

April 3rd

The Greatest Word in a Desperate Hour

*"When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."
John 19:30*

Finishing an assigned task. Completing assigned work. Checking off all the items in your to-do list. Feeling a sense of accomplishment and success. As men, we are doers. We desire to work hard to complete our daily assignments. God has made us in His image and marked us with a significant purpose. And every day we wage warfare against our enemy who wants to stop our advance into enemy territory. He wants to trample our defenses. Even though we struggle to remember the invisible spiritual war, most of us have no trouble nodding our heads in agreement about the realities of the daily spiritual battle that we face. But one thing we might miss as we fight the good fight of faith is remembering that Jesus faced the same battle.

Jesus was the Son of God and never sinned. But have you ever considered that His fight was even more intense than ours, even when He possessed a perfect union with the Father? Take some time in the next few days to trace Jesus' life. Notice when the gospel writers describe his weariness and frustration with His followers. Make special note of the onslaught of the enemy. Immediately after His baptism, Jesus was led into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. He didn't eat or drink that entire time. And then the tempter comes. Three times Satan tempts Jesus. Satan is relentless to convince Jesus to give up His mission. You'd think that Satan would give up, but He wants nothing more to stop the Father's redemptive mission to end sin's tyranny.

Follow Jesus into the garden of Gethsemane as He prays three times for the cup of suffering to pass from Him. Each time, he says to His Father, "Your will be done." Jesus' mission was decided before the foundation of the world. The glorious, Triune God determined that the Father would send the Son to pay for the sin of the world, while the Spirit applied the Son's work to those who believe in Him. Satan stops at nothing to thwart God's mission. But God. Jesus' work on this planet could not be stopped. Jesus knew this. John 17 records these words in Jesus' prayer: "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do."

"The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him. His rage we can endure, for lo his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him." Do you know what Martin Luther is talking about here? It's the words that Jesus said on the cross: "It is finished." Wait...that's three words not one. Actually, it's three words in English, but one in the original language. Let's do a deep dive into what this "little word" means, because it's not a little word, it's one of the greatest words ever written! Come with me on a little journey of the ancient language for just a few moments. In the ancient Koine Greek language, you have different tenses. I'll mention three of them: present, aorist, and perfect. The present tense is what it appears to be: a continual action that doesn't stop. The aorist tense acts as a snapshot event that doesn't address how long it occurs. The perfect tense refers to a completed action that continues its relevance in the present and future. Which tense do you think this "little word" represents? If you guessed the perfect tense, you are correct! That's why this word is one of the greatest, if not the greatest words in the entire Bible. Jesus' work to destroy the sting of death is completed at the foot of the cross.

Jesus takes on the sin of the world as our perfect Substitute. He finished the work that was given before the foundation of the world! The tyranny of death from Genesis 3 has been overthrown with perfect love shown at the cross! The completed work of Jesus shows the perfect justice and perfect love of the Father at the same time. Our Father can't alter His justice to let sinners join Him for eternity. He must punish sinners because He's just. But at the same time, His love is poured out because He sends a replacement for us. Jesus completes the mission. The wrath of God is

satisfied. The Father executes perfect justice in punishing His Son for our sin. And because Jesus' work is finished, our Father declares us "not guilty!"

Men, we can see that this word "it is finished" impacts people for eternity. But it's not enough to agree with what a word means. Scientists study the glorious evidence of our world, but many remain atheists because they don't believe that a God created it. They remain unfazed and unchanged by this evidence that God has shown them. But are we any different? Has the deep truth of Jesus' finished work changed us? Have the worries, challenges, and tasks of this life clouded our vision of the greatest conquest ever completed? Do we still strive to make life about us and our story? Men, we must remind ourselves daily of the good news of Jesus! Jesus' work completes the Father's plan to rescue us. One little word alters human history. Satan is defeated. I'll end with this example: war takes its toll on prisoners of war. These prisoners often suffer from neglect and severe abuse. And one day they are freed. They no longer have to cringe or shy away from the contact from their former captors. They are free! But the reality of that truth doesn't always penetrate their brains. They still flinch when they see their former captors. They still obey them when they are told to do something. It's because they can't truly believe it, even though they are truly free. In many ways, we act the same way with sin. We've heard the news that we are free, but we still live in the shadow of our sin. We fight from a position of failure instead of the victory that Christ has already given. Men, will you fight from victory today? It is finished!

Spend some time thinking the greatness of Jesus finished work. Confess ways that you have struggled to believe His finished work for you. Ask Him to help you live from His victory that has already been secured.

For Further Reading: Matthew 27:11-66