

DESTROYING THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL

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The Holy Spirit wrote by the apostle John in 1 John 3:8: That “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8 (ESV)

Since there is still a lot of evil in this old world, what was it that Jesus destroyed?

What evil have you seen lately? If you listen to the news from the world, whether local, national, or world news, then you are well acquainted with evil. Some of you listening this morning may be practicing some of the evil we read about. If Jesus appeared to destroy the works of the devil, then how can you do the works of the devil? What does this verse mean?

The Holy Spirit of God is extremely clear as to what constitutes evil. He is also clear that the devil is still at work in the world. The apostle Paul wrote to Christians warning them about lying and anger:

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. Eph 4:25-27 (ESV)

When we are angry the devil gains an opportunity to cause us to sin. Christians are the prime target of the devil. If you are a child of the devil then he will help you to maintain your status as a sinner. But if you are a believer in Christ then Satan will work harder at causing you fall to sin. Paul encourages the Christians to put on the whole armor of God so that we can withstand the “schemes” of the devil. (Ephesians 6:10.) The devil is scheming. He lays plans. He plans deceit. Paul told the Romans about people who use “fair speeches” and “smooth words” to deceive the hearts of the simple. (Romans 16:18.) Well, this is the work of the devil. Satan dresses poisonous philosophy in fair speeches and smooth words. The world is full of Satan’s deceitful, wonderfully delightful sayings. Just listen and you will hear these falsehoods, even over the air, radio, television. This is why it is extremely important that we plant our feet in the words of the Holy

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Spirit, the book we call the Bible. Jesus said that Satan is the father of lies. (John 8:44.) We need to believe Jesus. The old prophet Jeremiah told his people,

¹⁶ Thus says the LORD: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. Jeremiah 6:16 (ESV)

The good way, the road that leads to heaven is well-marked in the pages of the Bible. As we search the scripture and put its teaching into our lives Christians will find rest for their souls and Satan will be defeated.

If the works of the devil still exist in the world then what did the apostle John mean when he said Jesus came into the world to destroy the works of the devil?

The defeat of Satan was predicted in the Garden of Eden. God spoke to the Devil after he had tempted Adam and Eve to fall into sin. God said,

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." Genesis 3:15 (ESV)

This prediction played out in the days of Jesus; Satan did "bruise his heel" when Jesus died on the cross. But three days later, Jesus delivered a blow to Satan's head when He was raised from the dead by the power of His heavenly Father. In fact, Jesus was given flesh and blood so that he could die for our sins. That's right! The Spirit says,

[Jesus] himself ... partook of [flesh and blood], that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. Heb 2:14-15 (ESV)

You see, the works of the devil are not just the sin we see in the world, but the result of the sin we see in the world. Satan had the power of death because He was the spirit at work in people of disobedience. He is the spirit behind all the sin in the world. "The wages of sin is death", not only physical death, but eternal death. Death means separation. Physical death is the separation of the physical

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body from its life-giving spirit. Eternal death is the eternal separation of our spirit from the God who made us, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, Satan is the one who had the power of death. But the death of God's Son on behalf of the world snatched the power of death from the hands of Satan. People were in bondage to the fear of death. But we need never be in bondage again to Satan, because Jesus has broken the chains of death. He was raised from the grave never to die again. Those who believe and obey Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will conquer death. We will be raised from the dead, yes! But more than that, we will never see the second death of Hell.

Sin is overcome by forgiveness. Forgiveness is the only way to overcome sin! It was God's only way. But being a just God, how could He forgive sin and be true to Himself and His righteousness? Substitution was the answer! That's right! Just as Satan only had to cause one couple to sin in order to bring death into existence, God had only to have one sinless man to suffer death for every person who has ever lived or will live. Jesus suffered the physical separation of body and spirit, and He also suffered the spiritual separation from God. I believe that was the suffering He dreaded the most. Jesus had never known separation from the presence of God. Even when He became the babe of Bethlehem Jesus was never outside the care of His heavenly Father. But when he died for me, he suffered the consequences of my sin. He was separated from God for three days. He was within the clutches of Satan for three days. But then, early on that third day Jesus Christ came out of His exile, reunited with His body and walked out of the tomb and into history as the climactic event of all history. Satan is defeated because in the name of Jesus Christ God can forgive sinners.

The works of the devil are defeated when a person hears and obeys the gospel of Jesus Christ. One sinner at a time Satan is being robbed of followers. As people believe and obey the good news of Jesus their eyes are being opened and they are turning to God. Jesus said that He had appeared to Saul of Tarsus so that Saul could become a preacher who would

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¹⁸ to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' Acts 26:18 (ESV)

The apostle John wrote 1 John 3:8 that Jesus had come to “destroy the works of the devil.” But he also wrote

¹⁹ We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. 1 John 5:19 (ESV)

The destruction of Satan began when Jesus came casting out demons. Once, Jesus sent his disciples out to preach the kingdom of heaven and to cast out demons. The disciples came back rejoicing that even the demons were subject to them. Jesus said,

I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. ¹⁹ Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. ²⁰ Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. Luke 10:18-20 (KJV)

Yes, the destruction of the works of the devil has begun! You and I are part of the battle. The battle will continue until Jesus comes and puts all things under His control. The last enemy to be conquered is death itself when all the dead of every age will be raised for judgment. You will be there on that great day. Are you ready for it? Find a church of Christ nearest you to learn what you can do to be ready for that resurrection morning.