

21. DEAD BUT STILL DEADLY



*The war is won, but the
battle still rages on.*

#NCSAMENTALHEALTHDEVOTIONS

DEAD BUT STILL DEADLY

Romans 6 :11: "Likewise, reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Christ Jesus our Lord."

In the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, I've been occupied in my thoughts quite often. Perhaps you also have been thinking a lot. One of the thoughts I have is what life would be like when all of this is over? When lockdown is suspended and we can go back to work; when a vaccine has finally been manufactured successfully; when the virus is conquered and it has lost its strength; when we are not scared or terrified of it anymore, will life go back to normal? I realised that even if the lockdown is lifted and a vaccine is introduced and all is over, it is not really over.

There is an aftermath we will have to contend with. We will still feel the effects of this virus long after it is gone, long after it is conquered, dead and defeated. Economies will have to be regrown; routines will have to be adjusted; relationships will have to be mended; mourning and grieving will have to run its course. There are so many things that are still going to be there after this is over.

I realised that the devastation and the aftermath of COVID-19 is exactly the same as the devastation and the aftermath of sin in this world. Our lockdown for sin has been lifted, we now have access to God through Jesus Christ. A vaccine has been implemented for sin and this vaccine's name is Jesus. The cause of this virus called sin, has been destroyed because Jesus died on the cross.

**THE CAUSE OF THIS VIRUS CALLED
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CROSS.**

Satan was defeated, he has been vanquished and his eternal doom was sealed, but we are still living on this earth and we still see and feel the aftermath of what Satan has done. We still have to contend with the effects of what Satan has done even though he has been defeated. We still have to be regrown in righteousness. Our habits still have to be adjusted. There are still relationships that need to be mended and we still have to say goodbye to our old sinful ways. We still have to mourn the pain that sin has caused in our lives.

Satan may be defeated but sin is still very much alive, unless we kill it. Romans 6:11 says: "*We should reckon ourselves dead onto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ.*" The truth is that sin still has its effect here on this earth. Sin is still part of the aftermath of what Satan has done. Yes, he is a conquered foe, he is a defeated enemy, but his ways are still very much active in the world today. Let me explain this. I've heard some people say that they were accidentally stung by a dead bee. Apparently a scorpion can still kill somebody after it is dead and you somehow manage to prick yourself with its sting. This is because the venom is strong enough to cause a medical emergency even after the scorpion is dead. I also have heard of people being killed by landmines that were left behind after the war.

This is exactly the same for us even after Satan has been conquered on the cross. We are possibly losing the battle of sin long after the war with Satan has been won and his eternal death has been sealed. The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is death, but Christ conquered sin. Christ conquered Satan, but the effects are still lingering and we are waging a battle with sin everyday.

**SIN IS STILL PART OF THE
AFTERMATH OF WHAT SATAN HAS
DONE.**

Fortunately we don't have to fear the power of hell or the punishment of sin because God has made a way. God says: "I am the way, the truth and the life." Therefore death has no more sting. We can declare that the grave has no more victory, but we are still losing the battle.

Why are we still losing the battle? There are two reasons. The **first reason** is because we do not know that the war is over. A story is being told of a Japanese soldier, Hiroo Onadaage.

This Japanese soldier continued fighting World War II, 29 years after the Japanese surrendered because he didn't know that the war was over and that the Japanese had lost. On the 26th of December 1944, at the age of 20, he was sent as an intelligent agent to the Lubang Island in the Philippines where he lived. He and some comrades were supposed to collect intelligence information on the island. The command was given that he was not allowed to kill himself, he was not allowed to surrender and his commanding officer would come into the jungle once the war was over, to find him. He just needed to keep fighting and keep collecting information while the battle raged. He was told that it would take five to six years and when the war was over, they would come and fetch him.

Well, the war ended and leaflets were published and thrown throughout the jungle, saying that the war was over. For some reason many of the troops didn't believe that. They thought it was propaganda. They thought the enemy was trying to lure them out of the jungle in order to defeat them.

GOD SAYS: "I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE." THEREFORE DEATH HAS NO MORE STING. WE CAN DECLARE THAT THE GRAVE HAS NO MORE VICTORY.

Many groups within the jungle remained in the jungle for many months and years after that, but eventually, through some of the newspapers from Japan and the jungle, they saw that the war was over and that Japan had surrendered.

It is interesting that Hiroo with a small group of his comrades was the last remaining group that refused to believe all these pamphlets that were dropped in the jungle and therefore they lived in the jungle for many years. After five years, one of the guys surrendered. The rest thought they could not trust him anymore and that he was going to give them away. So they retreated further into the jungle.

Because they kept waging war with the civilians in the villages around them, using guerrilla tactics to survive, stealing their food and shooting some civilians thinking that the enemy was disguising themselves as civilians in order to lure them out, some of his comrades died. Eventually he was the very last one to survive.

A student made a bucket list and he went and looked for Hiroo in the wilderness because the people knew he was somewhere out there or believed that he was out there if he hadn't been killed by the elements. The student finally found the soldier and realised that the man was not going to leave the jungle unless his commander who said he would come and get him, would come and tell him that the war was over.

The student eventually fetched his commander who was now retired. The commander went to the jungle and told Hiroo that the war was over and convinced him to come out of the jungle, after 29 years.

**SOMETIMES WE NEED TO BE
REMINDED THAT THE WAR IS
OVER, AND THAT THE BATTLES OF
THIS LIFE ALSO BELONGS TO GOD.**

On the 10th of March 1975, at the age of 52, Onodaage, in full uniform that was somehow still immaculately kept, marched out of the jungle and surrendered his samurai sword to the Philippine President, Ferdinand Marcos.

This is a sad story. The problem with fighting a war that is already won, is that there are going to be casualties. Onodaage lost his comrades because they were fighting long after the war was over. They lost their lives fighting a battle that was already won. The same happens with us. The problem is that we think we are still at war and then we end up dying.

You see, the war is won, but the battle often still rages within us. God, with a mighty hand, has destroyed the enemy on our behalf, but we still fight. When we fight even though the battle is won, we become tired because we are fighting a lost cause. We then end up surrendering or we end up dying in the crossfire or we end up just giving up and siding with the enemy.

There is no rest in the battle we are fighting. God says the war is won, we must trust Him and find some peace, we must take His yoke upon us. He has already fought the battle of sin on our behalf and we need to rest. We don't need to keep on fighting in our own strength.

We can draw some lessons from the story of Israel on what to do after the enemy has been defeated. In Joshua 23 and 24 we read that after they fought and all the inhabitants (apart from a few small groups) of Canaan had been destroyed and they conquered the land, God allowed them to settle in peace. The battle was won. God also gave instructions of what to do after the battle had been won.

**THE WAR IS WON, BUT THE BATTLE
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Joshua 23:1 says: *“The Lord has granted you rest from your enemies. You have seen everything God has done (He fought the enemies on your behalf). He has given you land as part spoils of the victory.”* Then He gave the command in verse 6: *“Do not deviate from the law of God, do not associate with the people still remaining.”* In other words, don't go and play with a bee's sting. The battle is won but there are still some remains all over that could hurt you. Do not associate with the people (that is like the bee sting). If you do not listen, you are going to get stung.

In Joshua 23:12 we find more instructions to the Israelites: *‘Do not cling to their customs or do not intermarry.’* It is a trap. It is like the sting of the scorpion. Even though the people were defeated, their ways still remained and if the Israelites decided to still cling to the ways of the enemy, they could be killed. In verse 7, Joshua told the Israelites not to even mention the names of their gods, in other words, have nothing to do with their ways. Do not get into the enemy's ways, even if you are trying to fight a small battle on behalf of God. Do not fight on behalf of God. He has fought in His own name and He will be gloried and honoured for it. Verses 8 and 11 give a command: *“Cling tightly to the Lord”* and *“carefully love the Lord.”* What God is saying to us through these verses, is to focus on the Victor and on the victory. Stay away from anything that smells or looks or even has a hint of something of the enemy.

Our problem however is that we are curious little critters. We are constantly looking into exploring the ways of the enemy, his mannerisms, his devices. We just can't help ourselves. We dabble with conspiracy theories. We want to know more about how Satan does things. We play with the sting of the bee and we are going to get stung.

**“CLING TIGHTLY TO THE LORD” AND
“CAREFULLY LOVE THE LORD.” JOSHUA
7:8&11, IS TELLING US TO FOCUS ON
THE VICTOR AND ON THE VICTORY.**

The plunder of the war still lie around even though the war has ended. Satan's devices are all still lying around on this earth and they are accessible to us. We go poking around and snooping around in his ways and in his things. The ways of the world may seem interesting to us, but God says it is deadly. It can drag you off and kill you. Stay away from it.

Thus the first reason for us losing the battle is that we get stung because we think the war is still raging and then we go snooping around in the aftermath of the battle.

The **second reason** why we are losing the battle or we still get stung is because we are like war veterans coming home after a long battle. They suffer from what we call PTSD (post-traumatic stress syndrome). They end up missing the war because it is all that they know. The devastation has become such a big part of their way of living and their routine, that it comforts them, even though it is deadly. Then they go out, looking for things that are similar to the battle, to that war.

Peter understood this to be true of sin as well. 2 Peter 2:20 says: *"If people have escaped from the corrupting forces of this world through their knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and then again are caught and conquered by them, such people are in a worse condition at the end than they were in the beginning."* In verse 22 Peter wrote: *"What happened to them shows that the proverbs are true: 'A dog goes back to what it has vomited and a pig that has been washed, goes back to roll in the mud.'"*

The Bible highlights a strange phenomenon: People cling to and return to and even protect those things which are not good for them.

**THE WAYS OF THE WORLD MAY
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Those things that are deadly in the end, e.g. the customs, the practices, the habits and devices of this world. It is a type of Stockholm Syndrome. Stockholm Syndrome is a condition where hostages develop a psychological alliance with their captors during captivity. The hostage develops positive feelings towards the captor, even though they had no previous relationship with the captor. They develop a type of irrational way of thinking and feeling towards their captors for the following reasons:

1. When they got captured, it was a terrifying thing that happened to them. In the beginning of the captivity, the people were certain that they were going to die; their lives were being threatened.
2. After a while, they become like little children. They are unable to do or think for themselves. Everything they do, has to be done with permission. Their lives are controlled and ruled by their captors. When they want to go to the bathroom, they have to ask; when they want to stand up, they have to ask; when they want to sit down, they have to ask. Because they are in fear for their lives and they are certain they are going to die, they obey.
3. As time passes the captors realise that the hostages have to survive, otherwise the hostage negotiations won't go well. The captors then start showing small acts of kindness towards the hostages. Things like giving them food, allowing them to go outside and take in some fresh air.
4. A kind of gratitude for this kindness develops in the hostages. They experience a very powerful and positive feeling towards the captor because of these small acts of kindness they receive.

**ITS STRANGE HOW WE SOMETIMES
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They are in denial that the captor is the one who put them in the situation. In their minds they think this person is the one who is going to let them live and that he or she is keeping them alive. They develop this kind of irrational positive regard towards their kidnapper. This type of behaviour is illustrated well by the following story:

At the age of 10, a girl was kidnapped by a man called Wolfgang Priklopil. She was kept in his basement for 8 years. It was reported that she cried when she heard that her captor had died. Subsequently she went to the mortuary and where he laid, she lit some candles for him. This is an interesting phenomenon, for even after he died, she still had sympathy for him, she still missed him, she mourned him, she went and she lit candles for him.

This is exactly what can happen to us if we are not careful. We can lose the battle if we do not realise that we not only have a familiarity with Satan and his ways, but long after he has been defeated, we are still lighting candles for him, doing his things. We are still clinging to the memories of his ways and his things. We don't let go of them.

In this case, the captor is dead and defeated, but we still mourn as if it was a terrible loss. People who lost captors cling to things of the deceased. We do the same with Satan. We cling to the practices of the world, the ways of the world, the methods of the world.

We need to be careful of what psychology calls 'trauma bonding' – that is getting so used to the pain of sin and possibly even violence, that we miss the horror when it is gone. We become so used to the bad that we go searching for it.

**BE CAREFUL NOT TO DEVELOP
STOCKHOLM SYNDROME, WHERE
YOU START LOVING YOUR CAPTOR
AND HIS WAYS, THAT IS THE
SINFUL THINGS OF THIS WORLD.**

Psalms 89:15 tells us what we should do: *"We should walk in the light."* Ephesians 5:11 says: *"Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them."*

Joshua knew the dangers, and after Israel entered the Promised Land, he warned them of the deadly effects of the customs of the world that still remained. He told them to stay away from those customs and have nothing to do with that darkness, with the ways of the world. They shouldn't talk about them or even look at them. Have nothing to do with them, not even a hint. He called on the Israelites to make a choice when he said to them: *"Serve the Lord your God wholeheartedly. Choose you today who you will serve"* (Joshua 24:14). Then he made a declaration: *"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."*

My message to you today is to be careful. Be careful of the deadly effects of sin that still remain in this world because they might end up taking your life. Remember, your life does not need to be taken. God has conquered death. He has conquered sin. He has conquered Satan. Eternal life is yours, don't go snooping around in the after effects and the deadly aftermath of the war and the battle that has already been won.

**GOD HAS CONQUERED DEATH. HE
HAS CONQUERED SIN. HE HAS
CONQUERED SATAN.**

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