

Has Christ destroyed the works of the devil?

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"Can it be positively asserted that the Lord Jesus Christ *has* destroyed the works of the devil?"

Not according to the scripture which states, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy (or loose) the works of the devil." (1 John 3: 8.)

The word here rendered from the Greek into English, "destroy," occurs forty-two times in the New Testament, and is commonly and correctly rendered "loose" in most places, as in Matthew 21: 2, "Loose" the ass tied; John 11: 44, "Loose" Lazarus from his graveclothes; Luke 13: 16, "Ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound eighteen years, to be 'loosed'?" To "loose" a shoe string; "loose" the seven seals; "loose" the four angels, etc. etc.

The One that wrote this was God the Holy Spirit; and, naturally enough, as God, the range of His view was God's glory. Men that have got away from God until God lays hold of them measure everything by its bearing upon man down here. If, however, individually God meets them, that stops, and the thought that supplants it is certainly, I am ruined, lost, and undone; what can I do to be saved? The hard, careless souls go on, arguing against the word of God as unintelligible, untrue, very difficult; but they seek not to receive from God the explanation of what is difficult.

To me the meaning of the passage is very simple. Satan's works in the garden of Eden (and the same has been true ever since) have been to make God appear to man as niggardly — refusing to man, and, as a tyrant, seeking to reap where He had not sowed, and to gather where He had not strawed. God had made the world by His Son and for His Son, and Eden with everything in it suited to man's enjoyment was there; given it all freely, all to be his, until he set up in independence of God. (Gen. 3.) Satan begins with the weaker vessel, suggesting that what struck him most in the whole matter was prohibition on God's part. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (v. 1.) The woman replies — not carefully, answering according to what God had said to Adam. Satan suggests that God had told a lie. "Ye shall not surely die" (v. 4), and then as a reason for it insinuates that God wanted to keep from man the privilege of full intelligence and of being as God, knowing good and evil. (v. 6.) Eve, turning to think of herself, falls under his power.

Here was the first work of Satan as to man — presenting God as a God of prohibition, untruthfulness, and jealousy of man, lest he should get what pertained to God alone.

The gift by God of His Son, and that Son going down to death, the death of the cross, that He might break the bands of Satan's forging, and that whosoever might be free to follow Him, and share His throne and home, spoiled the work of Satan. The same thing has gone on over and over again, on Satan's part against God's character, and on man's part to his own deeper ruin; and so the interference of God through Christ and the Spirit have been renewed times out of mind. And is it a hard thing, or contrary to free gift, if God who knows that the blessing of every one depends upon

His maintaining His own glory as the first thing to be thought of, and working thereunto by His Son and Spirit, if He leaves to man to choose whether he will be of the seed of the woman, fight against Satan, and go to the glory in the end, or of the seed of the serpent? From the fall to the final doom of Satan "my Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said the Lord; and truly if Christ had not made you and me willing in the day of His power, we should both have been under Satan and the world, and in

ourselves still.

Adam and Eve's stock were sold by them under sin and Satan; and they cannot say, while they talk of innocency, of not being worse than others, of doing God's will, of the value of souls, etc., that they subserve God's glory. But a Saul turned into a Paul, and an active agent in the war between God and Satan is so, and can say so. To measure everything by man's advantage is sin. I am sure you will say so. God's honour and character Christ came to vindicate. And men will to go down; He needs, and will have, and loves to draw to Himself for heaven. G. V. W.