

# THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR

Meditations on the Last Days of Christ

By

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## CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

### “IT IS FINISHED”

THESE ARE THE GREATEST and most momentous words that were ever spoken upon earth since the beginning of the world. Who does not find in them a cry of victory? It is a shout of triumph, which announces to the kingdom of darkness its complete overthrow and to the kingdom of heaven upon earth its eternal establishment. How wonderful!

At the very moment when, for the Hero of Judah, all seems lost, His words declare that all is won and accomplished!

Our Lord's exclamation is like the sound of a heavenly jubilee-trumpet, and announces to the race of Adam, which was under the curse, the commencement of a free and Sabbatic year, which will ever more extensively display its blessing, but never come to an end. Listen, and it will appear to you as if in the words, “**It is finished!**” you heard fetters burst, and prison-walls fall down. At these words, barriers as high as heaven are overthrown, and gates which had been closed for thousands of years, again move on their hinges.

But what was it that was finished at the moment when that cry was uttered?

The evangelist introduces his narrative with the words, “**After this, Jesus knowing that all things were accomplished.**”

Only think - “**All things!**”

What more can we want? But wherein did they consist? We hasten to lift the veil, and view in detail what was realized and brought about, and may the full peace be imparted to us which the words, “**It is finished!**” announce to the world.

“**Jesus cried with a loud voice, It is finished!**”

It would seem as if He had wished to drink only to make this victorious cry sound forth with full force, like the voice of a herald or the sound of a trumpet. The Lord has now reached the termination of His labors. He has performed the stupendous task which He undertook in the council of peace, before the world was, when He said, “**I delight to do thy will, O my God!**”

Death, to which He is on the point of submitting, formed the summit, but also the concluding act of His mediatorial work.

Only take into your hands the divine program of His vicarious earthly course, as compiled in types and prophecies in the archives of the Old Testament, and be convinced how it has been most minutely carried out.

The mysterious delineation of the Messiah, as it passes before us in increasing brightness and completeness in the writings of Moses and the prophets, is fully realized in its smallest and minutest traits in the person of Jesus.

If you ask for the wondrous Infant of Bethlehem described by Micah, “**whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting;**” or for the Child born, and the Son given, with the government upon His shoulder, whom Isaiah brings before us; or for the meek and lowly King mentioned by Zechariah, who makes His entrance into Jerusalem on the foal of an ass - it meets you bodily in Jesus Christ.

Do you seek for the Seed of the woman, who with His wounded heel bruises the serpent’s head; or the second Aaron, who should actually bring about a reconciliation between God and a sinful world - look up to the cross, and there you will see all combined in One.

Do you look about you for the anti-type of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, or of the paschal lamb and its delivering blood in Egypt; or for the exalted Sufferer who appears in the appalling descriptions given us in Psalms 22 and 69, which record a malefactor’s awful doom, even to the mournful cry of “**My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?**” - all is combined in Him who hangs yonder, and exclaims, “**It is finished!**”

Then take a retrospective look into the writings of the ancient prophets, and what meets your view? The ancient types have put on flesh and blood in Jesus Christ. Their importance to us is henceforth limited to the testimony they bear that the divinely-promised Messiah is indeed come, and that no other is to be looked for. Every condition of the work of human redemption had been fulfilled at the moment when Christ uttered the words, “**It is finished!**” with the exception of one, which was included and taken for granted in them, because it inevitably awaited Him, and actually took place immediately afterward - thus bringing the whole to a perfect conclusion.

That which still remained unaccomplished clearly proves that Jesus did not hang on the cross on His own account, but as our Representative. It was our death. The laws of nature forbade that a green and thoroughly healthy tree, which was rooted in eternity, should bleed and sink beneath the blows of “**the last enemy.**” It was contrary to the divine government that One who had not with Adam tasted the forbidden fruit, should nevertheless fall under the sentence pronounced, “**In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die!**”

It was at variance with the express promise of the Most High - “**This do, and thou shalt live**” - that One who did not leave unfulfilled one iota of the divine commands, should not live, but die. He Himself repeatedly declared that the universal law of mortality had no claim upon His Person.

He asserted most pointedly that no one, not even His Father in heaven, took away His life, but that He laid it voluntarily down. Truly, the death of Jesus would have shaken the throne of the Almighty to its foundations, and violated all the statutes of the divine government, if it were not permitted us to carry the idea of it beyond the bounds of such a death as all experience.

These considerations compel us - irrespective of any revelation which the Scriptures afford - to regard the death of Christ as something extraordinary and unique in its kind.

And certainly, it is a fact which stands solitary in history, and with which none besides can compare. He who, according to divine right, was exempt from death, freely submitted to it in our stead, as the last bitter drop of the accursed cup.

Whether you believe this or not, the Scriptures most expressly affirm it in many and powerful words. They tell us that “**Christ tasted death by the grace of God,**” and therefore not as the result of a natural necessity. They say, “**In that he died, he died unto sin.**” And when they assert that, “**If One died for all, then were all dead,**” it points out the vicarious nature of His death so plainly, that I know not how it could be more clearly expressed. If, by His death, He paid the wages of sin for us, His death naturally could not resemble such a falling asleep as is granted at present to thousands of believers under the smile of heaven, and with the joy of redemption upon their lips.

No; an eternal statute required that He should yield, as far as possible, to the stroke of the king of terrors, and taste the death to which the first Adam was sentenced. Under its horrors He bowed His head. Observe the continued silence on high concerning Him - the appalling restraint upon all the heavenly powers - the three hours’ darkness in which He was involved - and the jeers and blasphemies which assail Him from below. Truly, in all this you perceive no cheering picture of the state in which He descends into the gloomy vale of death. No; He does not die on the downy couch of a pre-assumed blessedness, as many of the poorest sinners now die, at His expense. Nevertheless, He dies in the crown of triumph.

At the moment when His heart ceased to beat, the words, “**It is finished!**” revealed the entire fullness of their meaning. He had now reached the final completion of His work of redemption.

The exclamation, “**It is finished!**” resounded in heaven and awoke hallelujahs to the Lamb which shall never more be mute. They reverberated through the abodes of darkness, like the thunders of God, announcing the termination of the dominion of their prince. But a more blissful sound on earth does not strike the ear of the penitent sinner to this hour than the words, “**It is finished!**” It is as the sound of the great jubilee-trumpet, and the proclamation of an eternal salvation.

Yes, we are delivered. There is no longer any cause for anxiety, except in the case of those who refuse to acknowledge their sinfulness, and turn their backs on the Man of Sorrows on the cross. But if we are otherwise minded and, honoring truth, have judged and condemned ourselves in the presence of God, then come!

No more circuitous paths - no fruitless efforts to help yourselves - no vain recourse to the empty cisterns of this world, whatever proud names they may bear! The voice of peace is heard on Calvary.

O that we were solemnly conscious how much was done for us there! Great was our guilt; we were condemned to death, and the curse lay upon us; but all is done away in the words, "**It is finished!**" If He has paid the ransom, how can a righteous God in heaven demand payment a second time? Know you not the assertion of the apostle, "**There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus!**"

Let us give our whole hearts to Him, and neither the multitude nor the heinousness of our sins need appall us. His closed eyes, His death-like visage, His pierced hands and feet oblige us, even for the glorifying of His name, to oppose not only the infernal accuser and the judge in our own breasts, but even the law of Moses, with the apostle's watchword, "**Who is he that condemneth, it is Christ hath died?**" What invaluable fruit, therefore, do we reap from the tree or the cross!

That which the Saviour accomplished by His death was not merely the work of satisfaction to divine justice, by which He removed the curse from our heads, but likewise His representative obedience, which is henceforth imputed to His believing people, as the righteousness which avails in the sight of God. Along with the sentence, "**Depart from me, ye cursed!**" is also the "**Mene, Tekel,**" erased from our walls, and in its stead we read the mighty words, "**Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.**" And that we are so is confirmed to us by the fact that God now lovingly inclines toward us, breathes His Spirit into us, leads us in bonds of mercy and kindness, and as soon as we have finished our course, opens the gates of His heavenly mansions to us. But that condemned sinners are regarded as holy before God, without any infringement on His justice, holiness, and truth, is intimated by that which the suffering Saviour accomplished on the cross.

Even the twenty-second Psalm asserts that this would be the consequence of His death, since in the last verse it is said, "**They shall come and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.**" How just and well founded is, therefore, the victorious cry, "**It is finished!**" with which the Lord, after performing His work, inclined His head to rest!

"**With one offering he hath forever perfected them that are sanctified**" (Hebrews 10:14). Yes, by the one act of the offering up of Himself, He has so laid the foundation for all who believe in Him, of their justification, sanctification, and redemption, that they may now unhesitatingly rejoice in the first as an accomplished fact; that they bear in them the second; and that they have the third as surely and certainly in prospect, as Christ their Representative has already taken possession, in their names, of the glorious and heavenly inheritance.

A creative act of a spiritual kind was accomplished on the cross; and when that which was there created shall have attained to its perfect development, and have laid aside all its earthly veils and coverings, the full truth of the triumphal shout, "**It is finished,**" will become apparent, and its signification be revealed to us.

For know that the eye of the crucified Saviour, on uttering these sublime words, rested not merely on individual sinners, but also on the whole world at large. He had dissolved the ban that lay upon it - had snatched it from the curse which justice had impended over it, and had rent from the powers of darkness the desolate earth, which, by the divine decision, had fallen to them on account of sin, had conquered it for Himself, and consecrated it to be the scene of His future kingdom. The blood of Christ claims its transformation into an abode of righteousness -its renovation to a paradise - its renewed amalgamation with heaven; and the eternal Father who has solemnly sworn to His Son, saying, "**Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession,**" will not refuse to listen to the claims of the blood of His only-begotten Son. Whatever confusion and desolation may yet come upon our world, its- future is secure. On the cross, the ground of its inevitable transformation and glorification was laid, and the Holy Spirit was commissioned not to rest, till the great work of that new creation shall have been completed.

When the glorious representations which are here given us become life and reality, we shall then be truly conscious in what a stupendous and comprehensive sense the dying Redeemer uttered the words, "**It is finished!**" At that moment, the entire fullness of deliverance and glorification there depicted, had been won by Him, and the new world, in all the preliminary conditions of its realization, was formed.

Let us avail ourselves, then, of the treasures of consolation and hope which lie concealed for us in the words, "**It is finished!**" Let us more closely encircle the cross, and derive from the death of the Redeemer, along with the blissful consciousness that our sins are forgiven us, strength to live henceforth only to Him who gave such an invaluable ransom for us. If we now wish to see what He has made of us poor children of Adam by the offering up of Himself, let us cast a look at the Church triumphant above. The just made perfect there were once people like ourselves. Among them are the malefactor, the publican, Magdalene, Zacchaeus, and a host of other poor sinners. Who recognizes them in their glorified state, their shining garments and unfading crowns of life before the throne of God?

In those saints the words, "**It is finished!**" have, as it were, assumed a form. They display to us the entire greatness of the expression. They form its living and visible commentary. Let us therefore follow in their steps. No other banner but the cross accompanies us to the city of God. Let us join the band of travelers who follow this oriflamme, and let the full-toned echo, which resounds from the depth of our hearts, to the cry, "**It is finished!**" be heard both now, and especially in our last hour, "**Who is he that condemneth, it is Christ hath died?**"

~ end of chapter 49 ~

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