

Triple Victory.  
Colossians 2 v 13 – 15

When the Romans executed a criminal by crucifixion they would nail a written list of their crimes over their head on the cross. You remember how Pilate had them pin over Jesus' head the written accusation "King of the Jews". Imagine with me for a moment a grim and at first rather grotesque picture.

Let's begin with Calvary – three crosses, three dying men, Christ and two criminals, with their crimes pinned above them. Now widen the picture and we see not three, but hundreds, thousands, millions of crosses all over the world, the entire human race, all of us slowly dying because of our sins. We try to hide them but there they are, clearly identified by the Law and known to God.

Listen as one of the dying sinners closest to Christ pleads for mercy and watch in amazement as his list of crimes is removed from his cross and added to Christ's. Then as that sinner's body dies and is buried, his soul departs in safety to be with Christ again, only this time in Paradise.

There are a number of things which stand against us as Christians seeking to hinder us from experiencing the joy of salvation and the satisfaction of fruitful obedient service and personal holiness.

First is our natural sinful nature, that inclination with which we were born, which persuades us to ignore or openly rebel against God and live proudly and selfishly, resulting in a long list of actual guilt. We have been sinful by nature from birth and we have sinned in thought, word and deed, more frequently than we might want to admit.

The next thing is the written Law, all the commandments and regulations, those given by God plus those often added by human beings. The problem is that while the Law defines sin and righteousness, it doesn't actually make us good people. It just

clarifies the list to pin over our heads! And all the outward religious rituals in the world won't give us a clean or a good heart. They just serve to remind us that we are shut out of the presence of the Lord because of our sin. Paul goes on in v 17 to say the Old Testament rituals of Judaism were but a foreshadowing of the reality that has now come in Christ. But in themselves, rules don't save us or make us good people.

As if these weren't bad enough there's another problem. The forces of evil are never far away. They sneak up with subtle temptations and then make loud accusations when we succumb, doing their utmost to discourage us and destroy our life and witness.

A formidable line-up of enemies which could make any Christian feel like giving in, but for one thing. Our Lord has defeated them all and shares His victory with us! Christ has triumphed. The power is in His cross. In Him we are forgiven, released and brought over to the winning side.

When we were spiritually dead in sin and separated from God by our sinful nature God made us alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, Paul says. No exceptions. Every one. Every wicked thought or word. Every self-centred action or attitude. All forgiven.

Because on His cross Jesus was willing to have nailed your guilty record and mine, because He suffered to make complete atonement, in His death we find the basis for forgiveness and new birth. Our sins are forgiven, their record deleted because they were credited to Him and dealt with on His cross that first Good Friday.

More, because we have been brought to life in relationship with Christ and we are indwelt by His Holy Spirit the old sinful nature no longer has the upper hand over us. We are no longer prisoner to it but can increasingly regard it as dead and buried. We have been raised and are being enabled to live holy, God-pleasing lives because we are united to Jesus our Saviour.

Paul says the written code that stood against us has been taken away, nailed to the cross. The written laws that condemned us, the religious requirements that left us feeling like failures and excluded. The words which painfully identified our shameful problem but gave us no comfort to deal with it. This too Paul pictures as dealt with by Christ.

Listen to a paraphrase of Paul's words by J B Philips: "Christ has utterly wiped out the damning evidence of broken laws and commandments which always hung over our heads and has completely annulled it by nailing it over His own head on the cross".

Not only have we been forgiven our sins. We have been released from the burden of difficult, fruitless religion, long lists of joyless do's and don'ts bringing no assurance, only a bitter Phariseeism. The Spirit is producing in our hearts now a living law, a desire for all that is good and right, a godly hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Yes, it's still a struggle but Christ won this battle when tempted and in Him so can we.

Which means the powers of darkness are left with 'egg on their face' for they are defeated too. By His cross and shed blood Jesus has defeated Satan and fatally struck a demolishing blow to his kingdom of deceitful temptation and accusation. In Christ we have been brought over to the winning side. In His name we can drive out demons and pierce the darkness with the light of the Gospel.

John Newton wrote numerous hymns, not only "Amazing Grace" but also this one –

"Approach my soul the mercy seat  
where Jesus answers prayer  
There humbly fall before His feet  
For none can perish there.

"Bowed down beneath a load of sin

By Satan sorely pressed  
By war without and fears within  
I come to Thee for rest.

“Be Thou my Shield and hiding place  
That, sheltered by Thy side  
I may my fierce accuser face  
And tell him Thou hast died!”

At first the deck seems stacked against us – our sin, the Law and the Devil all lined up to attack and condemn.

But then our Champion, our Advocate the Lion of Judah, the Lamb Who was slain stands to speak with all authority in Heaven and Earth and declares that by His cross all of these have been dealt with – forgiven, erased, defeated, silenced!

We had been found guilty as charged, but then He pinned our record of shame to His cross that whosoever trusts in Him may now be united to Him and live freely, joyfully and victoriously as children of God, for His honour and glory.

We share in Him the triumph of His cross!

Thanks and praise and glory to His name!

Amen