

## **The Devil's Doom is Sure—Romans 16:20—6/9/2013**

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As we continue in our study of Paul's letter to the Romans today, we find mention of a person that Paul has not yet mentioned in this letter.

Paul has sent a lot of greetings and he's taught a lot of theology and practice, but here in the last chapter near the very end of the letter is a brief mention of the devil.

Since Romans is like a book of NT theology & practice on the Gospel & Christian life, it's interesting that Satan is only mentioned once.

With the devil only noted as a defeated foe, questions arise about the fascination with fighting the devil in recent decades.

If speaking to demons & other modern strategies were so important, wouldn't Paul bring them up in this thorough doctrinal treatise?

I think he would and I think Paul not mentioning Satan reminds us that our focus is on truth and what we trust.

As John Piper commented, "Paul's silence till now does not mean that Satan is insignificant, or that he can be trifled with. But it does mean that we deal with Satan mainly indirectly rather than keeping him in our mind and going toe to toe." [www.desiringgod.org, msg 11/12/06]

Then Piper referenced 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:24-26 where Paul noted how to deal with those who are ensnared by the devil.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:24-26, Paul wrote, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged,<sup>25</sup> with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,<sup>26</sup> and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."

The emphasis in 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:24-26 is on lovingly, patiently explaining truth so God free those trapped by the devil.

The path out of satanic enslavement is through knowing the truth and trusting the God of truth revealed in Jesus.

But in reacting against overemphasis on supposed spiritual warfare, we don't want to fall into an opposite error either.

In the preface to his fictional yet thought-provoking book, *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis noted that Christians often either ignore the existence of the spirit world or get consumed with it continually.

And both of those extremes are wrong.

So as the chief enemy of God & our souls appears in Romans 16:20, I thought we'd focus on biblical truth to guide & guard us against him.

We don't want to follow the fads of fascination with devils, but we do want to be aware and rightly informed about them.

So let's start by reading the context that brings this up & how what we've covered in Romans 16 leads to this topic.

Look at Romans 16:16-20 & follow along as I read. [READ]

As you know, we've covered the loving relationships and affectionate appreciation emphasized in the greetings of verses 1-16.

And the desire to protect those relationships led to the warnings of verses 17-18 against false teachers & divisive manipulators.

Since the Roman church had a great reputation, verse 19 cautioned them against ruining their testimony.

And we saw last week that the way to protect yourself is to soak your soul in what is good & don't get mixed up in evil.

But the mention of evil and smooth-talking trouble-makers and strife in the church is a sad thing.

Evil is real and it can be oppressive and dangerous.

You may live a comfortable, easy life insulated from problems, but sooner or later you will face the pain of sin in this life.

If you are honest and humble, you will feel the hurt your own sin causes others, and you will also be sinned against by others.

And you will know that something is wrong with this world.

As much as society promotes human goodness or governmental fixes or other folly, we must admit something's messed up.

Kids—it's good to understand this while you are young—evil really does exist and it even rises up within us, doesn't it?

And it raises questions about where it came from and how we can get rid of it and its consequences.

And that's where a biblical understanding of the devil can help us.

So I'm going to give you 3 points today from Romans 16:20 & the rest of Scripture to guide us and guard us against the devil as we deal with evil in this fallen world.

Let's note a 1<sup>st</sup> point from that flow of thought in Romans 16:20 that we'll support from the rest of the Bible as well.

#1—Satan started strife, pride, rebellion, lies, error & all evil.

Point #1—Satan started strife, pride, rebellion, lies, error & all evil.

Since many of you know your Bible, you know that, but let's think about it from various Scriptures.

First, we see that Satan comes up in Romans 16:20 because he is the one who started the trouble that they have to watch out for.

We could all live in loving harmony in relationships and never have to deal with divisions if only Satan hadn't started it all.

Of course, Adam and Eve were responsible for their sinful choice in the beginning and we are responsible for our sinful choices as well, but seeing Satan behind it reminds us that a chief enemy does exist.

A real devil does exist making war against your soul through his demons and the wrong ideas and temptations and perspectives and influences that keep people in darkness.

Because our lives are often so easy or so distracted by the next thing we need to do or the next entertainment we pursue, we tend to forget that a spiritual battle is going on in us and around us all the time.

We are constantly either believing the truth or believing a lie, either submitting to Christ and His Word or following the devil and his deceptions.

So as a 1<sup>st</sup> point, I listed several things Satan started—the first was strife because the context of Romans 16 celebrates and seeks to protect loving relationships and blessing among a body of believers.

And strife is the opposite of that—strife is conflict and trouble and division and dissension and discord and fighting.

And that's exactly what Paul was warning against in verses 17-18.

So when you feel that bitterness or bickering rise in your heart against a brother or sister in God's family, you need to see it as an attack against God's goodness in your life.

It's an attack against the peace of Christ's church when we let anger or clamor or gossip or slander overtake us.

And the devil himself may not be directly involved because he is not omnipresent, but we can know that it is the devil's way of thinking and his wicked influence that starts such strife.

Think back to what happened in Genesis 3 when Satan successfully led Adam and Eve into sin—strife resulted, didn't it?

Adam and Eve had distance in their relationship with God and they hid from Him and then they blamed others for their sin and began passing off hurt and creating further rifts.

And the root of that was pride—pride is what incited Eve to want the forbidden fruit and the lying promises the devil gave her.

Satan told her that she would be like God.

When we consider how Christians get deceived in Romans 16, note again that verse 18 warns of smooth and flattering speech.

What does flattery appeal to?

It appeals to pride—oh, you look so wonderful, you are so great, and puff, puff, puff goes the head of the listener.

Watch out for appeals to your pride.

We can & should encourage one another & give thanks for gifts & ministries, but we must direct that toward God and not others' pride.

And pride not only causes strife, it also feeds rebellion against God as our Creator who deserves to be obeyed.

And such rebellion and strife are fueled by lies and errors.

In the context of Romans 16, that's all helpful to recall.

So I tried to sum it up by saying, point #1, that Satan started strife, pride, rebellion, lies, error, and all evil.

Now let's look at two passages that allude to Satan's pride in his rebellion against God after being created as an angel.

Two passages give us a glimpse into the fall of Satan from good angel to the initiator of evil—Isaiah 14 & Ezekiel 28.

And what you need to know about prophetic passages as we look at these is that they often had near & far fulfillment like King David's words applying to him & also far ahead to Christ.

Similarly, these prophecies about Satan also had near and far applications in the level of involvement of Satan had with the evil kings of the earth at various times.

So as God gave judgments on earthly kings in Isaiah 14 & Ezekiel 28, He also extended his judgment to the evil behind the earthly king who was the devil.

And that's how these two passages give us a peek into what was going on when Satan fell from angel to chief demon.

Let's start with Ezekiel 28:11-16, which is a lamentation over the king of Tyre that goes beyond him to the devil behind him.

Turn & and follow along as I read Ezekiel 28:11-16. [READ]

Though we as Americans don't often read or think in this dual-reference way, it was not abnormal for a prophecy to do so.

And these verses clearly describe someone greater than the king of Tyre who lived far before Tyre existed because he's said to be in Eden the garden of God on the mountain of God at creation.

And he's said to be created perfect as an anointed cherub, which is an angel who had some guardian role.

Yet this angel was exalted in pride & fell into sin though in the garden.

Turn to Isaiah 14 to see more about this fallen angel we know as Satan and the devil and as the serpent in the garden.

Follow along as I read Isaiah 14:12-15. [READ]

These verses highlight the pride of the devil in his high position shining brightly as verses 13-14 quote him as saying, I, I, I, I, with a focus on himself in his pride.

That pride translated to rebellion which then spread lies and error to humanity as we find recorded in Genesis 3.

So turn to Genesis 3 & let's follow along in the beginning of history after Satan fell from God's good creation.

Follow along as I read Genesis 3:1-7. [READ]

You see here the appeal to human pride & the rebellion against God & the lies and error and the start of strife and evil.

Satan sewed error and lied to Eve to trick her as he appealed to the pride of being like God and thereby rebelling against God.

This was Satan's spread of darkness to humanity.

So we say Satan started strife, pride, rebellion, lies, error & all evil.

We could prove this further from other Scriptures like John 8:44 where Jesus called the devil the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning.

It is obvious from John 8:44 and other passages that Jesus believed that Satan was the origin of evil in the world.

If we know that Satan started strife, pride, rebellion, lies, error and all evil, shouldn't it warn us against those things?

For example, when our society promotes rebellion as cool, shouldn't this truth lead us to resist rebellion as a lie of the devil?

Listen young people—when you feel that urge to resist God's authority through His Word and His people or through your parents or others, realize that is most likely a satanic urge.

It's not that Satan is personally seizing you at that moment, but it is true that rebellion against God's good authority in your life is a devilish desire that should not be taken lightly.

We need to realize who we are really following in such things.

And when society teaches that pride is the path to success, we should fight that error with the truth that pride caused the fall & is the root sin.

Similarly, I remind myself and my kids when we're dealing with telling the truth that Satan is the father of lies.

So we dare not think that deception or dishonesty can coexist with devotion to Christ.

Do not lie—lying is following the devil.

But in contrast to these wiles of the devil, we should treasure the opposite paths as the true way to follow Christ.

That should teach us to love peace & humility & submission & honor for authority & honesty & truth & wisdom & goodness.

We should seek after these virtues and values and be wise in what is good as we learned in Romans 16:19 last week.

We're helped with hope in that pursuit by knowing that the devil has already been and will finally be defeated.

And that brings us to our 2<sup>nd</sup> point today that we'll start seeing in Genesis 3 while we're still open to that beginning passage.

If we admit the reality that everything in this world is not right, then the one messing it up needs to be stopped.

And that one behind all the evil, who started it and whose work in the world is continuing it and promoting it, must be conquered.

The Good News is that Satan has been and will be defeated.

That leads to our 2<sup>nd</sup> point this morning—point #2—Satan loses at the beginning, in history, at the cross and in eternity.

#1—Satan started strife, pride, rebellion, lies, error & all evil.

#2—Satan loses at the beginning, in history, at the cross, & in eternity.

I know these are long points, but I'm covering a lot of ground.

Look back at Genesis 3 & we'll skip Adam & Eve hiding & blame-shifting & how the curse messed up roles & relationships & more.

But let's read verses 14-15. [READ]

In God's curse on humanity, He also gave us hope.

In giving judgment, God also promised mercy.

In giving people over to the effects of sin, God also promised a Deliverer to come who would conquer sin by crushing Satan.

That's the first blush of the Gospel in Genesis 3:15 that's pictured in the words of the promise in Romans 16:20.

So much is contained in this curse that the woman's Seed will crush the head of the serpent though the serpent will bruise Him on the heel.

A woman technically does not have a seed, but the woman is promised a Seed as a hint at the Virgin Birth of Jesus.

A blow to the heel does not signal the end, but a blow to the head does.

Satan did bruise Jesus at the cross, but Jesus rose again and the cross became part of His victory to certify Satan as the loser.

In Satan's apparent early triumph to plunge humanity into sin, he was still the loser who was cursed with certain defeat.

Though Satan thought he would lead the great rebellion, he was subject to God's sovereign rule & was always the loser.

When he thought he won by leading humanity into sin, he actually opened the door for God's gracious plan of redemption for God.

And God thwarted and overturned Satan's devices all throughout history to show that God alone is wise and exalted.

Think of the biblical story of Job.

God brought Job's name up to Satan and Satan mocked Job's faithfulness and basically asked God to test and prove it.

Since Satan could not act outside of what God allowed, God set the boundaries of what Satan could do to test Job.

And God used that testing to prove Job's faithfulness and to again leave Satan out as the loser.

Satan is always subject to God, only allowed to do what God has already planned to turn for good purposes.

So Satan loses at the beginning and in history.

And the NT assures us that Satan loses at the cross and in eternity.

In John 16:11 when Jesus promised the Spirit's convicting work, He noted that the ruler of this world has been judged.

That ruler of this world system is the devil—God has allowed Satan to work in the fallen world until God brings final judgment.

Yet the judgment is sure—it has been earned & will be done.

Though Satan entered Judas to orchestrate Jesus' betrayal and crucifixion, Satan still lost at the cross.

Turn to Colossians 2:13-15 & let's read that. [READ]

The rulers and authorities are the demonic forces in the world and verse 15 says Jesus conquered them publicly in His death on the cross.

Jesus accomplished victory over sin and death at the cross.

So Satan lost at the cross and that's certified by the resurrection.

Turn to Ephesians 1:20-23 & read that. [READ]

Jesus won over all over powers and He granted that victory to His people in the church where He functions as our Head.

As 1<sup>st</sup> John 3:8 says, the Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil.

So Satan lost at the cross & in the resurrection & he will never win.

Romans 8:31-39 notes that nothing and no one—not angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor any other created thing—will be able to separate Christians from God's love in Christ.

As Revelation 12:10-11 mentions, Jesus has won the war in heaven and Satan the accuser of the brethren has been thrown down.

Revelation 20 says he will be bound in the pit for a thousand years and then finally and eternally being thrown into the lake of fire after his final foray of rebellion against God.

And by the way, Revelation 20:2 is where we find this evil enemy called Satan, the devil, the dragon and the serpent of old.

So we know the enemy at the beginning is judged in the end by whichever of those names he is called.

Here's the point—Jesus wins and Satan loses.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:25 says Christ must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

And the reason Romans 16:20 says God will crush Satan under “your” feet—meaning under the feet of Christians—is because we are in Christ and He gives us what He has earned.

Now turn back to Romans 16:20 and let's read it again with all that we've referenced in mind—Romans 16:20. [READ]

The God of peace will do this—it is promised and certain because Satan loses at the beginning, in history, at the cross and in eternity.

And God is called the God of peace here because He will bring an end to all the unrest and havoc that Satan started.

God's peace contrasts with the dissensions and hindrances against the truth that are warned about in Romans 16:17-18.

The God who brings reconciliation in Christ to those who are at war with Him is the One who assures this final victory.

He is the God who heals broken relationships & repairs broken hearts.

He is the God of peace & the fullness of His victory will come.

So in the context of Romans 16:20, that reminds us not to be lured by evil because evil's head is crushed in Christ.

Satan has been defeated and he is a loser, so don't follow him.

The church will experience that full victory that has been secured.

We begin to experience it now increasingly and we will fully and finally experience it in the end when Christ comes again.

And that final experience is what 'soon' refers to in this verse.

The phrase for "soon" is translated 'quickly' or 'swiftly' in Acts 12:7 & 22:18 and that's the idea is has here.

The related adverb refers to Christ coming quickly in Revelation 22:7, 12, & 20.

So the idea is HOW this victory will come, not WHEN it will come.

We think of 'soon' or 'shortly' as mainly telling us when something will happen and that could be the case.

But the idea of this word in verse 20 is how this victory will come—it will come quickly.

It could come at any time back then and at any time still now.

We don't know—but we do know that it will come quickly when it does come so we always need to be ready.

The phrase can even mean unexpectedly even as other NT passages speak of Christ's return coming unexpectedly.

We know that Christ's coming could be any time.

So we need to live prepared, eagerly awaiting this final assured victory of Christ and His people over Satan and all evil.

2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 3 predicted that scoffers will come questioning this, mocking the delay as if God has never intervened in time and never will.

But God is not constrained by time and His patience does not undermine the certainty of His promise.

He will bring the end—He will culminate His final victory—He will crush Satan under the feet of His people.

So Romans 16:20 is a promise to give us hope not to give up even when everything around us seems like Satan is winning.

It's a promise that tells us not to cave in to the evil & not to stop caring about truth because the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet.

And here again we see that Christians don't need to cast spells to defeat the devil.

The devil has already been defeated and we simply need to believe that truth, claim that victory in Christ, and live in the Spirit's power.

If you read James 4:7 and 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:8-9, you see that we resist the devil by humbly submitting to God.

And if you read passages on spiritual warfare like Ephesians 6, you find the emphasis on the truth as our weapon and protection.

As 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:4-6 describes, when Satan has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, the method to rescue them is by preaching and living the Gospel before them.

As Romans 1:16, the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

And the strongholds that 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 10:3-5 mention are ideas raised up against the knowledge of Christ.

So the method given in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 10:3-5 is to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

The battle is about truth and error in thought and action.

So believe the truth that Satan loses at the beginning, in history, at the cross, and in eternity.

And for further hope in living that true of victory in this messed up world, verse 20 ends with a prayer for God's grace.

Until the final victory is complete, Christians are promised grace.

Paul wished the grace of our Lord Jesus to be with them.

And that gives us a 3<sup>rd</sup> and final point for today—point #3—God's grace in Christ is greater than any enemy.

We've said #1, that Satan started strife, pride, rebellion, lies, error, and all evil; and #2, that Satan loses at the beginning, in history, at the cross, and in eternity.

Yet Satan is the great enemy our souls who led our race into rebellion.

So it is wondrous to know and recall that God's grace in Christ is greater than any enemy.

So we close with that as point #3—God's grace in Christ is greater than any enemy.

We highlight that God's grace in Christ is greater than any enemy because Paul followed the promise of victory over Satan with this wish of grace in verse 20.

Paul wished for the grace of our Lord Jesus to be with them.

Jesus is OUR Lord to all who turn from sin to bow the knee to Him as Lord and trust Him as their gracious Savior.

Jesus has lived perfectly, died sacrificially and risen victoriously to rescue His people from sin, death, and the devil.

And to those who trust Him, He will forever give grace.

Grace is unmerited favor; it's getting the opposite of what we deserve.

When we deserved punishment, God gives forgiveness.

When we deserve for God to give up on us, He perseveres with us.

When we deserve nothing good, He gives all the goodness that Christ has earned and will forever give us Himself.

That's grace and it only comes through our Lord Jesus.

So if you've never turned from your way of living to follow Him, then I beg you to come to Him for grace today.

You have a real enemy of your soul in Satan as he uses the world to feed your mind lies and to pull your flesh into evil.

And you will face eternal punishment if you do not flee the devil and his influence to come to faith in Jesus Christ.

But if you do come to Christ, then you can have grace.

You can have what Jesus deserves and has earned in His life, death and resurrection rather than what you or I deserve.

In Christ is full and final victory now and forever.

#1—Satan started strife, pride, rebellion, lies, error, & all evil.

#2—Satan loses at the beginning, in history, at the cross, & in eternity.

But, #3, God's grace in Christ is greater than any enemy.

So come to Christ and gladly persevere in following Him even when persecution comes & troubles overwhelm you & enemies assault you.



Don't get sucked into the devil's deceit and dominion and end up empty and headed for hell.

That's what he wants for you—so don't give him that pleasure.

Turn from his path and gladly follow Christ continually.

And when you are tempted, trust and serve the conquering Christ and not the defeated devil.

Remember the promise of Romans 16:20 and sing the words of Martin Luther's hymn to refresh you.

Though some often miss it, much of Martin Luther's hymn "A Mighty Fortress" is actually about our enemy the devil and how Jesus and His Word give us victory and security to run to.

Listen to these words and think on them as we close.

The first stanza goes like this...

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;  
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.

To be sure my kids got that when they were young, when we sung this, we would stop here and say, "That's the devil."

The devil is our ancient foe who seeks our sad woe & whose craft & power are great & armed with hate & whose equal is not on earth.

So we are in trouble if we trust in ourselves because only Christ Jesus is the man who can give us victory.

That's why the second stanza of the hymn says this...

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.

Lord Sabaoth means Lord of hosts, the Lord of all the armies of heaven, and He is Christ Jesus who will win.

So the third and fourth stanzas apply that hope like this...

And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us:  
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him.  
That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who with us sideth:  
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;  
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still,  
His kingdom is forever.

The prince of darkness, Satan, our enemy, is a loser.

For lo, his doom is sure—the devil's doom is sure.

In Christ, we can live new life by the Spirit and we win even if enemies take this mortal life from us.

Those are truths that can sustain us in whatever we face.

I pray you are encouraged knowing that the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

Pray with me as we close.