

John 19:30 “It Is Finished”

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama.! Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us. Amen. Can we pray together?

! Jesus, we thank you for the cross. We're gathered here because of your cross. And we're grateful that you're here with us and so ask that you would help us, that our lives would be different, that our relationship with you would be different because of your finished work on the cross on our behalf.

By your word, would you do that, Holy Spirit, in our hearts today? And we ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. We arrived this morning and are lingering at the cross of Jesus at his final breath.

He's been betrayed, arrested, beaten, unjustly tried, proclaimed innocent, mocked, handed over to be crucified. He's cared for those around him. He's endured darkness in the middle of the day for three hours. He suffered the torments of hell for our sins to the point of saying, I thirst.

The soldiers extend some sour wine to him and we continue our reading at verse 30 of John 19.

John 19. One verse, but one powerful, history-changing, eternity-impacting verse.

[2 : 09] John 19. John 19. John 19. At verse 30. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, it is finished. And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Thus far, God's holy word. Here, Jesus, about to lay down his life, willingly again, right? We see this highlighted. He's handing his spirit to his father in unimaginable agony, yet in total control. Jesus says, it is finished. It's one word in Greek, tetelestai.

It's been life-changing for me. It is the good news of Jesus in one word. So if you don't know Jesus, if you don't have a relationship with him or understand what his offer to you is, then I hope you'll listen with us this morning because he's going to explain it to us really in this one word.

I want to unpack that word together this morning, but I want you to know it could take a while. British preacher Charles Spurgeon once said, you would need all the other words that ever were spoken or ever can be spoken to explain this one word. I won't use them all this morning.

It's not actually complicated, but it's glorious. It's gloriously impactful and far-reaching.

That's why it takes so long. Let me just start by giving us a couple of pictures. Financial expert Dave Ramsey hates debt. He loves helping people get out of debt. And when they have paid and they've saved and they've paid some more and they've finally gotten all of it taken care of, they can call into his show and scream, I'm debt free.

[4 : 34] It's a scream of celebration, of freedom, of finish. That's part of Tetelestai.

Or picture a champion marathon runner leaning towards the finish line. After running 26 miles, navigating hills and heat, enduring aches and pains and thirst, holding off others seeking to defeat him.

And he gasps with a little bit of air he has left, finished! Or probably more like, yes! It's a cry of victory, of triumph, of finish. Keep that in mind too.

I mean, just thinking of where we are in John's story, all the way over the last couple years even, and in God's story, all the way through the Bible, when Jesus is on the cross, there is a long, long list of things of which we could say, it is finished!

Think with me. God's eternal plan of redemption. The reconciliation of the world to God. Jesus' defeat of the devil.

[5 : 55] The mission of the Messiah. The prophecies about Jesus. Jesus' revelation of his Father. All his sacrificial, substitutionary suffering.

Jesus' perfect life of obedience. His work to rescue those that his Father gave to him. All of that. We could keep going, but we would run out of words before we reach the end of the impact of what Jesus accomplishes on the cross.

I want, for the sake of our focus this morning, to group some of those big concepts into two groups to understand what Jesus saying it is finished means.

And then I want to ask, what does it mean for us? Tetelestai was a term from the world of accounting.

This is what you would stamp on a debt once it was paid back fully. To say paid in full. Jesus paid it all, right?

[7 : 00] Are we saying that? That's what he's saying here. He fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood. He took the wages due to my sin.

Death. The full punishment that I earned. The wrath of God due to me in hell. In my place. He took all of that.

It is done. It is finished. No more debt I owe. No. The verb tense here means finished with ongoing effect.

It stays finished. Not just finished for a second, but like finished forever. No more to pay. Jesus is not a halfway savior. Now let's make sure we get this part straight too.

This is no small debt that Jesus pays at all. It's bigger than any dollar amount that any of us have ever faced. When Christy and I got married, we had some student loan debt.

[8 : 06] And we desperately wanted to be rid of it. So we sold one of our single most valuable possessions. A car. Went from two cars to one. And took all that money and put it towards the debt.

And we weren't even halfway there. We felt like we would never pay it off. Month after month. Year after year.

Finally we did. But imagine the weight of this debt. Nothing you pay towards it even touches it. Month after month. Year after year. It's the same. You could never pay it off. It's an infinite debt.

And maybe you think, oh, preacher's exaggerating.

Maybe you don't think of your sin as that big. You know, there's a lot of other bigger sinners out there. Kids, I talk with some of you sometimes about your sin. And you give me good examples like when you're mean to your brother or sister.

[9 : 09] Okay? Can you think about that one? Have you ever been mean to your brother or sister? It doesn't sound real big, does it? But think with me. You were mean even though you knew that God wanted you to be kind and patient with them.

You actually thought, I know that, but I want to do what I want to do rather than what God wants me to do.

In other words, you thought in that moment that you were smarter than God. In that one little unkind word, it came from a heart that was saying, I would be a better God than God.

I thought, big sin, huh? You wouldn't want to say that. Also, did you know adults, including pastors, we commit big sins too.

Sometimes we forget that. Adults, when was the last time you looked at someone else's house? Or another woman? Or a different job?

[10 : 24] And thought, I wish I had that. I mean, you didn't do anything about it, so you told yourself it didn't really hurt anyone.

It's not really that big of a deal, right? But actually, you were saying in your heart that you knew better than God what would be best for you.

In fact, you felt that he couldn't be really fully trusted to give you exactly what you need, so you needed to trust yourself. Your heart was saying in that one little envious moment, I would be a better God than God.

That's big sin. And those are just some of the sins I'd point out that look better than others. We do some things that look a lot worse on the surface.

Our debt towards God is huge. An infinite amount because it's against an infinite God.

[11 : 30] In fact, it is so massively beyond our ability ever to pay back that our debt requires Jesus to suffer and die in our place.

It requires the death of the Lord of life. Our sin requires the sacrifice of the Lamb of God to take away our sins.

Wow. That's a big debt. And that's the debt that Jesus takes, and he stamps paid in full over all of it on the cross.

Picture Bunyan's pilgrim Christian overwhelmed by the burden of sin on his back until he comes to the cross and immediately it rolls off and away forever.

Right? It's why we sing that great stanza, my sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought. My sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more.

[12:51] Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Oh, my soul. Not just part of it, right? Not just the action. Not just the thought.

Not just the motive behind it. Not just the sin nature underneath it. All of it nailed to the cross.

Paid in full by Jesus. Tetelestai. Finished. In case you think I'm exaggerating, Hebrews 10 is a theological reflection on this idea.

It starts by telling us that all of the animal sacrifices for hundreds and hundreds of years could not pay for the debt of sin.

That that was impossible. So, Jesus came in flesh and blood to offer the true, worthy sacrifice that God required.

[13:53] See, every priest had been offering sacrifices over and over and over. But, verse 12, Jesus offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins and sat down.

Finished. Because now, he has perfected. This is what Derek read to us earlier after we confessed our sins.

Finished. Finished. It's from the same word. For all time. Those of us who are still in progress. Who are, by the way, still sinning.

Ah, there's the catch. So, maybe when we mess up again tomorrow, the debt is going to go up. And this time, we're going to have to pay. Right?

Nope. Verse 17 of Hebrews 10. I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more. Where there is forgiveness of these sins, lawless deeds, there is no longer any offering for sin.

[15:03] Finished. Forgiven. Free. See, our sin racked up an enormous debt, didn't it? But the triune God, from all eternity, set out to cover the debt for us.

Jesus said, I'll pay it all. So, Romans 3 explains, what God did was he passed over the full punishment for these sins. Until Jesus came.

He didn't pour it all out. He saved it up. And then he gave justice to past, present, and future sins on Jesus.

So that God could remain just. Sin gets what it deserves. Death. And at the same time, God could be the justifier.

Could bring us, undeserving sinners, back into relationship with him forever. What amazing love.

Right? That is the plan of redemption that Jesus started in eternity past and finished on the cross.

[16:16] As C.S. Lewis said, that when a willing victim who has committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the table would crack and death itself would start working backwards.

You wouldn't have to pay the penalty of death and you'd be given eternal life. the opposite of what you deserved. Jesus says, Father, I want these that you have given me to be with you and me sharing glory with us.

So let me pay the price to bring them home into our family. Jesus cries out in victory. Not so much for himself but for you and me.

Finished! And so we we can scream I'm debt free! That's not even all that's in this word.

If you get all your debts paid you still don't have any money to live on, do you? I mean, getting back to zero, who's excited about that? We owe God not only avoidance of sin and we messed that up but also a perfect life.

[17:37] He made us to reflect his image in his world in every way. We have to run the race as it were all the way faithfully to the finish.

It's our job. This is why Jesus doesn't die why the cross doesn't come just shortly after being born to pay for sins.

First, Jesus has to live and fulfill all of God's righteous law to embody all the Old Testament prophecies as John has been highlighting to us he has to reveal the Father to us so we know what he's like.

Show us what God's like in the flesh. And Jesus has done this to the very last breath as he now crosses the finish line.

He's finished the race the mission that his Father gave him to do so there is full credit earned for us. See in religious contexts the idea of tetelestai was that you had carried out a task you'd finished a mission.

[18 : 52] In fact Jesus uses a form of this same word a couple times only 24 hours before the cross. He's praying to his Father and it says having accomplished it's this word finishing the work God gave him to do earlier Thursday night showing them his love to the end to its finish to its completion so we understand what's on his heart that's part of what is finished now on the cross the will of the Father the mission of the Son by the power of the Spirit we've seen Psalm 22 referenced every step of the way to the cross every single sermon so far here's where it ends the last verse of Psalm 22 they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn that he has done it he's done it it is finished it's about his righteousness that's been finished there's nothing else to be added to what

Jesus has done he's not only paid what you owe to bring your account to zero to no debt but he's also granted you a full credit of righteousness as you trust in him I told you he's no halfway savior right this is the part of the good news highlighted in 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 for our sake God made him to be sin who knew no sin so what would happen to us so that in him we might become back to ground zero no the righteousness of God to tell us die Jesus has lived perfectly he's he's trusted his father when the agony was overwhelming he spoke in truth even when it cost him he's cared for the poor and the needy he quoted scripture when he was tempted to care for himself or to pursue power he honored his parents he kept the sabbath he loved his neighbor even to the point of laying down his own life for his sheep so that we might be righteous so that we get all that credit in our account indeed as

John promised us all along he has made God known to us the perfect image of God his righteous character shining in his law now seen on brilliant display in the word made flesh he has done all that the scripture requires and after one final reminder of that in saying I thirst he declares it is finished full credit earned race finished victoriously nothing left to do to earn God's favor grace grace grace flows abundant tetelestai that's what it means so it is finished means Jesus paid all my debt and earned all my credit cool how's that changed me what's that mean for me

I'll tell you how it impacted me as it sunk in as I grew up this takes a while for most of us see I knew from an early age that Jesus loved me I grew up in a church like this when I heard these types of things and I thought Jesus loves me that's awesome I want to do everything that I can to be worthy of that love now that's not a bad instinct if you felt that way but it will wear you out why because there's no end of what you would need to do to earn that kind of love because you have to pretend when you don't and fake it anytime you fail because it's not love you can earn that's not the nature of it that's what's so amazing about it it's grace Jesus doesn't need me to finish what he already has that's hard for me to take in that's why as he breathed his last

Jesus said it is finished buddha said keep on striving that's religious advice try harder when I try to finish what Jesus already has it's like telling him that the cross was not enough that's nice but there's some more I'm going to add listen if we could earn God's love on our own Jesus died for no reason but he really finished it all and that started to sink in and now I was free from performing to earn love all the time I could breathe let me ask you a couple questions how does God feel about you right now can you answer that are you unsure carry the one maybe he's waiting to see how you do today sounds right or when through grace in

[24 : 59] Christ our trust is justice smiles and asks no more he's smiling delighted in you because of Jesus question two do you live like it's finished or like there's constantly pressure to do more in other words do you feel more rush or peace in your life more anxiety or joy more envy or gratitude the more the finished work of Jesus on the cross sinks in the more you actually believe in your heart that that could possibly be true the more those realities will flood your life changes you when I was a young boy I read in our local newspaper about another young boy whose name was

Larry Don Larry Don wanted to play on the football team so he had to get one of those physicals you know the problem was the physical showed a problem with his heart a virus had attacked his heart and pretty soon he would need a transplant so you can imagine the number of times after scan x-ray after x-ray and they were monitoring him and one day went back for his x-ray and the nurse came out and said we're going to have to take you back again his parents were concerned what happened what's wrong she said oh don't be alarmed it's just inconclusive I said that doesn't sound good either he said oh no no he forgot to take his cross off again see Larry Don had met Jesus along the way and he was wearing as he always did his cross necklace that his mom gave him in celebration of that moment they took him back for another x-ray and he said hey can I keep that first x-ray that's the story of my life the cross of Jesus covering my sin sick heart do you live like

the cross is always covering your heart it changed my life because it is finished the cross of Jesus means a new freedom right no longer enslaved to sin no longer enslaved to performance to earn my parents love or the love of my friends or the love of myself or even the love of God free from that it is finished means unending gratitude because of what Jesus has done that I could never repay I'm just grateful it is finished means aggressive forgiveness in your life because no one has as big a debt to me as I did to God you know that's true so looking for debts to forgive is one of the best ways to reflect the image of our gracious father to share with others in a performance oriented get what you earn culture the joy of the cross forgive aggressively so many ways this cross over our hearts changes our lives but I want to focus on one this morning that I believe the Bible says is where all the change starts let's think about our big debt again I think you know this but I want to try to help you think about it if you've ever owed anybody anything you've experienced this like if you were a kid and it was five bucks right maybe you owed somebody an apology and you knew it whatever it was that you owed somebody what starts happening in your relationship with them that debt disrupts the relationship doesn't it you know that feeling of avoiding them you know ducking in the other doorway keeping your distance whenever you can until you can repay that debt I mean they might ask they might call don't answer that number they might run out of patience I had a great third grade teacher and I really wanted him to think that I was a great third grade student it's a big deal to me so I worked really hard I tried to follow all the rules I always did my homework until one day when I forgot to do my homework and all of the sudden he was about to check I was terrified I owed him a finished worksheet and mine was blank I thought quickly I stood up I asked to use the restroom and I took my blank worksheet with me with a pencil down the hallway to the bathroom locked myself in a bathroom stall and furiously got to work on the homework work he was going to be so disappointed what a failure I felt like I could not let him see me without a perfectly finished paper and then two boys from my class came into the restroom hey Will you okay in there Mr. [30 : 48] Andrag said to check on you because you didn't look like you were feeling good oh yeah I'm fine has he taken up that homework yet no actually he didn't take it up he said he was going to give all of us a 100 today oh cool cool yeah I'll be right there to this day I don't know for sure how much Mr.

A understood of what was going on but third grade teachers are pretty sharp what I do know is that I didn't have to stay locked in that bathroom stall any longer my debt was paid full credit earned by someone else and I could quit hiding and I could come back and be with my teacher again are any of you hiding out from God are you are you working furiously working hard to make it up to be able to face him again can I urge you to stop and come to him right now after Hebrews chapter 10 talks about Jesus's once for all finished sacrifice it tells us what difference should happen in our lives it has a few things but the very first thing it says is draw near to God let us draw near to God over and over draw near over and over it means just as I am without one plea but that thy blood was shed for me and that thou bidst me come to thee oh

Lamb of God I come I come don't keep your distance don't stay locked in the stall draw near your life will never be the same the freedom the gratitude the forgiveness and much more they'll flow out of you see the payment of debt restores relationship that's what he's doing for you it's what Jesus has done for you we sang earlier love so amazing so divine demands my soul my life my all I love that line but if we're not careful and if we're not near God that will put religious people like me back on an exhausting treadmill but draw near to God is not a wagging finger demanding come to church more read your

Bible more stop coveting! No draw near to God because it is finished is an arms wide open welcome of love saying come find life and joy in me come here let my word direct your path you can trust me cast your burdens on me and trust that I will give you whatever you need see you'll do many of the same things with so much more rest and peace and joy because it is finished in fact the cross of Jesus says draw near to God because he has already drawn near to you paid all your debts earned all the credit that you need sent his very son down to your locked bathroom stall where you were hiding out and working hard to make yourself presentable to him and he stamped on your paper tetelestai it is finished come home draw near that's what he wants you to taste as you gather around this table this morning on this very night that he was betrayed Jesus took bread and he broke it and gave it to his disciples as I ministering in his name give this bread to you he said take and eat this is my body given for you do this in remembrance of me in the

same way after supper he took the cup and said this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for many for the forgiveness of sins drink from it all of you for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes you proclaim it's finished and there's nothing else for you to do and you can come and sit and eat with God because of what Jesus has done brothers and sisters from any other church doesn't have to be this one if that's your hope and trust come and eat with him and celebrate his finished work and ongoing love for you friends who are weary perhaps like me maybe hurting maybe wondering

[36 : 30] I don't know what I think about all of this I'm not sure about Jesus I would invite you to come not to these elements this morning to take the bread and the wine but we do invite you to come come forward to these tables and and watch a picture of what Jesus is offering you but you don't have to come up here you can you can stay where you are way more important than coming to bread and wine would be considering Jesus himself and his offer to say you don't have to do anything else there's not a long list you don't have to keep being better and trying harder you can come and throw yourself on me and I'll take care of it for you in fact I've already done it you just trust me in his name we invite you to salvation in Jesus Christ alone by grace through faith in him let's pray and we'll come and celebrate together

Jesus we thank you again for the cross we marvel that you could pay it all we marvel more that you would want to for people like us and so we marvel at your love and ask that it would change our hearts even as we taste this reminder and as your spirit uses common elements for very unusual purpose in our hearts that we'd be strengthened to trust you more would we taste your grace would we remember the merit that we have before the father that's not from us but from one who's so good and so gracious we thank you in your name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org