

The Triumph of the Cross • Colossians 2:13-15

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Mike Johnson

1. How many of you have played kickball?
2. At the elementary school I attended in Park Forest, Illinois, one of the suburbs of Chicago, we played kickball at every recess and lunch
3. It's all we *ever* played!
 - a. we didn't play soccer, or baseball, or basketball, or football
 - b. we didn't play foursquare – in fact, I never heard about foursquare till we moved to the West Coast
 - c. we didn't have a tether ball and we didn't play dodge ball
 - d. we played kickball – and we were good
 - e. I have no doubt that if kickball were an Olympic sport, our school would have been the single greatest contributor to the players on the Olympic team
4. But head and shoulders above every other player on the field was Mike Johnson
5. He was a kickball god!
6. He was the Mark McQuire and Ozzy Smith of kickball all rolled in to one
7. Whatever team Mike was on – won
8. When it came time to pick sides, everyone wanted to be on Mike's team
9. And if you ended up on the opposing team, you knew you were going to lose
10. In my entire time at that school, Mike was never, ever on the losing team!
11. His presence *guaranteed* his team would win.

B. We Are On The Winning Team

1. I have good news for you.
2. If you're a Christian – you're on the winning team
3. The presence of Jesus Christ ensures you victory
4. At the cross, Jesus went to bat against all the curve balls, knuckle balls, sliders and fast balls the devil could serve up
5. And He hit every one of them clean out of the park!
6. Today, we take a look at the Triumph of the Cross
7. It's fitting that we do this week marks Good Friday

II. TEXT

A. V. 13

¹³ **And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,**

1. In this portion of Colossians, Paul is spelling out our *identification with Christ*
2. He is detailing what it means to believe *in* Christ, to put our trust and reliance

on Him

3. He says first of all, that before we came to faith in Jesus, we were dead
4. He means of course, that we were *spiritually* dead
5. The lost are greatly offended when we suggest that apart from Christ they are spiritually dead
 - a. while most people will readily admit they aren't perfect,
 - b. they find it difficult to accept that before God, they are lost and without hope
 - c. they say, "I'm not perfect, but really I'm not too bad a person!"
6. They're under the mistaken idea that when they stand before God for judgment, He will pile all their good deeds and even their good *intentions* on one side of a heavenly balance, and on the other side he will deposit their sin.
7. They fully expect their good to outweigh the bad
8. But that is not the way it will be.
9. If there were a set of balances in heaven, they would find that all there is to put on it is their spiritual corpse on one side and *nothing* on the other
10. As Paul says here, before we come to Christ, we are in a state of spiritual death – *not* non-existence – but death
11. This state of death means that we are out of touch with God and His Kingdom
12. The lost may be deeply into spirituality – but apart from Christ – they haven't a clue about truth!
13. There are many deeply spiritual people who are in too all kinds of intense spiritual experiences, but it's all lies and darkness, woven by the master deceiver to keep them in bondage to sin and death
14. The 10 year old child who's made a sincere commitment to Christ is far more in touch with truth and reality than the 45 year old unbeliever with a doctorate in theology.
15. While we were dead in our trespasses, being dominated by our flesh, Christ came and gave us life
 - a. He opened our blind eyes to see the light
 - b. He opened our deaf ears to hear the truth
 - c. He quickened our lifeless spirits by breathing into us the Breath of Life
16. All of this was accomplish by His removal of our sin through the Cross
17. Sin is what separated us from God
 - a. sin is what crushed the life out of us and held us in death
 - b. like a massive, granite tombstone, sin lay on top of us, holding us in the grave
 - c. Christ came, reached down, and lifted the slab away

B. V. 14

1. In v. 14, Paul changes the picture . . .
 - 14 **having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.**
2. Let me put this in the language of the street –
3. Jesus took our *rap sheet* and put it through the shredder

4. What Paul is speaking of here is the list of charges that was written up by a court when a criminal was charged with a crime
 - a. once the guilty verdict came in, the judge would set the penalty that had to be paid by the criminal
 - b. it was recorded on the same deed that held the list of charges
 - c. it became a bill they owed to society, to justice
 - d. this would then be tacked to the outside of his cell and he wouldn't be released till the penalty had been satisfied
5. The list of charges Paul has in mind is all the violations you and I have made against the Law of God
 - a. every trespass is being recorded, every little white lie
 - b. every impure thought that moves from temptation to fantasy
 - c. it's all there, dutifully recorded in the annals of heaven
6. But when Christ went to the cross, He took that list of charges that was against you and me, that was tacked up outside the door of our spiritual crypt, and He nailed it to the cross
7. And when He cried out "It is finished," he was writing across our list of charges – "Paid!"
8. When a prisoner had done his time and paid the fine levied by the court for his crime, the jailor would take down that list of charges and write across the bottom of it the word – "Tetelestai – Paid in Full."
9. He would then roll up the scroll, and hand it to the released prisoner.
10. That way, if anyone in the future ever accused him of being a criminal, he could unroll the document and show he had paid his debt and now stood free!
11. That one word – "Tetelestai!" says it all
12. That is the very word Jesus uttered from the cross as His passion came to a close
13. Tetelesai – Paid In Full!
14. Friends – this is *our* victory cry!
 - a. this is our document we can wave in the face of the devil every time he comes and suggests that we aren't good enough to be a Christian
 - b. we can agree with him – it's not about *our* goodness or what *we* do
 - c. it's about what *Jesus* did on the cross
 - d. HE! Paid for our sins – all of them, forever – completely!
15. When other men died on Roman crosses, they died cursing, hurling insults and slander at those who passed by
 - a. they died shamefully, cowardly
 - b. they died just like the Romans and Satan wanted them to, in utter and complete *defeat*
16. Not so Jesus! His suffering was marked by dignity and grace
17. And His death was attended by courage and the final note of Victory! IT IS FINISHED!!!!
18. But there is even more here . . .

C. V. 15

- 15 **Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them,**

triumphing over them in it.

1. Jesus uses a picture out of the Roman world that would have been easily understood by his generation but is lost on our own
2. He is speaking here of the Roman *Triumph*
 - a. the Triumph was a victory parade and celebration thrown in the streets of Rome for a returning general who had won some great battle
 - b. the historian Plutarch gives us a graphic description of the Triumph of one Aemilius Paulus, who had captured the province of Macedonia [1]
 - c. it lasted 3 days; great scaffolds were erected in the forum and along the boulevards of Rome for spectator seating, and all of Rome turned out, dressed in festive white.
 - d. on the first day, 259 chariots displayed in procession the statues, pictures, and colossal images taken from the enemy.
 - e. on the second day, innumerable wagons bore the armor of the Macedonians.
 - f. following the wagons came 3,000 men carrying the enemies' silver in 750 vessels, followed by more treasure.
 - g. on the third day came the captives, preceded by 120 sacrificial oxen with their horns gilded and their heads adorned with ribbons and garlands, next Macedonian gold, then the captured king's chariot, crown, and armor.
 - h. then came the king's servants, weeping, with hands outstretched, begging the crowds for mercy.
 - i. next came his children, the conquered king himself, clad entirely in black, and then a seemingly endless line of the common folk who were now to be sold in the slave market
 - j. Finally came the victorious general standing in a special chariot, at the head of his loyal troops
 - k. And as the victors passed by, the crowds would erupt in praise and adulation
 - l. Every so often, the general would stop his chariot and reach in to a chest and pull out some captured treasure which he would fling in to the crowd – enriching them from the spoils of his victory
3. This is the picture Paul is painting of the victory Christ won at the cross
4. At the cross, Jesus defeated satan; He broke the devil's dominion of mankind and nullified his claim to earth
5. When Christ ascended into heaven after His resurrection, the angels threw Him a Divine Triumph
6. Their cheers and adulation continue to this day, and we echo them here on earth as we worship and lift our praises before His throne

III. CONCLUSION

A. Powerless

1. I want to ask you to notice something in v. 15.
2. Paul says that Jesus disarmed the principalities and powers, meaning the entire demonic realm

3. The word “disarmed” means *to strip away the weapons*; to render powerless
4. Now – is that true or not?
5. It *is* true – absolutely true!
6. My friend, do you realize the implications of that?
7. If satan and the demonic realm have no power then nothing can hinder us from pressing forward in complete victory
8. Do we? Truth be told - No we don't. So what's the deal?
9. If satan is rendered *powerless* by the cross, then why is it temptation seems so incredibly strong
10. Here's why – temptation is only as strong *as we let it be*.
11. My friends let's think clearly here.
 - a. Paul says Jesus *disarmed* the principalities and powers
 - b. the only thing they have left is their *lying mouth*
 - c. and the only power they now wield is the power – WE GIVE THEM by believing their lies
 - d. temptation seems strong to us because rather than believing in Christ at that moment, we *CHOSE* to believe the lie of the temptation
 - e. there is tremendous power in *belief*, there is power in *choice*
 - f. what the enemy is trying to do is get you to use the power God has given *you* in your power to chose, your power to believe // and employ it in the cause of *his* kingdom and agenda
 - g. every time you get suckered by another lie, or another temptation you act as a surrogate of satan.
12. Let me say it again – Jesus has disarmed satan and the demons
13. The only thing left to them is their mouths, their deceit
14. And that only has power *if we chose to believe it*
15. This is why it is critical that we renew our minds and Paul says in Romans 12
16. Our faith needs to be built on the truth of God's Word

B. Problems With The Enemy

1. Do not be afraid of demons! They have no power
2. Oh sure, they can play tricks; turn on a light, make something go bump in the night; try to disturb your rest with nightmares and sick dreams
3. But what have they really done?
4. Nothing – their whole aim is to get you to believe they *DO* have power, then they can scare you, and *that is* power – because you give it to them
5. Stand your ground and refuse to give in.
6. [Our problem with lights]
7. Night troubles – pray before you go to sleep

C. The Big Turn Around

1. Looking at the cross from a purely human perspective, it was the height of infamy and shame
2. It spelled defeat in the biggest letters
3. But from God's perspective, and as *we* look back at the Cross of Christ, we see that it was the place of *Victory*

4. God takes the biggest blunder of the human race, the Crucifixion, and makes it the turning point of history
5. He takes what seems the supreme tragedy, and turns it into a Triumph!
6. Because of the Cross, that's the kind of thing our God does every day
7. I don't know what difficult thing you are going through this morning; what dark and lonely hill you may be on today
8. But this I do know, My God is a God who takes such dark and lonely places, and turns them into memorials of His power and salvation

[1] Hughes, Kent, *Colossians* pg. 80-1