

IT IS FINISHED!

Matthew 27: 50-56, Mark 15: 37-41, and John 19: 30

Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Never before nor since in all of history were greater words ever uttered! There are no words to equal the significance of these words anywhere. I may seem to all of you today somewhat like a little boy carrying water from the ocean to put inside a little sand lake I have carved out. As the little boy carries each bucket of water, he keeps hoping he doesn't make the ocean go dry. What folly! Who can begin to search out the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of God which surpasses knowledge as we turn to this word of Jesus, "It is finished!"? Preaching on "It is finished" reminds me that the magnitude of this loud utterance of Jesus is staggering, its mystery is more staggering, and its majesty is most staggering. Leonard Ravenhill once said, these three words, one word in the Greek, **tetelestai**, terrified hell." It is true for Satan and his minions in hell doubtless feared this moment when Jesus defeated sin, death, and hell at Calvary on the cross. Unfinished symphonies are the story of our lives. It's not just Beethoven. One of our worst fears is that we will die too young, too soon, with our dreams unfulfilled and unrealized, our work unfinished. We all know what it is like to have unfinished projects littering and cluttering the highway of our lives. Our lawn is half-mowed, our book is half read, our diet is half-followed, our degree is half-finished, our phone call was never returned, our job was half-done, our bills were half paid, and our promises were only half-kept.

The Greek word "**tetelestai**" comes from two nearly identical Greek verbs **teleioo**, or **teleo**, which both mean "to bring to an end, to complete, to make perfect, and to fully accomplish or carry out something to the full." The only slight difference in the two words is that teleo more frequently also means to fulfill and to fully pay a debt and teleioo more often means to make perfect. **Tetelestai** signifies the completion of a particular course of action. It's the word we would use if we spoke Greek and told about the day when we burned our mortgage here at the church, or told of the day we paid the last payment on our car, or the word we would give in our response to each other when we crossed the finish line after running a marathon. But the word means vastly more than just "I survived or I arrived or I got it done." It means "I did exactly what I set out to do." It is a victorious word of triumph, but it is still more. **Tetelestai** is in the perfect tense in Greek. That's quite a significant tense for **teleo--tetelestai**. Why? The perfect tense speaks of an action which has been completed in the past but it has results continuing into the present and on to the future. The perfect tense is much different from the past tense. The past tense only looks back to an event and says, "That happened." The perfect tense in the Greek adds another incredible dimension and a truth that says, "This

happened, yes, but it is still in effect today.” When Jesus cried out “It is finished,” he meant “It was finished that moment and has been so now since back then over 2000 years ago, in the past, it is still finished in the present and it will remain finished in the future for all eternity.” Jesus never said, “I am finished!” for that would mean He only died exhausted, defeated, and could do nothing about it. No, Rather, He cried out “It is finished,” meaning “I successfully have completed the work I came to do, the work the Father gave me to do.” Tetelestai, then, is the Lord Jesus Christ’s final cry of victory as our atoning Savior. When He died, He left no unfinished business behind. When He said, “It is finished,” He was speaking eternal truth for you and me. No one else but Jesus Christ could do what He did and fully atone for the sins of you, me, and the sins of the whole world.

In 1709, Isaac Watts, that mighty hymn-writer, wrote the words to a glorious hymn, that says, “Not all the blood of beasts, on Jewish altars slain, could give the guilty conscience peace or wash away the stain. But Christ, the heavenly Lamb, takes all our sins away; A sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they. My faith would lay her hand on that dear head of Thine, while, like a penitent, I stand, and there confess my sin. My soul looks back to see the burden Thou didst bear when hanging on the cursed tree, and hopes her guilt was there. Believing, we rejoice to see the curse removed; we bless the Lamb with cheerful voice, and sing His bleeding love.” Today, on this significant day called Palm Sunday, I ask you, “What did Jesus mean when He said, “It is finished!”? Let me share with you five most significant, wonderful meanings that begin to tell the story of His love.

IT IS FINISHED MEANS THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES AND PROMISES WERE FULLY ACCOMPLISHED IN JESUS DEATH FOR US.

- (I.)When something is repeated three times in Scripture, it shows completion in itself. I read in John 19: 28, “After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished “tetelestai,” said to fulfill, “teliothe, a form of teleo, to finish the scriptures, or to accomplish their being proved true in all the Messianic promises and prophecies, said, “I thirst!” Then in verse 30, we find the third use of **teleo**, “When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished,” – tetelestai. All the types of Old Testament typology were fulfilled and finished in Jesus’ death on the cross. Every lamb slain or the ram caught in a thicket for Abraham and Isaac, or every goat or red heifer or turtle dove or pigeon ever sacrificed was fulfilled in Jesus’ sacrificial death for us. All that was foreshadowed in Messiah being a prophet like unto Moses, a champion like unto Joshua, a priest like unto Aaron or Melchizadek, a King like unto David or Solomon, a preacher of righteousness like unto Noah or Jonah, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, or a savior like unto Joseph was all fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus is not only the Lamb of God that was slain from before the foundation of the world, He is the turtle-dove dipped in blood, He is the priest who

sacrificed the lamb, He is the altar, He is the tabernacle, He is the shewbread and the mercy-seat. To fulfill the Old Testament scriptures, Jesus had to become the God-man born of a virgin. He must be a man and the lamb without spot or blemish. He must be the son of David genealogically. As Jesus cried, "It is finished!" He died the only atoning sacrifice for our sins that ever could fully atone for our sins, His sacrifice did more than temporarily cover our sins as the former sacrifices had done. All the prophesied sufferings of Jesus ordained by God the Father for Jesus as find in the Old Testament, to bear as Messiah were finished and fulfilled in Christ's death. Nothing that happened to Jesus at Golgotha happened by chance. Jesus came, bled, and died and atoned for our sins to fulfill and accomplish the Word of God in the Old Testament, so that every smoking altar that was ever lit and every lamb ever slain—each of them looked forward to the day Jesus would fulfill their typology and significance and prophecies and promises and fully atone for your sins and mine, as He cried with a loud voice, "It is finished." The malice of Jesus' enemies as Isaiah 53 declared, was finished for the enemies of Messiah Jesus did their very worst to Jesus by nailing Him to the cross. Secondly,

IT IS FINISHED MEANS ALL JEWISH LAW WAS WRAPPED UP, EXPLAINED, FULFILLED, AND ENDED IN JESUS' DEATH FOR US. (II.)

The ceremonial law was abolished as Romans 10: 4 declares, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes." The ceremonial law found its total completion and fulfillment in Jesus when He cried, "It is finished!" All the Old Testament rules concerning animal sacrifices were now set aside and the rules and regulations concerning the priesthood were instantly out of date. Why? In Jesus we have our great High Priest who Himself laid down His life for us all. All those sacrificial laws pointed to Christ at Calvary. Once Jesus died, atoning for our sins, those laws were no longer necessary today. "The Mosaic economy was dissolved, to make way for a "better hope" as the book of Hebrews tells us. Have you ever read the words of the apostle Paul in II Corinthians 3:7-16? We read, "Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory. Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains un-lifted, because only through Christ is it

taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.” Thirdly,

IT IS FINISHED MEANS THAT AT THE MOMENT OF JESUS DEATH, HIS PERFECT OBEDIENCE TO THE FATHER WAS FINISHED. (III.)

It was necessary that in order for any person to be saved, the law of God had to be perfectly kept by our sinless Substitute. Christ’s atoning death had to be the death of a perfectly obedient, willing Lamb. Without perfectly keeping the law, no one can see God’s face. To give us access to the Fountain of salvation and to give us access to see God’s face, Christ had to obey every mandate of the law and preserve its every statute perfectly. The awesome high priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17: 1-5 makes it clear as it begins, that Jesus saw the work prophetically accomplished, fulfilled and finished before He went to the cross. Jesus is, was, and will forever be the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the earth. (Revelation 13: 8) He knew so well He would drink the dregs of the cup of suffering our sin and guilt and shame and hell, He saw His work as accomplished, or as good as done before He was crucified. Listen! “When Jesus had spoken these words, He lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You, since You have given Him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished (tetelestai) 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.” When Jesus said, “I have accomplished or fully consummated Your will, Father, perfectly obeying You on earth, it included thirty years at home, 3 and a half years in public ministry, and Jesus finished doing it all including going to the cross after the agony in Gethsemane. Before the cross as Jesus prayed His high priestly prayer, it was as good as done. Only by Jesus’ perfect obedience could He be the holy, righteous, and just Substitute to atone for our sins at the cross. He knew what He would do, and then He did it for you and me. The assault on Jesus of Satan’s temptation in the wilderness and in the Garden of Gethsemane was now over. Jesus physical, emotional and spiritual sufferings as the God-man, incarnate were complete. The storm was over; all Jesus’ pains and agonies were now at an end, and He was going to set the captive free, and to enter Paradise, to make good on His promise to the repentant thief, entering upon the joy set before Him, as Hebrews 12: 2 declares at the “Author and the Finisher of our faith.” 4thly,

IT IS FINISHED MEANS THE DEBT OF OUR SIN WAS FULLY PAID ONCE FOR ALL FOREVER SATISFYING GOD’S JUSTICE. (IV.)

“It is finished” means our sin wages that demand eternal death for us was paid in full to the last farthing. Our atonement and propitiation and satisfaction for our sins was made once for all and forever by Christ’s offering of Himself on the cross.

Hebrews 9:25, 26 tells us this glorious truth. “Nor was it to offer Himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then He would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” Jesus was the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, as John the Baptist prophesied in John 1: 29. The work of Christ’s redemption was now complete, fully satisfying God’s judgment on sin, bringing a head wound and fatal blow to Satan, sin, death, and hell. “It is finished” means in Christ’s sacrifice for us that a Fountain of grace was opened that will flow forever and the death of Christ became the foundation of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, a peace that will last forever. All of our sins were forever paid in full. That “Tetelestai was used over and over in the first and second centuries AD to mean a sense of “fulfilling” or “paying” a debt and the word often appeared in receipts. “It is finished” (Tetelestai) was interpreted in business terms as “Paid in full,” – something most of us ask for after paying a bill. We want a receipt that shows it is paid in full--tetelestai. Tetelestai is the price Jesus fully paid for the sins of the world. Jesus’ life and His mission to pay the debt we owed came to an end at exactly the same moment.

I wonder today, are there any sins that are keeping some of us from God. Just name them now. Is it hard-heartedness and unbelief and mocking? Is it alcoholism or drug addiction? Is it anger and bitterness? Is it explosive wrath and malice? Is it cheating, dishonesty and stealing? Is it murder or abortion? Is it pride or greed? Is it sexual sin and shame? Is it pornography and lust and unbridled pride and selfish ambition? Is it disrespect and disobedience? Is it laziness? Is it fornication? Is it lying lips which are an abomination to the Lord? Is it being a bully or bully victim who bullies others? Is it covetousness and embezzlement? Whatever your sin that you are battling, that sin was paid for in full at Calvary when Jesus cried, “It is finished.” Whatever sins plague your life, they are paid in full. Are there skeletons in your closet keeping you from God? “It is finished” means that those sins too are paid for fully at the cross. If we repent, believe and receive Jesus, God covers our sin with His blood and stamps our sin with “Tetelestai!—Paid in full.” Christ’s “finished” sacrifice paid in full the sins of every person who has ever lived, past, present or future. This is what we doctrinally call the “finished work of Christ.” What Jesus accomplished at Calvary was so complete, it can never be repeated, not even by Jesus Himself. His work is forever finished. There is nothing more Jesus can or will do to save the human race. There is no other plan, no other Name, no other plan B or C. All other plans are doomed to failure.

Dallas Theological Seminary in their statement of faith is dramatic about this. They wrote in Article VII, Salvation Only Through Christ. “We believe that, owing to

universal death through sin, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless born again; and that no degree of reformation however great, no attainments in morality however high, no culture however attractive, no baptism or other ordinance however administered can help the sinner take even one step toward heaven; but a new nature imparted from above, a new life implanted by the Holy Spirit through the Word is essential to salvation, and only those thus saved are the sons of God. We believe, also, that our redemption has been accomplished (It is finished) solely by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was made to be sin and was made a curse for us, dying in our place and stead; and that no repentance, no feeling, no faith, no good resolutions, no sincere efforts, no submission to the rules and regulations of any church, nor all the churches that have existed since the days of the Apostles can add in the very least degree to the value of the blood, or to the merit of the finished work of Jesus Christ.” Since Jesus paid it all, you and I can’t pay a dime, not a farthing. We cannot buy our salvation. Salvation is free because Jesus cried, “It is Finished!”

I have an old hymnbook entitled, “Sacred Songs and Solos.” It is a D. L. Moody hymnbook compiled with 1200 songs by Ira D. Sankey in 1921. This book is used in many parts of Nigeria still. # 142, “It is Finished” by J. Proctor, reads, “Nothing either great or small—Nothing, sinner no. Jesus did it, did it all, Long, long ago. “It is finished!” yes, indeed. Finished every jot: Sinner, this is all you need—Tell me, is it not? When He, from His lofty throne, Stooped to do and die, Everything was fully done: Harken to His cry. Weary, working, burdened one, Wherefore toil you so? Cease your doing; all was done Long, long ago. Till to Jesus’ work you cling By a simple faith, “Doing” is a deadly thing—“Doing” leads to death. Cast your deadly “doing” down—Down at Jesus’ feet; Stand in Him, in Him alone, Gloriously complete.” Fifthly and lastly,

IT IS FINISHED MEANS ALL OUR QUESTIONS ARE ANSWERED IN JESUS’ SACRIFICE SO OUR SALVATION CAN BE SECURED. (V.)

Is God still calling the lost to Him today? Can you still be saved? Hallelujah, yes! Today is the day of salvation. (Hebrews 3 and 4) There is nothing to wait for, because “It is finished.” Am I worthy enough to be saved? No one is worthy enough; that’s why we can only come to God worthily by trusting in the finished work of Christ. It is finished removes every stumbling block to salvation. No one is too helpless to be saved, too young for Jesus to forgive sin, too old for God to forgive, too sinful for God to forgive. Jesus forgave Paul, the chief of sinners. It is finished is God’s welcome mat to the table of love, to the marriage supper of the Lamb, our chains have been broken, the veil in the temple is rent from top to bottom. The table cloths on the Lord’s Table could well read, “It is finished!” What about those who are too guilty to lift their heads and those who hate

themselves so much they want to atone for their own sins by suicide? God stands at the cliff, at the bridge, at the brink, in the garage, in the bathroom where there are pills or a gun, or in secret where young women and men like the ancient prophets of Baal, cut themselves with knives or razor blades. Jesus cries in a loud voice, “It is finished!” “Cutting and body piercing won’t avail. Nothing else is needed. Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden. I will give You rest because “It is finished!” Put your hand and your heart today in the pierced hands of Jesus. Repent of all your doing to work to be saved, that doing that tries to pay or atone or plead or weep enough or work enough to be saved. It is finished means the kindness of God in “It is finished!’ leads you to repentance. Believe Jesus’ greatest cry for lost souls forever. It was, it is, and will ever be—“It is finished.” Receive His finished work at the cross. Let your sins by grace through faith be forgiven forever for they are nailed to the cross—It is finished. No one can find your sins again—for they are buried in the deepest sea, removed as far as the east is from the west, cast behind God’s back—Just come to Jesus. Come now! It is finished. Amen.