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Please turn in your Bibles this morning to the Gospel of John, chapter 19. We're going to read one verse and let that be the focus of our meditation this morning. [John 19:30](#): *"When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, 'It is finished,' and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."*

Let's pray: God, we pray that You would speak powerfully into our hearts and minds now as we focus on this great triumphant word of our Savior from His cross. Just as through Your Word, You spoke and light came into darkness, we pray, Lord that those who are despondent today would be encouraged and filled with power through this word. We pray, Lord, that those who are feeling their guilt and shame would experience Your forgiveness and mercy through this word. We pray, God, that those who are suffering would be given grace to persevere through this word. God, we pray that You would cause us to esteem and adore our Lord Jesus Christ and to look forward to that day when we, with all the redeemed from every tribe and language and nation, will gather before your throne and before the Lamb and say, *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"* We thank You for the way we've been led to praise and worship You through the music today. We pray that we would be praising and worshiping You in the Word as well. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

I want to speak this Resurrection Sunday about the greatest word ever uttered by the Greatest Man Who ever lived. Someone has said, "Never in history has anyone in any place at any time uttered a word so pregnant with meaning as this word."

"I don't believe that ever in history,  
anywhere, at any time, by anybody,  
were three words more pregnant with meaning  
than these three words given by one Man at the end of His life –  
It is finished. It is finished."

[Credited](#) to [Leonard Ravenhill](#)

And I agree. To fully explain this word is like trying to catch the wind in your hand or trying to pick up the ocean in a sieve. It's impossible to grasp the magnitude and mystery and majesty of this one word. In the Greek language in which the New Testament was written, it is just one word. It is in verse 30 - the word is: [tetelestai](#) -- τετέλεω. Translated in English with these three words: *"It is finished."*

[Oswald Chambers](#) says, *"We are listening to the greatest note of triumph that ever sounded in the ears of a startled universe. It is finished."* It's a word that terrified hell. It's a word that delighted God the Father. It's a word that has brought life and rest and liberty to countless human minds and hearts. *"It is finished."*

We know that things are not always what they seem on the surface. What looks like a small piece of ice hovering on the surface of the ocean may be concealing a great iceberg underneath. Or what looks like a tiny piece of glass may be a sparkling diamond. In some events of history, too, things are not what they seem. For instance, legend has it that one day [King George III of Great Britain](#) recorded these words in his journal: "Nothing of importance happened today." The date? July 4, 1776. Little did he know!

That's the way a lot of people see the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross has little bearing, they think, on their lives. They think what was happening there was nothing of great importance. But in this word from the cross, *"It is finished,"* Jesus Himself is declaring loudly and clearly from His perspective that something of vastly infinite importance is happening here on His cross. And from heaven, God the Father agrees. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is God the Father's thunderous "Amen" to God the Son's *"It is finished."* Think of Jesus saying *"It is finished"* as the lightning bolt and the resurrection as God's thunderous affirmation: "Yes, My Son, it is finished. You have triumphed. Your work is done."

If you know the story of creation in [Genesis chapter 1](#), it was on the sixth day that God created man in His own image - in His likeness - as the pinnacle of God's creative work. After God created man in His image He said, "It is good, very good." And then on the seventh day, God rested. But in [Genesis chapter three](#), man, then pinnacle of God's creation, marred God's creative work through sin and the rest of the story is one of misery. Except God made a promise that out of the seed of the woman, the offspring of the woman, [would come One Who would crush the serpent's head](#). One Who would triumph.

Now here we are, thousands of years later and our Lord Jesus Christ dies on a cross on the sixth day of the week - on Friday. John, in chapter 19, speaks these words, saying, "[Behold the man!](#)" Here is the perfect Man, the Man who has never sinned, dying in the place of sinful man on the sixth day. He cries out "*It is finished.*" God from heaven responds, "It is very good."

His body is laying in the ground on the seventh day and then on the first day of the week, He rises from the dead, beginning a new creation -- a new creation for all who trust and believe in Him. A new creation which one day will be consummated here on earth where there will be no more sorrow, no more mourning, no more pain, no more sin, all because of what Christ accomplished on that cross. "*It is finished,*" Jesus says.

Now we're going to ask three questions of this short saying: First, what does "*It is finished*" **not** mean? Secondly, what **does** it mean and then finally, **what** is finished?

### **A. What Does It Not Mean?**

When Jesus said, "*It is finished,*" it doesn't mean, "Well, I'm over and done with." It's not like when you lose your job, you're fired, you're laid off and you say, "It's finished. There's nothing more I can do." It's not like when your favorite team

loses in March Madness and you say, “Well, it was great while it lasted but it’s finished now.” It’s not like your favorite hobby -- maybe snow skiing, when the season ends and it’s spring time so you put your skis up in the attic and say, “It’s over, it’s finished.” It’s not like when a loved one dies after a long battle and you say, “It’s over. It’s finished. There’s nothing more we can do.”

You see, when the Roman soldiers saw Jesus dying on the cross and when the Jewish leaders saw Jesus dying on the cross and even when some of His closest followers saw Him dying on the cross, that’s what they thought happened. They thought it was over. Some of Jesus’ disciples went back to their old professions, mending their nets. They thought, “He’s done with. It’s over.”

But that’s not what Jesus meant when He said, “*It is finished.*” This was not the cry of frustration. This was not a cry of defeat. This was not a resignation statement. Jesus was not saying, “I am finished.” Jesus was not dying defeated. No, friends, this was the shout of a champion. This was the resounding cry of a victor. “*It is finished!*”

## **B. What Does It Mean?**

What does this word mean? Well, it comes from a word that means “to bring to an end, to complete, to accomplish.” It’s a word that speaks of a successful end to a predetermined course of action. It’s the word that I hope to use on the second Saturday of May when I hope to finish the half-marathon up in Wisconsin. I hope to get to the end of that and say, “It is finished. I completed the course I set out to do.”

When you’ve climbed the Grand Tetons and you stand at the summit and look out at the vast, great West, you say, “It is finished. We have accomplished what we set out to do.” When you’ve passed the entrance exams, when you’ve finished the

dissertation, when you've completed the construction of your home, when you've married off your last child, you proclaim: "Tetelestai -- It is finished!"

When a prisoner has completed his sentence, they sometimes have the list of his charges posted outside his prison cell and write that word over the charges: "Tetelestai -- It is finished!" When you'd go to pay off a great debt and you'd bring the certificate of debt into the banker, making your last payment, they'd put the stamp down on the paper: "Tetelestai - Paid in Full! It is finished!" You see, it means much more than just "I survived." It's more than just "Whew, glad I made it through that." It's "I have accomplished the work that I've set out to do. I've completed it fully."

That's what Jesus means when He says, "*It is finished.*" In the Greek language, this word is written in the perfect tense which means it's something that happened in the past that continues to have power in the present. When Jesus says, "*It is finished,*" He means, "I've fully completed the work I've set out to do and that continues to remain in the present."

Sometimes we build a house and a few years later it needs modification; it needs renovation, improvements. The work Jesus finished will never need any modification, it will never require any improvement. It was finished then, it is finished now and it will be finished for all eternity -- never to expire, never to be destroyed. And the fact that Jesus is alive today with an immortal, indestructible life is proof positive that "*It is finished.*" He completed the perfect work when He died on the cross.

Right now you've got some unfinished projects to do. I can't go into my office and look at the bookshelves without thinking, "It is not finished. There are so many books left to read." And now at age 40, I wonder, "Will it ever be finished? Should I ever buy another book again?" Probably not, because I'll never finish reading all of these.

So many unfinished projects. Yard work is never finished. There are letters that need to be written. There are calls to make. There are degrees that we've started in school and not finished. There are diets that we've embarked upon that are not finished and will be broken today. There are some things more serious than that. Maybe you could think of a relationship with a child that is tragically unfinished, incomplete, broken. Maybe you could think of a marriage that did not finish well. Maybe you could think of bills that racked up to the heights and you could not pay them off. There are promises all of us have failed to keep.

The Puritan, [John Flavel](#), observed, "We human beings can not finish anything. All our duties are imperfect. They are lame. They are defective. Christ has finished all His work but we can finish none of ours. And so though we be defective, poor, imperfect creatures, yet in Him we are complete."

[quote from [Fountain of Life Opened Up](#)]

That's good news for people who so often leave their work unfinished. We have a Savior Whose work is done. Who said, "*It is finished.*"

There is an old poem by [Edith Bergman](#). I thought this said it well. She wrote:

The sculptor laid his tools aside;  
Unfinished, though he was, he died.  
The artist, with his work undone,  
Laid down his brush at set of sun.  
The writer, with his tale half told,  
No longer to his life could hold.  
The farmer put away his plough.  
Sod still unturned, he's resting now.  
God's Son alone, triumphant, died,  
For 'It is finished!' Jesus cried.  
The price is paid, the battle won,  
The great work of salvation done.  
Because He finished all for me,  
Complete in Him, I know I'll be.

Good news! It is finished!

**C. What is finished?**

What is finished? What is “it?” What does Jesus mean when He says, “*It is finished?*” Well, I think Jesus means more than my mind can contain right now. More than my tongue can describe. More than we could grasp were we to ponder these words for a week. Yet let me highlight three triumphant victories of Christ’s cross this Easter morning. Three things that Jesus finished:

1. Jesus fully accomplished the vocation, the calling that He received from His Father
2. Jesus fully accomplished the salvation of His people
3. Jesus fully accomplished the destruction of the devil

Let’s think briefly about each of those accomplishments on the cross of Jesus Christ.

**1. Jesus Fully Accomplished the Vocation He Received From His Father**

First of all, Jesus fully accomplished the vocation He received from His Father. I’d like you to look in the Gospel of John at a couple verses that describe how important this was for Jesus to do the work of His Father. The first is in [John 6:38-40](#). You see, the Old Testament Scriptures contained a detailed job description for the Lord Jesus Christ. Many promises were made. Many prophecies were spoken. Many commandments were given in the Old Testament and Jesus came into the world to fulfill those promises. Jesus came into the world to be the One to Whom those prophecies were pointing. Jesus came into the world to obey all of those commandments because we had broken them.

We needed Someone who would complete the work the Father had given Him to do and that what’s Jesus came into the world to do. Look at verse 38 of John

chapter 6. These are words spoken by Jesus Himself, describing why He came into the world. He says, *“For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.”* He’s on a mission to do His Father’s will and that’s good news for us because, look at verse 39: *“And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.”* In other words, the Father is giving people to Jesus, His Son; people like us who will put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus said, “I have come so that those people will be raised up from the dead on the last day and they will live with me forever in glory. That’s what I came to accomplish.

Look at verse 40: *“For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”*

Beautiful! “That’s what I’ve come into the world to do,” Jesus says. “I’ve come into the world to be a Savior for those who will look to Me and will believe in Me. So that they can be rescued from death and destruction and be raised up on the last day and become part of the new creation that I’m coming to make.”

Now look at [John 17](#). This is the night before Jesus dies. He’s praying to His Father. We get a glimpse into the prayer room of God the Son, pouring out His heart to God the Father. Look at what He says in verse 4 of this prayer. He says to His Father, *“I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.”* That’s part of what Jesus means when he says, *“It is finished.”* He means every promise the Father has made, every prophecy He has given, every commandment contained in the law, “I have perfectly kept and I am perfectly fulfilling. That’s what I’ve come into the world to do and I have done it. I’ve completed it.”

That’s good news. That applies to you and to me. You see, Jesus is the only honest Man who has ever died without a single regret. There may be people who say, “I have no regrets” but they aren’t being honest. They don’t know themselves well enough. If we really look at our lives, we are full of regrets.

Jesus died with the satisfaction of knowing that the mission that God had given Him was accomplished and the Father was pleased with the work He had done. Because of that, listen to these words from [Erwin Lutzer](#): [“Jesus died without regrets so He could forgive our regrets.”](#)

You have regrets. Jesus died so He could forgive those regrets. He obeyed the Father’s will so your disobedience could be forgiven. Jesus completed His work so that despite our uncompleted work, we might enter heaven. Sometimes as we get closer and closer to the end of our lives, we feel like, “Oh, there’s so much I haven’t done.” But Jesus has completed His work. Jesus successfully met God’s standard to make up for our shortcomings.

One way you can know if you’re resting and rejoicing in the finished work of Christ is when you stop trying harder to make up for your regrets and you start trusting in His perfect righteousness. You start trusting in what He has done instead of regretting what you have failed to do. And as you trust in what He has done, you find that by His Spirit you are starting to be enabled to do the things the Father wants you to do as well. Jesus fully accomplished the vocation He had received.

## **2. Jesus Fully Accomplished the Salvation of His People**

Secondly, what is Jesus feeling when he says, *“It is finished?”* It means He fully accomplished the salvation of His people. Look at [John 1:29](#): John the Baptist is seeing Jesus. The heading in the Bible even highlights the words that John the Baptist spoke of Jesus. *“The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold [look, take notice], the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* That’s what Jesus came to do. To take away, to erase, to forgive, to cover the sin of the world. To remove the holy wrath of a righteous God against guilty sinners. To redeem us from the power of sin so we can now live lives of righteousness. To

reconcile us to the Father so the hatred and enmity that is in our hearts toward God and the anger that burns in God's heart toward us can be removed and we can be intimate and have friendship with God again. That's what He came into the world to do. He's the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world.

I'd like you to look at a verse that the Apostle Paul speaks in [Colossians 2:13-14](#): *"And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross."*

Do you remember those days of the dot matrix printer where you'd have this big box of paper with continuous reams of paper with the dots along the side? You could just pull out that paper and have this huge long list. I'd like you to imagine all your sins being detailed on that list. All your [guilty, vile and shameful sins](#). There's your record of debt, proving that you are deserving of the death sentence. You are in debt up to your eyeballs - in over your head. You are infinitely beyond your ability to pay.

What God's Word is saying here in verse 13 is that we were born on death row. We were born under the sentence of death because of the debt of sin. And then as we've lived our lives, we just keep adding to that list, that certificate of debt. We've been racking up debt. We've been running up the credit card of sin to the max. And Satan keeps sending you new offers in the mail: "Here, more credit. Sin some more. Sin all you want." We just keep racking it up.

What God's Word is saying is, "We're locked up; we're on death row in the prison house of sin. Sin is controlling our lives. Shame and guilt are inescapable. Judgment is looming." But then Jesus comes to earth, goes to the cross and takes that record of your debt and God nails that record of debt to the cross. And Jesus through His blood writes over that record of debt: *"Tetelestai -- It is finished!"*

That's why we love to sing:



## It Is Finished

John 19:30

Pastor David Sunday

April 24, 2011

“My sin, oh, 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](#)

“Because the sinless Savior died  
My sinful soul is counted free.  
For God the just is satisfied  
To look on Him and pardon me.”

[Before the Throne of God Above by Charitie Bancroft](#)

That’s what Jesus means when He says, “*It is finished*. I’ve paid your debt. I’ve erased the legal demands that were against you.” And one of the ways you know you are resting in His “*It is finished*” is when you think of your sins -- sins that bring you shame -- and you rejoice that they are paid in full.

Your poisonous words that have destroyed relationships: “*Tetelestai - paid in full.*” Your fits of rage that some can remember ten years later: “*Paid in full.*” Your arrogance that is so offensive: “*Paid in full.*” Your drunkenness: “*Paid in full.*” Your fornication: “*Paid in full.*” Adultery: “*Paid in full.*” Abortion: “*Paid in full.*” Even murder, for those who trust in Jesus: “*Paid in full.*”

[“The vilest offender who truly believes, That moment from Jesus a pardon receives”](#) because He finished His work, He paid the price of our sins. So God’s Word says to us, “[Behold, the Lamb of God](#), look at Him, trust in Him, believe in Him, He [takes away the sins of the world.](#)” That’s what Jesus means.

Let’s look at one more thing that Jesus means when He says, “*It is finished*” – there are many more but for today, just one more.

### 3. Jesus fully accomplished the destruction of the devil

Look at [Colossians 2:15](#): “*He disarmed the rulers and authorities.*” I like that because Satan is the one who is working behind the power of sin, filling us with the

fear of death and enticing us with his temptations and accusations to keep on sinning. But God says through His Word here in verse 15: *“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him [in His cross].”*

Do you know what that means? That means when Satan heard those words, *“It is finished”* -- when Satan heard that word *“tetelestai”* -- Satan trembled. Satan was terrified and exposed for the puny, false god that he is. He was put to public shame by that cross. That’s why Jesus came into the world. [1 John 3:8](#): *“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.”* [Hebrews 2:14](#) says He came, He took on our flesh to *“...destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil...”*

You know the forces of darkness were dealt a fatal blow at the cross of Jesus. He disarmed the rulers and authorities. In the darkness of His cross, Jesus went into mortal combat with the enemy of our souls. He took on Satan -- on Satan’s turf -- and stripped him of his weapons. When the forces of hell were imagining they had the Son of God at their mercy, they unleashed all their fury on Him with their hostile attempt. Jesus stood firm in obedience to the Father, in substitution for us, and grappled with the forces of Satan. Jesus mastered them and striped them of their armor and held them aloft in His outstretched arms, exposed to the world as defeated, destroyed. That’s what it means when He says, *“It is finished.”* And that’s why Jesus is able to break the dark and sinister forces of darkness and evil that have a grip on our lives in the world today. Jesus sets the captives free.

I want you to hear how much the early church delighted in this truth of the triumph of Christ on His cross, seen in the resurrection. On Easter Sunday in the year 195 [Melito of Sardis](#) preached this to his congregation. These are stirring words. He spoke of the cross of Jesus and said,

[\[“It Is I” Says the Christ\]](#)

He who hung the earth is hanging.  
He who fixed the heavens in place has been fixed in place.  
He who laid the foundations of the universe has been laid on a tree.



## It Is Finished

Pastor David Sunday

April 24, 2011

John 19:30

The master has been profaned.  
God has been murdered.

But He rose up from the dead  
and mounted up to the heights of heaven.

When the Lord hath clothed Himself with humanity,  
and had suffered for the sake of the sufferer,  
and had been bound for the sake of the imprisoned,  
and had been judged for the sake of the condemned,  
and had been buried for the sake of the one who had been buried,

He rose up from the dead,  
and cried with a loud voice,  
"Who is it that contends with me?  
Let him stand in opposition to me.  
I set the condemned man free;  
I gave the dead man life;  
I raised up one who had been entombed.  
Who is my opponent?  
I am the Christ  
I am the one who destroyed death,  
and triumphed over the enemy,  
and trampled Hades underfoot,  
and bound the strong one,  
and carried off humanity  
to the heights of heaven."

"It is I," says the Christ.

And when He says, "*It is finished*," that's what He's talking about. That's what He's accomplished. That brings comfort, doesn't it? Comfort to those who are struggling with indwelling sin because He Who finished His work for us on the cross will certainly finish His work in us today. [He who began a good work in us will be faithful to complete it.](#) That brings comfort to us when we're suffering.

Christ's sufferings came to their appointed end and they were not in vain neither will our sufferings be endless nor will they be in vain. [Matthew Henry](#) said, "[Let all who suffer for Christ and with Christ comfort themselves with this, 'that yet a little while, they also shall say, 'It is finished.'](#)"

These words, *"It is finished"* also present us with a challenge. A challenge we have to embrace personally. Are you resting in the finished work of Christ? Are you trusting in His finished work? You can't add anything to this work. You know, there are some things that can be improved by addition. How many of you would like to add two zeros to the end of your paycheck before the decimal point? Some things can be improved by addition; other things are ruined by addition. The human face, for example: How many of you would like to have an extra nose or an extra eye? The human face is a perfect creative work of God in its symmetry. If you add a nose or an eye, it becomes disfigured - you ruin it.

That's what's so unique about the Christian gospel. This is the only religion in the world that begins with *"It is finished."* It is done. Every other religion says "Do." Jesus says, "It is done." Every other religion says, "There's work for you to do to get yourself right with God. You need to scale the heights to heaven." Christianity says, "God came down and did the work on your behalf. The work that you could not do." Every other religion says, "Get to work." The gospel says, *"It is finished."*

Rest in the work that Christ has done for you and then all your good deeds will flow from that. Don't try to add to the finished work of Jesus to pay for your sins. There's nothing you can do. There's no penance. There's no punishment. There's no performance. There's nothing you can perform that will complete the work that Christ has done. If you try to add to it, you ruin it. You mar it. You disfigure it. If you try to pay for your own sins, you'll never finish making payment. In hell, no one ever says these words: *"It is finished."* Rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Have you ever asked God to apply Jesus' finished work to your bankrupt account? Have you ever asked God to erase the record of your debt through the



## It Is Finished

John 19:30

Pastor David Sunday

April 24, 2011

death of Jesus Christ and credit to you the perfect, finished, righteous work of Jesus? I would invite you to do business with God right now. Maybe you've never considered the fact that you have a debt of sin. What Jesus says on the cross is "I've paid the debt for all who will repent and turn from their sin and trust in Me."

Would you take this moment to say, "Oh, Holy God, I thank you. Thank You that in Your holiness You did not forget Your mercy toward sinners. Thank You that in Your love You gave Jesus Your Son to die in my place. I'm guilty, I'm vile, I'm helpless but He is the perfect Lamb of God who takes away sin. I trust in Jesus. I receive Jesus. I delight in Jesus. [Hallelujah! What a Savior!](#)

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### New Covenant Bible Church

4N780 Randall Road, St. Charles, IL 60175

(630) 584-2611 ♦ [www.newcbc.org](http://www.newcbc.org)

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