

The Cross From Jesus' Perspective

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 14:28-31
Preached on: Sunday, April 19, 2015

In the Providence of God, we now find ourselves in John 14. I would like to examine verses 28 through 31 this morning under the heading "The Cross From Jesus' Perspective." If we're honest, we must admit that we all struggle with being self-centered. By nature, we insist that the world orbit around us. The last I checked, there is no such thing as a selfless child. You go back there with the toddlers and you will discover that very quickly. In fact, you spend much time around adults, you'll discover the same thing. And it's also true that we all struggle with our faith at some level, that unwavering trust in the character and promises of God. We don't always find ourselves fully convinced that what God is doing is really his perfect work in us in every circumstance; we sometimes question his timing; we prefer that he would do things our way on our schedule and so forth. Our selfishness, unfortunately, makes it hard for us to see things from another person's perspective and even harder to see things from God's perspective. This often results in our failure to trust him. It often results in our failure to love him and this is precisely what was going on with the disciples in the text we have before us and for this reason, Jesus is now going to tenderly rebuke his disciples in this portion of his farewell address.

Now remember, the disciples were deeply troubled with all of this talk of Jesus leaving them. They had left everything to follow him. He had provided everything for them for essentially 3 years: all of their physical needs, all their spiritual and emotional needs. All of their hopes and dreams were anchored in Jesus, their long awaited Messiah. Every waking moment, they were thinking about the kingdom, the glory of the kingdom and their place of honor and service in that kingdom. So naturally, they are bewildered. They are deeply troubled over Jesus' prediction of his death. They are basically saying, "Surely this cannot be. What about me?" and their rabid commitment to self really prevented them from seeing the big picture. They were especially blind to what Jesus' death meant to him.

So in chapter 14, verse 1, you will recall Jesus commanded them, "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me." He went on to tell them that he's going to prepare a place for them and come back again and receive them unto himself. He has assured them that because they know him and are united to him spiritually, that they too will come to the Father. He has promised to send another helper like him, the Holy Spirit, who will comfort them and strengthen and guide them. And through the indwelling Spirit of God, he has promised that they will be able to experience the peace of God's presence deep within their soul, a peace that transcends circumstances. He's even promised them that he is going to be resurrected from the dead. But despite the abundant consolation that Jesus lavishes upon them, they simply could not extricate themselves from their self-centered preoccupation with what Jesus' departure would mean for them. They could not

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see that their loss would ultimately mean their gain and they certainly could not see that their loss would mean Jesus' gain.

So Jesus rebukes them, again, in verse 27 and he says, "let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid." Then he went on to add the text that we will examine this morning, beginning in verse 28,

28 "You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29 Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe. 30 I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; 31 but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here."

Here the Spirit of God reveals to us the divine perspective of Jesus' death on the cross and thus the title of my discourse to you, "The Cross From Jesus' Perspective." Now, as believers, we all have a clear sense of what Jesus' death on the cross means to us. We know that through that our sins were paid in full, we have been purchased unto God, we have been declared righteous, we're at peace with God and all those wonderful things. But what did the cross mean to Jesus? What was his perspective on what was about to transpire? In an effort to glean the fullness of Jesus' words here, I suggest that we examine them under 4 categories; here we can see that from Jesus' perspective his death on the cross would accomplish 4 things. 1. His glory would be restored. 2. His word would be confirmed. 3. His enemy would be defeated. Finally, his love would be manifested. And after we examine this, I wish to address some very practical warnings about the enemy that Christ has ultimately defeated, namely Satan, but an enemy that is still very much at war against Christ and all who belong to him.

So, let's begin with verse 28, "You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I." Obviously, their failure to trust in him was a failure in their love for him. Like us, they could only focus on themselves, not on the magnificent benefits Christ's departure would bring to him. So first, Jesus knew that because of his death on the cross, 1. His glory would be restored. This is something the disciples could not see at this point. Again, "If you loved me, you would have rejoiced." Now, Jesus knew that they loved him. He had already spoken about this but obviously their love was deficient. It was clouded by their love for self. They could only see their loss, not his gain. They were only focused on their sorrow, not his joy.

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So, "If you love me," he said, "you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father." And where is that? It is that place of perfect fellowship. A place of inexpressible glory. In fact, in just a few hours, Jesus will go into the garden. He will come before the Father in anguish and in prayer and he will express the longing of his heart to be with his Father. In John 17:1, we read what he prays, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You." Then in verse 5, "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." You see, this should have brought great joy to the hearts of the disciples but they didn't think about this because they were too self-absorbed.

He also says that, "You would have rejoiced because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I," in other words, he is in that place of inexpressible and undiminished glory unlike the place where I am at in my incarnate state of humiliation. I must add here that Jesus is not suggesting that the Father is greater than him in essence or in being as some heretical groups would have us believe. Jesus has previously stated, made it abundantly clear that as the second person of the Triune Godhead, he possesses all of the excellencies of divinity. He is co-equal. He is co-eternal. He is consubstantial with the Father, that is, he's of the same substance, the same essence, of the same nature. In John 10:30, he says, "I and the Father are one." So here Jesus is acknowledging his role as servant who came to do the will of his Father and at the same time now, he's exalting the one who has sent him. Moreover, Jesus knew that his death would be followed by his resurrection, by his exaltation. And he only wished that the disciples' love for him would exceed their preoccupation with their own pain and somehow rejoice with him in what was about to happen.

So first, Jesus knew that because of his death on the cross his glory would be restored. Secondly, he also knew that his word would be confirmed. Verse 29, "Now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe." Believe in what? "Believe that I am the Messiah." You see, he knew that their faith was beginning to waver a bit on this essential truth. They weren't looking for a suffering Messiah, they were looking for a conquering Messiah so they could not harmonize in their mind a Messiah that is going to die, that is going to leave them. So their faith begins to waver a bit, in fact, Jesus repeatedly rebuked them on the matter of their faith causing them to say in Luke 17:5, "Increase our faith." I can certainly identify with that. I might also add that fulfilled prophecy is perhaps the most profound measure of the veracity and the inspiration of Scripture. There is no other document in all the world other than the Bible that makes so many prophetic claims and so many claims that have been proven precisely which basically verifies the fact that it is the inspired word of the sovereign God who wrote it.

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Now, Jesus used this same phrase, this idea of, "I've told you before it happens so that when it happens you may believe." He used the same phrase when he warned the disciples about his betrayal at the hands of Judas in John 13:19. He says, "From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He." Jesus knew that once his predictions came true, their wavering faith would be greatly strengthened. You will also recall in John 2:19-21, Jesus predicted his death and resurrection, again, concepts that the disciples just could not grasp. And later in verse 22 he says, "When He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken." It's like, "Oh, now we get it! Now we understand what he was talking about. Isn't it great that he told us these things before they happened?"

Later in chapter 16, beginning in verse 1, Jesus predicted the persecution that would come upon the disciples. Then in verse 4 he says to them, "But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them." What a great way to strengthen their faith. Yet despite all of these warnings, it's virtually impossible for the disciples to fully embrace the truth of what Jesus promised pertaining to his death and his resurrection. However, John records a wonderful scene that shows how Jesus' word was later confirmed in the life of John as well as Peter. In chapter 20, verses 8 and 9, John says that when he and Peter went and discovered the empty tomb, "They saw and believed for as yet they did not understand the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead."

So Jesus knew that because of the cross, the mysterious and magnificent truths of which he spoke would all eventually be fulfilled and therefore confirm his word and ultimately strengthen the faith of all who believe. But thirdly, Jesus also knew that because of his death on the cross, his enemy would be defeated. Verse 30, "I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me." Now, Jesus is going to go on and discuss a variety of things with them as they make their way out of Jerusalem up to the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, but Jesus knew that in an hour or so, Satan would be bringing his entourage, so to speak, to arrest him. Maybe in a few hours but certainly it was coming. He also knew that Satan had just about an hour before entered Judas. So Jesus knew Satan's plan to arrest him. He knew about the betrayal that was coming. He knew that the members of the Sanhedrin were already salivating to get their hands on him. He knew that the temple police and the Roman soldiers had already been assembled or they were being assembled. He knew that their torches and their lanterns had been lit. He knew that their weapons had been readied. He knew that all of the preparations were set in place so that they could hunt down this vicious criminal, Jesus Christ. So indeed, the ruler of the world is coming. Beloved, it's as though Jesus could hear the wings of that awful dragon swooping through the air. It's as

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though he could hear his talons clanging and clicking on the cobblestones. It's as though he could smell his awful stench. If you think about it, intrinsic to his consummate perfections as the holy one of Israel, was his omniscient ability to detect evil.

So indeed, the ruler of the world is coming but notice, he says, "He has nothing in Me." A double negative in the original language denoting it is an emphatic declaration, "He has nothing in Me. Nothing. End of discussion." This was actually a Greek translation of a Hebrew idiom meaning, "He has no justifiable legal claim on me. There is no justification for what is about to happen to me." Jesus was the sinless Son of God. He said that he was not of this world. He had never sinned. In fact, we know that Pilate will later say to him, "I find no guilt in him." So Jesus is assuring the disciples beforehand that the enemy has no legal claim on him that would justify what was about to happen. So this was also a word of consolation to the disciples, even though they're not going to fully understand it until after his death, after his resurrection and after the Spirit of God comes upon them at Pentecost.

Now, an important note: this is the second of 3 references in John's Gospel where John refers to Satan as the ruler of the world. We know in 2 Corinthians 4, Paul refers to him as the God of this age and the God of this world. John will later on say that the whole world lies in the lap of the evil one and so forth. And to be sure, Satan rules this evil world in a limited way but you must be careful, it is the testimony of Scripture that God is the sovereign ruler over all, including Satan. In the Providence of God, Satan has been allowed to be a temporary usurper. As Luther put it, "Satan is God's ape," and God allows him to do what he does until the Lord Jesus Christ returns as King of kings. So Satan does rule but only in the sense of ruling sinful men who unwittingly and sometimes wittingly obey him.

So he plots to thwart the purposes of God through his diabolical deeds, especially through the temptation and the possession of evil men and women. Scripture teaches us that originally the devil was created a perfect angelic being, one that served God but because of pride, he wanted to be equal to God in status and authority so God removed him from his lofty position along with a third of the angels who chose to follow him in his rebellion. So what's fascinating is to realize that before man was ever created, there was a spiritual war going on between God and Satan and it continues to this very day along with Satan's demonic horde.

As you know, at the beginning of human history, Satan chose to launch an attack against God by challenging his authority over God's first created human beings that were created to give God glory. And after Satan's successful effort to tempt Adam and Eve to sin and lead the world into sin, God promised that that warfare would continue throughout

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redemptive history but that ultimately he would gain the victory, that God would vanquish his fiendish foe. We read about this promise in Genesis 3:15. There it says, "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed." "Your seed" refers to Satan and unbelievers. Remember, Jesus said in John 8:44 that the unbelievers are the devil's children. So he's going to put enmity between "your seed" in other words Satan and unbelievers, and "her seed," which speaks of Christ Jesus, a descendent of Eve and all who belong to him through faith. "He shall bruise you," in other words, Satan, "on the head," in other words, the seed of Eve, the Lord Jesus Christ, is going to give Satan a fatal blow. "And you shall bruise him," in other words, Satan will bruise Jesus, the Son of God, "on the heel." So Satan could only cause Christ to suffer temporary injury but he could not defeat him. This is often called the proto-gospel, the first Gospel. And it is good news, is it not, that among all the magnificent blessings that belong to us through faith in Christ and his work on the cross, one of the greatest blessings is that fatal blow that he delivered to Satan along with sin and death that came from him. John 12:31, Jesus spoke of his impending death and he said this, "Now is the judgment of this world, now the ruler of this world will be cast out." And years later, John would reflect upon this aspect of Christ's incarnation, reflect upon his death, and he would say in 1 John 3:8, "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil."

Dear friends, the implications of this for us as believers is staggering. Because we are united to Christ, the victory is ours. Paul tells us that God "has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son," Colossians 1:13. However, you must understand that we cannot experience the fullness of that triumph just yet. The battle still rages. We live in a tension between the "already" and the "not yet," alright? To be sure, Jesus' death on the cross and his bodily resurrection was Satan's death blow. He has disarmed principalities and powers. Remember, he made a public spectacle of them; he triumphed over them in Colossians 2:15. But the final triumph awaits his return so today we live between the cross and the crown. Today Peter warns us, "to be of sober spirit. Be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." It is for this reason the Apostle Paul goes to great lengths to warn us to, "put on the full armor of God that you might be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil," Ephesians 6:11. We're going to look at some of this in a few minutes.

So Jesus knows that the horrific hatred of the enemy was about to be vented upon the seed of the woman and he also knew that he was about to give Satan that fata blow so he makes this amazing statement, "The ruler of the world is coming and he has nothing in Me; but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here." In other words, "Satan has no legal claim

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against me, no justification for what is about to happen, nevertheless, I will not resist him. I am going to go forth boldly, I'm going to allow his cohorts to come and to arrest me and the reason I will do this is so that the world may know that I love the Father."

Jesus knew that because of his death on the cross, his glory would be restored, his word would be confirmed, his enemy would be defeated, and finally, his love would be manifested. Jesus will voluntarily lay down his life and in John 10:18, he said, "This commandment I received from My Father." It's important for us to understand that Jesus' voluntary death manifested his love primarily for his Father and only secondarily for us. If I can put it this way: we are only secondary to God's work of redemption. So often we tend to see ourselves as kind of the center of gravity around which the whole Godhead orbits, that we are just so special. But I don't want you to think that there was some deficiency within the Triune Godhead, between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that could only be remedied by our salvation. Scripture tells us that before time began, there was an arranged marriage. God chose a spotless bride, pure and holy, to give to his Son, the elect of his grace. Then according to Scripture, we see that he set this plan into motion to reconcile some but not all unto himself. In 2 Timothy 1:9 we read that he, "saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." Literally, before time began.

You see, while we are all debtors to God's grace, while we as believers are all the objects of his eternal love, we are only incidental to the purposes of his great plan of redemption. Beloved, you must understand: he did not save us primarily for our glory but for his. The divine plan of redemption is essentially about inter-Trinitarian love and inter-Trinitarian glory. We are only secondary in all of that. To put it differently: in eternity past, the Father promised the Son a love gift, a bride, that of a redeemed humanity. And when all of redemptive history is consummated, we read ultimately that the Son is going to return that gift back to the Father as a reciprocal expression of his love. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:24, "when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power." Verse 28, "When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all."

Now, back to John's narrative. As Jesus yields to Satan and the satanic acts of men, he does so because of his love for the Father, a love that is manifested by his perfect obedience to do the will of his Father. His Father has commanded him to go and to die, to redeem and so forth. I might add that obedience is always the test of love. Obedience is always what validates genuine saving faith. Not some profession of faith, not walking an aisle, praying a prayer. Those things may or may not be indicative of true faith but what

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really proves faith is a person who is obedient to the word and the will of God. And even his torturers are going to know down deep that Jesus' strange acquiescence, especially given his innocence, to all of these terrible things can only be explained by something far beyond humility. It can only be explained by a supernatural love, a love for his Father which he stated over and over and over again.

So he says, "but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here." And with this, they left the upper room, they exited the city. Geographically, they would have walked around the front part of the temple. They would have gone down the Kidron valley. They would have crossed the brook Kidron that would've already been running red with the blood of the sacrifices that were draining from the temple up above, a vivid reminder to the Lord Jesus of his blood that would be shed the next day. Then they would have made their way up the side of the Mount of Olives to one of their favorite places of seclusion called the garden of Gethsemane and there Jesus will pray, will sweat drops of blood and be arrested.

Now, I wish to leave that narrative at some level and use part of it as a catalyst to speak to you about this issue of spiritual warfare that I alluded to from what Jesus said concerning the ruler of this world and him knowing that he's coming. Once again, as I said earlier, Jesus' death on the cross and bodily resurrection was Satan's death blow but the final triumph awaits a future day. It waits his return and then when he returns, we will be able to fully realize our victory in Christ. Paul says in Romans 16:20, "The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly." We're waiting for the fruition of that. But today, we wrestle not against flesh and blood but powers and principalities.

There is a conflict, a very personal conflict going on between believers and Satan and his minions and we read about this in Ephesians 6. I wish you would turn there for a moment. While you're turning there, let me ask you the question: are you aware of this battle? Are your children aware of it? Now granted, a drunk can fall off of a horse on either side. One side of this horse is to see demons in everything and to blame everything on the devil but the other side of that horse is to believe that he is not around and that there is no war going on. The question is: are you aware that there is a battle? Do you take seriously the Spirit's command in 1 Peter 5:8 to, "be alert because our enemy, the devil, is seeking to devour us"? Do you take serious the fact that Satan has a very well organized, demonic horde and he has you on his hit-list? Are you aware that Satan and his minions watch this church intently? Are you aware that he is constantly trying to destroy me as your pastor and the elders? I could tell you stories that some of you might not believe and then I could tell you others that you probably would believe. He wants to destroy this church. He wants to destroy you. He wants to destroy your children. He wants to destroy your marriage. And he is constantly scheming to do just that. He wants

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to make your life a mockery so that you will be miserable, so that you will be ineffective, so that you will not bear fruit and so that unsaved people will look at you and say, "Ha, look at what the Gospel did for that person. I want nothing to do with it."

Well, I believe the Spirit of God would have me address this issue briefly and the watershed passage on this is in Ephesians 6:10 through 20. Let me give you some background and I'm only going to hit the highlights but hopefully it will be enough to minister to your soul. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians is divided into 2 parts. You have the doctrinal followed by the practical; he builds upon the doctrinal with the practical. So he begins with the indicatives, those doctrinal declarations of what God has done for us in Christ and then he follows them with the imperatives, the practical truths concerning how we should live out our lives. By way of background, what we have is the saints in Ephesus had been saved out of a very demonic culture. Ephesus was the third-largest city in the Roman Empire. It was a hotbed for magicians and sorcerers and every imaginable kind of charlatan. The dominant religion was the cult of Artemis Ephesia which was a multi-breasted idol located in the Artemision which was a marble temple dedicated to the goddess Artemis. It measured 93,500 square feet. It was surrounded by 127 marble pillars that stood 60 feet high. It was a place of unimaginable debauchery and orgies and so forth and demonic worship. You will recall that when Paul brought the Gospel to Ephesus, many pagan idolaters believed and came to Christ. In Acts 19 we read that, "many of those who had practiced magic burned their books in the sight of all. They counted up the value and it totaled 50,000 pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed." The text goes on to say that so many folks stopped buying idols that a riot broke out because these guys weren't able to sell those things anymore. It was ruining the economy.

So Paul now comforts these Ephesian believers by reminding them in the first half of the book of Ephesians of who they are in Christ but then he addresses the very real spiritual battle that he knew that they faced, that he knew we all faced and that is the spiritual battle with Satan. So he has an imperative here that he builds on the indicative. Verse 10, "Finally," here it is, here's what you've got to do, folks, "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." In other words, "realize that you are at war and be constantly strengthened by him because you do not have the power to engage in this battle on your own." You've got to know that you are at war. You've got to know, dear friends, that his divine power is granted to us, all things pertaining to life and godliness. And so you must learn to constantly rehearse the truth of who Christ is and who you are in him and on this basis, depend upon his power, indeed, beg for it every single day or you will not stand. You must know that he is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think and then you will be able to stand your ground in the strength of his might.

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Verse 11, "put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." I ask you: what soldier goes into battle without his armor and without his weapon? A soldier that is about to get defeated. We are to put on the full armor of God which means to consciously appropriate all that God is and all that he has given us in Christ. Clothe yourself with all that God has supplied. He is your armor. Live every moment in oneness with him. Deliberately live in the light of his glory. Cultivate the virtues of Christ in your life. And on and on it goes.

Let me put it real practically: dear friend, if you are ignorant, worse yet, if you are indifferent to Bible doctrine, especially the truths of soteriology, the doctrines of salvation, then your armor is paper thin. I see this all the time. Let me give you a little quiz. Do you understand depravity? Grace? Election? Do you understand calling? Do you understand the atonement? Do you understand faith? Repentance? Conversion? Do you understand your union with Christ? Do you understand justification and regeneration and sanctification? Do you understand the perseverance of the saints? Do you understand glorification? For a lot of Christians, those words are almost meaningless and those are the ones that are going to suffer defeat because they're not wearing any armor. You're walking through ISIS territory wearing a bathing suit while you're playing video games on your smart phone. You're not only stupid, dear friends, you're defenseless and you're living in rebellion. I want you to hear that. That is to live in rebellion against a holy God who has commanded you to put on your armor. Why? So that you would be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. Stand firm does not mean so that you can rebuke demons, so that you can bind demons, so that you can cast out demons, so that you can topple fortresses and reclaim territories that demons have taken or so forth. Stand firm means so that you can hold your ground even under attack. So that you will not yield. So that you will not allow the enemy to have any part of you, occupy even the slightest part of your life. 1 Peter 5:8, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world." James says, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

Beloved, there is never a day that I do not go before the Lord and ask him to help me see where the next attack is coming on my mind and on my heart and on my family and on my church family. As a pastor, I'm a warrior and you need to be the same. I'm always engaged in the battle. I'm always looking for the next troublemaker or false teacher that the enemy is going to bring into this church. By the way, the main place to look for Satan is not in the culture, look for him in the church. I'm always looking to see who is going to be the next celebrity pastor or best-selling author that the enemy will use to spread lies to deceive souls. I'm always looking for the next church growth strategy that he will

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introduce to attract crowds and at the same time, eviscerate the Gospel. I'm always looking for who is going to be the next deceiver that the enemy will introduce to my family or popularize through the media to seduce my children. Who is going to be the next friend they will bring in their house, that the enemy will place there to destroy them. What's going to be the next fad or the next television series or the next electronic device that he will use to draw them away from Christ.

Beloved, if this is not your heart attitude, you are losing ground to the enemy. You are vulnerable. In fact, you're probably already suffering major defeat in your family because you don't know. You're not looking for those schemes of the devil which refers to cunning plans that he brings to ruin you. Satan is both brilliant and patient. He's constantly bringing false teachers to deceive you. There are a myriad of schemes that he uses. Some of them are designed especially for you and your family, for me and my family. You use different tactics to kill a bear than you do an elk. You do different tactics to catch a catfish than you do a crappie. The enemy knows what he must do to destroy you and me. He fills churches with tares. He causes unbelievers to become leaders in churches. They are ignorant. They are arrogant. They are ungodly men. I've seen him use the scheme of unforgiveness in this church. Paul warned about this in 2 Corinthians 2:11, we are to be forgiving in order "that no advantage be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes."

Some of you have been seduced by the temptations of sexual immorality through pornography. Some of you are being seduced because you are naïve and undiscerning about certain friends that you come in contact with. Some have been tricked into loving the world until you become like it. He has tempted some of you to become so busy and so broke you can't serve Christ. Satan is ingenious, dear friends. He lays these snares in the well-worn paths of our lusts. His favorite tactic is deception. We saw that in the garden. He causes us to question the goodness of God. He starts distorting the word. Before you know it, we don't really understand who God really is. The person and the work of Christ is maligned and then he uses persecution to make us think that God is no longer good and that he's not faithful. My friends, because of Satan's schemes, some of you resent authority. Some of you can't maintain relationships. Some of you complain about virtually everything. Because Satan has tempted you, some of you are hyper-vigilant to find fault in others and yet you can't see the log in your own eye. Some of you are physically and spiritually lazy. Some of you are so desperate for attention and affirmation you spend your whole life on Facebook. Some of you are oblivious to the fact that your children are undisciplined and on a path to self-destruction. And some of you refuse to acknowledge that your marriage is a sham. Therefore you don't realize the schemes of the enemy.

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The Cross From Jesus' Perspective

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 14:28-31

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Paul will go on to say that you've got to put on this armor, "gird up your loins with truth." In other words, be standing ready to fight at all times, constantly studying and applying the word of God, living out those truths by the power of the Spirit. He says, "Then put on the breastplate of righteousness." You've got to protect your heart, dear friends, against the assault of the enemy. So you have to rejoice in the imputed righteousness of Christ that is yours but also in the imparted righteousness of Christ. You have to live that out by the power of the Spirit. He says that you have to have "your feet shod with the preparation of the peace of the Gospel," which means that you are to always be ready to proclaim and to protect the Gospel lest you give ground to the enemy. He says that you need to, "take up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one." In other words, you have got to learn to trust in the Lord come what may and with that unwavering confidence, you will not be hit by those flaming arrows of doubt and discouragement and defeat. "Take up the helmet of salvation," in other words, understand who you are in Christ and live in light of those glorious promises so that the enemy cannot attack your mind. "Take up the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God," in other words, know how to effectively wield the word of God, that sword, both offensively and defensively. Then, "with all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit," in other words, by the help of the Spirit, go before the Lord with great confidence, knowing that ultimately the victory is yours but you need his strength and his wisdom and power lest you give way to the enemy.

You say, "Pastor, I am deficient in this area." You know, that's so good to hear. If that's the case, it is good that you would acknowledge that. Here's what you do: you go before the Lord and you repent. You ask him to help you to understand better these great truths. Get serious then about living and learning the word. Find someone to disciple you. We have all of these opportunities in this church and some of you don't take advantage of any of it and so your armor and your weapons, you're weak, you're vulnerable. So take advantage of these things and then be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. May the Spirit of God cause us to be sober to these truths lest we suffer defeat.

Let's pray together.

Father, we give you praise for your word because it speaks so clearly to our hearts, but Lord, because of our weakness, because of our flesh, we simply cannot live it out apart from the power of your Spirit so we plead for that power. We pray, Lord, that each one of us would re-examine our hearts, our lives, in light of what we've heard today that in our lives Christ might have the preeminence in every area. We give you thanks, we give you praise for the victory that is ours that we will one day celebrate for it is in Jesus' name that I pray. Amen.

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We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.

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