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# 'Finished'

## What the Son Cried as He Died



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On the first Good Friday, throngs gathered on a hill outside the walls of Jerusalem, watching as Jesus hung upon the cross.

The Pharisees saw an agitator and a blasphemer, finally facing God's judgment. The soldiers saw a common criminal, caught between two thieves. Pilate saw an innocent man, executed unjustly. The disciples saw their Lord, dying outside his kingdom.

No one in the crowd, however, saw what Jesus saw. As the Son of God looked out from Golgotha's lonely height, he saw his task accomplished, his work complete, his Father's will fulfilled. With the nails pressing in, the blood streaming down, and his breath almost gone, he told the true story of the cross: "It is finished" ([John 19:30](#)).

*It is finished*: the law fulfilled, the devil disarmed, the cup of wrath drained, and sinners saved.

## Law Fulfilled

When our Lord came to dwell among us, he took up the ancient prophecy and said,

Behold, I have come;  
in the scroll of the book it is written of me:  
I delight to do your will, O my God;  
your law is within my heart. ([Psalm 40:7–8](#); [Hebrews 10:5–7](#))

From Bethlehem’s cradle to Calvary’s cross, Jesus’s food was to do his Father’s will ([John 4:34](#)). Though “tempted as we are” ([Hebrews 4:15](#)), no unbelief shook his faith, no envy clouded his contentment, no selfishness tinged his soul. Of all the men and women born beneath the law, he alone loved the Lord his God perfectly with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength ([Deuteronomy 6:4](#)). He alone walked the earth unfallen.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets,” Jesus told his disciples. “I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them” ([Matthew 5:17](#)). And so he did. In Jesus, every prophet’s dream took on glorious form; every ancient promise found its final Yes; every shadow of the law stepped into the light. Even in his final hour, his resolve remained unflinching: “Scripture must be fulfilled in me” ([Luke 22:37](#)).

With no iota incomplete, and no dot left undone, he looked upon the law and said: “It is finished.”

## Devil Disarmed

The promise of the devil’s downfall stretches back to the beginning. There on the edge of Eden, God vowed that a daughter of Eve would one day bear a greater Adam, a conqueror who would not listen to the serpent, but slay him ([Genesis 3:15](#)). Every demon heard — and trembled ([Matthew 8:29](#)).

When Jesus finally arrived, he came, as promised, “to destroy the works of the devil” ([1 John 3:8](#)). He opened the eyes that Satan had blinded ([Luke 4:18](#)); he straightened the backs he had bent ([Luke 13:10–16](#)); he freed the slaves he had captured ([Luke 4:18](#)). And then, in Jesus’s final hour, the very hour that belonged to the power of darkness ([Luke 22:53](#)), the devil was undone.

As Jesus was bound to the cross, he bound the strong man and plundered his goods ([Matthew 12:29](#)). As Jesus was cast out of Jerusalem, he cast Satan out of his kingdom ([John 12:31](#)). As the nails drove through Jesus’s feet, he drove his feet through the serpent’s head ([Genesis 3:15](#)). And as Jesus was lifted up for all to see, he put the devil to open shame ([Colossians 2:15](#)).

As the hour of darkness ended, Jesus saw the skull broken beneath his heel, and said: “It is finished.”

## Cup Drained

Throughout Jesus's ministry, a shadow hung over his soul. The darkness did not come from the law, which to him was a delight ([Psalm 40:8](#)), nor from the devil, who had no claim on him ([John 14:30](#)). No, the shadow was cast by something else, something that filled him with sorrow that was almost unspeakable: the cup of God's wrath.

No other thought caused our Savior such anguish. "How great is my distress!" he cried on the road to Jerusalem ([Luke 12:50](#)). "Now is my soul troubled," he said as he approached his final hour ([John 12:27](#)). In Gethsemane, he plunged into darker depths: "[He] began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said . . . 'My soul is very sorrowful, even to death'" ([Mark 14:32](#)). He asked if there were any way the cup could be withdrawn ([Matthew 26:39](#)), and heard his Father's answer in the silence. And so, for the joy set before him, he stretched out his hand and grasped the dreaded cup.

As Jesus began to drink upon the cross, the sky shuddered; the daylight fled ([Matthew 27:45](#)). Still, he put his mouth to the cup. He drank the consuming fire of judgment, the outer darkness of almighty anger, the infinite abyss of God's wrath against sin. He drank, and drank, and drank, until he drained the final dregs.

When his strength was almost spent, Jesus set aside the empty cup, and said: "It is finished."

## Sinners Saved

Some seven centuries before Jesus spoke his final words, the prophet Isaiah said of him, "Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied" ([Isaiah 53:11](#)). What sight would satisfy Jesus's soul as he finished his work upon the cross? Isaiah goes on:

By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant  
make many to be accounted righteous,  
and he shall bear their iniquities. ([Isaiah 53:11](#))

Jesus was satisfied not only by the law fulfilled, the devil disarmed, and the cup drained, but also by sinners saved. He had come to bring many sons to glory ([Hebrews 2:10](#)), and the sight of that multitude, at home in his Father's house, satisfied our dying Savior.

On the cross, Jesus accomplished everything necessary for his people to be with him forever. The Bridegroom gave himself for his bride, so that she might be spotless and resplendent ([Ephesians 5:25-27](#)). The Shepherd laid his life down for the sheep, so that they might dwell safely in his fold ([John 10:11](#)). The Priest offered himself upon the altar, so that anyone covered by his blood might approach him in the Most Holy Place ([Hebrews 7:27](#)).

Out of the anguish of his soul, Jesus saw his people clothed in his own righteousness, and with satisfaction, he said: "It is finished."

## We Begin on Finished Ground

As you stand beneath the cross of Jesus again on this Good Friday, what do you see? Do you see the Savior's finished work, and gladly receive the Father's favor? Or do you see a work *nearly* finished?

Many of us, after singing on Good Friday of the wonders of the cross, live the next day as if we must add a certain measure of obedience and good feelings before we can enjoy what Christ has finished. But we cannot add to a finished work. We cannot contribute to completion. We can only hold out the hand of faith and humbly, happily receive it.

To be sure, we still have a race to run, a devil to resist, good works to walk in, and holiness to pursue. But we begin on finished ground. Before any child of God rises to read one verse, pray one petition, or feel one godly emotion, we wake up shielded in the words "It is finished." And as we begin our day at Calvary, we find strength to run our race with freedom, resist the devil with defiance, walk in good works with zeal, and pursue holiness with joy.

Sing, then, on this Good Friday, our Savior's dying words: "It is finished." And when tomorrow comes, take up the song again.