

THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS

by

Evangelist Joe Henry Hankins, D. D.

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SERMON SEVEN

“THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS”

Text: Colossians 2:14-15. **“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”**

When Jesus died on the cross it looked to the world like a failure and a defeat, and I can imagine that the devil thought that he had triumphed at last. The enemies of Christ thought that it was the last of Him, and His disciples also thought that their hopes had been dashed to pieces in that hour. They sadly went away, saying, **“We had hoped that this was He who should deliver the kingdom to Israel.”**

In spite of all that He had said about His resurrection, they had given up hope and gone away in the spirit of defeat. But in reality the death of Christ, instead of being a defeat and a failure, was the greatest triumph that has ever taken place on this earth in the history of man, or I might say in all time or eternity.

The first trophy of victory of the cross was the thief who died on the cross nearby. In that hour he saw something that made him know that the man who was dying on that middle cross was more than a man, and out of the depths of his sin and shame, by faith, he cried, **“Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”** And Jesus looked over to that neighboring cross and said, **“Today thou shalt be with me in paradise.”** When Jesus went to the Father that day, he carried with him the soul of a redeemed thief to present him to the Father as the first trophy of the cross.

The next trophy of the cross was the centurion who was in charge of the soldiers that put Jesus to death. The Scripture says that when this centurion saw how He died he said, **“Surely this man was the Son of God,”** and he believeth on Christ and confessed Him publicly in that hour.

Tonight if you could look down through the ages from that hour until Jesus comes back you would see a multitude that no man could number. For these nineteen hundred years they have been coming to the cross and there they have been set free from their sins and washed in His blood and have joined the innumerable company that are marching to Zion, blood-washed and redeemed.

The prison houses have been opened and the captives have been set free and the cross has triumphed over sin.

“In the cross of Christ I glory
Towering o’er the wrecks of time:
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.”

Thank God for the cross of Jesus Christ.

I. The Cross Of Jesus Was A Triumph Over The Law.

We hear God’s Word saying that it has “**blotted out (or cancelled) the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross.**”

It means that even the law of sin and death has been nailed to the cross of Jesus Christ.

So complete is our redemption that even the very law that the devil would use to bring us under condemnation has been taken out of the way—removed from the statute books of God forever, as far as the redeemed soul is concerned.

You talk about the security of the believer, Paul never preached it so forcibly in all his ministry as we find in our text. Not only has He met the demands of the law and paid the penalty of the law; not only has He removed the curse of the law—“**having been made a curse for us**”—; not only has He removed our sins from us and washed them in His blood and made them white as snow, but the very law that would bring us into condemnation has been blotted out as far as the believer is concerned, taken out of the way and nailed to the cross.

O the triumph of the cross of Christ over the law; “**For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.**”

Not only has the law of life in Christ made me free from the law of sin and death, but listen, “**God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh,**” that the righteousness that is demanded by the law is fulfilled in us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Therefore sin and the law have no more claim upon the child of God. We are free from the law once and for all. The triumph is complete. That is the reason Paul said in Romans 8:1, “**There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.**” Why? Because those who are in Christ are not under the law. There is not even a law against them on the statute books of God. It has been nailed to the cross, and there is now no condemnation.

That is the reason Jesus said in John 5:24, **“He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”**

Out of death into life once for all.

II. The Cross Of Jesus Christ Was A Triumph Over Sin.

“But now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

Our sins, as well as the law, were also nailed to His cross. Judgment fell upon the sin of every believer, for **“he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”**

- **“He bore our sins in His own body on the tree.”**

- **“We were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”**

- **“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”**

That day the sword of judgment fell upon Him and He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. They are put away as dead things forever. Not only our sins, but sin.

Now sin is more than just transgression. Sin is that ugly thing in our hearts, that depraved nature in our being that makes us rebel against God, haters and enemies of God. But thank God, the triumph of the cross is so complete that the risen Lord is entering the human heart in salvation so completely changes the very nature of the redeemed that they now become lovers of God and lovers of righteousness and holiness.

“Therefore, if any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Peter says we are **“partakers of the divine nature.”**

The triumph of the cross over sin was so complete that it not only took away our sins, but thank God, in the regenerating power of the cross of Jesus Christ, God changes the human heart and human nature and makes us children of God—His dear children.

- **“And because ye are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your heart, crying Abba, Father.”**

- **“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”**

Now we have that nature that recognizes God as our Father, that cries out, not in fear of God and terror of the Lord, but that feeling of kinship with God, that nature that tells us that He is our Father and that we are the children of God.

“The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

That is the reason Jesus said, **“Because I live, ye shall also live.”** Why? Because my life is now bound up in the same bundle with Jesus Christ.

The living interceding Christ gives us victory through His intercession over every outward sin and temptation that the devil may bring us. I want you to get this. So many people tell me that “I would be a Christian if I thought I could hold out.” Thank God, it doesn’t depend on my holding out. There is a living Saviour who has conquered death; who has nailed the law to the cross; who has **“spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly and triumphed over them,”** and who is now even at this moment at the right hand of God, making intercession for the saints.

And so Paul said, **“Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”** And when he said, **“Able to save them to the uttermost”** he meant more than able to save any kind of sinner.

Yes, He is able to save any kind of sinner, regardless of how deep he has gone in sin or how black his soul may be. He is able to save those who have spent their lives in sin and come down to old age with souls as black as the midnight darkness of hell itself. He is able to save every one. But when God says, **“To the uttermost,”** he means more than that. He means He is able to save every step of the way; in every trial; in every temptation—able to save them and deliver them out of them all. Why? Because **“He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”**

The victory over the devil, over temptation and over the onslaughts of sin come not through our own strength but through the interceding living Christ.

III. The Cross Of Jesus Christ Was A Triumph Over Death

“Forasmuch then; as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Why do people fear death? There is just one reason— their sins. The sting of death is sin and the power of sin to bring fear that grips the human heart is the law of God — a law of holiness; the law that thunders from Mount Sinai that said, **“Thou shalt not”**; that said, **“The wages of sin is death.”** The sting of death is sin. But, thank God on the cross death stung Him and lost its sting there.

My father used to have bees when I was a child. When he was robbing them of their honey sometimes they would get angry and sting everything in sight.

One day I was eating a piece of honey and found that there was a bee that had honey on his wings and couldn't fly away. I got him in my hands and he stung me. I called to my father to get him off before he stung me again. But father said, "You needn't be afraid of him now, he will never sting again. When a bee stings once he loses his sting."

O thank God, He took the sting out of death. If you are redeemed of God your sins have been atoned for on the cross; they have been taken out of the way and nailed to the cross, and the sting of death is gone, for sin is gone. So the redeemed of God from that day to this have been able to step down into the valley of the shadow with songs of victory and shouts of praise on their lips.

But more than that, more than just taking out the fear of death, John saw Him on the isle of Patmos in His glory, and heard Him say, "**I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of hell and of death.**"

That day on the cross Jesus met the devil on his own grounds, for his domain is the domain of death. Jesus who said, "**How can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man**"?, went into the strong man's house that day—into the very domain of the devil. Yes, he dipped His soul into hell itself on the cross in those three hours of darkness when the battle raged there between Christ, the Son of God and all the powers of the underworld. He met those powers that Paul spoke of when he said, "**We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.**"

All this world's darkness met at the cross, all the powers of darkness, and the Son of God came to grips with death and with hell. He went into the strong man's house and, thank God, bound the strong man. For we are told that in His death on the cross He destroyed him who had the power of death. It was the devil's death warrant that day on the cross.

The execution day hasn't come yet, but thank God, it is coming. For victory over death on the cross means that it is a triumph, not only over the fear of death, but over the powers of death.

O listen to it! Hear it! My soul thrills with the thought of it. "**He made a show of them openly.**" What does that mean? *He brought them out into the open as trophies of His conquest.* Jesus said, "**I have the keys of hell and death.**" On the cross He brought out all the powers of ungodliness, all the forces of wickedness like a conqueror coming home from a battlefield with the trophies and spoils of war.

I think Paul must have been thinking about those Roman conquests and conquerors, as when a general has gone out to battle and has been a victor gathers the spoils and brings them back and marches down the streets of Rome coming through the arch of triumph in a glorious triumphal parade. He has the enemy king tied to his chariot wheel. Thank God Jesus Christ on the cross tied the king of darkness to His chariot wheel, brought him out openly in his triumphal procession and displayed him as a trophy of His conquest. God said to Him when He ascended on high, "**Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.**" "**For He must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.**"

IV. The Cross Of Jesus Christ Was A Triumph Over Satan.

John said as he saw that host in heaven, **“I heard a voice saying in heaven, now is come salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame Him by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their, testimony.”**

That is the picture of the individual’s victory over Satan. But God gives another picture of a complete victory over Satan in the twentieth chapter of Revelation where John says, **“I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him that he should deceive the nations no more.”**

The work of the devil is to deceive. The master stroke of the devil is to deceive men about sin. Yes, the devil’s business is to make sin attractive, to paint it in glowing colors, and set it to beautiful music, to lure people to their death by deceiving them about sin. But you can paint sin all you please, when it is finished it is death; the end of that way is death, and in the end, **“it biteth like an adder.”**

The devil’s business is also to deceive men about God, and about the joy there is in following Christ. How he deceives the sons of men into believing that if you follow Christ you have to give up all the joys and pleasures in life.

O friends, I wish I could tell you in such a way that you could understand; I wish you could see in my heart; I wish you could realize the joy—**“joy unspeakable and full of glory”**—there is in following Christ all the way. The devil never told a bigger lie to humankind than that if you follow Christ you will have to give up all the pleasures and joys in life.

A man in my Sunday School class who had been saved only a short time made this statement to me when I asked him if he had to give up all the pleasures in life: “Brother Hankins, I tell you the truth it is the first time I have ever really lived.”

It is the devil’s business to deceive about sin and to deceive about the joy there is in following Christ. Listen friends, why shouldn’t God’s children be the happiest people on earth? Our sins are forgiven, we are children of the King, **“heirs and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ”**,—and on our way to glory. I tell you it is great to be a Christian. I wouldn’t give up my hope for all the sins the devil has ever offered for all the good times sin has ever afforded from Adam until now.

It is the devil’s business to deceive about judgment and to tell people they can indulge in sin and miss the consequences of their sins. But you can’t do it. For it is written, in the eternal Word of God **“Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap . . .”**

God is not mocked even though the devil does deceive you.

Your sin will be judged either on the cross of Jesus your substitute, or in hell upon your own wretched miserable soul. And you, like the rich man in hell, will cry out, **“I am tormented in this flame,”** while God answers, **“Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.”**

You had your chance in life, it is now settled forever. Your sin will be judged regardless of what the devil says about it.

V. The Cross of Jesus Christ Was a Triumph Over All

Listen to it!

“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”

He triumphed over them all. Not only is it a triumph over the law; not only is it a triumph over sin, death and Satan, but listen, it is a triumph over all things. **“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”**

- Every enemy shall become the footstool of His feet.
- All hostile forces will be bound and cast into the bottomless pit and the key turned on him forever.
- All the hosts of wickedness and of the powers of darkness shall be one day trampled underneath His victorious feet.

He is coming riding on a white horse **“and on his thigh a name is written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”**

He is coming to conquer. And behind Him John said he saw all the host of the redeemed following in His train. Hear it! **“Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess, of things in heaven, (I want you to get this, watch it closely) things in the earth, and things under the earth.”** The triumph of the cross will be complete.

All the hosts of heaven will stand around the throne of the glorified Son of God, and the angelic hosts, with Gabriel, Michael and the archangels, the seraphim and cherubim; all that innumerable host of the angels of God will bow their knees in the presence of the glorified redeemer. Hear the Word of the Lord: **“And all the angels stood around about the throne, and about the elders and the four living creatures, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen, blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever.”**

Then, **“things in the earth,”** the redeemed of God, they will come from the north, south, east and west and kneel before the throne of His glory and cast their golden crowns at His pierced feet, and crown Him Lord of all.

They are singing a song. What is it? **“Unto Him who loved us and loosed us from our sins in His own blood.”**

“I beheld,” said John, **“and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands. And they cried with a voice saying”** — What? Listen to it! **“Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”**

Then he heard another song—**“the song of Moses and the Lamb.”** It sounded like the voice of many waters, like the voice of a great thunder, like the voice of a mighty earthquake as the very heavens reverberated with the shouts of praise of the redeemed of God. It is the time when the saints go marching in. **“Every knee shall bow and every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess.”**

There is another crowd — **“things under the earth.”**

All the hosts of the lost one day will be drawn to the cross—those proud haughty spirits who have hardened their hearts against the Lord; refused to humble themselves before Him and in their pride and self-efficiency, refused to acknowledge their need of the cross; refuse to accept His salvation; refused to honor the blood but have trampled it underfoot in their unbelief and counted it an unholy thing—they all are coming.

Do you see them?

Their haughty spirits are now broken. They are coming to the cross, coming to bow their knees and confess that He is the Lord to the glory of the Father. And with them there come the hosts of hell. All the demons are coming. The power of the cross has broken their dominion and they have surrendered and are coming to bow their knees before the glorious Christ.

Here comes the devil himself, that old serpent called Satan, the deceiver. Can it be? Is it possible? Yet, he is coming to bow his knee, acknowledging defeat before the cross of Jesus Christ. For He has triumphed over all, and **“every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess.”**

I am glad that I am in that company that shall be glad to bow to Christ that day; that shall count it the greatest privilege of my life and to take off whatever crown the Lord has given me and cast it down at His pierced feet, and see God take the crowns of all the redeemed and make one great glorious crown; take it in His own hands, rise up before the assembled universe and place it on the brow that wore the thorns.

Then He is going to bring out before all the assembled universe the trophies of His redeeming grace. **“But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath made us alive again together in Christ. And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”**

Dr. Carroll says this means that when his host from the three realms have assembled to bow the knee before the triumphant Christ, then Christ will bring out His redeemed, and before the assembled universe will put them on display as trophies of the cross while all the universe bows in acknowledgment of His Lordship and of His kingship.

Thank God for the triumph of the cross and for the privilege of being a child of God.

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