

**Title: God Will Crush Satan**  
**Biblical Text: Romans 16:17-24**  
**Teaching Series: Justified by Love**  
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## **Romans 16:17-23**

*I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you.*

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Satan is a shadowy and fragmented figure throughout the story of our faith. We never really get a full picture of his nature, character, or story of his origin in any one place. The Evil One is difficult to nail down. One reason for this is that he goes by many names. In the Garden he's called the serpent (see Genesis 2:1). In Isaiah he's Lucifer, taken from the Hebrew *helel* meaning Day Star (see Isaiah 14:12). In

the Gospels he's *Beelzebul*, "***the prince of demons***" (see Matthew 12:24, Mark 3:22, Luke 11:15). And in Paul's writings he's Belial, "***the prince of the power of the air***" (Ephesians 2:2). Through the centuries these vignettes have been pieced together as a solitary figure which has animated much of the Christian imagination in every generation of the Church.

Seventeenth-century preacher Jonathan Edwards' observation that "***It is a policy of the Devil to persuade us that there is no Devil***" (*A Treatise Concerning the Religious Affections*, 87). There's another name, the Devil. But Edwards is right. Think about it. Few of us think about Satan today. And if we do ... we think about him in two extremes. Either he's a cartoon with horns, a pitchfork, and zero spiritual influence ... or he's an evil force on par with God. We either dismiss him or fear him. Today, by God's grace, we're going to learn to do neither.

As Paul is winding down this great letter he's going to drop a few last warnings. He's going to tell us to watch out. He's going to tell us to be wise. Paul is aware of the powers and influences not only within Christian community but also larger society. And so he wants his readers to be careful not to give way to these impulses but rather stand firm in all that he has taught them. You see, we should watch out and be wise. We shouldn't dismiss. But we also shouldn't fear. After all ... and here's the crux of our passage today ... he says, "***The God of peace will soon crush Satan.***" That's what I want to talk about. I want to talk about how we neither dismiss Satan nor fear him. I want to talk about how we live with this hope that the

peace of God, or what the Jewish people call *Shalom*, will soon overwhelm Satan, sin, and death.

Here's how we'll organize our time ...

- Satan's *story*.
- Satan's *plan*.
- Satan's *demise*.

[Prayer]

## **Movement 1: Satan's Story (Genesis 3:1,15, Revelation 12:10, John 8:44b, Isaiah 14:12-14)**

As we've said, much of Satan's story is pieced together through what's called systematic theology. Systematic theology is a process of viewing Scripture as a whole, formulating a biblical thought or perspective based on many passage rather than one. You see, many important ideas aren't clear unless we take a step back and consider the whole picture. Satan is one such idea.

We're introduced to him in Genesis 3. Meet me there at the very beginning of the Bible. *Read Genesis 3:1 ... Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"* Okay, so it's a snake.

It's crafty (clever or cunning). It's a beast. But more than anything, this serpent is a questioner. He's a questioner of the Word of God. Notice, he asks the woman, "***Did God really say that?***" We know from the previous chapter, that's exactly what God said. So readers and Eve, the woman, know what God has said. Satan is casting doubt where there was no doubt. C.S. Lewis said we should never question in the dark what was true in the light. That's the work of Satan. In hard times he casts doubt where there was previously, no doubt. As consequence, God punishes the serpent. ***Read Genesis 3:15 ... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.***

*But how do we know that's Satan? How do we know this snake is the same being as Isaiah's Lucifer, the Gospel's Beelzebul, and Paul's evil prince? Well, again, systematic theology.*

When we step back and look at the whole, we have the privilege of reading Genesis (the beginning) and Revelation (the end) at the same time. And when we arrive at the last book of the Bible Revelation, the writer John makes an unmistakable connection. Meet me there. ***Read Revelation 12:10 ... And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*** You see, "*that ancient serpent*" is called the devil and Satan. The snake is the dragon, the Devil, and Satan. He is *the deceiver of the world*. Or as Jesus famously describes him, ***Read John 8:44b ... "When he***

***lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."***

Since the beginning and until the end Satan is a liar. Pastor Eugene Peterson has said, lying is Satan's native tongue.

John also makes a connection with Satan's origin story. *Did you notice? He was thrown down to the earth ... with his angels.* That tells us that the serpent is not only the dragon, but he's also Isaiah's Lucifer.

While on the surface Isaiah is predicting the fall of Babylon, there's what's called a dual or double fulfillment. We see this with prophecies of the Messiah's birth as well. There's something being fulfilled in the the present situation of God's people, but also in the future or in an ultimate reality. ***Read Isaiah 14:12-14 ... "How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'***" Again, in the foreground is the King of Babylon. But in the background, in the ultimate sense, Isaiah is talking about the evil force behind ever corrupt leader, person, and power—Satan himself.

Lucifer was set apart in the heavenly courts. Yet, he wanted more. He wanted to be set *above the stars of God.* He wanted to ascend above the heights of the cloud. He wanted to be God. Again, Jonathan Edwards explains, "*Lucifer, being the*

*archangel, one of the highest of the angels, could not bear it, thought it below him and a great debasing of him; so he conceived rebellion against the Almighty and drew away a vast company of the heavenly hosts with him" (Miscellanies, No. 320, in Works, in 13:401–402). As a result, Genesis and Isaiah and Revelation all tell us God threw Satan down to earth with his minions.*

So, the serpent is the dragon.

The dragon is the father of lies.

The father of lies is an cast-down angel.

That's Satan's *story*.

But now on earth, *what's Satan's plan?*

## **Movement 2: Satan's Plan (vv.17-18,19, Galatians 1:6-8, 2 Corinthians 11:3-4)**

This is what Paul was concerned to instruct his Romans readers about. Satan's *plan*. Let's keep in mind. About a million people lived in Rome at the time. About 60,000 of that million were Jews. And much less were Christians. That means the young house churches in Rome were constantly facing pressure from within their community. It was all new: following Jesus, being a church, and raising a family in a city. Not only so, but there was pressure from outside their community too; whether from the Jewish conservative powers or from progressive power of Roman society.

This is similar to the pressure we experience. I think it's this pressure that informs our view of Satan. We either dismiss him or fear him. While progressive society is becoming more spiritual we're becoming less religious. Ultimately this means we believe in an unseen realm and forces, but getting too particular about that realm or the players in that realm feels like nonsense. And so yoga is good, manifesting is powerful, meditation is helpful. But, naming Satan and talking about what he does seems too extreme. So we downplay his presence. That's the pressure we face externally. But we also face a pressure from within. Naming Satan does not mean blaming him for evil sin and suffering and evil situation so we can absolve ourselves of responsibility and guilt. Believing he is around every corner ready to crush God's people give him too much power. It's amidst this pressure, we need understand not only his *story*, but Satan's *plan*.

Paul gives us two directives.

Each helps us to see what Satan is up to.

Paul first says, *watch out*. Look at v.17. ***Read Romans 16:17-18 ... I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*** Paul wants them ... and by inspiration of the Holy Spirit ... God wants us to watch out for ideas and people that cause divisions within the church community. He wants us to be careful about believing

lies about who God is and what he has called us to. And the doctrine we've been taught from the start and throughout the letter of Romans is the doctrine of justification. How we're saved. We've been saved by grace. We've been saved through faith. We are justified by love. However, Paul knows that ideas don't float in space. Ideas are carried by people. As he's delivered the gospel of grace to Rome, other people are carrying these gospels of division, Paul says to watch out for them and avoid them.

From a wider view of Scripture we see this is precisely how Satan works all the time. Satan is the power behind every evil power. Satan is the divider behind all division. Satan is the deceiver behind every deception. This is always his plan: *division through deception.* So, we must watch out.

Paul was concerned about this in Galatia, ***Read Galatians 1:6-8 ... I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.*** Satan was at work in Galatia. They needed to watch out.

Paul makes Satan's plan clear when he writes to Corinth too. ***Read 2 Corinthians 11:3-4 ... But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if***



*someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.* As the snake caused division through deception between Adam and Eve, and between God and humanity, he now seeks to cause division through deception between us and between us and the Lord.

Paul is saying we put up with lies. In Rome and Corinth it was the lie that grace was insufficient for salvation. That works were necessary. In particular many Jewish Christians thought circumcision was necessary for salvation. But many Gentiles thought they could keep worshipping false idols and just add Jesus to their list. In other words, the lie is the same: *Jesus isn't enough*. These lie divides God's people. That's Satan's plan: *division through deception*.

I think this continues to be Satan's plan. In fact, I think he's telling us the same lie: *Jesus isn't enough*. But I think it shows up in a few ways. I think there are three ways this Satan is working this lie into our spiritual imaginations at Church in the Square ... lies we must no longer put up with because each accomplishes Satan's plan to divide ...

- The first lie divides us from God. Satan telling us that God sees us through our sin or doesn't see our sin at all. In other words, the lie is that sin defines our relationship with God and Jesus isn't enough to transform that relationship. And so, some of us are really casual with sin. Others of us are

constantly shamed by sin. In either case, we're divided from God. We're divide because we don't see our selves as sons and daughters, but as sinner. You see, *Jesus isn't enough*.

- The second lie divides us from each other. Satan is telling us that love isn't costly. In other words, we think our groups and friendships and church is held together by ignoring challenging words and pursuing holiness together. In fact, we believe in order to be united and show love we have to bury truth, hard words, loving correction, and encouragements toward holiness. You see, *Jesus isn't enough*.
- The third lie divides us from our neighbors. Satan has convinced us that truth isn't gracious and that love doesn't bring change. In other words, we have believed the lie that sin doesn't hurt our neighbors and friends. Or we believe that showing up to care for the needs of our neighbors won't bring lasting change. And so we opt for a passive brand of mission. Talking about Jesus is not intolerant. Talking about Jesus is loving. Showing love is not a secular idea. Showing love is the incarnation. You see, Satan's lie is that *Jesus isn't enough*.

So, *how can we discern these lies?* Well, Paul says we can tell by a person's motivation and what he calls smooth talk. Satan's lies go down easy. It feels good to believe that God doesn't see my sin. It feels good to love without cost. It feels good to speak the truth right up to the point of our comfort zone. It feels good to

keep our distance from pain and suffering. *Smooth talk. Flattery.* This is what we must watch out for. It's a distortion. It sounds right. It sounds like the gospel. But it's not. That's Satan's *plan*. Because believing that Jesus isn't enough separates us from God, each other, and our neighbors. And so Paul gives us his second instruction, be wise. Look at v.19. ***Read Romans 16:19 ... For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.*** Wisdom is all about understanding that leads to righteous living. When we pay attention, when we watch out for Satan's plan, we can do the good God is calling for us to do and we can refrain from believing the Evil One's lies. Wisdom in this case begins by naming Satan's *story* and his *plan* so we can walk in obedience.

The serpent is the dragon.

The dragon is the father of lies.

The father of lies is an cast-down angel.

And he's all about division through deception.

### **Movement 3: Satan's Demise (vv.20, 21-23; 5:1; 14:18; 14:17, Genesis 3:15, 1 Peter 3:18-19)**

Now, knowing his story and his plan may cause us to fear him too much. That certainly may have been an initial response in Rome too. But Paul gives us the full story and the result of this plan. He tells us Satan's demise. See v.20. ***Read Romans 16:20 ... The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of***

***our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*** Now, this might seem a bit strange at first. We might suppose *Yahweh Sabaoth* (the Lord of hosts) would crush Satan. That's the vision of God in the Old Testament, meaning the God of the armies. But Paul says "The God of peace" is will crush Satan. Now, of course the God of the armies is the God of peace, but why does Paul call out this aspect of the Lord as the demise of Satan?

Well, let's because of his story and plan. Satan's story is one of chaos and violence. He sought to upend and violate God's glory. Satan's plan is to divide through deception. He seeks to separated us from God, each other, and our neighbors. Therefore it's peace that brings order where there was chaos and peace that bring communion where there was division. And the Father will need nothing but his Son to accomplish all of this. *Why?* Because Jesus is enough. What Satan divides, Jesus makes whole. That's the peace (shalom) crushing Satan.

From the moment the serpent slithered his way toward our first mother, Eve God has promised to crush Satan. Remember, speaking to the serpent after his deception, ***Read Genesis 3:15 ... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*** Jesus is that promised offspring. Theologians call this the *protoevangelium* ... the first gospel. While Satan's plan caused enmity, God's plan brings peace. Or we might say, God's truth will overwhelm every lie of Satan. So, while we should not dismiss him ... we should neither fear him. Because he is a defeated foe. God's truth has been announced in the face of every lie. And that

gives us hope, but it also give us further understanding about what it looks like to be wise (Paul's second exhortation). Being wise means daily living in peace, trusting the truth and reminding one another of this truth.

- Satan says Jesus is not enough to keep in with God. But the truth is Jesus has made peace with God for you. *Read Romans 5:1 ... Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Jesus is enough to keep us with God, no matter our sin. That's Satan's *demise*. Jesus is our peace.
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- Satan says Jesus is not enough to keep us with each other. But Jesus has given us peace that we share and binds us as one. *Read Romans 14:18 ... Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.* Jesus is enough to keep us together, no matter the cost. That's Satan's *demise*. Jesus is our peace.
- Satan says Jesus is not enough to keep our friends, neighbors, and loved one. But the truth is Jesus has inaugurated a kingdom for us held together by his peace. *Read Romans 14:17 ... For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.* Jesus works through words and works of peace to bring people into his kingdom. That's Satan's *demise*. Jesus is our peace.

Jesus secures peace by bearing the wrath of Satan, sin, and death on the cross (see Romans 3:25). Namely, for a moment on the cross ... after eternity in perfect union with his Heavenly Father ... God the Son, our Lord and Savior takes on the full consequence of Satan's schemes. He is separated from his Father. He shoulders the deception. He endures the division. And in his death, Peter tells us he proclaims his peaceful victory to Satan and all his realm *Read 1 Peter 3:18-19 ... For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison.* You see, Satan, sin, and death has divided ... but through his purchase of peace our precious Lord brings us back to God, to each other, and for our neighbors.

The serpent is the dragon.

The dragon is the father of lies.

The father of lies is an cast-down angel.

And he's all about division through deception.

Jesus has brought peace where there was division.

Jesus has spoken truth back to deception.

Jesus has cast-down the fallen angel.

Jesus has vanquished the dragon.

Jesus has crushed the head of the serpent.

And soon ... the fullness of Christ peace will make all things new and all things well.