

## A Word of Completion

John 19:30

Series: Words In Red

*Pastor Jarrett Stephens*

This week I was spending some time at the Lanier Library studying. I like to get over there as often as I can these days to go over and check on the resident housing that is being built on the campus there.

For those of you that are not familiar with the Lanier Library, it was founded by church member, Mark Lanier and from what I understand is the largest personal, theological library in the world. Mark and Becky built the Library in 2010 and opened it up so the public could use its resources – they have over 100,000 volumes on hand for people to have access to.

It really is a gem in our community providing a serene place to study and pray as well as opening it up on nearly a monthly basis for people to come for free to listen and learn from some of the world's foremost theologians. They have an all Spanish lecture coming up in just a few weeks – again, all this just to be a blessing and expose our community to great world-class theological scholars.

The Library and Foundation have been wonderful partners to us. As you may know we have 23 ministry residents on our team here serving our church. They are working on their seminary degree and helping us in the specific ministry they sense God calling them to (cast vision).

When we were starting the program the biggest question we had was housing...where are all these residents going to live?! And many of you opened up your home and I can't say thank you enough for doing that – I HOPE it was a good experience!

As we were getting the program off the ground though Mark and the Foundation came and said, "what if we build housing for them on our campus and they can have access to the Library where they can study for school and kind of live together in fellowship and community – and I said, "that sounds like a GREAT idea!"

And so, the housing is coming along. I love going over there to study and check out the progress. I brought a few pictures for you to see (**SHOW PICS** and talk through). Now, few things here.

- First, you can't register to live in this housing! Ha! It's going to be AWESOME, but it's only for residents in our program and guests of the Library!
- Second, it really is going to set our residency program apart from any other residency that I know of in the country, and I am deeply grateful for the partnership and support of the Library and Foundation.
- Third, and this is a set up for where we are going on the message today – what would happen...what would the Lanier Library and foundation say if we said to them, "You

know this is awesome. It's more than we even imagined. Let us just go ahead and right now...just as it is move in and make ourselves at home."

What would they say? They would look at us like we are crazy and say, "You can't do that! It's NOT complete...it's NOT finished. You have to wait until it's done. Once it's complete...once it's finished, then you can move forward. The project has to come to completion.

Today's message is all about a project coming to completion. As we continue in our *Words in Red* series, I'm titling the message today: **A Word of Completion**

We are looking at the seven statements Jesus makes as he hangs on the cross. The first three statements have to do with others, and they are made at some point between 9:00 in the morning and 12:00 at noon. According to Luke's gospel around 12:00 noon, the "sun's light failed" – it turns pitch black and the final four statements Jesus makes, most scholars believe they came in rapid succession toward the very end of his life.

By way of review, they are in this order (and if you missed any of these messages, I encourage you to go back online and check them out:

- The first statement was a: **Word of Forgiveness**
- The second statement was a: **Word of Salvation**
- The third statement was a: **Word of Comfort**
- The fourth statement was a: **Word of Anguish**
- The fifth statement was a: **Word of Agony**
- The sixth statement was a: **Word of Completion**

We find this sixth statement in **John 19:30** – **"When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."**

These three words in our English text is only one word in the Greek. You've heard the word, "tetelestai" – we'll say more about it in just a moment, but it is a word of completion. It was an accounting term that means "to be paid in full".

We sing sometimes the hymn: **"Jesus paid it all. All to him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow. O praise the one who paid my debt and raised this life up from the dead...Jesus paid it all."**

This word of completion is a cry of victory. In a sense, Jesus is screaming out, "Mission Accomplished". And he was "screaming out"! It was from the gut...like the roar of a lion!

**Matt. 27:50** – **"And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit."**

**Mark 15:37** – **"And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last."**

A word of completion - "It is finished." I want to build the message today around defining what Jesus meant when screaming out, "It is finished" – what is "it".

First, we could say that Jesus means: **Suffering is finished.**

For Jesus, drinking in the full cup of the wrath of God, he didn't spill not one drop. He drank in God's wrath completely and suffered for it. But he didn't just suffer on the cross, his entire life was a life of suffering – it's why he's referred to in Isaiah's prophecy as "a man of sorrows".

Pastor and commentator, **Philip Ryken**: **"From beginning to end, Jesus Christ lived a life of suffering. From the moment he left the heavenly palaces of light to the moment darkness descended upon him on the cross he suffered."**

It's true! Just think about his life – from birth to this moment on the cross:

- He was born in an insufferable place – a cave where animals were kept...
- From the outset of his ministry, he was rejected. John said it like this in **John 1:11** – **"He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him."**

**Isaiah 53:3** – **"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not."**

- His family thought of him as crazy and rejected him...
- He lived as a traveling preacher and teacher saying of himself (Matt. 8:20) "the son of man has no place to lay his head."
- Religious leaders were after him...
- In the Garden one of his disciples betrayed him, the others abandoned him...
- Leading up to the cross, people mocked him ruthlessly and the soldiers abusing and beating him constantly...
- He was forsaken by God his Father while on the cross...

From start to finish, the life of Jesus was one of suffering and when he cried out on that day, "It is finished", in one way he was saying "the suffering is finished."

And listen: He will NEVER suffer again! He came the first time as a suffering servant – when he returns a conquering king! His physical life was one of suffering and when he cries out "it is finished" we can say with authority his suffering is forever over!

Now, we've talked about the "why" behind his suffering. He is identifying with humanity. Jesus as our High Priest (Heb. 4) knows what it is to feel our pain...to experience temptation...he can fully sympathize with us.

Our sin is behind his suffering. Sin has to be accounted and atoned for...that's one of the interesting points about Jesus using this word – “tetelestai” an accounting term itself. IN the death of Jesus and him crying out, “It is finished” he is announcing sin is paid for – IN FULL!

And this leads to a second meaning to “It is finished” and that is we could say Jesus means in saying this that: **Sacrifices are finished**

**Illus. Credit card** – (Exxon gas Card) See, Old Testament sacrifices that were brought to the Lord were like the swiping of a credit card. Ultimately that sin was going to have to have to be paid for...someone had to foot the bill! And not just for the sins of people in the past – but for all our sins – people living now!

If Jesus doesn't come, we are still making sacrifices! And that would be the problem with sacrifices! We'd have to keep making them over and over and over again? Why? Because we sin over and over and over again.

**Heb. 10:3-4, 11-14** – “But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. <sup>4</sup>For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins...And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup>But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup>waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. <sup>14</sup>For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said prophetically in **John 1:29b** – “...Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

We'll talk more about this in detail next week, but there's a reason the veil was torn in two from top to bottom, when Jesus died. Yes, it represented we have access to God, but it was also the exclamation point on what gets us that access – it's not the sacrifices of bulls and goats, but the sacrifice of Jesus!

When Jesus screams, “It is finished” he is in effect saying, “My suffering is finished.” “Making sacrifices is finished.” He could also mean in this: **Satan is finished.**

In the death of Jesus, Satan is defeated. Again, this is a cry of victory, and it is a victory over Satan...over the Enemy. It is a fulfillment of scripture. Remember the curse given to the Satan who manifested himself as a serpent, leading Adam and Eve to sin and start war against God.

The prophecy read: **Gen. 3:15** – “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

When Jesus cries out, “It is finished”, he is stomping...crushing the head of Satan and fulfilling the very first promise God made of a future victory to come.

Paul speaks of this triumph of Christ on the cross in:

**Col. 2:13-15 – “And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.”**

We’ve talked a lot about the suffering of Jesus – physically, emotionally, spiritually – it would be easy to look at the cross and think defeat. Had we been at the cross that day, we would have looked at Jesus...his movement...it would have seemed to be over!

Victory would have been the farthest thought from your mind. BUT we would be VERY wrong to think that way!

The reality is Jesus’ perfect life and obedient death disarmed Satan...he triumphed over him! And in crying out, “It is finished”, Jesus fulfills one of the main reasons he came to earth.

**1 John 3:8b – “...the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.”**

The greatest work the devil does is death! This is why Paul refers to death as our final enemy in 1 Cor 15. However, because Jesus died...because he tasted death for us, we don’t have to fear the Enemy, his schemes, nor his greatest tool for causing fear, which is death itself!

Listen to **Heb. 2:14-15 – “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”**

**Illus. Trophy – preteen camp**

The cross is the greatest trophy of victory the Christian has. It’s why we put it on the top of our churches...it’s why we put crosses on our homes and where them around our necks – it’s a trophy...a symbol of victory! It is finished!

It means – Jesus’s suffering is finished. It means making sacrifices is finished. It means Satan is finished. Put it all together and “it” also means our: **Salvation is finished.**

We talk often about the “finished work of Jesus”. What do we mean when we say this? Jesus spoke often of a “work” that he had to accomplish...that he had to complete...that he had to finish! I’ll give you just a few examples of this:

**John 4:34 – “Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.”**

**John 6:38 – “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.”**

**Luke 12:50 – “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!”**

The work of God was to accomplish the will of God. And this will of God was that Jesus would offer up himself as a sacrifice and die for the sins of the world – THIS act of Jesus going to the cross and giving his life – “IT IS FINISHED”, is Jesus saying, “I’ve completed the work I was sent to do. The way to salvation is complete.” – And then...he dies.

And you know what he does when he dies – he rests in the grave. I can’t stay here long, but I’ve got to show it to you. John when he writes his gospel is no doubt playing off and echoing much of the creation account we see in Genesis.

**Gen. 1:1 – “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”**

**John 1:1 – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”**

- In Genesis 1 much is said about light and darkness. In John 1, we are told Jesus is the true light that shines in darkness. In Genesis 1, there are seven days of creation. In John’s gospel there are seven signs that Jesus performs (seven major miracles) that point to a new creation.
- In Genesis 1, God rests on the seventh day and in John’s gospel, Jesus is resting in the grave after his seventh sign, his death on the cross. The words are closely aligned...no coincidence in this!

**Gen. 1:30-2:3 – “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day (He completed his work on the 6<sup>th</sup> day – when is Jesus dying on the cross completing the work of salvation – the 6<sup>th</sup> day! What does he do after he completes his work? He rests!). Thus the heavens and the earth were finished (what’s the word? “Finished”), and all the host of them. <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God (what? “finished”) finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. <sup>3</sup> So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.”**

Jesus, right here in John 19, after thirty-three years of living on the earth and three of those years being full of intense ministry, when he cries out, “It is finished”, he is saying the work of recreation – i.e. the work of redemption – it’s done. Mission accomplished.

And while recreation won’t be consummated until a future date set by the Lord himself, it’s as sure to happen as us being here right now because of the death of Jesus on the cross.

Jesus finishes his work, just like in creation and rests. The finished work of Christ. Beautiful. What is “it”? “It” means:

- Suffering is finished – to be clear, not our suffering, His suffering. His suffering though enables us to never suffer alone!
- Sacrifices are finished – he is the FULL and final sacrifice!
- Satan is finished. Notice, Jesus didn’t say “sin is finished”. We’ll still struggle in this fallen world with sin, but Satan who tempts us to evil and leads us to sin, while he still roars, he has no teeth.

Jesus on the cross “karate kidded” him (my 80’s and Cobra Kai fans know what I’m talking about! Finish him!

- Salvation is finished. There is nothing more that needs to be done. “Tetelestai”.

This word has such a wide range of meaning...as we mentioned it’s an accounting term. It means to being to an end...to accomplish...to finalize...to perfect.

And this is exactly what Jesus did in living his life and in dying on the cross. He brings to completion a life of obedience and faithfulness to God. He accomplishes our salvation and in finishing his race perfectly will perfect us along the way.

**Illus. Ruth Bell Graham – (SHOW IMAGE) – “end of construction. Thank you for your patience.”**

So, in closing let’s apply some of this...never want you to leave here without knowing that what we talk about on Sunday effects greatly how we live Monday through Saturday. What do we do with a message like this? How can this influence us.

Let me share with you three points of application. We talk about the finished work of Christ today:

### **1. Rest in the finished work of Christ.**

This is FOR SURE application number one. In other words, stop trying work your way to God. What did we talk about today? Jesus is the full and final sacrifice!

There is nothing you can do to earn salvation. Stop trying to work to please God in the sense of earning something that he gives. We rest in the finished work of Christ on the cross. He did all the work!

**Eph. 2:8-9 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”**

Stop striving...stop ceasing...stop working...stop trying to obey the Law as if that is going to make you any closer or give you any more favor with God. The way we get to God is through Christ...and the way we enter into a personal relationship with Christ is trusting what he did for us on the cross.

Listen, this is WHY the gospel is called the “good news” of Jesus Christ! You can find rest (spiritual rest – get off the treadmill that says I have to work my way to God) and find spiritual, salvation rest in the finished work of Christ today.

? – Have you done this? In just a few minutes, we’re going to have an invitation and I’m going to invite you to trust in the finished work of Christ?

**Matt. 11:28 – “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”**

And Jesus wants nothing more than for you to trust in what he did for you on the cross. We owed a debt we could never pay and because of his love and mercy, He paid in full that debt on our behalf. Rest in the finished work of Christ.

## **2. Reflect often on the finished work of Christ.**

THE way to grow in our personal holiness and walk with Christ, is not come up with a list of things to do...a list of ways we can serve God. Instead of making that list of things to do, to grow in our walk with God, make a commitment to ponder hard and think long and often about what took place on the cross.

Mediate on it. Reflect on it. And as you do, you know what will happen? Your heart for Jesus will increase. Your devotion to him will enlarge. And what you “do” for him will take care of itself. How will it not?

Let’s just do it right now...we’ve got a minute! The finished work of Christ shows me:

- I’m accepted...
- I’m loved...
- I’m a part of a family...
- I have value...
- I don’t have to have a guilty conscious...

The fact that Jesus gave his life willingly for me make me want to be on mission for him...makes me want to worship him...

Homework: Don’t do your quiet time without 30 seconds to a minute thinking on and reflecting on the finished work of Christ on the cross for you.

## **3. Resist sin and temptation from the finished work of Christ.**



Now, in Christ we have the ultimate victory over Satan. However, we still battle and engage in spiritual warfare even though the ultimate victory has already been won (Eph. 6).

And as we wage against the Enemy, remember we don't fight our spiritual battles FOR victory, but we fight FROM a place of victory – we already have the ultimate victory in cross and resurrection.

The finished work of Christ shows us that the power of the enemy has been defeated. That means, “in Christ” we can say “no” to any sin.

**1 John 4:4 – “Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”**

Because of the finished work of Jesus, his Spirit lives in us. This means we can break...we can destroy any stronghold in our life! Because of what he accomplished on the cross sin does NOT have power over us! It does not rule us!

The starting place to fighting the Enemy and resisting sin and temptation is having an understanding and awareness of the finished work of Jesus. It's a constant reminder to us of what we have died to (the old self) and the power that now lives in us (Christ in us!).

In him, our whole identity has changed, and we are no longer victims but victors. We don't struggle against sin with no answers, we understand that “in him” and because of his work on the cross, he is the answer. Our job is to simply abide in him and by his Spirit allow him to rule and reign in our life.

**Illus. March Madness** – it's madness! And it's not how you start that matters. It's how you finish!

Jesus on the cross – he looked like a no name team from a no name conference – everybody counted him out! But in going to the cross he finished off the number one seed death and accomplished our salvation. “Tetelestai” – it is finished.

Let's pray.

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