

“It is finished”

Two sermons preached by Dr M J Hyde at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on Lord's Day, 2nd September 2017

‘After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.’ (John 19:28-30)

The words especially on my mind to bring before you this morning are the three words in verse 30: *‘It is finished.’* These words form part of what are known as the seven sayings of the Saviour on the cross. The four Gospels record various things which Jesus said on the cross. None of them record all seven, but these words are one of the seven.

1. Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’ (Luke 23:24)
2. Jesus said to the dying thief, ‘Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.’ (Luke 23:43)
3. Jesus spoke to his mother. ‘When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved,’ (who, it is commonly agreed, is John, the author of this Gospel) ‘he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!’ (John 19:26-27)
4. He said, ‘Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani? That is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ We find this to be the only saying that is recorded in both Matthew and Mark. (Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34)
5. He said, ‘I thirst.’ (John 19:28)
6. He said, ‘It is finished.’ (John 19:30)

7. And his final words were, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.'
After he said this, he gave up the ghost. (Luke 23:46)

The dying words of any of our loved ones are words that we remember, words that we desire to treasure up, words that we dwell on. You can read the obituaries in *The Gospel Standard* going back years and notice how much space in them is given to people's dying words, the last things they uttered, the things they desired to leave with those who they loved. When we come to the words of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, how much space, how much time, how much thought we should give to them! Yet, friends (if I know anything of it) we become forgetful of them, and we pass these things by.

This morning, I would like to just consider this one saying of Jesus on the cross – the sixth, the penultimate saying, 'It is finished.'

I want to notice before we go any further, the manner in which it is said. John does not tell us how Jesus Christ said, 'It is finished.' We simply read, 'When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he *said*, It is finished.' But we have to compare scripture with scripture. Both Matthew and Mark record for us, 'Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.' (Matthew 27:50, see also Mark 15:34, 37) Luke, however, says, 'And *when* Jesus had cried with a loud voice, *he said*, Father into thy hands I commend my spirit.' (Luke 23:46) Therefore we can deduce that he did not cry with a loud voice, 'Father into thy hands I commend my spirit,' but he cried with a loud voice prior to that, and the words that he cried with a loud voice are evidently the words of our text, 'It is finished.'

Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'It is finished.' It was a cry of triumph. Many people, when they come to die, their voices become husky and faint as they lose their strength. They have to muster all the strength they have to utter even broken sentences. But here we have a cry of triumph on the cross from our dying Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He cried with a *loud* voice, 'It is finished.'

Now, I want to remind you of what I have just read to you in Matthew. 'Jesus, when he had cried *again* with a loud voice.' This was not the *only* thing he cried with a loud voice on the cross. What was the other thing he cried with a loud

voice upon the cross? Matthew tells us, 'About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' These are the two sayings of Jesus on the cross that he cried with a loud voice: 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' ('My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?') and 'It is finished.'

Why were they cried with a loud voice? I believe they were cried with a loud voice because in these two sayings we have the heart of the atonement. These are the two sayings on the cross which have an enduring theological significance about his atoning work, reaching beyond his immediate circumstances and the circumstances of those around him.

When he said, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,' these words were not directed to all and sundry, they were directed to his Father, and this was not a request for all and sundry, but for the specific individuals involved in putting him to death at that time.

When he said, 'Woman, behold thy son!' and 'Behold thy mother!' these words were spoken to his mother, Mary, and his disciple, John.

When he said, 'I thirst,' it was a statement about what he was suffering, which prompted those around him to give him something to drink.

When he said, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,' he was again speaking to his Father about what he was doing at that moment.

But when he cried, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' and when he cried, 'It is finished!' he is giving us all an insight into the saving work he was carrying out. These two sayings provide vital information to all of those bound up in the everlasting covenant, from Adam down until now, and to the end of time. 'Look unto me, I am your Saviour!' These two sayings demonstrate for us the kind of Saviour he is and the kind of salvation that he is making.

Firstly, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' This question indicates that he feels forsaken by his Father. This shows that he has been made sin for us. He had no personal sin of his own which would require his Father to hide himself from him, or punish him in any way. Rather he was suffering for the sins of others. This is the first essential part of

the atonement. There could be no atonement if the one who was offered for a sacrifice did not have the sins of the people laid on him. You remember the Day of Atonement when the goat was brought in place of the people. The high priest had to lay his hands on the head of the goat and there confess the sins of the people. Without that, there would be no atonement. If our sins had not been laid on Jesus, his death would not have atoned for anything.

Our sacrifice was first made sin for us. Here was someone who was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.' (Hebrews 7:26) He knew no sin. He never did any sin. Here on the cross and in this cry, we see him made sin for us.

If you are a sinner this morning, if you feel your need of atonement, there is something in this cry, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' which will enter with mercy into your soul. Here are your sins laid on Christ. He knew no sin. He was not forsaken on account of his own sin, but for the sins of his people. That cry could never have come forth from him in his own person. There could be no hiding of the Father's face from the Son on account of some sin of his own. The Father loved the Son. When he looked on him, he said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' (Matthew 3:17) He repeated this not just at his baptism, but also at his transfiguration, 'This is my beloved Son: hear him.' (Luke 9:35) There could be no doubt about it. This was the one whom the Father loved. He was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.' This was the one in whom the Father never saw the least transgression of his laws.

Yet here – here in this cry, it reveals a felt separation in his holy, human soul. A hiding of the Father's face. A disruption of the sweet communion that they enjoyed one between the other. O friends, do not get me wrong – the Father was still pleased with the Son. There is a sense in which the Father was never more pleased with the Son than when he saw him on the cross. 'Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience,' (Hebrews 5:8) and the Father was never more pleased with his obedience than on the cross. He was never more pleased with him than when he went to the end of the law in order to bring in salvation and a complete righteousness for his people.

Through this cry, he testifies to us that he had really been made sin and that our sins had been really laid on him. He tells us that he is really bearing the

punishment due to our sins. He is drinking up hell, spiritual death, the eternal separation from the comfortable presence of God, 'the blackness of darkness for ever.' (Jude 1:13) There Jesus, the suffering Lamb of God, is drinking up the cup of wrath which was due to our sins. 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

O, friends, it was a cry of horror, it was a cry of darkness, from the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But it was cried with a loud voice so that sinners would hear it, and so that in hearing they might believe. 'How shall they believe,' asks the apostle, 'in him [of] whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?' (Romans 10:14) Here we see the prince of preachers. He was anointed to the mediatorial office of prophet, so that he would proclaim salvation to his people. And here he is proclaiming, with a loud voice, that atonement is really being made for the sins of his people.

We must come now to our text, to the second loud cry. 'It is finished!' The first loud cry was a cry of darkness, a cry of horror, on the part of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But the second loud cry was a cry of triumph. 'It is finished!' This is the proclamation which brings peace to the Lord's people. We know that his people's sins have been laid on him. We know he has been drinking up the cup of wrath. But here is the cry that proclaims that everything is now finished, everything is now done. Your sin has been done away with. The death which was due to you has been borne on your behalf. Your salvation has been brought in.

And so we find that although there are seven sayings of the Saviour on the cross, two of them are set apart, as if they are printed in bold, highlighted, and underlined, in the fact that Jesus cried them with a loud voice. May the Holy Spirit speak them into our souls this morning. May we hear them. As I came into the pulpit this morning, my cry and prayer can only be for the help of the Holy Spirit. As Joseph Hart puts it:

'It is finished,' said the Lord,
In his dying minute;
*Holy Ghost, repeat the word,
Full salvation's in it.*

(Gadsby's 306)

That is what we all need this morning – the Holy Spirit to repeat, in the ear of faith, the loud cries of Jesus from the cross. Then we would know that our sins were laid on him and that he has borne the punishment due to our sins. This knowledge is all conveyed when we hear that cry of triumph, ‘It is finished!’ That cry conveys that sin and death are put away, and life and peace are brought in. He came and preached peace – peace to them that were afar off, and to them that are nigh. This man is our peace as we hear him cry, ‘It is finished!’

Well, friends, these remarks are by way of introduction. May we be enabled to hold these two sayings in our hearts. May the Holy Spirit repeat them to us. It is in hearing these cries (that we find a balsam flows today, a healing balm flowing from the sufferings of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is as we hear these cries that we live, and while we behold, while we hear, him die. ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ ‘It is finished!’

In coming to these words, it raises the question – What is finished? As the Lord would help me this morning I would like to come to answer this question. What is finished?

Well, where do we begin? John Gill (I seem to remember) said, ‘This is one of the shortest texts that ministers can preach from, but a sermon would never get to the end of it.’ A minister preaching from this text will never be able to sit down and say, ‘It is finished.’ But may the Lord help us, just for a moment, to try and approach logically and clearly, some of the things which are included in this cry, ‘It is finished!’

1. Redemption is finished

Firstly, the work of redemption is finished. The hymn writer says, ‘Love’s redeeming work is done;’ (Gadsby’s 485) – ‘It is finished.’

Before I go any further, let me just clear up a point with you, because it may be a question some people have. You will remember that in Charles Wesley’s hymn, ‘Christ, the Lord, is risen today,’ the hymn suggests that it was not until the resurrection that ‘love’s redeeming work is done.’ So was Jesus’s work not finished even when he said it was? When he cried, ‘It is finished,’ he’d still got

to die. He'd still got to rise again for our justification. He had not yet entered into the holy place with blood on his hands. The veil of the temple had not yet been rent in twain from the top to the bottom. The middle wall of partition had not yet been done away with. What does the cry – 'It is finished' – therefore mean? Is it just an empty cry? Claiming to be finished when so much remained to be done! No!

(a) Death is finished

Jesus could cry, 'It is finished' because redemption was finished. He had conquered death. Yes, Christ had still got to die and to rise again from the dead. But nothing could hold his body in the grave. He could not see corruption. Why not? Because in making the atonement he had conquered death. Death was the punishment for transgression of God's holy law – but Jesus had suffered that punishment in the place of his people, and he had kept the law on their behalf, consequently the law can no longer condemn them to death, and so we can say, death is conquered! He had conquered the powers of hell when he triumphed over the devil. These things could not hold him. The grave could not hold him. He could not remain a captive to death. 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.' (Acts 2:27) All the barriers to the resurrection were removed. All the barriers to continual intercession were removed. All the barriers to your everlasting union with the Father in Christ were removed. All by the time he cried, 'It is finished.' Yes, aspects of these things still had to be worked out in time, but there was nevertheless a certain completion. He died. He was laid in the grave. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven a victorious Saviour.

But, against this certain fact – a finished salvation – there is a very real sense in which all things are still not yet finished. Jesus is still to come again. There are so many things in our lives, and in our poor sinful bodies, that are not finished. Are you, like the apostle, groaning, being burdened, waiting for the redemption of the body? That is because the work of redemption in its fullest sense is not finished yet. And things won't be finished till the resurrection day. The apostle says, 'Now we see not yet all things put under him.' Not everything is finished yet. 'But we see Jesus.' (Hebrews 2:8-9) And how does the eye of faith see Jesus? It sees Jesus crowned with glory and honour because of this

fact, 'It is finished.' Faith believes it, hope expects it? We can rest there, if the eye of faith sees Jesus. 'We see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death.' Therefore:

We shall be conquerors all ere long,
And more than conquerors too.

(J. Hart, *Gadsby's* 305)

And it all rests on this cry, 'It is finished.'

Therefore when Jesus cried, 'It is finished' it was no sham cry, no empty words. No – it was true. It was reality. All the barriers were now removed. The atonement was made. Sin had been put away. And though he had to pass through death, and his body had to be laid in the grave, to rise again on the third day, the work of redemption *was* finished.

(b) The demands of the law are finished

Further, to say that the work of redemption was finished means that the demands of the law were finished.

Some people seem to suggest that when the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ came to this earth, he tore up the law. But that is not what Jesus told us he came to this world to do. He told us he came to magnify the law. 'He will magnify the law, and make it honourable.' (Isaiah 42:21) And how did he magnify the law? How did he make it honourable? He magnified it in all its holy righteousness, and in all its just demands, in that he submitted to every single one. He fulfilled all the demands of the law. If Jesus could have passed by any of the demands of the law, if he had left any of the law unkept, unfulfilled, he would have de-lawed the law. He would have, in effect, torn it up – but he did not. He went to the end of the law. He fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law, even down to death.

Let's just notice how Jesus fulfilled the law. First of all, the law makes demands on us. It demands our obedience to its commands. As we are born into this world we are each under its commands. 'Thou shalt have no other God beside me. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt

not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Honour thy father and thy mother, etc.’ Now we have failed, every one of us, in keeping these commands. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We have all come short of the righteousness which the holy law of God calls for from us. But Jesus kept all these commands. His life was a life of perfect obedience to the law.

It is through this vast act of obedience that the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ performed that he produced the perfect obedience by which we are justified. We are justified when all that we owe to the law is paid – when all its demands are met. Then before the law we have no debt, but are seen as perfect. We are justified in the eyes of the law, when the perfect law-keeping life of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, his perfect obedience, is imputed to us, or laid to our account.

Now we have already mentioned this act of imputation, when the sins of the Lord’s people were imputed to Jesus. And we have heard the effects of that imputation, the evidence that this imputation has really been made, when he who knew no sin cried out, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’

The second act of imputation is that his finished, perfect righteousness is imputed to us. What do we cry out, when we are justified? When the Holy Spirit works faith within us, and we are enabled to lay hold on the obedience, the suffering and death of Christ, and we find ourselves justified before the law, we cry out, ‘I’m clean, just God, I’m clean!’ That is the antithesis of the cry, ‘Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani?’ ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ – ‘Just God, I’m clean.’ There is no longer any separation between our soul and God. But we are made in Jesus perfectly justified, perfectly holy in the eyes of the law, on account of the precious obedience of Christ. Through Jesus, God is reconciled to us and we enjoy the fulness of his love and favour.

(c) The penalty of the law is finished

We have just mentioned what the law demands. But the law also has a penalty attached to it. If we fail to keep those commands, then this penalty is due to us, ‘The wages of sin is death.’ (Romans 6:23) ‘The soul that sinneth, it shall die.’ (Ezekiel 18:20) And Jesus paid what the law demanded. He paid it, not for himself, but for us, because of our sins, because of our transgressions. He paid

our debt which was due under the law when he became obedient to death and suffered the death of the cross.

‘The wages of sin is death.’ Jesus swallowed up death in victory. (1 Corinthians 15:54) One the theologian put this in a nutshell – John Owen in the title of his unanswerable book, announced ‘the death of death in the death of Christ.’ That sums up what is in this cry, ‘It is finished,’ as regards the death which is the wages of sin. The death of that death is accomplished in the death of Christ. Or, as Hugh Martin aptly put it, ‘When Jesus died, he died death dead.’

Jesus is the end of death. Why is he the end of death? Because he died on behalf of his people. If we are found amongst these people *for* whom Jesus cried, ‘It is finished,’ then he died the death that was due unto us. And because the law cannot demand payment twice, therefore death has been swallowed up in victory. There is no more death for the Lord’s people to die.

For many people, death is counted as just the moment that we leave this life, just the breathing of our last breath on earth. But that is not the full meaning of death as the Word of God describes it. Death is eternal separation from the comfortable presence of God. It is the blackness of darkness forever, the absence of comfortable communion with God, the denial of his goodness and mercy. Charles Hodge says that the death due to us under the law as sinners is to be unreconciled to God. If we are unreconciled, estranged from God, then we are in that solemn place where,

Out of Christ, Almighty power,
Can do nothing but devour.

(J. Hart, *Gadsby’s* 789)

O friends, that is what it is to die – to die spiritually, spiritual death. That is what the law demands – the burnings of hell forever. This is what Jesus passed through in his sufferings. This is what he has swallowed up in victory. And he cried, ‘It is finished!’ It was the end of death. Death is finished.

The hymn writer says, ‘The Saviour lives, no more to die!’ (S. Medley, *Gadsby’s* 751) And because *he* lives, to die no more, his people also live, to die no more. Death to the Lord’s people is swallowed up, taken away, finished. The

demands of the law as regards our death, the debt we owe, the redemption price, is paid in full. There is nothing to pay.

Now, I want to make this point, theologians sometimes speak of the 'active obedience' and the 'passive obedience' of Christ. They speak of his active obedience as being all the obedience he performed to the demands of the law (keeping the Sabbath day, honouring his parents, not stealing, not coveting, etc.) He fulfilled all the demands of the law on us. Then the passive obedience of Christ refers to his suffering, both throughout his life and on the cross. But although we can distinguish these two concepts, when it comes to what was required for the precious, perfect obedience which would justify us, they make up one complete, perfect obedience. It is all one obedience. It is a valid distinction to make. Horatius Bonar refers so aptly to these two aspects of what we rely on for justification,

Upon a life I have not lived,
Upon a death I did not die.

Both his perfect life and his perfect death are required. It is important that we emphasise this fact. It is important that we distinguish between them. There are many churches today which lay so much emphasis on the death of Christ, but overlook his life. But a soul who needs justification this morning needs both the death of Christ and his perfect, law-keeping life, his perfect obedience. We need both aspects.

But the real picture is of one complete whole. The perfecting of his obedience, the last piece of obedience, the last stitch in the seamless robe of his righteousness is his death. 'Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered, and was made perfect.' (Hebrews 5:8) He 'became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' (Philippians 2:8) He gave himself. 'I lay down my life ... No man taketh it from me ... I lay down my life, that I might take it again.' (John 10:17-18) This was the last act of his precious obedience. He was obedient unto death. The law demanded death, and he willingly submitted to its demands on behalf of his people, and in submitting, he cried with a loud voice, 'It is finished.' He says, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.' He *gave up* the ghost. This was an activity on the part of the Lord and Saviour Jesus

Christ. We are passive in our death. Our life is taken from us. He was active. His life was not taken from him, he gave up his life – freely, unconstrained by any force outside of himself.

Friends, I would like to make this point and dwell on it for a moment. He gave up his life. There was no necessity on him as he was born into this world to die. J. C. Philpott coined the term ‘a-mortal,’ to use instead of ‘immortal’ or ‘mortal.’ He was capable of death (he was not immortal), but there was no necessity of death on him (he was not mortal) because he was never a sinner. We are mortal, we have to die. ‘It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement.’ (Hebrews 9:27) But he willingly submitted to death.

Nevertheless, his death was necessary. Jesus could not escape death. It was in the terms of the everlasting covenant. Under that covenant he became surety to bear the punishment due to his people, to be obedient unto death. He speaks so beautifully about that necessity, ‘But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!’ (Luke 13:50) He willingly submitted to death according to the everlasting covenant. That death is the death of deaths, and the last stitch in the perfect robe of righteousness which he worked for his people. This is what is included in his cry, ‘It is finished!’

A note on the sufficiency of Christ’s death

As it comes to mind, let me just clear up one more point. Perhaps it mystifies some of you, or perhaps it is something the devil uses to get at the Lord’s people. How can the death of one man be sufficient for the countless number, the multitudes that we cannot number, who are said to be saved? It is a mystery, isn’t it? Is the devil querying it with you this morning, ‘The law demands death, and here is one man that died, but how is that death ever going to be sufficient for you?’

Well, for one thing, remember this – this was a *real* man, but he was no *mere* man. He was the man Christ Jesus, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ – very God, very man. Therefore his death was not the death of a mere man, even a perfect man. It was the death of the incarnate Son of God. Therefore, friends, there is an efficacy, a power, a merit in his death which is infinite. We cannot comprehend it, we cannot get to the end of it. The hymn writer, Joseph Hart,

says that his blood is ‘invaluable blood.’ O! the infinite merit of the death of the man Christ Jesus, the incarnate Son of God!

But then also remember the everlasting covenant. In the everlasting covenant, the Son of God stood surety for his people. Now you know what a surety is in everyday life. If you go to rent a house, or perhaps take out a mortgage, or a loan, the bank or the lender will ask you for a surety, or as they are often called, a guarantor. This is somebody who agrees that if you fail to pay, if you break the terms of the agreement, they will pay on your behalf, an amount that is set out in the agreement. The agreement may be that they pay what you owe. It may be they would have to pay more than what you owe, or less than what you owe. The person making the agreement has the right to set the exact terms. But once the agreement is made, its terms cannot be changed. Then when you default under that agreement, and fail to pay what you were supposed to pay, the guarantor has to step in and pay what was demanded according to the agreement.

Well, friends, so it is in grace. In the covenant, demands are laid on the Son as our surety. This agreement says that, for the sins of his people, he needed die in their place. Now just as we do not argue with those whom we have made a legal agreement with, when it comes to our guarantor paying up, so it is when it comes to the payment made by our everlasting surety. There is no room for argument, the requirements are inescapable.

It is therefore the wrong question to ask, ‘How can the death of one be sufficient for all his many people?’ The right question is, ‘What is demanded of our surety in the everlasting covenant?’ What is demanded is his life. And he gave his life. He paid the price in full. When he stood as our surety in the everlasting covenant, he met the terms that were laid on him, and he poured out his soul unto death, until he could cry, ‘It is finished!’

To conclude this point – the work of redemption is finished. The demands of the law are met. If the law is telling you that you have sinned, and reminding you painfully that the wages of sin is death, this is the place where you will find that the law’s demands are absolutely met – in the sacrifice of Jesus. Bring those demands to the cross. Point the demanding law to these words, ‘It is finished.’ Say, ‘Law, it is finished – all your demands are met.’ All the holy

justice that the law reflects cannot, can *never*, exert payment again. This is balm for the wounded soul. This is balsam for the wounded conscience. 'Oft as sins, my soul, assail thee,' and as often as the law demands payment for those sins, 'turn thine eyes to Jesus' blood.' (J. Kent, *Gadsby's* 916) O, to hear that cry echoing in our own souls, 'It is finished!'

2. The will of the Father is done

Secondly, when Jesus says, 'It is finished,' it means that the will of the Father has been successfully done. Jesus prays so beautifully, in the 17th chapter of John. He says this, 'I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' (v 4) In his cry, 'It is finished,' he proclaims to his Father, 'I have fulfilled all the terms of the everlasting covenant and, as a willing and obedient Son, I have fulfilled all the demands thou hast laid on me.' The will of God has been done. The will of God has been completed concerning our salvation, therefore, 'It is finished.' This cry is the cry of an obedient Son to his Father. He says to his Father, 'Just as thou hast commanded, I have done it.' All was done perfectly and completely, therefore he cried, 'It is finished!'

3. The cup of suffering is finished

Thirdly, the cup of suffering which our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ had to drink, is all drunk up. Theologians are divided on what was the lowest point of the humiliation of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Was it the lowest point of humiliation when he cried, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Or was it when his lifeless body was laid in the tomb?

It is true in one sense that in time, the lowest place sin brings the Lord's people to is death and the grave. The grave may be considered as the lowest place that disobedience, sin, and rebellion against God, brings the Lord's people. There is nothing lower. We can never fall into hell. 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.' (Acts 2:27) All the Lord's people are included in that promise made to our Saviour. Jesus came into that low place when he was laid in the tomb. But, to go back to the point I made earlier, even though Jesus still had to die and still had to come to that lowest of places – the grave – nevertheless, when he cried this cry, everything was done. The worst sufferings of the holy Lamb of God were at an

end. He had borne the punishment, paid the price, overcome death. The law could not exact any more from him. Therefore, 'It is finished.' There was really an end to his sufferings in this cry.

4. The ceremonial law is finished.

All the ceremonial duties which had been required from the Lord's people from Sinai down to this day of crucifixion were finished. Day by day, worship was still being performed in the temple. But in the moment Jesus gave up the ghost, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. This showed that all the ceremonies were abolished. Why were they abolished? Because they were finished, brought to completion, fulfilled. Now the type was swallowed up in the antitype. Now, things which had been seen only through a glass, darkly, were made bare and seen face to face in the suffering Lamb of God. Everything that the types pointed to, was now plainly displayed in fulfilment. From the first beast that God took and slew in Eden and shed its blood to make coats of skin to clothe Adam and Eve's naked bodies, through Abel's lamb, the ram caught in the thicket when Isaac was to be offered, and all the lambs of the Passover, through the goats on the Day of Atonement, through the red heifer and the other animal sacrifices, down to the precious cry of John Baptist, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' (John 1:29). Now everything that had been prefigured is fulfilled. Jesus was not only the sacrifice, but also the priest and the holy altar too, when he offered himself through the eternal Spirit, without spot, unto God, to make atonement for his people. And he cried, 'It is finished!'

That is why there is now no longer any demand on us to take lambs, and go yearly to the temple. That is why temple worship is finished. That is why it is such a travesty and such blasphemy to ever perform those things again, and why it is such a delusion to believe (as some do) that a day is coming when the temple worship will be re-established. In this cry, 'It is finished,' all the types were done away with – they were completed.

As I said before, the law was not ripped up. Neither was the ceremonial law ripped up. It was not that all those sacrifices and ceremonies had been wasted. Rather, in the work of Christ they were glorified, as they were seen in the perfection they pointed to, and as they were there fulfilled.

Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain,
Could give the guilty conscience peace,
Or wash away the stain.

But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they.

(I. Watts, *Gadsby's* 125)

Here the precious suffering Lamb of God took away all sin. 'The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,' bore the punishment due to those sins at Calvary. The Lamb of God fulfilled the demands of the law of God, and therefore he cries, 'It is finished!'

5. Prophecy was fulfilled

One final aspect of what was finished is that all the prophecies concerning the work of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, on this earth are finished too. I was going to say that prophesy has finished, but prophesy itself has not finished – there are still unfulfilled prophecies about the things which are yet to come, and they are no doubt being fulfilled even now. The day when all prophesy will be finished is that day when the Lord will return, 'In the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.' (1 Corinthians 15:52)

The prophecies concerning the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ are finished. In the same chapter as we have our text, it says, 'After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.' (John 19:28) The prophecies concerning him were being completed. It is as though in this cry he says for the final time, 'I am the one to whom all the scriptures have pointed!' He could point to the fact that 'it is finished,' as he preached to the two on the road to Emmaus. 'Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.' (Luke 24:27) What was he proclaiming? 'It is finished – in me.'

All sorts of things were prophesied about him. The time and the manner of his birth, his sufferings, the cries on the cross, down to the very words, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani,' and his dying words, 'Father, into thine hand I commit my spirit.' They were all fulfilled. As it says later in this chapter, 'These things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.' (John 19:36) He was the fulfilment of prophesy. He was the one who the Old Testament pointed to. He has now come. He has fulfilled what he came to do. And therefore, 'It is finished.' The Old Testament had its fulfilment in him, and the New Testament was sealed with his blood, when he cried, 'It is finished.'

Well, friends, we could no doubt continue. We have only skimmed the surface of some of these aspects in which the work of salvation is finished. The fullness that is in this word, 'It is finished,' we can scarcely comprehend. Our whole salvation is here. May the Holy Spirit repeat this word to us this morning, because this is a cry of peace. It is a cry of peace to a soul who finds themselves sin-bitten, with the law demanding, 'Pay up, pay up!' As the Word of God reminds us, 'The wages of sin is death.' But as one has said,

Hark! The voice of love and mercy
Sounds aloud from Calvary!

(J. Evans, *Gadsby's* 93)

That is what I desire that you would hear this morning under the preaching of the Word, the voice of love and mercy. That is what we desire to hear. The voice of love and mercy that sounds aloud from Calvary says, 'It is finished!' Full salvation is in it! It is mercy!

Behold a scene of matchless grace,
'Tis Jesus in the sinner's place;
Heaven's brightest glory sunk in shame,
That rebels might adore his name.

(W. Gadsby, *Gadsby's* 536)

All that is demanded by the law from you is paid! The payment that *you* owed is paid, and it is finished. That is the voice of mercy. And the voice of love.

How willing was Jesus to die,
That we fellow-sinners might live!

(J. Swain, *Gadsby's* 159)

'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' (John 15:13) 'For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; ... But ... while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' (Romans 5:7-8) While we were yet sinners, this cry went forth from the cross, 'It is finished.' This is the voice of love and mercy that sounds aloud from Calvary. May the Holy Spirit repeat it to us this day, and may we find full salvation in it.

May the Lord bless his Word to us.

Amen.

Evening Sermon

'After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.' (John 19:28-30)

The words we were considering this morning, and the words that I want to return to this evening, are those three words, the cry of Jesus: '*It is finished.*'

I do not want to completely go over the ground we covered this morning, but just to remind ourselves, (and for the benefit of those who were not here), we began by pointing out – this is one of the dying sayings of Jesus. And as we record and hold on to the dying words of our loved ones – so the dying words of Jesus should be particularly, peculiarly, set apart for our consideration, our meditation and our remembrance.

We pointed out that, out of the seven sayings upon the cross, two (by cross-reference between the Gospels) were uttered in a loud voice.

1. The first saying from the cross that was uttered with a loud voice was this, 'Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani? That is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34)
2. The second is the word we have before us this evening, 'It is finished.'

As the one speaks of the depth to which the Son of God went – in bringing salvation unto his people, so the second is the cry of triumph. As the first is the evidence that he was really made sin for us, that our sins were laid upon him, (because of the experience that he found within his Holy Soul – that separation from the comfortable presence of his Father, and so he cried, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' – there is the evidence of the transaction of our sins being laid upon him) – here the second is the evidence of the precious triumph, the victory of this conquering Lord, who in his dying moment cried, 'It is finished.'

Then we sought to notice some of the things that are bound up in this, 'It is finished.' The fact that it was the end of the work of redemption, in that he had fulfilled all the demands of the law. The demands of the law regarding his people are now finished. He has borne the punishment that was due to his people, 'The wages of sin is death.' (Romans 6:23) Here dying in their place, he takes and fulfils all the demands of the law on their behalf, and therefore the demands of the law are finished, as it concerns the Lord's people, in this cry, 'It is finished.'

Death is finished. Death is done away with. The Lord's people are no longer found on death row. No longer is 'The wages of sin' written over them – but that has been paid in full.

Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine.

(A. M. Toplady, Gadsby's 227)

Then we sought to notice how our redemption is completed also in this aspect, that this was the last act of the precious obedience of the Son, who, 'Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience.' (Hebrews 5:8) He, 'Became obedient

unto death, even the death of the cross.’ (Philippians 2:8) This was the last act of obedience to the demands of the law.

Through his precious law-keeping life, he kept all the positive commands of the law. He had honoured his father and his mother; he had not stolen; he had kept the Sabbath day, etc. (We need not go through them all.) But now, here he was fulfilling the demands of the law as it concerned malefactors under the law, those who had sinned – and he bears the punishment. He goes to the end of the law to bring in a righteousness for his people. He pays the price in full. He not only takes away the charges that are laid to us, (the wages that are laid to us, the price that is over our head) but he works out that precious robe of righteousness, that glorious justification, that precious obedience which is imputed unto us in the eyes of the law – and therefore we are found blameless, spotless, and with not a mark on our records. We stand, justified by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Therefore, when he said, ‘It is finished’ he said it is finished in the fact that our justification is completed – that precious robe of righteousness is finished, and ready to put on.

Then, friends, we tried to speak something of the fact that the Father’s will concerning him was completed – was finished. He came into this world, ‘Not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.’ (John 6:38) And here he is found submitting to the last degree, (if I may use that term) the last thing that the Father would have him to do while he was here upon this earth. There, as Priest, to offer himself without spot unto God – the Sacrifice for sin. He was obedient unto the Father, ‘Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience.’ And here the will of the Father is completed, and we quoted those words in John 17:4, ‘I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.’ ‘It is finished.’

Then his sufferings were finished. He was shortly to pass through death. (And I want to just return to that in a little while, as the Lord may enable me.) He passed through death. The Saviour lives to die no more. That was the state that he was found in, even when his body was found within the grave, but then risen again the third day, and now ascended and exalted. Exalted a Prince and a Saviour, set at the right hand of the Majesty of God on High where, ‘He ever liveth to make intercession for them.’ (Hebrews 7:25) The end of his sufferings

– the cup drunk up, to the very dregs. Now the Conqueror’s crown awaits him
– a throne in Glory. ‘It is finished.’

Then we concluded by speaking a little of how ‘It is finished’ regarding all the types of the ceremonial law. Everything that had been pointed to, from that first beast which God shed the blood of – ‘Without shedding of blood is no remission.’ (Hebrews 9:22) – and made those coats for Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness – down through the lamb that Abel offered; all the lambs of the Passover; the goats of the Day of Atonement; down to the day when John Baptist said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ (John 1:29) In the cry, ‘It is finished’ the veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom – all the ceremonial law completed. We are no longer bound by that. – O friends, the blessings of that. Do we really appreciate the blessing of which the hymn writer speaks, in that hymn concerning the Sabbath day, that we no longer have to go up to the Temple in Jerusalem, but:

Where’er they seek thee thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground.

(W. Cowper, Gadsby’s 1023)

Delivered from all the bondage, the ceremonial law, the types and shadows – that which could only portray in part the blessings of the Gospel, now seen in all their beauty in the glories of Jesus’ face. ‘It is finished.’

All the prophecies concerning the Son fulfilled and finished. The prophets foretold who should come, ‘For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ... and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.’ (Isaiah 9:6) All those precious prophecies, ‘They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.’ (Zechariah 12:10 and John 19:37) The words that are recorded even concerning the crucifixion in Psalm 22, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ – all completed in every jot and tittle. Here is the evidence that the One who died was none less than the Son of God. So, he might well cry upon the cross, ‘It is finished.’

We closed by trying to say a few words of comfort to the Lord’s people, that though (so often concerning our personal experience there seems so much

that remains to be done) we wrestle with the powers of hell, until Jesus bids us go – the Apostle says, ‘But now we see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus.’ (Hebrews 2:9) As faith eyes Jesus, it eyes him with this cry upon his lips, ‘It is finished’ – the mighty Conqueror. And faith, therefore, has to live in expectation of that day, when all those things which we currently have to wrestle with: this body of sin and death, this mortal, this corruptible – shall be brought in subjection unto him. We shall all be changed. When sin, which so often, and so easily, besets us here below (it is part of the fibre of our fallen nature) shall be done away with, and we shall never, never sin:

There shall we see his face,
And never, never sin;
There, from the rivers of his grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.

(I. Watts, Gadsby's 770)

There will the devil be finally put under his feet, and will be silenced in hell forever. No temptations, no unbelief, all those things put under the feet of this mighty Conqueror. ‘It is finished.’

This is the place where the Lord's people have to be brought by faith, and the place where we each need to come, time and time again, to find:

Oft as sins, my soul, assail thee,
Turn thy eyes to Jesus' blood.

(J. Kent, Gadsby's 916)

And by faith to hear him saying, ‘It is finished.’ Finished for us. That's the important thing. It is one thing to know about these things, it is one thing to be able to repeat the precious doctrines, but we need to lay hold upon them by precious faith.

These truths *are* precious (and may we never take them for granted). They are all important. These are the truths which a believer will be enabled to die upon. Friends, if you are resting on your own experience this evening, I tell you, in your dying moment – What is experience? The doubts and fears that arise, even this evening, concerning your past experience. But these are truths which

can never change. This is the cry that will see us safe across the river, 'It is finished.'

In that dread moment, O to hide
Beneath his sheltering blood!

Beneath this sheltering cry. This complete cry. The cry of our mighty Victor.

'Twill Jordan's icy waves divide,
And land my soul with God.

(J. Kent, Gadsby's 1093)

This is what the Lord's people want in their dying moment – the truths of the Gospel.

I have often been comforted and encouraged by the diary of Kenneth MacRae. If you read that diary, you'll find there that he was upon his deathbed, no longer able to preach to his congregation in Stornoway, and much about him to cause him dismay, but his wife read to him a sermon by John Colquhoun, from his book *Sermons on Important Doctrines*. He said, 'This is my comfort – Doctrine. Big chunks of it, big chunks of doctrine is my comfort in dying.' That is what will comfort the Lord's people – the precious truths that we tried to speak of this morning. All bound up in this, 'It is finished.'

I would be clear, we must know these things personally. I am not decrying experience. We need a personal knowledge of these things. It is one thing to know them as we know natural truths, but it is another thing to hear the voice of Jesus by the revelation of the Holy Spirit within our soul, 'It is finished' – concerning your sins, concerning my sins. When we hear this cry personally proclaimed in our soul, 'It is finished' – our sins will be gone. We will find ourselves then complete in him. The law would no longer have any demands over us. It is such a precious place, when we are brought there. I wonder sometimes how much we know of it? We find ourselves so legally minded, so taken up with the works of the law. We find ourselves so tempted and in so much darkness. We need again and again to hear his cry, spoken to our own soul, 'It is finished.' Son, Daughter, thy sins are all forgiven – 'It is finished' – Go in peace. This is what we must contend for.

I was preaching this afternoon at Heathfield from those words, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ (Matthew 4:19)) It struck me very forcibly: it is not good enough, it is not sufficient to know about Jesus. We are brought up in the House of God, knowing about Jesus. (This is something that we should be very thankful for.) But friends, are we found followers of him? – to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. You see, that is the mark. We don’t just hear of him, but we desire that we might see him, that he might speak to us, and that we might be found humble followers of the Lamb. To find our name recorded in some humble place beneath my Lord the Lamb.

I want to come this evening to consider our text, as the Lord would help me, in a different light. You may remember the first Lord’s Day in April (the last service I preached in my probationary period here) I preached from those words, ‘Amen.’ ‘The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.’ (2 Corinthians 13:14) We spoke then concerning that word, ‘Amen,’ as marking an end and also a beginning. We end our prayers with ‘Amen,’ but it is the beginning of looking for the answers. When we are brought to that place where we can truly say, ‘Amen’ in submission concerning our circumstances – that is when we prove the Lord begins to work. When we are brought down, that we confess, Lord, compared to what my sins deserve, how easy are our pains; when we are brought to put our mouths in the dust if so be there may be hope – then we prove he draws near, and, ‘He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes’ (1 Samuel 2:8) ‘He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock ... and he hath put a new song in my mouth.’ (Psalm 40:2–3) So often, when we are brought to those places in providence where we cannot see the way cleared up, we know not which way to take, we feel all is hopeless, we feel everything is dark and we are going to be brought to despair – *then* we prove he begins to work. When we are brought to those places where we have to confess that he is just and holy in all his dealings with us – *then* we begin to see him work.

Well, as I see this word this evening, I would like to bring it in a similar light. This morning we spoke about, ‘It is finished’ regarding those things that were finished. This evening, if the Lord would help me, I want to notice this word as

a beginning. There are so many blessings that flow from this word as their source. Out of this ending, there was a beginning.

We are made partakers of that beginning. This is the blessing. All the blessings that we receive, if we are found amongst the Lord's people, they flow from this, 'It is finished.' It wasn't the end, was it? It was not the end. If this had been the cry that was the end, as man might take it to be the end, 'It is finished' and nothing else – where would we be? As Paul said, in our reading, 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.' (1 Corinthians 15:19) But, O friends, it was not the ending, was it? This cry, 'It is finished' was just the beginning. It was a beginning in the life of the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and it is a beginning in the life and experience of the Lord's people.

As the Lord would help me, I would like to just trace out some of these things with you this evening.

Firstly, I would like to notice this – this is the beginning of life. 'It is finished.' This is what the world cannot understand. Here we have a man, (as they see him) a man dying upon a cross – and he cried, 'It is finished.' They laid him in a tomb – he is dead. Really dead.

Friends, can I just emphasise that for a moment. We read together John chapter 19 this morning and John spends a lot of time, in this chapter, proving, documenting and stating the reality of the death of the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. And let me just lay that foundation – (you may feel I am being pedantic but stay with me; it is an important point in noticing how this is the beginning of life) – Jesus really died. May we lay this close to heart.

The Jews, those that went to Pilate and desired that he would give them a watch, so that his disciples might not steal him away – they were concerned lest he should appear to not be really dead. But for the Lord's people, all our hopes lay upon this – that he really died. Because that is the punishment that was due unto us under the law. That is the payment that was demanded. Except Jesus has really died, then we are still under the curse of the law – that payment is still written over our heads, it has not been paid, and therefore the law has a just demand upon us. But John is so clear here, they came to break

the legs of the thieves that were on either side – they break their legs, ‘But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs.’ (John 19:33) There we have documented the opinion of those that were sent to ensure these men were dead – they came to him and he was already dead. There is the first evidence.

But friends, if that was not sufficient: ‘But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.’ Some spiritualize those things, and there may be spiritual things that could be drawn out – the blood to take away our sins, bearing the price, and the precious water which sanctifies us – but, let’s leave those things this evening. This is John’s second evidence of the reality of the death of Jesus – the separation of the blood into its constituent parts of plasma and of the clot. There can be no doubt Jesus had really died.

But to return to the point, that cry, ‘It is finished’ it was the beginning of life. ‘The Saviour lives no more to die’ as the hymn writer (S. Medley) says. That is the truth that is proclaimed from beginning to end of the Word of God – the Saviour lives to die no more.

He died. But in that moment he died – he lived. Yes, his body – really dead, laid in the tomb, laid there for three days. Laid there for a sufficient length of time that Lazarus’ sisters said concerning his dead body (after a similar length of time) ‘Lord, by this time he stinketh.’ (John 11:39) Really dead. But on the third day, he rose triumphant from the grave. Death could not hold him. The grave could not hold him. ‘Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.’ (Psalm 16:10) Why? Because he had met the demands of the law. The wages of sin, under the law, is death. That is the sting of the law. But here the wage had been paid. The law had been fulfilled. The demands of the law had been fulfilled. Therefore he died in paying that price. He received his life, and he lived.

We must never conclude, concerning the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, that in that moment of death he was conquered. No. In death *he* conquered. He was not conquered in death. Death did not conquer him. But in death he conquered. As I quoted this morning, that title of John Owen’s book – ‘The Death of Death is The Death of Christ.’ This is what happened when Jesus died

– death died. Therefore, friends, he lives. He lives to die no more. And the evidence of that life is seen in his precious resurrection. Rising again from the dead. That life which he lives – he lives everlasting life, and we live through him. Paul says in that chapter we read together, ‘Christ the firstfruits’ (1 Corinthians 15:23). ‘It is finished.’

In that moment death was dead – it was the beginning of life. So it was the beginning of life for his people. As we live in Christ, as he is made our resurrection, the resurrection and the life, ‘Because I live, ye shall live also.’ (John 15:19) ‘I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.’ (John 10:10) How does he give us life? And how does he give us more abundant life? By his death, and in his death he gives us life. Therefore this cry, ‘It is finished’ is the beginning of life to the souls of the Lord’s people.

Yes – Really died. Paid the price in full. And now, friends, *life* through Christ. ‘It is finished.’ It is life for us. In the moment that the Holy Spirit reveals to us our interest in the Saviour’s blood, our interest in his death – the moment when faith is enabled to believe that our sins were amongst those that made him cry, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ The moment we hear that cry within our souls, by faith, ‘It is finished,’ we find our sins taken away – we begin to live.

Yes, we begin to live in the moment of regeneration, but in experience, we feel death within us as convinced of sin before the holy law of God, until that moment when we are justified by faith. When we experience what it is to be brought into the precious fullness of the Gospel. In that moment we are granted some sweet assurance that these things are done for us, and we feel our sins to be forgiven. That experience of life in Christ may occur many days after the work of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. But it is the moment we begin to *feel* life. Then we feelingly pass from death unto life. No longer on death row. The law which has been hounding us and crying in our ears that we are a sinner deserving endless pains – now that is silenced, it cannot speak, because the payment has been met in full, and in that moment we pass (feelingly, in our experience) from death into life.

What is the nature of that life? That life is eternal life. It is a mystery to the Lord's people – we have begun to live eternal life, we will never die. Yes, we have to pass through that moment when body and soul shall be separated one from the other, unless the Lord come first – unless the Lord returns while we are alive upon the earth. But assuming that we should die before the Lord's return – there will be a separation of body and soul. We will die what man calls death. Our body will be laid in the tomb – precious dust in the sight of the Lord. But our souls will enter *immediately* into the fullness of the joys of the person of Jesus Christ forever and ever. That is death, friends, for the Lord's people. Immediately! In that moment when we draw our last breath, we will pass immediately from this time state into the fullness of those joys for evermore. You see, the life that we begin to live here, the life that is known in the souls of the Lord's people is eternal life. We are no longer bound down by the shackles that hold us here.

Bound down with twice ten thousand ties,
Yet let me hear thy call.

(C. Wesley & A. M. Toplady, *Gadsby's 1072*)

In that moment when Jesus says, 'Come up higher,' we will depart to be with him forever. Nothing can prevent that! And then, 'There, with my powers expanded' (as the hymn writer says – *Gadsby's 483*) we will enter into the fulness of life eternal. No longer tied down. No longer bound down by the infirmities of this sinful body.

But when this lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave,
Then, in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing thy power to save.

(W. Cowper, *Gadsby's 160*)

In that moment we will enter into the fulness of eternal life.

You know, if only we could see death more often in that light. Passing immediately into the arms of Jesus – that is what death is to the Lord's people. As one has said, 'It is no more death to die.' We repeat these things, but, friends, do you really believe it? When we hear the Lord and Saviour, Jesus

Christ cry, 'It is finished,' then we can look the monster death in the face. Death is no more a frightful foe. Why? Because it is swallowed up in victory.

And so, in the moment we hear this cry, it is the beginning of life, and it is the beginning of eternal life. Eternal life for the Lord's people. Life which will never be (and *can* never be) taken from us. 'The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.' (Galatians 2:20) The meaning of the Apostle's words is that we live by that life that is in Christ Jesus, through him, by him, through the fullness of this precious work which he finished here in this cry, 'It is finished.' And so we begin to live. This cry, 'It is finished' is the beginning of life for the Lord's people.

Then, secondly, I want to notice this: it is also the beginning of glory, the beginning of exaltation. It was for the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ – in that moment he cried, 'It is finished.' Although he has yet to enter into the fullness of it – don't forget that. There is a real sense in which he will not enter into the fulness of his glory until all his saints are gathered with him there in glory, when the Bride will then be brought in, at the marriage supper of the Lamb. But he is crowned with glory now. A mighty Conqueror. This was the beginning of his conquest. This is the beginning of that cry, (of which we read in the 24th Psalm) 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.' This was the beginning of the entrance of the King of glory into his exaltation. The taking up of that throne on the right hand of the Majesty of God on high. This was the beginning of these things, as he cried – 'It is finished.'

It was the beginning of that rest of glory that he has entered into. He offered one sacrifice for sin, and sat down forever on the right hand of God on high. This was the end of that work – although he continues that work of intercession in heaven above – but the end of that one sacrifice for sin. The end of that offering. And he sat down forever waiting until his enemies be made his footstool, until all things be put under his feet.

This is the beginning of the end. It is the beginning of the end of sin. It is the beginning of the end for this fallen world. It is the beginning of the end for the devil and all his angels. The Victor's cry goes forth, 'It is finished.' The victory

is won, the battle is done. *'Fought the fight, the battle won.'* (Quoting again from that hymn of Charles Wesley, *'Christ, the Lord, is risen today.'*) The battle is won. 'It is finished.' So glory crowns the Conqueror's brow.

This is the beginning of his glory – in this cry, 'It is finished.' Yes, he had to be laid in the tomb. Yes, there was those forty days that he appeared unto his disciples, and not yet ascended unto his Father, to his Father – our Father, to his God – our God. But there was nothing to bar his passage – he had conquered all. 'It is finished.' So he *must* enter into his glory, and he will finally enter into the fullness of that glory.

Our place in heaven, if we are found amongst these people, is certain. And, therefore, in this sense, *our* glory is begun too. In that moment when the Holy Spirit makes this cry in our heart, 'It is finished,' it is a sweet foretaste of heaven. It makes us long for that place where we will enter into the fullness of that glory. We are no longer of this earth, are we? Then we are separated, marked out, strangers, pilgrims. The things which we then once enjoyed we no longer enjoy.

When Jesus' gracious hand
Has touched our eyes and ears,
O what a dreary land
The wilderness appears!
No healing balm springs from its dust;
No cooling stream to quench the thirst.

(J. Berridge, Gadsby's 673)

Everything is dreary unto the Lord's people. Now we have a hope – a prospect of glory to come. That is what the Lord's people desire after.

Yes, you may say, these are high things, this evening, I feel the language of the hymn writer suits me, better than what you are saying:

Look how we grovel here below,
Fond of these trifling toys;
Our souls can neither fly nor go,
To reach eternal joys.

(I. Watts. Gadsby's 24)

But are you satisfied there, friends? If you are satisfied there this evening, if you are satisfied with grovelling in those things – then what do you really know of this, 'It is finished?' But, as you hear these things mentioned, does it make you mourn over the fact that you are grovelling here below, fond of these trifling toys? O, to be made to desire, 'Lord, lift me higher – hasten the day when I shall be done with all these things.' Does it bring a cry in your heart:

 Weary of earth, myself, and sin,
 Dear Jesus, set me free,
And to thy glory take me in,
 For there I long to be?

(S. Medley, Gadsby's 386)

That is a cry, friends. That is a cry for the completion. For all the fullness that is within these words here, to be made over to us, 'It is finished.' To be at an end of everything, and with Jesus. 'It is finished.' The beginning of glory. As we read together, 'Christ the firstfruits.' (1 Corinthians 15:23)

'It is finished.' **Upon this hung his resurrection; upon this hangs our resurrection.** There is a day coming when we must rise, when our bodies must rise. We shall all be changed. It does not matter whether our bodies have been lying in the dust, or whether we are alive upon this earth, none of the Lord's people are exempted – we shall all be changed in the twinkling of an eye. We do not know what we shall be – that is a mystery, but we know we shall have a body like his. It is a mystery what we read concerning Jesus Christ after his resurrection. It was a real resurrection. He could say to his disciples, 'Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side.' (John 20:27) He said, 'For a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.' He was hungry, 'And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish.' (Luke 24) Yet, he was found within the doors without opening the doors. He was manifest in the midst of them. He departed suddenly from their presence. The nature of that spiritual body, (which Paul assures us is the resurrection body, in the chapter we have read together) we do not understand – we cannot understand. We can only go as far as Paul, 'For this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality.' What

we shall be, we know not, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, and we shall see him. All of that hangs upon these words, 'It is finished.'

Then in this cry, 'It is finished,' we have opening of the new testament. This cry marks the sealing of, 'The new testament in my blood' (Luke 22:20). The new covenant. That covenant which we read of in Hebrews 9, 'For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.' And whereas the first testament was dedicated with blood, so this testament was sealed with the precious blood of Jesus. Friends, in this moment when he cried, 'It is finished' this testament came into force.

What is a testament? What is it that is left to his people in this cry? Just as if one of your family writes a will, and remember you in that will, it means nothing to you (you do not enter into that benefit) until that moment when they breathe their last, and it is said concerning them it is finished. In that moment of their death (although there may be the time of legal transaction) you become inheritor of that which was promised in that testament. It is made effect in the death of the testator. So in the cry, 'It is finished,' the will of Jesus Christ was brought into force, and we receive the blessings that are made over to us in that testament.

What were those blessings, then? 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.' (John 14:27) That is the first blessing that comes to us through the precious testament of Christ, in this cry, 'It is finished.' It seals our peace with God. The peace of pardon. The precious blood that taketh away all sin. Able to cleanse:

A Mary's or Manasseh's sins,
Or sins more vile than they.

(J Kent, Gadsby's 914)

That precious blood which takes away that which separates us from God – our sin. Our sins all swept away in that precious fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. As he cried, 'It is finished,' we receive peace in the testament of Jesus Christ.

But we can think of those other things that flow, and are our benefits, from the death of Jesus Christ. (We have already spoken of some of them, and I will not enlarge upon them.) The blessings of the forgiveness of sins, and that peace with God. The blessing of justification.

That robe which they cast lots for at the foot of the cross – it was a wonderful robe. They divided everything else, but when they came to that robe, they would not divide it. Woven without seam. Marked out as being a particular garment. Nothing miraculous about it. (I would be clear about that. If you go to the Cashmere Mills of Hawick in Scotland, you will find all their knitted garments are made without seam, they are all knitted on a machine which leaves no seam.) But I would say this, that if the soldiers stopped at a garment that had no seam – O, how much more precious is this robe, this precious robe of righteousness, which can never be defiled, but is holy and spotless. The righteousness of the Son of God. We have to come to that place when we see that which is willed to us in his will. A benefit that flows from his death, from his testimony, made over to us in this cry, ‘It is finished.’ If the soldiers stopped in wonderment at his natural robe that had no seam, how much more so must a child of God be brought to a stop, and be brought to cry,

Why me, why me, O blessed God,
Why such a wretch as me?
Who must for ever lie in hell,
Were not salvation free.

(D. Herbert, Gadsby’s 680)

– as we are brought face to face with that precious robe of righteousness, which is left for us in his last will and testament.

We must pass on from justification, to sanctification. This flows from the precious death of Christ, in that moment when he cried, ‘It is finished.’ The Apostle, writing in the 10th chapter of Hebrews, tells us this, ‘For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.’ In that moment he cried, ‘It is finished,’ our sanctification was assured. The means to our sanctification was assured. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit. ‘Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.’ (John 17:17) The fulfilment of that cry. The precious blood which takes away all sin. The pattern for our sanctification

– we shall be like him, the holiness of the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. This is another benefit which flows from the last will and testament of Jesus Christ.

Then we come to this – the adoption of sons. To know the love of the Father, shed abroad within our souls. This all flows from this cry, ‘It is finished.’ How does it flow from that cry, ‘It is finished?’ It is bound up in what John tells us – he is our propitiation. ‘He is the propitiation for our sins.’ (1 John 2:2) What does that mean? He propitiates God – he takes away that which separates – that which is an offence unto God – our sin. He bears it away upon the cross. No longer any separation. The precious love of God is now shed abroad in our hearts *by* the death of the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. In this cry, ‘It is finished.’ It is as though he opens a channel whereby the love of God is shed abroad within our souls. Do not get me wrong, friends – that is not the moment the Father begins to love. No, the whole reason Jesus was found upon the cross was because the Father loved us. ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ (John 3:16) That is the origin of our salvation – the love of the Father. But, as our sins have separated us from God, we are children of wrath, even as others. God cannot look upon sin with any degree of leniency even within his people. But when we are viewed in Jesus Christ, when he bears away that sin which is upon the cross, nothing now stands in the way of the love of the Father, and it flows into the souls of the Lord’s people. He says I am thine and thou art mine. ‘Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.’ (Song of Solomon 4:7) As the blessings of son-ship, brother-ship – with our elder brother, the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ – the communion of the Holy Spirit, as these things are made over to us, as we are enabled to cry, ‘My Father’ and as he says, ‘My son’ or ‘My daughter’ – all from this cry, ‘It is finished.’

Then that precious chain in Romans 8:30, ‘Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified,’ brings us to the last benefit of the will of Jesus Christ. (Of which we have already tried to say something of) ‘Father, I will.’ This is what he writes in his last will and testimony, ‘Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.’ (John 17:24) And we must be with him where he is. Why? Because, ‘It is finished.’

This is the beginning of all the blessings we receive, 'In heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (Ephesians 2:6) they begin here, 'It is finished.'

One last thing that I will just mention that begins here with this cry – the Gospel dispensation. Yes, the New Testament. The Gospel dispensation – the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon us – whereby we have the Spirit who indwells us to form Christ in us, the hope of glory. No longer do we have to go to the prophets or the seer. No longer do we have to view through the types and the shadows. But now, as the Holy Spirit reveals to us the blessings of Jesus Christ in his Word, we find,

For thou, within no walls confined,
Inhabitest the humble mind;
Where'er they seek thee thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground.

(W. Cowper, Gadsby's 1023)

The blessings of Gospel days. No longer through a glass darkly, but now face to face – in glory to come. No longer through the types and shadows. It is clearly set before us in this precious Gospel, 'It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.' (John 16:7) How did he send the Comforter unto us? As he purchased, as he fulfilled the demands that were laid upon him in the everlasting covenant, and therefore the Spirit was poured out upon the Church at Pentecost from on high.

Though we may often fear we grieve the Spirit (and left to ourselves we do grieve the Spirit) – we need warning about it. The Apostle warned the Ephesian Church, (chapter 4:30) 'Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.' Left to ourselves we will, and we fear at times our land and nation, and the church, has also grieved the Spirit. But the Spirit can never be entirely taken from the church, and can never entirely be taken from his people. Why? Because, 'It is finished.' This is our guarantee. This is the word of promise which is written over all our salvation, 'It is finished.' Everything completed. All is now ready. Everything is safe. Everything is sure. Eternally safe. Nothing can disturb the peace that is declared here in this cry, 'It is finished.'

What a privilege it is when we are brought to hear this cry, 'It is finished' by faith, and we enter into the fullness (yes, we feel it is the fullness) as we enter into something of the blessings that flow from this – of which this is just the beginning. But the prospect is set before us of:

The streams on earth I've tasted,
More deep I'll drink above:

(Samuel Rutherford)

The little too that's known,
Which, children-like, we boast,

(J. Hart, Gadsby's 792)

O, the day is coming, when the blessed reality of this cry: 'It is finished,' will overwhelm everything.

If such the sweetness of the streams,
What must the fountain be?
Where saints and angels draw their bliss
Immediately from thee!

(A. M. Toplady, Gadsby's 472)

May the Holy Spirit make known a little of the sweetness of these words in our souls this evening, 'It is finished.' And if so, what a precious expectation we have got – that when our days (whether they be many or few) upon this earth are done – that then there is a fullness into which we will enter, which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, that is prepared for them that fear him – and which is assured to us in this: 'It is finished.'

Amen.