

Bethel

Pulpit

The Finished Work of Christ

**Address given from his own home by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Monday, 6th April, 2020, when chapels were closed owing to the
coronavirus. The address was relayed.**

Text: *“It is finished” (John 19. 30).*

The Psalm we read this evening (Psalm 22) gives a picture of the awful sufferings of our Lord Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, on the cross. It is an amazing chapter – written so many hundreds of years before the Saviour suffered, and yet so many of the details of His dreadful sufferings pointed out. At the beginning, the very words the Lord Jesus spoke on the cross: “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” And then as we read on, almost as if we were beholding that solemn scene, the details of it, the awful mocking. “He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.” And then that verse, “I am poured out like water” – the horrors of the cross – “and all My bones are out of joint: My hearts is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and My tongue cleaveth to My jaws.” We have to pause and say,

“What He endured no tongue can tell,
To save our souls from death and hell.”

We even have that awful detail of the Roman soldiers casting lots at the foot of the cross. “They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture.”

But then the word which really brings it home: “They pierced My hands and My feet.” O may we this evening be blessed with a spirit of worship and humility and repentance at the foot of the cross, and if we have an interest in the Lord’s saving work, it was our sins which caused Him to suffer there. “Our sins were the nails and the spear,” and the crown of thorns. We once felt years ago in our beginnings, and what a word it is:

“Thy temples, Immanuel, bled,
That mine might with glory be crowned.”

So we think of the cross, the agony, the shame, the cruel spear, the crown of thorns the nails. We would sympathise with the “Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” But then we think of the deeper sorrows of His holy soul, as He felt forsaken by His beloved Father and His God, and as He suffered in the sinner’s place, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God,” and we see divine wrath poured upon His head, which otherwise must have fallen on His people to all eternity. We see the load of sin He had to bear, but we see Him for ever bearing it away.

We cannot help but go back to the great day of the atonement in Israel. There were two goats taken, one for the Lord, one for the people. One was slain, and its blood was brought into the sanctuary for sin, and then the body of that goat that was slain was carried right outside the camp, and there it was burnt. “Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.” The other goat, the live goat, the scapegoat – the sins of all Israel ceremonially were confessed and laid on the head of that goat, and then it was led by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness, never to be seen by mortal eye again. That famous painting of the scapegoat by Holman Hunt seemed to miss the point. There is that beautiful picture of that sorrowful goat in the wilderness, but the point on the day of atonement was that it was never to be seen again by mortal eye, signifying the complete removing of sin in the atonement. “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.” So what can we say of Calvary?

“Behold a scene of matchless grace,
'Tis Jesus in the sinner’s place.”

O but to be reminded of His bitter sufferings of body and of soul – what He endured, bearing divine wrath, bearing the weight of the sins of His people, and the agonies which He endured. I believe there is such a thing with the Lord’s people as looking with holy delight when they hear the Lord Jesus say, “It is finished” – His sorrows for ever ended, never to suffer again to all eternity, now risen, exalted, glorified in heaven. He sees of the travail

of His soul, those dreadful sufferings, the travail of His soul, and He is eternally satisfied.

It is a very unusual but very beautiful expression: “the travail of His soul.” They say that travail is different from any other kind of suffering. All other suffering is unto death, but travail is unto life. O the many souls who have been saved with an everlasting salvation through those bitter sufferings of the Saviour! “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.”

I know, beloved friends, there are some deep, mysterious, some glorious gospel truths in this text, “It is finished.” But may we never overlook how it was spoken – the dear, dying Saviour, and His agonies ended for ever, and He could bow His head in death, and there He could rest in the grave. As we hope we have been led a little in deep sympathy with what the Lord Jesus suffered, I think we know something of that rejoicing when His sufferings come to an end, never to be endured again to all eternity. O may we never forget that point: sympathising with a sorrowing Saviour, His sorrows finished. “It is finished.”

Now when our Lord Jesus, hanging on the cross, cried that word with a loud voice, “It is finished” – because really it was a triumphant cry; it was the cry of the mighty Conqueror – but at that very moment, a strange scene was taking place in the temple, in the most holy place. An invisible hand, the hand of Almighty God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, tore that thick veil, the veil of the temple, in two. “It is finished.” It symbolised the end of the ceremonial law.

Let us be clear, the ceremonial law had its place. It was given in love and mercy. It prefigured the Saviour. They were wonderful types of salvation in it. There was the emphasis on precious blood. But it was impossible that all those sacrifices of the ceremonial law could ever put away sin. So that cry, “It is finished,” and the symbol of it, that veil torn from the top to the bottom. It is not the blood of bulls and lambs and goats now. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, that cleanseth from all sin. O what a word: “Not redeemed with corruptible things” – none of those corruptible things of the old dispensation – “but with the precious blood of Christ, as of

a lamb without blemish and without spot.” May we have faith to behold Him this evening. “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

“It is finished.” But whilst the old dispensation lasted, that thick veil symbolised no access, no entry. In a way, it bade sinners keep out. What is it now? “It is finished” – the veil rent in twain from the top to the bottom. What is it? “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.”

“It is finished.” But especially, beloved friends, I want to speak to you about these vital truths, gospel truths, bound up with the finished work of Christ. It has become a well-known word to us: *the finished work of Christ*. What the Saviour accomplished at Calvary is complete. Nothing can ever be taken from it. Nothing can ever be added to it. It is a finished work. The old, godly divines very reverently said that not even the blessed work of the Holy Spirit, though it is vital, can ever add anything to the finished work of Christ.

Now in the Book of Daniel (9. 24), there is a beautiful word which in simple language explains what was finished at Calvary. It is put like this: “To finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” What a beautiful summary of what was accomplished in the Saviour’s finished work! But if your religion and mine is real, we see a beauty, a suitability in Christ’s finished work.

“To finish the transgression.” Our sins are transgressions against God’s holy law, but in the atonement, as precious blood was shed, “He was wounded for our transgressions,” and those transgressions are for ever cancelled in the blood of Jesus, not to be reckoned against His people.

“To make an end of sins.” And that leads us to that (O is there a deeper word in Scripture?): “He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

“To make reconciliation for iniquity.” Through the Fall, sinners were at enmity with God, but that peace-speaking blood, shed on the cross,

speaks reconciliation to sinners, those who were far off by wicked works. That beautiful word: “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

“To bring in everlasting righteousness.” We have none of our own. “Our best is stained and dyed with sin; our all is nothing worth.” The whole life of our Lord Jesus was spent weaving that robe of righteousness by His perfect fulfilment of His Father’s law. And now, “It is finished” – the perfect righteousness for sinners who have no perfection in themselves.

“It is finished.” I am sure you have all noticed the first word the Lord Jesus is recorded as saying: “I must be about My Father’s business.” And the last word: “It is finished.” His Father’s business was finished. How He glorified His Father! How He fulfilled His Father’s will! Nothing to be added to it; nothing to be taken from it. A finished work. And especially to think of the fountain opened.

“Richly flowed the crimson river,
Down Immanuel’s lovely side;
And that blood will you deliver,
Whosoever ’tis applied.”

“It is finished.” So as we think of this word, how does it affect us? I believe if our religion is real, our only hope of salvation will be built upon the finished work of Christ – nothing in self, everything in the Saviour. It is a finished salvation. Not only do we disagree with the Arminians, but we cannot really understand them. They say that the blood of Christ was shed for everyone without exception. Well, why is everyone without exception not saved or in heaven? They say it is up to the sinner whether he accepts it or not. So according to Arminians, the work of Christ is not finished. There is something, however little, needed from the sinner.

I have often thought of those two large chapels. They were both nonconformist chapels in Yorkshire. One was one side of the road, one was the other side of the road. Somebody asked an attender, “Why do you need two chapels? What is the difference between the two?” He said, “There are only two letters different. They preach *do* – D-O. We preach *done* – D-O-N-E.

“Hear the Lord Himself declaring
All performed He came to do;
Sinners, in yourselves despairing,
This is joyful news to you.”

“It is finished.”

* * *

Hark! the voice of love and mercy
Sounds aloud from Calvary!
See! it rends the rocks asunder,
Shakes the earth and veils the sky!
“It is finished!”
Hear the dying Saviour cry!

“It is finished!” – O what pleasure
Do these charming words afford!
Heavenly blessings, without measure,
Flow to us from Christ the Lord.
“It is finished!”
Saints, the dying words record.

Finished, all the types and shadows
Of the ceremonial law;
Finished all that God had promised;
Death and hell no more shall awe.
“It is finished!”
Saints, from hence your comfort draw.

Tune your harps anew, ye seraphs;
Join to sing the pleasing theme;
Saints on earth, and all in heaven,
Join to praise Immanuel’s name.
Hallelujah!
Glory to the bleeding Lamb!

J. Evans