

From “Christ the Spoiler of Principalities and Powers,” a sermon by Charles Spurgeon on Colossians 2:15 (“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it”):

(1) Deeper in woe the Saviour dived, imagination cannot descend. A blacker calumny than was cast on him satanic malice could not invent.

(2) How different however is the view which presents itself to the eye of faith. Faith knows no shame in the cross, except the shame of those who nailed the Saviour there; it sees no ground for scorn, but it hurls indignant scorn at sin, the enemy which pierced the Lord. Faith sees woe, indeed, but from this woe it marks a fount of mercy springing. It is true it mourns a dying Saviour, but it beholds him bringing life and immortality to light at the very moment when his soul was eclipsed in the shadow of death. Faith regards the cross, not as the emblem of shame, but as the token of glory. The sons of Belial lay the cross in the dust, but the Christian makes a constellation of it, and sees it glittering in the seventh heaven.

(3) Satan, leagued with sin and death, had made this world the home of woe. The Prince of the power of the air, fell usurper, not content with his dominions in hell, must need invade this fair earth. He found our first parents in the midst of Eden; he tempted them to forego their allegiance to the King of heaven; and they became at once his bondslaves—bondslaves forever, if the Lord of heaven had not interposed to ransom them. The voice of mercy was heard while the fetters were being rivetted upon their feet, crying, “Ye shall yet be free!” In the fulness of time there shall come one who shall bruise the serpent’s head, and shall deliver his prisoners from the house of their bondage. Long did the promise tarry. The earth groaned and travailed in its bondage. Man was Satan’s slave, and heavy were the clanking chains which were upon his soul. At last, in

the fulness of time, the Deliverer came forth, born of a woman. This infant conqueror was but a span long. He lay in the manger—he who was one day to bind the old dragon and cast him into the bottomless pit, and set a seal upon him. When the old serpent knew that his enemy was born, he conspired to put him to death; he leagued with Herod to seek the young child that he might destroy him. But the providence of God preserved the future conqueror; he went down into Egypt, and there was he hidden for a little season. Anon, when he had come to fulness of years, he made his public advent, and began to preach liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. Then Satan again shot forth his arrows, and sought to end the existence of the woman's seed. Once the Jews took up stones to stone him; nor did they fail to repeat the attempt. They sought to cast him down from the brow of a hill headlong. By all manner of devices they laboured to take away his life, but his hour was not yet. Dangers might surround him, but he was invulnerable till the time was come. At last the tremendous day arrived. Foot to foot the conqueror must fight with the dread tyrant. A voice was heard in heaven, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." And Christ himself exclaimed, "Now is the crisis of this world; now must the prince of darkness be cast out." From the table of communion the Redeemer arose at midnight, and marched forth to the battle. How dreadful was the contest! In the very first onset the mighty conqueror seemed himself to be vanquished. Beaten to the earth at the first assault, he fell upon his knees and cried, "My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me." Revived in strength, made strong by heaven, he no longer quailed, and from this hour never did he utter a word which looked like renouncing the fight. From the terrible skirmish all red with bloody sweat, he dashed into the thick of the battle. The kiss of Judas was, as it were, the first sounding of the trumpet; Pilate's bar was the glittering of the spear; the cruel lash was the crossing of the swords. But the cross was the centre of the battle; there, on the top of Calvary,

must the dread fight of eternity be fought. Now must the Son of God arise, and gird his sword upon his thigh. Dread defeat or glorious conquest awaits the Champion of the church. Which shall it be? We hold our breath with anxious suspense while the storm is raging. I hear the trumpet sound. The howlings and yells of hell rise in awful clamour. The pit is emptying out its legions. Terrible as lions, hungry as wolves, and black as night, the demons rush on in myriads. Satan's reserve forces, those who had long been kept against this day of terrible battle, are roaring from their dens. See how countless their armies, and how fierce their countenances. Brandishing his sword the arch fiend leads the van, bidding his followers fight neither with small nor great, save only with the King of Israel. Terrible are the leaders of the battle. Sin is there, and all its innumerable offspring, spitting forth the venom of asps, and infixing their poison-fangs in the Saviour's flesh. Death is there upon his pale horse, and his cruel dart rends its way through the body of Jesus even to his inmost heart. He is "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Hell comes, with all its coals of juniper and fiery darts. But chief and head amongst them is Satan; remembering well the ancient day Christ hurled him from the battlements of heaven, he rushes with all his malice yelling to the attack. The darts shot into the air are so thick that they blind the sun. Darkness covers the battle-field, and like that of Egypt it was a darkness which might be felt. Long does the battle seem to waver, for there is but one against many. One man—nay, tell it, lest any should misunderstand me, one God stands in battle array against ten thousands of principalities and powers. On, on they come, and he receives them all. Silently at first he permits their ranks to break upon him, too terribly enduring hardness to spare a thought for shouting. But at last the battle-cry is heard. He who is fighting for his people begins to shout, but it is a shout which makes the church tremble. He cries, "I thirst." The battle is so hot upon him, and the dust so thick that he is choked with thirst. He cries, "I thirst." Surely, now, he is about to be defeated?

Wait awhile; see ye yon heaps; all these have fallen beneath his arm, as for the rest fear not the issue. The enemy is but rushing to his own destruction. In vain his fury and his rage, for see the last rank is charging, the battle of ages is almost over. At last the darkness is dispersed. Hark how the conqueror cries, "It is finished." And where now are his enemies? They are all dead. There lies the king of terrors, pierced through with one of his own darts! There lies Satan with his head all bleeding, broken! Yonder crawls the broken-backed serpent, writhing in ghastly misery! As for sin, it is cut in pieces, and scattered to the winds of heaven! "It is finished," cries the conqueror."

(4) And now, what says this to us? Simply this. If Christ on the cross hath spoiled Satan, let us not be afraid to encounter this great enemy of our souls. My brethren, in all things we must be made like unto Christ. We must bear our cross, and on that cross we must fight as he did with sin, and death and hell. Let us not fear. The result of the battle is certain, for as the Lord our Saviour hath overcome once even so shall we most surely conquer in him. Be none of you afraid with sudden fear when the evil one cometh upon you. If he accuse you, reply to him in these words:—"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" If he condemn you, laugh him to scorn, crying:—"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather hath risen again." If he threaten to divide you from Christ's love, encounter him with confidence:—"I am persuaded that neither things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord." If he let loose your sins upon you dash the hell-dogs aside with this:—"if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." If death should threaten you, shout in his very face:—"O grave where is thy sting" O death, where is thy victory?"