

CHRIST'S FINISHED WORK

NO. 378

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 4, 1861
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

"It is finished!"
John 19:30

THERE never existed but *one* being who in truth could affirm of His work—"It is finished!" Incompleteness and defect trace the most vast, elaborate, and accomplished products of human genius and power. That brilliant volume of history, at a period of thrilling interest, falls from the death-struck hand of its author, fragmentary and incomplete.

That magnificent work of art fades before the glazed eye of the painter and the sculptor, at a moment when the pencil is pointed and the chisel upraised to impart the last and perfecting touch. That splendid edifice, the conception of a master mind, with all its architectural skill and beauty, is but a monument of human forethought and power, blinded and cramped in its range.

Thus, contemplate man's noblest achievements—the intellectual and the physical—the touch of human imperfection and incompleteness mars and traces all. The great truth, then, stands out like a constellation flaming in its own solitary orbit, that there never was but *one man* who could gaze with complacency upon His work, and with His expiring breath, exclaim, "It is finished!"

That man was the God-Man, Mediator, who, as the Son, and yet the Servant of the Father, relinquished His throne for a cross, that He might accomplish the redemption, work out the salvation of His church—the people given to Him of God—and who, on the eve of that redemption, and with all the certainty of an actual atonement, could thus breathe His intercessory petition to heaven, "I have *finished* the work which thou gavest me to do."

We summon you this evening around the cross of Calvary, to listen to the words now breathing from the quivering lips of our dying Lord—"It is finished!" And believing, as I most firmly and solemnly do, that no Scriptural doctrine, no revealed truth, will ever be able to confound the infidelity of the present day, to meet and explode the many errors and heresies, fearful and fatal, which are inseparable from this age of licentious thought, unchecked utterance and freedom of opinion, but the simple, full, unreserved exhibition of the ATONEMENT, the SACRIFICIAL, and FINISHED WORK of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am the more anxious and earnest on this important and impressive occasion to bend upon it your especial, devout, and solemn attention.

Oh, that our modern theological controversialists—the men who are desirous of contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints—who are putting on their armor and furbishing their weapons for the approaching conflict, might learn the secret of their might, wherein their great strength lies.

It is not in accumulating around the cross the stores of ancient and modern lore. It is not in a strife of arms, dazzling and distinguished by profound intellectualism, learning, and eloquence—but in a simple, bold, uncompromising presentation of the atoning and finished sacrifice of Christ—the uplifting, in its naked simplicity and solitary, unapproachable grandeur, of the cross of the Incarnate God, the instrument of the sinner's salvation, the foundation of the believer's hope, the symbol of pardon, reconciliation, and hope to the soul.

In a word, the grand weapon by which error shall bow to truth, and sin give place to righteousness, and the kingdoms of this world long in rebellion against God, crushed and enthralled, shall yield to Messiah's spectre, spring from the dust, burst their bonds, and exalt in the undisputed supremacy and benign reign of Jesus.

And believing, too, as I firmly do, that so large an amount of corroding doubts, and gloomy fears, and painful forebodings, which so essentially and so widely impede the religious progress, invade and becloud the spiritual joy and hope of the Lord's people, is mainly traceable to imperfect, crude, and dim views and apprehensions of Christ's complete work, of the Savior's finished salvation which He has wrought for His church—not distinctly seeing that all is done—the great debt paid, the mighty bond cancelled, the full atonement made, sin all and freely forgiven, I am still the more desirous of placing this great, this cardinal and precious truth prominently and broadly, as the Lord the Spirit shall help me, before the present assembly, trusting and believing that, in answer to prayer, there will be tonight the presence and power of the Holy Ghost descending, invisible and noiseless, upon your souls, sealing upon your hearts this grand, this essential, this saving truth—the FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST. “It is finished!”

Let us consider these memorable words—

I. As THE CRY OF A SUFFERER.

And what a sufferer! Contemplate for a moment *the divine dignity* of the sufferer. Here was no ordinary sufferer, my brethren. We approach the scene of the crucifixion, and we behold three individuals alike suspended upon three different crosses, two on either side and one in the center. They all suffer—all languish—all die.

But the sufferings and death of One is attended by circumstances so strange, and events so unparalleled, by prodigies so miraculous and sublime, that we are led to exclaim in wondering awe, “Who is this?” And the voice of prophecy replies, “This is *He* of whom I spake—‘Awake, O sword, against my shepherd and against the man who is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.’”

My dear hearers, if throughout the life of Christ I could fasten upon no other event confirming the doctrine of the Godhead of Christ, I would be willing and satisfied to predicate my argument in vindication of His essential dignity upon the closing scene of the cross—the last moments of His parting life. If His life were destitute of fact, His death alone would supply the evidence that He who died upon Calvary was none other than the Son of God! Hold fast the doctrine of Christ's essential deity, for upon it, as upon a rock, reposes the entire and stupendous fabric of the ATONEMENT.

The sufferings of Christ were *expiatory* and *vicarious*. You are aware that by many this fact is denied. The only solution of the mystery of Christ's death offered by the school to which I refer, is that which presents our Lord as a model of patience and resignation in suffering—a saint in virtue—a hero in endurance. And thus, the cross of Christ is deprived of its magnificence and robbed of its glory.

But our Lord suffered as an expiatory offering, as a vicarious victim. All suffering is, *in a sense*, vicarious—not in the fullest meaning of the term, as conveying the idea of *substitution*, but simply and only in the sense that all suffering is the effect and consequence of sin.

The man who violates the laws of his physical nature—who puts the empoisoned cup of intemperance to his lips to steal away his brains—who wastes his substance in riotous living—who herds among the unclean, and sacrifices to his baser passions health, property, character, shall suffer as a consequence of his lawlessness, folly, and sin. He cannot trample upon the laws of his physical and mental constitution with impunity—he shall *suffer*. These sufferings shall not expiate his transgression, but they shall follow in its wake, a sure and dire consequence.

Our Lord's sufferings were also the result and consequence of *sin*—sin, not His own, but His people's. And in the fullest and most emphatic meaning of the terms, were expiatory and vicarious—sufferings, not only the fruit of sin, but more than that, suffering expiatory of sin—sufferings, substitutionary and vicarious, sacrificial and atoning.

There are theologians who dispute this statement, who deny this doctrine. But I challenge them to explain these sufferings of our Lord satisfactorily upon any other hypothesis than this. I bring them back to the idea, that all human suffering is the effect of sin—our Lord suffered the death of the cross. Was

not that death in some way connected with sin? Most assuredly. Had there been no sin, there had been no suffering.

This granted, we advance a step further, and claim for that death of Christ, a substitutionary character, an atoning nature—a sin expiatory result. And so the revealed truth stands out in all its magnitude and glory. And this is the only clue to the mystery—“*He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.*” “*Who, his own self, bore our sins in his own body on the tree.*” “*Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savor.*” “*The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.*”

Behold the Almighty sufferer! There stood the Son of God, bearing the sin and enduring the curse of His church—putting away the one, and exhausting entirely the other—by the sacrifice of Himself. To all the demands of God's moral government, to all the claims of law and justice, Jesus now, on behalf of the people for whom He stood as surety, gave a full, honorable, and accepted satisfaction.

Come, poor sin-burdened, heart-broken penitent, and sit beneath the shadow of this tree of life, and its bending fruit of pardon, peace, joy, and hope shall be sweet to your believing taste. But the sufferings of Christ were *unparalleled and intense*. Never since the universe was formed was there such a sufferer as Jesus. He was the Prince of sufferers. No sorrow ever broke the heart like that which tore His in twain.

Truly could He challenge the universe of sufferers, and ask, “Is it nothing to you, all ye who pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.” No, Lord! Your sufferings had no parallel, no sorrows were ever like unto Yours!

I do not go with the Greek church, as you know. I differ from it both ecclesiastically and doctrinally. But I admire and love what is good, find it where I may. And I perfectly assent to the remark of my beloved brother, made in the vestry before the service, “That there's some good in all Christian communions and creeds, and that it is our wisdom to accept what is good and leave what is evil.”

Now, that is a sublime sentence in the liturgy of the Greek church, which I have often pondered with emotion—“*thine unknown agonies.*” Yes! the agonies of our sin-suffering, sin-atoning Lord were unknown. They were in their intensity known only to His own holy soul. No angel could ever fathom their depth, no finite mind shall ever be able to gauge the breadth, to scale the height, to conceive even of the agony of His soul when He exclaimed, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? I can bear the abandonment of My disciples—one has denied Me, another has betrayed Me, all have forsaken Me—but O My God, My God, why have *You* forsaken Me?”

But we may form some idea of their character, else how can we with Paul have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. First, there was the *physical* element—our blessed Lord suffered *bodily*. Men of science and of sanctified intellect have endeavored to analyze and describe the physical agonies which Christ endured, when His heart was broken with grief, but physiology in its noblest triumphs has never been able to fully portray what the Savior endured when, like the rending rocks around His cross,

***“That heart was torn asunder,
Never once defiled by sin.”***

Then there was *mental agony*. The mental grief He endured, who can conceive? His mind was a human mind, and all the more sensitive because it was a sinless mind. The human sympathy of Christ infinitely transcends the most exquisite sympathy that glows in your bosom, because it was the sympathy of a pure and sinless humanity.

There is selfishness in our sympathy. We love to sympathize with the sufferer because we love the sufferer, and we are paying a homage to our love to the creature when we take the hand and dry the tears, and speak the words of consolation. But the sympathy of Christ was all the more exquisite, and all the more tender, and all the more human, because it was all the more free from sin.

The perfect sinlessness of Christ's sympathy did not in the slightest degree affect the perfect humanity of His sympathy. He was more human than you and I are, because His humanity was entirely free from sin. We are not all human. We possess a part of a demoniacal nature. Sin has impaired all those glorious virtues and excellencies which our humanity in its primitive condition possessed, and ours is a distorted, paralyzed, altered humanity.

Let your humanity be restored to its original righteousness, to its primitive purity. Let it be elevated, renewed, sanctified, ennobled, as your humanity will be if you are believers in Christ, and as you gradually recede from sin you will approach the perfect. As sin is eliminated and purged away from your nature, your crushed, your bruised, your bowed humanity will rise in its original purity, and majesty, and glory, and you will be all the more human because you approach all the more to the purity of the divine.

But the *soul-suffering* of our Lord was more intense than all. This was inconceivable, indescribable. Listen to the cry in Gethsemane, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." The billows of God's wrath began now to penetrate His nature, the storm to break in upon His soul. Oh! that was a terrible moment! It was only now that He began to succumb to the woe.

Hitherto He had maintained a comparatively calm and uncomplaining demeanor. The tempest until now was *without*. When a vessel, coursing its way over the ocean, is arrested by a storm—the fierce winds blowing, the ocean broken into billows, seething, raging, roaring—as long as his gallant bark ploughs its way, and keeps its course, the mariner treads its deck undaunted by fear, confident in the strength and firmness of his vessel to outride and outlive the tempest.

But let the cry be heard, "A leak! A leak! A plank is sprung, the waters are coming in!" And in a moment, despair enters and enthrones itself upon the brow, and the hearts of the stern sons of the sea die within them. Beloved, that was the moment of our Lord's deep, unknown agony, when He could exclaim, "*Save Me, O God, for the waters are come into My soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow Me.*" "*All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me!*"

All this, O child of God, was for your soul! It pleased the Lord to crucify Him and put Him to grief for you. By His stripes you are healed. Your healing flows from His wounds, your joy from His sorrow, your glory from His abasement, your riches from His poverty. your hope beams through the darkness which enshrouds His holy soul.

Oh! was ever love like Christ's love? In what else can we resolve all this mystery of unknown agony—of intense, unparalleled suffering, but in the "*love of Christ which passeth knowledge.*" "*Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*" O mystery of suffering! O deeper mystery of love!

But these sufferings now are over. Hear him cry—"It is finished!"

Have you ever stood by the dying bed of one you have loved—and have marked the throb, the throes of agony, the maddening convulsion, the terrible shaking of the earthly tabernacle, as pin after pin, and beam after beam has fallen a shattered wreck. And as you caught the last breath that floated from the pale, quivering lip, and closed those eyes in death, has not your heart in the depth of its grief felt something like a thrill of joy and gladness that the sufferings of the loved one now were over?

Rejoice, then, rejoice that the sufferings of Jesus are finished! that the storm and the tempest will no more beat around Him. The sun of God's love shall no more darken over Him, for He took the cup, pressed it to His lips, exhausted the last bitter drop, and then shouted out in words that made heaven reverberate with its melody, and hell to ring with its mightiness, "It is finished!"

Child of sorrow, child of suffering, rejoice that the sufferings of your Lord are over, and that in all the suffering, and all the trial, and all the sorrow through which He leads you home to Himself, has not one drop of the curse to embitter it—has not one particle of the sufferings He endured. He took your cup of grief, your cup of the curse, pressed it to His lips, drank it to its dregs, then filled it with His sweet, pardoning, sympathizing love, and gave it back for you to drink, and to drink forever.

II. Secondly, and more briefly, "It is finished" is not only the cry of a sufferer, it is THE LANGUAGE OF A SAVIOR.

Our Lord's mission to our world was simply and singly to save. He came for no other object than to save man, to give His life a ransom for many; to provide, to execute an expedient devised in the eternal council, and purpose, and love of the Triune God, for securing the full redemption of His church—an expedient that should harmonize and unite all the moral attributes and perfections of His being, and then lower from the battlement of heaven to sin's fathomless depths the golden chain of mercy, pardoning mercy, to which, if in faith you take hold, it will lift you up to the throne from where it came.

It is the fashion of the present day to ignore the Saviorship of Jesus, and to represent His person, and His life, and His death in any and every form, rather than acknowledge that He died on the cross in the character of a Savior, and that faith in the merits of His obedience and in the efficacy of His death, constitutes the only basis on which a lost sinner can build his hope of heaven.

I ask you, my beloved hearers, what is the grand object of modern heresy but to undermine the cross of Christ, to ignore the sacrifice of His death, to blot out the glorious atonement, and to reduce the splendid paraphernalia of Calvary, with all its moral and sublime results, to a mere nonentity? His death, His obedience was the obedience of the law-maker in the form of the law-fulfiller to a law which man had broken and violated.

And that obedience perfect and complete, so that broken law is the righteousness that justifies the ungodly, and places him that believes spotless before God. Hold you fast that truth—the imputed righteousness of the Lord our righteousness wrought and complete in His perfect obedience to the precepts of a broken law.

His death on Calvary was an atonement to divine justice. The shedding of His blood was for the remission of man's sins. The paying out of His soul to death was the perfect honor given to the moral government of JEHOVAH.

And when He went out of the streets of Jerusalem staggering beneath the beam on which He was to be impaled; when, with lowly footsteps, He ascended that sacred hill, Calvary; when there, like a lamb led to the slaughter, He gave Himself up uncomplainingly, unreservedly into the hands of His executioners; when they stretched Him on that tree, transfixed His limbs to those beams, lifted it and let it fall into the place excavated for it to stand; when there He poured out His holy soul unto death—oh, my brethren, it was to harmonize justice and mercy, holiness and truth, to blend in one vast bow of hope all these divine attributes, that they might span the moral heaven and encircle our lost humanity.

It was then He gave up His soul unto death, and offered up that sacrifice for sin, which man, in his madness, folly, and infidelity, dares in this our day to ignore and to deny.

Yes, it is the language of a Savior. Those words speak hope to the hopeless, pardon to the guilty, acceptance to the lost. They tell you, O poor sin-smitten, burdened sinner, that there is hope, pardon even for you. He has finished all that justice asked, that the law demanded. He has finished the mission His Father had confided to His hands. He had finished the grand oblation that was to restore to God's moral government the glory it had lost in man's apostasy. He had finished all the ancient types, predictions, and shadows.

He tore the veil in twain and opened the bright pathway for the sinner to retrace his steps back to paradise, back to God, and once more feel the warm embrace of his Father's forgiving love. And yet this is the work, this is the atonement, this is the sacrifice which modern essayists dare with scorn and unbelief to trample beneath their feet.

Oh! it is the language of a Savior which bids you come. Poor broken-hearted sinner, with all your burden of sin, believe and be saved! It bids you come without money and without price. It tells you the blood He poured from His broken heart can wash out and cancel the deepest stain that is on your soul. It tells you there is room in that bosom which He laid bare to the lightning-stroke of God's wrath.

It tells you, dry your tears, embrace the cross, trust in the finished work of Christ. Fling to the heavens all your own righteousness, enwrap you up by faith in the righteousness of Christ, and all the minstrelsy of heaven shall tune their harps of gold, and make the heavens reverberate with their songs of praise over your submission in faith to the atonement of the Son of God.

III. Lastly, and only one word or two on this—it is THE SHOUT OF A CONQUEROR.

Christ was a man of war, our glorious Joshua was He. He had come to gird on the sword, to invest Himself with the armor, and to go out and battle with Satan, with sin, and with hell. It was a terrible conflict, it was a fearful battle, but He girded Himself for the mighty and the solemn work, and He completed it, He finished it.

He met His foes on the battlefield, confronted all His enemies, and on the cross He destroyed—He divested death of its sting, triumphed over Satan, the grave, and hell, and as He expired, He exclaimed, “It is finished!” Oh what a sublime conflict was that, my brethren, when the Captain of our salvation met single-handed and overcame the powers of darkness, fought the fight, won the victory, and died, saying “It is finished!”

With two or three brief inferences from the subject I will close.

1. *What a spring of comfort flows from it to the true believer amid his innumerable failures, flaws, and imperfections.* What service do you perform, what duty do you discharge of which you can say, “It is finished”? Alas! not one. Your service is imperfect, your obedience is incomplete, your love is fluctuating, yea, upon it all are the visible marks of human defilement and defect.

But here is the work which God most delights in, “finished!” “*Ye are complete in him.*” Turn you, then, your eye of faith out of *yourself*, and off of all your own doings, and deal more immediately, closely, and obediently with the finished work of Immanuel.

Come away from your fickle love, from your weak faith, from your little fruitfulness, from your uneven walk, from all your shortcomings and imperfections, and let your eye of faith repose where God's eye of complacent love reposes—on the finished work of Jesus. God beholds you only in Christ—it is not upon you He looks, but on His beloved Son, and upon you in Him, “wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

2. *If Christ's atoning work is finished, what folly and what sin to attempt to supplement it!* What vast numbers are doing this! Away with your tears, your confessions, your duties, your charities, even your repentance and faith, if these things dare to take their place side by side with the finished work of Christ. See that you attempt to add nothing to it. In a similar strain of exhortation let me—

3. *Warn you of the utter worthlessness and fallacy of all grounds of faith, and of all human hope that comes in conflict with the finished work of Christ.* My dear hearers, you have nothing to do in the great matter of your salvation, but to accept in faith the one offering made once for all by God manifest in your nature.

Cast your deadly doings at the foot of the cross. Cease from your own works. Cease from your own righteousness. Cease from resting in your confessions, in your tears, in your prayers, in your church or your chapel going. Oh, cease from all this, and in simple faith accept—take hold of—the divine work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God wants no more sacrifice. God asks no other atonement. God looks for nothing on your part to propitiate His regard or present you with acceptance. He is satisfied with the divine work of Christ—with His obedience—and with His blood-shedding. And if tonight, sin-burdened and distressed one, you will abjure all your own doings, and rest in the finished work of Christ—the one eternal redemption He has offered—God will expand His arms of love and embrace you, take you into a covenant, filial relation to Himself.

And from that moment your path to eternity will be like the sun, growing brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. All is done! Christ has done all, Christ has suffered all, and all He asks of you is in faith to receive His glorious sacrifice. Believe in Him and be saved.

4. Beware of the errors of the day, the tendency of which is to veil the light and glory of Christ's finished work, and to mislead, misguide, and misdirect souls on their way to the judgment seat. The fact is too patent to ignore, and it would be affectation to veil it—that there exists at the present moment a theological school in our land—which by the press is endeavoring to circulate doctrines and statements

which go to undermine the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible, and to cast the pall of darkness, and of death over the splendors of the cross.

I warn you of these errorists and against their errors. Perfidious men! false to your Master, and recreant to His truth. You may attempt to veil the lustre of the cross, you may sepulchre incarnate truth, roll upon it your stone, seal it, and set your watch. Truth shall leap from the dark chamber in which you attempt to entomb it, and shall walk this earth again—a thing of life, light, and beauty.

Rejoice, O Christian, that all these attempts to subvert the truth as it is in Jesus, God will laugh to scorn, and finally His Gospel shall fully and universally prevail.

*“Truth crushed to earth, shall rise again:
The eternal years of God are hers;
But error wounded writhes in pain,
And dies amid her worshippers.*”

And now from my heart, I ask the blessing of the Triune God upon my beloved brother, the grand substance of whose ministry I believe from my very soul is to exalt the finished work of Jesus. And I pray that this noble edifice, reared in the name, and consecrated to the glory of the Triune God, may for many years echo and re-echo with his voice of melody and of power in expounding to you the glorious doctrines and precepts of Christ's one finished atonement.

And God grant that none of you may be found rejecting to your everlasting woe the doctrine of the cross. You may attempt to laugh it to scorn. You may make your excuses for its rejection, but the hour is coming, ay, the hour is near, when death confronting you—the veil falling upon all earthly scenes, rising upon all eternal realities—then will you discover the unbelief and contumely that could trifle with the atonement, dispute it in life and in health, fail you in your solemn hour, and you will find yourself on the brink of eternity, without a plank, without a lifeboat, without a star of hope to cheer the dark spirit's travel to the bar of God.

Reject it, deny it at your peril. Your blood be upon your own heads. And may God grant in His grace, that ere long you who have believed in Him, confessed Him, and loved Him here on earth, may cluster around His throne, gaze upon His unclouded face, unite in the anthem of the blessed, and from those lips which once uttered that glorious sentence—“It is finished,” receive the “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world.” And to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, we will all unite in one eternal ascription of praise. Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.