

Finished!

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Psalter: 387

Scripture: John 19:23–42

Psalter: 47:8–11

Sermon Text: John 19:30

Psalter: 109

Psalter: 261:1, 2

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

— John 19:30

Imagine if we all spoke in one-word sentences. How much would be communicated? We would strive to find the best word that captures everything we would want to say. Key words would become so important in day-to-day speech. We are given a key word from John 19:30, a word that communicates the essence of the gospel. It is one word that contains all salvation—an exclamation mark upon Christ’s work. It is a simple Greek word: “Tetelestai.” If there is one Greek word that all Christians should know it is this word. It’s translated into English as, “It is finished, completed, fulfilled, or accomplished.” This is Christ’s cry of triumph from the cross; it is the cry of God’s grace to the world.

This is the final word of Christ to those gathered at the foot of the cross. It was not a whisper; it was a loud cry as the other Gospel writers tell us. The crucifixion, the death of Christ, the atonement—this great work was not finished in a corner. It was done so that the entire world might know and hear the great salvation that Christ has accomplished for sinners. Our theme as we

consider the final minutes of Christ on the cross is simply this: "Finished."

The road to the cross has been a long one. Christ has gone through agony of soul in Gethsemane, faced His accusers in the High Priest's house. He's come before Pilate, before Herod. He's been forced to carry His cross. He's been beaten, whipped, had His hair ripped out, was suspended on the cruel cross, made a curse in the eyes of God and man, and was forsaken of God. In the midst of it all, Jesus is other-oriented. He looked at Peter in the hall of Caiaphas, which led to Peter's sorrow over sin. Jesus spoke words of compassion to His own mother and the apostle John. He prayed for His enemies. He saved the thief. And now the end has come; His last moments come to a close. Will He go out with a whimper? No; first, He calls out, "I thirst." He cries out in His agony and suffering. There is one more thing Jesus needs to say. He needs just a little moisture on His tongue to announce to the world that redemption is accomplished: "Tetelestai! It is finished!" His cries come in quick succession and He gives up the ghost, thus finishing all that Scripture has testified He would do. He is completely sinner-oriented when He cries out the last word.

This is really Christ's victory cry on the cross. It is all accomplished. Everything is fulfilled. His work is complete. It is the stamp of authentication upon everything that Christ has done. According to the eternal plan of the Father and the covenant of redemption, Christ has done it all. Because of His work, salvation is offered to each one of us. Christ has willingly given Himself up for sinners, finishing salvation and offering it freely to sinners.

The complete work of redemption is finished. What does that include? It includes eight things that we want to consider.

1. Suffering is Finished

No one can reach Him anymore. There will be no more

experience of pain or sorrow or suffering. His suffering has come to an end. The agony of soul is over. There will be one spear thrust to confirm that Jesus is really dead, but He will have been at peace already. No one can falsely accuse Him. No one can mock Him and taunt Him to come down from the cross. The shame He bore is now finished. The terrible wrath of God against sin has been satisfied. It is a cry to heaven, to His Father, saying, "Father, My suffering is finished. It is complete. I have done Thy will. I have suffered, the just for the unjust! I have been 'made perfect through suffering' (Heb. 2:10). It is finished!"

It's not only a cry to His Father, but it is also a cry to sinners. Christ's suffering is finished. He has endured hell and endured being forsaken of His Father so you don't have to, child of God. How this ought to sober us! We must not think lightly of Christ's suffering and death. He did not have to come. He did not have to finish suffering for sinners. He could have left us exposed to the all-consuming wrath of God. But He did not.

The penitent sinner hears this cry with bittersweet feelings. In His finished suffering there is life and comfort. The hell that you rightfully deserve has been finished. The God-forsakenness that you deserve is finished! The nails through the hands and feet are what you deserve, but it's finished. The hellish agony and God's wrath is what you and I deserve. We deserve this death. But glory be to God, "It is finished!"

2. Scripture is Finished

All the Old Testament promises and prophecies have been finished. The seed of Genesis 3:15 has come and bruised the head of Satan. The virgin of Isaiah 7 has conceived and born Emmanuel. The Son of David will soon be seated upon the eternal throne. From the cradle to the cross to the crown, the Lion of the tribe of Judah has vanquished every foe. The experience of the psalmist in Psalm 22, 69, and 118 has been fulfilled as a complete reality for

Christ. He thirsted and drank vinegar. He suffered alone. He was the rejected Cornerstone. His hands and feet were pierced. His garments were gambled away at the foot of the cross. Isaiah's prophecies were finished. Christ was despised and rejected of men. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to those who plucked out the hair. He was numbered with the transgressors. The Passover Lamb was offered up and none of His bones were broken. The Brazen Serpent was lifted up. The second Adam came to reverse the curse. Prophecy after prophecy about Christ's birth and death are finished. One can argue, too, that Christ is looking ahead to His burial and resurrection. That is finished as well! Not one word remains unfulfilled as Christ cries out triumphantly, "Tetelestai!"

Prophecy after prophecy and promise after promise of mercy has been finished. Centuries of anticipation have culminated in this cry for undeserving sinners, "It is finished." Scripture is authenticated in this cry. The gospel is complete. Shelter under the blood of the Passover Lamb and be saved! Look to the Brazen Serpent and be healed of your poisonous sin! Flee to the second Adam and find your obedience in Him! Test the Scripture and see if there is any promise concerning Christ's life and death that has not been finished in this cry. The promises and prophecies are "yea and amen" in Him. You must test them or you will fail. You must rely on them or you will falter. You must believe them or you will doubt. You must live in them or you will perish. It is finished!

3. Christ's Service is Finished

Christ came on a divinely appointed mission, a mission of redemption. Nothing could dissuade Him from finishing this mission. As a child, Jesus said, "What, don't you know I must be about My Father's business?" Luke tells us in Luke 9:51 and 53, "And Jesus set his face like a flint to go to Jerusalem knowing what must befall him there."

At every turn, Jesus was faced with death threats, but He resisted because His time was not yet. Jesus Himself says in John 5:30, "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." In the Greek world, this word *tetelestai* was used by servants who would come to their masters and say the task has been completed. In John 17:4, Jesus reaffirms this in praying to His Father, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed in deep agony, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Now, He says, "Thy will is done. It is finished!" Heaven's Missionary came to earth, carried out His mission of redemption, and now cries, "It is finished."

What resolve to redeem sinners! God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to accomplish the mission of redemption. The Savior lived with holy resolve until the will of His Father was accomplished. In the covenant of redemption, the Father and Son determined to carry out redemption for sinners. Jesus did not have to fulfill His mission. He delights to do the Father's will (Ps. 40:8). He delights to save sinners. This is grace upon grace. Will you find in His finished service what you need to do the Father's will? Or will you still remain in unbelief at the glory and grace of Christ's work?

4. Sacrifice is Finished

All the Old Testament types and figures of Christ's sacrifice have been ended in this cry, "It is finished!" Shepherds and priests used the word "tetelestai" when they found a perfect sheep, ready for sacrifice; and Christ died as the perfect Lamb of God. Day after day of bloodshed has been finished; no more blood of animals must be shed. The sacrifices are finished. There is no more anticipation on the part of the Israelites, the Lamb of lambs has been

slain. The sin offering has been made. The peace offering has been slaughtered. The blood has been sprinkled. The wave offering has been made. The Passover Lamb has been sacrificed. The veil has been rent. The blood of atonement has been sprinkled. Atonement is forever finished. The High Priest has entered into the Holy of holies, once for all. It is finished. The ceremonial law is finished and the Moral Law has been kept. The second Adam has done what the first failed to do. He did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it, to finish it for sinners. Christ lived the perfect life and died the perfect death so He could utter this saying, "It is finished."

What a comfort for sinners tonight that Christ has finished sacrifice. This is the only sacrifice that could satisfy God's wrath for sin. Hebrews 9:28 says, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Look to Him and His complete sacrifice! Or are you still bringing your own works to the table? God does not delight in what you can offer; there is no bargaining with Him. The sacrifice is already complete in Christ. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to all who believe (Rom. 10:4). Your works are imperfect, but Christ's is perfect and wholly reliable and trustworthy. Are you confessing and living out this confession with the words of the hymnist?

Not the labors of my hands
 Can fulfill thy law's demands;
 Could my zeal no respite know,
 Could my tears forever flow,
 All for sin could not atone;
 Thou must save, and Thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
 Simply to the cross I cling;
 Naked, come to Thee for dress;
 Helpless, look to Thee for grace;

Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die.¹

5. Satan is finished

The battle between Christ and Satan has existed from the beginning. It is present in the mother promise of Genesis 3:15. There would be enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. This battle is waged as Christ was suffering in agony of soul. Satan attacked Christ vehemently, but in Colossians 2:15 we read that Christ made a show of Satan openly, triumphing over him in the cross. Upon Christ's return, Satan will be forever bound and cast into the lake of fire because of Christ's victory on the cross (Rev. 20:10). Satan is a defeated foe. He is finished.

Again this is a comfort for the people of God. Satan is powerless to dislodge you from your place in Christ. And for those of you who do not trust in Christ, it means you serve a defeated master. You serve a lost cause. If you continue to serve Satan, Christ's victory cry will resound in your life in a different way: you will be finished just like your master. Have you ever considered that? Is this cry your banner of victory or your cry of defeat?

6. Sin is Finished

The word for "It is finished" was also used by merchants to indicate that the price was paid completely. A common word with so much meaning! John the Baptist already announced Christ as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." In 2 Corinthians 5:21, we read that Christ was made to be sin for those who knew no sin. Hebrews 9:26b says, "But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Sin put away forever because of Christ's work!

1. <http://www.hymnsite.com/lyrics/umh361.sht>. Accessed March 31, 2010.

Christ has canceled the record of debt that was against us. Colossians 2:14 says, "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." When you pay a bill, you usually get a receipt on which is stamped "PAID." You and I have a statement of debt written in black ink. But Christ has stamped in blood red PAID IN FULL! Peter speaks of sin being finished, because Christ bore our sins in his own body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24). He was bruised for our iniquities; He was wounded for our transgressions. Christ has made the great exchange. His purity for sinner's impurities! His righteousness for our unrighteousness! His obedience for sinner's disobedience! His sinlessness for our sinfulness! It is finished!

Sin is finished! The price has been paid. "The cross of Christ is the grave of our sins!"² God has reconciled the world to Himself through the sacrifice of Christ, and peace is offered to desperate and sin-sick souls. His blood has been shed. It is finished. Are you wrestling with sin, working to pay off your own debt? Martin Luther tried it again and again until he realized that the righteousness of God whom he hated so much was actually his friend. The righteousness or justice of God has been satisfied by Christ's sacrifice for sin. Are there any of you toiling and struggling under a load of sin? Do you wonder if God could ever forgive you? Christ has finished sin. He calls sinners today to have stamped across their debt, PAID IN FULL! Christ's death offers complete satisfaction for sin. You cannot pay the debt. Someone else cannot pay the debt. Only Christ can and has paid the debt. That is the reality of the child of God. The currency of Christ's blood has finished sin, once and for all. He has not paid only half the debt; He does not put down a down-payment

2. Arthur Pink, *The Seven Sayings of the Savior on the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1976), 116.

and then pay the rest later. No, as soon as you are united to Christ by true and living faith, you can sing with Augustus Toplady:

If Thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my place endured
The whole of wrath divine,
Payment God cannot twice demand—
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.³

7. Salvation is Finished

Salvation is complete, full, and free. There is nothing you can add. Daniel prophesied of this completion in Daniel 9:24: “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.” Every aspect of salvation is complete. From the moment of calling and regeneration of the soul to repentance and faith, justification, sanctification, adoption, perseverance, and glorification, it is all sealed in this one cry, “It is finished!” It was the sole purpose of the Son of God to save sinners. He “came to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

Don't turn to anything else but Christ's finished work. Calvin says, “We ought to be satisfied with his death alone for salvation, and we are not at liberty to apply for assistance in any other quarter.... It was chiefly for the purpose of giving peace and tranquility to our consciences that he pronounced this word, ‘It is finished.’ Let us stop here, therefore, if we do not choose to be deprived of the

3. http://www.wicketgate.co.uk/issue73/e73_3.html accessed April 2, 2010.

salvation which he has procured for us.”⁴ Are you stopping at Christ for complete salvation?

8. Christ's Spirit on Earth is Finished

All that happened on the cross was due to the determinate counsel of God. The Roman guards did not murder Christ. The Jewish mob did not give Christ the death blow. They crucified Him, certainly. But this victory cry was issued forth because Christ had the power to lay down His life and take it up again. John 19:30 says, “And he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” In these words, we see the voluntary action of Christ to lay down His life for sinners. Christ Himself says, “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

It is finished for poor, wandering, lost, and hell-bound sheep. What love, what compassion Christ demonstrates for sinners! Christ does not end in defeat; He ends in perfect victory. He was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. It was in the determinate counsel of God that Christ should die for sinners. The cross is the pulpit of God's love and what is the closing appeal of that sermon? IT IS FINISHED! The Marrow Men said, “Christ is dead for sinners.” It is finished!

The fact that Christ uttered this cry and bowed His head and willingly gave up His spirit tells you something. It is finished. Nothing can take away from its reality. Do you believe it? Is your soul's and life's confession, “It is finished,” or are you still going about to establish your own righteousness? Are you shutting out the final appeal of God's love from a conquering and victorious Savior? Are you trampling underfoot God's offer of grace to you in this call?

I want to close with an illustration.⁵ Some years ago, a

4. Calvin, *Commentary on John 19:30*, 236.

5. This illustration is taken from A. W. Pink, *The Seven Sayings*, 119–120.

Christian farmer was deeply concerned over an unsaved carpenter. The farmer sought to set before his neighbor the gospel of God's grace, and to explain how that the finished work of Christ was sufficient for his soul. But the carpenter persisted in the belief that he must do something himself. One day, the farmer asked the carpenter to make him a gate, and when the gate was ready he carried it away to his wagon. He arranged the carpenter to call on him in the morning and see the gate as it hung in the field. When the carpenter arrived, he was surprised to find the farmer standing by with a sharp axe in his hand. "What are you going to do?" he asked. "I am going to add a few cuts and strokes to your work" was the response. "But there is no need for it," replied the carpenter, "the gate is alright as it is. I did all that was necessary to it." The farmer took no notice, but lifting his axe he slashed and hacked at the gate until it was completely spoiled. "Look what you have done!" cried the carpenter. "You have ruined my work!" "Yes," said the farmer, "and that is what you are trying to do. You are seeking to nullify the finished work of Christ by your own miserable additions to it!"

It is finished! What hinders you from believing? Is it really your inability? Christ has finished the work; there remains nothing for you to add to it, but to embrace this complete work by Spirit-worked faith. Is it your unwillingness? It is finished; a willing Savior has given up His life for sinners! There is nothing you can add to or subtract from the finished work of Christ. God is reconciled to the world in this cry. None can now escape the objective reality of the finished work of Christ. It is either trusting in the Savior who uttered this cry of victory, or breaking to pieces His work with your unbelief.

This victory cry represents a glorious and stark reality for sinners: salvation is accomplished. Skepticism must be laid to rest. Rational arguments against this reality must be silenced. Unbelief must melt away at this astounding

cry, "It is finished!" The cross is not an arena for the intellect. It is not our duty to grasp everything about the cross with our minds, but to rest in Christ's finished work by faith. It is finished! God communicates salvation in one simple word—*tetelestai*. Do you believe it and do you find your life in this simple gospel word? Amen.