

Words of Victory
Part 6 - When Love Speaks
John 19:28-30
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How many of you remember watching the first man land on the moon? I was very young but I remember what an exciting thing that was. I remember watching on television as Neil Armstrong set the lunar module down on the moon. It was a great victory for the United States. As they touched down on the surface of the moon, Neil Armstrong said, "***The eagle has landed.***" Remember that? "The eagle has landed." I thought that was the coolest victory statement.

Today we are going to look at a victory statement made by Jesus from the cross just before he died. The apostle John writes, "***After he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.***" (John 19:30) At first glance it appears to be a statement of defeat much like, "I'm done", "I quit", "I've had enough" or "I give up." But when you understand what he was saying you learn that it was anything but a cry of defeat. When you understand what he meant you realize what an amazing victory cry it was. "***It is finished***" is the greatest victory statement ever made.

We on this side of the empty tomb know that it was a statement of victory. But when the Roman soldiers at the foot of the cross heard him say, "***It is finished***" they were probably thinking, "Good riddance. We're finished with this radical insurrectionist who challenged the powers of Roman." They saw it as a cry of defeat for Jesus and a victory for Rome.

When the Jewish religious leaders heard, they too thought it was a cry of defeat for Jesus and a victory for them. Jesus was gone. They didn't have to be concerned with him anymore. Like many movements in history, once the leader is

gone the movement dies out. They were counting on that. His movement would die out now that he was dead and the large crowds he attracted would forget about him. It was finished. They had succeeded in getting rid of him.

When the disciples heard that he said, "It is finished" they were thinking, "Our hopes and dreams of a new kingdom are finished. It's over. We've been defeated." Some of them were still in shock. They didn't know what to think. Just days earlier they had witnessed Jesus entering Jerusalem like a victor, coming home from battle. The crowds were shouting, "*Hosanna!*" "*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*" "*Blessed is the King of Israel!*" (John 12:13b) Things were looking so good. Now it looked as though all was lost. The crowds that once supported Jesus had disappeared. Even the disciples had abandoned him and were hiding in fear.

But when Jesus cried, "*It is finished!*" he wasn't saying "*I am finished.*" He said, "*It is finished!*" There's a big difference. He didn't say "I am finished" because he knew in three days he would rise again from the dead. He knew he was anything but finished. What was he talking about then? What did Jesus mean when he said "*It is finished?*"

Obviously his suffering was finished. His humiliation was finished. His pain was finished. His grief was finished. But there is much, much more going on here. For his entire life on earth, Jesus had one goal, one over arching goal. Here's that goal recorded for us in John's gospel, chapter four, verse 34. "*Jesus said, 'My food [in other words, my nourishment, where I get my strength] is to do what God wants! He is the one who sent me, and I must finish [that same word] the work he gave me to do.'*" (John 4:34) When Jesus said, "*It is finished*" he wasn't talking about himself - he was talking about the work he was sent to do. He was talking about the work the Father had sent him to earth to do.

When Jesus said, "*It is finished*" he used an Aramaic word that is rich with meaning. That word is "*Tetelestai.*" This morning we will look at the different contexts this word was used in and as we do, you will see more fully what Jesus did for you on the cross and why this is the greatest victory cry of all time.

FIRST, THIS WORD WAS USED IN THE CONTEXT OF ART. When an artist would put the final brush strokes on his painting, or touches on his work, he would stand back and say, "It is finished." He was announcing that his work was complete. What he had set out to do was accomplished. It was perfect. When Jesus was dying on the cross he announced, "The picture is complete. It's perfect. I've done the last brush stroke. I've completed the last touch. Every detail is in place. My work is finished."

Last week I talked to you about how there were over three hundred eighty **prophecies** in the Old Testament where God, over hundreds, even thousands of years said, here's how you will recognize the One I am sending into the world to save you from your sins. This is how you will know that he's the One, the Messiah. This is how you'll know he's the real deal and not a phony or a fake; he's going to fulfill all the scripture verses written about him. That is exactly what Jesus did. He fulfilled all three hundred eighty prophecies from the Old Testament. Like a great artist he finished the work his father had given him. Like a great artist Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies written about him in the Scriptures. When his work was done, he looked upon all that he had done and said, "*It is finished.*"

JESUS FULFILLED THE PROPHECIES OF SCRIPTURE LIKE A SKILLFUL ARTIST COMPLETES A WORK OF ART. That is why Scripture tells us, "*Fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...*" (Hebrews 12:2)

SECOND, TETELESTAI WAS A TERM USED BY A SERVANT. At the end of the day the servant would return to his master to report that everything he

had been given to do was done. He had completed all the tasks he was assigned to do. That's what it meant when Jesus was on the cross and he said, "*It is finished.*" He was saying, "I have completed all the work my father gave me to do."

God made a lot of **promises** in Scripture. He promised to send the Messiah into the world to save his people from their sins. He promised to send the perfect sacrifice so they would no longer have to kill lambs and bulls and goats as a way to be forgiven. All those sacrifices were pointing to the real sacrifice and that is Jesus on the cross. When Jesus finished suffering on the cross for the sins of the world, the work he had been given by his father was complete. Scripture was fulfilled.

After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples. *"He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.' Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, 'This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'"* (Luke 24:44-47)

LIKE AN OBEDIENT SERVANT, JESUS FULFILLED THE PROPHECIES AND PROMISES OF GOD,

THIRD, THE WORD "TETELESTAI" WAS A TERM USED BY A JUDGE IN A COURT OF LAW. It was a judicial term. Once a man had served the sentence for his crime, the judge would stamp the man's court record with "*tetelestai*", "*it is finished.*" It meant justice had been served. The penalty had been paid. The man was now free to go. He had finished paying his debt to society and making restitution for his crime.

When Jesus cried, ***"It is finished,"*** he was declaring, "The payment has been paid. The time has been served. The punishment is complete." He had satisfied the demands of the law by taking upon himself the sins of the world. Scripture tells us, ***"The law of Moses could not save us, because of our sinful nature. But God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours, except that ours are sinful. God destroyed sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so that the requirement of the law would be fully accomplished for us..."*** (Romans 8:3-4 NLT)

The only person who has ever kept every law in the Bible is Jesus. No other human being has kept the Law of God perfectly. We have all fallen short. The Law of God could not save us because we couldn't keep it. So God put into effect a different plan. He sent Jesus to fulfill the Law for us. The Bible says, ***"He [God] canceled the record that contained the charges against us. He took it and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross."*** (Colossians 2:14 NLT)

I read a statistic that said the average American household in 2010 owed \$6,500 in credit card debt. Consumer debt now stands at 2.4 trillion dollars. The average college debt is \$24,000. Wouldn't that be awesome if the credit card company or the loan company called up and said, "We're going to cancel your debt with us. We're going to completely wipe it out." I don't think that's going to happen but I know a lot of people who would be dancing in the street if it did.

While listening to the news I heard that all the claims people filed against BP for damages caused by the oil spill in the Gulf, all those claims that were stored in a computer, were lost. Wiped out. Completely gone. Irretrievably lost. I bet there were some people thinking, I wish that would happen to my credit card debt.

Every time we sin we got deeper and deeper in debt with God. God in his great mercy sent Jesus Christ into the world to pay our debt so that God could stamp our account PAID IN FULL - IT IS FINISHED. That is what God did through Jesus Christ. The Bible says, *"God's Son paid the price to free us, which means that our sins are forgiven."* (Colossians 1:14) What did Jesus accomplish for us on the cross? He paid our debt in full so that our record is now stamped IT IS FINISHED - PAID IN FULL. **JESUS SERVED THE SENTENCE FOR OUR SINS AND SATISFIED THE LAW OF GOD.**

FOURTH, THE WORD "TETELESTAI" WAS USED BY A CONQUERING WARRIOR ON A BATTLE FIELD. It speaks to the fact that Jesus conquered sin and death for us. He broke the grip of sin and death on our lives. He defeated the power of sin and death to keep us captive. The Bible says, *"The sin of one man, Adam, caused death to rule over us, but all who receive God's wonderful, gracious gift of righteousness will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ."* (Romans 5:17)

What does this mean? It means when you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are set free to live in righteousness. It means when you receive Jesus into your heart, you are given power over the things that once held you captive, sins that once had a stronghold on you. You are given power to live a new life! You no longer have to live captive to those sins that held you down - those habits that hurt you, those behaviors that beat you up and ruled over you. You are set free by the power of Christ in you to live a new life of freedom over sin and death. Before you had Christ in your heart, you didn't have the power not to sin. It was inevitable that you sin. Now, because of Christ in you, you have the power to triumph over old habits and sinful strongholds. Before, you were helpless over the power of sin and death. Now, you have the very power of Christ available to

you to help you live a life of righteousness. Before, you had no choice but to sin. Now you have the power to choose Christ - to choose to live as He would have you live. The battle is won. The Bible says, ***"Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*** (1st Corinthians 15:54b-57) **LIKE A MIGHTY WARRIOR JESUS CONQUERED SIN AND DEATH FOR US.**

Jesus not only conquered sin and death. He also conquered the devil. When he cried, ***"It is finished"*** at that moment the devil was defeated. The Bible says, ***"He shared in our humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."*** (Hebrews 2:14-15) Are you afraid of dying? That fear is the work of the devil. Satan wants you to be afraid of death. He wants you to be bound by fear. He doesn't want you to claim the power that is yours through Christ. Christ defeated Satan on the cross. When Jesus cried, ***"It is finished"*** the devil was defeated. The cosmic war that was being played out between Satan and the Son of God was over.

From the human standpoint it looked like Satan had won. Jesus is all bruised and beaten, broken and bleeding. He said, ***"It is finished."*** ***With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."*** He was dead. It looked as though Satan had won. But we know the rest of the story. In three days Jesus rose from the dead. The tomb was empty and Satan was defeated. Satan may not know it, but he's finished. The main battle has been fought and Jesus is the victor.

When Jesus cried, ***"It is finished"*** he was announcing:

- I have fulfilled the Scriptures.

- I have satisfied the Law.
- I have paid your penalty.
- I have conquered sin and death.
- I have defeated the devil.

Have you ever been to Mount Rushmore? It's a pretty impressive sight when you see it up close. The thing that sticks with me about it is that it was never finished. They guy ran out of money and died before he could finish it. His son took over the work and lasted about four months before giving up and it was never completed. We all die with unfinished business. Only one man has ever been able to claim that he had no unfinished business when he was dying and that was Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul summed it up when he said, "***Salvation is all his idea and his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish.***" (Ephesians 2:8) There is nothing we can do to add to our salvation. It has been completely accomplished and finished by Jesus Christ. There isn't anything we can do to improve upon his work either. That would be like trying to improve upon the work of a great artist. There is nothing we can do because it has all been done. "***It is finished.***"

What can we do then if the work of our salvation is already done, if the victory has already been won and the enemy already defeated? We can share that good news with others. We can celebrate that good news. We can work to make that good news known. Our efforts won't add one single brush stroke to our salvation, but we can pray it leads others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and what he has done for us. We can live our lives in such a way as to honor Jesus for what he has done for us and allow him to use us to share that good news.