

Sermon

- We have been enjoying a series on the Goodness of God! Noting that God's goodness is inherent in who God is. God doesn't just do good things the essence of God is good!
- However, last week we were reminded that Satan the accuser comes disguised, comes unexpectedly, and comes in a subordinate or lesser form to sow seeds of doubt regarding the goodness of God and the faithfulness of God's word, and if acted upon, will lead us to sin.
- In our reading today, Paul began by warning his readers not to be kidnapped, or taken captive, or carried off by philosophy, as a slave raider might plunder a village and carry people off.
- Philosophy in this passage does not refer to the study of basic questions concerning God, man, and the meaning of life. Considering some of the philosophical or existential questions of life is quite healthy, especially if we are to connect with others who are asking these questions.
- Here, Paul is referring to worldly "principles," and speculations and ideas of false teachers who are not rooted in Holy Spirit inspired revelation.
- Such as, teachings from the mystery cults which flourished in that context – offering a great promise of salvation through enlightenment, or angel worship, or adherence to strict rules regarding denying the flesh and bodily desires.
- One scholar suggests that following these false teachings is like a blind man looking in a dark room for a black cat that isn't there—there is no hope in following it for truth.
- I suspect that this is why Paul says not to be carried away by such philosophical arguments, it could very well be Satan the accuser, disguised as a clever argument, suggesting that God is not sufficient to save and restore us.
- Paul continues by introducing a reason for abandoning the false teaching – he says that what followers of Christ have is completely adequate. Because Jesus is the very essence of God's fullness, goodness and faithfulness:

"For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority." (Colossians 2:9-10)

- In Christ we partake of His fullness and are made complete. We have no essential need that He does not supply. What Paul means is that in Christ we find the satisfaction of every spiritual longing, want, and need.
- Christ's sufficiency for us is evident in three things that we have in Him: spiritually circumcised (vv. 11-12), forgiven for our sins (vv. 13-14), and we are given victory over the forces of evil (v. 15).

1. Spiritually Circumcised:

"In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; ¹² when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead." (Col. 2:11-13)

- Moses commanded that in circumcision, part of the physical flesh should be cut off as a sign of covenant commitment.
- In this passage Paul is declaring that our spiritual circumcision, made without hands, took place when God regenerated us. It involves Christ cutting off the domination of our sinful flesh/nature.
- For Moses it was a physical circumcision, in Christ, it is a spiritual one. One is made in the flesh, one is made in the Spirit, severing the fleshly nature.
- Therefore, being buried with Him in Baptism the sinful nature/flesh is circumcised, it is cut off and dies with Christ, and in rising again to new life, we are born again of the Spirit. This is symbolized in water baptism.
- So the nature/desire to turn away from God, to listen to the accuser, and seek after our own wisdom, our own fulfilment and our own pleasure has died – it has been cut off! We are set free from this inclination!
- We are no longer slaves to sin! Jesus has severed its hold on us and we are not under its grasp anymore, therefore, we can deny any enticement, any temptation or impulse to rebel.
- Whether we chose to or not is another story. But in Christ, we have a pain free circumcision! (pain free for us, maybe not so much for Him)

2. Forgiveness:

- God has forgiven believers. He has cancelled the record that stood against us:

“And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, ¹⁴erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:13-14)

- The term erasing or cancelling out suggests the smearing of letters written on wax. Like taking a felt pen and writing on grease proof paper – then simply smudging it out/off.
- It’s gone! Written off! Removed!
- We may not be bad people, but there are times when we seek after worldly treasures and pleasures to make us feel secure, important, significant, in control.
- God crucified our record of wrongdoing with Christ on the cross. It died when he died!
- Christ actually died as our Substitute under the charge of guilty for listening to the accuser and rebelling against God – even though He didn’t!
- So we are forgiven for allowing ourselves to listen to the accuser and therefore, deny God’s goodness, faithfulness and trustworthiness to supply all our needs – for wisdom, security, fulfilment...

3. **Victory over Evil:**

“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.” (Colossians 2:15)

- Disarming the angelic rulers and authorities means that Jesus defeated Satan and his demonic powers by His death and resurrection.
- At the cross, Jesus denied Satan of all authority.
- The authority Satan had to persistently attempt to force Jesus to abandon the pathway of the cross, is the same authority Satan has to persistently attempt to force us to abandon God’s pathway.
- Not only did Jesus deny Satan of this authority, but by living a sinless life, Jesus was resurrected victorious, and therefore, disarmed Satan of his authority to control/rule human nature.
- In the garden of Eden God gave authority to Adam to rule the earth, but Adam handed it over to Satan when he listened to the accusations about God and ate of the apple.

- In Luke we see Satan boast of this transaction – listen to his taunt:

“Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And the devil said to him, “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please.”” (Luke 4:5-6)

- We were originally given all authority over the kingdoms of the earth, but in listening to and believing the accusations Satan made of God, it was handed it over to Satan in the garden, as recorded in Genesis 3.
- But at the cross, Jesus took it back! Now, all authority in heaven and earth is located in Him! Which is why, after His resurrection Jesus could say the following:

“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28:18-19)

- When He died on the cross, Jesus bore the sin and shame that Satan’s used as a threat against humanity.
- And in His resurrection, Jesus disarmed Satan of his authority to use our sin against us. And He took back the authority to rule the earth (which was not even Satan’s in the first place).

Jesus shares several parables about a landowner or a king who puts servants in charge, but their poor stewardship leads to disastrous outcomes – so Jesus, being the king’s own son, comes to restore order.

- Jesus removed the horrid tenant and gave the keys of the kingdom to us!
- And in doing so, He disgraced the powers of evil by prevailing over them.
- Christ triumphed over Satan’s hosts at the cross. And because the Cross was a public death, it ended up becoming a public victory.
- In their day, it was common for the victor to parade through the streets with their defeated foes driven forward in front of the chariot as a sign of their impotence before the conqueror’s superior might.
- The image Paul refers to here is a familiar image to the Roman world.
- To the casual observer the cross appears to be only an instrument of death, but Paul represents it as Christ’s chariot of victory – where Satan and his demons are paraded as impotent, defeated, foes before Him!

- God is good and God's goodness has not and will not change. However, our perspective of God's goodness has been corrupted and distorted by Satan the accuser, who unexpectedly and in disguise will sow seeds of doubt about the character and nature of God.
- But in this passage, Paul informs the church that through Jesus, our inclination to listen to and follow Satan's subtle accusations has been severed, cut off, and we are reborn.
- We are forgiven for following our desires for self-fulfilment, security and power to lead us to sin.
- And Satan's authority to hold our sin against us, his authority to rule our hearts and minds has been publicly denied and taken back.
- Therefore, through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus we are restored to receive and experience what God intended in the garden of Eden.
- This is more than a theological summary of the Christian faith. This opens the door for you to experience all that God has instore for you!
- Whatever Adam and Eve had access to regarding the goodness of God – we have access to.
- Noting about God has changed, our perspective of God and our access to God may have, but now, it is restored in Christ!
- What a cause for celebration!
- This means that when our hearts are troubled – we can know perfect peace; when our thoughts are scattered, we can know perfect wisdom; when our world is turned upside down, we can know perfect hope; when those around us disappoint us or let us down, we can know perfect love.
- Now Satan will still try to corrupt and distort our perception and experience of God, but we don't have to listen, we have choice to focus the eyes of our heart on the goodness of God. Surround yourself with people who will speak this into your life, read the scriptures, sing songs of praise...do whatever it takes to draw near to God.
- What do you need to experience right now? Invite God to manifest His presence in your life.

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