

Jesus Christ Gloriously Exalted Above All Evil in the Work of Redemption

by Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

1 Cor. 15:25-26

I. The Text Opened

A. 1 Cor. 15:25-26

1. "For he must reign, until he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death," (1 Cor. 15:25-26).
 - a) The apostle in this chapter particularly opposes some among the Christian Corinthians who denied the resurrection of the dead and infested the church with their doctrine.
 - b) There were two sorts of people in that age who were especially great opposers of the doctrine of the resurrection.
 - (1) *One among the Jews were the Sadducees, of whom we read, Acts 23:8, for the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, either angel or spirit.*
 - (2) *And we have the same account in other places.*
 - (3) *Among the heathen that were the chief opposers of this doctrine were their philosophers.*
 - (4) *The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was not consistent with their philosophy, by the principles of which, it was impossible that one who was deprived of life, would ever receive it again.*
 - (5) *And they ridiculed the doctrine when the apostle preached it among them at Athens (Acts 17).*
 - (6) *Probably the church at Corinth received this corruption from the philosophers, and not the Sadducees.*
 - (a) *For Corinth was near to Athens, and the place of the chief resort of the philosophers of Greece.*
2. The apostle, in opposing this error, first insists on Christ's resurrection from the dead, and next on the resurrection of all the saints at the end of the world.
 - a) And in the verses next before the text, shows how both are connected, or that one arises or follows from the other.
 - b) And then adds, "then comes the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

II. The Doctrine from the Text

A. Doctrine: Our Lord Jesus Christ in the work of redemption gloriously appears above all evil.

1. Here is one thing in which appears the glory of that exaltation and dominion, that Christ has as our redeemer, namely, that it issues in the subjection of all enemies under his feet.
 - a) It is not said all his enemies, possibly because those that shall be put under his feet are not only his enemies, but also the enemies of his Father and of his people.

2. Their being under his feet denotes their being perfectly subdued, and his being gloriously exalted over them.

a) We may learn what is here meant by enemies by the particular instance here given as the last that shall be destroyed, namely, death.

b) Which shows that by enemies, is not meant only people, that set themselves in opposition to God and his people, but evils; whatever is against God and his people, and opposes Christ or his saints, whether they are people or things.

B. HOW EVIL OF ALL KINDS HAS PREVAILED AND HIGHLY EXALTED ITSELF IN THE WORLD.

1. Evil, of all kinds, has risen to an exceeding height in the world, and highly exalted itself against God, and Christ, and the church. — This will appear by the following particulars.

a) I. SATAN has highly exalted himself, and greatly prevailed.

(1) *He is vastly superior in his natural capacity and abilities to mankind.*

(2) *He prevailed to draw away vast multitudes of the heavenly hosts into an open rebellion against God.*

(3) *And after he was cast down from heaven, he proudly exalted himself in this world, and prevailed to do great things.*

(a) *By his subtle temptations he procured the fall of our first parents, and so brought about the ruin of their whole race.*

(b) *He so far prevailed, that he drew men off from the service of their Maker, and set up himself to be the god of this world.*

(c) *And when Christ himself appeared in the world, how did Satan exalt himself against him!*

(i) *And prevailed so far, as to influence men to hate and despise him all the days of his life.*

(ii) *And at last he persuaded one of his own disciples to betray him.*

(d) *Accordingly, Christ was delivered into the hands of men, to be mocked, buffeted, spit upon, and treated with the greatest ignominy that unrestrained malice could devise.*

(i) *And at last procured that he should be put to the most cruel and ignominious kind of death.*

(ii) *And since that, he has greatly exalted himself against the gospel and kingdom of Christ.*

(e) *He has procured that the church, for the most part, has been the subject of great persecution; has often brought it to the brink of utter destruction; has accomplished great works in setting up those great kingdoms of Antichrist and Islam; and darkened great part of the world, that was once enlightened with the gospel of Christ, with worse than heathen darkness.*

(f) *And he has infected the Christian world with multitudes of heresies and false ways of worship, and greatly promoted atheism and infidelity.*

b) II. GUILT is another evil which has come to a great height in the world.

(1) *All guilt is an evil of a dreadful nature.*

(2) *The least degree of it is enough utterly to undo any creature.*

(3) *Guilt is a thing that reaches unto heaven, and cries to God, and brings down his wrath.*

(4) *The guilt of any one sin is so terrible an evil that it prevails to bind over the guilty person to suffer everlasting burnings.*

(a) *And guilt, when it was imparted to Christ, greatly prevailed against him — though in himself innocent, and the eternal Son of God — even so as to hold him prisoner of justice for a while, and to open the flood-gates of God's wrath upon him, and bring his waves and billows over him.*

c) III. CORRUPTION AND WICKEDNESS OF HEART is another thing that has risen to an exceeding height in the world.

(1) *Sin has so far prevailed that it has become universal. All mere men have become sinful and corrupt creatures.*

(a) *And not only is every one corrupt, but they are all over corrupt, in every power, faculty, and principle.*

(b) *Every part is depraved!*

(c) *Which is represented by the several parts of the body being corrupt, as the throat, the tongue, the lips, the mouth, the feet.*

(i) *“Their throat is an open sepulcher, with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood.”*

(ii) *And not only is every part corrupt, but exceeding corrupt, being possessed with dreadful principles of corruption, horribly evil dispositions and principles of sin, that may be represented by the poison of asps, which makes men like vipers and devils, principles of all uncleanness, pride, deceit, injustice, enmity, malice, blasphemy, and murder.*

d) IV. Many of the DEVIL'S INSTRUMENTS have greatly prevailed and have been exalted to an exceeding height in the world.

(1) *It has been so in almost all ages of the world.*

(2) *Many of the devil's instruments have prospered and prevailed until they have got to the head of great kingdoms and empires, with vast riches and mighty power.*

(3) *So they are represented in the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2:35, 36).*

e) V. AFFLICTION and MISERY have also prevailed and risen to an unspeakable height in the world.

(1) *The spiritual misery which the elect are naturally in is great.*

(2) *They are miserable captives of sin and Satan, and under obligations to suffer eternal burnings.*

(3) *The church of God has, for the most part, all along, been a seat of great affliction and tribulation.*

(4) *But the height to which the evil of affliction has risen, nowhere appears so much as in the afflictions that Christ suffered.*

(a) *The evil of affliction and sorrow exalted itself so high, as to seize the Son of God himself, and to cause him to be all in a bloody sweat, and to make his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.*

(b) *It caused him to cry out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”*

(i) *Affliction never prevailed to such a degree in this world, as in Christ, whose soul was, as it were, overwhelmed in an ocean of it.*

f) VI. DEATH is an evil which has greatly prevailed and made dreadful havoc in this world.

(1) *How does death waste and devour mankind, one age after another, sparing none, high or low, rich or poor, good or bad!*

c. HOW JESUS CHRIST, IN THE WORK OF REDEMPTION, APPEARS GLORIOUSLY ABOVE ALL THESE EVILS.

1. It was not the will of the infinitely wise and holy Governor of the world that things should remain in this confusion, this reign of evil, which had prevailed and exalted itself to such a height.

a) But he had a design of subduing it, and delivering an elect part of the world from it, and exalting them to the possession of the greatest good, and to reign in the highest glory, out of a state of subjection to all these evils.

b) And he chose his Son as the person most fit for an undertaking that was infinitely too great for any mere creature.

(1) And he has undertaken the work of our redemption.

(2) And though these evils are so many and so great, and have prevailed to such a degree, and have risen to such a height, and have been, as it were, all combined together; yet wherein they have exalted themselves, Christ, in the work of redemption, appears above them.

(3) He has gloriously prevailed against them all, and brings them under his feet, and rides forth, in the chariots of salvation, over their heads, or leading them in triumph at his chariot wheels.

(a) He appears in this work infinitely higher and mightier than they, and sufficient to carry his people above them, and utterly to destroy them all.

2. I. Christ appears gloriously above all evil in what he did to procure redemption for us in his state of humiliation, by the RIGHTEOUSNESS HE WROUGHT OUT, and the ATONEMENT HE MADE FOR SIN.

a) The evils mentioned, never seemed so much to prevail against him as in his sufferings.

b) But in them, the foundation was laid for their overthrow.

(1) In them he appeared above Satan.

(2) "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it," (Col. 2:15) i.e. in his cross.

c) In this also Christ appeared gloriously above the guilt of men.

(1) For he offered a sacrifice that was sufficient to do away all the guilt of the whole world.

(2) In this Christ appeared above all the corruption of man, in that hereby he purchased holiness for the chief of sinners.

3. II. Christ appears gloriously exalted above all evil, in his RESURRECTION and ASCENSION into heaven.

a) When Christ rose from the dead, then it appeared that he was above death, which, though it had taken him captive, could not hold him.

b) Then he appeared above the devil.

c) Then he appeared above our guilt.

(1) For he was justified in his resurrection (Rom. 4:4, 25; 1 Tim. 3:16).

(2) In his resurrection he appeared above all affliction.

4. III. Christ appears gloriously above all evil, in his work in the hearts of the elect, in their CONVERSION and SANCTIFICATION.

a) This is what the application of redemption, so far as it is applied in this world, consists in, which is done by the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ.

b) In this Christ appears gloriously above the corruption and wickedness of the heart.

- (1) *In this he appears above all their lusts.*
- (2) *For all sin is mortified in this work, and the soul is delivered from the power and dominion of it.*
- (3) *In this work the grace of Christ gloriously triumphs over men's guilt.*
- (4) *He comes over the mountains of their sins, and visits them with his salvation.*

5. IV. Christ gloriously appears above all these aforementioned evils, in his GLORIFYING the souls of departed saints in heaven.

- a) In this he gives a glorious victory over death, turning death from an enemy into a servant.
- b) And their death, by the glorious change that passes in the state of their souls, is become a resurrection, rather than a death.

6. V. Christ appears gloriously above these evils, in what he does in his PROVIDENCE in the world, as head and redeemer of his church.

- a) He appears gloriously above Satan and all his instruments in upholding his church, even from its first establishment, through all the powerful attempts that have been made against it by earth and hell.

(1) *Hereby fulfilling his promise, "That the gates of hell should never prevail against it," (Mat. 16:18).*

- b) Though great and might empires have been set up one after another in the world, in opposition to the kingdom of Christ, during the succession of so many ages; yet, Christ's kingdom shall be the last and the universal kingdom, which he has given him, as the heir of the world.

- c) Then shall Christ appear gloriously exalted indeed above all evil.

(1) *And then shall all the saints in earth and heaven gloriously triumph in him, and sing, "Hallelujah, salvation, and glory, and honor, and power unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments; for he has judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and has avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigns," (Rev. 19:1, 2, 6).*

7. VI. Christ will appear gloriously above all evil in the CONSUMMATION OF THE REDEMPTION of his elect church at the end of the world.

- a) Then will be completed the whole work of redemption with respect to all that Christ died for, both in its interpretation and application; and not until then.
- b) Then all that evil, which has so prevailed, and so exalted itself, and usurped and raged, and reigned, shall be perfectly and forever thrust down and destroyed, with respect to all the elect.

(1) *And they will be exalted to a state wherein they will be forever immensely above all these things. "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away," (Rev. 21:4).*

III. The Text Applied

A. THE SUBJECT IMPROVED AND APPLIED.

1. In this we may see how the GLORY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST appears in the work of redemption.

- a) It was because the Father had from eternity a design of exceedingly glorifying his Son, that he appointed him to be the person that should thus triumph over the evil in the world.

- b) The work of redemption is the most glorious of all God's works that are made known to us.
 - c) The glory of God most remarkably shines forth in it.
 - d) And this is one thing in which its glory eminently appears, that Christ in it appears so gloriously above Satan and all his instruments, above all guilt, all corruption, all affliction, above death, and above all evil.
- 2. God had appointed his Son to be the heir of the world.
 - a) But the devil has contested this matter with him, and has strove to set himself up as God of the world.
 - b) And how exceedingly has the devil exalted himself against Christ!
 - (1) *How did he oppose him as he dwelt among the Jews, in his tabernacle and temple!*
 - (2) *And how did he oppose him when on earth!*
 - c) The beauty of good appears with the greatest advantage, when compared with its contrary, and appears vastly above it, in its greatest height.
 - (1) *The glory of Christ, in this glorious exaltation over so great evil, that so exalted itself against him, the more remarkable appears, in that he is thus exalted out of so low a state.*
 - (2) *Though he appeared in the world as a little child; yet how does he triumph over the most gigantic enemies of God and men!*
 - (3) *He who was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," is a man of war, and triumphed over his enemies in all their power.*
 - (4) *He who was meek and lowly of heart, has triumphed over those proud foes. And he is exalted over them all, in that which appears most despicable, even his cross.*
- 3. Here is matter of exceeding great ENCOURAGEMENT for all sinful miserable creatures in the world of mankind to come to Christ.
 - a) Christ in the work of redemption appears gloriously exalted above all.
 - b) If they apprehend themselves to be miserable captives of Satan, and find him too strong an adversary for them, and the devil is often tempting and buffeting them, and triumphing over them with great cruelty; if it seems to them that the devil has swallowed them up, and he got full possession of them, as the whale had of Jonah; yet there is encouragement for them to look again, as Jonah did, towards God's holy temple, and to trust in Christ for deliverance from Satan, who appears so gloriously exalted above him in the work of redemption.
 - c) If they are afraid of death, if it looks exceeding terrible, as an enemy that would swallow them up; yet let them look to Christ who has appeared so gloriously above death, and their fears will turn into joy and triumph.
- 4. What cause have they who have an interest in Christ, to glory in their Redeemer!
 - a) They need not fear any evils.
 - b) They may glory in Christ, the rock of their salvation, who appears so gloriously above them all.
 - c) They may triumph over Satan, over this evil world, over guilt, and over death.
 - d) For as their Redeemer is mighty, and is so exalted above all evil, so shall they also be exalted in him, they are now, in a sense, so exalted. And, in a little time, they shall be carried so out of their reach, that they shall not be able even to molest them anymore forever!