

How 'Finished' Is It Really ?

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Preacher: Rev David Andrew

[0 : 0 0] when I was asking the Lord for a title that would kind of cover what we were trying to do today the phrase that came to mind was how finished is it really?

Jesus cried out on the cross it is finished so just how finished is it? is it really complete? is there anything missing?

has anything been left to chance? well let's just see what God's word has to say to us today and I do covet your prayers for me while I speak to you because this is big this is bigger than any of us this is absolutely cosmic it's enormous what God has done and we don't want to diminish it in any way so in the beginning was the word and the word was with God the word was God he was in the beginning with God all things were made through him and without him was not anything made that has been made that kind of doesn't leave anything out does it?

without him was nothing made that has been made what we're talking about here is the creator himself and we're saying that somehow or other in a way that's mysterious to us our God exists in three persons father, son and holy spirit and this son is the word who was with the father at the beginning of creation and absolutely nothing was made without the agency of the son absolutely nothing so how big is your Jesus?

the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it we're told in verse 5 you know Greek has a very it has a selection of past tenses in the New Testament Greek and one of the tenses is really quite tiki because it can achieve all sorts of things it's almost like a fluid past tense if you if you read it in certain ways it will it will be quite comfortable to tell you that something happened in the past but it can equally apply to something that's going on in the present and it can even apply to something that's that's going to have some kind of future impact and that's the word that's used here by John he's saying the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it now think of what John's doing here because in order to get ourselves into John's mind we have to realise he's an old man by this time this is being written somewhere around

[3 : 0 0] AD 85 and Jesus died somewhere around AD 33 so this is John thinking back over about 50 years of his life when he says the darkness has not overcome it so John's own experience says the darkness has not overcome it here he is in his later years and he's surveying the long decades of his friendship with Jesus now I don't know about you folks but when I woke up this morning the first person I spoke to died 2000 years ago any hands up if you did that this morning did you speak to someone who died 2000 years ago amen is that wonderful or is that wonderful because you see he's the victor he's the one who has completely and utterly conquered death and he's done it for all of us for all time and John is thinking back over this he remembers when he says the darkness has not overcome it what's included in that is his memory of the very first time there was an explosion of light into his darkened soul

Jesus came along to this fisherman and said follow me now you know something in those days rabbis did not gather their disciples they didn't choose them the disciples chose the rabbis a rabbi would sit down as a rabbi did and he would teach and people would say oh I like that I'd like to know more and so they would attach themselves to this rabbi and bit by bit people would attach themselves and the rabbi would end up with a following and it was his teaching that gathered them Jesus is the exception to all these teachers because his disciples did not choose him he chose them he actually said that to them he made a point of saying it you did not choose me I chose you and here's a fisherman minding his own business cleaning his nets or whatever it was John was doing at the time and this teacher walks up and he fixes him with a pair of eyes we will all see one day when we get to heaven he fixes him with a pair of eyes and he says to John follow me what is John going to do what else is John going to do but to follow the one who looked at him with those eyes so John gets up and he follows and the light begins to flash into his darkened soul because bear in mind this is

Galilee this is Galilee of the Gentiles this is the place where the people walking in darkness have seen a great light and the light has got two legs and he's standing right in front of them saying follow me and John's remembering all this back 50 years before and he knows he knows how hard the darkness has tried to extinguish the light he saw the extent to which the darkness was willing to go he saw this darkness in religious people who saw the son of God as a threat to their status and to their income and to all their little plans he saw that they were willing to go to any lengths at all to extinguish this light and enjoy their darkness for a little while more and he saw how utterly futile were the attempts of those who loved darkness to extinguish the light he saw that he was able to say after 50 years the darkness has not overcome the light it has never overcome it and it never will overcome it all that is packed into this tiny little Greek phrase so the

John's past tense is functioning like a time machine it's a fluid past tense that easily embraces the point of the original entry of light at Bethlehem in fact it's drawing in because John knows the scriptures it's not just drawing in everything that started with Jesus encountering John and James when they were cleaning their nets it goes way back further than that because this phrase that John is using about the darkness not overcoming the light that applies also to the Old Testament period from the time of Adam and Eve right to the day when John is alive and writing so all the light that was working in Old Testament times is also gathered up into this and then there was in John's experience 30 years of Jesus solo warfare against the darkness his agony in Gethsemane and on

Calvary and the victory of his empty tomb the ascended glory of the Lord Jesus continuing fellowship with the saints through the word of God and through the Holy Spirit so we're really saying here that this rich Greek tense is actually defying gravity it's lifting us all up way above the scene way above thousands of years and we're looking down on it all because of this one tense that John used indeed our Lord is truly great the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it does that give you confidence to continue in the faith of Jesus Christ then of course there was a man who was not

[9 : 31] I love John the Baptist he's a man who was careful to say that he was not and he was a man who was happy to be not he was not the Messiah he was not the one whose sandals he wasn't worthy to unloose he was not that man and John was happy to be not he's happy to be remembered as the man who was not because he wanted to decrease so that this other man would increase and he came as a witness wow what a ministry to be a witness to that one light that that great cosmic light that was going to come right in and thrill those who are open to the light because not everybody loved the darkness some people were sick of the darkness and today right now in our society there are people

I keep meeting them I keep bumping into ordinary folks and they're not Christians but they're sick of the darkness they're sick of the madness they're sick of the danger to the children I tell you my friends if Jesus were standing here right now apart from the fact that you would all be better off than my standing here but if Jesus were here right now he would say to all of us the fields are white unto harvest the fields are white unto harvest pray ye therefore that the Lord will thrust out labourers into his harvest field and that's literally what the Greek means pray that the Lord will thrust out labourers not send out but thrust out because that's exactly what Jesus did they had been told they were to go to Judea and Samaria and to the very uttermost parts of the earth and they were to make disciples of all nations they were told to do that but months later they were still in Jerusalem they were stuck and what did the

Lord of the harvest do he thrust them out he allowed persecution to overcome the church as soon as as soon as Stephen was martyred persecution broke out and the church was scattered and suddenly here's Philip in Samaria a Jew in Samaria of all places and he's in the middle of a rip roaring revival praise the Lord the Lord of the harvest will thrust out labourers into his harvest field and if you want to see the harvest gathered in these days my brothers and sisters you'll be praying that God will take us and he'll shake us about to the point where we're all out of our pyjamas and into our work clothes into our armour because we're going to need armour for the days ahead we need it right now the true light that was giving light to everyone was coming into the world he was in the world and although the world was made through him the world did not know him

Paul said as much but you know he actually said that the world is completely without excuse for not knowing God do you remember how Paul on Mars Hill when he was talking to the Athenian philosophers now these were the intellectuals of the day and they had thousands tens of thousands of gods in Athens in those days and they had an altar to one god who they said was unknown now actually that's completely back to front it's hard to believe they were actually intelligent people but these intellectuals had got it completely back to front because the only god that was knowable was the one they said was unknown the other gods were rubbish they were just fictions they were just the product of imagination and in many cases it was worse than that because behind many of these gods there was a being behind each of these gods but it was demonic and it was completely full of hatred towards humanity so these people were worshipping demonic deities that just wanted to destroy them how intelligent is that how can you be the intellectual class of

Athens and be worshipping demonic entities that are completely fake and misleading and deceptive and yet the only one God who is actually knowable and Paul says sorry folks but you are without excuse if you say you don't know God because the invisible qualities of God have been perfectly displayed in the heavens the heavens declare the glory of God if you want to believe that there is a God there's plenty of evidence how does the grass come up in the morning how does the sun rise where does the snow come from how did your first breath come into your body how is a baby formed in a mother's womb who does all these things but to all who did receive him to all who did receive can you unpack that wee word for a moment to all who did receive him you know have you received put your hand up if you have received

[15 : 25] Jesus into your life and your heart right lovely show of hands if you have received Jesus do you know what you've done you've received all of him because he doesn't come in installments he doesn't come in part payment now and again he doesn't take a little piece of himself out of a warehouse and give it to you to keep you going for a while when he gives himself he gives himself he gives all of himself to you all the fullness of God dwelt in bodily form Paul said to the Colossians all the fullness of God dwelt in bodily form in Jesus and Jesus gives himself to you and you have dwelling in you right now all the God you're ever going to need or have God has not given himself to you in little installments he has come to you in all his fullness how do we know that you can go back to the very beginning of

Genesis and know that because God did not create the sun until the fourth day and the sun gives light to everything so we think but God said let there be light on the first day and there was light where did the light come from the light is God himself because God is light and him there is no darkness at all so when he said let there be light and there was light God gave himself to the whole of the cosmos to the whole of the created order and that's what God does all the time you see because God is love and love doesn't work with little pockets of reserve love doesn't hold anything back and so God gives you to give you himself without reserve out of his infinite riches in Jesus he gives and gives and gives again and we're going to see that a wee bit more towards the end of this chapter but we need to know who we are and we need to know whose we are there's a story told about about

Napoleon the emperor somebody gave him some papers to read and they were on the battlefield they were on the of course the generals were all on the edge of the battlefield with some of their other troops round about them for protection and somebody gave him some papers to read and on his horse he fumbled the papers a wee bit and fumbled the reins of the horse in the process and the horse reared and it was just about to throw the emperor off when a young corporal just dashed forward took control of the horse calmed everything down and Napoleon without even lifting his eyes off his papers said thank you captain and so this young corporal without a minute's hesitation he started running towards the officer corps further across the field and he was ripping the stripes off his uniform as he went and he just went there and he stood in the officer corps and they said what are you doing here he says

I'm the new captain of the guard and they said who said so he said the emperor now he could have dithered about couldn't he he could have just stood there and thought oh what wonderful compliment the emperor just paid me and he could have made that his little anecdote and his story to tell his grandchildren for years and years to come but he didn't do anything of the sort he acted exactly on what the emperor had said and he considered himself from that moment on to be the captain of the emperor's personal guard brothers and sisters do we know who we are do we know whose we are because if we do we should be acting upon it we're children of the king we're a royal priesthood we're a holy nation we're a people belonging to God not to ourselves we do not belong to ourselves we were bought with a price and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we've seen his glory glory as of the only son from the father full of grace and truth full of grace and truth now if if he is full of grace and truth and if he gives himself totally to us then brothers and sisters we're full of grace and truth as well and we need to let the

Lord release that from us that's a fragrance waiting to get out into the world it's the fragrance of Christ it's waiting for release don't let's hold it back John bore witness about him and he cried out this is the very one of whom I said he who was he who comes after me ranks before me because he was before me John understands that there is something about Jesus that he can't say about anyone else because he was in the beginning he was before there was a before before there was ever a before before there was any time Jesus was and Jesus is and for from his fullness from his fullness here we are again from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace what does that mean you know that the various translations try hard to capture just what is John's meaning here the NIV puts it quite well it says we've received grace in place of grace already given we need to try and clarify this for ourselves because some people found her over this verse think of it it's really important to to see that this is this is a contrast that's being shown here not a contention between the time of law and the time of grace grace was active all the way through the

[22 : 12] Old Testament as well God could have left his people in pagan darkness the Hebrews might have been just as ignorant as anybody else but God chose to shine the light of his glory upon his people and by his light he plucked them out of the nations and he plucked them out of the nations for the sake of the nations he didn't pluck them out of the nations because he preferred them because they were nicer or kinder or holier than anybody else they were nothing of the sort I have a Jewish friend who's a pastor in Jerusalem and he says we Jews he said we're just like everybody else only more so he says if you guys can make a pig's ear of it we can do it more so if you guys are loving we can be more loving he says there's something about us Jews he says it's just like everybody else but we tend to have kind of exaggerated ways of doing things but the grace of

God was there in the Old Testament times when God plucked them out of Egypt that was a grace of God when God gave them Torah when he gave them the law when he gave them instruction that was grace so grace didn't suddenly come into being through Jesus when John says in the next verse the law was given through Moses grace and truth came through Jesus Christ we can stumble over that and we can end up with a kind of separation between the Old Testament and the New Testament as though the New Testament is about grace and the Old Testament is about law that's not what John's saying here this is an important thing to grasp here because he's not saying there's a contention between the time of the Old Testament and the time of the New he's saying there's a contrast there is a contrast so we mustn't stumble over this it's important that we take the context seriously here the light that we need for this is usually found in the surrounding text and it is here when the

NIV says grace in place of grace already given we're going to confuse our minds if we think this is an antithesis it's not this is complementarity that's going on here law and grace are not opposed to each other the law was a gift of grace the law was an expression of the father's nature the law was a revelation of God himself and how do we know how can we can we seal that forever so that we're confident about that yes I think we can because in a moment or two we're going to take communion and we're going to rejoice that this is the new covenant in Christ's blood what did the new covenant say he gave the terms of the new covenant through jeremiah and he said he said that the grace of god is such that he's going to take the law that was broken and he's going to take that same law and he's going to write it on the hearts of those who trust the new covenant terms that's the same law god hasn't torn up the law of moses and thrown it aside and written a new law he takes the law his law which was always full of grace and he writes it on our hearts so that we have a whole new inclination it doesn't mean we can't sin it doesn't mean we're morally perfect it means that we no longer want to sin it means that sin is our enemy not our friend it means that we love the light not the darkness how wonderful is that is that wonderful so he's taken the law and he's written it upon our hearts brothers and sisters you're never going to be comfortable with your sin all your life till your dying breath you're going to be uncomfortable with your sin you've been spoiled for sin

Jesus has spoiled you for sin you don't enjoy it anymore you don't like it anymore you hate it I hate the sins that made thee grieve and drove thee from my breast William Cooper said but he got it wrong because you see the sins do grieve our father but they drive us from his breast they don't drive him from ours nothing drives God away from us even our sin doesn't drive God away from us our sin drives God towards us because he knows we need him all the more brothers and sisters what a God we have you know your God doesn't come into your life as a day visitor with a suitcase he doesn't come in packed and ready to go at a moment's notice because your thought life is offensive to him because the way you treated that neighbour down the street is offensive to him he doesn't just grab his suitcase and say well I'm off I'll come back when you're nice

God does not do that God is with us for the long haul and believe me it's a longer haul for God than it is for us what a test we are to his patience and he passes the test every time no one has ever seen God the only God who is at the father's side he has made him known and this is why Paul was able with complete confidence to tell these intellectuals in Athens that they had no need to worship an unknown God no need to worship an unknown God the reality was that their gods were false and only that one God was true and Jesus has made him known he was able to say with complete confidence and authority whoever has seen me has seen the father you want to know what your God is like then become more familiar with Jesus in the Bible he steps out of every page and by the way he steps out of every page of the Old

[29 : 15] Testament as well as the New Jesus didn't use the New Testament on the Emmaus road to give them a Bible study beginning with Moses and all the prophets he taught them all the things in the scriptures pertaining to himself the scriptures he used were the scriptures we call the Old Testament and Jesus steps out of the pages of the Old Testament look for him you'll find him he's there so here's a question the question we started with how finished is it really how finished is it really let's just dip into Colossians for a moment Paul says this having told the Colossians that God has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the son he loves in whom we have redemption the forgiveness of sins having told them that he then goes on and he says chapter 2 verse 13 and you who were dead in your trespasses now let me ask you something before we go on if you're dead how much can you do for yourself and you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh

God made alive together with him so when God raised up Jesus you were raised up in him your resurrection is guaranteed because it has already taken place hello I'm going to say that again your resurrection is guaranteed because it has already taken place you were in Christ when God raised him up read the first two chapters of Ephesians and you'll be left in no doubt about that God raised him up and he raised us up in him and we need to believe that Jesus said it a different way he said if you believe in my words you hold to my words you have crossed over from death to life and shall not come under judgment you have already crossed over from death to life death is not going to be able to touch you it cannot separate you from your God death is nothing at all as far as we're concerned when we had the pandemic and people were all frightened about COVID

I said to some friends I said well I'm sorry but you need to know that I'm immortal they said what are you talking about I said well because it's not COVID that's going to determine the end of my life it's the living God the one who made me and called me to be his own he determines the length of my life I'm immortal until he calls me home and then I'm immortal how wonderful so God this is what he's done 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 do you see that little word all have forgiven us all our trespasses what of your sins have been dealt with do you think your sins of your childhood have they been forgiven what about the sins you committed yesterday what about the sins you're going to commit five minutes from now sin is a serious matter to the living

God it is so serious that it took the crucifixion of his son to put it right we're not minimizing sin here but we're maximizing the grace of the living God what grace has reached out to us in Jesus that all our sins he has forgiven us all our sins how has he done it by cancelling the record of debt that's you know God is into cancelling the woke people think they invented it you know but God is into cancelling and what he cancels is our debt to him how wonderful is that he's cancelled the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands these he set aside nailing it to the cross he disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame so that's why when Jesus cried it is finished the Greek word is the same word that's used they've actually found they found an invoice a paid invoice from the first century that has the word tetelestai written across the front of it and you know what that means it means paid in full it is finished it's done there's no more to pay now that doesn't give you and me a license to sin it gives us a joy in our saviour and a call to holiness because he gets the reputation we give him so let's not be at peace with our sin but let's be at peace with our saviour who has delivered us from our sin amen now we're going to sing about the man of sorrows what a wonderful song to follow what I've been saying