

INTRODUCTION

It was April 18, 1775 in Massachusetts. 240 British troops marched from Boston to confront armed minutemen who had refused to pay taxes to King George. At Lexington they met 70 farmers and merchants who called themselves the Minutemen. According to Pastor Jonas Clark who was there, a British officer fired the first shot, and more shots followed. Eight of the Americans were killed and one British soldier was wounded. The British troops continued six miles to Concord and found resistance gathered at the North Bridge. More shots were fired and two colonists and three British were killed. The British retreated to Boston and the War of Independence had begun. Poet Ralph Waldo Emerson memorialized this battle in a poem entitled, Concord Hymn. He wrote, "By the rude bridge that arched the flood/Their flag to April's breeze unfurled/ Here once the embattled farmers stood/And fired the shot heard round the world."

That shot and that war changed our world forever. Although it happened 245 years ago, we are still impacted by it.

In much the same way, Jesus spoke a word from the cross almost 2,000 years ago that was heard around the world. It wasn't during a military battle, but it was the shout of victory for a spiritual battle that has affected millions of people throughout history, and it still is heard today. That word was *tetelestai*. It's one word in Greek, but three words in English: "It is finished." It was the Word heard around the world.

John 19:28-30. "After this, when Jesus knew that everything was now finished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, he said, 'I'm thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine was sitting there; so they fixed a sponge full of sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it up to his mouth.

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.

People talk a lot. On average an American man will speak about 7,000 words a day. On average, an American woman will speak 20,000 words a day with gusts to 30,000. It is amazing that in the six hours in which Jesus was hanging on the cross, He only made seven simple statements. In English, these seven statements comprise only 45 words. There are only 40 words in Biblical Greek. The fact that Jesus said so little fulfilled the prophecy from Isaiah 53:7, "Like a lamb silent before her shearers, he did not open his mouth."

Soon after being crucified Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." As we studied last week, the next thing He said to the thief was, "Today, you'll be with me in Paradise." Then He said, "John, take care of my mother." The Bible says that at noon, darkness fell on the earth, and it was dark until 3:00. He cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And as we read in our text, Jesus said, "I thirst" and "It is finished." And just before He died He said, "Father into your hands, I commit my Spirit."

In this message we'll focus on what Jesus meant when He cried, *Tetelestai!* which is translated, "IT IS FINISHED!" It was the word that was heard around the world. It shook the foundations of Heaven and rattled the gates of Hell. When Jesus said, "It is finished, just what was finished? I want to give three Biblical answers to that question.

1. JESUS' SUFFERING WAS OVER.

It's very important to realize that by the time Jesus said "It is finished," He had been hanging on the cross for almost six hours. Darkness shrouded the earth. But Jesus was in complete control. When the final prophecy of offering Him vinegar happened, Jesus said, "That's it. They are all fulfilled. It is finished!" Let me talk about the different kinds of suffering that Jesus endured.

(1) Anticipated suffering

Jesus grew up knowing He was going to die on a cross. You know the anticipation of something unpleasant can often be worse than the experience itself.

Do you know what our family would do on Sunday afternoons when I was a boy in South Alabama? We would just ride around in the country. Of course gas was about 24 cents a gallon. My mother and dad would be in the front seat of the 1961 Chevy and the three kids would be in the back, my older sister had one window, and I had the other, with our younger brother in the middle. As with most kids, we would fuss and fight. I can remember times when My dad would turn around and said, "Stop that right now. You don't want me to come back there." And we would stop for a minute, but soon the punching, and the pinching, and the hitting would resume. So on many occasions my dad would turn around and say, "That's it! You're both going to get a spanking when we get home." Well, that would sure take the joy out of the ride. And my dad always delivered. The anticipation of the punishment was always worse than the actual spanking.

Can you imagine living your whole life anticipating the most horrible death possible? No doubt Jesus saw hundreds of Roman crucifixions as He was growing up. He must have thought, "That's me someday." Every time Joseph planed a rough piece of wood, Jesus probably thought about the cross. Every time Joseph pounded nails in wood, Jesus surely thought of the last time His human ears would hear that sound.

Even up until the week of His crucifixion, Jesus was still troubled by the anticipation. In John 12:27 He said, "Now my soul is troubled. What should I say—Father, save me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name."

Holman Hunt is a wonderful Christian artist and he has painted a picture in which Jesus is portrayed as a teenage boy, probably, 16 or 17 years old and is there in the carpenter shop in Nazareth. It's almost sunset and the last light of the sun is streaming in from the west. The young figure of Jesus is stretching out His arms to relax His tired muscles. And there on the wall, the sun casts a shadow of a cross. And the name of the painting is *The Shadow of the*

Cross. For over three decades Jesus lived in the shadow of the cross. As He came to the end of this suffering, no wonder He cried out, "*Tetelestai!* It is finished!"

But when Jesus said, "It is finished," it also meant the end of His

(2) Physical and Spiritual suffering

It's hard for us to imagine the physical suffering Jesus endured. Jesus had been arrested the night before and subjected to an illegal trial at dark before the Sanhedrin. He was beaten and tortured there at the House of Caiaphas which was like a city jail. Early the next morning He was delivered to Pilate and the Romans. They cruelly lashed His back, placed a crown of thorns on His head, and beat Him around the face and head with a club. They plucked the beard from His face and foul spittle from brutal soldiers soiled His face. Isaiah predicted that His appearance wasn't even that of a man.

As He carried His cross, Dr. Luke tells us that He fell beneath the load. A man by the name of Simon from Cyrene was enlisted to carry His cross. They laid Jesus out on the cross on the ground and pounded huge nails through His hands and feet. They lifted the cross up and put it in a hole, and dropped it. As the wooden cross clunked into the bottom of the hole the body of Jesus sagged from the sudden drop. We cannot begin to fathom the depth of His physical suffering.

But as bad as the physical suffering was, it doesn't come close to the depth of suffering Jesus endured as He bore the guilt and shame of our sin. The Bible says in 1 Peter 2:24, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."

All the sins of all the people of history were laid upon Jesus. Isaiah says, "But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment of our peace was upon Him." (Isaiah 53:5)

If you or I die outside the Lord Jesus Christ, our penalty for sin would be eternity spent separated from God in Hell. But in six hours Jesus experienced all the Hell that you and I would suffer for eternity. Jesus, being infinite, suffered for us in a finite period what you and I being finite would suffer for all infinity.

What is Hell? It is torment, darkness, and separation from God. Jesus experienced the depth of torment beyond our imagination. At noon Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And the Bible says at that moment darkness covered the land.

In that moment in which Jesus BECAME sin for us, He experienced alienation from His Father for the first time since the beginning of the beginning. Why? The Prophet Habakkuk says this about God, "Your eyes are too pure to look upon sin and You cannot tolerate wrongdoing."

The old song says, "He took my sin and my sorrows. He made them His very own. He bore my burden to Calvary and suffered and died alone."

Just before Jesus died, "He cried '*Tetelestai!*' His suffering and separation was finished and He said, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit."

But that's not all that was finished, it is also true that

2. SATAN'S POWER WAS DESTROYED.

Satan's dynasty was finished at the cross. In John 12:31 Jesus said, "Now the prince of this world will be cast out." The devil is called the prince of THIS world. The writer of Hebrews describes to us how the power of Satan was destroyed at Golgotha. Hebrews 2:14 says, "Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, Jesus also shared in these, so that through his death he might destroy the one holding the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death."

One of the most debilitating fears of humanity is the fear of death. The sinister minister of fear wants people to fear death. My friend, Dr. Jim Denison, recently wrote this: "I grew up in a family with no spiritual life, but I knew there was a heaven and a hell. I remember vividly the times I was afraid to fall asleep because I was afraid I would go to hell if I died. I was right to be concerned: as Jesus said of himself, "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (John 3:18). Only after Jim came to Christ as a teenager did he stop fearing death.

I checked our records, and this summer, twenty-three of our members went to Heaven. I spoke to many of them before they died and not one of them said, "I'm afraid." The common thread of those I talked to was, "I'm ready to go to be with Jesus." For us, there is no longer any fear of death. Satan's power has been destroyed.

There's a great story about Satan's defeat. There was a painting done in 1830 by the German artist Moritz Retzsch. It was entitled "The Chess Players."



Die Schachspieler (The Chess Players)
Oil on Panel 1830
Moritz Retzsch

It depicted Satan on the left playing chess with a young man. The young man is in despair because Satan is winning the match for his soul. The devil's dark pieces are represented by the

vices, and the young man's pieces represent virtue. Satan has nine pieces left to the young man's six. It seems hopeless and even his guardian angel is looking at him in sorrow. The devil is gloating in delight. The painting was nicknamed The Devil's Checkmate.

Years after the picture was reproduced, international chess champion, Paul Morphy, was at a party of a wealthy man in Richmond celebrating the presence of international chess players who were there for a tournament. There was a copy of this painting and Morphy stared at it as the party swirled around him. He finally shouted, "It's not over! The young man has another move. I can win the match for him." The host said, "Impossible!"

So they arranged a chess board that replicated the position of the players in the painting. Morphy won five games in a row from the other chess experts who were at the party.

What's the lesson? As they nailed Jesus to the cross, the devil and his demons must have howled with delight. They thought they had won the victory as the Son of God bled and died. But when Jesus cried, "IT IS FINISHED" He didn't mean, "I am finished." He was saying, "Satan, you are finished!" God had one more strategic move that snatched victory from defeat. The empty tomb is the final move that shamed the devil and destroyed his power.

You don't have to fear the devil because he is a defeated foe. Back in 1970 Hal Lindsey became famous for his book *The Late Great Planet Earth*. He predicted Jesus would return in 1988, forty years after Israel became a nation. He was wrong—and those that are setting dates for later this fall are wrong also. In 1973 he wrote another book entitled, *Satan is Alive and Well and Living on Planet Earth*. I disagree with the title. Satan is alive, but he hasn't been well since the cross. He was dealt a mortal blow there.

Today, Satan is like a roaring lion roaming about seeking whom he may devour. But all he has is his roar, he lost his teeth and claws at Calvary. And we can have victory over the troubles and temptations of the toothless lion. In James 4:8 we read, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

His suffering was finished, the devil's power was finished and finally:

3. OUR SALVATION IS COMPLETE.

The Greek language was the most expressive language in history. That's why God chose to have the original New Testament written in Greek. The Greeks claimed they could get an ocean of meaning from a single drop of a word. And it is true of this word *tetelestai*.

The word *tetelestai* wasn't a spiritual word. It was a word that came from the world of accounting. It is a word that meant, "paid in full."

Let's go back to the marketplace of 2,000 years ago. Suppose you own a shop selling rugs from Persia. So, a buyer comes in and wants to buy a certain rug. You tell him he can have the rug for 200 shekels. He says, "I will pay you 50 shekels now and 10 shekels a week until you are paid

the full amount." You would draw up a written contract with his name and the amount he has paid and what he owes. Every week you add the amount he pays. When he has finally paid 200 shekels you would write one word on the contract: TETELESTAI. He would get the contract and it would be legal proof that he has paid the full price.

We all owed a sin debt we couldn't pay. The payment for the forgiveness of sin required a perfect, sinless sacrifice. Jesus came to die to for our sins. And when He paid the full debt, He shouted, "TETELESTAI!" Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow.

The price was steep. It cost the silver of His tears and the gold of His blood. The Bible says in 1 Peter 1:18, "For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb."

CONCLUSION

When I was growing up in South Alabama, my dad was a Forester for International Paper company and he and his crew supervised 20,000 acres of Pine woodlands in South Alabama. They harvested and planted and also fought any forest fires. When I was eleven or twelve, my dad sometimes woke me up at night to go with him to fight a forest fire.

That was pretty exciting stuff. As we would drive out toward the woods in his pickup, I could see the entire horizon lit up from fire and smoke. He had a radio in his truck and we would meet his crew who had the heavy equipment to plow fire lines to stop the spread of the fire. These were usually just brush fires between the trees, nothing like they experience in California. But his crew would literally fight fire with fire. After the fire lines had been plowed the crew would take torches that dropped fire and ignite the brush on the other side of the fire line so it would meet the oncoming fire. It was usually routine.

But I remember one particular night when the fire was larger than usual. I could see the worry in my dad's eyes. We heard the sound of the loud roar and one of the crew came running up and said, "The fire has crowned." That meant that it had gotten in the tops of the pine trees and was spreading above the fire lines.

I was scared, and so was my dad. I thought we would turn and run from the fire, but instead, my dad and the other worker ran toward the fire. I thought this was a crazy thing to do. But we ran across the fire line that had been plowed toward a blackened patch of ground where they had set a back fire –it had already cooled. We got down on our faces and my dad covered me with his jacket as the fire roared over us – it was soon past. I learned that night that the safest place to be in a forest fire is where the fire had already burned.

There's a great spiritual truth to learn. The cross is where the full force of God's judgment against sin fell—and it burned out at the cross. The cross is the only safe place to stand when God's judgment against sin is poured out. So our choice is simple. We will either stand at the

cross and let Jesus take our punishment, or we stand alone and accept the full punishment for our sin.

So one day if you stand before God and He asks, "Why should I let you into my Heaven?" Please don't say, "Because I was a good person." Or don't say, "Because I went to church, read my Bible, and gave money for missionaries."

Here's your answer, "I stand in the FINISHED work of Christ on the cross."

Our redemption was finished at the cross. There are two ways to spell salvation. Some people spell it D-O. They think they will be saved by the good things they do. But the Bible spells salvation D-O-N-E. Jesus has already done everything necessary for us to receive His free gift of eternal life.

Just before He willingly gave up His spirit and died, Jesus shouted, "IT IS FINISHED!" That was the word that was heard around the world!

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