

John 19:17-30

¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

¹⁹ Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. ²¹ The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.”

²² Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

²³ When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. ²⁴ “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.”

This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, “They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.” So this is what the soldiers did.

²⁵ Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” ²⁷ and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

²⁸ Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” ²⁹ A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. ³⁰ When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Dear people in God’s Kingdom

We often yearn for the finish lines of life! When we were young, we wanted to be done growing up. When we purchase our first car and soon find ourselves longing for the day of the final car payment. When we pack the children or grandchildren up for the long ride to Disney Land. After two days in the car, it is a magical feeling to finally catch a glimpse of the Magic Kingdom! We yearn for the finish line to finally arrive, to be done.

It is also true that we so yearn to be finished that we often fool ourselves into thinking we are finished—when in reality we are far from it! A basketball team has a great first half. It has to keep up the momentum, however, because the game isn’t finished until the final buzzer sounds. You attend a concert. Throughout it, people may stand and applaud a dozen different times. The concert, however, is not finished until the final chord dies away. You just got an A on a semester examination. Excellent! School, however, is not finished until you open your diploma on graduation day and find it signed.

“It is finished!” Those are perhaps the most famous words that our Lord spoke from the cross. But was he really finished? What did he just finish? What had to happen for him to be able to say he’s

finished? What do those words really mean? Today, let everyone who has ears listen carefully as Jesus proclaims salvation's grand finale with these precious words from the cross. Today, let everyone who has a heart that beats and a soul that yearns for heaven turn to Jesus in repentance; for

Theme: Repent! Turn To Jesus; He And He Alone Finished Your Salvation!

- 1. When he fulfilled all of God's Law**
- 2. When he fulfilled all of God's promises**

It certainly seems as if Pontius Pilate was finished. It hadn't been a good day for Pilate. An angry mob had formed outside of his windows bright and early. The people were demanding to see a crucifixion. Instead, he provided them with an opportunity to see a real criminal punished and an innocent man released. They chose poorly, and the rebel Barabbas walked free! He provided them with a good old-fashioned Roman flogging, hoping to satiate their bloodlust. But 40 lashes minus 1 weren't equal to their hatred. The man the mob brought before Pilate certainly wasn't very talkative. He spoke a little about kingdoms that weren't of this world and something about "the truth." Pilate wasn't up for debating the finer points of philosophy with the makings of a mess on his hands. Charges of treason and the real possibility of a riot had Pilate thinking twice. What would Caesar think if news about this ever got back to Rome? That could kill a governor's career—and that right quick!

With a bowl of water, Pilate thought he had washed innocent blood from his hands. With a sign on the cross, Pilate was publicly proclaiming the reason for the crucifixion—and likely poking the Jewish leaders in the eye! **"The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, 'Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.' Pilate answered, 'What I have written, I have written.'"** Pontius Pilate was certainly finished! Finished with Jesus, finished with priests and people, and finished with this whole frustrating debacle.

By the appearance of things, it looked as if Jesus was finished too. There he was, nailed to wood and hung out to die. His end was coming. The Romans would make sure of that. But Jesus was not finished. Not yet. Jesus was not yet finished fulfilling the law with a perfect love. In a shocking act of love, he looked down from the cross and forgave the very soldiers whose fingerprints were on the hammer. In a saving act of love, he looked over to a criminal and assured him that that very day he would be with Jesus in paradise. Then in a son's final act of love, he looked down from the cross and made his mother, Mary, the object of his loving concern.

How easy it is to forget that Jesus had a real family: a mother named Mary, a stepfather named Joseph, and several siblings. What would it have been like to have Jesus as your brother? What would life be like if your big brother were, well . . . perfect? Ladies, what do you think it would have been like to have Jesus as your son? I can't imagine the privilege of the eternal Son taking on human flesh within my flesh! Indeed, Mary was **"highly favored."**

But being Jesus' mother was a blessing that was destined to cause her heartache. Thirty-three years earlier, Simeon had this to say about her forty-day-old baby boy: **"This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel. . . . And a sword will pierce your own soul too"** (Lk 2:34,35).

That sword was sharpened by her people's rejection of her son. That sword was driven home into her

heart as the nails were driven into her son's flesh. And Jesus knew it. Jesus dealt with the sword in Mary's soul with his perfect love for her soul—love that brought him from heaven to her belly, love that had caused him to obey her every word as a child, and love that looked down from the cross and took care of his mother's future needs: **“Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, ‘Woman, here is your son,’ and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.”**

Jesus provided for his mother's physical and emotional well-being. But he provided the world with far more! With nails in his hands and his end in sight, Jesus shows perfect love for his earthly mother and, in so doing, perfectly fulfilled the law of his heavenly Father. Only then could he provide the world with an innocent substitute, a perfect sacrifice, a holy Savior. In showing his love to his mother, he was also showing his love to us—winning for us a place in the home of the heavenly Father.

But Jesus still was not finished! His love went to work on the cross so that he could be the pure Savior. While on the cross, we see Jesus still actively fulfilling the prophecies of Scripture so that we can have 100 percent certainty that Christ is the true Savior.

The first fulfillment of Scripture was done to Jesus by the soldiers. For them, this wasn't a good Friday. This was a workday. They had been assigned to this execution squad—not a pleasant duty. Still, they took the opportunity to profit a little from it: **“When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. ‘Let's not tear it,’ they said to one another. ‘Let's decide by lot who will get it.’”**

What these soldiers didn't know is that this was the most special paycheck that they would ever bring home! As a matter of fact, **“This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, ‘They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.’ So this is what the soldiers did.”** These very garments had been sung about in Psalm 22 one thousand years before the soldiers ever tossed the dice. The Lord used the soldiers' greed and cruelty to provide us with proof and surety that Jesus was the long-promised Savior!

The first fulfillment of Scripture was done to Jesus. The second fulfillment of Scripture was done by Jesus: **“Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty.’ A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.”**

Jesus' thirst was a terrible result of his crucifixion. The bloodletting of whips, thorns and nails had created a deep-down, dreadful thirst. As true God, he created the recipe for water. As true man, he was desperate for a drink of it! **“I thirst”** is powerful proof that Jesus' suffering was real. Even more, it is powerful proof that Jesus fulfilled Scripture down to the tiniest letter! Jesus knew that one more prophecy had to be fulfilled, that of Psalm 69: **“They . . . gave me vinegar for my thirst” (Ps 69:21).**

The point? Jesus was not finished until he fulfilled every single prophecy of Scripture in the smallest detail, from the toss of Roman dice for a piece of clothing, down to the very vinegar that was offered to Jesus to drink. Jesus fulfilled Scripture 100 percent so that we might have zero percent doubt that our salvation has been accomplished! And drink the vinegar Jesus did, because he had something else he

needed to say, something else we desperately need to hear! Jesus wasn't finished until he was finished—finished fulfilling every letter of the law. Jesus wasn't finished until he was finished—finished fulfilling every prophecy of Scripture. Then and only then was Jesus truly finished: **“When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”**

Jesus' word **“it is finished”** is the “final word” on the FACT of your forgiveness! I say word, because in the Greek language, it is only a single word: *TETELESTHAI*. Translation? “It is finished.” You might find it interesting to know that Greek shopkeepers of Jesus' day would write that very same word on the bottom of bills—once the bill had been paid in full.

What a thought! Our sin was a hopeless debt. There is nothing we can give, say, think, or do to pay off a single sin—let alone a whole life of them. Our sin, our debt, is paid for, paid in full. There is no small balance of sin remaining that we are supposed to pay down. There is no “to be continued” payment plan when it comes to our salvation. It is, simply put, FINISHED. The whole Bible is summed up in this one word: FINISHED. The Son of God who cannot lie said it: the debt of your sin has been paid—paid in full!

If there is anything that our Lenten/Holy Week journey has proclaimed, loudly and clearly, it is that Jesus, and Jesus alone, finished our salvation. Nothing or no one dare take the place of Jesus. No human work, no matter how right or “holy” it feels, dare turn Jesus' finished into to be continued or maybe. Think of it this way:

Judas trusted his money instead of Jesus. This proved to be the ultimate dead end. Peter trusted in his personal feelings of dedication to Jesus. This paved the way to the disaster of his denial of Jesus. Pilate trusted in old-fashioned worldly power. The high priests and leaders of the Jews wanted to preserve the works and traditions of their religion. They trusted human works more than the Son of God. In the process, they rejected the Messiah—the real beating heart of their religion. Even Mary could do nothing to help her Son at the foot of the cross, let alone help her Son do the saving. And still today, nothing, no one, and no human work dare take the place of Jesus:

“But if I just feel bad enough about my sin and just promise to do better next time.” . . . No, your resolutions to do better didn't finish your salvation. Jesus alone finished your salvation. “But if I just make sure that I'm really, truly, surely sorry over my sin, then Jesus will surely forgive me.” . . . No, your sorrow didn't finish salvation. Jesus alone finished your salvation! “But all I have to do is make certain that I truly believe in Jesus; then Jesus will forgive me.” . . . No, your faith didn't die on the cross for you. Jesus alone finished your salvation!

Brothers and sisters, let there be no “ifs, ands, and buts” this Good Friday. Instead, be still. And in simple faith turn once again to Jesus; he, and he alone, finished your salvation. Salvation is accomplished always and forever through Jesus. Salvation is yours only and solely through Jesus. It is finished! Amen.