

Series: The Confident, Loving Church – week 25

CDOBC – beginning on 2/14/10

Title: “Realities of the Christian Life”

1 John 5:18-21 ~ September 12, 2010

OBJECTIVE: To help believers understand the spiritual battle between Satan and God – and how important our confidence in Christ is and how important our obedience to His commands are.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- Set-up help needed for baby shower – after 2nd service in rooms 1 & 2

Opening prayer

Turn to 1 John 5:18-21 – the concluding section of the first Epistle of the Apostle John. (Read passage)

The reality of Satan’s Kingdom vs. 19b

“...the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”

Lit. *The whole world in the wickedness lies.*

Satan does have a kingdom. Just because we can’t see it clearly or plainly doesn’t mean it’s not real.

Jesus talked about the reality of the world as Satan’s kingdom...

Matt. 12:26

“If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?”

God also has a kingdom...

Matt. 12:28

“But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

Jesus clearly believed and taught that we live in the midst of two kingdoms – the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God. Our difficulty comes not from a lack of information

from Scripture – but since these kingdoms are mostly invisible to us – we sometimes forget they exist.

(2 Kings 6:15-17 – Elisha and his servant – surrounded by God’s invisible army – Just because we can’t see the spiritual battles taking place, it doesn’t mean they don’t exist.)

But what is the significance for us of these truths? How does this affect our everyday life? The first significant thing we need to understand is that we live in the midst of evil.

The present evil age...

Galatians 1:4

“...the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age...”

Eph. 5:16

“...making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”

The significance for us is that we must recognize that we live in a world that is ruled by Satan. He is evil – and His kingdom is evil. The world is his domain – and the world’s values and system is under his control. This doesn’t mean that every non-believer is a Satan worshiper – but it means that every non-believer from the Satan worshiper to the person who is simply interested in being a good person and enjoying life – that they are acting according to Satan’s plan and desire. One of Satan’s primary objectives in his kingdom is to keep people from Christ. If he can deceive people into believing that if they live a good life, that God will accept them – then Satan wins! You see – Satan doesn’t have to make every person outwardly wicked and sinful – he simply needs to keep them disinterested in the Gospel, distracted from the Gospel - or confused by it – or thinking they don’t need the Gospel!

Another important reality for us to understand is:

The activity of Satan in this world...

2 Cor. 4:4

“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

Eph. 2:2

“...in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.” (“sons of disobedience” – other translations)

Satan has a 2-pronged approach. **First**, as I mentioned a few moments ago – he tries to make sure people ignore the Gospel or are distracted and disinterested in the Gospel. **Second**, he works more directly through certain people – whom Paul calls “sons of disobedience”. These would be those in our world who are actively and publically opposed to the things of God and actively trying to promote ideas and practices that are against Biblical and Christian principles.

But Satan does not have free run of this place. The greatest battle against the kingdom of darkness began with the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem – and the decisive battle was won as the nails were pounded in His hands and feet – as the spear was thrust into His side – and as He rose from the dead on Sunday morning.

The reality is that God’s kingdom is at war against Satan’s kingdom.

Jesus fought against Satan’s kingdom...

John 12:31

“...now the prince of this world will be driven out.”

John 14:30

“I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me...”

John 16:11

“...because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”

Col. 2:15

“And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

Because of Jesus’ work on the cross, believers have been rescued from Satan’s kingdom and brought into God’s kingdom.

Col. 1:13 – *God has ‘transferred us from Satan’s kingdom to His kingdom!’*

“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves...”

I’m so glad that so much more has happened to me as a result of my salvation – than I know!

Believers fight against Satan’s kingdom...

Eph. 6:12

“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.”

The decisive battle of this war has been won by Jesus as He died and was raised from the dead – but even though the outcome of the war is certain, the fighting continues.

The reality of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan – which Jesus clearly taught as truth – do we really believe this? Do we really understand the spiritual war that is taking place that is hidden from our eyesight?

If you believe this – do you realize how crazy you sound to those in the world? Do you think that people in the world believe that they are living in the kingdom of Satan and that they are under the power and control of Satan?

If this is your worldview (as it should be because it is the truth of God’s Word) then you will be ridiculed as having a

world view that is superstitious, outdated, pre-scientific, divisive, and unenlightened. This world view is not the accepted world view in modern, secular, materialistic, post-modern America.

This is a huge challenge for us as believers. It's so easy for us (I'm guilty of this) to live our Christian life each day – to even read these passages – and to think they have some other kind of meaning – that they are merely symbolic or somehow unrelated to our everyday life. It's so easy to live our faith from an intellectual and moral platform – that we neglect or ignore the spiritual forces that inject power and influence in our life and our process of spiritual growth!

The reality of Satan's kingdom and his activity in the world should not cause us to be scared, but to be prepared.

Don't think that just because Jesus has defeated Satan, that the fighting is over.

1 Peter 5:8

“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

The battles wage on. D-Day, which many believe was the decisive battle in WWII – began on June 6, 1944 – and ended on June 30, 1944. However, Germany didn't surrender until May 7, 8, and 9, 1945! So the fact that the decisive battle has been won by Christ, but that Satan continues to fight shouldn't surprise us or seem untenable.

At the same time, don't live in fear of the Devil.

1 John 4:4

“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”

We need to be aware of the enemy (Satan) and that he will attack us through our doubts – especially our doubts regarding our standing before God – and he will attack us by using the sin in our life to gain a foothold (Eph. 4:27).

The truth of Satan’s kingdom makes the other things in today’s passage more urgent!

Believers know they are God’s children. vs. 19a

“We know that we are children of God...” (we are of God - NASB / from God - ESV)

Once again, John reminds us that we are indeed God’s children. This is the first of the three assertions – or the ‘*three knows*’ in these closing verses.

“We know” (οἶδαμεν - perfect, active, indicative, plural) looks back to our conversion – when we first put our faith in Christ – and that we are convinced that our salvation is still in effect. There is no doubt about this – we are certain of it. Our certainty is not in ourselves – but it is due to our faith in God and His Son. The love we have for other believers – and our obedience to the commands of God also informs our confidence.

Believers know they are protected from sin. vs. 18

“We know that anyone born of God does not *continue* to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him.”

Upon our initial reading of this verse – we might think that John believes that Christians don’t sin. However, we need to understand this verse in its context – and by the grammatical details it contains.

The NIV and ESV translate this verse into English with a sense of the Greek grammar intact – both of those

translations include the word *continue* as a modifier to “sin”. Some of the other English translations can be misunderstood as implying that when someone becomes a believer in Christ, that they stop sinning!

1 John 1:8

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

1 John 3:9

“No one who is born of God will *continue* to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.”

What John is restating for us is that when someone becomes a Christian – when they are “born of God” – their life should change. They will still struggle with sin – but the desire for sin should be replaced (or begin to battle with) a desire for righteousness (Matt. 5:6) – a desire for God’s truth.

The person who claims to be a Christian – yet there is no change in their life – needs to consider if their faith is real and genuine.

The second half of the verse tells us how Jesus helps us to resist sin and pursue holiness. He does this through His truth and through the Holy Spirit.

Believers know the truth of God and eternal life. vs. 20

“We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true--even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.”

Once again, our knowledge (“We know” - οἶδαμεν - perfect, active, indicative, plural) is based on the continuing reality of what has happened in the past – which in this case would be the reality of the incarnation of Christ (“the Son of God”) and that we

have received His truth/understanding and it continues to impact our life.

Notice the reason for the coming of Christ and for the understanding we have from Him – is to know Him more! “so that we may know him who is true”

Our confidence is increased when we realize the abiding nature of our relationship with Christ.

“we are in him who is true--even in his Son Jesus Christ”

The last verse in vs. 20 is a strong statement of the deity of Christ. Not only is He the true God – but in Him is our eternal life.

John 14:6 “I am the way, the truth, the life...”

Believers are commanded to stay faithful to Christ. vs. 21

“Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.”

At first, this verse seems out of place. However, two interpretations are helpful to make sense out of John’s command – and help us see how this statement is a fitting conclusion for the letter.

The first interpretation – put forth by John Piper – is that the command to “keep yourselves from idols” is a command not to love the world or anything in the world. Earlier, in 2:15-17, the Apostle had warned against loving the world and he described the various ways we begin to crave sinful things.

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷ The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”

The second interpretation is given by a handful of commentators, and this interpretation understands idols as referring to the false views and false worship that the

Gnostics and the false teachers had tried to establish in the churches.

Idol worship is worship of a false god – and to follow the Gnostic’s teaching is the equivalent of worshiping an idol – a Jesus that doesn’t and never has existed.

John prefaces his strong command with the loving term “Dear Children” – which would have reminded his readers of his love and concern for them.

Application

Understand the reality of Satan’s rule over the world.

Christ has already won the decisive battle in the war – but don’t be ignorant of the spiritual battles that involve us – whether we realize it or not.

Don’t be fearful – be prepared for the fight.

Have confidence in three things:

1. You are a child of God if you have faith in Christ. *vs. 19*
2. As a Christian, you should be battling your sin – *vs. 18, 21*
3. Because you know Christ and are “in Him” – and He is “in you” – your knowledge of the true God – and His truth should be increasing. **Trust Him in everything.** *vs. 20*

Close in prayer