

Be encouraged: this is the greatest betrayal in human history

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[0 : 00] From John chapter 13, starting at verse 18, reading through to verse 30, and that can be found on page 1085 of the Church Bibles.

So that's John 13, starting at chapter 18 to verse 30. And this is Jesus speaking. I am not speaking of all of you. I know whom I have chosen.

But the scripture will be fulfilled. He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me. I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place, you may believe that I am he.

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me. And whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit and testified, Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.

The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table close to Jesus. So Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking.

[1 : 23] So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.

So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him.

Jesus said to him, What you are going to do, do quickly. Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that because Judas had the money bag, Jesus was telling him, Buy what we need for the feast, or that he should give something to the poor.

So after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out, and it was night. Dear Lord, the world is full of darkness, and the world seems often very strange, difficult, and dangerous.

Father, we know that there is a spiritual enemy, but we thank you that you have had victory over him. And I pray what we see this morning would give us the encouragement to keep going.

[2 : 36] Amen. We are this morning focusing our attention on the great battle of the Christian faith. We are reflecting on the work of Satan, which would hopefully be obvious from our reading, but we are specifically thinking about how he works in the believer, and how the Christian can combat, repel, and have victory over him.

It is a sad yet true reality, I think, that our peers think little of the work of Satan in Dulwich, and without doubt, he is powerfully at work here.

Now I want to suggest, and I think John wants to suggest, that the primary weapon and means of warfare on this world that he uses is to generate unbelief in the believer and non-believer alike.

Just to show you what I mean by that, have a look with me at John 8, verse 43 to 46, where Jesus speaks of the work of Satan. John 8, 43, this is Jesus speaking to the Pharisees.

Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father, the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.

[4 : 01] When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar, and the father of lies. But because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin?

If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? The weapon, Jesus is saying, the means of attacking the unbeliever is to get you to doubt.

Doubt the words of Jesus, to stop you believing. Doubt. Doubt is Satan's biggest weapon, and I'm going to keep repeating that, because we are this morning dealing ultimately with doubt.

Doubt in the words, the work, the character of our precious Lord. And our friends, when we see that the primary weapon of our great enemy is doubt, doubt, surely, surely we see that Satan is at work everywhere around us.

Calendar culture, academic excellence, million pound houses, friends mocking you at school, self-image and Instagram, healthy lifestyle, hobbies abounding, and the quiet, ever-presence of suffering.

[5 : 08] That age-old weapon that Satan always uses to generate doubt. Everywhere you look, Satan is at work to produce doubt in the people around us.

And I think that must make sense. How can you be confronted with the name of Jesus as Lord and Saviour if Satan keeps you so busy that you never have a chance to think on your sin or your need of grace?

How can you be confronted with the name of Jesus as Saviour if Satan persuades you that your worth is determined by your achievements, as many of our schools here teach? How can you be confronted with the name of Jesus if Satan gives you everything your sinful fallen heart desires in terms of wealth, status, and housing?

Our friends, Satan is powerfully at work among us. And I hope you can see that the great weapons of doubt are continually wielded against the believer too.

It is not just for those of our friends and family around us who aren't followers of Jesus. us. We all live in the water of attainment, busyness, and wealth. We all are told over and over that the material is all that matters, that status and wealth is where true security is found, that the best narrative to give our children for their success is their work rate and achievement.

[6 : 31] And all of us, all of us will or have or are, will experience the doubt that suffering causes, illness, the loss of loved ones, the walking away of people that we care about.

You may even be experiencing that now, causing us to doubt, doubt that God is good, doubt that God is here for us, doubt that God offers life, doubt even perhaps that he is real.

It can be so exhausting, I think, for the believer to be hit on all sides by lies, lies seeking us to cause doubt.

Well, indeed, and I think, you know, this is not unusual for Satan, the first lie in the great book of Satan to Eve, well, it was doubt-sowing, wasn't it?

Did God really say? Now, I must confess that I am so unbelievably grateful to the Lord that he hasn't given me much by way of material wealth in this life because I'll be honest with you, I don't think I have the godliness to see it as a good gift from God and not get puffed up by it.

[7 : 43] All of us will feel the bite of Satan's lies every day. He will speak to you through your colleagues. He will speak through our material provisions from God. He will speak through our friends at school.

He will speak through our parents. He will speak through our suffering. He will even, I think, speak through our own views of ourselves. And it will always be the same.

His lives are everywhere to get the Christian to give in to doubt. To give in to doubt in the words of Jesus. To doubt that we truly have life in his name.

It is exhausting. And this morning, we will think on the great antidote to doubt for the believer. And there is only one, I think. And it is simply this.

We think on the victory of Christ. We think on the victory of Christ. And so, friends, that is what we're going to do this morning. We're going to look at the Lord Jesus and his victory.

[8 : 43] Now, I hope Michael's kicked us off in a wonderful series in John 13 to 17. It shouldn't take us very long to realize that the disciples would have been in immense need of encouragement to persevere through doubt.

Jesus, in 13 to 17, is preparing them for his absence. He's about to leave, to die on the cross as a slave, and he's leaving these 11 men to evangelize the rest of the world.

The likely outcome for them, and it was the case for 10 of them, is certain death at the hands of those who hate them. A task momentous, fatal, and to be done alone.

Yes, we can well see why doubt might be the great enemy of these 11 men. The fate of the Christian world rests on their shoulders. If Satan is successful in bringing doubt into their hearts, Christendom falls with it.

And we, 2,000 years later, never hear of the saving work of Jesus. In a sense, your faith today is dependent on these 11 men not giving in to doubt.

[9 : 50] And so these four chapters, just these four chapters, serve as the disciples' only lifeline to cling to when the waves of doubt crash against them as their saviour dies and leaves them alone.

I hope you're beginning to see the sheer weightiness of these chapters. These chapters are, I suppose, for want of an illustration, like the armoured plates of Christianity, a defence against the devil's powerful work.

And I want us to see together what their answer is to the weapon of Satan, which is the victory of Christ, the victory of Christ. And that brings me on to my first point, which is simply this.

Yes, Satan looks powerful. We are faced this morning with one of the most harrowing passages in all of Scripture. It is, without doubt, without doubt, the greatest betrayal in human history.

It is, second to the cross, the greatest achievement of Satan, to kill the Son of God at the hands of his own follower and for something as simple and despicable as 30 pieces of silver.

[11 : 04] Now, why do I say this is a victory for Satan? Well, look with me at who Judas was and what he was offered. Our passage, and I wonder if you notice this as Laura read it, is one of such breathtaking intimacy and desperate betrayal.

And I want us this morning to simply take us through this scene to show us the Lord Jesus because I think that is John's only goal, to show us the Lord Jesus.

And we saw from last week as Michael said in 13 verse 4, Jesus rose from supper, he laid aside his outer garments and taking a towel, he tied it round his waist. He then proceeded in verse 5 to wash the disciples' feet.

Jesus made his way around the circle of his disciples washing their feet as a slave, the disciples in silent shame as he cleaned them. And then in verse 24 to 25, their master, yet ultimately their slave, took his place among them once again.

Look with me at this image in verse 25. So that disciple, that's John speaking, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, Lord, who is it?

[12 : 14] This is such a picture of intimate friendship. Imagine our Savior being so close that you could simply lean backwards and you would be able to look into his face.

Your eyes could behold him, hands touch him, and ears hear his voice. But more than that, this is a picture of such sweet fellowship, isn't it?

The simple breaking of bread amongst brothers. Imagine, hearing the voice of our Lord ask you if you would like another little bit of morsel of food and then have him hand it to you.

And yet, this is the exact scene that Judas found himself in. Have a look with me at verse 26 because this is the scene that I want us to pause on and reflect on.

Jesus answered, it is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it. So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Iscariot.

[13 : 17] I want us to pause here and imagine that scene in our mind's eye. Imagine the Lord Jesus Christ, hand outstretched, food in hand, Judas, within arm's reach, reaching to take it.

Imagine, imagine all that is represented in the food Jesus has already offered. Jesus is Judas' maker. In the beginning, Jesus spoke and here Judas is.

His breath and energy to reach for that very morsel of bread are in and of themselves already gifts of the Lord Jesus Christ. Think also on all the privileges Judas has already been given to spend three years with our Lord.

Judas, a most intimate friend, one who's been witness to Jesus' teachings, his compassion to the cripple, his loving tenderness to the adulterous woman. Oh, think what this despicable man must have seen.

The water to wine for the joy of the wedding, the feeding of thousands who were starving, the tender compassion and gentleness to the sick, the weeping of Jesus at Lazarus' tomb, only to them with a word, raise him from the dead.

[14 : 38] And think of the countless other moments of beauty and intimacy that this wretched man would have witnessed that are not recorded here. We should gasp with such holy, holy jealousy that this man, Judas, shared our Lord's table, heard his physical voice, saw his mighty works and had his feet washed in the dirt by the darling of heaven.

How could someone as this betray the love of our lives? How could he have descended so very, very low? Low enough to hand him over to death.

And think then of everything that was being offered to Judas. Remember our scene, Jesus hand outstretched with the food in hand to Judas. Think of all the things that Judas could have had if he had accepted that bread correctly.

An eternity of bliss and peace. An eternity with the darling of heaven. An eternity of joy and light and beauty and meaning and purpose. All represented in that bread if he had only just reached out and taken it in acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh to think on what Judas gave up in order to have 30 pieces of silver. Think on it. Think on what he gave up for just money.

[16 : 03] The difference between what he was offered by Jesus and what the chief priest offered is incalculable. What a victory this is for Satan. What a coup.

The disciple of Jesus himself. Three years his companion. Three years his confidant. Three years his trusted treasurer. Three years his friend. Willing to give him up to the worst of deaths.

Creator murdered by creatures. And I want us to note that this really is Satan working. Have a look with me at 13 verse 27. Then after he, that is Judas, had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him.

Jesus said to him, what you are going to do do quickly. Yes, Satan is powerfully at work. The satanic forces will have been howling in delight as Judas ran out into the dark.

And well does our passage end with night. It was the darkest of nights. Satan looks powerful. And as we begin to think about it in our own experience, it doesn't take very long to realize that Satan looks powerful now.

[17 : 18] The pull of this material world, well it is just so alluring, isn't it? Slowly undermining the belief that life in Jesus is enough. That Jesus came to offer life to the full.

The world just silently keeps calling in the opposite direction. I've had the great privilege in my lifetime of walking ten people to a knowledge of the Lord.

God. But tragically, now, only three of them are still going as believers. Seven. Seven gave in to doubt.

Seven gave in to the lies of Satan. And it would be a lie for me to say that that is not desperately exhausting and doubt inducing.

to see the lies of Satan and the doubt that it can bring. All of us here will feel that work in our own lives. For some of us here, the question of why God would allow so much suffering to harm them will be a deeply relevant one.

[18 : 22] Even this week, sadly, that is a question that I have been faced with in a very personal way. For others, the question of why a loved one is no longer walking with the Lord will bring such pain.

And for others still, the world has given you everything you have ever wanted and the Lord feels so faint in comparison. And that is why it is of first and foremost importance, friends, and I absolutely refuse to patronize you that before we talk about victory, before we talk about salvation and theological truths that wrap up our suffering in a nice little bow, and before we talk about what the cross has achieved, I want us to note the emotional response of our Lord Jesus Christ to the pain that Satan causes in verse 21.

Have a look with me at verse 21. After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit. Now, troubled in his spirit is such a pathetic sounding translation.

It sounds like he might have eaten something a bit dodgy, but it is the same gut-wrenching emotion that led Jesus to weep at the tomb of his friend Lazarus. The same emotion that led him to break down publicly and weep so that everyone around him was struck at his love for Lazarus.

That is the emotion, the emotion of grief that Jesus feels here, knowing that his friend is about to betray him. And we must pause here and see that we do not have a God who is detached.

[19 : 57] We do not have a God who is unable to empathize. We do not have a God who is ignorant of the pain that Satan causes in this world. before we speak of victory, before we speak of what the cross has achieved, we must pause to see that Jesus knows.

He knows. Yes, if even Satan grieved our Lord Jesus Christ, Satan looks very, very powerful. But this is where I come on to my second and final point.

But Christ is victorious. Christ is victorious. Now, one might think it's strange, given everything that we've seen in this passage, to speak of victory.

Certainly, the events of this passage do not seem to speak of victory. But I think we need to attune our eyes a little closer. First, I want us to note the complete control that Christ has over these events.

Have a look with me at verse 21. Again, second half. truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me. Christ predicted that this would happen.

[21 : 08] Verse 26. Have a look with me. Jesus answered, it is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it. Christ predicted how this person would be triggered to betray him.

And verse 27, most shockingly of all, then after Judas had taken the morsel, sent it, Satan entered into him, Jesus said to Judas, Jesus said to Satan, what you are going to do, do quickly.

Jesus gave Satan and Judas permission to leave. It is only once Jesus has given them permission do they leave to work their work of darkness.

And this is something that Jesus has predicted all the way since our prologue. John 1.11, his own would reject him. John 6, 70-71, the devil and Judas will betray me.

And even at the start of our section that Sam took us through, have a look with me at John 12, verse 31-33. Jesus, referring to his own death, says this, now is the judgment of this world.

[22 : 18] Now will the ruler of the world be cast out, that is Satan. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

Jesus, at every single step through John's gospel, has predicted the rejection of his own. He has predicted the working of Satan through Judas, and he has also predicted the downfall of Satan.

But it still begs the question, how can this passage be a victory for Jesus? Second to the cross, this is Satan's greatest achievement. How can this be a passage of victory?

How can Christ be victor from his desperate, desperate betrayal? Why? Why would Jesus give Judas and Satan permission to win such a vile victory over him?

Well, this is where we need to stop. And pause and reflect on the outrageous reality of the cross of Christ. Because have a look with me again at what the cross achieves.

[23 : 22] Come with me to 12 verse 31 to 33 again, because these verses are in many ways the summary of the theology of the whole of John. 31 again of chapter 12.

Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. This is breathtaking. This is glorious. Because what Jesus is saying is that the cross, the cross is the moment of his greatest victory.

The cross is the moment when Satan is not victorious, but is defeated. In other words, think about this. This is the stunning irony of our Lord. Think about this, how outrageously glorious this is, that the greatest victory of Satan, having the Son of God murdered, is his greatest and final downfall.

Or to put it another way, the victory of Satan, having the Son of God murdered, is the greatest, most glorious moment of Christ's victory. Or to put it yet another way, the greatest defeat of Jesus is the downfall of Satan.

[24 : 40] Or to put it yet another way, the greatest defeat of Jesus is his greatest achievement, the salvation of the whole world. Our Jesus, our Jesus can turn his greatest defeat and Satan's greatest victory into his masterpiece of glory and Satan's eternal downfall.

That is how powerful that is how victorious our Saviour is. That he can use even Satan's greatest achievement to put him to death forever.

How can that be so? Well it is because the Son of God murdered on a tree is the glory of God. It is the point where sin is dealt with.

It is the point where death is swallowed up forever. It is the point where God's justice is shown to the whole world. It is the place where love pours like a torrent into this world.

It is the point where grace explodes from the heavens to cover every sin of humanity. It is the place where man's great, great problem, death itself, is finally and completely and universally dealt with.

[25 : 59] death. The cross is the point where we see the majesty of heaven most clearly, most truly, most completely. A lamb murdered for his people, betrayed by his friends.

The cross is Christ's great, great victory and Satan's great, great defeat. The cross, the cross of shame, the cross of death and vileness and judgment is the place where Jesus defeats Satan, where all sin and judgment is poured out on the only Son of God and by doing so removes the sting of death forever.

What a strange, glorious irony is our God. Satan's greatest achievement, Jesus dead on a tree, his greatest failure.

failure, Jesus' greatest failure, murdered by his creatures at the betrayal of a friend is his greatest victory. This, this is the truth to dispel doubt that Satan brings.

Look at our God, look at our God. Yes, Satan looks powerful but Christ is victorious. He most certainly is.

[27 : 19] I mentioned at the start the sad reality that we are all here living under such pressure, pressure to doubt that Christ has won victory over Satan and that pressure can become overwhelming for us I think even though the lies often that we're being told are so very subtle, that all we need in this life is to be liked or maybe finish school or get a good job, find a husband or a wife, a nice house, a nice car, long weekend, good vacations, grow old healthy, have a fun retirement, die easy.

We are told these things over and over and over again in a million different ways and that's before we even talk about the lies that suffering tells us, the questions that that throws up about whether or not God is good or powerful or for us.

Yes, we as believers live under such immense, immense pressure and it is exhausting. But friends, I only have one thing that I can share with you for your encouragement and it is that we can look to Christ.

All those powerful lies that look so very potent, Christ has entirely triumphed over. If your Jesus who loves you and knows you can turn even his greatest defeat into the most glorious victory in human history on the cross, then we most certainly serve a victorious saviour.

he is worth persevering in because yes, the lies of Satan look powerful. The material world he offers you here is outrageous and suffering is very, very painful.

[29 : 02] He would do anything for you to give your life to those things. But Christ has won the victory. Christ is worth living for. This world has nothing to offer you.

Christ is victorious. One eye lead us in prayer. Dear Lord, we thank you that at the cross you triumphed over Satan, death, and sin.

Father, what an outrageous, victorious God we serve, a God who knows suffering, a God who we can know and love and be empathised with, and one who is eternally and forever victorious at the cross.

Amen. Amen.