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'TILL HE HATH PUT ALL ENEMIES UNDER HIS FEET'

By E. W. ROGERS

The verse is worth quoting in full: 'For He must reign, till He hath out *all enemies* under His feet' (1 Cor. 15:25). Who are these enemies? The resurrection from the dead of the Lord Jesus was not only a *final* victory over the Devil, it was also an *initial* victory to be followed in due course by many another. When Christ broke the power of Satan He ensured that *all* other manifestations of evil would in turn be broken, and at length the universe would be freed from every trace of sin.

The 'last enemy' with which He will deal will be 'Death', but prior to that 'all', other 'enemies' will be dealt with, for 'He must reign till He hath put *all enemies* under His feet'. One by one they will fall and the Lord at last will stand in the midst of a renewed creation as the universal Triumphant Victor.

The Devil

In more than one sense Satan is enemy Number 1. He is the first 'enemy' named in the New Testament (Matt. 13:39). As far back as Adam in the garden of Eden, God had promised that a Conqueror would come, Who like a valiant man would place his heel upon the Serpent, thus dealing a fatal blow to Satan while at the same time He Himself would suffer an injury (Gen. 3:15). Throughout Old Testament times Satan used every possible endeavour to prevent the advent into the world of such a Conqueror, but when at length he was frustrated in these attempts he sought to destroy the Conqueror before he himself was destroyed. Not having succeeded in deflecting the Lord from His course, each came into conflict with the other at the Cross, and the Lord 'by death put out of action him who had the power of death, that is the devil' (Heb. 2:14). The empty tomb demonstrated beyond effective dispute that Satan's power over death had been broken, for he could not keep the Lord *in* the grave. The ascension to the right hand of the Father demonstrated that he who is described as 'the prince of the power of the air' had been defeated, for Satan could not keep the Lord *on earth*. The resurrection of the Lord, and His ascension revealed that 'principalities and powers' had been spoiled and that the whole Satanic system had been 'made a show

of openly'. The Lord had been triumphant in what appeared to be His defeat. 'He led them in triumph by it' (Col. 2:15).

For the time being the devil 'goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour' (1 Peter 5:8) and in heaven he is the 'accuser of the brethren' (Rev. 12:10). But in the middle of Daniel's seventieth week there will be 'war in heaven: Michael and his angels' will fight 'against the Dragon', who is that 'old Serpent, called the Devil and Satan', and he will be 'cast out into the earth and his angels' with him. Then will commence that awful period for this world in which there will be trouble such as has not hitherto been: 'Except those days be shortened' indeed, 'no flesh' would 'be saved'. For 3½ years, 1,260 days, 42 months, or 'a time, and times and half a time', as this short period is variously called, there will be unparalleled trouble on earth, but it will be terminated by the advent of the Son of Man who will 'lay hold on the dragon . . .' and bind him a thousand years, and cast him into the 'bottomless pit'. Then man will be tested by yet another method: he will be ruled for a thousand years by a perfectly righteous King and not be menaced by a present Devil. Notwithstanding, 'after that he must be loosed a little season'. 'And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth'. It will then be manifested, that men, under the best of rulership, have not in the slightest changed. They will be gathered 'as the sand of the sea' against the Lord Christ, under the leadership of the Devil, but the Lord Himself will 'cast' the Devil 'into the lake of fire and brimstone' and that will be the final defeat of this relentless enemy of God and man.

The Apostate Jew

'Those mine enemies' is how the Lord refers to 'His own' people the Jew, 'which would not that' He 'should reign over them' (Luke 19:27). Their was an enmity not merely 'in mind' but also 'by wicked works', for they took the Lord of Glory and slew Him and hanged Him on a tree. The plot of His arrest and ultimate murder was hatched among them. It was a Jew who betrayed Him. It was the Jewish council that paid for His arrest. It was the Jewish High Priest who stirred up the common people to clamour for His death. 'His blood be on us and on our children' they cried, and God took them at their word and for

centuries they have suffered in consequence. The harrowing story of the siege of Jerusalem by Titus is well known. It was but part of the evil results of their awful deed. The nation was driven out of the land, and like Sarai of old, 'buried' in the 'corner of the field'. They are nationally 'dead'. Without king or heir apparent: without obelisk or teraphim, open or secret idolatry: without priest or ephod. Lo-Ammi, 'not my people', Lo-Ruhamah, 'not obtained mercy'. They are put on a siding, as it were until such time as another event has 'gone through', until the church has been formed and raptured. Their enmity still persists. Of course, they cannot now inflict injury upon their true Messiah: He is beyond their reach, but 'as concerning the Gospel, they are enemies'. They would neither have the Saviour nor His Gospel message. 'Blindness in part is happened to Israel'. Later on God will resume His dealings with them. Brought back to their land, God will then make 'inquisition for blood' for 'the body of a man that has been slain has been found in the field' and the guilty must be punitively dealt with. Then will occur the 'time of Jacob's trouble': the great tribulation: then God will exact from them that which they undertook to give. It will be a time of sorrow, blackness, and remorse.

Amongst them will be a godly remnant upon whom the Spirit of God will have wrought, preparing them for the advent to earth of Jesus, whom they will acknowledge to be their true Messiah. Then the 'family household' mourning of which Zechariah speaks so eloquently (ch. 12:11-14) will take place: and Psalm 51 will be their utterance in respect of a murder far more heinous than that of David's. Then they will utter the words of Isaiah 53 as expressing their own shameful folly: yet true and real repentance and relief will be given them: 'a nation will be born in a day'. The persistent enemies will be summarily removed in judgment: the repentant will be spared and restored in blessing under their once-crucified but then glorified Messiah in their own land, long since promised to Abraham. The old enmity will have gone: it will be a converted Israel which will become the head of the nations and an instrument of blessing to all others.

The Hostile Gentile

Hope ran high when the Lord Jesus was about to be born. 'We shall be saved from our enemies', Israel thought. 'We shall

be delivered out of the hand of our enemies', and free to 'serve' God 'without fear' (Luke 1:71, 74). Those enemies were the Roman authorities, who held sway over the Jew and dominated their national life and land. Their disappointment is understandable when the Lord Jesus died. Instead of He delivering the nation from the Roman power He had been delivered to it. Instead of He breaking that power it seemed as if that power had broken Him: 'We trusted it would have been He who should have redeemed Israel' (Luke 24:21) was the lament. But they knew nothing of God's wider plans, and how He would so overrule and utilize that which appeared to be a disaster to *universal* blessing as well as Israel's.

Yet the day will come when not only the Roman power but all hostile Gentile civilization will be destroyed. Civilization, however refined it may have become by the influence of Christianity, is still anti-christian, and because of this its doom is sure. It was this that was revealed to Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream the great image that depicted the four main empires of Gentile civilization. He failed to see that from the inception of the 'times of the Gentiles' in himself there would be deterioration as the metals which composed the image clearly showed. Nor did he see that where it should have been strongest (at its feet) it was weakest and liable to topple. The stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, (who prefigures the 'Elect Stone and precious') fell on the image and crushed it to powder replacing it with a world-wide Kingdom that will never pass away. God will not, and cannot allow, to continue *ad infinitum* such a system as an enemy of His Son. It must be 'destroyed', put out of action, rendered harmless, and give place to 'the Kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ'.

With this agrees the vision given to Daniel who saw things from God's point of view. The impressive image of Daniel, ch. 2, is seen also to be a series of wild venomous beasts in chapter 7, finalizing itself in one indescribable monster with ten horns and one prominent horn. As the ten toes prefigure the revival of the Roman empire, so the ten horns depict the heads of those ten kingdoms. Over them will be the Man of Sin, the 'Beast' of the Apocalypse. In alliance with him will be the False Prophet with his seat in Jerusalem. But when the Lord Jesus, in His judicial capacity as Son of Man, returns to earth 'the beast' will be 'taken,

and with him the false prophet' and 'these both' will be 'cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone'. This their doom will prove the collapse of all that man has built in opposition to God's Christ and will be the destruction of yet another one of the enemies that dare to raise themselves against God's Messiah.

The sinner

There are yet other enemies: 'We' who by God's infinite grace have laid down our arms, and have received a new life in Christ, 'were enemies' (Rom. 5:10). We were 'once alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works' (Col. 1:21). How well Paul knew this! There was no doubt about *his* enmity. Yet when he wrote these words 'old things had passed away and all things had become new'. Instead of enmity there was friendship: instead of hostility there was a holy co-operation. But how was this effected? It is stated thus: 'our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed', i.e., put out of action, made inoperative, 'that henceforth we should not serve sin' (Rom. 6:6).

Paul applies this truth to himself, when he says 'I have been crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me' (Gal. 2:20). 'Ye are my friends' He now says of us. 'I have called you friends.' When a lost sheep is found it is his 'friends' which the good shepherd calls together to 'rejoice with' him. In the eyes of the *Roman law* Barabbas had been 'crucified with' Jesus, but in *his* case the old nature and old enmity remained unchanged. Not so with the believer. The 'old man' has been crucified and he is called upon to regard the thing as an absolute *fait accompli*. '*Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*' Of course, there are moral implications which impose duties upon the child of God. Abraham was 'a friend of God' and in consequence he was no friend of Sodom, and earnestly pleaded for Lot and his family who were therein. And we must bear in mind that 'the friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God' (James 4:4). We must guard against allowing a knowledge of our doctrinal position to lull us into a state of spiritual indifference to moral duty.

The Law

'Having abolished (destroyed: rendered inoperative) in his flesh, the enmity, the law of commandments contained in ordinances.' For the law was an enemy of man. To it he had put his signature. 'All that the Lord our God hath said we will do', they said not knowing that it was 'contrary' to their fallen nature and made requirements which they were totally unable to fulfil. It was 'against' their best interests for, while it proposed blessings on obedience, it imposed curses on disobedience. And man could not keep it. How then was it to be got rid of? It could not be cavalierly torn up, as if it were mere paper. It was a solemn covenant between God and man and while man would have been willing to scrap it, God could not. But in the person of His sinless Son, who magnified the law and made it honourable, the solution of the difficulty was found. He kept the law because His nature was such as enabled Him so to do, He being always without sin. He merited its blessing of life. But He voluntarily, and on behalf of the law-breakers, submitted to its curse, for 'Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree' and 'He became a curse for us'. Thereby He 'took out of the way' the 'handwriting of ordinances' and 'blotted out' that which hindered God from blessing man (Col. 2:14). The result is that God has been able to 'create in Himself one new man, so making peace'. The enmity has been destroyed.

It is as if there were a house divided into the upper and lower flat. Those in the upper flat, with greater amenities represent the Jew. Those in the lower represent the Gentiles. The dividing partition is the law. Each hate the other, but both hate the owner of the house. The owner, however, decides to make a gratuitous offer to the occupants which all or any may accept. He decides to build a new house and those in the old, who accept His terms and offer unreservedly, may go and live in the new house. This new house has no upper and lower compartments: it is all one: there is no middle wall of partition. It represents the Church. Some from each compartment accepted, though more from the lower than the upper. This is the happy result of the destruction of the law, for those in the new house are 'not under law but under grace'.

Millennial enemies

In millennial days (and it is to these specially that 1 Cor. 15:25 alludes) there will be here and there enemies to the King of Kings. 'Strangers will yield feigned obedience' to Him (Ps. 18:44). They will submit because they must, but should they reveal their enmity and openly rebel they will be summarily dealt with in judgment. Then 'the sinner' though he be 'a hundred years old shall be accursed'. He must reign till all such enemies are 'under His feet'. Even in that happy era unregenerate man will still be the same as ever, though suppressed. But the King will not allow any open rebellion to succeed. Its instigators will at once be punished.

The last enemy

'The last enemy that shall be put out of action is death.' Death is not cessation of being. It is the separation of soul from body. The manner of the destruction of death is given in inspired words which we may, as we finish this article, quote at length. 'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death (that which here has to do with the body) and hades (the place of departed spirits) delivered up the dead which were in them'. Thus the bodies of all the lost will be raised and re-united to their spirits, 'salted with fire' so that they are suited for eternal existence in 'the lake of fire' to which they will be cast. What an end for unsaved sinners. 'This is the second death' for the first will have been 'destroyed'.

The end

'And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, *then also* shall the Son Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.' When the Lord Jesus became incarnate He took the subject place never for eternity to abandon it. Such humility and grace will mark Him, in conjunction with power and glory, that not even when every enemy has been put out of action He will act independently of His Father. He could not, not because of innate inability but because of His moral glory.