**IT’S FRIDAY – BUT SUNDAY IS COMING**

***It Ain’t Over Till It’s Over***

It was Sunday, June 18, 1815, in present day Belgium, that the famous Battle of Waterloo took place. The French, under the command of Napoleon Bonaparte, were fighting the Allies (British, Dutch, and Germans) under the command of Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington. The legendary Bonaparte had returned from his forced exile in 1814 and was once again leading the French to victory after victory. He seemed invincible. The two great armies of Britain and France met on this historic day with all the eyes of Europe upon them. Would the countries of Europe be again subjected to this egotistical madman from France, or would they finally be rid of him forever? Their freedom was hanging in the balance as the battle began.

During the battle the people of England depended on a system of signals called semaphores (a light relay system that could be described as a visual Morse Code). Flashing lights spelled out messages letter by letter / word by word. Suddenly a message came from the front lines from the top of the famous Winchester Cathedral. The sentry relayed it letter by letter: "W-E-L-L-I-N-G-T-O-N---D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D"

Just at that moment one of those sudden English fogs made it impossible to read the message. The news of defeat quickly spread throughout the city. People throughout the land were sad and gloomy when they heard the news that their country had lost the battle and would soon be subjects of Napoleon’s dictatorship.

Suddenly the fog lifted, and it was discovered there was more to the message. The message had four words, not two. The complete message was:
"W-E-L-L-I-N-G-T-O-N---D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D---T-H-E---E-N-E-M-Y!"

It took only a few minutes for the good news to spread like wildfire throughout London and to every city and village in England. Sorrow was turned to joy; defeat was turned to victory!

The same thing happened when Jesus was laid in the tomb on Friday of the week of Passover. Hope had died even in the hearts of Jesus' most loyal friends. After the frightful crucifixion, the fog of disappointment and misunderstanding had crept in on the friends of Jesus (they were “sad” – Lk 24:17). They had read only part of the message. "C-H-R-I-S-T --- D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D" was all they could feel in their depressed state of mind. They scurried away into fearful hiding behind locked doors. Their world had come to a crashing halt. All their future plans were now in ruins.

But then on the third day – Sunday morning – the fog of disappointment and misunderstanding lifted, and the world received the complete message:

"C-H-R-I-S-T — D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D — D-E-A-T-H!" The agony of defeat was replaced with the thrill of victory. Death was turned to life. Oh how that changed the attitudes of His disciples, both then and now. Their joy shook the earth and reverberates down to our day. They could shout with clenched fists:

“O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? … But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:55-57).

We, like those downhearted and dispirited disciples of the first century, begin to say to ourselves what Paul said concerning those who had tried to save themselves by their own good works:

*21 I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. 22 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?* (Rom. 8:21-24)

We mutter in despair, “What’s the use in trying? The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. I am defeated!” But as it was then, so it is today, Friday’s defeat turned into Sunday’s victory. The answer to the “Who” question above is answered in a resounding shout, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom. 8:25).

For me, baseball is a thrilling game because it is a game of statistics! In Major League Baseball there is a statistic called W.E. (Win Expectancy). It mathematically calculates the odds of winning based on the score and the inning. For example, the greatest comeback in MLB history was on June 29, 1952 when the Chicago Cubs were losing to the Cincinnati Reds 8 to 2 in the top of the 9th with 2 outs and nobody on base. Losing by six runs with only one out to go places their odds of winning at 0.01%. The Cubs got a runner on base. Then another. Then another. Suddenly, hit after hit drove in seven consecutive runs and the Cubs pulled out a stunning 9 to 8 victory!

(Note: I once attended a Minnesota Twins game in 2008 in which my team was losing 8 to 3 in the 9th inning with 2 outs and one runner on base. The W.E. was 0.14%. The fans were heading for the exits. Not me. I’m a believer. We rallied to tie the Kansas City Royals 8 to 8 in the 9th, then won it on a walk-off hit in the 10th. I’ll never forget it.)

Yogi Berra, a Hall of Fame catcher for the New York Yankees, is credited with many “Yogi-isms” that are head-scratchers, and quite humorous. One such saying is, “It ain’t over till it’s over.” What’s true in baseball is also true in God’s heart. Where there is still breath there is life, and opportunity to turn defeat into victory.

If you’re not a Christian yet, it ain’t over till its over. Come to Jesus’ outstretched arms and find rest to your soul (Matt. 11:28-30). Be repentant of your sins, washing them away in the blood of the Lamb in baptism (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Rise to walk a new life (Rom. 6:4).

If you are a struggling Christian who has fallen into hopeless despair, do what Simon did when he found himself “*poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity*” – He begged Peter to pray for his soul (Acts 8:23-24). You do the same.

To the world, at my funeral, it might seem to read:

“L-A-N-N-I-N-G D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D”

But on the resurrection morning it will read:

“L-A-N-N-I-N-G D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D D-E-A-T-H.”

It’s Friday, but Sunday is coming! - Rick