

John 19:30

It takes three words in English to say what Jesus spoke with one word in Greek: *Tetelestai* (“*It is finished!*”) This word could only come at three o’clock in the afternoon on Good Friday. He would not have spoken this word at His baptism in the Jordan. He would not have spoken this word at His transfiguration on the mountain. This word would not have come from His lips after any of His miracles. It would not have come in Gethsemane or in the Upper Room. Not all was finished; not yet. Jesus had to fulfill every Scripture. He had to endure the full punishment from His Father for every sin...every sinner. He had to drain even the last wretched drop from the cup of suffering. And when that cup was empty; when everything was completed, Jesus cried: “*It is finished!*” And He bowed His head and died.

This word from the cross does two things. It disturbs us, and it brings us the sweetest comfort. Our sinful flesh does not react well to this word of Christ. *Finished? No way!* says our flesh, *It’s not finished. I, and I alone, must finish it!*

We are born with this insanity; with the stubborn thinking that we must approach God; that we must compel Him to love us; that we must finish our salvation by having good intentions, good behavior. *Jesus opened the door; now I must finish it by walking through.*

If you doubt what is being said here, then just wait until you are on your deathbed, and Satan attacks you as only he can. He will tempt you then, more than ever, to doubt this word from Jesus: “*It is finished!*” He will remind you of your sinful past. He will cause you, as best as he is able, to doubt that your salvation is finished. *You have not been good enough!* he will say, *to enter heaven. How dare you stand before the righteous Judge!*

I know. I have heard, with my own ears, from the lips of dying Christians, “I hope I go to heaven when I die, but I don’t know for sure.” Satan tempts us throughout our life, and especially as death draws near, to doubt the word of our Savior from His cross, “*It is finished!*” The Pharisee in all of us does not want to believe it.

But friend, Jesus would never have spoken this word if it was not true. Your debt has been paid. God the Father does not look upon your past sins, so why do you? He looks at His Son on the cross, and bids you to look also. Jesus finished it for each and every one of you. There is nothing you need to do; nothing you can do, to complete what your Lord has completed. Your baptism into Him guarantees it. His body and blood for you in the Sacrament is proof enough. Everything is finished. Here in the Gospel it is freely given to you.

When Satan tempts you, you tell that wicked liar, “No, I do not deserve heaven. I am much too sinful to enter Paradise. But my Jesus died for me. I am forgiven. Heaven belongs to me because it is a gift to me in Christ Jesus.”

If it was not finished, then the stone would not have been rolled away on Easter morning. If it was not finished, then there would be no Baptism, no Lord’s Supper, no word of Absolution.

And so this word from the cross brings us sweet comfort. Jesus did everything for you. And then He bowed His head and He died. This means, my friend, that we, too, are able to fall asleep in death without fear, without uncertainty. Because He finished it, Jesus could die. Because He finished it for you, you can live and you can die in peace.

When an author completes a book, there is nothing more the reader can add to it. The book stands as it is - finished, end of story. Your story, although you are still living your life, is really already completed. Jesus is the author of your salvation. Your story begins in sin but ends in grace. It ends at the cross of your Savior. Here, “*It is finished!*” Jesus cries for you. You are forgiven. End of story. Amen.