

Good Friday – It is Finished

Easter Weekend 2015

John 19:30

David Sunday

April 3, 2015

Lifted up was He to die.
“It is finished!” was His cry.
Now in heaven exalted high.
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

(Hallelujah! What a Savior by Philip Bliss, 1875)

“It is finished.” Tonight, let us listen to the greatest words ever uttered by the greatest Man Who ever lived. They are words of which it has been said, “Nowhere in history, anywhere at anytime, by anybody were three words more pregnant with meaning.”

In the Greek language, in which the New Testament was written, this is just one word: *tetelestai*. Oswald Chambers said, “This one word is the greatest note of triumph ever sounded in the ears of a startled universe. “*Tetelestai*. It is finished.”

It is a word that terrified hell. It is a word that delighted the heart of God the Father. It is a word that has brought life, rest and liberty to millions of minds. “It is finished.”

To try to explain this word is like trying to catch the wind in my hands or trying to hold the ocean in a sieve. It staggers the imagination. The magnitude, the mystery and the majesty of this utterance of Jesus from the cross defies our comprehension. However, it is a word that lovers of Jesus return to again and again because it soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds and drives away our fears.

What This Word Means to Jesus

So first meditate with me on what this word meant to Jesus when He said, “It is finished.” When the Roman soldiers, Jewish leaders and even some of His closest followers heard Him say it, they may have thought, “He is finished! He is over. He is done with. He is defeated.”

But that is not what Jesus meant. For Jesus, this was not a cry of frustration, defeat or resignation. When Jesus said, “It is finished,” it was a cry of triumph and victory. Notice, Jesus did not say, “I am finished.” He said, “It is finished.” It is a word that means “to bring to an end;

to complete; to accomplish something that you have predetermined you want to do.” When you have finished running a race, climbing a great mountain or passing entrance exams, you might say, “It is finished. The mission has been accomplished.”

When a great debt was paid off, a banker would stamp on the loan papers “*Tetelestai*. It is finished.” When a prisoner had completed his sentence, they would write over the list of his charges, “*Tetelestai*. It is finished. Paid in full.” When Jesus said, “It is finished,” He meant much more than, “I survived.” Jesus meant, “I accomplish precisely and completely what I came into the world to do.” Everything He set out to achieve was accomplished. After a lifetime on the move, serving and suffering for others, the Son of Man finally found a place He could lay His head. In the cradle of the cross, He can rest in the knowledge that His work has been done.

Jesus is the only honest man Who has ever died without a single regret. That is vital for us. Erwin Lutzer writes, “Jesus died without regrets so He could forgive our regrets. He completed His work so that despite our uncompleted work, we might enter heaven. He successfully met God’s standard to make up for our shortcomings.” So when Jesus said, “It is finished,” it means that He could die without regrets, having fully accomplished the work He came to do.

What This Word Means to the Father

Now, let’s meditate for a moment on what these words must have meant to the Father when He heard His Son say, “It is finished.” God the Father laid out a detailed job description for His Son’s mission in the Old Testament. Jesus fully accomplished the will and the purpose of His Father in every prophecy, promise, symbol and commandment.

Jesus is the perfectly faithful servant, the perfectly obedient Son of the Heavenly Father. He is so perfect that, on the eve of His death, Jesus prayed to His Holy Father, “*I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed*” (John 17:4).

No one has honored the Father the way Jesus has. No one has ever loved the Father the way Jesus does. The pleasure that we take in our children’s accomplishments can be among the highest joys we ever experience here on earth. When we see them complete a course of training and preparation with honor and then give themselves in unselfish service to others, it brings immense joy to the heart of a loving parent.

However, nothing can compare with the satisfaction that thrilled the Father’s heart when He heard the triumph cry of His Son upon that cross. His Son came into the world saying, “Sacrifices and offerings You have not desired, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt

offerings and sin offerings, You have taken no pleasure. Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God. As it is written of Me in the scroll of the Book, I have come to do Your pleasure. I have come to do all that You desire, Father” (Hebrews 10:5-10).

For the Father to hear His Son cry out from the cross, “It is finished,” means the whole world can be reconciled to the Father. The Father’s heart may now freely and fully forgive sinners. Now the Father can welcome prodigal sons and daughters into His heavenly home. Now the Father can say to all who will ever look to Jesus and believe in Him, “Your sins and your lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Hebrews 10:17).

This finished work of Jesus brings great delight to the Father because, finally, the Father’s mission of salvation has been accomplished. Reconciliation can be offered to all. The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5 is meditating on this. He proclaimed that Christ died for all, and then he traced that dying love all the way back to its origins in the reconciling heart of the Father.

Listen to what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:18-21:

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Those words could not be written and that call could not go forth if it were not for the word—*tetelestai*—that Jesus, the Father’s Son, spoke from His cross.

What This Word Means to the Law

Consider what this word means to the law, the righteous law of God. We have already heard it in Colossians 2:13-14. God’s law stood against us with a list of accusations too harrowing to count. We were doomed. But thanks be to God for what we read now. God cancelled the record of debt that stood against us with all its legal demands.

Think of the long list of all your sins. They are written on a record of debt. They are shameful sins, sins that make you guilty, vile and helpless to save yourself. That record of debt indicts you. You are in debt to your eyeballs and over your head, infinitely beyond your ability to repay. This law of God condemns you and the sentence is death. So the law holds you prisoner on death row. Your guilt and shame are inescapable and judgment is looming. The law cannot set you free. Justice must be satisfied.

But then Jesus comes. He takes your record of debt with Him up to that cross and God nails that record of debt, with all its legal demands, to the cross of Christ with His perfect, atoning blood written over the record of your debts, “It is finished! *Tetelestai!*” Those poisonous words you have spoken, so divisive and destructive: paid in full. That arrogant pride that has made people tiptoe around you and has offended the holy wrath of God: paid in full. Your angry rage that has kept people quivering in terror around you: paid in full. Abortion, adultery, murder, embezzlement, lying, stealing, rebellion, slothfulness: *tetelestai*, paid in full.

“He has hushed the law’s loud thunder. He has quenched Mount Sinai’s flame.” So let us wonder at this great word of Jesus Christ, for in it we hear that grace and justice meet. Justice smiles and asks no more of those who put their trust in Jesus. Because the righteous requirement of the law is fully met in Jesus for us, we can now rest. We can rest in the bliss of this glorious thought:

My sin, not in part, but the whole
Is nailed to the Cross, and I bear it no more:
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, o my soul!

(It is Well with My Soul by Horatio Spafford, 1873)

“It is finished.”

What This Word Means to the Devil

Also, consider what these words must have meant to Satan. Hell trembled when those words were spoken from the cross. “*Tetelestai!*” That shout of triumph made Satan tremble in his boots, because that word unravels Satan’s entire case against us. If we believe that it is finished, it drives out the fear of death which is how the devil holds us in lifelong bondage. Satan and his forces thought they had Jesus in their mercy on the cross, but as the powers of hell unleashed their fury on Jesus with hostile intent, Jesus took on the devil and his minions on their own turf. He grappled with them and He mastered them. He stripped them of their armor and weapons; He held them aloft, as it were, in His outstretched arms on that cross, displaying to all the universe that the devil is helpless and the Savior is triumphant.

That is what Paul says happened on the cross. Colossians 2:15: “*He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in his cross.*” When Jesus says, “It is finished,” the devil knows that 1 John 3:8 has come to fulfillment: “*The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.*”

Jesus did just that on the cross which means Jesus is able to break the dark and demonic chains that bind us to guilt and shame. He is able to free us from our bondage and captivity to sin. Thanks be to God that it is finished!

If Good Friday was the lightning bolt, Easter Sunday is God's thunder clap, affirming that what Jesus did on that cross changes everything. Jesus finished His work. The Father was gloriously honored and reconciled to sinners through His Son's death on the cross. The law was satisfied in full. The devil was vanquished. It all happened when Jesus said, "It is finished." On Resurrection Sunday, God said, "Amen, My Son, it is finished."

What This Word Means to You

So what does this word, *tetelestai*, mean for you? The word is in the perfect tense, which indicates a completed action that has continuous results. It is speaking of something that happened in the past, but it continues to have an on-going affect today. When Jesus said, "It is finished," He means, "I have fully completed the work I set out to do, and it continues to remain finished in the present, with no need of modification, updating or renovation. It will forever remain finished in the future, never to expire."

This work has not expired. The work that Jesus did on the cross is just as potent and powerful to save you today as it was on the first Easter Sunday when He rose from the dead. You cannot improve upon the finished work of Christ.

Some things can be improved by addition if you add something to it. For example, if you take your paycheck and add a couple of zeroes, it will look a whole lot nicer. However, other things cannot be improved. In fact, they are destroyed by addition. If you add an extra eye onto a person's face, it ruins it. If you try to improve the Mona Lisa, you will mar it forever. If you try to add to the finished work of Christ, you will destroy its power for you. Its impact on your life will be disfigured and marred. If you try to pay for your own sins, you will never finish making payment.

I ask, have you ever asked God to apply the finished work of Jesus Christ to you? Have you ever recognized how much you need Jesus to pay the debt you cannot pay, to free you from the devil from who you could not be freed, and to do the work you would never be able to accomplish for all eternity? Have you ever asked God to apply the finished work of Christ to your life and to your account? Have you ever rested and rejoiced in the total sufficiency of what Jesus has done for you on the cross?

Nothing you do can improve that work or contribute to what He has done. The gospel we celebrate today is utterly unique. What makes it so beautiful and powerful is that every other

religion says, “Do.” Christianity begins with, “Done.” “It is finished.” Every other religion starts with, “Get to work.” Christianity starts with, “The work has been finished for you. Trust. Believe. Rejoice in what Jesus has done for you on the cross.

Believer, if Jesus has finished His work for you, you can also trust that He will be faithful to finish His work in you. That which He began in you He will be faithful to carry on to completion until the day He returns (Philippians 1:6).

On the night He was betrayed and the night before He went to the cross, Jesus said, “This is My body. Take and eat.” He said that to His disciples. Nobody at that table said, “Lord, I cannot take,” although I am sure all of them felt unworthy. Jesus said, “Take,” and they took. Do you need a Savior? He is here. He is alive today. Take Him. Take Him as your own. Receive Him by faith. Trust Him to deliver you from the power of sin and from the power of Satan. He is your Savior Whom God put forth to reconcile you to Himself. Take freely of the work that Jesus has done for you. Take Him. Receive Him. Rest and rejoice in His finished work.

Charles Spurgeon said, “Jesus is as free as the air. You have no more to pay for Christ than you have to pay for the next breath that goes into your lungs. Take Him in. Take Him in.”

Take Him in by simply saying to Him, “O, Lord Jesus Christ, I am a great sinner. You are a great Savior. I receive You. I believe that You finished the work I could have never done, and I rest and rejoice in that work. It is finished.”

It is finished! O what pleasure
Do these precious words afford;
Heav’nly blessings, without measure,
Flow to us from Christ the Lord...

Finished all the types and shadows
Of the ceremonial law;
Finished all that God has promised;
Death and hell no more shall awe.
It is finished! It is finished!
Saints, from here your comfort draw.

(Hark! The Voice of Love and Mercy by Jonathan Evans, 1784)

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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