

The Man who Conquered Satan

Series: Battlefield:
fighting the flesh, the world, the devil
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Matthew 6:21-26
Spiritual warfare, Easter Sunday

He is Risen! He is Risen indeed!

Jesus has conquered the grave. For a long time Easter was the more celebrated season of the Christian Calendar. Bigger than Christmas. Because all the other things were leading up to this point; the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Through the death and resurrection, two parts of one event, Jesus became King. The Kingdoms of this world are now the Kingdoms of our God. This was Christus Victor, Christ victorious, the final blow against death, sin, the world, the flesh and the devil. We have our victory.

We are coming to the end of a long series on Spiritual Warfare. Fighting the flesh, the world and the devil. If you have forgotten it all, let me remind you some.

The devil is real. there are Spiritual entities that God in his wisdom created and some now act against God and our good. They can afflict human beings and nature either directly and overtly or indirectly and subtly. And, just like germs, just because you do not see them nor believe they exist it does not stop them from acting against you.

The way of our world is opposed to the way of Jesus. There is a way of doing things in our families and our secular world that is ruled by Satan. And the world will not draw you closer to Jesus. The world will also keep telling you it is Jesus and...

Then there is a part of us that turned away from God, it is called the flesh. It is the seat of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. It is where the desire to fulfil all my appetites at any costs sits. Where the greed to get anything I find attractive sits and where the lie that I know best and no one should tell me what to do sits.

Now, here is how the 3 work together, the devil tells lies that play to the disordered desires of my flesh, which make them attractive to me. And these lies are often what the society around me calls normal or tells me that everyone else is doing or that it is not anyone else's business.

But both Jesus, Paul and Peter teach that we must die to the world, the flesh and the devil, the three enemies of our soul.

Today, I want us to talk about the man who conquered the devil. Because sometimes it can feel like we are constantly in battle and even get discouraged when we feel like we lost some to our flesh or to the world or looking around us feeling like the devil is winning. Let us talk about the man who conquered the devil.

Let's Pray.

So before we talk about the man who conquered the devil I want us to go back to the narrative of humanity's first encounter of Spiritual Warfare.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Genesis 3:1-7

So the chosen human beings have a show down with the enemy. There are no bullets, no bombs, no swords. Just ideas that do not correspond to reality. Just lies. But let us look at the whole strategy of the hostile one, or the accuser or the devil if you like.

1. He isolates Eve from the presence of God by planting doubt about God's identity and therefore her own.
2. He isolates Eve from her primary community, Adam.

Once Eve is alone, away from the Spirit of God and other sound voices, she is ripe to be lied to about the nature of God and about what is wrong and right. Then she gives into her desire to redefine good and evil for herself.

This is not about her being a woman. Adam would not, did not do any better. The devil knows that it is through presence and truth that we are formed into the image of God. Therefore, he isolates us before he can lie to us. He knows that it is through isolation and lies that we are deformed into His image.

The worst regrets you have, you were either alone before you bought into the enemy's lies about what will make you happy or you were in very bad company, bad presence. It is no wonder why the best way the enemy wins is by making believers think they really do not need the church community. He is busy isolating people. No wonder the COVID lockdown times were disastrous on mental health and all.

And it is also for this reason that Jesus the man who conquered Satan comes to us as Human and a teacher. He is presence and teaches truths. Gives us new paradigms by which to live our life. And when Jesus leaves he offers Holy Spirit, and calls Him the Spirit of truth. It is both presence and truth.

If you are going to be formed into the image of Jesus, you must be found in God's presence, with the body of Jesus and in truth. Otherwise, the enemy isolates you and lies to you.

So Jesus comes to us and Paul calls him the second Adam. He is able to accomplish what the first Adam was not able to. He is the seed that crushes the enemy on the head. He beats the devil.

So I want us to look at the encounter Jesus had with the devil head to head and see how he beats the devil. Because if we are going to beat the devil, we can only do it the same way he did it.

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted[a] by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

Luke 4:1-4

So this describes the showdown Jesus had with the devil. Do you realise it was not just 3 times? He was tempted the entire 40 days. Spiritual warfare is real whether you are the son of God, pastor, teacher, missionary or student.

And it is not any different from the first battle of Spiritual warfare. The devil comes at Jesus attacking his identity and whether he can trust God. "If you are the son of God..." Are you really the son of God is the question or even better, can you trust God to back up his claims about you? Jesus is being asked this right after coming from His baptism where God had just declared both to Jesus and the world that He was the son of God.

Have you ever realised that sometimes the worst times of attack and doubt come right after you have seen God move so powerfully? One of my biggest attacks and moments of questioning whether God speaks came after a season of having heard God clearly and even my community, family and Spiritual leaders having confirmed what I heard God say to me. And it was a moment of wondering did God speak? Or Did God speak to me? Or Does God even keep his word?

This is the same tactic the enemy uses at the beginning. Sowing seeds of doubt about God's identity and our trust in him and consequently about identity. What you think about God influences what you think about yourself and others and consequently about right and wrong.

But I want us to see a few differences in the first Adam and the second one in this moment.

The first Adam was in a garden, Jesus was in a desert. Representing human beings exile from the garden.

Adam ate the fruit from the tree because it seemed good for food and pleasing to the eye. He was fulfilling his appetites and feeding his flesh. Jesus was fasting, denying the flesh and depending on being fed by the Spirit of God.

Adam and Eve were running away and hiding from God. They were isolated from the Spirit of God but Jesus is in communion with the Father through prayer. He is led into the desert by Holy Spirit.

Then as the enemy is fighting Jesus, there are no bombs or swords. It seems like a conversation. But it is war nonetheless. The enemy still comes at Jesus like he comes at Adam and us, with untrue ideas, with lies. And Jesus leans into the truth and wisdom of scripture.

After this back and forth guess what happens? The devil leaves.

Jesus conquers by living a lifestyle marked with certain habits. These habits are the practices of the way of Jesus. They are also called spiritual disciplines.

The problem with the term Spiritual disciplines is that people then begin to think they are for Spiritual pros. Actually nope. These are any habits we see Jesus keep. Then we are called to, as a matter of discipline, practice them ourselves.

These are simply habits we have to keep in relationship with Jesus. It is how we, who are material beings, engage with God who is a Spiritual being. They are practices with our bodies that allow us to present ourselves to ourselves to God and open our hearts to his Spirit and truth.

How is Jesus living out his life and constantly being with the father? Withdraws to be alone; silence and solitude. Goes without food to starve the flesh and feed from the Spirit; fasting. Has a habit of being with the father in prayer. He's worldview and identity is shaped by scripture. He goes to temple fellowship and lives in community with a few. He speaks up for the least of these but also does something about the least of these; mercy and justice. He joins God in his mission by proclaiming and demonstration of the Kingdom of God. And takes up his cross for the Kingdom.

And how does Jesus win the battle with the devil in the desert? It is not by some emotional frenzy but by the power of the Holy Spirit and a practice of the the same habits.

Now Jesus is alone, he is not giving into FOMO. Jesus is not gratifying his flesh. Jesus is very hungry. You would think after being so disciplined with his body, he would be sad and at very weak. Quite the opposite. The devil finds that Jesus is at his strongest despite all of that.

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Spiritual disciplines, are Spiritual warfare. The practices of the way of Jesus are how we win the battle against our flesh, the world and the devil.

Death and defeat came through the first Adam. But in Jesus, the second Adam we have life and victory. But Jesus Did not just do it for us, he did it to show us how to do it well.

Do you want to fight well? Do you want the life of Jesus? You must live the lifestyle of Jesus. What will it look like? Living a life empowered by the Holy Spirit and marked by:

1. Silence and solitude
2. Fasting
3. Prayer

4. Scripture
5. Community
6. Mercy and Justice
7. Proclaiming and demonstrating the Gospel
8. Take up your cross

Today as I finish I want to highlight only 2 practices that are crucial in spiritual warfare.

1. Solitude and silence or quiet prayer alone

Jesus is alone in the desert. He does not have any other input from friends or family or Instagram or Facebook. He goes to a place where he can minimise any other voices and noise. But it is not just getting rid of external input, he is doing that to face down internal inputs. He is facing down voices from his own desires and flesh too.

Silence and solitude is not some emotional therapy thing but the place of spiritual warfare. And many of us fear silence and solitude because we will find that there is nothing between us and God and we also fear just being alone with our own thoughts. Solitude is not a break from the battle, but the battlefield itself and the furnace of transformation.

It exposes our thought patterns and we learn to give the attention of our minds to God after which will follow the affections of our hearts.

Without quiet prayer we remain victims of our society and culture and continue to be tied up in the illusions of our false self.

2. Scripture

There are 3 lies and each time Jesus comes back with scripture. But it is not like some magical incantation.

I see many shops with scripture on them as if it were witchcraft or some magical incantation that would make the devil just drop and run away.

Or in Nollywood movies, that well depict some of the religiosity we grew up in, when there is a cat on the rood and people start shouting scripture.

Do you realise the devil quotes scripture back? And Jesus is not using it like the old paradigms of using scripture to win an argument. It seems like he is leaning on habit that has formed him and has shaped his way of thinking. He is leaning on words and truth that have deeply formed him and whose wisdom he trusts with his life.

You see, scripture is meant for formation not information. You can use it for information and it may seem to be working. But that but that is like using a claw harmer to dig a hole in your garden. It will but that was not the design.

It is the kind of literature that does not yield all its secrets and treasures in the first reading or the 5th or the 500th but as you journey with it through a lifetime you become a person who has been formed by its truth.

It is sad that today we spend very little time with God's word and a lot more with our news anchors and Facebook posts and tweets and every other things but God's word. Guess what, that is what is forming us.

We are after all, what we think. You become what you give your mind too. Attention is the beginning of affection. Every time people who had been friends for years fall in love, it is because finally they started paying attention to each other. Attention is the beginning of affection.

Scripture invites us to think of God, to think deeply of God, to think rightly of God and to think always of God. And the things you think of form new neural pathways in your brain and then impact how you behave and guess what? Some of these we even pass down to our generations.