

OUR RAP SHEET

Colossians 2:13-14

INTRODUCTION: We saw it happen time after time last week in Altamira, Brazil. You ask, “Saw what happen?” We saw what is described in our text today in Col. 2:13-14 happen in the lives of rough old men and sweet little ladies, in the lives of harried young mothers and hard-working young fathers trying to scratch out a living for their family. We saw it happen among teenagers, rambunctious boys, and shy little girls. And although they looked and acted so very differently, yet the same thing happened in each one. And in each and every one of them, Col. 2:13-14 came to pass.

Colossians 2:13–14 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

- We also see it happen almost every day at the Center of Hope, people being forgiven of all of their sins!
- We see it happen sometimes in our Lifechange Groups or in morning Worship, people who were separated forever from God because they violated His commands, forgiven and made alive in Christ!
- Many of us have had it happen in our lives, but if you have not, it could become a reality for you today.

Yet seldom do we think about the detail or the fullness of what it means to be forgiven of all our trespasses. The New Testament actually speaks a great deal about the details because understanding them can have grand implications in our lives. These two verses are near the top of the list in explaining the fullness of what Jesus did to allow all our sins to be forgiven.

However, to really understand what Paul is saying to the believers at Colossae, we need to understand a little background that was common knowledge among people in the first century, but not well known today.

I. THE BACKGROUND

Two phrases need explanation?

A. **“the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us.”**

1. **“The handwriting of requirements against us” refers to a certificate of debt.**

- We might call it a promissory note.
- The certificate of debt stated who owed the debt, how much was owed, and to whom the debt was owed.
- The fact the requirements Paul is talking about were against us, means this certificate of debt stated that we were the debtors.
- Another interesting and important part of this background is that when the debt was paid, a single Greek word, or the abbreviation of that word, would be written across the face of the document. The word was “tetelestai,” and it meant, “paid in full.”

2. **“Which was contrary to us” indicates a special use of the certificate of debt.**

- When a criminal was being punished for his crime, a list of his wrong doings was written upon a parchment.
- The handwriting was a statement of his offences, his debts to the state the price of which were being extracted by his punishment such as being whipped, jailed, or executed.
- **We might call it today “a rap sheet,” a list of the crimes a person has committed.**

B. **“having nailed it”**

- This is a reference to the very public nature of these certificates of debt.
- **Sometimes the certificate would quite literally be nailed on the door of the residence of the debtor for all to see.**
- Sometimes **if it were the list of crimes for which a person was being punished, it might be nailed to the whipping post where the criminal was being beaten** or above the cell door where he was imprisoned.

II. THE STORY

Now let me tell you **the story of the day when our certificate of debt was nailed to a cross resulting in it being wiped out, taken away, and all our trespasses being forgiven.** It happened in a single day, although the preparation for that day had taken thousands of years and began before the world itself was formed and God breathed into the nostrils of man the breath of life.

But **the day that our certificate of debt was wiped out began when Pilate said the words concerning Jesus of Nazareth, “Let Him be crucified.”** Pilate intended for the placard nailed above Jesus’ head upon the cross to be His certificate of debt, His rap sheet, for in Pilate’s mind the crime for which Jesus was being executed was His claim to being The King of the Jews. Of course, we know, this was no crime at all but the absolute truth. Jesus was and is the King of the Jews and every other people group as well, and the fact that the Jews and others reject Him does not diminish His lawful right to the title.

But that placard ordered by Pilate was not the handwriting against us. It was not the certificate of debt or the rap sheet that was contrary to us. But folks, listen. **Each of us has such a rap sheet. Each of us has a record of every wrong we have ever done,** every evil deed we have ever performed, every wicked word that escaped our lips or crossed our mind, every perverted thought that flickered between the neurons in our brains. **Such a record exists in heaven in the books.**

These books, the records of what every person has ever done, will be opened at the judgment that takes place before the Great White Throne of God, and they are described in Rev. 20:12. Those records will be so complete and faultless that every man and woman who stands accused will be speechless as the evidence is read. There will be no denial; there will be no excuse. There will be no explanation, nor basis for appeal.

- This is the handwriting of requirements that is against us, that is eternally contrary to us, and that justly condemns us.
- This is the certificate of debt, a debt owed to the God who created us, to the God we should have gladly obeyed; but each time we did not, another debt was added to the certificate, and for each and every one of us the debt has become so large, that we are utterly incapable of ever paying it.
- It is a debt owed to God, for ultimately He is the one injured and offended by every sin we have done.

- Would you pause with me for a moment just to contemplate your own personal handwriting that is against you, your own certificate of the debt you owe to God because of all of your sins in wrongful deeds and thoughts and motives?
 - How long would yours be?
 - How many pages would it take to write out every sin?
 - How many hours would be required for it to be read in the hearing of all?
 - How long before our tears ran dry from the shame of having every evil deed that originated in our heart exposed before the Holy Angels of Heaven?

This is the handwritten certificate of debt, the rap sheet of crimes committed that was nailed to the cross, and it was nailed there for each of us. But you say, "Preacher, I heard, I've read this story many times and I don't remember anything else being nailed to the cross except for Pilate's placard!"

But I tell you, yes you do! Yes, you do. Just think about it. Only do not think about what was nailed to the cross but *Who*. When Jesus was nailed to the cross, His hands and feet impaled on its wooden beams, my certificate of debt, my rap sheet was being nailed there. Your certificate of debt to God Almighty, your rap sheet for evil done was being hammered to the tree as Jesus was nailed to the cross.

My friend, this is not mere illustration. This is not a figure of speech. This is what really happened.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

And as Jesus hung upon the cross, the righteous wrath of Holy God fell upon Him paying the penalty for every sin, paying the price of every debt, incurring the just punishment for each of our crimes against God.

And when the righteous wrath of Holy God was satisfied, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Tetelestai!" That was the single Greek word that was written across a certificate of debt that means "**Paid In Full.**" It requires three words to translate in English – "**It Is Finished!**" But those words were not spoken with a sigh because the suffering at last was over and death was but a final breath away. Those were words of victory and of satisfaction! **The**

purpose for which the Son of God left His Heavenly abode and came down to the world He created, had now been fully and eternally accomplished.

The prophecy of Isaiah spoken 800 years before was fulfilled.

Isaiah 53:5–6

... He was wounded for our transgressions,

He was bruised for our iniquities;

The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,

And by His stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray;

We have turned, every one, to his own way;

And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

The handwriting against us, our certificate of debt, was nailed to the cross, resulting in our debt being wiped out, our penalty taken away, and all our trespasses being forgiven.

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,

And time will not allow me to even mention all the implications of this mighty, wondrous act. I will only name a few.

III. THE IMPLICATIONS

A. Salvation is available to all who will trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

And seeing clearly what Christ did for us upon the cross explains clearly why there is no other way of salvation.

John 3:16-18 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Rom. 10:9-10 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For

with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

You can be saved today! Your debt of sin wiped out. Forgiveness, righteousness, salvation, and eternal life. For those of us who have been saved by grace through faith, knowing what Jesus did for us on the cross should greatly increase our

B. Gratitude

Where would we be if Jesus had not born our sins upon the cross?

We would be waiting for our time when the dead great and small stand before the Holy God against whom they have rebelled to have their crimes revealed and sins exposed before they are cast into the Lake of Fire.

But we who have trusted Christ shall not endure those hours of shame nor the eternal penalty of our sin for we trusted in Christ who paid for our sin and wiped the record clean for us and wrote our name in the Lamb's Book of Life!

Oh, Praise His Name! Glory to the Name of Jesus! The result of what Christ has done should be

1. Faithfulness

2. Service

C. Forgiveness of others

Eph. 4:32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

The result should be changed lives!