

Meeting With Christ

Practical and Exegetical Studies on the Words of Jesus Christ

Yves I-Bing Cheng, M.D., M.A.

Based on sermons of Pastor Eric Chang

www.meetingwithchrist.com

SATAN DEMANDED TO HAVE YOU (2)

Luke 22:31-34

This is the second lesson on Luke 22:31-34 where Jesus reveals that Peter is the object of satanic attack and He has been praying for him. Let's read the story.

Luke 22:31. "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren."

33 And he said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death."

34 He said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you three times deny that you know me."

The situation is extremely serious. Satan has demanded to have all the apostles so that he can sift them like wheat. It seems that the request has been already granted. 'Sifting someone like wheat' expresses a destructive intention. The picture is that of a grain in a sieve, where the head of the grain is taken apart. In English, we would say, 'picking someone to pieces' or 'tearing someone apart.'

Satan, the accuser

We saw in the previous lesson that every time a person sins, this person exposes himself to Satan's power. When a person sins, Satan has the legal right to bring the case before God with an accusation. We saw that the very word 'devil,' *diabolos*, means 'accuser'. In the heavenly court of justice, Satan is the accuser, the accuser of men, particularly of Christians.

There is an allusion to this heavenly court of justice in Zechariah 3:1 where God gave a vision to the prophet Zechariah. This vision is basically a judicial scene with three main actors. Joshua is the person being accused. He is standing in front of the Angel of the Lord. The accuser of Joshua is Satan. He is standing at the right hand of the Angel of the Lord. The Judge is the Angel of the Lord. Joshua was wearing filthy garments, which represented his sin and guilt, and that of the nation. What particular sin or sins were brought up by Satan is hard to say. But the point that I want to emphasize is that by our sins, we give Satan spiritual material for reproach and accusation. In that particular case, Joshua was acquitted. This is seen in the removal of Joshua's filthy clothes (v. 4).

Remember that in the case of Job, Satan was allowed to sift Job. Job was handed over into his power as the result of the following argument. Satan said to God, 'Job is committed to you, true, but it is only because you have sheltered him so much. You have given him so many blessings! How can he not love you? But just remove your protection around him and I will show you that his commitment to

you is nothing but sham.’ Satan made a point that God could not deny. And we know the rest of the story. Job suffered a long series of calamities instigated by Satan.

God’s legal obligation

Here is something very important to understand. In any legal proceedings, when the jury decides that the accusation against you is true, the judge has to put the verdict against you, no matter how much he hates having to do it. Under the terms of justice, he has to do it. He has no choice. And punishment must follow.

We cannot really understand God’s love if we do not understand the judicial aspect of the spiritual life. If God is going to save us, even God Himself cannot forgive us with the wave of the hand because He cannot deny who He is. He cannot contradict His own nature, which is justice and which is holy. And under the terms of justice, His own justice, there has to be a penalty for our sins. God is perfectly loving, yes, but he is also perfectly righteous and just. So the dilemma God was facing is this: as much as He wanted to save sinful men, at the same time, He has to judge and punish sin. How could He do both? Only in this way: God had to send His own Son to earth to die for man. He had to give His Son in order to bear the guilt and punishment of sin for man. He had to send His Son to bear the justice and judgment of God against sin.

You see, God’s act of love in allowing Jesus to be crucified has to be understood in the context of God’s legal obligation. Being perfectly just, He was willing to cast the wrath of His justice against his own Son when God took the sins of men upon Himself.

It is only in the light of His justice that His love becomes meaningful. Then we can really appreciate how much it cost Him to secure our redemption.

This means also that Satan can use that same justice against us every time we sin. Every time we sin, Satan has a case in his hand that he can use against us. You can be sure that he will take pleasure to plead his case before God. And God has to respond to that case. He has to act upon it. God has no choice. It is a matter of justice that has to be settled. Remember. It is the same justice that sent Jesus to the cross.

Now understand this well. It will be very difficult for our advocate, i.e. Jesus, to defend our case if we conduct ourselves inappropriately. As you know, in the human court of law, the person being defended can take the case out of the hands of his lawyer by dismissing him or by behaving in such a way as to make the lawyer’s work impossible. Satan is determined to put you in his power and break you up. And he is going to use everything that he knows of God’s justice to demand to gain possession of you. It is possible to tie the hands of our advocate, Jesus, by conducting ourselves in such a way that He can no longer do anything for us. Remember this. God cannot deny Himself. He cannot just do anything without regard to justice. In Matthew 13:58, we read that Jesus did few miracles in Nazareth because of people’s unbelief. Their lack of faith tied Jesus’ hands. In the same way, we can tie Jesus’ hand as our advocate by our disobedience.

What then should be our conduct? Let us read 1John 2:1-2: *My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate* (Jesus is our advocate, our defense lawyer) *with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;* ² (Why do we have an advocate? Because He is the expiation for our sins.) *and he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.*

Jesus’ death is sufficient to cover the sins of the whole world. But does that mean that the sins of the whole world are automatically covered? No, of course. What has to happen? Let us go back two verses earlier, 1John 1:9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Here is the condition: there has to be a confession. That is the

fundamental requirement. When sin happens, if we want to put the matter right, confession is absolutely necessary. If we fail to confess, that is when we are making our advocate's work impossible. How can he defend us? When we understand Satan's activity on matters of justice, we will never take sin lightly.

Satan, the tormentor

The devil is not only the accuser, he is also the tormentor. In the Bible, Satan is spoken of as a tormentor, i.e., the person who carries out the penalty for sin. Let us look at a few examples of this.

In Luke 13:16, Jesus says this. *And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?* This is the account of a woman who was bound physically by Satan for 18 years. We are told that she was bent over, completely unable to stand up straight. Imagine being in that position for all those years. This means that some time ago, some 18 years ago, this woman did something that caused her to come under Satan's power. Satan did not miss the opportunity to do his destructive work. He crippled her body for 18 years. And here, Jesus set her free.

In 1 Corinthians 5:5, we find these words of Paul. *You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.* The destruction of the flesh means the destruction of the body. It is to die physically. What was the accusation? Sexual immorality. This man had sinned in such a way that justice demanded a heavy penalty. And who carries out the execution? The man is handed over to Satan.

There is another kind of execution, a spiritual execution. This is what Satan did with Judas. He finished Judas off, not only physically but also spiritually. Judas was so desperate, so tormented, that he saw no other solution to his situation than to hang himself. He preferred to be dead rather than being alive and having to face his problems. But why didn't Judas repent? Why didn't he confess his wrongdoing and plead the mercies of God? Because it was too late. He went on his own disobedient way until Satan got full control of him. We find in Luke 22:3 one of the most chilling sentences of the Bible: *Then Satan entered into Judas.* The moment Satan entered Judas, that was the end of Judas – spiritually. When Satan went into Judas, on Judas' own consent, there was no way that Satan was going to get out again. Judas was finished.

Satan in the heavenly places

Here is a curious question for you. You will understand later why I am asking that question. Do you know where is Satan right now? Satan is of course on earth, doing his work of deceiving the nations, blinding the minds of the unbelievers and tempting the believers to commit evil. But did you know that Satan has access to heavenly places? Not only is Satan on earth, but he is also, presently, in heaven. Let us read Revelations 12:7-9.

*Revelation 12:7. Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,
8 but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.
9 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.*

A war broke out in heaven, involving Michael and his angels, and Satan and his fallen angels. In the end, Satan was defeated and thrown out of heaven. The eviction of Satan from heaven will happen just before the coming of Christ's kingdom, which is still future. But at this moment, he still has access to heaven. Now we need to ask that question. What is Satan doing there in heaven right

now? He is doing the same thing that he was doing against Joshua in the vision God gave to Zechariah. He is talking to God and pleading his case against the believers, demanding to have each one of them under his power.

*Revelation 12:10. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for **the accuser of our brethren** has been thrown down, **who accuses them before our God day and night.***

Here Satan is described as the accuser of the brethren. He accuses the Christians of their sins before God. And notice. He does that day and night. Day and night, Satan will point out to God every failure that he can find of a believer. Every time a believer sins, Satan can say to God, 'You see, the death of your beloved Son was wasted and useless. It was not worth the sacrifice if this Christian is going to trample the blood of Christ like that. He says he loves Christ. Well, I would say that his love is hypocritical. He doesn't care about you. If he does, he wouldn't disobey your word. This Christian is not worth all the pain that you felt when you sent Jesus to the cross. Just hand him over to me.'

Let me remind you again. At this moment, Satan is in heaven, in the court of justice, bringing accusations and indictments against the Christians. Let us then take heed that we give him no cause of accusation against us. Let us conduct ourselves in a manner that will not hinder the work of our Advocate in defending us.

The Lord Jesus knew that Peter's commitment was not quite as strong as he thought. He was not denying his sincerity, but he was concerned about the strength of his commitment. Therefore Jesus said, *but I have prayed for you.* Here is a word of comfort for us. We may not know how strong is our commitment, perhaps because we have never been tested seriously. But if we are able to say in all sincerity, like Peter, 'Lord, I'm willing to suffer with you and to die,' even though our commitment may not be as strong as that, if it were to be tested, the Lord will take into account our sincerity. He will intercede for us on the basis of the genuineness of our commitment. We may not be as strong as we think, but we can be sure that in the hour of trial, Jesus will not let us down. He will pray for me and for you.

I have prayed for you

I would like to make another comment about Jesus' intercession. When we talk about salvation, we always stress, with good reason, the death of Christ. He died for me to save me. His blood covered my guilt and my sins. We see that as the chief evidence of His love. Well, I would like to give you another major evidence of His love. You see, his love for me is expressed not merely in the fact that he died for me in the past, but also in the fact that he intercedes for me right now, through all the days of my life. Let's read Hebrews 7:23-25.

Hebrews 7:23. Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office;

24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood.

25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Notice the last sentence. 'He is able to save completely those who come to God because he always lives to intercede for them.' How is Jesus able to save us completely? As our High Priest, Christ is our advocate. He lives eternally to intercede for those who come to God. By interceding for us. That is how he is able to save us forever. He does in heaven what is necessary to obtain for us grace and strength. He constantly looks after our interests, presenting our requests to the Father, defending us against the devil's charges. By His perpetual intercession for us before God, Jesus is able to save us day by day. So salvation is not just a matter of Jesus dying on the cross for me. It is also a matter of Jesus praying for me everyday

But Jesus is not the only one who is praying. We have another intercessor. Who is he? This second intercessor is the Holy Spirit.

*Romans 8:26. And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but **the Spirit Himself intercedes for us** with groanings too deep for words; 27 and **He** who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because **He intercedes for the saints** according to the will of God.*

Jesus intercedes up there in the heavenly court, at the right hand of the Father. The Holy Spirit intercedes down here, if we can put it like that, pleading on our behalf from here, with groanings that words cannot express. Two intercessors pleading our case.

But intercession is not the responsibility of the Lord and of the Holy Spirit only. It is also our responsibility. 1Timothy 2:1: *Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.* Paul says that the saints are also to intercede, and he uses four different words: supplication, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving. Although God is all-powerful and all-knowing, He has chosen to let us help Him change the world through our prayers.

So through the intercession of the Lord Jesus, through the intercession of the Holy Spirit, and through the intercession of righteous men, things do happen for the benefit of God's kingdom. How this works is a mystery, but we know that it is a reality of the spiritual world.