

God's Deliverance from God Is the Foundation of God's Deliverance from Satan

How the Cross of Christ Corresponds to and Conquers Satan's Work

[January 10, 2007](#) / by [John Piper](#) / Topic: [The Death of Christ](#)

Satan's work is not the chief peril dealt with in the death of Christ. God's wrath is. God is *opposed* to us in his righteous wrath, and he is *for* us in his love. Therefore, in his great love, he sends his Son to endure his own wrath against us. In this way, his righteousness is upheld and his love is expressed. His wrath and curse and condemnation of our sin are endured for us by another—a substitute, Jesus Christ. Here are some of the texts that teach this:

- “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the *wrath of God* remains on him” (John 3:36).
- “Since . . . we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from *the wrath of God*” (Romans 5:9).
- “[We] were by nature *children of wrath* But God . . . made us alive together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:3-4).
- “God has not destined us *for wrath*, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us” (1 Thessalonians 5:9).
- “Christ redeemed us from *the curse* of the law [which is an expression of his wrath] by becoming a curse for us [so that we do not bear God's wrath]” (Galatians 3:13).
- “By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, [God] *condemned* sin in the flesh [thus, his wrathful condemnation of sin is expended on his Son's flesh, not ours]” (Romans 8:3).

Nevertheless, in dealing with God's wrath in this way, the double work of Satan is itself overcome. It is crucial that we see this wrath-enduring work of Christ as foundational to our deliverance from Satan's work. To say it more provocatively, it is crucial that we see our deliverance from God as foundational to our deliverance from Satan.

The double work of Satan is his work of *accusation* and his work of *temptation*. His name, *Satan*, means *accuser*. And John describes him that way, “The *accuser* of our brothers has been thrown down, who *accuses* them day and night before our God” (Revelation 12:10). And both Matthew and Paul call him “the tempter” (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5). Consider then how Christ's deliverance from the wrath of God is the foundation of his deliverance from both these works of Satan.

When Satan accuses us before God, what he accuses us with is sin. The only reason this accusation has a significance is that it is true. Both Satan and God know that we *have* sinned. And they both know that “the wages of sin is [eternal] death” (Romans 6:23). That is, God's appointed punishment for sin is eternal torment (Matthew 25:41, 46; Revelation 14:11). Sin deserves and receives God's wrath. “On account of these [sins] *the wrath of God* is coming”

(Colossians 3:6). So Satan is laying claim to humans and saying that on God's own terms they must be damned like he is for his sin.

But at this point in Satan's accusation, Jesus Christ stands forth as our advocate and intercedes for us. God designed this, desires this, and delights in this. "If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:1-2). Christ's advocacy is based on his propitiation—his infallible securing of the removal of God's wrath for all who are in him. So Satan's accusations fall to the ground because our Advocate pleads his own blood and righteousness on our behalf. "Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us" (Romans 8:34). Christ's advocacy and intercession for us nullify Satan's accusations against us. This advocacy and intercession are based on his death for us. By this death for us, Christ endured God's wrath against us. Therefore, Christ's deliverance from God's wrath is the foundation of his deliverance of us from Satan's accusations.

This is also true of our deliverance from Satan's *temptations*. Christ's propitiating work to deliver us from God's wrath is not only the foundation of our deliverance from Satan's *accusations* but also from his *temptations*. Many Christians fail to see this. That is why the gospel (the news of Christ's wrath-enduring, guilt-removing death and resurrection) is so often associated with *starting* the Christian life but not *living* the Christian life.

There are at least two ways that the New Testament shows how Christ's deliverance from God's wrath is the foundation for our deliverance from Satan's *temptations*. One is that our victory over Satan's temptations assumes God's merciful help by his Spirit. "Put on the whole *armor of God* , that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). "*God may perhaps grant them repentance . . . and they may . . . escape from the snare of the devil*" (2 Timothy 2:25-26). "*By the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body*" (Romans 8:13).

Without the merciful gifts of God's armor and repentance and Spirit, we cannot defeat the temptations of the devil. But the only reason God's full sanctifying mercy is flowing to us (through his armor and repentance and Spirit) is because his wrath isn't. And the reason his wrath isn't is because Christ endured it for us on the cross. Therefore, our deliverance from Satan's temptations is based on our deliverance from God's wrath.

One other way that the New Testament shows this is by teaching us that when Christ died for us, we died with him. And because we died with him, we can reckon ourselves dead to Satan's temptations to sin. "We have been united with [Christ] in a death like his [O]ur old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin" (Romans 6:5-6; cf. Galatians 2:20). "One has died for all, therefore all have died" (2 Corinthians 5:14). Therefore, one of the ways we fight Satan's temptations to sin is to reckon ourselves dead to sin. "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11). We can do this because when Christ died for us, we died in him.

But why did he have to die for us? Why did we have to die in him? Because the wages of sin is death. God's righteous wrath sooner or later falls on all sin (Colossians 3:6). Therefore, the death of Christ, by which we die to sin, is the same death that endures the wrath of God for us. The death that we die in Christ is both our punishment *for* sin and our death *to* sin. They are inseparable. That is why Christ's work to deliver us from the wrath of God is not only his deliverance from the *accusations* of the devil but also from the *temptations* of the devil.

Summarizing, Christ's wrath-enduring, *propitiating* work on the cross is the foundation of our

justification *and* our sanctification. This *justifying* work of God corresponds to, and conquers, Satan's work of *accusation*. And this *sanctifying* work of God corresponds to, and conquers, Satan's work of *temptation*. In our justification, Satan's *accusations* lose their condemning power, and in our sanctification, Satan's *temptations* lose their corrupting power. And both—our deliverance from his accusations and our deliverance from his temptations—are based on our deliverance from God's wrath by the cross of Christ (that is, by his propitiation).

Therefore, in the defense of the gospel, let us never surrender the wrath-enduring substitution of Christ on our behalf. It is foundational to everything that matters in our lives. And in the radical living of the gospel for the glory of Christ and the good of the world, let us never get beyond the gospel of Christ crucified in our place. May it be our daily bread. May we live by its Satan-defeating power.

Loving the gospel of Christ with you,

Pastor John

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