

# Hebrews 2:5-15

by Mike Cleveland

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*The cross of Jesus Christ brings victory over sin, guilt, and shame, and teaches us how to deal with sin in our lives.*

**Duration:** 34:27

**Scripture:** Matthew 27:50, Galatians 6:14, Hebrews 2:5-15

**Topics:** "Manhood"

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## Description

In this sermon, Mike Cleveland discusses the difference between human achievement and divine accomplishment in relation to achieving heaven. He emphasizes that Christianity teaches that we cannot do anything to achieve heaven, as it has already been accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Cleveland explains that although we are responsible for sin, the victory over sin has already been gained through the cross. He shares his personal experience of being a slave to sin for fifteen years and how he found freedom through Christ. The sermon encourages listeners to seek victory over sin and offers resources to help in this journey.

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## Transcript

...setting captives free with our host and teacher, Mike Cleveland. It's been said that there are only two religions in the world. One speaks of human achievement, the other speaks of divine accomplishment.

When you think about it, all the major religions of the world explain what you and I must do to achieve heaven. But Christianity teaches us that we can't do anything to achieve heaven. It's all been taken care of through the blood of Christ.

So why is it then that we still live as if we need to work as hard as we can to get rid of sin? Obviously we're responsible for sin, but in today's message, Mike Cleveland helps us understand that the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ has already gained victory over our sins, and he empowers us to silence what he has already put to death. Now that may sound like a contradiction, but it really isn't. Let's listen together as Mike helps us understand the victory that is already ours.

Thank you, Corey. This is Mike Cleveland, November 30, 2003. Our message today comes from Hebrews 2, verses 5-15.

It's a very somber message about the cross, and yet it's a message of celebration as well, as we see the victory that comes through the cross. If you have your Bibles and you're not driving, please take them out and let's read together. Hebrews 2, verses 5-15.

I'm reading from the NASB. For he did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking, but one has testified somewhere, saying, What is man that you remember him, or the son of man that you're concerned about him? You've made him a little lower than the angels, you've crowned him with glory and honor, and have appointed him over the works of your hands. You've put all things in subjection under his feet, for in subjecting all things to him he left nothing that is not subject to him.

But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him, but we do see him, who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely Jesus, because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for him, for whom all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father, for which reason he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will proclaim your name to my brethren in the midst of the congregation, I will sing your praise, and again I will put my trust in him, and again behold I and the children whom God has given me.

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. Well, this passage again speaks to us of the superiority of Jesus Christ over angels, telling us that Jesus in his incarnation was made a little lower than the angels, but in his resurrection and exaltation was shown to be higher than everything and all people, and now all things are subject to him as Lord of all. But there is a highly instructive passage here in verses 14 and 15 which say, Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

Aha! Now we see why Jesus Christ took upon himself flesh and blood, why he became a man. There are really two reasons. Number one, so that through his death he might destroy the devil.

And two, that Jesus might free those who were captive. Oh, what a blessed thought of victory this is! Jesus Christ died on the cross and through his death he destroyed the devil. How fantastic is this, that Jesus took death, the devil's own tool, and destroyed the devil with it.

Ha! Just like David, who took Goliath's own sword and destroyed the giant with it. You see, the devil thought the cross was the tool he would use to destroy Christ, but God turned that cross into an upside-down sword and plunged it into the heart of the devil and destroyed him. Ha! Just like the king, who took Haman's own gallows and impaled Haman on it.

Just like Moses, whom God told to use a snake to cure the Israelites. Ha! A snake! The very thing that bit them and was causing their death actually brought life to them. What a beautiful picture of the cross, where God took death itself and used it to bring life.

Now Jesus says in John 3, 14-17, As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man may be lifted up, so that whoever believes will in him have eternal life. For God so loved the world,

that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

Oh yes, Jesus destroyed the devil on the cross and victory comes through the cross. But he not only destroyed the devil on the cross, he also freed us from slavery. The cross is the instrument of freedom.

Jesus was nailed to it that we might go free. Free from habitual sin, free from death. You know, for 15 years of my life I was a slave to sin.

I was a slave to my impulses, a slave to pornography, to gluttony, to drunkenness, to all kinds of sins of the flesh. My master was my cravings, was my lust, was the devil. If my master told me to gratify the lusts of my flesh through overeating, I would immediately obey.

If I was commanded to commit acts of impurity, I would follow wholeheartedly. But these ways led to death, spiritual death, relational death, and eventually would have led to physical death. Why would anyone in their right minds obey such a cruel taskmaster? Well, because I was a slave.

Romans 6.16, Paul says, Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one you obey, either of sin, resulting in death, or of obedience, resulting in righteousness? But Hebrews 2.15 says that Jesus frees slaves. It says that through death he released us, who were slaves because of our fear of death. Now, question, why would anybody be afraid of death? Well, I don't know about you, but when I was living in my sins, I was scared to death of death.

We are afraid of death because all people have some sort of built-in understanding that one day there will be an accounting. Oh, right now I can blame everyone else for my sins. It's all their fault.

You see, but one day I will be called into account and must face the living God who judges not only my actions, but my heart, my motivations, my deeply kept secrets. All will come into the light. My sin will eventually be found out.

I will be exposed. And I will have to face judgment and punishment for my sins. All people inherently know these things, whether they admit them or not, whether they care to think about them or not.

Now, I've heard many people who are living sinful lives say that they're not afraid of death. No fear seems to be their slogan. But the fact is we'd better be afraid of death if we're living in sin.

For if we live in sin, we will die in sin. And it's appointed to man to die once and then face judgment. If we're living in sin and not afraid of death, we are presuming upon God's grace.

Not good. No, I was fearful of my life of sin and the condemnation that was coming at death. I was scared to death of death.

Now, I like the way the message paraphrases these verses that we're reading about. It says, since the children are made of flesh and blood, it's logical that the Savior took on flesh and blood in order to rescue them by His death. By embracing death, taking it to Himself, He destroyed the devil's hold on death and freed all who cower through life, scared to death of death.

Oh, there I was, cowering through life, scared to death of death. But oh yes, God used the devil's own instrument and destroyed the devil with it. And guess what? He is doing the same thing today.

Seven years ago, the devil used the Internet, among other things, to try to destroy me. But God turned it around and is using the Internet to release many slaves to sin and give them freedom in Christ. At [settingcaptivesfree.com](http://settingcaptivesfree.com), we hear the sound of chains dropping and prison doors opening all the time.

Now, you know what else? We need to learn how to do that same thing more and more. That is, to take what the devil meant for evil in our lives and use it for good. Just like the woman who, out of overwhelming love for Jesus, broke her perfume jar and poured it out on Jesus.

She had formerly used that perfume for evil, to attract her men to sin with. And now she is using it for the good in the worship of her God. Just like Gideon who took the altar that his father used in the worship of Baal and dedicated that altar to the service and worship of God.

But now comes a very important question. How does victory come through the cross? Well, we have just noticed that through the cross, Jesus destroyed the devil. That is one reason.

But there are several more. When we come to the cross where Jesus died, we see that our sins are forgiven. We see that our guilt is removed.

We see that our debt is paid and a huge burden and weight is lifted from our shoulders. Why is this important? Why can't we find freedom from sinful habits like the Muslims who try to fast and crawl their way to freedom? Or like the Raelians who try to clone their way to freedom? Or even like the moralists who think they are free without Christ. Why the cross? Just this.

All of those people listed still have guilt in their souls. Oh, they may not feel guilty, but they are guilty. You know, homosexuals who come out unashamedly may not feel guilty, but they are guilty.

And listen to this. Guilt is like an undertow that pulls us back into our life of sin. Oh, friend, there is no freedom from the power of sin until we find forgiveness from the guilt of sin.

And when we come to the cross of Jesus Christ, we see a man who took upon himself the guilt of our sin, who was judged in our place, who was condemned to death, not for his own sins, but for ours. And we see him opening up his arms to the east and to the west, removing our sins from us as far as the east is from the west. You know Psalm 103, verse 12, it says, As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Now, I'm a pilot, and I know that if I fly north, and I keep flying north, I will eventually get to the place where I'm flying south. Poof. Just like that.

The difference between north and south is just minuscule. I've just crossed the pole, and now I'm going south. But, you know, I also know if I'm flying east, and I keep flying east, I will never get to the place where I'm flying west, because east and west are infinitely removed from each other, just like our sins and us.

You see, the cross brings victory, because at the cross, we see that our guilt and shame are removed from us and placed on Jesus Christ. Now, the cross also brings victory, because it teaches us how to deal with sin in our lives, just as God did. We must follow His example.

He put sin on His Son, and then put Jesus to death, nailed Him to a cross, burying Him in a tomb. That is how we are to deal with sin. Crucify it.

Bury it. Now, obviously, this takes grace. Obviously, this is why Paul said to the Ephesians, Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

Otherwise, we would not be able to carry out this crucifixion of our lusts. The cross brings victory to us, because it teaches us how to deal with sin in our own lives. You see, we need to be like Abraham, who was commanded to offer up his son whom he loved.

God says to us, Do all this right now, before you have one last fling with it. Oh, truly, this is a hard saying. Flesh and blood cannot bear this saying.

Our lusts will certainly not lie patiently on the altar, like Isaac or Jesus did, as a lamb that is brought to the slaughter, which is silent. No, no. Our lusts will yell and scream, even to the shaking and tearing of our hearts, with its hideous outcries.

You see? And you know what else? The devil will intercede for this sin. Right? He'll say, Oh, leave it alone. Don't crucify it.

It's just a small sin. Let it live. Nobody knows about it.

Oh, no. The cross teaches us to wound it, to strike it, to nail it, to kill it, and bury it. You see, there is no neutral ground when we face the cross.

Either we accept its atoning work and become a new person in the crucified one, or we reject Him and remain in our sinful, self-centered state. When we take our stand with Christ and His redemption accomplished at Calvary, we are compelled to make two profound confessions, the wonders of His glorious love and my own worthlessness. Elizabeth Clephane wrote the song called Beneath the Cross of Jesus, and she wrote, Upon the cross of Jesus mine eye at times can see the very dying form of one who suffered there for me, and from my smitten heart with tears two wonders I confess, the wonders of redeeming love and my unworthiness.

That's what the cross does for us. The cross convinces us of God's redeeming love and of our own unworthiness. Another song says, On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame, and I loved that old cross where the dearest and best for a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross till my trophies at last I lay down. I will cling to the old rugged cross and exchange it someday for a crown. A man by the name of John Damaskene in 675 A.D. wrote, By nothing else except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ has death been brought low, the sin of our first parent destroyed, hell plundered, resurrection bestowed, the power given us to despise the things of this world, even death itself, the road back to the former blessedness made smooth, the gates of paradise opened, our nature seated at the right hand of God, and we made children and heirs of God.

By the cross all these things have been set straight. And Gregory Nansen in 329 A.D. said, Many indeed are the wondrous happenings of the time. God hanging from a cross, the sun made dark and again flaming out, for it was fitting that creation should mourn with its creator, the temple veil torn in two, blood and water flowing from his side, the one as from a man, the other as from what was above man, the earth shaken, the rock shattered because of the rock, the dead risen to bear witness to the final and universal resurrection of the dead, the happenings at the sepulcher and after the sepulcher, who can fittingly recount them, yet no one of them can be compared to the miracle of my salvation, a few drops of blood renew the whole world.

And Augustine said, As they were looking on at the cross, so we too gaze on his wounds as he hangs, we see his blood as he dies, we see the price offered by the redeemer, touch the scars of his resurrection, he bows his head as if to kiss you, his heart is made bare open as it were in love to you, his arms are extended that he may embrace you, his whole body is displayed for your redemption, ponder how great these things are, let all this be rightly weighed in your mind, as he was once fixed to the cross in every part of his body for you, so he may now be fixed in every part of your soul. No one, however weak, is denied a share in the victory of the cross, no one is beyond the help of the prayer of Christ, his prayer brought benefit to the multitude that raged against him, how much more does it bring to those who turn to him in repentance? You see, at the cross, ignorance has been destroyed, that's right, obstinacy has been overcome, the sacred blood of Christ has quenched the flaming sword that barred access to the tree of life, the age-old night of sin has given place to the true light, the Christian people are invited to share the riches of paradise, all who have been reborn have the way open before them to return to their native land from which they had been exiled or captive, unless indeed they close off for themselves the path that could be open before the faith of a thief. You see, the business of this life should not preoccupy us with its anxiety and pride, so that we no longer strive with all the love of our heart to be like our Redeemer and to follow his example, everything that he did or suffered was for our salvation, he wanted his body, that's us, to share the goodness of its head.

And then there's an Easter homily by Melito of Sardis in the 2nd century that says, For the sake of suffering humanity, he came down from heaven to earth, clothed himself in that humanity in the virgin's womb, and was born a man. Having then a body capable of suffering, he took the pain of fallen man upon himself, he triumphed over the diseases of soul and body that were its cause, and by his spirit, which was incapable of dying, he dealt man's destroyer, death, a fatal blow. He was led forth like a lamb, he was slaughtered like a sheep.

He ransomed us from our servitude to the world, as he had ransomed Israel from the hand of Egypt. He freed us from our slavery to the devil, as he had freed Israel from the hand of Pharaoh. He sealed our souls with his own spirit, and the members of our body with his own blood.

He is the one who covered death with shame, and cast the devil into mourning, as Moses cast Pharaoh into mourning. He's the one that smote sin and robbed iniquity of offspring, as Moses robbed the Egyptians of their offspring. He's the one who brought us out of slavery into freedom, out of darkness into light, out of death into life, out of tyranny into an eternal kingdom, who made us a new priesthood.

Oh, I love that, he made us a new priesthood through his cross. The cross, my friend, brings us face to face with Jesus suffering for our sins. He was alone, all his disciples had deserted him, except for his mother and three women, along with John, the beloved disciple.

And his death was agonizing and humiliating. Normally, a crucified man could last for several days on a cross. Jesus had already been scourged, beaten with rods, and a crown of thorns pressed into his skull.

It's no wonder that he died mid-afternoon. Pilate publicly heralded Jesus, the King of the Jews, as he died upon the cross, no doubt to irritate and annoy the chief priests and Pharisees. We can find no greater proof of God's love for us than the willing sacrifice of his Son on the cross.

Jesus' last words, it is finished, express triumph rather than defeat. Jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit, knowing that the strife was now over and the battle was won. Even on the cross, Jesus knew the joy of victory.

What the Father sent him into the world to do has now been accomplished. Christ offered himself without blemish to God, and he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. In the cross of Christ, we see the triumph of Jesus over his enemies.

That's what we're studying in Hebrews chapter 2, the triumph of Jesus over his enemies, sin, Satan, and death. You know, Christian writers down through the centuries have sung the praises of the cross of Christ. Paul the Apostle said, but far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's Galatians 6.14. Yes, a few drops of blood renew the whole world. Abbot Rupert of Deutz wrote in the early 12th century, The cross of Christ is the door to heaven, the key to paradise, the downfall of the devil, the uplifting of mankind, the consolation of our imprisonment, the prize for our freedom. Isn't that good? The cross of Christ is the safeguard of our faith.

It's the assurance of our hope and the throne of love. It is also the sign of God's mercy and the proof of his forgiveness. By his cross, Jesus has redeemed our sin and atoned for our punishment, the way to peace, joy, and righteousness in the kingdom of God, and the way to victory over sin, despair, and death is through the cross of Jesus Christ.

Do you willingly follow Jesus in his way of the cross with joy and hope and confidence? Lord Jesus Christ, by your death on the cross, you have won pardon for us and freedom from the tyranny of sin and death. May I live in the joy and freedom of your victory over sin and death. There's a song that's called God has reigned from a tree.

It says the standards of the king appear, the mystery of the cross shines out in glory. The cross on which life suffered death, and by that death gave back life to us. His side, wounded by the spear's cruel point, poured out water and blood to wash away the stains of our sins.

The words of David's true prophetic song were fulfilled, in which he announced to the nations God has reigned from a tree. Tree of dazzling beauty, adorned with the purple of the king's blood, and chosen from a stalk worthy to bear limbs so sacred. How favored the tree, on whose branches hung the ransom of the world.

It was made a balance on which his body was weighed, and bore away the prey that hell had claimed. Hail, cross, our only hope. In this season of passion tide, give an increase of grace to the good and wipe out the sins of the guilty.

Let every spirit praise you. I like that, let every spirit praise you for the cross. Paul says, May I never boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Now he makes the statement, and then he shows the reason why. The statement is, May I never boast, except in the cross. The reason why is because the world has been crucified to me.

I see all vanity in the world now. Why? Because the cross is where there's life. The world is where there's death.

A song was written, 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. When the woes of life overtake me, hopes deceive and fears annoy, never shall the cross forsake me.

Lo, it glows with peace and joy. When the sun of bliss is beaming, light and love upon my way, from the cross the radiance streaming, adds more luster to the day. Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure, by the cross are sanctified.

Peace is there that knows no measure, joys that through all time abide. 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.

I'd like to invite you, if you've never come to the cross of Jesus Christ, do so today. Won't you please not wait another moment? Take all of your sin, all of your guilt, all of your shame, and come to the cross with it, and unload it there. For there you'll see Jesus Christ suffering in your place, dying instead of you.

You'll see him being judged as guilty in our place, condemned, and then watch as he's executed instead of you, and instead of me. Are you mourning over your sins? There's a place to go to rid your life of them, that's at the cross. A song was written that says, mourner wherever you are, at the cross there's room.

Tell the burden of your heart, at the cross there's room. Tell it in your Savior's ear, cast away your every fear. Only speak and he will hear, at the cross there's room.

Hurry, you wanderer, don't tarry, at the cross there's room. Seek that consecrated spot, at the cross there's room. Heavy laden, sore oppressed, love can soothe your troubled breasts.

In the Savior find your rest, at the cross there's room. Thoughtless sinner, come today, at the cross there's room. Hark, the bride and spirit say, at the cross there's room.

Now a living fountain see, open there for you and me. Rich and poor, for bond and free, at the cross there's room. Blessed thought for everyone, at the cross there's room.

Love's atoning work is done, at the cross there's room. Streams of boundless mercy flow, free to all who thither go. Oh, that all the world might know, at the cross there's room.

My friend, if you're a sinner, in need of a Savior, there's room at the cross for you. Come, won't you? Maybe you've spent your life in pornography, and your conscience is defiled, and you're impure from inside to out. Oh, come to the cross, won't you? You'll be relieved of your burden, you'll be cleansed from within, you'll have a new life.

Oh, maybe you've given yourself to gluttony, and food has become your master, and your body is showing the evidence of serving food. Oh, come to the cross, won't you? Jesus will teach you how to deny yourself and take up your own cross and follow after Him. Just come to the cross, there's room for you.

Maybe you've spent your life as a drunk. You've been involved in alcohol so long it's part of you. You turn to it for comfort, you turn to it when you're bored, you turn to it when none of the above.

Oh, there's room at the cross for you too, won't you come? You know, at the cross, Hebrews chapter 2 tells us that Jesus destroyed the devil for you. It tells us that He freed the devil's captives for you. There's room at the cross.

Won't you come? Now, here's for you. Here at Setting Captives Free, we've had only one desire, one wish, that you too would realize the truth of Jesus' words, I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly. You can wrestle, fight, strain, and fuss over sin in the flesh, or you can come to the spring of living water that quenches your thirst.

You know, we understand that our struggle over sin comes in many forms, whether it's smoking, overeating, sexual impurity, homosexuality, or alcoholism, sin has a way of getting us sidetracked instead of plugging into that spring of living water. That's why we've put together some resources for you to help you find that victory that Mike Cleveland just talked about. Take a look at our website, [www.settingcaptivesfree.com](http://www.settingcaptivesfree.com), and see if there's some resources there that will help you.

We also understand that confiding in a loved one or a friend about sin is hard enough, but confiding in a stranger can be even harder. That's why we want you to take some time to get to know us. You can write us using email or send us a note through the postal service.

To email us, go to [settingcaptivesfree.com](http://settingcaptivesfree.com), and on the left side of the page, click on Our Ministry, and then Contact Us. Or, you can write us at Setting Captives Free, 2325 Medina Road, in Medina, Ohio, 44256. We want to help you, pray for you, walk with you side by side, and provide whatever we can to help you discover the rich and wonderful blessing of victory through Christ.

Remember this, the world celebrates Christmas with presents, love songs, and stories of Santa Claus, but none of those things offer the peace and the joy and a clear conscience of having gone to Christ for the greatest present of all, salvation. If you don't know Christ, or maybe you've forgotten the real gift of Christmas, get in touch with us. Do it now.

Do it today. What a great way to celebrate Christmas with the power and love of Christ in your heart.

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