

**You Have Authority!**  
**Colossians 2:6-15**  
**Argyle – 10/15/17 – Implications of Our Life in Christ**

**Introduction to Worship**

We come this morning to the end of our short series on the implications of our life in Christ. As you come to worship this morning, what is it about your relationship with Christ that you are most celebrating this morning?

**Introduction to Scripture**

33 years ago I heard a sermon in a chapel service at Gordon-Conwell that continues to speak to me today. The speaker was a man from India who I had never heard of before and whose name I don't remember today. He preached on these words from Ephesians 2. "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, <sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe."(Ephesians 2:18-19) Several times during the sermon he stopped and said, "Do you know you are a rich person?"

He told a story about Queen Elizabeth of England. When Elizabeth was a young girl she was staying at the family estate out in the country. She and a friend went for a long walk and got lost. So they stopped to ask for directions at a house near the estate. Knowing that the place they were looking for belonged to the royal family, the man said "Who are you that you want to go to that place?" Elizabeth said, "Who we are is not

that important, but my father is the king?” Your heavenly Father is the King. He has given you “hope” for the future and a “glorious inheritance” and “incomparably great power?” Do you know you are a rich person?

This sermon series on the four primary implications of our life in Christ is intended to remind us of how rich we are. You’ve been accepted by God which means you’ve been reconciled to him through your faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection. You’ve been delivered from the power of sin so you can live an increasingly holy life. You are not alone because the Holy Spirit has come to take up residence in your life. You are a rich person. And it gets better. You have authority. We are going to start this morning in Colossians 2:6-15. (Read) (Pray)

### **We Have an Enemy!**

We have an enemy! This morning we are talking about the spiritual authority God has given us over Satan and the spiritual powers and authorities. I know that this talk of the devil makes some of you uncomfortable. Polls show that a vast majority of us believe in the existence of God, but significantly less of us believe in the existence of Satan. Belief in Satan, also known as “the devil,” has the feeling of superstition to some of us. It goes against our rational thinking. If you are a skeptic about the existence of the devil and other evil spiritual forces, I am glad you are here this morning to consider the Scripture passages that we are looking at.

In his book *The Screwtape Letters*, (picture) C.S. Lewis says that we make two opposite, yet equally destructive errors regarding the devil. The first error is to not

believe in his existence of the devil. In our scientific age the idea of a supernatural being who is the enemy of God is seen as a product of primitive times. Rudolf Bultmann who was an influential 20<sup>th</sup> century author wrote, “It is impossible to use electric lights and the wireless, and to avail ourselves of the modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time believe in the New Testament world of demons and spirits.” I think Bultmann presents the choice pretty clearly. On the one hand we can trust our rational human reason and on the other we can trust the Scriptures. Those two aren’t always opposed to one another, but when they are, which one do we choose?

The other error about the devil that Lewis points out is “to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest” in him. The person who makes this mistake sees demons as the cause of all their problems and the world’s problems. A relative of mine once developed a sore throat after being out late at night with her friends several nights in a row. She asked me to pray against the demon of sore throats. I told her to get a good night’s sleep.

Some of us don’t believe we have a spiritual enemy. Others of us are preoccupied with him. Both are problems and ignore the teaching of Scripture. In *Discipleship Essentials* (picture) Greg Ogden points out a third error Christians make about the devil. We say that we believe in the reality of the devil, but that belief has no practical effect on our lives. So when we are confronted with challenges we fail to recognize the enemy behind those challenges. As a result we fail to access the spiritual

weapons that God has made available to us for fighting these spiritual battles. I suspect there are many of us here who fall into this last category.

So whether you are actually skeptical about the existence of the devil and demons or functionally skeptical, I would invite you to consider these questions from Greg Ogden. “How do we account for the heinous evil of ethnic cleansing carried out by the Serbians against the Muslims in Bosnia? How do we explain the number of pastors who have sacrificed their call to the temptation of sexual infidelity? How do we understand the disunity and dissension in many churches who are bringing shame on the name of the Christ they follow? How do we make sense of the rapid disintegration of marriages where the divorce rate has escalated from 11% in the 1950s to over 50% today? How do we justify our own self-destructive behavior when we violate our own beliefs about what is right, decent and virtuous?” We would add, “How do understand a man who would kill almost 60 people at a concert in Las Vegas.” They are analyzing the Stephen Paddock’s brain and maybe it will show something, but ultimately behind that kind of action is a very real spiritual enemy. There are often human explanations behind these evil actions, but those human explanations don’t tell the whole story. We have an enemy. If we fail to recognize that, we will only come up with partial and short term solutions.

### **Our Enemy Has Been Defeated**

The second thing I want to point out is that our enemy has been defeated. In Colossians 2 Paul talked about two things that Jesus accomplished on the cross. He

wrote, “When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, <sup>14</sup> having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

First, Jesus “canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.” The “written code” is a reference to the list of our sins that Jesus died for on the cross. Imagine a list of all of the sins you have ever committed and will ever commit. Now imagine that list nailed to the cross and covered by the blood of Jesus. What a great image to help us understand our forgiveness. Jesus canceled the written code that was against us because of our sin. All our sins have been forgiven.

The second thing Jesus accomplished through his death on the cross is he “disarmed the powers and authorities.” What does that mean? Paul referred to these “powers and authorities” in his letter to the Ephesians when he wrote, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”(Ephesians 6:12) The “powers and authorities” are Satan and the spiritual forces of evil. Through his death on the cross, Jesus defeated them.

Paul used an image that would have been familiar to the folks he was writing to on Colossae. It was of a Roman victory parade. When the Roman army would return

home after a successful military campaign, they would march through the city in triumphal procession. First would come the victorious Roman soldiers and then the defeated prisoners. The Roman generals wanted to assure their people that they had nothing to fear from these defeated soldiers. Paul is making the same point with us in using this image. We have nothing to fear from the evil powers and authorities because they have been defeated and we have been given spiritual authority over them. In I John 5, John wrote these encouraging words. “We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them.”

Satan can't harm us because Christ defeated him on the cross, but he can wound us if we are not careful. John Bunyan illustrates this in (picture) *The Pilgrim's Progress*. *Bunyan* pictures the powers of darkness as lions chained on short leashes on either side of the road to the Celestial City. These lions can maul travelers who wander from the middle of the path, but cannot touch those who stay in the center. The spiritual warfare we are engaged in is not a conflict in which the sides are equivalent or one in which the outcome is unsure. The forces of darkness have been defeated and are so restrained by the victory of Christ that they are unable to do anything which does ultimate damage to God's glory and kingdom. However, we can get ourselves in trouble if we do not rely on Christ's work and power and submit to his Lordship.

## **Our Enemy Must be Resisted**

We have an enemy. Our enemy has been defeated. Our enemy must be resisted. Satan was defeated on the cross, but until Christ returns and his victory is complete, Satan is capable of doing a lot of damage. The end is not in doubt, but there will be struggles in the present.

James wrote, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."(James 4:7) Peter adds, "Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. <sup>9</sup>Resist him, standing firm in the faith..." (I Peter 5:8 & 9) Paul wrote, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup>Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." (Ephesians 6:10-11)

In his autobiography, *A General's Life*, General Omar Bradley writes of his first meeting with a young William Westmoreland. Westmoreland would go on to become the commander of the American forces in Vietnam. At the time, Westmoreland was a cadet first captain in the West Point Class of 1936. During the summer war games Westmoreland commanded a battalion defending a hill. He performed so poorly that the hill was overrun in this mock battle. Bradley pulled the young field officer aside and gave him this advice. "Mr. Westmoreland, look back at that hill. Look at it from the standpoint of the enemy. It is fundamental to put yourself in the position of the enemy."

In order to resist our spiritual enemy, we need look at things from his perspective. Paul tells us to put on the full armor of God so that we can take our stand against the devil's schemes. What are the devil's schemes and which ones is he most likely to use against you? Busyness is a scheme Satan often uses in my life to distract me from what God is doing. Discouragement is another scheme he uses against me. There are certain temptations I am more susceptible to than others. In order to resist the devil's influence in our lives we need to be aware of his schemes and to put on the full armor of God - the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith with which we can extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one, the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, the belt of truth and with our feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

Our enemy must be resisted, not in our own strength, but in the Lord's mighty power using the spiritual weapons that he has made available to us.

### **Conclusion**

Do you know that you are a rich person? You are, so stop living an impoverished life. Stop living as if you have to earn God's acceptance. Stop living as if you have no power to resist temptation. Stop living as if you are on your own to live the Christian life. Stop living as if you are still subject to Satan's control. You are a rich person. Live like it!