

Acts Chapter 19 v 8 - 22

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[0 : 00] Paragraph end. So here's Paul. He's in Corinth. Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly for about three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God.

Some of them became obstinate. They refused to believe and publicly maligned the way. In other words, they poo-pooed it. They talked it down. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.

This went on for two years. So that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord. God did extraordinary miracles through Paul.

So that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to those who were ill. And the illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them. Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed.

They would say, in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out. Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.

[1 : 19] One day, the evil spirit answered them, Jesus I know and Paul I know about, but who are you? Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all.

He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear.

In the name of the Lord, Jesus was held in high honor. Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly.

When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to 50,000 drachmas. In this way, the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

After this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. After I've been there, he said, I must visit Rome also.

[2 : 24] He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer. I was writing down. As I've said before and as I've said this morning, I want to continue in this matter concerning what we might call the occult, but really we're talking about the devil and demons, as came out in that passage there.

In Acts 19, there's a certain strangeness about it, as we said this morning, and the same in Luke in chapter 19.

This isn't going to be an absolutely bolts, nails every single thing that we can do. It's not going to cover every matter, but hopefully it will be enough. To help us to see the reality of what the Bible teaches, and also to see how this is vital for us as believers to be reminded of.

So I want to begin with sort of a question, really, in that sense. When the name devil or Satan is mentioned, what comes to your mind?

Do you think of those medieval paintings of a horned creature dressed in a red cloak with a pitchfork in his hand?

[3 : 55] Or do you think of a Halloween costume, fancy dress, people dressing up to party? For the majority, of course, of people in the West, I mean Europe and the US, the devil is considered a mythical creature, a pretend bogeyman.

We see him everywhere. He appears in all sorts of places, a cuddly toy, a tattoo, a cartoon character sitting on the shoulder.

He's a symbol of mischief, naughtiness, and not evil. And certainly, no one to be feared.

But, as we saw this morning, demons and the devil are real. And they are very much unmasked, as it were, by the Bible.

Remember that when we come to the Bible, we're coming to a book, which in one sense is a window into the world of the spiritual world, the heavenly world, the unseen world.

[5 : 11] Not a world that we see readily available, but one which is just as real. And when we look into the matter of the devil and demons, we see that they are dangerous, extremely so, and destructive, in every sense of the word.

That's why we read, just from Acts, briefly, another occasion that brings to light the reality of the devil, and that he is active, active in this world.

So I want to enlarge upon that. I want to ask a few questions. What does the Bible have to tell us about the devil and demons? What does it teach us? What do they do?

And more importantly, what has God done to overcome them? So in one sense, it's something of a Bible study. So let's ask this question, who is the devil, or what is the devil?

Well, he comes by many different titles. The word devil actually means accuser, and the word, the title Satan, means adversary, or opponent.

[6 : 20] He's elsewhere called the enemy. Jesus, in Matthew chapter 4, verse 3, when he was tempted, refers to him as the tempter. In 1 Peter, in chapter 5, he's likened to a roaring lion, prowling around the earth, looking for those he might devour.

We know that he is the serpent. Revelation chapter 12, and verse 9, he's called the ancient serpent of old.

He was the one who was in the garden of Eden. He's also known in Revelation as the dragon. And elsewhere, he's called Lucifer, or the shining one, or morning star.

Isaiah, in chapter 14, so, what is he? Well, he's not another God. He is a created being, a creation of God.

Created as an angel, with all the other angelic beings, in creation. But, because of his pride, and his desire to occupy God's throne, he was thrown out of heaven, he was thrown out of heaven, and lost his position with God.

[7 : 39] We understand that from Isaiah in chapter 14. Just listen here. How you have fallen from heaven, how you have fallen from heaven, Lucifer, or morning star, son of the dawn.

You've been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations. For you said in your heart, I will ascend to the heavens, I will raise my throne above the stars of God, I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon.

I will ascend above the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the most high, but you were brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit.

And that follows in and ties in with what we read here, in Revelation and chapter 12. The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient snake called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray, he was hurled down to earth, and his angels with him.

We don't know when that happened, what time in history, whether that was before Adam and Eve sinned, after Adam and Eve sinned, we're not sure. The Bible doesn't tell us that.

[8 : 55] But now we do know, is that the devil is the opponent of God. And he is opposed to everything that reminds him of God, including all humanity, who are made in God's image.

His goal is to disrupt the work of God, to hinder the people of God. And particularly, he hates the children of God, the believer, the Christian.

His mission is to harass us, to harm us as much as he can, to cause us to be ineffective, and to lose our joy and usefulness in God's kingdom.

Here's what we're told in Revelation 12. The dragon was enraged and went off to wage war against the rest of her children, those who keep God's commands and hold fast to their testimony about Jesus.

That's us. I've got time to go in all the explanation of Revelation and the woman and so on. But the devil is enraged and he has set himself to war against the children of God.

[10 : 10] We'll come back to that a bit later on. So that's the devil. Well, what about demons? What are demons? If the devil was an angel, a great angel, a powerful angel, it seems, from what the Bible teaches us, demons, also we're told, were angels, angelic beings, who, it seems, discontent to serve God, were led astray by the devil and also fell with him to earth to be his demonic servant.

So we read there in Revelation 12 about the devil was hurled to the earth and his angels with him. Revelation 12 verse 4 suggests to us that in fact a third of the angels of heaven were those who became demons.

Speaking of the devil and his tail, verse 4 of chapter 12, its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth.

So they too are angelic beings but who have rebelled against God and have become those who again are working for and in league with the devil.

What do they do? What does the devil do? What do these demons do? Well in one sense that question needs to be divided into two parts. First of all, how does this devil and his demons affect the people of this world?

[11 : 46] Those who are under his rule and dominion. And then how does the devil and his demons afflict the church? Those who are under Christ's rule. First of all, the people of the earth.

In Revelation chapter 12, we're told this, woe to the earth and the sea because the devil has gone down to you. He is filled with fury because he knows that his time is short.

One of the things that's hard perhaps for us to appreciate or even to understand or especially to accept is that all people are born into the kingdom of the devil.

All people are born as subjects of the devil. In fact, more than that, the Bible calls those without Christ the children of the devil.

1 John in chapter 3, verse 10. This is how we know who the children of God are and who are the children of the devil. Anyone who does not do right is not God's child.

[12 : 53] Now, when the Bible calls those who do not do what is right the children of the devil, it is not saying that the devil has given them life or they've been begotten of the devil or born of the devil or even that they're possessed of the devil, but rather that they bear the likeness.

Like a child bears the likeness of a father, like father, like son. So those who are the children of the devil, those who live lives in opposition to God, bear the likeness of the devil.

This is what Jesus said to those who opposed him in John chapter 8, verse 44. You are of your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires.

And so those who are the children of the devil are those who are directed and governed just as a father would govern his own children.

They may be, as we thought this morning, woefully ignorant of that, completely unaccepting of it. It doesn't change that truth. And so he is called the prince of this world, the people of this world by Jesus in John 12.

[14 : 10] In 2 Corinthians 4, 4, he's called the god of this age. In other words, the people of this age. And in Ephesians 2, 2, the ruler of the kingdom of the air.

The devil's purpose, his desire, his plan, his work is all to this end to prevent people escaping his kingdom.

He doesn't want people to be set free. He doesn't want people to be, get away from his power and influence over them because he knows as long as he can keep them under his power and influence, then he can keep them away from God and he can keep them away from Jesus and he can keep them away from salvation.

And so his work in the world is to do just that. And he does it through a number of ways and I haven't time to look at all of them, but there are particularly the ways that the devil works, one of which is that he blinds them to the gospel.

In 2 Corinthians 4, verse 4, Paul writes this, the God of this age, remember that's one of the titles of the devil, has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ.

[15 : 30] Blinds them, he keeps them in darkness. That's why often in other places, his kingdom is called a dominion of darkness. Notice, men and women cannot see the reality of God, of his love, of his care in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It seems to them to be rubbish or untrue or mythical or whatever it may be, but he does all that he can to prevent and keep people from hearing and receiving the gospel.

He blinds them. We must remember that when we seek to share the gospel with people, that ultimately their eyes can only be opened by God. We can encourage them, we can reason with them, we can lay before them the gospel and the truth, but until that scale, as it were, is taken away from their eyes, then they should always be blind.

He also deceives them and leads them into sin or tempts them into sin. Remember, when he came to Jesus, he sought to tempt Jesus to sin by giving him all sorts of things that would appeal to him at the time, bread, when he was hungry and so on.

And we know that he was the one who was in the Garden of Eden. 2 Corinthians and chapter 11. We're told that he was the one who there deceived Eve and Adam, leading them into sin, telling them that if they ate of this fruit, nothing bad would happen to them, they wouldn't die, calling them to doubt God and his promises, that if they did, then they would die.

[17 : 00] He leads people into temptation. He puts before them things that would entice them to their natural desires, to be popular or famous or to be satisfied or rich.

He plays upon those natural sinful desires and he knows our weaknesses. And then he works through, finally, just in this section, through false teachers, false religions, false ideologies, who lie and deceive people into ignoring and rejecting the gospel but into accepting other things.

Paul had to warn the church in 2 Corinthians 11 about this very fact. He writes to the Christians there and tells them this. Sorry, verses 13 and 14.

2 Corinthians 11, verses 13 and 14. Such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ and no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

It's not surprising then if his servants, so these people who are the false teachers, are the servants of Satan also masquerade as servants of righteousness.

[18 : 21] Their end will be what their actions deserve. And so, it isn't that all religions lead to God.

It isn't that they're all pretty much on the same footing. It is that there is that which is truth and that which is false. The truth about who God is and the false, deceptive lies about God.

Men and women will follow them and many women, many millions of people have done just that. So he keeps people trapped within his kingdom. He can give them religion.

They can have whatever they want. They can have religion until it's coming out of their ears. It's false. It's false. It don't save. It doesn't help. It keeps them blind.

What about us? What about the church? What about the people of God? Do we suffer from the hatred of the enemy? Well, yes we do. As we read, he has waged war against us as God's people.

[19 : 29] He sends false teachers also into the church to try to deceive us. That's exactly what he did to the Christians at Galatia. In Galatians chapter 3 in verse 1, Paul writes, you foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?

In other words, who's duped you? Who's fooled you? Who's told you these things that are untrue so that they were being led away from the truth of God into sinful action?

And in Jude, his letter was written specifically because of false teachers. He says, for certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you.

They are ungodly people who pervert the grace of our God into a license for morality and deny Jesus Christ our only sovereign and Lord. And Paul makes it very clear that these people are false teachers.

They twist God's grace as they did here. They are ungodly people who pervert the grace, twist the grace of God. And there's two classic examples in one sense that Satan uses to deceive Christians.

[20 : 42] The first one we see with the Galatians. He wants us to become legalistic. In other words, to base our salvation upon our works, upon our self-righteousness.

That's what he was doing with the Galatians, telling them they had to keep the law to please God instead of trusting in his grace. And sadly, Christians have gone that way into a hardness which is bound upon the law.

But then the other one, as we see with Jude, is he deceives Christians into thinking that they can do whatever they like. They can indulge in any sort of sin or practice as he did there.

Sexual immorality and other things too. The other thing that Satan does when he attacks the church is he seeks to divide Christians, to divide the church, to divide God's people one from another, sowing seeds of unforgiveness, sowing seeds of bitterness.

Notice here, again in Jude, this time verse 19. These are the people, the ones he's been talking about, these are the people who divide you. Who divide you.

[21 : 53] And earlier on when Paul writes to the Christians in Rome in chapter 16, he has to warn against those who seek to divide. And he links their work with Satan's work.

Romans chapter 16, 17 to 20. He says this, I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you've learned. Keep away from them. Such people are not serving our Lord Jesus Christ but their own appetites.

By smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the minds of naive people.

Then he goes on to say, the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. There's a link there. He's recognizing these divisive people and the divisions that they bring are part of Satan's work in the church.

That's why so many of the letters that we read, nearly all the letters that we read in the New Testament point to and speak about loving one another, forgiving one another, not letting a disunity get into the church.

[23 : 02] That's exactly what Satan wants and we know, we've seen that, how damaging that is. Through false teaching and other means, Satan is able to weaken the church through division.

How we need to be wary of that. And thirdly, we need to recognize that the devil will play upon our own sinful weaknesses. Just as he does with those who are non-Christians, we still have a sinful nature.

We still have bad bits, as it were, within us that he can play upon. In fact, he has many schemes, many sorts of traps and plans they have spoken about in the New Testament where he seeks to trip us up as Christians into sin and therefore into living lives which are ineffective in God's service.

Those of us who have been Christians for many years, we've met with and we've seen to our great sorrow and sadness, Christians who seem to have gone on so well with the Lord and then somehow they've fallen into a sin, into some bad or wrong practice or attitude or habit and they've fallen away, either never to walk with Christ again or to become such bad witnesses of Jesus. Who's behind all that? Surely it is the adversary, the devil, who seeks to undermine. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 2.11, in order that Satan might not outwit us.

[24 : 34] He's not a fool, is the devil. not outwit us for we are not unaware of his schemes. That's why it's so important that we make use of the armour of God in Ephesians chapter 6.

God has provided for us all that we need to protect us and we must use it daily to make sure that we are not those who fall victim to his traps or schemes.

Dear friends, we need not fear Satan as Christians. He cannot take from us our salvation. He cannot make us fall away from Christ.

He cannot turn our hearts. The only way that he has room in our lives is when we give that to him by yielding ourselves to sin. In James in chapter 1, James warns very much about the one sense the steps of sin.

He says, each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then after desire has conceived it gives birth to sin and sin when it's fully grown gives birth to death.

[25 : 50] We must be on our guard as believers. We must recognize the spiritual battle that's going on around about us and we mustn't as it were as Paul puts it give a foothold to the devil that he can come in and begin to influence and use us.

And again one of the great sadnesses we see through history, church history even in our own day and age is how Christians those who've loved Christ and had a public ministry have allowed Satan to come in and they have been used to great harm in the church of Jesus Christ and they have been used to do the devil's work even though they were believers.

So let us not think that we are above all these things. Let us not think that the devil can't use us. If we give room unforgiveness pride greed selfishness laziness all these things which we know are there in our hearts he will gladly jump on them as it were make use of them.

We must keep a close walk with the Lord. We must put on the armor of God. Well that brings us to the question then what has God done? Satan is here Satan is at work in the world deceiving and trapping people keeping them under his darkness if he's attacking the church and undermining the church and at times he seems to win what has God done to deal with him?

Is God ineffective and powerless? Well of course he's not. That was the whole point of Luke 8 wasn't it where Jesus stood up against that demon and drove him out and even we spread there in Acts about Paul and others doing the same.

[27 : 35] What has God done? Well God has done the one thing that was essential to bring defeat to Satan. He has sent his son. We picked up this verse this morning 1 John 3 8 the reason the son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

He came to battle he came to fight he came to overcome he came to destroy and he did that primarily through his death upon the cross.

Colossians chapter 2 verse 15 having disarmed the powers and authorities that's one of the phrases often used by Paul to speak of the devil and demons he made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them by the cross.

When Jesus went to the cross when he suffered and died in our place it wasn't a defeat but it was a blow of victory.

At the cross he dealt a fatal blow against Satan. In one sense he gave him his eviction notice. he struck a coup d'etat from which the devil can never recover even though he does at least in this time exercise a stronghold against those who are without Christ.

[28 : 59] To use a historical illustration on the 6th of June 1944 when the allies landed on the Normandy beaches all of Europe was under the sway of Hitler and Nazism but from that moment Nazis were driven back over the next 10 months until eventually defeated on the 9th of May 1945.

It was a bloody attack. Many lives were lost but so it was with Jesus at the cross.

It was his finest hour. The beginning of the end for the devil. That was only one sense the necessary blow, the necessary preparation for the final accomplishment that Jesus would bring. His reason for driving out the devil was that he might rescue those who were locked away in his prisons. Jesus spoke of another illustration in Matthew in chapter 12 and verse 29 when he was accused of driving out demons by the power of the devil and he gave them this illustration to show them exactly really what was going on.

He said this in Matthew chapter 12 verse 29 How can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man then he can plunder his house.

[30 : 40] He's talking about Satan's stronghold, his house and Christ by the cross has tied up the devil, put him on a lead as it were so that he is able to rescue and deliver people out of Satan's grip until that day when ultimately Satan is destroyed.

Another history from World War II. When in May 1945 the forces of Nazi Germany were finally defeated, Hitler's armies surrendered. There were many hundreds of thousands of people in prison camps, either POW camps, concentration camps or other labor camps.

As the allied troops reached those camps these people were set free at last and able to return home. So through the victory of the cross there has been a pushing back as it were of Satan's power and for 2,000 years men and women have been liberated, set free all through the world from all sorts of darkness, falsehood and deception, all sorts of slavery brought into the kingdom and the liberty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that will continue and is going on even today here in Whitby, throughout the UK, throughout the world until that eventual day, that ultimate day, that day when Satan will be thoroughly and completely destroyed.

Remember when we read from Revelation in chapter 12, we read this, Woe to the earth and the sea because the devil has gone down to you. He's filled with fury because he knows his time is short.

[32 : 38] The devil has a limited time in this world before his destruction. He knows very well that he cannot continue to hold men and women captive forever but that Christ is coming to bring about full and everlasting destruction to him.

And do you remember when we read this morning about the demons who possessed that man? Do you remember one of the things that they said? They begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the abyss.

all that Jesus has to do is with his voice with his word declare the devil defeated and all his hosts will be cast into everlasting punishment.

they too knew the end was near. And Jesus comes again as he surely must and as he surely will.

All evil will be brought to an end and Satan and all his hosts will be cast forever into what we're told is a lake of burning sulfur.

[33 : 52] Revelation 20 verse 20. the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

What are we to say to this dear friends? We are to recognize that we are on the winning side. We look around us in a world that seems to be and is in fact as we're told in the very grip of Satan.

We see a world where evil is on the ascendancy. We see a world where men and women do unspeakable things to one another and act in unspeakable ways.

We see and hear that the Christian faith is maligned, ignored, rejected, despised, even legalized against.

And it seems to us perhaps that the devil is winning and that he's going to have the victory. Dear friends, we forget. We forget the very word of God, the promises of God, the realities of God, the truth that Satan cannot and will not be victorious, that Christ must succeed, that all those for whom he died, he will rescue, that all those he has chosen will be saved, that every single one of those that he loves will be rescued and brought into his kingdom for all eternity.

[35 : 37] Let us not be afraid. Let us not be afraid. Let us recognize that the Lord Jesus Christ has in his power everything to overcome all the attacks of the evil one.

Let us realize that it is now a time of war. We're not living in peace, we're living in war, and we're warring and battling for the souls of men and women, their eternal, immortal souls.

The day is coming, Christ will return, the battle will be won, and we shall be there with the Lord.