

## 1 John 5:19 (NKJV)

<sup>19</sup> **We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway of the wicked one.***

What is the problem with the world?

It is interesting to watch the world system's experts answer that question. Every decade brings a new focus that is sure to repair this fallen world. And every decade it fails and the focus gets changed on finding a new fix.

What is the root problem?

You can find books saying the root problem is **economics**. If people just had enough resources everything would be better. Some say it is **political**. If the government did what it should, all would be better. I saw a sign on facebook with a bunch of 20 year old sages standing around it that said that Capitalism is the problem. Socialism is the solution. It was a clear example of errant belief. Some say the root problem is **sociological**. If we got rid of all the so called systemic evils, like racism, all would be better. Some say it is **information**. If people were truly educated, all would be better.

And there is just enough evidence available to seduce people into thinking that the rat's wheel they are spinning on actually leads to a destination.

The world we live in, the world under the devil's power, is more and more resistant to the idea that **sin** is the problem. The propaganda of the devil is removing this from our western world as even being a **viable problem** with a **specific solution**. You can spot the trends by people giving off the street interviews and what the assumptions are that they hold. Look for Ray Comfort's videos online. He does street evangelism and we get to see what these people actually think. There was a time not so long ago that popular opinion held that Christianity was at least a **viable option**, maybe an option that was **more valid morally** than other responses. People were more likely to see themselves as having **strayed** from something superior. But the devil is working hard to **remove** that mindset. **Now**, when we speak about Christ to the world around us we have **different ideological barriers** to overcome than even 60 years ago.

And this world cannot be ultimately improved. Its antagonism toward believers has ebbed and flowed. But the **world** is ultimately the **world**. If we think to improve its nature, we are on a fools errand. It cannot be done any more than the devil can be reformed. We may stand for social causes and have some success, but we will not change the **nature of the beast**. The best test of the world is how willing it is to submit to the Person and rule and word of Jesus Christ. And when put to that test, the world always fails.

So ....How about us? What do **we** really think? What is **my** problem? What do **we** think that... if I just had this thing, I would be happy? If I just had this, I would be better? Do you see the problem? It is just taking the **world's** thinking and applying it to **ourselves**.

We Christians should be people who are crystal clear about the problem in this world. There is a plaque we sometimes hang at the fair that sums it up:

Life is short

Death is sure

Sin is the problem

Christ is the cure

There are lots of complicated issues in this world. But the core problem, and the core solution, are ultra simple. Sin is the problem. The sin in my life and the sin in your life and the sin in the lives of the people around us are the source of the world's problems. The sin domain of the devil is the problem. And the cure is to be set free of the **power** of sin in this life and the **presence** of sin in the next.

I don't think we can even fully imagine what our lives would be like without sin. It is so much a part of us that we have no idea what life would be **in its absence**.

Our relational defenses, our constant fighting our own proclivities to think wrongly and to do wrongly, those things are like a static that is always playing on our favorite radio station. Sin tempts us, distracts us, and when we partake of it, it punishes us. It causes misery in us and those we love. It causes wars between individuals and countries.

Yes sin is the problem.

And sin has a champion. There is a being who **stands** for sin. He is **committed** to it. He is the epitome of evil. He is the **pro** evil doer. And his fingerprints are on all the atrocities done on this planet. He is the EVIL ONE. The WICKED ONE.

And God has allowed him a degree of control on this planet. He heads up the world that is in rebellion against God. He is in charge of what the Bible calls the **world** and all **worldliness**. He is the chief tempter and accuser.

What do we know about this evil one?

Most scholars believe Satan shows up in Genesis 3:1.

### **Genesis 3:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

The serpent is all that is mentioned. It never identifies the serpent as the Devil. But we have several clues.

**First** if you look at what the serpent says, it has all the marks and intents of the Devil.

**Second**, the serpent was never questioned about his actions. The guilt was assumed and there was no opportunity for repentance.

**Third**, the Devil is referred to as the serpent in Rev 12:9

**Fourth**, the prophecy in the serpent's curse is that **Genesis 3:15 (NKJV)**

<sup>15</sup> **And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."**

We see that believers are referred to as having the devil **under their feet**.

**Romans 16:20 (NKJV)** <sup>20</sup> **And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.** So it looks like the serpents curse and the devil's curse are similar.

**Fifth**, the devil is called the father of lies. He was the originator of lies. The lies that the serpent told came from the Devil, one way or the other. We don't have any record of lies prior to that.

I think it is safe to assume that the **serpent** was directly controlled by the devil and did all of the devil's bidding. The temptation, while coming out of the mouth of a snake was coming out of the heart of the devil.

By the way we should consider this deeply. Whenever we are **tempted to sin**, this is who is, one way or the other, behind it. And look at what his intent is toward human kind. He **never intended** for Adam and Eve to have **something good**. He wanted them to grab for something he convinced them was **good** so they could lose that which was **most precious**. That is the devil's will for your life when he draws your attention to that forbidden fruit. Just remember, if it is truly good for you, if it truly would lend to your eternal happiness, the devil would never offer it to you.

OK so **what is the devil?**

Most people think he was a fallen angel. This is why.

**Matthew 25:41 (NKJV)**

<sup>41</sup> **Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:**

**Revelation 12:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> **So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.**

**Luke 10:18-20 (NKJV)**

<sup>18</sup> **And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.**

<sup>19</sup> **Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and**

**over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.**

**<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."**

I am not sure that scripture ever tells us specifically that the devil is a fallen angel, but since we don't know of any other beings in heaven, we usually assume that he was an angel. All of his cohorts are fallen angels.

OK so the devil showed up in the fall of man in the garden of Eden.

He was originally in heaven and welcome there, but he rebelled against God, taking angels with him in his rebellion.

Since then he has been attempting to do harm to humans in expression of his deep hatred of God.

We saw in 1 John that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil.

And in Colossians 2:15 (NKJV) we see <sup>15</sup> **Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.**

Christ **overcame** Satan's damning influence over humanity. He set any follower of His **free** from the **power** of the devil's domain and the ultimate curse of fallenness. Christ brings **life** where there was only **death**.

Now in order not to misunderstand the devil's power, let's look at a few more verses.

**Job 1:6-7 (NKJV)**

**<sup>6</sup> Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.**

**<sup>7</sup> And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."**

**Job 1:12 (NKJV)**

**<sup>12</sup> And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has *is* in your power; only do not lay a hand on his *person*." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.**

**Job 2:6 (NKJV)**

**<sup>6</sup> And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he *is* in your hand, but spare his life."**

It is important that we think clearly about the devil's power. The only power he has is **allowed by God**. There is no great struggle between God and the devil.

The day God wants the devil's influence to stop, it will stop. When God speaks the word, it will be done. Even now, the devil can only do what God allows him to do. We are told that greater is He who is in you than He who is in the world. We need to always keep that perspective. We need not fear the devil because God

has **always been infinitely stronger** than the devil and Christ has **overcome the damning influence of the devil** in the humans who follow Christ.

So what power is he left with?

He is the prince and power of the air. He is the father of all humans who live in rebellion against God. He is allowed to control their actions to a limited degree. What the devil tempted Christ with when he took him aside and offered his temptations, he may have had the ability to temporarily deliver on them. The devil can shape the wills of any human who is not IN CHRIST. Satan, unlike God, does not require willing and worshipful submission by humans. He is happy to let them think that they are **their own kings of their own lives**. He is happy to rule them without them having any idea that he is doing so. The devil has no integrity. He has power over his realm, to the degree God allows it. But he has no goodness but fake goodness. He **presents** himself as an angel of light. But he never **is** one. Scripture gives us some clues to the limits of Satan's power. Scripture tells us that it is God who places people in political power and that it is he who determines the boundaries of countries. So we see that the devil's **control**, even in his **own realm**, is not **absolute**.

And the most wonderful thing is that when Christ chooses a person that He is going to save, the devil is completely **powerless** against such a thing. The Holy Spirit will relentlessly pursue that person until the person turns in repentance to God. It has got to be frustrating to the devil that he can do nothing against those attempts. He has lots of power in **those who are his**. He can even steal away the word from them when presented, like in the parable of the sower. But he can do nothing to God's elect but bluster and make suggestions. He cannot make us do anything. He can, however, lay in front of us temptations that take us to the brink of that which would be too much to face. We are told **he can never cross that line**. God will not allow it. Satan can try as he might to destroy us. He can throw things at us that we have revealed to him, by our actions, that they are highly tempting. He and his demons appear to be free to watch our actions and gather information. But they cannot read our minds. And they cannot control our actions. They cannot create a temptation that we, in the power of God's truth and God's Spirit cannot resist. The gates of hell, the devil's greatest effort to wall in his people, will not prevail against the pursuit of God **for His people**.

Satan's destination is the lake of fire forever and ever. And His doom, as Martin Luther said, is sure.

We can praise God, even in the midst of severe trials and temptation, that God has the devil under His control.

Now remember that we looked at this verse last week.

**1 John 5:18 (NKJV)**

**<sup>18</sup> We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.**

The words for “touch him” are the same words as used by Jesus telling Mary not to cling to him prior to Him going to be with His Father. That is the kind of touching the devil would like to be free to do to us. He would like to cling to us and not let us go. He would like us not to be able to leave his presence and his kingdom.

But our verse this morning tells us the opposite. The devil does have the whole world under his sway. He is holding onto his own. He is actively and continually touching them. But he cannot do that to us.

**the whole world lies *under the sway of the wicked one.***

I think that it is interesting here that John is not saying this so we will assume a fetal position and wait for the world to end. He is not saying it out of anger for what all **wicked things** people in this world **will do**. If he were here and watching the arena of the world in the United States, he would not be distraught with how evil can seem to prevail. There is no fear in his statement that the world lies under the sway of the wicked one. It is just **factual**. Just like John wanted his hearers to understand **how to have joy** and to **have it** based on the **certainty of their salvation**. He wanted them to know that those forces that seem to have great power of destruction in this world **cannot** grab hold and destroy a believer. The devil does not have that power. We can fixate on those things that we prefer the world would be. We might cling to wanting things how they used to be. We can allow ourselves to believe any lie for a while. And our wrong expectations regarding this world can certainly make us miserable. But neither **the world** nor **the Satan that controls this world** has any power over us.

And in fact, when we look at the world as described by John, does that not promote in us a sympathy? There is a sense that all the human beings under Satan’s control are the devil’s victims. Those who mouth blasphemous insults at God are only doing what **their father**, the devil, **drives them to**. They are damned. They are blind. How did **we** like having a father like that when we were **unsaved?**

What if we regarded the news clips with **that belief?** How would that change things? Might we not find ourselves praying more for those who exhibit such

wickedness? Might it not drive us to want to find a way to reach out to people like that that we know. Might **despair** turn into **mission**? Might we not begin to pray with the ferocity that the state of this world **deserves** and **needs**? Truth sets us free. Where we are **not** free, look for the **truth**, because there is **truth** that **WILL** set us free. When our lives do not resemble what scripture says our lives should look like, when the fruit of the spirit and the fruit of our lives look different, look for the truth in scripture that will free you from the wrong thinking. It is there. We need to believe God.

**the whole world lies *under the sway of the wicked one***

Martyn Lloyd-Jones says this

**That, according to scripture, is the view of life in this world. Men and women were made for God and were meant to serve God and enjoy Him; but they are in the grip of Satan. So they hate the name of God, and because of this, they are unhappy. They are unhappy with themselves; they cannot find satisfaction; they are unhappy with other people because they blame them for their trouble. They do not say that it is in themselves- they are all little gods fighting with one another, jealous and envious of one another. That is the meaning of the state of the world according to the Bible. "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" The answer is "Come they not hence, even of your lusts...?"**

OK but then what about us? What about we Christians?

<sup>19</sup> **We know that we are of God,**

Do you know that?

Do you know that?

Do you know that?

We must know this. We must be certain of this. If we are to see **the world** as it is we must know this. If we are to see **our lives** as they truly are in the light of eternity, we must know this.

If we are to have **joy**, we must know this.

If we are to live a **life of obedience**, we must know this.

We must know that our salvation is not primarily about something I decided at one point in my life.

My salvation is not primarily about how effective I have been at obeying God.

My salvation is not primarily about having chosen the right set of beliefs as opposed to the wrong set.

My salvation is not primarily about how well I understand scripture and can explain it to someone else.

No, all those things are important. But they are all results, not causes.

Our salvation is primarily about **God** taking us from the **Devil's kingdom** when we were under the power of our father the devil and his domain of sin.

Our salvation is what **He did** to bring us to Himself, to present the truth of Himself to us, and to move upon our hearts to where we **gladly** responded to His call on our lives.

Our salvation is about Christ taking us as a **child of the Devil** and making us a **child of God**.

Our salvation is about a total miracle accomplished by the power of God.

That is what we must know.

Do **you** know that?

That is the necessary understanding of your salvation if you are to have the Joy that John describes. That is the thing we **must be certain of** before we can be **certain of all the other things** John tells us about believers.

I want to quote the following verses, not so much because anything I am saying is new or needs proven to us, but because it is frankly so wonderful.

Every day we wake up in the same bed, we may go through the same habits, we eat the same foods, we go through our days. And it is easy to lose sight of the spiritual reality that surrounds our lives.

If we had a monitor that we could **spiritually** see from space every **child that is God's**, we would see ourselves light up that screen. We would be surrounded by those that are just gray moving bodies. But **ours** would light up. That is the spiritual reality of what Christ has done.

**Galatians 1:3-5 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup> **Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,**

<sup>4</sup> **who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,**

<sup>5</sup> **to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.**

**Colossians 1:13-14 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> **He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,**

<sup>14</sup> **in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Rom**

**Romans 6:4 (NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> **Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.**



## Romans 6:14 (NKJV)

<sup>14</sup> **For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.**

Do you see the wonder of it all? We are not **partially** saved. We are not, in the sense of **being justified** in the process of **arriving at salvation**. If we are in Christ we are as secure in our salvation as we are ever going to be. In that sense we are as saved as we ever will be. Our light is either on or off.

If you are not sure of that this morning, let's talk. This is the kind of thing we **can** be sure of. And we **should** be sure of.

God has performed a miracle in the life of every true believer. That believing person is in His kingdom and the devil cannot lay hold of him ever again.

But we need to remember that we are still living in a **hostile world**.

This world is a **danger** to us. It is all the time trying to infiltrate us. The devil, if he cannot destroy us, if he cannot get us in his control, wants to **remove God's blessings** from our lives. He wants to turn our **peace** into **anxiety**. He wants to turn our **love for our brothers** into **discord and distrust**. He wants to turn our **obedience** to Christ into **disobedience**. He wants to turn our **confidence** into **uncertainty**. And He can accomplish that if we choose to live in unbelief.

Our flesh wars against the spirit. If you are not fighting, you are losing. That is just how the spiritual life is. You cannot drift. Drifting always goes in the wrong direction.

And while we are fighting, we are also constantly needing to be cleansed from this world. It's residue is always being collected by us and we need to get cleaned from it. That is why we pray like Christ taught us, continually asking to be forgiven of that which we take on that does not resemble Christ.

So if someone were to point to all the political drama in our world today and they were to ask you, **what needs to be done to solve this?** What is it that would make this world better? What would you say?

And if you were asked, what is different about you? Why are you not in turmoil about the bad things that can happen in this world stage, what would you say?

Do you believe that our brother John has all the right answers? If so, our lives should be a shining light in these times of uncertainty.

**the whole world lies *under the sway of the wicked one*. But we know that we are of God**