

Title: It is Finished

**Scripture Reading: John 19:28-30:
Psalms 22:1; 14-18**

"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?'

"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."

'It is Finished' are among the last words of Jesus before He gave up the ghost. Anyone's last words are important. But the last words of Jesus obviously carry unique significance. Today is Good Friday and so we should recount the story at the last moments of the Cross.

'It is finished' has a reference to John 19:29 when Jesus 'knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture.' Jesus knew that His great work, His life and death work on the cross was fulfilled. He then made preparation to yield His life and die having finished the work. When he said, 'I am thirsty', a jar full of sour wine was standing there. This was a cheap wine, a sour wine. Most likely it would have been both for the soldiers and for the crucified. They were given small amounts of liquids in order to make the crucifixion last longer. Sour wine is literally vinegar. This was the drink of poor people. Notice that Jesus did not take the drugged wine earlier that the women of Jerusalem offered. The most notable reason is that it would have numbed the pain. Jesus wanted to be

fully conscious through the entire process.

Actually one of the features of Good Friday was to bring out the physical suffering of Jesus. John's intention too was to bring us face to face with his human suffering; when Jesus was on the Cross, he knew the agony of thirst. When John was writing his gospel, round about A.D. 100, a new teaching has arisen in religious and philosophical world, called Gnosticism. One of its great tenets was that spirit was altogether good and matter altogether evil. Certain conclusions followed. One was that God, who was pure spirit, could never take upon himself a body, because that was matter, and matter was evil. They therefore taught that Jesus never had a real body. They said that he was

only a phantom. They said, for instance, that when Jesus walked, his feet left no prints on the ground, because he was pure spirit in a phantom body. They went on to argue that God could never really suffer, and that therefore Jesus never really suffered but went through the whole experience of the Cross without any real pain. When the Gnostics thought like that, they believed they were honoring God and honoring Jesus; but they were really destroying Jesus. If he was ever to redeem man, he must become man. He had to become what we are in order to make us what he is. That is why John stresses the fact that Jesus felt thirst; he wished to show that he was really human and really underwent the agony of the Cross. John goes out of his way to stress the real humanity and the real suffering of Jesus.

So Jesus took the cheap wine offered by the soldiers. Possibly the reason He accepted this drink was to fulfill **Psalms 22:15**, 'His strength is dried up like a potsherd; And his tongue cleaveth to his jaws.' He was too parched to speak and He had one more thing to say. And he need the vinegar to say the one more thing. So the soldiers filled a sponge with sour wine and put it on a hyssop. Having drank it, Jesus shouted out with a loud cry 'It is finished.' This refers to the finished work of redemption. This term 'it is finished' in the Egyptian papyri was a commercial idiom for 'paid in full'. Then 'he bowed His head and gave up His Spirit.' The phrase 'bowed His head' was idiomatic of 'going to sleep'. Jesus' death was a calm moment for Him. Then he breathed His last. The

Hebrew word for 'spirit' and 'breathe' are the same. His last breath was viewed as His Spirit leaving the body.

In New Testament times, when an employee had completed a day's work or finished a project, he would tell his boss "tetelestai." This was to signal that whatever it was that he was assigned to do was now completed. Similarly, when an artist would complete a piece of art, he would have declared "tetelestai." This too was to signal that his masterpiece was complete. No more touch-ups or adjustments are necessary, the work is done. When Jesus came to this world, he told us what his job was: to provide salvation to a lost and broken world. So in his last words, Jesus was communicating that the work he came for was accomplished. The task of

earning the salvation of the world was completed in his work on the cross. No more additions or adjustments were necessary – salvation was completed.

I had to prepare two sermons for this Holy Week. Good Friday and Easter Sunday. I said to myself after the Good Friday Sermon, 'one is finished'. I felt myself relieved and happy that the task had been done. And when I finished the Easter Sermon, there is this great feeling when I accomplished a project. It is finished. But this is nothing, zero, compared to the greatest project ever planned came to an end. The eternal plan of God to bring humankind back to him through the sacrifice of His own Son Jesus Christ was accomplished. Jesus was able to say on the Cross – It is finished in a loud cry. It is the shout of

a victor, not the last words of a weak dying man. Jesus had said to the disciples in John 10:17-18 'the reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. The command I received from my Father.' The way Jesus committed His Spirit in the hands of the Father and died is a guarantee that He had accomplished everything that was required by the Father. His sacrifice was accepted by the Father and Jesus was able to depart in peace, in the firm assurance of His resurrection on the third day according to His own words. What does Jesus mean when He said 'it is finished?'

1. He has accomplished the prophecies.

John carefully shows us that scriptures are being fulfilled. Everything that happened to Jesus was according to the Prophecies of the Old Testament. There are chapters in the Old Testament which are especially concerned with the Crucifixion. I would list Psalm 22, Genesis 22, Isaiah 53 and Leviticus 16 but I would just bring out Psalms 22. There are 28 prophecies fulfilled while He was hanging on the cross. Even some single details that seem to be of no importance for us were accomplished. This is to show that Jesus was put to death not only by the envy of the High Priest and the Jewish leaders, but this was God's plan to sacrifice – 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.' Please read Psalms 22 to see so

much of the fulfillment according to prophecies in the Old Testament. When Jesus cried 'Eloi Eloi, lama Sabachthani', He was uttering the first words of **Psalms 22**, 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?' Later, knowing that all was now accomplished, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, 'I am thirsty.' Again the same **Psalms 22:15** describes the situation of the dying Messiah with the words 'My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. **Psalms 65:21** says, 'They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst. Even after Jesus' death, when the soldiers pierced Jesus' side and broke the legs of the two men crucified with Jesus so that they would die fast, Jesus didn't have any of His bones broken. This was according to God's law

about the Paschal Lamb, 'Do not break any of the bones (**Exodus 12:46**). And **Psalms 22:16 says**, 'They have pierced my hands and my feet. And **Zechariah 12:10 says**, 'They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.'

2. The Salvation Plan was accomplished.

But not only these external signs were fulfilled, but the all-important eternal plan of God was also accomplished – the salvation of all of us! The seed of the woman promised to Eve in the Lost Paradise, that would come to restore communion between men and God, is the son of Mary, Jesus of Nazareth. Even dying on the Cross, He showed

concerns about His mother and committed her to the Apostle John, His good friend and disciple. The sacrificial Lamb and the scapegoat of the Old Testament covenant were accomplished in Jesus, 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.' Prophet Isaiah had spoken about His sacrifice on our behalf 700 years before it happened. Isaiah 53 says, 'Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering. He was pierced for our transgression, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.' The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open His mouth, He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. For He was cut off from the land of the

living. For the transgression of my people He was punished.'

3.The debt was paid in full

Maybe the most common use of "tetelestai" in Jesus' day was in debt collecting. When a person finally paid off a loan, they were issued a receipt that was stamped with the word "tetelestai" which meant that their debt was now paid in full. This was verification that they were no longer responsible for any of that debt, that everything they owed was completely and permanently paid for. The Bible says that our sin created a debt to God, and one that we could never pay back on our own. But when Jesus died, he was paying off our debt of sin once and for all. Again, the Book of

Hebrews describes the finality of Jesus' payment for our sin.

4.Once for all

The phrase 'it is finished' is actually the translation of one word, 'tetelestai' in the original language of the bible. And this rich and carefully chosen word is full of powerful meaning. It actually means the sacrifice is accomplished.

Every Jewish person there would have instantly recognized this word as the equivalent of a Hebrew phrase that was used in the Old Testament sacrificial system. Each year, on the Jewish holiday called the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would enter into the temple and make a special sacrifice for the sins of the people of Israel. As soon as the

priest had killed the animal, he would emerge from the place of sacrifice and declare to the waiting crowd 'tetelestai'. It is finished. In this sacrifice all the sins of Israel were symbolically placed on the lamb that was killed and punished in their place. Yet the Bible teaches that this sacrificial system was never really complete or finished because the sacrifice of that lamb was imperfect and temporary. And they had to do it again the next year and again the next year and again and again. But when Jesus died on the Cross, He became the perfect and final sacrifice for all sin. Because He was sinless. He was the perfect sacrifice. The book of Hebrew describes how Jesus was the ultimate Lamb of God and by His sacrifice, the work of forgiveness was finally complete.

So by saying "it is finished" Jesus was signaling to the Jewish world that there was no more need for sacrifices or temples because that his work brought ultimate fulfillment to what their sacrificial system foreshadowed. This is what the Apostle Paul said in **Hebrew 9:12, 26** which says, 'He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.'

Once for all Jesus died as a victor and had completed what He had come to do. Everything was done. —It is finished! Jesus cried from the cross as a

shout of victory! —For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. Nothing more is necessary to reconcile God with humankind, and nothing more can be done, as some people insist to work on their own salvation, attempting to please God. It is an offense to Jesus' sacrifice if someone tries to add some personal sacrifice to the sacrifice of Christ to get his own salvation. If someone does this , it means that he doesn't trust in Jesus completely. Faith is faith, and not deeds! Either we believe in Jesus 100%, or we do not believe in Him and despise His sacrifice. When the jailer in Philippi asked the apostles, —what must I do to be saved? they simply answered him: —Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will

be saved – you and your household. He couldn't do anything but believe. Forgiveness and salvation is a matter of faith in Jesus, who proclaimed in a loud and strong voice: —It is finished. In this faith, and only in this faith, we are saved to live a new life with the resurrected Jesus according to God's will. —We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. Salvation is a gift from God, totally free and finished. It's not like when we receive a puzzle as a gift , that we need to put the pieces together. —It is finished! It's a ready gift! God gives it to us by grace and we accept it by faith! Conclusion: —It is finishedis the full stop to a long quarrel between men and God. Paul wrote to the Corinthians —All this is

from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ ... God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. Why is this day called —Good Friday and not —Bad Friday, when we remember all the sufferings of Jesus? Maybe because it was bad for Jesus; but for us it is a Good Day, the day of our salvation! —It is finished! God invites us: —Come, for everything is now ready.

Conclusion

Today no one in this room can say Jesus did not love them. Because He chose the Cross. When we committed all kinds of hidden sins and unforgivable acts, He chose the cross. When we are unfaithful to our spouse and cheats on them and irresponsible to our children and betray

their trust and disillusioned their future, He chose the Cross. When we murder, kill, commit all sorts of violence, He chose the cross. When we lie, cheat, become dishonest, he chose the cross. When we rebel against the government, against our leaders, against our parents, against our teachers, against our pastors, he chose the cross. When we steal, robs He chose the cross. When we abort our baby and teach our daughters to abort their babies, He chose the cross. When we drink and commit violence towards our spouse and children and others, He chose the cross. When we mess up our lives and thought that all hope is gone, He chose the cross. When we committed acts after acts of wrong and repeatedly commits sins, He chose the cross. Today not a single soul can say that God did not love

them. Not a single soul can say God did not give them a chance. Because He chose the cross. As I look at my life, having been a Christian for more than 43 years and a pastor for at least 36 years, looking back at the hundreds and hundreds of mistakes and sins I have committed and amazed at the undying love He has for me, in spite of what I am, in spite of what I have done, and He choosing the cross, I cannot help but greatly acknowledge this great Christ and says He is Lord. If there is anyone that is worth calling him God, it will be Jesus. Sometime I wonder how can someone love me so much after all that I have done, after all that I am. It can only be Jesus.

DeitrichBonhoffer writes:

Behold the incarnate God, the unfathomable mystery of God's love for the world. God loves human beings. God loves the world. God does not love some ideal person, but rather human beings just as we are, not some ideal world, but rather the real world. What we find disgusting namely, the real human being, the real-world God becomes a human being, a real human being. While we distinguish between the pious and the godless, between good and evil, the noble and the common, God loves real human beings without discriminating against any.

But it is not enough to say that God takes the side of human beings. God's love for human beings is put beyond any doubt by taking on and bearing the nature, essence, guilt, and suffering of human beings. For the love of human

beings, God's incarnation alone makes it possible to know real human beings and not to despise them.

What makes Good Friday Good is that Jesus loves us. All of us. Just as we are. Not only good people or religious people, but also all people. What makes Good Friday Good is that God in Jesus chose to be born of a woman and to live among us as one of us, including all the suffering and death that goes with being one of us.