

Coach House Church

BEACONS

CHUMBAWUMBA

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The other week we had a missionary speaker visiting the church, reminding us of the persecution that many Christians face, simply for just being called a follower of Jesus.

I am still amazed, even today, at the negative attitude that many have to the church and Christians. Now, I'm not going to defend some of the things that have been done through the centuries and had the churches name attached to it and, by association the name of Jesus. Some of it has been absolutely horrendous, but to use a well known saying, to reject the salvation of Jesus, is likened to throwing out the baby with the bath water!

Most Christians who have had their lives changed and turned around since receiving the free gift that God gives us in Jesus, would be amazed at the harm done by those who act in the name of the church, but whose hearts are far from Jesus.

We must remember that we live in a world and culture which is shaped from a standpoint that God does not exist – which means that His biblical standards are also daily trashed and abandoned. We shouldn't be surprised that some of this culture seeps into the church, after all, the church – those that have accepted Jesus as saviour – is made up of humans like me and you. We know our faults, we don't need them pointing out – the Holy Spirit does this continually and daily – reminding us of how far we fall short of Gods standard, and yet – and here is the really good news – we are accepted as we are and our sins forgiven when we accept the sacrifice that God provided when He sent Jesus as payment for our wrongdoings.

We definitely have a lot to be thankful for, but we should be mindful at all times that we only stand in God's strength, never in our own.

Way back in 1997, a British band by the name of Chumbawamba had a top 10 hit with a song called 'Tubthumping'. It contained a limited lyrical content, but I remember at the time, liking the refrain:

'I get knocked down, but I get up again
You are never gonna keep me down,
I get knocked down, but I get up again
You are never gonna keep me down'

I never really thought much about the rest of the lyrics (which are actually about getting drunk...so don't go there!), but I do remember thinking that the chorus refrain was encouraging in my faith, therefore proving that God can use anything to remind us of His sovereignty.

Here is the amazing truth that scripture reminds us of in 2 Corinthians 4 v 8-9

'We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed'

The Missionary speaker used a phrase which I had been thinking about prior to his use of it from the platform. With regard to the continual assault that Christians are subjected to by this world – which is controlled by Satan the bible tells us – it is no wonder that we often feel battered and bruised – however, we were reminded that we may get knocked down, but we are not knocked out.

If we know our bibles, then we will be familiar with the efforts that the New Testament writers to the early church go to, to encourage the new believers to not give up in the face of persecution or give up and return to what they had been saved from.

Sadly, I believe the same sentiment has to be proclaimed from the churches today. We may feel weary and worn down at this time, but don't give up!

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

These are the words of Paul as he spoke to the Corinthian church about the 'thorn in his side' which afflicted him.

We don't know what this affliction was, but Paul tells us it was a messenger from Satan sent to torment. We know that Paul suffered greatly from this, but it never deterred him from proclaiming God's goodness and mercy and the salvation won through Jesus. The promise of eternity and escape from judgement was a prize worth striving for!

It should also remind us, that nothing happens to us without God's permission. This sounds hard to take, but the truth is this is what God being sovereign means. He reigns OVER ALL.

The Bible tells us that this is the case and therefore it signifies that God has the authority over all of His creation and everything in it. Which also means that every power, including Satan, is under His authority and has limitations to what can be done.

If you read the book of Job, or recall the beacon that Steve shared with us last week, you will notice that Satan was allowed to test Job, but only after seeking permission, which leads to the same conclusion.... The power rests in God's hands.

I think an illustration that sums all this up is as follows:

Imagine a boxing match. It is you in the blue corner against Satan in the red corner. The match has been allowed to take place, but there are rules in place. Overseeing the match is the official who holds all the authority required to officiate. In this case it is God himself.

As the match grinds on, Satan is landing blows left right and centre. It is an unrelenting attack, brutal and bloody. Finally, we are worn down and our defensive guard drops revealing our weakness ... I have a glass chin! The uppercut is not blocked and Satan lands a knockout blow to the face. Down we fall to the canvas, darkness surrounding us. Satan begins to gloat and celebrate as we crunch to the canvas flat out.

The referee steps in...

One..... two three the countdown has begun
..... four.....five...

Satan is jumping with joy now; He has won we are down and out

..... six..... seven..... eight...

We lie flat out oblivious to the cries of glee from Satan ... the referee continues to count...

Nine.....

Satan I delirious, the taste of victory is sweet.....

Ten..... Eleven..... Twelve...

Satan looks around. Something is wrong, why has the match not ended the count is over...

The referee leans closer to us and whispers 13..... 'take your time son'14 'when you are ready, I'll help you up'15..... 'however long it takes - you've got this'...

Satan is furious. Just as He was when Jesus conquered death and rose from the grave two thousand years ago. The rules have changed, because the one in authority has the authority!

We are knocked down but not knocked out.

God is good ... ALL the time...

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them (Romans 8 v 28)



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