

## [IN GOD'S IMAGE 42 – DEFEATING EVIL]

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*The last couple of sessions we talked about how God has justified us and reconciled us through the saving work of Jesus Christ.*

- ◆ But we can't leave this section surrounding the events of the cross without saying something about the destructive force that is "sin."
- ◆ After all, this is the primary cause of the broken relationship between a holy God and His creation.
- ◆ Humanity was created to be in relationship with His Creator.
- ◆ The Creator not only brought man into existence, but also provided the means by which he would be sustained (Acts 17:28).
- ◆ His existence though was dependant on the created maintaining a healthy relationship of love and trust with His Creator.
- ◆ Under this arrangement, mankind enjoyed harmony, security, assurance and peace, not lacking anything.
- ◆ However, as we know when Adam and Eve disobeyed God by insisting on being their own gods rather than their Creator this special relationship was terminated and although God did not disinherit nor destroy his wayward children, He continued to sustain them but allowed them to reap the consequences of their decision to substitute themselves in the place of God.
- ◆ So rather than enjoying the peace and security offered by living a life under the guidance of their Creator, Adam and Eve now found themselves in the anxious, stressful and harrowing experience of living a life alienated from God, a life characterised by sin and guilt.
- ◆ Their sin was to assume a position reserved only for God Himself. The "created" assumed the role of the "Creator."
- ◆ This is the basis of all sin, a lack of trust by the created in their Creator.
- ◆ The command, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3) was given to preserve the Creator's place of honour in the relationship and why it is mentioned first in the Decalogue.
- ◆ This is why God takes our sin very seriously as it is a direct affront to Him personally. It is a rebellious creation thumbing their noses at their Creator and Father.
- ◆ Adam and Eve's temporary existence continued but fellowship with a Holy God ceased as a result of their sin.
- ◆ This is why they went and hid themselves and humanity has been following their example ever since.
- ◆ But more than hiding is at stake. Now that humanity has cut themselves off from the true source of life, there can be only one consequence, physical and spiritual death.
- ◆ This is the ultimate result of self-willed humanity rebelling and choosing to trust themselves rather than His Creator.
- ◆ Mankind has, in effect, committed a form of suicide.

***But now there is an additional problem. Not only has man cut himself off from the source of true life and fellowship with God, but also now his sin has created a corresponding separation from God's point of view.***

- ◆ As God's holy nature is opposed to sin and evil, it now means humanity finds itself under God's judgment.
- ◆ For God not to oppose sin would mean a total denial of all God stands for.
- ◆ He is a holy loving God, full of light and truth and as such has to oppose sin and evil in whatever forms it takes.
- ◆ But His opposition to, and judgment of sin, is with the intent of restoring the creature back into relationship with Him.
- ◆ As mentioned earlier, God's goal is not the destruction of mankind, but salvation.
- ◆ Salvation means the restoration of the relationship where the creature trusts the design of the Creator.
- ◆ But it is precisely here in His opposition to sin and evil that God exercises His righteous anger.
- ◆ He is not going to allow evil to frustrate His purpose of sharing the life and love of the Trinity with His creation.
- ◆ And the means he chooses to express His wrath against sin and evil is to do so in a very unorthodox way.
- ◆ Instead of holding mankind to account for their sin, He chooses to substitute His very own Son to pay the penalty for their sin.
- ◆ The intent of this approach is to provide the way whereby humanity can be drawn back into relationship with Him.
- ◆ So God's anger is not expressed in the destruction of mankind, but rather as redeeming love.

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- ◆ Rather than casting us off, God through the incarnation and the atonement of Jesus, reaffirms His commitment to His wayward children.
- ◆ He will not let us go. His judgment and wrath is directed at the sin and evil that is preventing restoration.  
***In addition to providing salvation for mankind, the incarnation and the atonement are also designed to remove once and for all the two sources of evil that hold mankind under its deadly sway.***
- ◆ We have spoken at length about the Lamb of God accepting the penalty of sin on our behalf. Now we see Jesus going forth as the conquering King to destroy the two sources of evil that are at the heart of our sin.
- ◆ If we can use a medical analogy, it would not be of any use to save the patient without taking care of the disease that is the cause of His impending death.
- ◆ Humanity is trapped in a fearful spiritual disease not entirely of their own making from which they cannot extract themselves.
- ◆ If Jesus is to deliver humanity from the chaos of sin and evil into which it has disintegrated, then He has to confront and destroy these evil powers and break their unrelenting dominance over humanity and reclaim the lost for the kingdom of God.
- ◆ Here at the cross, Jesus will face His greatest challenge hazarding everything on His ability to faithfully rely on the Father to overcome the combined forces of evil as they attempt to lead Him into sin.
- ◆ The forces arrayed against Him are formidable. Not only is Jesus confronted with the evil resident in the human heart, but also the dark forces of evil in the spiritual realm led by the devil himself.
- ◆ In contrast to the normal spiritual battleground where the confrontation between God and the devil take place, such as revealed in the books of Job and Revelation, this battleground is the flesh, the “flesh of sin” which Jesus has invaded to destroy these two enemies and free mankind once and for all from the scourge of sin.

***We last spoke about the devil in regard to Jesus’ baptism where Jesus willingly submitted Himself to the devil’s temptation.***

- ◆ We finished that section with an ominous threat.
- ◆ ***Luke 4:13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.***
- ◆ Although the devil is given little press in regard to Jesus’ ministry, we see his influence working behind the scenes in the various players surrounding Jesus all in an effort to derail His ministry.
- ◆ We see his name associated with the disciples, Peter (Matthew 16:33), Judas (John 13:2), and of course the Pharisees (John 8:44).
- ◆ At other times we see the angry mobs being whipped up into a frenzy in an attempt to end Jesus’ life.
- ◆ These were all “opportune” times for Satan to disrupt or wreck God’s plan for the salvation of mankind.
- ◆ Throughout His lifetime, Jesus, because of who He was, was besieged as no other human has been before or since by the devil and his demonic forces.
- ◆ These vicious attacks came to a climax in the ordeal of the cross when we see the full extent of the evil nature of fallen humanity under the wicked influence of Satan and his demons determined to tempt Jesus into sin.

***And it is here too that the spotlight is rightly focused on the true extent of humanity’s sin.***

- ◆ The symbol of the cross has both a light and a dark side to it. While on the one hand, it symbolises God’s loving redemption of mankind, it also carries a dark shadow that should remind each of us that we too are implicated in this shameful deed.
- ◆ It is no accident that in Jesus’ ordeal leading up to the crucifixion, representatives of all humanity are implicated in His execution.
- ◆ Collectively, Jews, Gentiles, church, state, and individuals in the crowd, all of humanity as sinners have the blood of the beloved Son of God on their hands.
- ◆ That “wicked deceitful heart” (Jeremiah 17:9) of mankind rose up and spat in the face of God.
- ◆ Yet in the midst of this, the beloved Son asks His Father to ***“forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34).***
- ◆ Such is the contrast to the way we humans would have reacted to the terrible injustices He suffered.
- ◆ Instead the love of God shines through even while suffering innocently the wrath of God against our sin.
- ◆ ***1 Peter 2: 21-25 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 22 “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”23 When they***

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*hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." 25 For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

- ◆ Through the whole awful ordeal, Jesus remained faithful to His Father and His heavenly kingdom.
- ◆ He did not sink to the level of man's fallen nature by retaliating in kind; neither did He succumb to the temptation to call on the divine power at His disposal.
- ◆ We see the devil's influence in this regard when a similar question to his earlier temptations is raised, "***if you are the Son of God!***"
- ◆ ***Matthew 27:39-40 "Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads 40 and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!"***
- ◆ Although the forces arrayed against Him were formidable, they are dealing with the King of Kings who would not betray His kingdom for the passing glories of this present age (Matthew 4:8-10).
- ◆ Nor would He yield to the demands of the flesh to use His divine powers to end the ordeal (Matthew 26:53, Matthew 27:40-43).
- ◆ His sights were unswervingly set on the task set before Him, to free once and for all His wayward children whom He loved and for whom He was determined to be their Saviour (Luke 9:51).

***By not yielding to humanity's fallen nature nor the temptations of the devil, Jesus overcame and defeated the two sources of evil holding man captive.***

- ◆ Jesus by His perfect trust and obedience to the will of His Father overcame and defeated our hostile fallen nature so that it died at the cross. It was the death of the old man (Romans 6:6).
- ◆ In its place was the new redeemed human nature of Jesus Christ, the first true human in the image of God.
- ◆ And in fulfilment of the prophecy made back in Genesis 3:15 speaking about the impending clash between Jesus and that serpent, the devil, for dominion over the earthly kingdom, "***he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel***"
- ◆ Despite the best efforts of the dark forces of the spiritual realm, Jesus in the flesh overcame and crushed them.
- ◆ ***Hebrews 2:14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.***
- ◆ Jesus seized back from the devil the position that was rightfully His, lordship over His subjects. No longer would it be business as usual for the dark forces of the invisible world.
- ◆ Their hold over mankind was greatly diminished and humanity had access to a new redeemed nature.
- ◆ The combined evil forces of both the visible and invisible powers arrayed against Jesus in this battle for supremacy were unable to bend Him from the task of delivering mankind for the dark forces that held them captive.
- ◆ ***Colossians 2:15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.***
- ◆ Jesus' work of delivering humanity took a giant step forward. But there was still one last enemy to defeat!