



Nails

Colossians 2:13-15 – “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;” “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.”

I. INTRODUCTION – NAILS

-I dare say that probably every person in this room has had some encounter with a nail. I can remember being nine-years old and stepping down on a nail and it going through the sole of my foot. It was during one of those adventures that boys often find themselves being involved in while they are building “forts.” Even now, I can remember how bad the pain was and the wound that the rusty nail caused. It was the first time but it would happen again twice more that I would step down on a nail before I finally figured out that shoes were to be worn all the time.

-But when we think of nails, the majority of the time we think of construction, something being built to last. Nails hold things together. Nails stabilize the structure.

-Stephen Ambrose wrote a book in 2000 entitled *Nothing Like It In The World*. It is the story of the Transcontinental Railroad that was built from 1863-1869. In that book he describes what happens during the building of the rails that led West.

There were a series of wagons that were pulled by great horses. One wagon would carry about forty rails, another would be filled with the proper amount of spikes and railroad ties. From that wagon four men would grasp the rail and anchor it into place. At the command of “Down!” they would drop the rail into it’s place.

Every thirty seconds there came that brave “Down, down, down!” from either side of the track. The chief spiker was ready; the gauger stooped and measured, the sledges rang out. Two rails every thirty seconds, one on each side, four rails a minute.

As the rails went down, they were gauged by a measuring rod exactly 48 ½ inches. When the wagon was emptied, in about ten minutes time, covering a little over 80 feet further down the line, another horse drawn wagon was immediately settled into place to follow the same suit.

There were thirty men driving in the spikes, on the outside and on the inside, with three strokes of the sledgehammer per spike, ten spikes to the rail, four-hundred rails to the mile, and it was 1800 miles across Nebraska and into San Francisco on the Union Pacific Rail. Twenty-one million times those sledgehammers had to be swung. The pace of the rails going down was as fast as a man could walk at a normal pace. In the end, when the finishing touches had been placed on the track, an average of nine to ten thousand spikes had been placed in the rails per mile.

-But the spikes that helped wield that foundation of the railroad tracks pale in comparison to only three spikes that were used a little less than two-thousand years ago.

II. COLOSSIANS 2:13-15

Colossians 2:13-15 – “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;” “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.”

-Paul left us with those words. It is those words that impart to us the hope and power of Calvary.

-The bond that was written against us had to be paid. It was something that every man owed and if not paid he would be thrown into debtor's prison and could actually spend his entire life there.

-To understand this concept is to understand the amazing mercy of God. The substance of ancient documents were written either papyrus, made from a bulrush, or it was written on vellum which was made from the skin of animals.

-Both were fairly expensive and certainly not to be wasted. Ancient ink had no acid in it, it merely lay on the surface and did not bite into the material as does modern inks. Sometimes a scribe, to save paper, used papyrus or vellum that had already been written on. When he did that he would take a sponge and wipe the writing out. Because it was only on the surface of the paper, the ink could be wiped out as if it had never been. God, in His amazing mercy, banished the record of our sins with the nails at Calvary.

III. THE WALK TOWARD GOLGOTHA

A. The History Behind the Act of Crucifixion

-In the ancient world, crucifixion was considered the most severe form of capital punishment. In order of severity, decapitation was the least painful and was reserved for citizens of rank. Somewhere in the middle came being burned alive.

Last came crucifixion, which was reserved for slaves and criminals.

-The rulers of the provinces favored crucifixion because of the public statement that it made. A Roman orator, Quintilian, wrote "Whenever we crucify the guilty, the most crowded roads are chosen, where the most people can see and be moved by this fear."

-The Romans did not invent death by crucifixion. The Persians, Medes, Carthaginians, Assyrians, and Indians all practiced it in various forms. To trace it back, one finds that the bodies of the defeated in war were displayed in this manner. As a warning to others who might be tempted to rebel, they impaled the conquered on poles or stakes. One of the early Greek words indicates that the early crosses were actually stakes and the victim was impaled.

-Crucifixion was death by exhaustion—every minute consumed with the painful necessity of struggling to suck in another breath. David's cry from the Psalms rings, "*Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck, I sink into the miry depths, where there is no foothold*" (*Psalms 69:1-2*).

-The legacy of death by crucifixion is still with us in the word "excruciating" which literally means "out of the cross." To extend the life and also the torment, the executioners took care not to damage his vital organs. If they performed everything properly, he could hang for as long as nine days before death finally came.

B. The Trail of Torment

-The mock trials are now over. What little that Pilate was willing to allow Jesus to be set free has been done. For the sake of the record and political correctness, he symbolically washes his hands of the whole affair. It appears that he was grasping at a simple procedure to relieve him of his responsibility.

-Four soldiers then take Jesus with the intent of carrying out the execution. It is going to be a long walk for a condemned man. Previously, in the Garden there had been close to six-hundred who had gathered to capture the Lord.

-Pilate now sees little chance of a riot. The only supporters of Jesus now appear to be a few weeping women.

-Two soldiers take him and lift the forty-pound cross beam onto His shoulders. He is going to be forced to carry His own cross to the place of death. Around his neck hangs a piece of wood coated with white chalk. On this board, painted in black letters, is the crime which the Lord is charged with. Dressed in cast-off purple, crowned with thorns, and carrying the label of "King of the Jews," He is hustled through a screaming, deafening crowd.

-Step by excruciating step, Jesus stumbles out of the Praetorium and down the twisted streets of the city. How far does He stagger before He falls face down and lies motionless and bruised under the beam?

< Some onlookers turn their eyes from His agony.

- < Some watch Him with disinterest as they peddle their wares.
- < Others are waiting for the mob to thin so they can move on through Jerusalem.
- < Some are cursing Him.
- < Some are laughing at Him.

-One way or another, the crowd becomes a key element in the whole process. Either cheering or cursing, they participate as He struggles to rise and take another step to stumble on past them.

-But it is not long before He falls again. What makes Him stumble?

- < Is it the weight of the crossbeam added to His wounds?
- < Is it the loss of blood that had come from the scourging?
- < Is it the insurmountable burden of the whole world's rebellion?
- < Is it the weight of all our past sorrows that presses Him down?

-It is all of those things. at last the weight grinds Him into the ground and stops the entire procession.

-As the Lord lies expended on the ground, the soldiers summon Simon from the crowd. It was an unexpected cross which is an entire message in itself.

-At Golgotha, the soldiers take the cross beam from Simon's shoulders and place it at the foot of an upright timber that has been placed in the ground. The pole is one of three on a hill.

-The mob forms a tight, expectant circle around the site of the execution. Some suddenly fall silent as they realize that they are indeed going to witness a crucifixion. Perhaps in the silence, they began to hear the wailing of the weeping women.

-Jesus is stripped of His outer garments and they are divided among the four soldiers. The more expensive robe is to be saved for later as they gamble at Golgotha.

-Now three soldiers stretch Jesus out on the cross-beam while the other picks up a long iron spike. The nail is a tapered shaft from five to seven inches long and about 3/8's of an inch in diameter.

-The fourth soldier swings the mallet high. The women turn away. The mallet falls and drives the nail through the flesh of God and into the wood of the beam. The nail is forced between the two bones, the ulna and radius, just above the wrist joint. If it were placed only in the hands, the sheer weight of the body would cause the man to fall from the cross.

-The nail comes dangerously close to the radial and ulnar arteries in the hand, perhaps even severing them and the blood of God begins to fall to the earth.

-Seconds later, the other arm follows and then the feet are overlapped and a single nail is forced into the feet of God.

-The soldiers hoist the beam up and drop it into place and it is through that act of nailing that the nails cancel out the debt.

IV. CONCLUSION – TURN YOUR EYES UPON JESUS

-The hand of God is a mighty hand:

< It is the hand that formed Adam out of clay.
< It is the hand that wrote the commandments on stone tablets.
< With a wave of this hand, the Tower of Babel was thwarted and the Red Sea was parted.

< From this hand flew the locusts that plagued Egypt and the ravens that fed Elijah.

< It is these hands that stilled the sea.

< These hands mixed mud and daubed it on blind eyes that would eventually see.

< It is these hands of power that cleansed the Temple.

< It is these hands that beckoned Lazarus from the dead.

< It is these hands that brought healing to the lepers.

< These hands reattached Malchus' ear.

< Hands of inspiration that taught the Sermon on the Mount.

< Hands of dedication that served the fish and loaves.

< Hands of power. . . . Hands of hope. . . . But crucified hands.

-Between the hands and the wood is a long list of things that have been cancelled out. A list of mistakes. A long list at that. A list that contains the lies, the lusts and the greedy moments and the wasted prodigal years. Bad decisions from last year.

-Why would He do something like that? Because He knew that these sins could kill. The price of this sin was death. . . . So He went to a Cross.

< The same hand that stilled the seas, stills your guilt.

< The same hand that cleansed the Temple, cleanses your heart.

-The hand is the hand of God. . . . Working, convicting, pleading. . . .