

THE WORD OF COMPLETION

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." John 19:30.

The surging crowd at the foot of the cross watched the spectacle of Christ's death. To them it was a brief episode in the drama of life. They heard strange words which they could not understand, nor did they really care. When He said, "It is finished," they doubtless thought it meant that His life was at an end. But to the ages these words have grown richer in meaning, fuller in content and more spiritual in significance. These words do not denote defeat, but glorious victory. They are words of hope, shining in the darkness, dispelling gloom and ushering in hope and life abundant.

Christ, on Golgotha, looked up and looked down. He looked up to God and thought of His having glorified His name, having finished the work that God gave Him to do. He looked down to men and thought of the saving power which His Cross was to exert over millions of the human family. It must have been a moment of most intense joy for His last pang was endured, His last service rendered and His vicarious work completed.

Near the end of His six hours on the Cross, Christ opened His lips to utter just one word - "tetelestai." A great dramatist said, "The words of dying men enforce attention." How much more the words of the dying God-Man. The Greeks of old thought saying much in few words was the perfection of oratory. That perfection is found in this cry of Christ. He uttered a sea of truth in the drop of a single word. In the word "tetelestia" is wrapped up the gospel of God; is contained the ground of the believer's assurance; is discovered the sum of all joy, and the very spirit of all divine consolation. It is probably the greatest single word ever uttered. Krummacher thinks it is the greatest and most momentous word ever spoken on earth. Brooks declared that this word contains "a breadth, and length and depth and height, which will take eternity to comprehend." Also that no one could fathom its profound depths or understand its vast significance. Panton declares: "It is the one word in all literature which summarizes the work of Calvary forever."

To finish means to bring to an end; and there are different ways in which things may be brought to an end. A work is finished when it is completed or brought to perfection. Like the account of creation is concluded as follows: "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the hosts of them." A thing is finished when it comes to an end by being destroyed, e.g., an egg broken. Again the word is used to state something brought to an end without regard to the nature of that end, e.g., Paul said, "I have finished my course."

The more difficult and prolonged any task is, the greater is the satisfaction in finishing it. Every one who has aimed at the best, and has worked nobly to achieve the best, knows what it means, after accomplishing anything on which a great deal of labor has been bestowed or the accomplishment of which has been delayed, to be able to say, "There, it is finished at last!"

Our lives are overshadowed pathetically by a tragic sense of the incomplete. Men start to build but are often unable to finish their structures. Joshua muttered his deathbed confession, "there remaineth yet much land to be possessed." When we look back over our work we see much that is left undone. Our weaknesses and sinfulness prevent us from achieving all. Christ alone could say that He had finished His work. In moonlit Gethsemane He exclaimed with a sense of achievement: "Father, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). Then on the cross He cried: "It is finished."

Words are vehicles which transport ideas from one mind to another. Sometimes the weight of the idea is so great that the vehicle breaks down en route from one heart to the other. Infinite thoughts cannot be contained in finite words or comprehended by finite minds. This is true with the sixth word spoken from the cross. However, though this word is incapable of containing all of its cargo, yet it brings to us enough that we can marvel at the richness of its meaning and rejoice in its message to our hearts.

No other person could have said "tetelestai" as Christ said it. He had lived a perfect, complete, human life in which there were no mistakes, no omissions, no shortcomings. This was an exclamation of supreme satisfaction. Over His teachings He had wonderful satisfaction. Over His life He had sweet satisfaction. Over His miracles and works He had comforting satisfaction. But when Christ Jesus cried, "It is finished," He had something in His mind of great importance and tremendous value to us. This brings us then, to this question WHAT WAS FINISHED?

The Old Testament prophecies had predicted all the remarkable events in the earthly life of Christ Jesus. In the hour when Christ cried, "It is finished," all the prophecies which had been written of Him ere He should die were fulfilled. All the prophecies concerning His life of humiliation upon this earth became history that day.

The sufferings which He had come to endure were finished. What tongue or pen can describe the sufferings of the Saviour? O the unutterable anguish, physical, mental and spiritual, which He endured! Appropriately was He designated "The Man of Sorrows." His physical sufferings were excruciating, but they were as nothing compared with His anguish of soul. He suffered loneliness and rejection. He was misunderstood and nothing can bring greater sorrow than that. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." They did not welcome Him. They did not want Him. Instead of being received, He was rejected. "We will not have this Man to reign over us," was their cry.

Through sin the human race had been brought under the sentence of God's condemnation. Through sin men had become slaves of Satan and self. But Christ had come to redeem His people. This sixth cry on the cross meant, "I have finished that great work of redemption." He meant, "I have finished it and as a result it is done forever." He finished it in such a way that God in heaven was satisfied as to the claims of His Law. The atonement was complete because it was the offering of a perfect life. He could

look back over His life without any regrets. No talent had been misused or left unused. All of His influence had been beneficent. No one had ever been hindered in running the race of life by anything Christ had said or done. Anytime or anywhere He could truthfully say, "I do always those things that please Him."

On account of sin the demands of justice had to be met; the requirements of God's holiness had to be satisfied; and the awful debt men incurred had to be paid. On the cross this was done; done by none other than the Son of God; done perfectly; done once for all. "It is finished -- what was finished? The making of atonement. "It is made an end of" -- what was? Our sins and their guilt. "It is paid" -- what was? The price of our redemption. "It is performed" -- what was? The utmost requirements of the Law. "It is accomplished" -- what was? The work which the Father had given Him to do.

When Christ Jesus said, "It is finished," a greater work was completed than that of creation. When God created this universe He just spoke, "Let there be," and the world was. But redemption involved a great deal more. God's wisdom, goodness and power shone in creation. But in redemption, not only wisdom, goodness and power were manifested, but also righteousness, love and mercy. Think of what a sacrifice it meant from the side of the Heavenly Father to give His Son. Think of what a sacrifice it meant on the side of Christ to give His life as a ransom for many. Think of all the labor He had to perform and the agony He had to suffer, in order to deliver and keep His people forever. Therefore, the work of redemption was even a greater work than that of creation.

On the cross, Christ procured salvation for sinful men. There, He finished His work on earth. Earth's millions cannot blot out their sins, but they can accept Him and know the joy of sins washed away. It is our part to accept the finished work of Christ. There is no work left for us to do for salvation. We can be saved only by entering into the finished work of Christ. Simply accept salvation as a gift. Don't try to add something of your own to merit God's favor.

'Tis done: the great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's and He is mine.
Happy day! Happy day
When Jesus washed my sins away.