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The Evil Prince

Ephesians 2:1 *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, **according to the prince of the power of the air**, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*

Like so many other pastors, I normally teach through various books of the Bible, and it was Ephesians in this case. The following is from that series. It is possible to spend a lifetime on just one book as many men have done with various books of the Bible. I hope I can share some of the excitement of this book with you.

To get a proper understanding of any passage, it must be examined in its historical context, the situation being death with, and the understanding must agree with the law and the prophets. Hence, this short introduction to Ephesians:

Paul is writing to the Ephesians from prison in 60-63 AD, which was just a few years before the Great Tribulation. According to **Matthew 21:41** and **Matthew 23:34** through **Matthew 24**, the **great tribulation** took place in the *Jewish Roman war*, 67-70 AD, and ended in the total destruction of Jerusalem. That war erased the Jewish or Hebrew race from history. The Roman general Titus overturned Jerusalem's walls, sowed it with salt and plowed it with a yoke of oxen. Jerusalem today is built on the rubble of the old city. Titus killed multitudes of Jews, and those he did not kill, he sent to the mines or sold them into slavery.

The church as overlooked the importance of that destruction as it erased ancient Israel from history, and replaced it with the New Israel of God, the church.

That destruction of the 1500-year-old method of the Hebrew worship of God through the various ordinances that started when Israel came out of Egypt would naturally cause great consternation in the new first century church. So Christ warned them about what was soon to descend upon them.

Matthew chapter 21 through 23 is clearly God the Son pronouncing his curse against the Hebrew nation of the day, the nation that would soon put him to death.

We read in **Matthew 23:34** *Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and*

scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: 35 That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. 36 Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

Matthew 24:21 *For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.*

A Biblical generation is 40 years, and Christ was crucified in 33 AD, so the **great tribulation** came upon the generation that crucified our Lord. Josephus gives an accurate eye witness account of that destruction in his chapter, “The war of the Jews.”

In other words, the destruction of the Hebrew or Israelite nation by Rome was God’s vengeance for all the blood shed from Able up to 70 AD. There had never been anything like it in the past nor would there be in the future.

The Book of Ephesians

In about 63 AD, Paul wrote Ephesians to encourage the New Israel of God. The first century Christians would have been inclined to doubt that King Jesus was in control during the three year war, 67-70 AD, that would soon be upon them, and ending in 70 AD.

Paul assures the new church that evil is not out of control, and that all things were working to accomplish God’s divine purpose. God’s divine purpose had been foretold many times in the law and the prophets, and now even by Christ himself. His purpose was to judge apostate Israel, and replace that apostate nation with His new nation, the **New Israel of God**. With that new nation, **the Father will subdue** the world under the footstool of Jesus Christ. (All of Galatians)

We have the same issue today as it appears that *the whole world lieth in wickedness*, yet we have the same assurance as the first church had; **God’s righteous judgment is at work against apostasy both inside and outside the religious community.**

The whole world lies in wickedness BECAUSE of apostate Christianity.

Eph 2:1. *who were dead...* There is nowhere a clearer statement of the total inability of anyone to choose or to please God any more than could Lazarus who was dead in the tomb could chose to “Come forth.”

A few points about ***the prince***.

FIRST, vv. 2, 3. ***The prince of the power of the air.*** Christ called him ***the prince of this world*** in John 12:31, 14:30 and 16:11. Though Satan is only a prince, he is **the god to those who are not**

following Christ. One either follows Christ or Satan. One is either for Christ or against Him; there is no neutral ground.

SECOND, *the prince dwells in and controls the space round us.* According to **Colossians 1:12**, God has given *the prince limited* power and authority to control of all things, seen and unseen.

We read in **Colossians 1:12** *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: 13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:*

Here Paul assured the believers that their redemption through *Christ's blood* delivered them from the *power of darkness* and *into the kingdom of his dear Son*: providing forgiveness of sin, and heirship to all the promises of God in Christ.

In **Acts 28:18**, the Lord Jesus told Paul, who was on his way to Damascus, that he, Paul, was *To open their (Gentiles) eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

THIRD, *the prince is close at hand.* He is *the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.* This evil *prince* now walks the earth seeking whom he may devour.

But *the prince* can only work according to *the counsel of [God's] own will.* It is in the sovereign will of God the Father that the *power of darkness* (Lk 22:53) have been given the lower region to inhabit and work. In the lower region, they are close at hand to work their mischief in man, and in the world of nature, as happened in Job.

FOURH, Ephesians 2:2, 3, *the prince works in the children of disobedience.*

Note the order here. It is not the "*powers of darkness*" that cause disobedience. Rather, it is **individual's disobedience** that allows the "*powers of darkness*" to work their mischief in him, and thus undermine any godly social order society.

James 1:13 *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: 14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*

James tells us that **sin is man's natural tenancy** which permits the evil "powers" to work in man. In our text **Ephesians 2:4**, we are told that *God, who is rich in mercy*, brought about the new birth. We become a new man with the new desire to live above sin. In His rich mercy; He strips the *powers of darkness* of their power in the lives of those who have trusted in Christ's redeeming work.

That is to say, God permits the temptations from the world, flesh and the devil, but it is man's sinful nature that causes him to yield to those temptation. So, God is not the author of sin; **THE SINNER IS THE AUTHOR OF HIS OWN SIN.**

We have been given the victory over the power of sin, but we must claim that victory daily. According to Romans 8:1 & 2, those who walk after the spirit are freed from the law of sin and death. That is, the *powers of darkness* lose their power over those who walk according to the law of their King.

Paul warns us in Ephesians 4:27 that though the redeemed have been translated into the kingdom of His dear son, the redeemed can give place, or permission, or authority to *the evil prince* to work in them.

Psalms 2 tells us that from the time of the Fall, men have united together to accomplish their evil devices to overthrow God's law-order. However, *the prince* is only doing what fits into the Divine Counsel of our God. **He and his followers** are only doing the pleasure of the **King of kings.**

FIFTH, the prince is in total subjection to Christ. Christ clearly stated in Matthew 28:18 that *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

The prince does not have unlimited power and authority now any more than he had in Job's day when he had to report to God. According to Ephesians 1:11, *the prince* is only doing *according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*

Here we have three sins to confess and turn from:

1. **It is sin to doubt** God's control of all things for His own glory and for the good of His church.
2. **It is sin to attribute** any independent power to Satan as he roams the earth seeking whom he may devour.
3. **It is sin to stress, fret and doubt** God's goodness to the people **who belong** to *him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*

All power belongs to Christ

SIXTH, the evil prince and all those outside of the Kingdom of God are doing the will of God. That includes Bill Gates, George Sorous, Zucerburg, and all of those who feel they can overthrow God, and do their own will on the earth.

Proverbs 19:21 [*There are*] *many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.*

Isaiah 46:10 *Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times [the things] that are not [yet] done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:*

Psalms 76:10 *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*

Ephesians 3:10 tells us **why** God gives the desire to rebel:

Ephesians 3:10 *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: 12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.*

Thus, we are told in Ephesians 3 that the eternal purpose of God is to subdue the world to Christ Jesus our Lord through *the church*. **That is**, through the preaching of the everlasting Gospel of Christ and all that entails. The eternal purpose of God is to show His manifold wisdom to all the principalities and powers. He is **even now using** the church to accomplish His **eternal purpose** as the church obeys the great commission.

Paul assures the new Church that is facing the very soon coming destruction of the world that had existed for 1500 years that all the evil powers of this world are only carrying out God's determinate counsel according to his foreknowledge. (Acts 2:23)

The internal evidence tells us that Revelation was written before the Great Tribulation of Matthew 24, and the destruction of Jerusalem. It was written to assure **not only the new church, but the church of all ages** of God's control of all things.

Here is an amazing verse found in John's assurance of God's control of all things:

Revelation 17:17 *For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.*

It is God who unites the wicked to war against himself.

God's purpose then and now is righteous judgment against apostasy, against those who are at war against His Kingdom. His purpose is the advancement of His kingdom, the glory of His own name, and for the good of all who are the called according to his purpose. One of the most quoted passages in the New Testament is

Psalms 110:1 « A Psalm of David. » *The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. 2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.*

In Ephesians 1:19-23, Paul says that Psalms 110:1 was fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ. In Psalms 110, the Father is speaking to the Son, and He says, *Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*

Though Christ had all power from eternity past, He laid that power aside for 33 years, so He could provide redemption and victory over sin and death for His people. At the resurrection, He was reinstated on His throne, and from that throne all things shall be subdued to Him as the Father does according to His sovereign will in the kingdom of men and devils. And according to 1 Corinthians 15:24-26, only then the end will come.

~~1 Corinthians 15:24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.~~

How will the Father fulfill His promise to the Son? Clearly not by physical, political nor military force, for it is a spiritual warfare. It will be through preaching and teaching of the entire law-word of God. The promise is that the Father **is even now** subduing and even now is making Christ's enemies His *footstool* through the drawing of and conviction by the Spirit of God—that is, Holy Spirit conversion. (Jn 12:32, 17:7, 9, 11, 24. Isa 5:26, 7:18, Zech 10:8.)

Examples of the world-changing gospel:

- 1) "John G. Paton, Missionary to the New Herbrides" gives an amazing account the life of the Presbyterian missionary, and how the gospel changed the cannibals of the Islands into Bible believing and practicing Christians.
- 2) "The Man Who Moved a Mountain" tells how the Presbyterian minister, Bob Childress went to Buffalo Mountain in the Blue Ridge and changed the area from an area of total debauchery to following Christ.

God is **even now** doing *according to his will* in the kingdom of evil men who are serving the world, flesh and the devil with all their heart, soul, mind and might, which includes their money.

SEVENTH, Psalms 2 tells us that *the prince has united all the various powers of darkness, as well as those who are dead in trespasses and sin*, to counsel together to establish a strong and united power against *the Lord and his anointed*. Their goal is to cast off the binding cords of God's law.

As we saw in Revelation 17:17, it is the Lord who gives the wicked the desire to council together in their rebellion against Himself. God is the one who gives the Bill Gates of the world the finances and the desire to overthrow the Kingdom of God on earth through any means possible. But the **Revelation** shows us that in the end, Christ will triumph.

Our battle is a spiritual battle against the evil forces that inhabit the world around us.

In **Ephesians 6:12** we are told that *we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

The *rulers of the darkness of this world* appear to be prospering, which encourages the wicked in their evil deeds.

In Ecclesiastes 8:11, the Wise Man tells us that the **failure to enforce justice and quickly punish evil deeds leads to more evil deeds.**

David in Psalms 37 and Asaph in Psalms 73 both complained about the prosperity of the wicked while the righteous suffer.

But the Saints are warned by the King Himself that we “*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*” **John 7:24.** “*Righteous judgment*” tells us that **all things are even now working together for the good of the Elect and according to “the counsel of his own will.”**

We must not let current disconcerting events around us get our minds off of Romans 8:37 *Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

As we see the strength of the enemy, we are tempted to take our eyes off the Lord and His promise of victory in human history over all His enemies. He even now fulfilling the promise in Psalms 110:1.

EIGHTH, the prince is not a god nor is he a king. Rather, he is a liar and the father of lies. He presents himself as something he is not, and those who believe his lies are captive to him. Paul has already made it clear in **Ephesians 1:21** that Christ is the King and absolute Ruler over everything that can be named in heaven above, on earth and under the earth.

2 Corinthians 4:3 *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

V. 4 is the only place where Satan can be identified as a god. Elsewhere he is identified as simply a lower power, a *prince*. According to A.T. Robertson, *god of this world* means **god of this age** which is not an uncommon usage. Satan did claim unlimited rule over the world in his temptations with Christ.

Dealing with Psalms 82:6, Albert Barnes’ points out that Satan is god to those who subject themselves to the powers of darkness that operate within his realm of authority. Thus, “*the children of disobedience*” are **his willing subjects**, and Satan keeps them locked in their deadly path to destruction. Only the One Who has the keys to death and hell can deliver them from their dark prison, and place them in His glorious light.

NINTH, the prince blinds his followers.

hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

The “*god of this world*” blinds those who serve the gods of lust, pride, fame, glory, the god of money. Basically, **they serve the god of self**. Their god, the *god of this world* blinds them to the glorious gospel, and the freedom promised by the gospel. Only the Spirit’s call to obedience to the gospel can free the sinner from Satan’s area of dominion, to serve the living God. It is the Lord God who must replace the “*god of this world*” with Himself.

Ephesians 2:4 ¶ *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*

Paul gives the purpose of being quickened together with Christ. It is far more than simply heaven, for he continues in **v. 10** *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

That is, the purpose of our salvation is *good works* empowered by the Spirit of Grace; that is, works of the Law-word of God might work to bring glory to God.

We are warned by the King Himself that we must not *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.* **John 7:24.** *Righteous judgment tells us that all things are even now working together for the good of the Elect and according to “the counsel of his own will.”*

Let us rejoice in the assurance of Ephesians 1:11 *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who **worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:***

Let us pray.

Father, we pray that thy throne will be established in our hearts. Let thy laws be administered in our lives, and thy name magnified by our words and actions. Give us grace, faith and boldness to claim our area of dominion for your Kingdom. We pray that you will hasten the day when Satan and his hosts shall be completely vanquished, when Thy people shall be done with sinning forever, and when Christ shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. Through Christ who gave himself for us, Amen