

## ***IT IS FINISHED***

*Colossians 2:15*

Amid the silent, astonished gazes that Friday afternoon, while the sky turned black and the earthquake struck, was a smiling, exuberant presence. He had been tailing Jesus throughout His entire earthly life, doing everything in his power to sabotage and destroy whatever Jesus could accomplish. And now it seemed as if his work had been successfully completed. The Son of God was dead. The Messiah, the Savior, the Hope of the World for thousands of years, was now defeated, overcome, and conquered. There hung His lifeless corpse on the wood of the cross, and His words rang out, "It is finished."

"Yes, it is finished," scoffed Satan. "What a masterful job I have done. Jesus must never have expected that I would use His own religious leaders and one of His own pious disciples to win my battle. He probably thought I would come at Him head-on like I did in those first days, when I tempted Him in the wilderness. But I was much too smart for that. How crafty, clever and subtle I am," he mused. "How intelligent, and bright and talented. I have taken the Lord of the Universe and made Him the fool on the cross. I have taken the King of all creation and lowered Him to the point of humiliation and shame and destruction. He is finished. He said it Himself. He is finished. And now," laughed Satan, "Now I will be Lord, I will be ruler, I will have control over this world and reign forever as the Prince of Darkness."

Indeed, that's the way it looked. The Wisdom of the World stared at the corpse of Christ and said, "It is finished. This is not victory. This is not success. Jesus didn't win. He lost. His body is pierced and hangs in disgrace. His followers are scattered and scrambling for safety. And left in His path are shattered hopes and unfulfilled promises, not a Messiah and Savior."

But guess what, my friends? God had the last laugh on Satan. He had the final word to defeat His foe. For, in the humiliating death of Jesus Christ, God had a plan to punish the sins of His people forever -- HE WOULD LAY THEM ON HIS PERFECT SON AND PUNISH HIM INSTEAD. And through the sacrifice of His Son, then, God would accomplish our cleansing, our redemption, our salvation. He would take us, lost in trespasses and sins and destined for damnation, and bring us life and forgiveness.

And left in the rubble would be just the opposite of what Satan and Human Wisdom would think. For in the trail of Christ's victory, sealed by the blood of His own hands, lay the mangled and destroyed remains of the Devil's power. No longer could he taunt God's people with the threat of eternal destruction. No longer could he lead them away from God and rejoice in the power of sin. No longer would death be the voice of defeat and doom.

Instead, God's people, through faith, would be able to stand up strong and say with confidence and conviction, "It is finished. You are finished. Be gone, Satan. Be gone, sin! Be gone, death! Away with you! I am redeemed by the blood of God's Only-Begotten Son. His death was for me! And while you may taunt and tempt me, while you may cause me struggle and grief; my Savior has given me His Spirit to resist you and His promise that, through faith in Him, my future lies beyond the grave and in the sacred arms of a Shepherd who loves me."

In short, Jesus' cry "it is finished," meant not that His own life or power or strength was gone. Instead, it meant God's plan was complete. He had finished His work. And now Satan was finished. His bite was no longer venomous and His threats were null and void.

The promise had been made way back at the Garden of Eden when God said to the Serpent: "He will crush your head, but you will strike His heel." A prophecy that meant that the Messiah, though stricken a brutal blow by the Serpent, Satan, would wield the final death blow to him.

A similar image is seen in the Old Testament story of the Bronze Serpent. In the end, by the power of God, while the serpents once struck God's people, it is the Serpent who is eventually lifted up on the pole of destruction -- it is the Serpent whose poison is rendered ineffective by God's hand of grace; and when the people look up to the bronze snake lifted up on the pole and see, in faith, through the coat bronze to the open hand of God reaching out to them, they are saved from death.

Jesus uses this image to refer to His own sacrifice: "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life." And now it had happened. It is finished -- God's plan is complete.

And Jesus puts the final seal upon it just a short time later when He descends into hell to declare His eternal victory to the disarmed, devenomed Serpent. For He is the One who took away His power forever -- He is the One that made Satan the fool, for thinking that he could stand in the way of God's love for His people -- for thinking that he could reign supreme in the face of our powerful Savior. He is the One who, lifted up on the cross, becomes King triumphant, conquering soldier supreme, -- a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Colossians says it plainly:

"When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

"He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross!"

At home we have a game called OUTBURST. Inside, it has some special cards encoded with answers to specific questions. The only way you can see those answers is to use this special red holder that enables you to cut through all mess off distractions on the card to the answers that lie beneath.

Today, I'd like you to do the same as you stare at the cross. See not the instrument of Roman torture. See not the horrific executioner's rod of suffering. See not the lifeless body of the Man of Sorrows who was despised and rejected by men. No. Instead, glimpse through the crimson stains of Christ's holy, precious blood and innocent suffering and death to see what really hangs there: -- the devenomed, deflated power of Satan and all his temptations and threats, and.....AND your sin -- all your sin, all your guilt, all you transgressions, all your infractions, all your faults, failures and flaws -- crucified with Christ.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.