

It is Finished  
John 19:30

Last time we were together we looked at Jesus hanging on the cross and the cry, "I thirst." And we realize that he thirsted so that we would never have to. We realized that this cry not only fulfilled Scripture, but also indicated that Jesus drank the full wrath of God. We realized that on the cross he not only drank that cup of the Lord but was forsaken of the Lord. Because sinful man pursues comfort and life apart from Him, then in the next life God's comfort will be removed, and all the punishment will be levelled on humanity. Christ became thirsty that we would ultimately have the everlasting comfort of not only forgiveness of sins but also the comfort of his presence forevermore.

Now today I want us to look at the words of Christ just before he expired. We looked briefly at it last time we were together, and it is the words, "**It is finished.**" And with that Jesus bowed his head and gave up the spirit. And so often we look at these words as no more than a sign of his death. And they certainly are. They speak of his control and the timing of his death. But often we do not actually see the glory and significance of these words. So often we do not recognize or meditate on all that Jesus accomplished in his death. These words of Jesus not only speak of the finality of his life but also they speak triumphantly of all that Jesus accomplished.

And so many believers struggle with assurance of salvation. People struggle often when they actually growing as believers. And the reason why is two things we start to see with greater clarity. One is we see the enormity and the majesty of God. We recognize more of his regal nature and we are amazed that we haven't seen him more or recognized him earlier because the evidence of his power and goodness is all around us. But the second thing is we grow in seeing ourselves. We grow in seeing our sin, and especially in our inner person. We begin to see how sin is so much part of our life. The person who thinks they are basically a good person or not that bad hasn't spent much time in the presence of God; hasn't thought deeply of who he is, and therefore cannot see the distance between us and an all holy and glorious God.

Now seeing ourselves and God with greater accuracy we can end with two wrong conclusions. One is to have a defeatist attitude when we keep looking at our hearts. There is no way that I can ever be right with God. God is perpetually angry with me. He is perpetually against me. And because of my sinful heart, because of the things I have done in the past, because of the sins I cannot overcome today there is no hope for me. And I think we might not have come to that conclusion, but I think there are many believers who are at a point of despair, and rather than running to God they actually run from him. Why run to him if he wants nothing to do with us?

That is one conclusion. The other is that Jesus came and died, but the more I see God's glory and worth and the more I see my sin and grievous heart, there has to be more that needs to be done. There has to be some way that I can atone or prove myself before God. Some Christian traditions even teach of the necessity of Christ's death, and Jesus forgives all your sins the moment you believe but those are the past sins. Your present and future sins are your responsibility. Roman Catholicism is built upon this. The whole goal of life is penance — paying the residual debts I owe. I go to mass and get some credit. I go to the confessional and get some credit. I give money

or light a candle or say the rosary or whatever and I get credit. And here is the thing, because sin is never eradicated in us, there is always more to be done.

And many well-meaning Christians when they first came to Christ celebrated what Christ has done for them. But the further they get away from that initial salvation, the more they get on the treadmill of performance. And there is no rest. The more we learn about God, the more we see about our sin, and the more activity or work needed.

But here is the remedy, these words of Christ right here, rightly understood give so much rest for the soul. And they point us away from our work to the work of the One who cried — “It is finished.” Life becomes a celebration and a joy and a seeking to make much not of ourselves but of Christ. So today I want us to look at these words of Christ and truly celebrate that it really is finished. Let’s seek to understand this utterance of Jesus and then seek to draw some implications to really strengthen our faith, joy and assurance in Christ alone.

1. In order to understand the certainty of our salvation we need to understand Jesus’ words. V. 30.

I think too often we rush through passages, and do not take time to really think about what is being communicated. And because we do, the joy, assurance and security of all that Jesus accomplished is many times not seen or appreciated. Our thinking, attitudes and hope are not corrected. And this verse is one of those verses, because think about it. Jesus is at the point of death and absolute exhaustion. He has been beaten a number of times, beard plucked out, and now has been hanging about six hours in excruciating pain. And yet he calls out, or cries out. And remember all of his words that he speaks on the cross have so much significance. And this statement right here has so much meaning as far as the mission and determination of Jesus.

So let’s read through this verse one more time and really think about what John is recording, and remember the whole point of writing this gospel is that we would know Jesus is the Christ and have life through his name. He wants each of us not only to have that life but revel in the certainty of that life, So verse 30 says, **“When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, ‘It is finished,’ and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”** Now the English translation does not do it justice to what is fully being communicated. Because there is a sense where it can be a statement of defeat. I have come to the end. I am done. I have tried to hang on but I am finished! And the phrase here is only one word in the Greek. It is the Greek word “tetelestia.” And it means more than come to an end, but has the meaning of bringing something to fruition, or completing a task fully. In fact listen to John 17:4, and see if you can spot how this Greek word is translated in that verse, **“I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.”** It is the word “accomplished.” Jesus came and accomplished all that God the Father had given him to do. And here on the cross he says the same word. It is finished, or it is accomplished. The end goal of all that I came to do is complete. There is nothing more that needs to be done.

Matthew does not record the words that he spoke but says in Matthew 27:50, **“And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.”** With all his energy he could muster he cries out not in defeat but in victory — “It is finished.” This is the victory. Think of it, Jesus when he endured the wrath of God spoke, **“My God,**

**my God why have you forsaken me?”** The son is forsaken and under the Father’s wrath. But listen to his words at the very end in Luke 23:46, **“Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this he breathed his last.”** Notice the restoration of the relationship. Father into your hands and care I commit my spirit. And through all the anguish and pain and turmoil that none of us can truly understand, the comfort at the end for Christ is knowing that fellowship is restored, knowing that the mission was accomplished and the purpose fully satisfied must have been so sweet for our Lord and Saviour.

Think how he accomplished the mission God had given so fully. Every prophecy that deals with the death of Christ was chronicled in the Old Testament and he fulfilled them all. Listen to what one commentator wrote, **“His betrayal by a friend (Ps. 41:9), the disciples’ forsaking him (Ps. 31:11), the false accusations and Jesus’ silence before the judges (Ps. 35:11; Isa. 53:7), his formal acquittal (Isa. 53:9), his being numbered with transgressors (Isa. 53:12), his crucifixion (Ps. 22:16), the mocking of the onlookers (Ps. 109:25), the taunt about his failure to save himself (Ps. 22:7–8), the soldiers’ gambling for his clothing (Ps. 22:18), his prayer for his enemies (Isa. 53:12), his being forsaken of God (Ps. 22:1), his thirsting cry (Ps. 69:21), his yielding up of his spirit into the Father’s hands (Ps. 31:5), the preservation of his bones from being broken (Ps. 34:20), and his burial in a rich man’s tomb (Isa. 53:9) —all were foretold in the prophetic witness.”** Wow, if anyone doubts that Jesus is the Messiah, how could they when he fulfills all of these prophecies in the Old Testament? If anyone ever doubts the veracity or truthfulness of the Scriptures, how could they when it prophesied in so much detail what would happen to our Lord? This is the Word of God and Jesus truly is our Lord. He fulfilled all, it is finished!

But most of all, these words appoint us to what is known as the atonement. When we speak of the atonement the big idea is penal substitution. Someone came and took the punishment that I deserve. We realize this was the whole point. Matthew 20:28 says, **“even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”** The meaning of ransom is a payment. And Jesus came to pay the debt of my sin and what it deserves to our great and all righteous God. And this was the whole direction of his life. Think of what he said even earlier in this gospel in John 10:11, **“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”** He is the Good Shepherd and this is exactly what he did for you and me. He laid down his life so that you and I would have life. Last week we looked at his thirst. We said he thirsted so that we would never thirst, and this is the direction of his life toward this moment. In fact, this is the direction of the whole Bible. All of Scripture has been pointing and leading to this moment. We realize since the fall of man, since Adam in the Garden, all of creation has been waiting and groaning for the coming of Christ — for the payment to be made that we might have life eternal through his sacrificial death.

Think of the old hymn written by Phillip Bliss in the 19th century, **“Bearing shame and scoffing rude, In my place condemned He stood; Sealed my pardon with His blood; Hallelujah! what a Savior! Guilty, vile, and helpless, we, Spotless Lamb of God was He; Full redemption—can it be? Hallelujah! what a Savior! Lifted**

**up was He to die “It is finished!” was His cry; Now in heaven exalted high; Hallelujah! what a Savior When He comes, our glorious King, To His kingdom us to bring, Then anew this song we’ll sing! Hallelujah! what a Savior!”**

Think of the phrase “keep going.” It is one that is used to inspire so many. Often even individuals will on their death beds inspire others maybe with their philanthropic work, maybe in cancer research or in building a company, but to take what they have built and keep going. And the words have so much power and direction. Why? Because the task is unfinished. When we look at the words of Christ, the last recorded here in the Book of John before his death — it was not “keep going,” but “It is finished.” The purpose of his coming had been realized. Now if that does not cause you to love and cherish Christ and to look to him in faith I do not know what will.

2. So let us look at two implications from this text.

And the first must be the most obvious — Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe, sin had left a crimson stain and he washed it white as snow. The debt has been paid and we are now free in Christ. Scriptures point to the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ and the finality of the sacrifice of Christ. Listen to the contrast of the priests in the Temple and the one sacrifice of Christ in Hebrews 10:11-12, **“And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.”** The priests are so often like the modern day follower of Christ. They are busy trying to take away that stain of sin, and they could never do it, that is why there was constant activity and busyness. They could never do enough or offer enough sacrifices to take that debt. These sacrifices were a picture but also created a longing for the perfect sacrifice where they could actually rest from their doings because full atonement has been made.

And here is the contrast — Jesus comes and offers a sacrifice not continually but one time. And then guess what he does? He does what no priest ever did in the Temple, and that is he sat down. Now why did the priest not sit down? It is because no atonement was ever made. Their sacrifices were never enough. Christ sat down because, “It is finished.” You have to find assurance here. It truly is found in Christ. It truly is found in what we call the finished work of Christ.

Think of what the sacrifice of Christ accomplishes in your life and my life. Listen to what John says a little later in 1 John 1:7, **“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”** We walk in the light of what Christ has done for us. And look at what the sacrifice of Christ does for us — “the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin.” Now here is the question because some of you might be looking back at past sins, and there is so much shame, and you might be trying to atone for that sin, in other words pay the price through some sort of work. So what does the word “all” mean? It means all. Jesus’ substitutionary death on the cross, his shedding his blood cleanses us from any and all sin. It is finished. It is a done deal.

So think of it, when we say we have faith in Christ what do we mean? We often talk about our trials, and in our trials God is for us and not against us, and that is certainly true. We walk by faith and not by sight. But that is all predicated on what we

truly trust Christ for, and that is his dying on the cross, his voluntary sacrifice for sinners like us. We mean that when he went to the cross and died on the cross Jesus really did pay it all. We mean that when he cried, "It is finished," Jesus has forevermore accomplished forgiveness, has paid the ransom, has brought reconciliation for sinners like us. And so when we say we have faith in Christ, we turn from trusting in ourselves, from saying look at me, to look at him. This is where assurance is found. It is not found looking at us but looking at Christ.

The question is often asked, when we die and we get to the gates of heaven, and Jesus meets us there and says to us why should I let you into my heaven? The answer is never look at what I have done, look at how I lived, look at what I have given, but wonderfully and delightfully look at what Jesus has accomplished. Look at what you have accomplished for a sinner like me. Jesus cried out in such victory and joy, "It is finished!" And with that he is able to lay his head down in care of his loving Heavenly Father. Redemption truly is accomplished. We have assurance and security by looking at him and his finished work.

And the second application is that the finished work of Jesus — these words "It is finished," should cause not passivity in us but such a joy and such an activity in serving and following Christ. There is irony here. Because we say what needs to be done, what else needs to be accomplished? And the answer comes back loudly — nothing! He truly has done it all. So there is nothing that you and I need to do. But it is the depth and the breadth and the all-completeness of our salvation that causes our activity. We want to follow a Saviour like this. We want to make much of him. We want to glory in him. He becomes our delight and he becomes our all. We stand complete in Christ and therefore we want to serve him. Isn't that the argument that Paul puts forward in the Book of Romans? In the opening five chapters he goes and presses home the truth that we are all sinners deserving of the wrath of God, but God sent forth Jesus as the propitiation for our sin. We now stand forevermore justified in his sight through the death of another.

Then the argument goes, if you teach that Christ has done it all then it will lead to sin and passivity among his followers. But listen to what Paul says in Romans 6:1-4, **"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."** Paul says that it is unthinkable that we would continue in sin. Look at what Jesus has done for us. Look at the new life and meaning and direction he has given us. Rather than the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone causing us to be lax it makes us zealous. Our hearts are taken up with purpose and that purpose is living for Christ.

And think how this affects our everyday life. We want others to have the same rest and the same joy and the same security we enjoy in Christ. People try to find security and meaning in sex or purchases or whatever, but they keep looking but they cannot find it. When your heart is taken up with all Christ has done there is such a satisfaction. There is such a joy. You want others to come to Christ to share in that

assurance. You want other Christians that are chasing after other things to share in that joy. It is never look at me but look at him. Look at his finished and complete work.

And I think that is the problem. We can be challenged so often to live for Christ, or even see the idols in our life, and say we are going to do better. We are going to steward our lives better. We are going to put more effort into our devotion to God. And we do need to put effort into following Christ. But the problem with that is we are always looking at self and never looking at Christ. The joy, power, and motivation is looking at Christ — the One who is alive forevermore. The One who accomplished all that needed to be done, and therefore there is nothing that can separate you from him. Do you believe that? Let me end with this passage of Scripture, and this really is the power for holy living. It is our absolute security in Christ because when he died on the cross and if these words were verified through his resurrection, there is absolutely nothing that will ever take you out of his grasp, Romans 8:33-39, **“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. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

These words or word of Christ, “It is finished,” not only give us security but truly changes our lives. Oh believer, there is so much rest here, “It is finished!”