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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

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**God's Superintending Power**

**Colossians 2:13-15**

**Prayer:** *Father, what a gift this day is, what a gift you've given to us in your Son who was willing to die that we might have life. We are so grateful and thankful for what you've done. And Lord, as we open up your book this morning, as we try to glean some more insights into just what it is you've done for us on this Easter morning, we pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit. Guide us, direct us, give us the ability to make this of permanent value, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well you know, the story of Easter is one that is often told by painting Jesus as a victim of consequences. He was a victim of the Jewish leaders who saw him as a threat, he was a victim of the imperial Roman system that denied him justice, he was a victim of his own people either turning on him or abandoning him at his moment of deepest need. Jesus was never a victim. Our God is far too powerful to ever allow his Son to become simply a victim. But he doesn't use that power to turn us into puppets.

Instead the story of Easter is a story about consequences, intended, unintended and superintended. And in this case the unintended consequences of Adam's fall is what brought Jesus to earth in the first place.

Adam was convinced by the serpent that the intended consequences of his eating that fruit would be that he would be like God himself. Adam had been lied to, and all of us today are bearing the unintended consequences of his action.

When Adam ate the forbidden fruit he wasn't the only one who fell from perfection to imperfection, every subsequent child of Adam inherited from Adam a fallen will that from birth shakes its fist in the face of God. And whether you refer to it as "the fall" or "original sin," the effect is that every one of us is born captive to our imperfection. And God who is perfect knew the only way to resolve this unintended consequence of imperfection was to demand a full payment for it and thereby satisfy his own perfect justice, but that payment was death.

Easter is a celebration of the fact that God's perfect justice met his perfect mercy at the cross. The death that we deserved was paid instead by Jesus on the cross, and by offering up his life instead of ours, he perfectly satisfied justice and mercy as well.

And we know the story of Easter is the story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ but we seldom realize that Jesus rose from the dead because his sacrifice had been accepted as perfect.

He had come to the planet not as a teacher or philosopher or political leader but instead as God himself in the flesh determined by his own sacrifice on the cross to ransom and rescue his own chosen people who had been captured and held captive by the fall of that very first man Adam. And, you know, it's easy to look at the circumstances of the crucifixion and miss that completely, to only see Jesus as the victim of consequences, intended or unintended.

You can choose to see the events of Easter as these random chance-driven acts that simply trapped Jesus and made him a victim or you can make God into some type of master puppeteer overwhelming the wills of the key players in the Easter drama so they would do exactly what he wanted them to do, but both of those miss the mark.

I submit to you that the events of Easter had consequences that were not just intended or unintended but were instead superintended. That is to say that God sovereignly worked through man's own free will in multiple ways to accomplish his will.

And we've seen this many, many times in scripture, we've seen it in

the life of Joseph. If you recall, Joseph gets kidnapped and sold into slavery by his brothers, he gets arrested, he winds up in prison where he meets with the wine taster of the king of Egypt. Some of you know the story. Joseph through this series of divine events predicts an enormous famine that's going to take place in Egypt and he also provides a means for providing for it. So he winds up becoming second in command to the king. Famine stalks all of the other countries except Egypt due to Joseph's brilliant planning. And his brothers now years removed, they no longer recognize him but they come to him seeking to buy food and Joseph eventually reveals himself to his brothers and they're terrified. They understand that now he can, if he wants, still exact his revenge.

And Joseph sums up all of what took place that brought him from slavery to second in command in all of Egypt by saying to his brothers in *Genesis 50:20*: "*As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.*" You see, Joseph's brothers intended to do him evil but God superintended that evil for good. God working through the free will of even evil intentions of men by his own sovereign grace and wisdom can still effectively bring about his will, and that's exactly how God superintended the events of Easter.

So I want to walk you through some of the events of Easter and I want to focus on God's ability to superintend the events that took place. And the first and most obvious instance that took place, it took place shortly before Jesus entered into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

If you recall, he had raised Lazarus from the dead and the religious leaders were discussing what an incredible threat Jesus had become to them. *John 11:47* states the case, it says: *So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish."*

Now Caiaphas had one specific intended consequence of his words. Quote: *"That one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish."* He saw the potential that Jesus had to cause uproar or dissent within a nation and he knew he didn't have firm control over it and he saw Jesus specifically as a political liability. His intent was to eliminate Jesus as a potential threat

to his power and to the nation of Israel simply by killing him. Now every single word that Caiaphas uttered was directed freely by his own will to his intended goal, and again, that was the elimination of Jesus. However, those exact words contained an entirely different meaning that Caiaphas was completely unaware of but that God superintended prophetically.

See, God himself had decided before the world had ever been formed that at an appointed time it would be better -- quote -- *"that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish."* And Jesus came to this earth for that express purpose. Not the entire nation but the entire world was in the process of perishing. Adam's fall had cursed all of creation and Jesus alone was the only man who could save us.

And what is even more astounding about how God superintended this statement is that he put profound truth unwittingly into the mouth of a man who had no respect for truth whatsoever. God however had respect for the office that he had created and wicked or not, Caiaphas was the high priest at the time. Verse 51 says this, he says: *He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they made*

*plans to put him to death.* God made one of Jesus's arch enemies speak absolute truth prophetically.

Now the second unintended consequence that was superintended by God is that of the traitor Judas. You know, Judas was a very unhappy man. He was a very dishonest man. In fact, he was an embezzler and the scripture says so. After he chides Mary for anointing Jesus with an expensive ointment, it says in *John 12:6*: *He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.*

Okay. So why did Judas betray Jesus? Well there's lots of speculations as to what his actual intended motive was. Perhaps Judas expected Jesus to be a political figure and in his frustration he simply tried to move the process along by betraying him, assuming that's going to force his hand politically. And I say that because the only shred of anything decent to be found in Judas was his regret over having betrayed Jesus, but even that regret went to its worst possible end with Judas committing suicide. In fact, Jesus himself described Judas in the most unflattering of terms. He said this in *John 6:65*. *Speaking to the disciples he said: "Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil."* He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot,

*for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him.*

So no one can say for certain why Judas did what he did but we know that his intention, as wicked as it was, was once again superintended by God to start the process of Jesus' passion with the betrayal and to pay a price that the betrayed always had with the exact same price paid for a slave.

You see, hundreds of years before Judas made this infamous deal, God had already established what that price would be. Going all the way back to *Exodus 21:32*, it says: *If the ox gores a slave, male or female, the owner shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.* You see, Judas, he intended to force Jesus' hand and make some money on the side. God superintended Judas's freely chosen wicked decision to start the process of Jesus' crucifixion. *Matthew 26* says: *Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.*

The third superintended consequence that took place at that time actually came from one of Jesus' dearest disciples. It was the betrayal of Jesus by Peter. And in this one we have an intended

consequence, we have an unintended consequence and a superintended consequence.

I want you to picture the scene. Jesus has just been taken captive, he's about to submit himself to the beatings and the mockings, and we pick it up at *Luke 22*. It says: *Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.*

Now Peter's intended consequence was to get close to Jesus without really exposing himself as one of his followers. His unintended consequence was being identified by a servant girl and then by another onlooker as a follower of Jesus. He wanted to be close enough to Jesus to know what was going on but when that put him in

a position of being identified as one of his followers, his fear just overwhelmed him, and just as Jesus predicted, Peter denied him three times.

You see, Jesus superintended Peter's decision and he did it this way. You see, Peter was always known to be an impulsive person and many times he said things without thinking them through. And one of the worst instances of bad thinking leading to bad statements occurred shortly before Jesus' passion began. I mean, you have to understand Jesus knew exactly what he was heading into, but when he began to explain it to his disciples, Peter's sin began to unfold.

And we pick this up at *Matthew 16*. He says: *From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."*

You see, after three years, three years of living with Jesus, Peter still didn't grasp what Jesus' mission really was. I mean, he couldn't believe his ears when he heard Jesus speak of his upcoming

suffering and death and he just wouldn't hear it of. Well Jesus not only puts Peter in his place but he warned him of the very events that were going to take place during his suffering.

This is what he said in *Luke 22*. He said: *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."* Peter said to him, *"Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death."* Jesus said, *"I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."*

Well we've already seen exactly what happened. I just want to focus on one little detail that occurred during Peter's denial and what happened after Jesus rose from the dead. So I want to pick up on Peter's actual denial. This is *Luke 22:59*. It says: *And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean."* But Peter said, *"Man, I do not know what you are talking about."* And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, *"Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times."* And he went out and wept bitterly.

You see, the servant girl, she was Peter's unintended consequence. Peter intended to stay close enough to find out what was happening to his master but not so close as to be implicated as his follower, and Jesus superintended the exact same time and the exact circumstances so that as he was being abused by his captors and denied by Peter, the rooster crowed. And as verse 61 says: *And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.*

You know, Peter had freely denied his Lord. Jesus had freely given up his freedom to his captors and yet at the precise moment of Peter's denial, his eyes and Jesus' eyes meet. The only creature that was acting under compulsion was the rooster that crowed precisely when Jesus made it crow. So Peter's actually crushed. It says, he went out and wept.

Well, after Jesus rose from the dead, this risen King of the universe is cooking breakfast for his disciples. Just ponder that for a second. Afterwards he has a conversation with Peter and it focuses in on his healing and restoration.

This is *John 21:15*. It says: *When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He said to him a second*

*time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."*

So what we have here is Peter's three denials of his Lord is met with Jesus' three affirmations of his restoration, "feed my lambs," "tend my sheep," "feed my sheep." Again, it's hard for me to get my head around the fact that this victorious risen King of the universe is serving breakfast to the one who denied even knowing him, and he's restoring him fully. And we know for the rest of Peter's life and ministry he would remember that night and those eyes. And he would know from personal experience that God is a God of mercy and grace and that he chooses broken vessels like Peter to administer his grace to a fallen world.

The sins that Jesus had gone to the cross to pay for included Peter's vehement denials. Jesus had already paid that price and because he had paid that price, Peter was now free. Peter had intended only to get a safe enough distance to find out what was happening to Jesus. Jesus superintended Peter's cowardice with just one look and forever broke his arrogance and confidence in his

own strength in a way that would affect his ministry for the rest of his life.

Now this next unintended consequence occurred during the actual crucifixion of Jesus. And again, to put it into perspective we have to go back in time some thousand years. At that time King David is under assault. We don't know if he is fleeing from King Saul or from his rebellious son Absalom but we know he is in desperate straits. He feels that even God has deserted him and he's intending to pour out his heart and out of his heart he's pouring the pain that he is in and he writes in *Psalm 22*: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.*

Understand, David here is writing about his own personal agony, he's writing about his own personal feelings of abandonment, and so we go a thousand years later and Jesus is hanging on the cross and he speaks the very same words. In *Matthew 27*, it says: *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* See, God superintended those very words and he put them on the lips of Jesus.

And you know, the cynics and the critics might say, well, you know Jesus was that a student of the Old Testament and he knew the Psalms inside out and backwards, why not speak the words that had been spoken over the ages and then claim them as your own? And again, let's say for argument's sake that Jesus intended those words to support his claim to be God, but understand by the same token there were many events that took place while Jesus was hanging on the cross that Jesus couldn't possibly have had any control over whatsoever. Those are the events that were superintended by God.

And again, we don't know the exact events that caused David to write the following statement in the same Psalm, *Psalm 22*. This is what he wrote, continuing, it says, David's words, *he says: For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet -- I can count all my bones -- they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.*

Understand here, David is intending to describe the circumstances that he was in, but God superintended what David had written to describe something that David could never have even dreamed of. Verse 16 says: *"They have pierced my hands and my feet."* One thing we know about crucifixion, that it obvious pierces both hands

and feet but another thing we know about David and the time that he wrote this Psalm was that crucifixion as a form of punishment did not exist. It was not even known. It was not introduced as a form of punishment until literally hundreds of years later.

Jesus hardly could have intended the particulars of his own punishment, but again let's play the role of the cynic and let's say that he arranged the time and the place of his arrest in such a way that his hands and feet would be pierced through crucifixion would be maximized. But what David would write next, that could never be intended or unintended by Jesus. It could only have been superintended by God. This is what David wrote: *They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.*

We fast forward to *John 19:23: When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things.*

Well, the soldiers intended nothing more than to preserve a

valuable garment. They had no notion whatsoever of who it was they were crucifying or what historical significance their actions would have. They freely chose to ignore the brutality and even the humanity of their victim and they gambled for his clothing right before his eyes. Jesus could hardly have intended an outcome such as this, but only God is capable of superintending it.

You know thus far we've seen how many of these key players in this drama freely by their own will intended one thing and wound up producing a series of unintended consequences, all of which were superintended by God. And the result was that these men acting only in their own self interest with absolute freedom wound up playing a crucial role in the unfolding passion of Christ, and to suggest that all of this just happened by chance is literally to stretch credulity into a pretzel.

To understand God's superintending power is to see him work his will through the free wills of fallen man. And we've seen it in Caiaphas, we saw it in Judas and Peter and the soldiers, but the next character in this drama is not even human. It's the enemy of our souls; it's Satan himself. See, he intended many, many different things to happen. God superintended them to suit his glory and his plan and still preserve our freedom to choose badly.

Most folks see Easter in terms of chocolate bunnies and Easter eggs; Christians see it in terms of war. You see, Easter is the ultimate celebration of victory in the war between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, and it was a war that started all the way back in the Garden of Eden as Adam and Eve stood before God to receive their sentence for eating the forbidden fruit. Along with them was a third party, it was the serpent who was obviously the embodiment of Satan.

This is what took place way back in Genesis. It says: *He (God) said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

So all the way back at the very beginning right at the start God identifies two warring parties. He said the battle of that would

take place would be between the serpent and his offspring and the woman and her offspring. God is announcing all the way back in the Garden of Eden that Jesus would be at war against Satan. And when Jesus was about to enter into his passion, he clearly and plainly identified who it was that he was going after, how he was going to fight him, how difficult it would be, and how he would ultimately claim victory.

It's found in *John 12*. It says: *And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name."* Then a voice came from heaven: *"I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."* The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, *"An angel has spoken to him."* Jesus answered, *"This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all*

*people to myself." He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.*

So first we look at the who. Jesus was going after the ruler of this world. That's the official name that he gave to Satan. Secondly is the how, how he would fight him. Jesus says, *"When I am lifted up from the earth."* Well, it's the cross that would lift Jesus up. Verse 33 says: *He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.* Thirdly, Jesus addresses how difficult it would be. In verse 27, he says: *"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour."* And lastly he would claim ultimate victory. Verse 31 says: *"Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out."*

And so we ask, how would Jesus' death on a cross be the judgment of the whole world that casts out its ruler? Well, like all the others in this drama, Jesus took what the devil intended in disaster and defeat and he superintended it for his own victory. See the enemy knew that God's justice was perfect because he knew God was a perfect God, and that means that every single infraction, every single time we fall short of the glory of God from a stolen paper clip to the act of murder itself, has to be paid for.

Folks say, "Well, if God is all powerful then why doesn't he just forgive everybody of everything?" Well the simple answer to that if he does that he's no longer perfectly just. Should Hitler get a pass? How about Boko Haram or Al-Shabaab or ISIS for that matter? Just last week they murdered 135 concert goers in Russia. Should God forgive those murderers just because he's all powerful? Where would his justice be?

See, every single sin we commit incurs a cosmic debt that's got to be paid for by someone, and either Jesus will pay for your sin or you will, but no sin will ever go unpunished. It's easy to see the need for justice in wanton acts of murder of innocence; it's a lot harder to see it in stolen paper clips. The fact is everything less than perfect has to be accounted for in the moral universe that God occupies, and God knows that but so does Satan. He has no power over God whatsoever and God owes Satan absolutely nothing but God does owe his own sense of justice and his perfection that stems from his character. Satan is quite happy to point out each and every time we fall short of that perfection. That's why his other name is "the accuser."

*Revelation 12 says: And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers*

*has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.*

You see, God in his omniscience and justice had to deal with the accuser of the brethren, he had to deal with our sin, and he did it by the one thing that caused him to say, *"Now my heart is troubled."* See, Jesus didn't nobly shoulder the burden of our sin; instead he became sin. *2 Corinthians 5:21* says: *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

So the perfect son of God, the flawless one who delighted in his fellowship with his Father for all eternity had on the cross become every single repulsive thing that sin itself represents. When God looked down from heaven on the cross, he no longer saw his precious Son, instead what he saw was rape and murder and pride and envy and gossip and pornography and drug addiction; you name it, Jesus had become it. And God poured out his collective righteous and just fury going backwards to Adam and forward to the very last believer who will ever be born, God poured out that fury not on the heads of those who belong to Christ but on Christ himself.

I don't think we realize that there's a personal dossier of your sin and my sin that is added to every single day from the day we

were born to the day that we die. And God has made that abundantly clear in his word. Listen to Romans 2:5. He says: *But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek.*

*Ecclesiastes 12 says: For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. Matthew 12 says: "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." And Luke 12 says: "Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops."*

You know, those words spell catastrophe for every single person on the face of this planet who doesn't have Jesus as Lord and Savior. The stark truth is this, every sin ever committed will be paid for

either by you or by Jesus Christ.

Now Satan intended to see Jesus' ultimate sacrifice of himself somehow made less than perfect by a failure in Jesus himself. You see, if Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf had not been flawlessly perfect then God's justice wouldn't have been satisfied and Jesus would have stayed in the ground; he would have remained dead. So from the moment that Jesus gave up his spirit on the cross to the moment that he rose from the grave, the entire universe was holding its breath as it awaited the final proof that Jesus' sacrifice was accepted, and the empty tomb was that final proof. That dossier that Satan held over each of us was taken by Jesus and paid for in full at the cross.

Listen to how *Colossians 2* puts it. It says: *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, 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. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.*

Paul is painting a triumphal portrait of the cross and he sees

Jesus for what he actually accomplished with your record and my record of sin, that's our dossier. It says he nailed it to the cross. The rulers and the authorities -- that's the bad guys -- they knew all too well the legalities of God's perfection, they knew full well that the wages of sin was death and they were prepared to demand for justice sake that that debt be paid. Well at the cross, God figuratively and literally shut them up.

That formal name of Satan according to Revelation 12 is "*the accuser of the brethren*," well Satan could accuse us day and night but Christ had the ultimate response. Paul says in *Romans 8*: *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died -- more than that, who was raised -- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.* And so Paul completes the note of triumph in verse 15 of *Colossians 2*. He says: *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

You see, Paul saw Christ and the cross as it truly was, intended by Satan as the ultimate defeat not only for us but also for the Son of God, superintended by God as a victory for us and a triumph for Christ. I mean, the enemy saw the shame but the kingdom saw the triumph in dying the death of the crucifixion; and where the enemy

intended only defeat in Jesus nailed like a common criminal to a tree, the kingdom superintended triumph. They saw King Jesus nailing our sins to the tree.

And where the enemy intended only scorn in the King of the universe subjected to the humiliation of the religious leaders who mocked him, the kingdom superintended exaltation. They saw King Jesus disarming the spiritual rulers and authorities by removing their right to accuse his saints.

And when the enemy intended only shame in a public display of beatings and mocking and nails and nakedness, the kingdom superintended glory. They saw King Jesus openly and willingly displaying the splendor of God's justice and mercy.

And when the enemy intended only weakness in the King of life itself having bowed his precious head in death, the kingdom superintended power. They saw King Jesus defeat death itself as he rose from the grave.

The enemy gloated in what it intended to be the ultimate display of shame and humiliation at the cross but the kingdom triumphed in superintending that very same display. And he did it to showcase and publicly display to the universe the height and breadth and

width and depth of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

I mean in his life and his ministry while he was here on earth Jesus frequently told us that heaven's economy was the exact opposite of earth's. He said, if you seek to be exalted, you're going to be humbled; but if you're humble, you will be exalted. He said if you want to lead, you're going to have to learn how to serve. If you want to be rich, you have to become poor. If you want to be wise, you have to become as simple as a child. If you want to live, you have to be willing to die. If you want to understand God's economy, just take planet earth and turn it upside down. That's exactly what Jesus did throughout his life and ministry. That's exactly how he turned the shame of the cross into the triumph of the cross.

Quite frankly, the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, they never even realized they were being had. They didn't realize it even when they thought they were gloating in victory. Again: *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

You know, the Chinese have a saying, you're all familiar with it: "He who laughs last laughs best." Well God has a saying almost akin to that. In *Psalm 37*, it says: *The wicked plot against the*

*righteous and gnash their teeth at them; but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming.*

And here's the good news for all of us. You see, God's superintending power is not just for Caiaphas and Judas and Peter and the rest. God says: *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.* So if you love the Lord Jesus Christ, then God has been superintending your life as well from the very beginning. And if God hasn't touched you, all of this is going to seem like an elaborate fairy tale that will mean nothing to no one. But if God is speaking to you, his superintending grace can turn Easter from a day of chocolate bunnies and Easter eggs into a day that he intends it to be: The celebration of the resurrection of the King. Let's pray.

*Father, we praise you, we thank you for what you have done. I just love how you've turned everything upside down, how you took everything the enemy and our sinful human beings could throw at you and you turned it into a triumph of your love and your mercy. I praise you and thank you for this day, and I pray that you would give us the ability to just understand a teeny bit more how wonderful you are. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*