

“When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

John records for us the last words of Jesus. “It is finished.” In Greek it is but one word, τετέλεσται. It is one word, but it is packed with meaning. We will spend our time together this evening unpacking this meaning.

The first thing I want to explain about it is finished, τετέλεσται, is that it is a verb in the passive voice. Remember, verbs are action words such as swim, jump, or write. That the verb is passive means that the recipient of the action is the focus. Thus, the passive voice is the barn was struck by lightning rather than lightning struck the barn. An infamous use of the passive voice is the phrase, “mistakes were made.” But we’re left wondering, who made the mistakes?

It is finished! τετέλεσται! But who did the finishing? Who completed this that happened on Good Friday? Perhaps the forces of evil have done it. Certainly, as we read this account from John 19, we see the enemies of Jesus conspire against Him to trap Him and kill Him. Is it the chief priest and elders who frame Him in a sham trial? The Jews finished it. Is it Pilate who ultimately caves to the pressure of the crowds? Pilate finished it. Is it the soldiers who twisted a crown of thorns and tortured Him without mercy? The soldiers finished it. Certainly, it has to be Satan who acted as the master of puppets pulling the strings behind the scenes. The devil finished it. Is this exclamation a cry of defeat? Evil has finally gotten me? The devil has won? Perhaps Satan heard it as such.

That can’t be it. Jesus is adamant that His death is no mere accident or a tragedy of history. Jesus said, **“No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”** Jesus could have escaped the clutches of evil, avoided the suffering, but He took it all head on for you.

It is finished! τετέλεσται! But who did the finishing? Sometimes we like to put ourselves in the story. Maybe it’s me or you who has to finish it. It is finished, but only because you accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior. It is finished but because you made His sacrifice perfect by your good deeds. Christ did His part, now you need to do yours. There

are some Christians who think they need to contribute something to this Good Friday story to assure their place in the life to come.

By no means! Us adding something to what Christ has done on Good Friday would be like a kindergartner contributing his artistic talents to the *Mona Lisa*. It would be ruining a masterpiece. All we have to contribute is our sins. We read in the book of Hebrews, “**For by a single offering [Jesus] has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.**” Through the offering of Himself for us, He has paid the full price.

It is finished! τετέλεσται! But who did the finishing? 3. The Lord Jesus Christ has finished this. Even though He received the suffering, the blows, the condemnation from the forces of evil. He received your sin and mine. It was God in the person of Jesus Christ who has finished all of this for you.

But when Jesus said, “It is finished” what was finished, exactly? Did Jesus simply mean, “I am finished”? I’m done for, I’m dead? By no means. “It” is Christ’s active and passive obedience.

Let’s talk about it in terms of the *Mona Lisa*. Scholars believe it took Leonardo da Vinci three years to paint the *Mona Lisa*, and perhaps da Vinci took an extra eleven years after that to put finishing touches on it intermittently. I have seen the *Mona Lisa* with my own eyes in the Louvre, and it is indeed beautiful. With good reason it is a masterpiece.

It may have taken up to fourteen years for da Vinci to paint the *Mona Lisa*, but scholars estimate it took thirty-three years for Jesus to live a perfect life for you. When Jesus said, “It is finished,” τετέλεσται, He is saying that everything in His life was done out of love and care for you and all humanity. Every miracle, every teaching, every good deed was each brush stroke on the canvas creating a perfect masterpiece.

How many times have we sinned today? This week? This year? Jesus walked this Earth and never sinned once. Not only did He not sin, He actively obeyed God’s commandments. Not only did He not do bad things, but He actively did good things to help others. When Jesus said it is finished. He said that He is offering up this perfect life to the Father for our sakes.

The *Mona Lisa* was subjected to various attacks. It was stolen in 1911 to be recovered two years later. A visitor damaged the painting by pouring acid on it since then, they put it behind glass. In 2022, an activist threw a cake at the *Mona Lisa*, and just last year, protestors threw soup on it protesting the unsustainable food practices of our society. Poor *Mona Lisa*. Luckily, the glass protected her in the last two instances.

But there was no bulletproof glass to protect the perfect man Jesus. Consider the suffering Jesus endured for you throughout His life, but especially in the last hours of His life. He was flogged. Soldiers put a crown of thorns on His head. Nails were pounded into his hand and feet. He was mocked, spat upon, and killed. Jesus' passive obedience means that He suffered all that for you.

Beyond the physical suffering, Jesus faced spiritual suffering as He took on the sins of the world. **“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”** **“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”** Jesus took on all the sins of the world. This perfect portrait was marred beyond all recognition.

When Jesus said “It is finished,” τετέλεσται, he was saying that He has suffered the full amount for all the sins of the world. The perfect portrait was painted, active obedience, but all the filth and garbage in the world was poured on that perfect canvas, passive obedience. In saying, it is finished, we can be confident all things have been done for me and for you. Jesus paid the full price for our sins. 2. "It" is all that Christ has done for you.

But there's one last point that I want to tease out with “It is finished!” τετέλεσται. The verb is a perfect tense verb. We might more woodenly translate Jesus' last words as: it has been finished! Perfect verbs talk about a past event, but that past event has implications for the present.

If I say, I have made dinner, it likely implies dinner is on the table waiting for us to eat. Or I have made dinner every night this week, so let's go to a restaurant. There's a past action with a connection to the present. The popular commercial Life Alert taught us, I've fallen and I

can't get up! The past action of falling connects to the person not being able to get up again.

To put everything together that we've been talking about this evening: Christ has finished the work of salvation through both actively obeying the Father's will and passively enduring the Father's wrath. It was finished, and it still is finished. It is a done deal. You can't un-ring a bell. This past action has implications for the present.

Da Vinci painted the last stroke on the Mona Lisa many centuries ago, yet people still travel for miles and miles to see it in the Louvre. Perhaps it's just famous for being famous, but the depth of composition still enchants. Her mysterious half-smile still sparks wonder. People get lost in the painting.

This is why we gather year after year not because we've always done it this way, not because we want to remember something that happened a long time ago in a magical kingdom far away. This story invites us in to comprehend what it "It is finished!" τετέλεσται means in our lives.

To think of all the sins we've ever committed, all the worst mistakes we've made, all the things we're going to do that we haven't even done yet—all of that has been forgiven, finished, removed as far as the east is from the west. This changes our lives. The past event has present implications.

Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews still has the power to change lives because we know how the story ends. We know it doesn't end in death but rather resurrection. And as we face our sufferings, sins, and death head on, "It is finished" τετέλεσται invites us to trust that that past act of Jesus' love has implications for our lives today. The one who suffered so much for us will get us through the worst life has to offer. 1. What Christ has accomplished invites us to trust in Him. "It is finished!" τετέλεσται! IT IS FINISHED INVITES YOU TO BELIEVE IN THE ONE WHO HAS DONE IT ALL FOR YOU.