

John 19:30
Good Friday
April 15, 2022

A short phrase in English, one word in the Greek quotation of Jesus' Aramaic statement from the cross: *tetelestai*, but a wealth of meaning.

IT IS FINISHED!

Christ's work on earth was at an end. At this point in time he had been on the cross for several hours. Most prominent was the period of darkness from noon to three in the afternoon. It was like the universe couldn't bear to see the horror enacted as the Creator of all was put to death. During those hours Jesus endured the most intense part of his suffering as his Father forsook him and he experienced the torment of hell deserved by the sins of the world. It is beyond visualization. He was bearing every sin ever committed, each deserving an eternity of human suffering in hell, but all compacted into those hours of suffering.

Earlier the soldiers had offered him a drink of wine mixed with gall or myrrh. Then he refused it as he intended to pay the full price for our sins. Now he accepted a drink, as if to clear his throat for his final words.

Tetelestai rang out in a loud voice, so it was not a whimper of defeat like, "I give up," or "I'm done for." It was a cry of victory.

Much work was finished. Our Savior had done what he came to accomplish. He had kept God's law to a T. In every moment, in every detail, he had done what was required of us. That perfection he credited to our account.

He had fulfilled the types and symbols from the Old Testament. He was the atoning sacrifice for sin. The ultimate Passover lamb had been offered. Jesus was lifted up on the cross like the brass serpent during Israel's wilderness years. Looking to it with faith in God's promise brought deliverance from the snakes that were killing them after they had disgusted the Lord with another bout of grumbling. He was the ram offered as substitute for Isaac when God tested Abraham and asked him to sacrifice his son. He was the scapegoat, loaded with the sins of the world and driven out in the wilderness to die on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Everything that prefigured or foretold of the Messiah had now occurred.

Done were temptations to deter him from his mission such as Satan had presented at the outset of his ministry during those forty days in the wilderness or as he wrestled with during prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane before his arrest.

His suffering was at an end. He had drained that cup to its last bitter dregs. He had paid in full the price for the world's sins. The work of redeeming us was complete. In a moment he would commit his spirit into his Father's hands as he breathed out his last. "It is finished!"

We often feel our work is never done. There are always projects on the "to do" list, both at work and at home. More to the point, the work Jesus came to do was something we could never have accomplished. Keeping God's law was doomed from the start for us since we are born in sin. It would take an eternity of suffering for us to pay for even one of our multitude of sins. Removing them all is clearly impossible. So we are relieved to hear our Savior call out, "It is finished!"

II.

If his job is complete then so is our salvation. In the home of the vertically-challenged tax collector Zacchaeus he had announced his mission: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." Or another time, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." The ransom price had now been paid so the captives of sin were set free. The Son was ready to return home.

Astounding events attested to the momentous event. An earthquake shook the area. Dead people exited their graves. The veil in the temple that separated the rest of the structure from the Most Holy Place, where none but the high priest could enter and he only once a year after special cleansing and sacrifice, split open from top to bottom. That event showed the separation between God and mankind that resulted from sin was ended. We now have direct access to God, with no need for priestly intervention.

This unique moment in history meant there was nothing left for us to add. We stand acquitted in God's eyes, forgiven and holy in Christ. We are saved. Many people, ourselves at time included, have difficulty accepting that truth. Experience with one another teaches that you get what you pay for, that nothing in life is free. So we feel we must contribute something toward our salvation. God doesn't operate that way. It is impossible to add anything to what Jesus has already accomplished for us.

In fact, it is an insult even to try. You give the impression that what he did for you and gives to you wasn't enough. You have to improve on it. An encounter between a Christian and an artist friend may illustrate the point. The believer wasn't able to convince his friend that Jesus had done everything for his salvation. "I have to do my part," the man always replied. One day the artist delivered a landscape. The Christian said, "I'll take it, but first I must add some trees in the

foreground, more snow on the mountains and a few other things." The artist was upset. "You never treated my paintings this way before. You have no right to add anything to my work, for it is finished already." "That's exactly what I've been trying to convince you of," the Christian replied. "Christ's work is finished, and for you or me or anyone else to add anything to it is an insult to him." Besides that, anything we would try to add would be tainted with sin and render it all worthless.

Know the work of Jesus for your salvation has been completed. You are forgiven. You are holy in God's sight. You are welcome in his heaven. Let there be no uncertainty. The perfect Son has offered the perfect sacrifice.

There is something that is not finished, and that is spreading the news. That's what you and I can still do. Tell others of the work of the Lord for your salvation and theirs. Despite centuries of Christian mission work, the percentage of unbelievers in the world is growing. And it's not all across the ocean. Our land is experiencing a spiritual decline. The workers are few, as Jesus noted in his day and as we know from personal experience. Our work is just beginning, not to win our salvation but to witness to the world the completed work of our Savior for us and for all people.

Hear your Savior cry out, "It is finished!" Be convinced. Be confident. Cherish the salvation he won. Share your certainty and joy. It is a Good Friday.