother having more than you, don't envy him, don't desire what he has, and don't expect any gifts from him. Be content with what it has pleased God to give you. "He who hates gifts will live" (Proverbs 15:27b - KJV). Don't be ignorant of Satan's schemes. The moment you are discontent with your salary, your house, the colour of your skin, or any such thing, you open your heart's door to Satan.

We Do Not Struggle Against Flesh and Blood

"Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the HEAVENLY PLACES" (Ephesians 6:12).

3500 years ago, Moses came down from Mount Sinai and brought the Israelites a promise from God of a kingdom on this earth. But 2000 years ago, Jesus came down from heaven and brought us the promise of a heavenly kingdom. This is the fundamental difference between the new covenant and the old. If we don't understand this, we will not be able to wage an effective warfare against Satan.

Our kingdom is not of this world. And so we must NEVER, NEVER fight or quarrel with human beings concerning any matter. This is the Number One requirement for effective spiritual warfare. One of the chief ways by which Satan tries to sidetrack believers from their calling, is by getting them to fight or quarrel with

others - with their relatives or their neighbours or their brothers and sisters. And invariably the quarrel will be concerning some earthly matter. Thus he succeeds in dragging believers down from their heavenly position to this earth and its affairs, and thus makes them ineffective in their battle against him.

If you want to fight Satan effectively and to build the church, determine that you will never get involved in a dispute with any human being, or concerning any earthly thing. We must not even wage imaginary battles in our minds, with others. We must not have a single complaint against anyone.

And we must not have an inward demand on anyone either. We must not, for example, have a demand that people should treat us with respect, or with consideration, or show love to us, or that they should never cheat us or deceive us etc. We must not have such expectations even from our marriage-partners. All such disputes and complaints and demands are indications that a person's kingdom is of this world, and that he has given place for Satan in his heart. And such people are doomed to live a miserable life.

God is the Only One with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:13). All our circumstances (including the way others treat us) are designed by our loving Father for our very best - to conform us to the likeness of His Son. Therefore we have no room for any complaints against anyone, but plenty of room for praising God at all times.

The Spirit of Praise

In each of the 7 glimpses of heaven given in the book of Revelation, we see the inhabitants of heaven continuously praising God with a loud voice - sometimes as loud as thunders and as the noise of roaring rivers. This is the atmosphere of heaven - one of continual praise, without any complaints or demands. And this is the atmosphere that the Holy Spirit desires to bring into our hearts, our homes and our churches as well. It is thus that Satan will be driven away from all these places.

I read of a fiery brother (who lived in the last century) who used to frequently praise God with loud 'Hallelujahs'. One day, one of the staid, dead Christians around him, who was irritated by this spirit of praise, asked him what the brother would do if God finally sent him to hell. To this the brother replied, "If I go to hell, I will keep on shouting 'Hallelujah' and the praises of God there, until the Devil tells me to get out of Hell, lest I infect others in hell with the spirit of praise!!"

No, there is no place in Hell for those who have a spirit of praise! The ones who go to Hell are those who are full of complaints and demands against others. They were like that when they were on the earth and they carry that evil nature with them when they leave the earth too.

Satan has paralysed the vast majority of Christians, and made them ineffective in spiritual warfare against him, because he has succeeded in getting them infected with the spirit of murmuring and complaining against their brothers and sisters, against their relatives and neighbours, against their circumstances, and even against God Himself.

We overcome Satan, when we obey the following exhortations:

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which indeed you were called in ONE BODY; and be thankful" (Colossians 3:15).

"I urge that thanksgivings be made FOR ALL MEN" (1 Timothy 2:1).

"Always give thanks FOR ALL THINGS in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father" (Ephesians 5:20).

We are exhorted first of all to be thankful for all whom God has called into Christ's Body. If the choice had been left to us, we might not have called many of those whom God has called - especially those who belong to some other group than ours!!! But God's wisdom being higher than ours, even as the heavens are higher than the earth, He obviously had a different opinion about them than we have. And if we are wise, we will re-align our thinking in line with God's.

Once we have learnt to be thankful for our brothers and sisters in Christ's Body, we can then learn to give thanks for all men and then for all our circumstances. We know that our Heavenly Father sovereignly controls all men and all circumstances. If we really believe this, we will certainly praise God at all times, and thus prove that our kingdom is of heaven and not of this world. Then Satan will lose his power over us. Only then will we be able to wage an effective warfare against him.

There is a wonderful word written in Revelation 12:8 that no place was found in heaven for Satan and his demons. This is how it must be in our lives too - in our hearts, in our homes, and in our churches. **SATAN AND HIS HOSTS MUST FIND NO PLACE IN ANY OF THESE PLACES.**

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/the-full-gospel-12-a-church-triumphant-over-satan/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net