



Part 6

July 11, 2010

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COMPLETE Indeed

PLEASE TURN WITH ME TO COLOSSIANS CHAPTER TWO.

⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹ In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Let us pray.

Lord, thank You that your Scripture reminds us we are complete in Him. So today, Lord, as we look at Colossians together again, help us to be reminded of that simple truth.

It is in Jesus' name we pray. AMEN.

Today's
Scriptures

Isaiah 29:13; Jeremiah 4:4; Matthew 12:13; Mark 7:6-9; Romans 6:3-4, 23;
1 Corinthians 2:9; 12:13; 2 Corinthians 5:8, 17; Galatians 4:3; 5:1; Colossians 2:6-15;
2 Timothy 3:6; 1 Peter 3:19; 2 Peter 1:3-4; 1 John 2:6

OUR JOURNEY IN REVIEW

In our study together over the past few weeks, we have learned that the book of Colossians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Colossae, where there was a rising philosophy, or heresy, causing a threat to the young church.

The City of Colossae

We learned Colossae was located in the region of Phrygia in Asia Minor, about a hundred miles from Ephesus. It was one of a triad of cities along with Hierapolis, which we know very little about, other than there were many medical doctors trained there, and Laodicea, which is mentioned in the Book of Revelation.

The History of Colossae

Some five hundred years before Jesus, Colossae was an important port city on the Lycus River, which fed into the Meander River, which in turn was a tributary of the Red Sea. As a result, its early culture and religious traditions were strongly influenced by both Greeks and Romans, who invaded and conquered the city for its proximity to strategic waterways, and by a very large population of Jews who had left their land centuries earlier during the exile to Babylon.

The Threat To The Church In Colossae

By the time of Jesus, Colossae's importance had been significantly diminished, but its culture retained large remnants of these traditions, so Paul's message to Colossae was in part an attempt to bring some correction to the threat of the rising heresy that was rooted in the remnant philosophies.

Paul's Connection To The Church In Colossae

While he was ministering and teaching in Ephesus, Paul met and befriended a new believer named Epaphras, who most likely was converted under Paul's ministry. Epaphras then returned to his home town of Colossae to plant a church.

During the next six years, Paul finished three years of ministry in Ephesus; traveled to Greece, where he wrote his letters to the Romans and Corinthians; and then traveled to Jerusalem, where

he delivered to the poor an offering he had been collecting during his missionary journeys. While there, he was arrested, taken to Caesarea Philippi and imprisoned. When his imprisonment was completed, he was brought to Rome to face other charges and was placed under house arrest while awaiting his trial.

During this same time, Epaphras had been ministering to the young church he had planted in Colossae. After six years he traveled to Rome to see Paul and to talk about the church in Colossae.

Paul's Letter To The Church In Colossae

When Epaphras visited Paul in Rome he shared his heart for the Colossians, and Paul sent back a letter in an effort to correct any false teachings.

We learned from the letter that most of what Paul heard from Epaphras was good. Paul thanked the Colossians for their faith, encouraged them to walk steadily in it, and continued to remark about how they were living out their faith in the world. Yet Paul also demonstrated his concern over the increasing threat that the church might be led astray.

The letter was not a rebuke of a serious group of defectors. Rather it was a loving warning to a new congregation to not let false teaching or philosophy infiltrate their young body. Colossae had its false teachers; every church does. There were philosophers with misguided wisdom on the steps of the church, prowling for control, and Paul warned the church about the danger. This is always to be expected. Every church, of every age, of every location will have to fight to hold its doctrinal purity.

So Paul wrote this letter to encourage the church to stand firm in the faith and to contend for the purity of the Gospel.

Because the book of Colossians is a letter, we see

- **The SALUTATION, or INTRODUCTION** of the letter, in chapter one, verse one (1:1) through chapter two, verse five (2:5);
- **The BODY** in 2:6-4:6; and
- **The CLOSING or CONCLUSION** in 4:7-18.

Today represents a major transition in our walk together through the book of Colossians as we begin our study of the body of the letter, the real meat of what Paul desired the church to hear and learn from his pen.

SIMPLE REMINDERS

⁶ *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,* ⁷ *rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*

As we pick up our study in verse six, we read the beautiful summary Paul has provided – as only Paul can do – of all he previously presented to the readers of his letter.

Jesus Is Lord

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord

The King James and English Standard versions of the Bible use the more common vernacular to translate Christ Jesus *the* Lord in this and previous passages, but the New International version instead translates Christ Jesus *as* Lord. This is an important distinction here because Paul has been contending with the church in Colossae that the fullness of God dwells in Jesus and He is all the God they need. So they have received Christ Jesus as Lord of their life,

Walk In The Way Jesus Walked

so walk in him

1 John 2:6 says, *Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.* One of the evidences that we have been redeemed and renewed is that we continue to walk in our faith; we press forward.

Do Not Change

rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught,

They are rooted and built up in Him, established in faith, and are not to turn from the truth they have already accepted.

And so Paul said, You have received Christ Jesus *as* Lord, continue to walk forward.

To what end?

The Purpose of Freedom

Last week, July Fourth, I was thinking about how much I love American history. Each July Fourth I try to take some time to read The Declaration of

*Yes, you have been set free from sin,
but don't stop there.*

*You have been set free for a purpose,
not just freedom from,
but freedom to something greater.*

Independence because it is poetic and beautiful, and it gives insight to the mindset of the founding fathers of our country at that time.

As I read, I thought about how difficult it must have been for those men who were fighting so for freedom from the oppression of another government, a freedom we so often take for granted. And as I read the last paragraph, just before the signatures, I was reminded of a simple truth. Let me draw your attention to it.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States;

... and of Right ought to be Free. The founding fathers realized it was not enough to be simply free *from* something; they were free *to* something greater. They ought to be living free because there was something greater they had been called to.

Paul wrote of this same concept, saying, Yes, you have been set free from sin, but don't stop there. You have been set free for a purpose, not just freedom *from*, but freedom *to* something greater. And so Paul reminded them they had been set free

*You can either be taken captive by philosophies and empty deceit,
or be complete in Christ.*

from sin so that they might walk steadfast in their faith since they know Christ Jesus as Lord.

Everyone in all of history has had a philosophy to answer the question of why we exist, but nobody has anything new. Most philosophies can be traced back to Aristotle and Plato, and so everyone has been borrowing philosophies from each other for two thousand years.

Colossae was no different; there were competing philosophies, and what Paul earlier wrote to the Corinthians, *No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him,*¹ he might also have written to Colossae. In essence he was saying, Listen, other people are going to have competing theories, but no man knows the riches of what God has done. They may conjecture, guesstimate and present other philosophies, but no man knows what God has done.

But before Paul moved to his great response to the question of why we exist, and to how we are to live in the world now that we are a new creation and have been transformed, he sent one last shot across the bow to the false teachers.

TAKEN CAPTIVE

⁸ *See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.*

Paul had previously established and reminded the Colossians that Jesus is not an emanating spirit from God; He is God in the flesh, and all the wisdom and knowledge of God dwell in Him. He then began his discussion of the characteristics of false philosophies by employing a beautiful teaching tool, implying two alternatives or employing a comparison. He said, *You can either be taken captive by philosophies and empty deceit, or be complete in Christ.*

In Galatians 5:1 Paul wrote, *For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.* It is a continual reminder by Paul to not return to that which you once knew.

Kidnapped

The word *captive* is very interesting in this passage. Its literal translation is, *to carry off the booty*, or plunder, meaning to have someone steal or kidnap and carry away what is rightfully yours. So when Paul said, Don't be captive to these philosophies, he was saying don't let the philosophies steal from you that which you knew to be precious; don't let them kidnap you. There is a prey mentality to the warning.

Paul used a very strong word here to create an all too familiar image. To the people of Colossae, a port city which had over and over again been ransacked, captured and overrun by wave after wave of invaders because of its prime location, the idea of someone coming in and taking what was most precious must have rung true. Once the Colossians had built their homesteads and fortunes, the Greeks came in under the leadership of Alexander the Great and swept it all away. When Alexander the Great fell, the Colossians began to rebuild, but the Romans soon invaded and took everything away again.

Don't let anyone take that which is precious to you *captive* by any philosophy. Paul used the same word in 2 Timothy 3:6: *For among them are those who creep into households and **capture** weak women...* It creates the image of something creeping in; you don't see it; it comes in the cover of night and takes what is rightfully yours.

Hooked

The word *deceit* here is also very interesting, Don't be taken captive by philosophy *and empty deceit*. The word literally would have meant *fish hook* to the men who **read** this. Many of the people whom the Apostle Paul ministered to in this port city would have been fishermen, so he used the word *deceit* to illustrate the idea of a fish hook.

¹ 1 Corinthians 2:9

I don't know much about fishing, but I do know the number one rule of fishing is to camouflage the hook. You do whatever you can with the hook to make it not look like a hook. You add to it a squirming worm, fly, piece of shrimp or bread because you want the fish to think that it is food, something it finds appealing. You disguise what the hook really is and you throw it in the water to lure the fish.

Paul used the same imagery for deceitful philosophies. They will be thrown near you and will look appealing, but if you take the hook, it gets you. Don't be led astray, don't be led captive by deceitful philosophies, things which on the outside look appealing, but on the inside are just the devil's hook.

We sometimes feel it would be difficult to defend our faith, but for Christians, defending our faith can be simple if we compare everything to Jesus. How does what you've heard relate to what you know about Jesus?

Does it cause a question about Jesus being raised from the dead?

Does it cause a question about Jesus' authority?

Does it cause a question about Jesus' deity?

If so, that cannot be of God. That is a fishhook.

So Paul said to hold up all philosophies, all that would take you captive, against Jesus, Who is the fullness of wisdom and knowledge.

Sources of Philosophy and Empty Deceit

⁸ *See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition ...*

Paul has indicated two sources of philosophy by which you can be taken captive.

Tradition

The first is human tradition, and tradition may often become idolatry.

When I think of tradition, I think of my grandfather, whom I love. My Grandpa retired for a lot of reasons, and one of them was to take care of my brother and me after my parents were divorced. He got us up in the morning, fed us and took us to school. (There is nothing quite as

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humiliating as your Grandpa pulling up in his barely-running Chevrolet truck, waiting until you walk in front of it, and then blowing the horn so that everybody looks at you! Great childhood memories.)

My Grandpa was born in 1923. He will be eighty-seven in just a few days, and I was thinking about his car. It is a big old hunk of metal with wheels that we call a Dodge. It is HUGE. We had to get him this big hunk of metal because he might run into things, like a house, and we wanted to make sure everything would hold up. If we gave him a fiberglass car it would just collapse on him.

He doesn't really travel much anymore, so occasionally we will take him for fried oysters, which he loves. Recently while we were there we were talking about his car. Not realizing his car was probably made in 1975, he said, *You know, they just don't make cars the way they used to.* To which I immediately thought, *Yeah, they used to not make cars at all. What are you talking about?*

*Don't use the elementary teachings of the world
as your foundation for understanding who God is.*

He just has the idea that everything in the past used to be so much better than it is today. I don't know what you all did before you had TiVo, the DVR, or color television! There are a lot of things now that are better than they were then!

Paul has essentially said to be careful that you don't uphold tradition for the sake of tradition; be clear that you do not just believe that it is old so it must be good.

In Mark chapter seven we read that Jesus was talking to the Pharisees and Scribes and they asked Him:

Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?

⁶And he [Jesus] said to them, 'Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, [only Jesus could speak to them like that!] as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁷in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' ⁸You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.' ⁹And he said to them, 'You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!'

He was quoting Isaiah 29:13, and saying, Everything you know has been pointing to me, but you, instead of clinging to me, are clinging to tradition, not realizing that all of it was an effort by God to reveal me to you.

The Rudiments of The World

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world,

The second source of philosophy by which you can be taken captive is *the elemental spirits of the world*. I think the King James version uses a better rendering of this, for instead of *elemental spirits*, it reads *after the rudiments of the world*. In the Greek, *rudiment* literally means one of a row, as in putting things in rows, ordered with purpose, often for

learning. For instance, there is no reason that a, b, and c are placed in that order of the alphabet other than it is a great way to help kids learn the ABCs.

My Adam is three and is learning the ABCs. He can't figure out at what point he can use l, m, n, o, or p because he thinks they are one letter. So he will say,

Can we put lmnop here?

*No, you cannot put them **all** there. They are a lot of letters, not just one.*

When Paul told the Colossians not to let themselves be distracted by the rudiments of the world, he meant, Why would you go from the mature knowledge of Scripture back to the rudiments of the way the world says to live? So he once again set up a dichotomy between God's Word and the way the world tells us to live.

There are essentially two ways to read Scripture. One is to use the culture in which you live as the foundation for reading it. Yet, how terrible would it be to use everything we see around us as a lens for interpretation of Scripture.

Instead, Paul said to the Colossians, Don't use the culture as a way to understand God's Word; use God's Word as a way to understand culture. Don't use the elementary teachings of the world as your foundation for understanding who God is. Use God's Word as the way of understanding the world. Do not be held captive by the vain deceits of philosophy, whose sources are tradition and rudimentary or elemental spirits. This would be similar to the contrast he drew in Galatians 4:3:

In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

COMPLETE IN CHRIST

⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

When I read this I immediately thought of 2 Peter 1:3-4:

³ *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature...*

God comes to us through Jesus and makes us complete. We are the partakers in the divine nature. All the fullness of deity dwells in Him, and under God's power we have been filled in Him.

It is fascinating to see in the New Testament that when Jesus healed people, He touched them with His hand and their healing was always immediate and complete. One of many accounts is of the man with a shriveled hand in Matthew 12:13:

Then he said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other.

Immediate and complete. It seems clear that when Jesus touches a body, the healing is immediate and complete, and spiritual healing happens the same way. When Jesus touches a soul, the healing is immediate and complete. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17, *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away – the old is gone, not the old is in the process of going away – and, behold, the new has come.*

So we are complete, made whole in Christ. But to what end? In light of Paul's didactic comparison, being captive to philosophy ends in destruction. So then, to what end or aim are we complete in Christ? And what does it really mean to be complete?

I suggest that Paul argues for three aspects of being complete in Christ:

- Completely **SAVED**
- Completely **FORGIVEN** and
- Completely **VICTORIOUS**

COMPLETELY SAVED

¹¹ *In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.*

When we hear the word *baptism*, a particular image often comes to mind of water baptism. In fact,

this Scripture is most often quoted when we immerse someone into the waters of baptism. But that doesn't seem to be the case here. This seems to be a very dry kind of baptism, especially in light of other Scripture, for instance:

- **1 Corinthians 12:13**

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

- **Jeremiah 4:4**

Circumcise yourselves to the Lord; remove the foreskin of your hearts

- **Romans 6: 3-4**

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

He was saying that any man can circumcise the flesh, but only God can circumcise the heart. And so he drew a comparison between Old Testament ritual circumcision and New Testament circumcision of the heart, and he used the word *baptism* to tie it together. This is beautiful.

When you are saved, you are baptized by the Spirit of God and buried with Jesus. Why is this important? Because, when we receive Jesus as our Savior, we receive a new spirit. This is why you will not receive a new spirit in heaven, but you will receive a new body. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.²

Is it possible for us to still sin in this world after we have been given a new spirit? Absolutely. I can give you a list from just today. Your spirit has been renewed, but your flesh is still broken and decaying, so in a certain way you are somewhat serving two masters.

BUT, Paul emphasizes, we are freed from the consequences of sin, but not freed from sinning.

What are the consequences of sin? Death.³

There is an old adage, that there are only two things you have to do in this world: pay taxes and die. How many times do you die? Once.

² 2 Corinthians 5:8 KJV

³ Romans 6:23

COMPLETELY FORGIVEN

¹³ *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*

*You were dead.
Not only were you not saved;
you were not even
in the covenant people.
You were completely outside of God,
and you were made alive.
God's Spirit breathed on you.
You have been given life.
You were dead in your trespasses
and God made you alive
together with Him.*

When you receive Jesus as your Savior, you die to flesh and are buried with Him. Everybody only dies once, so when you were buried with Christ, and raised by the glory of the Father, you died all the times you are ever going to die. Yes, your body will pass away, but in an instant you will be in heaven and your body will be renewed and restored.

Paul says, literally, your spirit has been renewed and in that you have been buried with Christ, baptized into one body through one Spirit. When you come up, when Jesus comes out of the grave, you have been renewed and have died the only death you will ever die.

Paul was thus reminding the Colossians of how completely they had been saved, that their bodies will pass away, but their souls, their spirits, have been restored by the Gospel of Jesus and they will never die again. They are completely saved.

It is interesting that after Paul presented both an Old Testament circumcision of the flesh and New Testament circumcision of the heart to explain what it means to be baptized in the death of Christ, he again used, *uncircumcision of your flesh*. It seems clear that Paul was speaking at this point to a particular group of Gentiles. In the Old Testament, Jews, even Jews who were not saved, were marked by circumcision. And when they were marked, they were a part of the covenant people, which means they were entitled to the covenant blessings. God blessed through His covenants in the Old Testament, and one of the ways you were marked for being in the covenant people was through circumcision on the eighth day. Here Paul was saying to this group of Gentiles, *Not only are you unsaved so you are dead, but you are not in the covenant people because you are uncircumcised*, meaning, You are dead and you are lost.

Here is the only real truth I know about dead people. They don't do anything. I went to a funeral this past week. Guess who was the only person who didn't leave? The dead person. He was ninety-seven; he was already in heaven. Dead people don't do anything. They don't have the ability to do anything. Paul said, You were dead. Not only were you not saved; you were not even in the covenant people. You were completely outside of God, and you were made alive. God's Spirit breathed on you. You have been given life. You were dead in your trespasses and God made you alive together with Him.

This is one of my favorite verses in all of Scripture:

¹⁴ *by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*

God's forgiveness is complete.

Verse fourteen in the King James version is written this way, and I love it: *blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us...*

*There aren't any I.O.U.'s with your Father in heaven.
He took the debtor's note that had legal right to your soul
and His Son nailed it to a cross.*

The word for *handwriting* there, or *record* in the ESV, is the same word that we get our word *autograph* from and it meant the hand-written note of a debtor. The person who owned the debt, who loaned the money out, would make a note of it and keep record of all the debt.

As we were growing up, we were given an allowance. I'm not sure how much it was, but it was not enough, for we often spent it before we even received it. So Dad kept on a notepad on his dresser a running total of all the times we went to the grocery store and said, *Dad, we don't have any money. Could you just take it out of next week's allowance?*

Do any of your kids ever do this? *I'll just pay you back next week with your own money.*

So Dad kept a list of all those debts, but the problem was that we were never able to catch up. So at some point one of his children would walk in there to the top of his dresser and try to throw that note away, just hoping that in his ripe old age of thirty, or whatever he was then, that he would forget how much money we owed him and say, *Well, since the note mysteriously disappeared, we'll just start over again.* Dad was a lot smarter than his ten-year old boys, so he kept a backup note all the time because those notes just mysteriously disappeared.

Only the hand that writes the note has the authority to destroy the note. Only the father who keeps the account has the authority or the right, the legal ability, to destroy the note.

It was a good day when Dad would occasionally walk to the dresser, rip up the note, and say, *All right, boys, we're going to start over again.* The number had gotten to somewhere near two hundred dollars at some point. That would have been all my allowances for all my teenage years. That was a good day.

But Dad would never forget. The next time we were at the candy store and we would say, *Dad, can*

we get that? No, we don't have any money. We spent it all, but we'll pay you back next week, he remembered. He forgave our debt, but he remembered, because we don't have the ability to truly forget things. At times in our lives God will place a veil over particular memories, but let's be honest, most of us have too accurate a memory, much more accurate than we really like to have.

How many sins does it take to keep us out of heaven? One. God has been keeping a record, but Jesus takes it and nails it to the cross. And in a way that only our heavenly Father can do, He takes the record of debt that we have owed Him, a record that deserved His wrath, and lets His Son nail it to the cross. Not only does He forgive it, but in a way that we are never to do, He FORGETS it, because we are completely forgiven. There aren't any I.O.U.'s with your Father in heaven. He took the debtor's note that had legal right to our soul and His Son nailed it to a cross.

COMPLETELY VICTORIOUS

¹⁵ *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

There is a verse in 1 Peter 3:19 that I don't always understand. It says that Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison. I cannot really talk about what that means, but when I was reading that this week in light of our complete victory over the dominions and authorities of darkness, I was reminded that the devil is not like God.

I think sometimes in an effort to think about the devil accurately we equate him with God – God good; devil evil. We put them on the same plane, out there fighting and competing.

*Oh, devil,
did you know that in that moment,
all of human history was transformed;
that in that moment
that you thought you had won,
you lost;
that Jesus being nailed to that tree
was the greatest victory
in human history?*

We forget that the devil is a fallen angel; that he is a created being; and that being created by God, he is not omniscient.

In light of him not being omniscient, what a glorious day for him crucifixion Friday must have been. Can you imagine the carnival that was going on in the devil's house that day? All of his efforts through all of human history had been towards concealing the identity of Jesus the Christ. And finally, in his last ditch effort, he thought he had Him nailed to a cross. How arrogant he was about this.

I got Him nailed to a cross. Look, they put Him in a tomb. They put a rock in front of it that He could surely never move by Himself; He is merely one man.

How long do you think it took the devil to realize he had been played? How long do you think it took him to realize that this was the plan the whole time? Do you think it was when the first stitch fell out of the veil in the Temple? Or was it when Jesus screamed, *It is finished*, and the earth cracked in half? Was it when the sun was covered in darkness? At what moment do you think the devil, who in glee thought he had turned Jesus over to an old, rugged

cross, realized that Jesus had done it by His own choice?

Oh, devil, did you know that in that moment, all of human history was transformed; that in that moment that you thought you had won, you lost; that Jesus being nailed to that tree was the greatest victory in human history?

We were COMPLETELY SAVED
by the work of Jesus.

We have been COMPLETELY FORGIVEN,
and so much so
that God no longer remembers.

And we have been COMPLETELY VICTORIOUS
and
SET FREE
by the victory of Jesus
over the grave.

The carnival had barely begun when the devil turned to his friends and said,

Uh-oh. They are no longer mine.

And in that moment, I, a sinner, running from the grace of God, had a way to be reconciled to my Father.

In that moment, when all of my debts were adding up to an irreconcilable amount, Jesus nailed them to the cross.

So when life comes and you don't know how you are ever going to make it over the hurdles or through the pain, you have to rely on the victory of God in the world. Jesus is God's victory.

After Michael Jordan had pushed that Utah Jazz player out of the way and hit that jump shot, after his team had won the sixth championship, someone asked him,

How did you know you were going to hit the shot?

He said, *Well, I ALWAYS hit that shot.*

What do you mean?

I've hit that shot a thousand times.

So you didn't have any doubt when you took that shot that it was going in?

Oh no. I knew when I hit that shot the game was over.

He said, *Watch my eyes. I shot the shot and looked at the bench.*

You didn't even watch it go?

No. I've hit that shot a thousand times. The victory was mine.

Every time something comes up in our life, our first reaction should be,

God, not my will but yours. You've hit this shot a thousand times. I am not the first person who is worried about finances; I am not the first person who is worried about his marriage; I am not the first person who is worried about wayward children or any future events that might be coming up. I'm not the first person who has been here, Lord, but every single time You had to hit this shot, Lord, You have been victorious, because You are God and Your ways are not my ways.

And so, Lord, today, whatever it might be, whatever I might be struggling with, whatever the circumstances might be, I am going to trust that my victory is in You, not in me. I have been completely saved, Lord, by the blood of Your Son, Jesus Christ. I have been completely forgiven because You hold no wrong against those who are in Your Son, and today I am going to live as one who has been completely victorious because of what you did through Jesus. And so whatever may come, whatever may happen, I am going to trust You, because You have hit that shot a thousand times and the victory is in You.

Let us pray,

Lord, thank you for this good day. Thank you that whatever may come, Lord, you are always good; your character never ever fails. And so whatever might happen, whatever the world might throw at me, Lord, whatever I might suffer in the flesh, my spirit is new, and I will trust in you.

May God the Father, Who created you for a great destiny,
And Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God,
Who died in your place for your sin, so that you might live free,
And the Holy Spirit, Who dwells in you so that He might work through you
Be with you now and always.

And all God's people said, AMEN!

Lord, when Jesus was nailed to the cross of His own choosing, the devil thought he had won the victory, but in the words, 'It is finished,' the veil was torn, my soul was set free, and I am complete indeed. Thank you for the freedom to live like your child who has been set free in this world.

And so, Lord, we celebrate together as a people who have been set free. We stand here knowing that the God of all the universe loved us so much, loved us so deeply, loved us so completely, that He sent His only Son, and the nails through Jesus' hands changed human history, and changed each of our lives.

*Thank you God for your unmerited favor.
In Jesus' name. AMEN*

We never want to end a service without giving you the opportunity to accept Jesus as your Savior. Maybe today you are hearing the Gospel for the first time. If that is true, let today be the day that you receive in faith Jesus as your Savior, that you might walk in Him every day for the rest of your life. There is no freedom apart from Him. Trust in His complete victory that has become yours.

Leave today knowing that you were bought with a precious price, not so that you would live the way you used to, but so that you would be set free to live by the power of the glory of the Father that raised Jesus from the dead.

And also, leave knowing that your church and your God love you.

Let me send you out with a blessing,

Chris Lawson

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