

IT IS FINISHED - JOHN 19:30
LIFE VERSE OF HUDSON TAYLOR

James was a bit bored. It was a holiday, and the rest of the family was away from home. James had some time on his hands. He liked to read, so he wandered into his father's library to look for something that might be of interest to him. Most of the books would require much too heavy reading. But then he saw a smaller tract. Usually, a tract contains an interesting story at the beginning before it gets into the spiritual application. James decided that he would read the opening story and then skip the application if it got too heavy for his tastes. So James grabbed the tract, scampered off to the barn where he climbed up into the hayloft, got himself comfortable, and began to read. He never put that tract down until he had read every word. And by the end of that

afternoon, James Hudson Taylor was kneeling all by himself in that hayloft, surrendering his teenage life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The tract was entitled *The Finished Work of Christ*. It centered around that 6th word that the Lord Jesus Christ uttered from the cross of Calvary. That statement of Christ which really consisted of just a single word in the Greek language would become the life verse and guiding force in the life of the great missionary Hudson Taylor.

TURN TO JOHN 19 WITH ME.

The Lord Jesus is very near the end of his life as he utters this word from the cross. He has already spoken 5 times. This is his 6th statement. And this word is literally that - a single word.

Tetelestai. It comes from the root term Teleo which indicates having an end or goal in view. It speaks of the result of a process looking

forward to the realization of the fruits found with the completion of some task. We use the root term all the time in our English language. Telephone, telegraph, television. The telephone is the voice (phonos) being carried to its desired goal, the telegraph the writing (grapha) being carried to its desired goal, the television the vision or picture being carried to its desired goal. And so when Christ said "tetelestai" he was indicating that a goal had been accomplished, a task had been completed.

Notice his words with me as we read them together. READ John 19:28-30.

²⁸ Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." ²⁹ A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a

stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. ³⁰ *When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

Now the question immediately comes to our minds, What was finished? What task was completed? What goal was Christ referring to here? You noticed the difference between this word of Christ and the other single word utterance "I thirst". I thirst called attention to his person. But Christ did not say "I am finished" calling attention to his person, but rather he says here "it is finished" calling attention to his work.

We would like to look at this term in its context this morning and consider 4 goals that had been accomplished when Christ uttered this word. He might have had even more in mind when he said tetelestai, but

he would at least have had these 4 tasks which had been achieved. And these certainly were truths that Hudson Taylor saw clearly and that became guide posts for his life.

1. Christ had fulfilled all of the Old Testament prophecies concerning himself. You noticed that when our Saviour uttered the former word "I thirst", there is an interesting little comment made by John that Jesus said this "so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled." Now obviously, the Lord Jesus Christ was thirsty, but it appears that he was also aware of Old Testament prophecy. Christ loved God's word, and he delighted in fulfilling it to every detail because he realized that in so doing he was demonstrating it to be the inspired breath from God.

Now Christ had realized that it was finished. There remained no more prophecies for him personally to fulfill. It was true that there still

remained prophecies to be fulfilled.

- the passing of his spirit into the hands of the father Ps. 31:5

- the piercing of his body with the spear Zech. 12:10

- the preserving of his bones unbroken Ps. 34:20

- the placing of his body in a rich man's grave Is. 53:9

But there remained no more for him personally to complete. He had accomplished his task of fulfilling all prophecy. Therefore, having uttered the word "I Thirst", he could say tetelestai, It is finished.

2. But notice also with me the fact that his personal sufferings were finally ending. We really know so little comparatively speaking about physical suffering that it is fruitless to begin to delineate the agonies that our Savior had endured.

It began with his birth and youth. At an early age, he became aware

of his mission in life. We know that by the age of 12, he was aware that he must be about his father's business. Someone has painted a picture of Jesus as a boy in the carpenter's shop of Nazareth. He is standing before a window holding his arms out to either side in a stretching position probably finding a moment of relief from the work of the day. But as the rays of the sun are reflecting thru the window, they portray his shadow on the wall behind him in the form of a cross. That painting is symbolical of Christ's life. He lived his entire life in the shadow of the cross. How would any of us like to live our lives knowing that a brutal and violent death was waiting for us at the end of life? Christ knew that- he realized all of the Scriptures that he was going to fulfill. How would we like to rise every morning and go through the days activities whether it being eating or working or fellowshiping with friends or recreating

knowing what was waiting for us just around the corner in our future? Not many of us could stand a life like that- yet that is what Jesus Christ had to endure.

And then the suffering came. The mocking, the scourging, the slaps on the face, the crown of thorns, the weight of the cross, and all of the agonies that accompanied crucifixion, and what was even greater than all of the physical sufferings, the filth and degradation of bearing the sins of the world.

But finally, it was over. It was finished. What a relief it must have been for Christ to be able to utter that word- tetelestai. My suffering is over!

3. But we would miss the entire point if we fell short of the spiritual applications of this word, for Jesus Christ had just completed the final

and perfect sacrifice for sins.

Throughout all of human history, man had been sacrificing for his sins. After Adam and Eve sinned, God killed an animal and made cloths for them out of its skins, and sacrificing began. Throughout of centuries, literally thousands of sheep and goats and bulls had been slain looking forward to that perfect sacrifice who would come and end sacrificing forever.

And as Christ was uttering that word tetelestai, the veil in the temple was being torn from the top to the bottom. Never again would it be necessary to sprinkle blood upon the mercy seat in the holy of holies. And while there was conspicuously absent any couch or seat in the temple area for the priests work was never done, when Christ would ascend back into heaven, he did what no other high priest had ever done

in the presence of God- he sat down, the author of Hebrews tells us. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." Hebrews 10:11,12. Yes, it was finished. The perfect sacrifice for sins that man had been waiting for was now complete. There would never need to be another one, for God's wrath over sin had now been satisfied. We are told that the word that Jesus Christ uttered was commonly used in the business marketplace. It was roughly equivalent to our phrase "paid in full". When we purchase something, the words "paid in full" are stamped on the receipt. These words indicate that there is no longer any debt owed. When the Lord Jesus Christ finished his redemptive work on the cross of Calvary, the debt of sin owed to God was paid in full for all who personally accept his atoning work. When we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and personally

receive his sacrifice in our lives, we can have the confidence that all of our sins have been paid in full in the eyes of God.

4. But one final point of completion must be noticed. The conquest over the power of Satan had now been finished. By His death upon the Cross, Jesus Christ conquered death and Satan. For all of Christ's life, He had been engaged in a fierce battle with Satan. The Devil had tried to kill him as a youth in Bethlehem. We don't even have any idea of how many times Satan had tried to take Christ's life in the carpenter's shop. But we do know that upon his entrance into public ministry, the adversary had opposed him on the mount of Temptation trying to discredit his entire ministry. Then numerous times again, the deceiver had tried to prematurely take Christ's life through riled people planning to stone him or other hideous assassination plots. Finally, in the garden of

Gethsemane, Christ had wrestled with Satan's last attempt to prematurely end his life, but he had persevered to the end. And finally now "it was finished". The power of Satan had been broken forever. Yes, the serpent had risen up to bite the heel of the seed of woman, but Christ had crushed the head of the serpent, and Satan's domain would never be the same again.

Tetelestai. It is finished. The prophetic ministry of Christ was finished. He had carefully fulfilled all prophecies concerning himself. The sufferings of Christ were finished. He had lived his entire life in the shadow of the cross, but now it was finished. The sacrifice was finished.

The perfect lamb of God had been slain so that God was satisfied- our sins could be paid in full now. And the conquest of Satan was complete. No longer would we have to live in fear and dread of the evil one. Now

the enemy's power had been rendered powerless by Christ's death upon the cross. Christ in his death had defeated death itself. So it was finished. The goal of His life had been accomplished. The task to do the will of the father to which Christ had dedicated his life was done.

Hudson Taylor found and lived the spiritual truth found in that single word from the lips of the dying Christ. If there is one lesson that a missionary must learn to be successful, it is the lesson of dying to self and having victory over the evil one. A missionary lives in a culture that is not his own. He has all of the foundational props that we take for granted knocked out from under him. Everything from the common language for communication to all of the non-verbal ways of communication are suddenly strange to him. The innumerable cultural idiosyncrasies in a new land that we take for granted as we grow up are

all new and different. And he must adjust to this new way of living. He doesn't naturally want to. His natural desires are for these new people to make some adjustments to move into areas of his own comfort zones. But that is not possible and he knows it in his heart. How will he be able to cope with this new way of life?

There is only one way. He must die to himself. He must not allow his own fleshly desires to rule over him. This would be impossible if it had to be done in his own strength. But the Lord Jesus Christ has made such a life of self-sacrifice possible because of His finished work on the cross of Calvary. And Hudson Taylor realized and practiced this truth. He was the first missionary to really identify himself with the foreign culture he was in. Taylor was criticized by others for dressing in Chinese clothing and wearing his hair long and braided in Chinese fashion and

adopting Chinese cultural practices in his life. But his identification with the Chinese culture allowed him to be very successful in his quest of communicating the gospel message.

Another battle that every missionary faces is direct conflict with the enemy. When a missionary invades a foreign land with the purpose of spreading the good news of the gospel, he is entering territory that has been dominated by the evil one - sometimes for thousands of years. The enemy's hold is strong on these people. He must be overcome if there is to be any hope of spiritual victory. But that victory is possible because of the finished work of Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary.

Hudson Taylor learned and practiced the truth of Christ's 6th word from the cross in his life. So we must learn and practice the same truth if we are to have victory over self and the evil one in our lives.

I conclude this sermon with a quote from the opening chapter of the book entitled *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*. This book was written by the missionary's son and daughter in law - Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor.

What was the secret, we may ask, of such a life? Hudson Taylor had many secrets, for he was always going on with God, yet they were but one - the simple, profound secret of drawing for every need, temporal or spiritual, upon the fathomless wealth of Christ. To find out how he did this, and to make our own his simple, practical attitude toward spiritual things, would solve our problems and ease our burdens, so that we too might become all that God would make us. We want, we need, we may have Hudson Taylor's secret and his success, for we have Hudson Taylor's Bible and his God.