VICTORY OVER THE DEVIL

1 John 3:4-10

Key Verse: 3:8b

“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”

In the last lesson, we thought of the great love of God that motivated him to send his Son into this world to make us children of God. That is what we are. The children of God are destined for the future glory, that we shall be like Christ Jesus the Son of God and everyone who has this hope purifies himself. In 3:1-3, we pondered on justification, glorification and sanctification in three verses, which are the whole teaching of Christianity. We again thank and praise God for his great love that we should be called children of God. What a privilege it is to call God, “Abba, Father.” Today’s passage, 3:4-10, is the continuation of purifying ourselves as God’s children in the hope of glorification. The purification is certainly related to doing what is right. For this, John had to write about why the Son of God came into this world – that is, to take away our sins and to destroy the devil’s work so that we may truly do what is right and be righteous. Let’s think about how great these two works of Christ are.

**First, to take away our sins (4-7).** Verse 4 says, “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.” In the KJV of the bible, lawlessness is the transgression of the law. It is clearly written that sin is to break the law. So sinners are law-breakers or transgressors of the law, in disobedience to God and his holy will. Those who break the law are under the condemnation of the law and so under God’s wrath. Sin is not to be taken lightly. Sin is not merely showing one’s weakness or it is not just a failure. Sin is a serious problem, breaking God’s law. And when we think of lawlessness, it is the state of living as if there is no law. In that state, the evil one works rampantly without constraint to ruin people’s lives with the power and pollution of sin. Children of God are to have a correct understanding of sin. Sin is dreadful.

One’s understanding and attitude toward sin largely relies on the degree of knowing the grace of Jesus Christ. So John says in verse 5, “But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.” This verse can be one of the most significant verses and one of the most amazing messages in the whole Bible. Can you imagine a person in whom is no sin, a sinless one with complete purity? Bible says that there is no one righteous, not even one…There is no one who does good” (Ro 3:11, 12). And “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Ro 3:23). But here is one in whom is no sin. He is Jesus Christ. According to Hebrews 7:26, he is holy, blameless, pure set apart from sinners.” David, who could be considered to be the most righteous one, confessed in Psalm 51, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (51:5). Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born sinless. Moreover, he was tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin (Heb 4:15). He lived by the law and fulfilled all the demands of the law. So he is the end of the law. In describing Jesus’ suffering, Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:22, “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” He lived a sinless perfect life. He is the Son, God’s chosen one, whom God loved and delighted in (Mt 12:18).

He appeared so that he might take away our sin. We thought of the seriousness of sin. Sin started by disobeying the holy law of God, which seemed to be an insignificant event. Then soon sin spread and covered the whole world, and God had to judge the world. God’s judgment of flood wiped out all mankind except Noah’s eight family members. That was the dreadful effect of sin. Yet, sin was not taken away through the deluge. Again, sin grew and sinful human beings challenged God. It was unthinkable to take away sin and looked totally impossible. But he appeared so that he might take away our sins. Wow! We should really notice how he took away the sins of man. It is the core message of the Bible. He did so to the point of becoming the atoning sacrifice for our sins as we studied (2:2; 4:10). The qualification of the sacrifice for the atonement was that the offering of the sacrifice was to be without sin. Christ Jesus was the only one who met this qualification. And he was willing to offer himself as such an offering (Heb 10:7). And Hebrews 9:26 says, “…he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

Apostle John wrote the words of John the Baptist concerning Jesus in John 1:29, “Look the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” Jesus is the Lamb of God to be sacrificed as the reality of the shadow of all the animals sacrifices written in the Old Testament for the sins of all mankind. He was the lamb who was slain (Rev 5:9, 12). Yet, we cannot overlook another point, when John used the expression, “take away our sins.” In Leviticus 16, on the Day of atonement two goats were taken and presented before the LORD. By lot, one was chosen for the sacrifice and another was chosen to be presented alive before the LORD and be sent into the desert as a scapegoat. How it becomes a scapegoat is written in Leviticus 16:21-22, “He (Aaron) is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat’s head. He shall send the goat away into the desert in the care of a man appointed for the task. The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place; and the man shall release it in the desert.” And “the man who release the goat as a scapegoat must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water” (16:26). What a picture of the scapegoat. The reality of the scapegoat is found in Christ Jesus. The innocent Jesus the Son of God took upon himself all our sins and was sent to the desert, the solitary place, the land of abandonment when he died on the cross abandoned by God. In this way, he took away our sins. All our sins were imputed on him, and he carried them away. Thus he separated sin from sinners. He detached our sins from us. According to Hebrews 13:12, “Jesus suffered outside the city gate…” He was completely ignored by the world, but he did the most significant work before God in all of human history. The old prophet Isaiah had prophesied in Isaiah 53:5-6, “He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him…the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” And the prophet said further, “…he was cut off from the land of the living” (53:8). In this way he solved man’s sin problem, taking away our sins once for all. He truly did the most amazing work in the history of mankind. How precious this Jesus is!

All our sins – the sin of pride, lust, jealously, love self more than God, love of the world, fear of people, unbelief and worries – were all placed on upon him and he carried them upon himself and was killed outside the city gate in the solitary place. As I prepared this message, I found my sins of humanistic way of thinking and life were wicked before him. Because of lack of fear of God, I could not help those whom God entrusted to me clearly leading them to God at each crucial time. God says in Isaiah 66:2, “This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.” I found that I did not tremble at his word so I could not obey his word personally and as a result could not help God’s flock of sheep rightly to obey the words of God. With my sins I had to come to this Jesus with a repentant heart. God had mercy on me to be renewed in this this grace of who took all our sins. In this grace, I prayed and pray that I may truly tremble at his word. Truly, my salvation is solely due to him and this salvation is assured because of what he has done. I praise Jesus, my precious Saviour. When we think of this Jesus, no human situation can be a problem. The worse the situation is, the better condition it is to know this Jesus and go deeper in the grace that he took away all our sins, being such a scapegoat. So the author Hebrews says in 13:12-13, “Jesus suffered outside the city gate…Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.” May we not lose sight of this Jesus, the scapegoat Jesus! May we not ignore him in our life in this world, but come closer to him! Amen!

When we think of the words, “he appeared so that he might take away our sins,” we can go further into the meaning of this. Hebrews 13:12 says, “Jesus suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.” Apostle Paul also wrote in Titus 2:11-14, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” What a great purpose the Lord Jesus had when he took away our sins and redeemed us! It is to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. Only redeemed and purified people can do what is truly good before God. This people of God are really precious in the sight of God. Christ Jesus’ purpose of coming is to turn the proud to be humble, the self-centred and selfish to be God-centred and sacrificial, the lovers of pleasure to be the lovers of God, the unholy the holy, the people-fearing the God-fearing, the men and women of calculation and worry the men and women of faith, the simple the wise, etc. It is that out of the ugly comes the beautiful, out of the worthless the very valuable, and out of the sinful saint eventually the sinless. Praise God! Paul also expressed it this way in Ephesians 2:10, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Let’s read 3:5 together, “But we know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.”

Now verse 6 says, “No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.” It becomes obvious when we think of the grace of this Jesus.

Then in verse 7 it says, “Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray.” John wrote in 2:26, “I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.” There are those or things that lead us astray. Yet it is our responsibility to keep ourselves from anything or anyone who leads us astray. And verse 7 continually, “He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.” In the grace of our Lord Jesus, we are to do what is right and be righteous just as the Lord is righteous. It is also in accordance with what Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:24, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.” Doing what is right is practically obeying his word very personally. May I obey the words of Revelation 2:10b, “Be faithful to the point of death and I will give the crown of life” to serve the ministry of God’s word, since he raised me as a servant of God’s word despite all my unworthiness.

**Second, to destroy the devil’s work (8).** Verse 8 says, “He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning.” Those who continue to sin doing what is sinful are of the devil. Jesus said to the Jews who claimed that they were Abraham’s descendants and God was their Father, but had no ears to hear Jesus’ word, “You belong to your father, the devil” (Jn 8:44), Jesus spoke such a word so that they might accept his word and truly belong to the Father. Here John says that the devil was sinning from the beginning. In Genesis 3, we see how the devil sinned against God, tempting Adam and Eve to disobey God and so rebel against God. The devil deceived Adam and Eve by distorting the word of God and then plating his word which was a lie, “when you eat of it, you will be like God” (3:5). And we see in Revelation 12:9 that the devil, also called Satan, deceives the whole world. Here, the important thing is that the devil is real just as God is real. Jesus clearly recognized him and exposed him. Again, Jesus said of him as the prince of this world 3 times in John’s gospel. Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” He also said in Ephesians 2:2, “in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.” The devil is the god of this age and the ruler of the kingdom of the air. John used the word, “the evil one” regarding the devil or Satan in chapter 2, saying, “I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one” twice in verses 13 and 14. And John used the word in 3:12, “Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one”, 5:18, “the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him” ad in 5:19, saying, “We know that we are children of God and the whole world is under the control of the evil one.” Here in 1 John 3:8-10, he clearly mentioned the devil 4 times. Again, as God exists, so does the devil. As God is real, so is the devil. Yet, there seems to be many Christians who do not acknowledge the existence of the devil. Can you image how our enemy responds as we are negligent of his existence? Without power of resistance, he will do his work uncontrollably to accomplish his purpose.

Here verse 8b says, “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.” We should really understand the devil’s work. We can say that behind all the tragic events and destructive work such as unspeakable killing of people there is the devil. However, the devil works in a very subtle way. He appeals to men’s sinful nature with a sweet lie, satisfying their itching ears. He appeals to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. In Genesis 3, when the woman heard the words of the devil, her view of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was changed. Before having the conversation with the devil, when she saw the tree, this was the symbol of God’s presence that produced in her heart the fear of the LORD. In that, she was truly free in God, delighting in him. But after hearing the devil’s word, the tree looked different. The woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom. When her view of the forbidden fruit was changed, in a matter of time she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Again, the devil tempts the people of the world to love the world, from which comes the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. He leads the whole world astray. He uses kings and presidents and authorities of the world for his own agenda and purpose. That is to establish his kingdom in this world eliminating God and putting all people of the world under his control.

In history, no one dared to destroy the devil’s work. But Jesus the Son of God appeared to destroy the work of the devil. To destroy the devil’s work, first of all, he himself defeated the devil in his personal battle with him, without which he could not begin his public ministry. The devil tempted him with a bread problem appealing to his flesh, people’s sensation problem appealing to the lust of the eyes, the problem of worldly glory and power appealing to the pride of life. Jesus defeated the devil’s temptation with the absolute words of God. He once spoke in a synagogue. Then a man in the synagogue cried out, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” (Mk 2:24). The evil spirits were scared at his presence and fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God” (Mk. 3:11). Throughout his earthly messianic ministry, he proclaimed the good of the kingdom of God. He diligently taught the truth of God’s word, even during the passion week (Lk 21:37). On one occasion Jesus drove out a deaf and mute demon. Then some people criticized Jesus saying, “By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.” Jesus replied, “If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.” Here we see the purpose of destroying the devil’s work, which is ultimately destroying the kingdom of Satan and establish the kingdom of God in the hearts of people. Finally, the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ will be accomplished on the earth at his second coming.

After saying, “If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then, the kingdom of God has come to you,” Jesus said, “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone else stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.” In telling this, Jesus regarded himself as one stronger than the devil. The devil’s final temptation came when Jesus was hanging on the cross. All sorts of people, passersby, the religious leaders and solders who crucified him and even a criminal beside him on a cross said, “Come down from the cross and save yourself.” Of course, Jesus had power to come down from the cross and save himself and all his followers. But he stayed on the cross to the end in obedience to God’s will and thus overcame the temptation of the devil. Through his death on the cross and resurrection he completely defeated the devil and manifested that the devil’s destiny is determined, and he is heading to the eternal destruction along with his kingdom, which is crumbling. The important thing is that now he redeems his people in the grace of forgiveness of sins and rescues them from Satan’s rule to God’s rule, from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of Christ, from the dominion of darkness to that of light. When Paul stood before King Agrippa and other powerful people to defend himself, he testified to them what Jesus spoke to him, “I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God…” (Ac 26:18). Paul also said in Colossians 1:13, 14, “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

We are to know that the devil is diligently working to mislead believers seeking an opportunity at any moment. Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 5:8-9, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.” This spiritual battle with the devil is common to all true believers. James 4:7-8 says, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.” Through the time of suffering and temptation God wants us to come near to him. It is the time of refining our faith to be shining more and be more precious than refined gold. Christ Jesus came to destroy the devil’s work, still letting the devil exist so that we may also overcome the devil as he did. We are to know that in our Lord Jesus Christ we have an assured victory over the devil, for he did all the ground works for our victory. Since the Lord took away our sins, the devil lost the ground to accuse us for our sins. And our Lord Jesus showed an example of how to defeat the devil in the battle, that is, by relying on the words of God absolutely. That’s why Apostle John wrote twice in chapter 2, saying “I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one” and again, “I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.” So it is also written in Revelation 12:11, “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.”

Especially, we are to know that the devil’s work will be intense as the end time is coming close. Last April, around the passion week, Calgary Police arrested pastor Artur Pawlowski in the name of COVID non-compliance. To arrest him was understandable. But he was dragged being knelt on his knees on the street. This kind of scene would be shown in a communist country like China. However, such a thing is displayed in Canada, which has been known as a missionary-sending country. We see the spirit of the antichrist is rapidly growing in this country. We should have eyes to see what happening not only in our country but in the whole world. We remember Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:9-13, “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people….but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

Verse 9 says, “No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.” The new life of Christ in us is God’s seed, which is to grow. Also, we are to know that the word of God is the seed of the kingdom of God (Lk 8:11).

Verse 10 says, “This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are:” We should that there are only two kinds of children in this world, the children of God and the children of the devil. There is no middle ground. And there are only two ways of living, to live as children of God or to live as children of the devil. There is no alternative. Verse 10 continues, “Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; no is anyone who does not love his brother.”

We paise God that Jesus appeared to take away our sins and to destroy the work of the devil. Truly Christ Jesus is the most precious one bringing the victory over sin and the devil. May we keep his grace of taking away our sins and, in this grace, be overcomers over the devil following our Lord Jesus Christ in this generation.