

Sermon outline and notes:

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John 19:30; Luke 23:46 “Words of Victory from the Cross”

Intro. The enemies of Jesus tried to kill Him on several occasions. Each time they failed. Then Judas came to them saying, “What will you give me if I betray Him to you?” They were very glad that he was willing to betray Jesus and offered him thirty pieces of silver. Judas informed them of His whereabouts that night, & actually led a large armed band of temple police & others to the Garden of Gethsemane. They arrested Jesus. He did not resist. They put Him on trial. They brought in false witnesses & convicted Him of blasphemy. But the Romans did not allow them to put anyone to death. So early the next morning they brought Jesus to Pilate, accused Him of being an insurrectionist, and demanded that Pilate have Him put to death. He resisted, but the Jewish leaders incited the crowd to cry out, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Pilate yielded to their wishes and signed the order for His execution. Jesus and two others were compelled to carry their crosses to Calvary. They the Roman soldiers crucified them. The enemies mocked Him saying, “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross, and we will believe in you. They were so happy they had finally in getting rid of Jesus. They were filled with glee at their victory over Jesus.

However, we are going to see this morning that Jesus was not defeated. Instead, even His final words from the cross show that He was indeed victorious in several ways. He gained a great victory by His crucifixion, and even by His death. And the good news this morning is that if Jesus was victorious, all of us who believe in Him share in His victory!

So let’s see from our text that the last two utterances of Jesus from the cross were actually words of victory. First of all, in His 6th saying from the cross, we see that:

I. CHRIST WAS VICTORIOUS IN ACCOMPLISHING HIS MISSION

Isn’t it a great feeling when you finish something? Back in 2,000 I began the process of working toward a doctor of ministry degree. Just getting accepted into the program was difficult. Then I went through 5 seminars over an 18-month period, reading numerous books and writing numerous papers. Then I began work on my ministry project, which culminated in a 204-page project report. When I finished my project, the report, and the oral exam, it was a great feeling! I could finally say, “It is finished!”

Well, that was nothing compared to what Jesus had to do & finish. In v.28 John says, “After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished (*tetelestai*)...” But the rest of the verse indicates that there was yet one more prophecy to accomplish. Psalm 69:21 says, “for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” So He said, “I thirst!” Sure enough, they gave Him vinegar wine to drink. In v.30 it says, “So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’” It would seem as if He had wished to drink only to make this victorious cry sound forth with full force, like the voice of a herald or the sound of a trumpet. After all, this was the greatest announcement ever proclaimed!

What did Jesus mean when He said, “It is finished?” Well, that short sentence is from a single word in Greek (*teleo*), spoken in the perfect tense (*tetelestai*).¹ It means, “It is finished, it

¹ Technically, Jesus spoke in Aramaic, but we may assume that the Greek word in the perfect tense translates the

stands finished, and it always will be finished!" This word was used to describe a worker who had completed his assignment. It was used of an artist completing a picture! It was used by a merchant when payment was complete. So, we can say that when Christ said, "It is finished!" I believe He was affirming four great truths:

A. He Had Fully Obeyed God's Will – In John 6:38 Jesus said, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." In Hebrews 10:9 we have a prophecy of Jesus saying, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God."² Did He fully accomplish His mission? Indeed He did. Even as a 12-year-old He said, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). He fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law. He overcame every temptation in the wilderness and elsewhere. He taught the multitudes. He healed the sick. He proclaimed the Kingdom of God. The night before He went to the cross, He prayed to His heavenly Father saying, "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4). He even obeyed His Heavenly Father by fully enduring the suffering of the mock trials, & the cross itself. His death was not an accident; it was a divine appointment. Philippians 2:8 says that He "became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."

What does this mean for us? By fully obeying God's will, Jesus met the condition of being the true sacrifice for our sin. He was without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:19), and He died not for His sins, but for the sins of others. So let us put our trust in Him, for when we believe in Christ, His righteousness is imputed to us. His obedience is regarded as our obedience. We are made fully right with God through Christ. 1 Cor. 6:11 says, "But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus...."

Furthermore, when Christ said, "It is finished," that meant:

B. Every Prophecy Had Been Fulfilled – Scholars have estimated that more than 300 prophecies were fulfilled by Christ's first coming. 28 prophecies were fulfilled at the cross. One fulfilled prophecy is referenced in v.24, which indicates they would cast lots for His clothing. In vv.28-29 we see that another prophecy was fulfilled when they gave him sour wine in response to Him saying, "I thirst." Two other fulfilled prophecies are mentioned in verses 36-37. The prophets predicted that none of His bones would be broken, and they shall look on Him whom they have pierced.

Another form of prophecy in the Old Testament is typology. In Genesis Jesus was the fulfillment of the lamb that died in Isaac's place. In Exodus He was the fulfillment of the Passover lamb in Egypt. In Leviticus He was the fulfillment of the scapegoat. Through Christ your sins can be removed far away. In Numbers He was the fulfillment of the brazen serpent that Moses lifted in the wilderness. All who believe and look to Jesus can be saved. In Deuteronomy He is the fulfillment of the Great Prophet who was to come, like unto Moses. In Joshua He is the fulfillment of the typology of Joshua, who leads God's people into the Promised Land.

So every prophecy that needed to be fulfilled up to the time of His death had been accomplished. Not one was unfulfilled. After fulfilling one last prophecy (vv.28-29), He could say, "It is finished!"

Oh, I believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah. He fulfilled the prophecies like no other. Someone has estimated that it is statistically impossible that anyone could have fulfilled all 300 prophecies. Surely, He is the Savior God promised to send! Surely, He is the Son of God.

sense of the Aramaic.

² Likewise, in John 5:30 Jesus said, "I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me."

However, the primary meaning was:

C. Sin's Debt Had Been Fully Paid – As already noted, the word translated “finished,” was also used in commercial transactions. The seller or lender would stamp this word across the bill which meant: the debt is paid in full! Likewise, when Jesus cried out, “It is finished,” He was announcing to all that man's sin debt to a Holy God had now been paid in full. The debt had been paid through the shedding of His blood! And if He has paid the ransom, how can a righteous God in heaven demand payment a second time?

Multitudes have found forgiveness because of what Christ has accomplished. Think of Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter, Matthew the tax collector, and the thief on the cross, just to name a few. According to Revelation 7:14, these and others have “have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

So when Jesus said, “It is finished,” He meant it. He meant that you and I can add absolutely nothing to that work. It would be idiotic for me to take a felt-tipped pen and try to improve the Mona Lisa. It is a masterpiece. It has been accomplished and nothing can be added to it. So it is with our salvation in Christ. You cannot purchase your salvation by giving up stuff for Lent, or by doing good works, or by going through rigorous religious rituals. He paid your sin debt for you. So what religion could not do, what philosophy could not do, what good works could not do, what morality could not do, Jesus the Lamb of God did! Let us simply trust Jesus, and receive the forgiveness of sins fully provided by Jesus. “Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe!”

Finally, when Christ said, “It is finished,” that meant:

D. A Decisive Battle against Satan Had Been Won – I believe that when Jesus said, “It is finished,” this was also a shout of triumph, announcing that the kingdom of darkness had suffered a decisive defeat. The battle was now over. Victory had been won!

In Genesis 3:15 God gave a prophecy that the serpent would bruise the heel of the promised seed of the woman. Through the betrayal of Judas, & the jealous hatred of Israel's leaders, the Romans blindly crucified Jesus. Satan thought he had destroyed the promised Seed. And at the very moment when all seemed lost, the words of Jesus declare that all is in fact won and accomplished. At the sound of those words, can you not hear fetters burst, and prison-walls fall down? It is as the sound of the great jubilee-trumpet, and the proclamation of an eternal salvation. We who believe in Jesus have experienced Romans 8:1, which says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” We have been set free from sin, death, & the kingdom of darkness. Hallelujah! The battle over the souls of men was won by Jesus. It is finished!

So when Jesus said, “It is finished!”, it is quite evident that He was not a helpless victim of circumstance or hatred. He did not die in defeat, but He died in victory. Jesus died with a consciousness that His work was done, and that there was nothing left for Him to accomplish. He did not die prematurely, but only after He had completed all the will of God, after all prophecy had been fulfilled, and only after His atoning work for our sin had been completed. The ransom had been given, sin's wages paid, and divine justice satisfied. Victory over Satan had been won. It was indeed finished!

Finally, in the very last words of Jesus from the cross, we see that:

II. CHRIST WAS VICTORIOUS IN HIS DEATH

There was yet one more act to accomplish before atonement for sin would be complete. Jesus knew that He *had to die*. You see, from the very beginning God declared that death was the consequence of sin. He told Adam that if he disobeyed Him, he would surely die. God declared through the prophet Ezekiel, “The soul that sins shall die.” The Bible also says, “The wages of sin is death.” So the only way sin could be forgiven was for Jesus to die for us. So shortly after He said, “It is finished!”, He died. But before He died, He uttered His last words. And in those last words, and in the manner of His death, He was victorious. He was sovereignly in control as the Son of God. Let me show you in what ways He was victorious in His death. First of all:

A. His Life Was Not Taken from Him – Let me show you the evidences of the fact that Christ died voluntarily, & only when He willed it to be so. Turn back to Luke 23:46. Knowing that Christ had finished His work on earth and had completely satisfied the heavenly Father, we read in Luke’s Gospel, “And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.’” The very fact that Jesus uttered these words with a loud voice also shows that He willingly, voluntarily laid down His life for us. He did not die because His bodily organs failed. Crucifixion was a slow, painful death, for nails in the hands and feet pierced no vital organs. Most of the time, crucified victims would live 1-3 days on the cross. Christ had only been on the cross for 6 hours, and though He had suffered much, His voice was still quite strong. Humanly speaking, He was not near death.

As a pastor I have been by the bedside of a number of dying people. Typically, if they can speak in all, it is with great difficulty, and often you have to bend down to hear what they are saying. There is what is commonly known as the “death rattle” when they breathe toward the end. It is always with a struggle and with great effort.

But just before Jesus died, He spoke with a loud, strong voice. Surely, this means that no one took His life, but He laid it down voluntarily. His life was still strong within Him. If He had willed to do so, He could have unloosed the nails, and come down into the midst of the crowd that had mocked Him. In Jn. 10:17-18 Jesus said, “...I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself.....” (See also John 10:11, 15).

He was also victorious in His death because:

B. He Entrusted His Spirit Back to God - Though humanly speaking He felt forsaken by His heavenly Father during the 3 hours of darkness, He knew that God was still His Father, and as He was about to die, He was comforted by that thought. He addressed God as “Father” as He knew He was about to die. Now that His work of redemption had been accomplished, He knew He would soon be restored to the Father’s presence. So He said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” The word translated “commit” (*paratithemi*) in this case means “to entrust.” He exhibited complete trust in His heavenly Father. As He faced death, He could victoriously say, “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:55).

What a blessed thing it is for us also, my brethren, to die conscious that we are sons of God! Oh, how sweet it is to feel in our soul the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, “Abba, Father!” Knowing that Christ completed the work of redemption, we can go into the jaws of death without fear. When we realize we are about to die, we can say these same words with confidence, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” Such words were the last words of Stephen, Polycarp, Bernard, Luther, Melancthon, John Huss, and an almost endless list of saints. When we know God in such a personal way, we have no fear as we trust our souls to Him in

death. “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57).

By the way, I wish to point out something else about those dying words of Jesus. He quoted from Psalm 31:5.³ How significant it is, that He left the world with a passage of Scripture on His lips? He loved the Scripture, and studied it, and used its expressions continually.

If Christ thus lived upon the Word of God, should not you and I do the same? How much more do we need the Word of God as our spiritual food, our encouragement, our guide, and our hope?

Now let’s see one other way Jesus was victorious, even in His death:

C. He Bowed His Head & Died - Now turn back to John 19:30. In the last of the verse it says, “And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.” “He bowed His head” suggests that until that moment He had held His head mostly erect. But having said, “It is finished,” and “into Your hands I commit My spirit,” there was no need to continue living. The work of redemption had been accomplished. So Jesus gently, and in full control, pillowed (*klino*) His head as if to go to sleep. That is the meaning of the word in Matthew 8:20. So there was no sudden jerk, no jolt, no slumping of the head *when* He died.

Then, after pillowing His head, probably on his raised shoulder, v.30 says, “He gave up His Spirit.” With all other crucified victims, the spirit departs, and then the head falls to a resting position; with Him it was the opposite! He bowed His head, not because He could no longer hold it up, but by choice. Then, and only then, He gave up His spirit. The word translated “gave up” (*paradidomi*) is in the active voice, not passive. When we die, we are passive in the process, because it is no longer in our power to retain our life. But when Christ died, He was actively involved in giving up His spirit. So once again we see that His life’s breath was not taken from Him by the Romans, or the Jews, or by anyone else. He chose to die. Jesus was in total control of His own death. He was no victim. He literally dismissed His spirit. He died purely and simply because He said, “Death, now you may take Me,” and death did. Hebrews 2:9 says that “by the grace of God, [He] tasted death for everyone.” It was by grace that He died, and not the result of a natural necessity. There was no necessity for our blessed Lord and Master to die except the necessity which He had taken upon Himself in becoming the Substitute for His people.

Now going back to Luke’s account, note that he reports the death of Jesus with the words, “He breathed His last” (23:46). Remember, this is Dr. Luke speaking from a doctor’s viewpoint. He had been in the presence of many people who had died. He knew how they died, and He knew how our Lord died. Our Lord’s death was different. The Lord Jesus dismissed His spirit. So He was not a martyr; He was a willing sacrifice for the sins of the world. He who had the right to be exempt from death, freely submitted to it in our place. So Jesus suffered the full consequences of sin on our behalf, including death itself.

In one moment, Jesus had enough life and vigor to say with a strong voice, “It is finished!” Then, just a moment or two later, He gave up His spirit and died. He ceased to breathe. His lifeless body no longer responded to pain, or the people around Him. Even when the soldier pierced His side with his spear, there was no indication of pain. His body was dead, and began to grow stiff. It must appear extremely striking that an individual dies, who could testify respecting Himself, that He was the Resurrection and the Life. The only way we could reconcile that statement with His death is to recognize that Christ died willingly, and not of necessity.

³ Jesus added “Father” to the words of David.

Now let us not forget that, in thus dying, Jesus gave us an example to follow. He knew that it was His time to die, and He did so willingly, without resistance, and with faith in what lies beyond. Even so, when God calls, the Christian does not leave this world with resistance and reluctance, but we are willing to say goodbye to our loved ones and commit our spirit to God. We believe that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Heb. 10:31 says, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,” but not when one knows that every sin has been forgiven.

Conclusion: Even though Christ finished His work of redemption on the cross, the application of salvation to individuals is an unfinished work. Has He saved your soul? Are you ready to face death when it comes? Christ has demonstrated that He is victorious over death. He paid sin’s debt. He tasted death for every man. In so doing, He made forgiveness possible. Repent of your sins, and trust in Him, and you can be saved today!

Source: Oliver B. Greene, *The Gospel According to John, Vol. 3* (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour, 1966); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978); Fred. W. Krummacher, *The Suffering Savior* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1855); John MacArthur, Jr., *Crucifixion & Resurrection: Study Notes on John 20* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1984); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Volumes 9 & 10 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 4 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983)-Luke; Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975); Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Expository Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 327-332; Merrill C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948); Warren W. Wiersbe, “Be” Series: *New Testament Volumes 1 & 2: Book* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1989). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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