

The Power of Redemption and the Words of Accomplishment

The Sixth Saying from the Cross — 'It Is Finished'

Sermon · 2024 (inferred from file name; not stated in the text)

Grace and peace of the Lord be with you all! Today, we have gathered to reflect on the seven profound words spoken by our Saviour, Jesus Christ, as He hung on the cross. We will now look at Verse 30 of John 19, which reads, "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, 'It is finished:' and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." These were the last words Jesus spoke before He gave up His spirit. They are powerful words, and they have been the subject of much debate and discussion over the centuries. These discerning words, seemingly simple but eternally significant, reveal the culmination of God's redemptive work for humanity. Let us briefly delve into this insightful message and discover how it impacts our lives today.

To look at it in its context, we need to back up to a few hours before Jesus uttered these three words. Let me begin by saying that it could not have been easy for Him to utter those words from the cross. He was mercilessly beaten using whips with sharp animal bones attached to their ends, tearing away His flesh and exposing His bones. From a medical perspective, He would have been highly dehydrated and in deep shock due to the loss of blood. A person could die of these conditions, but they wanted Him alive until they crucified Him. They put on Him a purple robe to stop the bleeding. When they got Him to Golgotha, they drove nails seven inches long through the median nerves of His wrists while He lay in position, to secure Him to the cross, sending excruciating pain all through His body. When they raised the cross to its vertical position, His nailed wrists bore His weight. To speak, He had to inhale and exhale, lifting and lowering His body on His nailed hands. Each time He attempted it, He suffered agonising pain all through His body. He was in a perpetual state of pain, and even the slight breeze on the hillside would have caused immense pain in every part of His body. Scientific studies confirm that difficulty in breathing causes less oxygen to be pumped into the heart, resulting in the blood turning into a watery substance. We find a reference to this later in the narrative. The deficiency of oxygen results in death due to cardiac arrest. In that condition, Jesus chose to speak. He had to speak, because He had His last messages for sinning humanity. For me and you.

Yes, these three words may seem simple, especially when seen as spoken as our Lord was about to breathe His last. Some people believe that Jesus was simply referring to His physical suffering. He had been on the cross for hours, and He was in excruciating pain. Some argue that when He said, "It is finished," He was saying that His suffering was finally over. One would be grossly mistaken to believe that He was speaking of His physical death. That was not so; that could not have been. Death was a foregone conclusion for Him. So why talk about it?

Others believe that He was referring to His spiritual suffering. Jesus had come to earth to die for the sins of the world. He had taken on the cumulative burden of the sins of all mankind, beginning with the first sin, and He was suffering the punishment for those sins. His sufferings, physical and spiritual, could not have been a punishment, as it was His choice to suffer to redeem us.

If anything has to finish, it has to start at some point in time. For Jesus, the start could not have been His crucifixion, the torture He suffered, His arrest the previous night, or even His humble incarnation in Bethlehem 33 years ago. It did not begin at those points in history. It began in the Garden of Eden when humanity chose to disobey God and suffered the disconnect between God and man. It began when the curse of eternal death fell upon humanity. For billions of centuries, man indulged in all forms of sin, distancing himself further and further away from God and living hopelessly under the control of Satan. Jesus began His redemptive work right then in the Garden of Eden. He wanted His subjects reconciled to Himself and was not willing to give up on them.

When the time came, He incarnated in human form in fulfilment of the prophecies, in subjection to the Covenant He made from time to time. From that time, Jesus was resolutely walking towards the cross to conclude His mission: to reconcile and redeem humanity to God. Therefore, what is finished signifies the fulfilment of God's plan for salvation and the completion of His redemptive work. Man is released from the curse of eternal death and is now entitled to forgiveness.

The Greek phrase "Tetelestai" spoken by Jesus from the cross is traditionally translated as "It is finished." Using this phrase, Jesus conveys the profound theological significance of His crucifixion to those present and subsequent generations. It signifies the completion of His divinely ordained mission and the ultimate accomplishment of God's plan

for salvation. This statement emphasises the finality and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, offering hope and redemption to all who place their faith and hope in Him.

The sixth saying is not a cry of despair, nor is it a cry of hopelessness or exhaustion. It is a cry of VICTORY! Jesus has completed in His death the task the Father set for Him to do: achieving the salvation of the world. He remained obedient to death, even death on the cross.

This phrase carries multiple layers of theological significance and is associated with several possible interpretations, such as the fulfilment of prophecies concerning the Messiah, for example Isaiah 53:12: "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Another interpretation is the completion of Jesus' earthly mission: His sacrificial death ultimately paid the price for human sin, thus completing His work. I like to argue that it was His victorious declaration: it implies a triumphant proclamation, indicating that Jesus has conquered sin, death, and the powers of darkness through His atoning sacrifice. It signifies the victory of God's redemptive plan. May we respond to this truth by seeking a deeper understanding of the finished work of Christ, allowing it to transform our lives, enable us to live victoriously, and inspire us to bring others into His marvellous light? Let us go forth, proclaiming the power of redemption found in the finished work of Jesus Christ!

The words "It is finished" call us to surrender our lives fully to Jesus and to trust in His completed work on the cross. It offers us our redemption and reconciliation, freedom from guilt, shame, and condemnation, the restoration of our relationship with God, and the invitation to experience abundant life in Christ. Trying to save ourselves or relying on our own merits is futile; only Jesus can offer us true salvation. It is by faith, believing in His finished work, that we can receive the gift of everlasting life. Christ's words encourage us to surrender our self-reliance, lay down our burdens, and fully trust in His unfailing love and grace. Let us respond to this call with open hearts, surrendering ourselves to the One who can liberate and transform us.

May His words not only be a historical event, but a life-changing reality in our daily walk with Christ. It is finished; our salvation is secure. Amen!