

Change...and Trust the Good News

- ✦ **The enemy is defeated.** (vv.12f)
- ✦ **God's kingdom is near.** (vv.14f)

In the Name of Jesus, our suffering Savior, dearly redeemed children of God:

Anyone who takes God's Word seriously knows that Satan really exists. Those who do not think the devil is real, he wants to keep that way. Ignorance is bliss, especially in spiritual matters. Every tyrant uses these tactics. Hitler hid his army from the world during the 1930's because if they found out, they might try to stop him. His early speeches used many expressions designed to capture the hearts of God fearing Germans like, "We commit our cause to God." Lulling the enemy to sleep defeats him.

A world of sinners sleeps in Satan's grasp, their lives made easy on his happy way to hell. Some joke about him. Some worship Satan and consciously choose the fallen angel over the Almighty Creator. Now many preachers deny Satan exists. Here's Paul's shocking, God-inspired commentary about these spiritual rip-offs: "*For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.*" (2 Corinthians 11:13-15 NIV84) Are you awake? Then **Change...and Trust the Good News...**

- ✦ **The enemy is defeated.** (vv.12f)

"*The Spirit immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness.*" (W.P.)¹ Mark's breathless style the Holy Spirit used to communicate the Gospel to Gentile Romans all over the ancient world. But slow down. This suggests something just happened that was very important. Anyone know what happened to Jesus just before He battled Satan in the desert? Mark's three previous verses tell us: *In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.*¹⁰ *Just as Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.*¹¹ *And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love. With you I am well pleased."* That's when Jesus was anointed as the Christ "*with the Holy Spirit and power.*" (Acts 10:38)

So Jesus was equipped and ready to fight our evil foe from hell. "*He was in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels were serving him.*" Two of the Holy Spirit's other Gospel writers give details. Satan attacked Jesus as he always does with lies and empty promises. In one case the liar from hell even quoted Scripture to deceive our Savior. And in all three documented attacks Satan used his favorite dirty word. It's not a four-letter word, but a two-letter word. In computers they talk about an "I.P." address. In conflicts with Satan it's an "I.F." address because Satan's favorite dirty word is, "If..." He uses it against us all the time. "If you were really a Christian, you would stop ___." "If you were really a believer you wouldn't have so many doubts and fears." "If you love God..., if you are repentant enough..., if you give your life to God...read your Bible enough...go to church enough...give enough money/time/talent...if you get it right, then God will love you...bless you...let you into heaven." God sent His only begotten Son to destroy Satan's, "If..."

For every time you and I have fallen for Satan's temptations, here is Jesus as our Substitute and Champion. Our Warrior-Redeemer wields a weapon He wants to put in our hands too – or more precisely, put in our mouths. Matthew and Luke both report how Jesus fought back with the "*sword of*

¹ W.P. ~ Wartburg Project – Mark popular review (w/o footnotes) the Bible text unless stated otherwise. [M.C. 2/22/2015]

the Spirit.” Every one of Satan’s “If-bombs” Jesus answered: **“It is written....” “It is written....” “It is written....”** So **“take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”** (Ephesians 6:17 NIV84) The Holy Spirit counseled 1000 years B.C.: **“May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron, to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all his saints. Praise the Lord.”** (Psalm 149:6–9 NIV84)

You little kids can pick up that sword and fight the devil every time you remember your Sunday School stories and practice your memory work. The beautiful song you sang for us in church last Sunday, “Christ Begins” (Luke Thompson), is just one of many spiritual songs that make the devil run and hide. He’s scared of Jesus and He’s scared of you because you trust in Jesus. Don’t anyone, adult or child, think you can defeat the devil by yourself. But because Jesus ditched the devil in the desert, **The enemy is defeated.** And you and I are free to follow Jesus into the bright morning sunlight of grace because...

✦ **God’s kingdom is near. (vv.14f)**

This was a sad time for Jesus. His cousin and forerunner John the Baptist who had just baptized Jesus was arrested by wicked King Herod and thrown in prison. Like the prophets and apostles Jesus sent, our Lord used the bad news as a mom who sees a mess in the kitchen and cleans it up. Like a dad who sees a flat tire and fixes it. Like a kid who sees one of his socks is missing and finds it so his feet won’t freeze in the snow. Bad news put Jesus to work with Good News of **God’s kingdom: After John was taken into custody, Jesus went to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.** ¹⁵ **“The time is fulfilled,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near! Repent, and believe in the gospel.”**

With **God’s kingdom** come all the blessings that make life worth living and death worth dying. It’s not just a pair of socks that keeps your feet warm. It’s the warmth of God’s grace in the full and free forgiveness of sins. It’s Satan’s defeat and the forgiveness of every sin with which he wants to accuse you before God’s throne in heaven. Jesus is right there as your Champion-Lawyer holding up His hands that still show the nail marks where His blood flowed out to wash away your sins and mine.

God’s kingdom comes by the Spirit with more than enough air to fill your flat tires and get you rolling down the road again. But remember, if Jesus is your copilot, then trade places. If you try to drive, the devil will get you all worried, “What *if* I go that way? But what *if* I go that way?” Jesus says, “Slide over, baby. I AM the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.” (John 14:6 TPA)

God’s kingdom comes with all the order and cleanliness of the great mix Master who can straighten up your life before you see what happened. Before you reach the bottom of that tangled mess of sin, the Prince of Peace will have you all settled like a baby wrapped up tight in God’s grace blanket.

See, this is **“the time”** – the right time for God’s grace on this special day God calls **“Today....”** **So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert....”** (Hebrews 3:7f NIV84) God has filled up all His precious promises in Jesus Christ, our Satan-Defeater. By His Word He gives what God demands.

God says, **“Repent, and believe in the gospel.”** That means: **Change...and Trust the Good News.** **Change** your mind about sin, Satan, and God. For us it’s like a special day in England, June of 1815. Everyone waited to hear whether their general Lord Wellington had beaten Europe’s conqueror, Napoleon at Waterloo. As the story goes, signals from a ship got through with the words, “Wellington defeated,” but then the fog set in. The whole nation grieved as the message flashed from tower to tower. Then the fog lifted to see the rest of the story: “Wellington defeated *the enemy.*” So Christ died and rose to defeat Satan our enemy. That’s God’s **Good News** to trust for time and eternity. Amen.