

Illus “There is a great difference between your religion and mine,” said a Christian to his neighbor. “Indeed!” was the reply. “What is that?” “It is this: Yours has only two letters in it, while mine has four.” “What do you mean?” said he. “Well, yours has ‘DO.’ Mine has ‘DONE.’”

As we approach the 6th statement of Jesus on the cross, let’s hold this thought in our minds, that what is written over the cross is the word ‘DONE’

It’s Friday afternoon, just before 3 pm, and it had been a long 6 hours of suffering for Jesus He has been on that cross since 9 that morning, that cursed, wretched tree
A punishment so terrible the Roman statesman Cicero said: *“Let the very name of the cross be far away not only from the body of a Roman citizen, but even from his thoughts, his eyes, his ears”*

And this is, in fact, what many try to do even today
November 1993, 2,000 people gathered at a theology conference called ‘Re-imagining God’
One of the speakers was Lesbian feminist Virginia Mollenkott of the National Council of Churches, who said the idea of Jesus’ atonement was *‘the ultimate in child abuse and a model of human child abuse...that depicts God as an abusive parent.’*

This was followed by Dolores Williams, a professor at Union Theological Seminary, who said, *‘I don’t think we need folks hanging on crosses, dripping blood, and weird stuff.’*¹

We do need that bloody cross, and we do need Jesus on it, or there is no hope of our salvation
And we do need to hear the words that He spoke, and so our ears listen carefully as we read them from John’s Gospel

“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

He said ***“It is finished,”***

Three words in English, but again, as we saw last week, one word in the original Greek
The ancient Greeks boasted of being able to *“to give a sea of matter in a drop of language”*

PP Charles Spurgeon wrote that this one word *‘would need all the other words ever spoken, or ever can be spoken, to explain it...it is altogether immeasurable. It is high; I cannot attain to it. It is deep. I cannot fathom it.’*

This word isn’t the despairing cry of a helpless victim of injustice, it is a cry of victory

PP It is the Greek word ***tetelestai***, a word well-known and in great use in the 1st century

PP Servants used it when they had completed their masters’ tasks

PP Artists used it when the final touches had been applied to their masterpiece

PP Merchants used it when haggling had ended, and both parties were satisfied, the deal made

PP Farmers used it when a perfect lamb was born into the flock

PP Tax collectors wrote it across tax receipts when paid in full

PP Bankers used it when a loan had been completely repaid

PP And priests would pronounce this word over an animal that was found to be spotless and without defect, worthy to be offered in the Temple

¹ It is Well, Mark Dever and Michael Lawrence, p. 145

Even more, remember that the Greek language had tenses, and the tense of this word from the lips of Jesus meant '*It is finished and it is forever done!*'
Not finished for today and we'll do it again tomorrow, but "*It is finished*" once and for all!

But let's look carefully at what that little word '*It*' refers to
The first answer is that *tetelestai* was Christ's confirmation that all the prophecies about Him had been fulfilled

When Jesus said that He thirsted, the soldiers heard and put a sponge on a hyssop branch, soaked with sour wine and gave Him some to drink

PP This was to *fulfill the scriptures*, John said, so in one way, *tetelestai* is the declaration that all scripture has been fulfilled

There are two more prophecies to be fulfilled and we see them in verse 36 and 37
But these are passive prophecies, meaning they will be accomplished in His death
His cry of thirst was accomplished in His life, and with it He could say *tetelestai*

PP Second, *tetelestai* was the declaration that His suffering was finished
He was born in a stable, He was rejected by His own people, even his own family
He suffered reproach, He was thought to be demon-possessed, a charlatan
His own home town tried to push Him off a cliff
God, Who had come to deliver His people, was pushed away at every turn
He had no place to call home, no bed to sleep on and pillow for His head
He wasn't given a fair trial, He received the greatest injustice possible
He was beaten, mocked, cursed, His beard hair was ripped from His face
So severe was His torture He no longer looked human, and He was impaled on a cross to be made a spectacle of, a human exhibit for the sinfully curious
His shout of victory signaled that His suffering had come to an end, He had completed it
Which is a promise for us who are in Christ; that one day we too will be able to say *tetelestai*
There will be no more tears, no more suffering, no more death, only glorious, joy-filled life!

PP Yet thirdly, *tetelestai* was His affirmation that everything necessary for our redemption was complete

Friends, when you hear me say the word *redemption*, what do you think of?

Maybe you think of redeeming a coupon, or redeeming yourself by making up for a mistake

But in the 1st century, *redemption* was a secular word connected to warfare

In the ancient days, wars were conducted much differently than what is common today

One of the unfortunate customs of war took place after the battle was over, as the victorious soldiers rounded up all those of the vanquished who were still alive

They took them as spoils of war, slaves, and they would find the important people of rank who were not good for menial labor

Of course, they would want to be home with their families and friends, but they had fallen into the power of a strong enemy and they could not get free

The victorious soldiers would send word back to their families and let it be known that, for a price, they could have their loved one back

The families could purchase their loved one, redeeming him by paying the ransom price

Left to themselves they had no means of freedom, if they were to be free, money must be paid
This understanding of redemption is what enables us to hear the heart of Jesus in *tetelestai*

This need of *redemption* is what we see all through the Scriptures

We read in Genesis 1 that God created all there is, and to the Creator belongs the creation

What work of art was ever the master of the one who painted it?

We might turn from Him, deny He exists but we cannot alter the fact that He made us and
we all belong to Him

But then sin came into the picture and its destructive power enslaves human beings

PP And the solution to sin throughout the entire Old Testament was sacrifice, for *“Without the
shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins”* **Hebrews 9:22**

Sin brought death, life is in the blood, something innocent has to die, so that we could live

You see this in Genesis as God covers sinful Adam and Eve with animal skins...

But friends, the death of an animal, the blood of an animal could never take away sin, never!

Sin is too heinous, too evil for the blood of an animal to atone for

The Jews knew this, as the smoke from their altars had to rise continually day after day

Year after year the high priest had to go back into the holy of holies and sprinkle the mercy seat
with the blood of the slain animal

No priest was ever allowed to sit down while on their shift, all pointing to what they knew, a
better sacrifice was to come that would once and for all, take away sin

It was not the blood of the animals that had cleansing forgiving power, it was that sacrifice that
was to come Who would, the Lamb of God, Jesus

Every animal offered in faith pointed forward to the perfect sacrifice that would one day be given

You could write a check for any amount you wanted, but it would be worthless without the
money in your account to cover it

That written check only has value when you have the money in your account to cover it

It was the blood of Christ which stood behind every faithful sacrifice that made it effective

The cry of *tetelestai*, it is finished, proclaimed that His blood, His death just wrote the check for
the ransom price

His death made atonement, His death paid the price for the freedom for any who trust in Him

PP Jesus said, *“If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the
truth, and the truth will set you free.”* **John 8:31-32**

PP And He went on to make clear just what this freedom was: *“Truly, truly, I say to you,
everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.”* **John 8:34**

Sin captured all of us on the field of life and made us all prisoners and slaves

We have all fallen into the power of a strong enemy and we cannot break free

We need a redeemer who will pay the ransom price, to atone for our sins

And the prisoner cannot pay the ransom price, someone who loves him must

If God wants people back, He must pay the ransom price, to buy us back from sin and give us
freedom

PP This is why Jesus came to earth, *“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to
serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”* **Mark 10:45**

His death was the ransom price

PP It's why the early church could glory in the knowledge that Jesus '*bought with His own blood*' the church. Acts 20:28

PP The ransom price Christ paid was His death on that cross: "*you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers [nature to sin], not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*" 1 Peter 1:18-19

PP And while the church on earth sings of this truth, the saints in heaven above are singing, "*Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,*" Revelation 5:9

We are set free from captivity to sin and free to love God-'*ransomed from the futile ways*', we are a '*ransomed people for God*'

His victorious cry of tetelestai was His proclamation that He paid the price and set us free

The work of redemption the Father had given Him was completed in His death, sin was paid for, and Satan was defeated

But how can we say that Satan was defeated in His cry of tetelestai, he is still a deadly enemy?

Thunder and lightning actually occur at the same time, it just doesn't seem that it does
Lightning strikes, its energy heats and rapidly expands, creating a sound wave of thunder
The reason for the delay for crashing boom is that sound travels a lot slower than light
Take this dynamic and apply it to the 6th statement of Christ and we understand it a little better
"It is finished" is the cry of victory over Satan, he has been defeated at the cross!

PP "*He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him.*" Colossians 2:15

Both in and out of the Bible, redemption was about freedom which comes at a price

There is no redemption without the paying of a ransom and there can be no redemption unless freedom is *guaranteed*

They must go together, payment and freedom so that all who believe in Him can say with the

PP Apostle Paul '*For sin will have no dominion over you.*' Romans 6:14

We are redeemed by Jesus' death for freedom to serve God Who loves us and bought us

Have you been set free from sin, the great iron bars on your soul opened wide?

Have you left the cell, or are you still sitting there hardly believing that freedom is really here?

Have you left that cell, only to walk right into another, having closed the manacles and shackles once again on your wrists and feet?

Friends, haven't you ever gone to the zoo and seen the great gorillas sitting there staring back with almost lifeless eyes?

Or elephants which despite their overwhelming power are restrained by a thin rope and a stake?

Or lions, the king of the beasts, who just lie in the sun panting in captivated weakness?

How similar to Christians who, freed from sin, have found new ways to be enslaved and they live their lives with an empty, lifeless gaze in their eyes

Tetelestai is the declaration that everything that needed to be done for our freedom from the bondage of sin is complete, we can live for the glory of God!

Brother and sister in Christ, you are free, He has finished all the work needed to make you so
As surely as Jesus was the Son of God Who bought you with His blood, you are free!
Sin no longer is your master, Satan no longer has domineering power over you
You can live, because of Jesus, a life of victorious power serving God

PP ***"You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."***

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Friends, don't ever forget *tetelestai*, let every day of your life begin and end with the promise, ***"It is finished"***

We have an artist in our church who signs all her paintings with this great word, to remind her of
Christ's work of redemption in her life

Christ has paid the ransom to set us free from sin so that we can live for Him
Have you placed your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ plus nothing else, to save your soul?
Have you been set free from the bondage and penalty of sin by the ransom price of His death?
If there is any doubt, then I would invite you to pray to the Lord and have it settled today
And if you do, He will once and for all write that great word *tetelestai* across your soul

Pray