

IT IS FINISHED
John 19:16-42
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Theologian Karl Barth, after writing thousands of pages in his *Church Dogmatics*, arrived at this simple definition of God: “the One who loves.” When he visited the University of Chicago, students and scholars crowded around him. At a press conference, one asked, “Dr. Barth, what is the most profound truth you have learned in your studies?” Without hesitation he replied, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”
2. How do we know that God loves us? How do we know that Jesus loves us? The old children’s song says that we know “for the Bible tells me so.” But just saying that God is love, and that God loves us, is not how we assured of God’s love. We know that God loves us, and how much He loves us, because Jesus died for us.
3. This morning we are going to take a look at the crucifixion of Jesus, and be reminded of how much God loves us.
4. We are in John 19. Last week we covered the trial of Jesus before Pilate. Pilate did not want to execute Jesus, and tried to dissuade the Jews, but in the end he caved to their pressure and sent Jesus to His death.
5. But not to worry. This is exactly what Jesus wanted to happen, and knew would happen. This is all turning out exactly as God had planned. And it was absolutely necessary for our salvation.

II. TEXT: John 19:16-42

1. *16 Then he handed him over to be crucified. Then they took Jesus away.*
 - i. **William Barclay** “There was no more terrible death than death by crucifixion.”
 - ii. **Cicero** called it “the most cruel and horrifying death.”
 - iii. **Tacitus** described it as a “despicable death”
 - iv. Crucifixion goes back to 600 BC. It was invented by the Persians, passed on to the Carthaginians, and then passed on to the Romans. It was dominant form of capital punishment by the Romans until AD 337.
 - v. It was so terrible that the Romans never persecuted anyone in the homeland; it was only used in the provinces, such as Judea.
 - vi. It was never used on Roman citizens, no matter how horrible the crime. It was reserved for slaves, and the worst criminals who were not Roman citizens.
 - vii. The pain was so horrible that there were no words that could describe it, so they invented a new word -- excruciating. The word literally means "from the cross."
2. *17 Carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called Place of the Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.*
 - i. Crucifixion always followed a standard pattern.

- ii. When the criminal was condemned, the governor would say, "Ibis ad crucem," or "You will go to the cross."
- iii. There was no death row. The sentence was carried out immediately.
- iv. The criminal was placed in the center of four soldiers, called a quaternion, and he was escorted to the site of the crucifixion.
- v. His own cross was placed on His shoulders. Typically the vertical beam of the cross was already in place at the execution site, and the criminal just had to carry the horizontal beam. Still, this beam was 100-200 pounds, and it had to be carried from Jerusalem to an execution site outside of the city, since it was illegal to crucify someone within the city walls.
- vi. Here it says that Jesus carried the cross by Himself, but in the other gospels we learn that the Romans forced a man named Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross. Simon was just coming into Jerusalem at the same time that Jesus was carrying His cross, and they forced him to help. Jesus carried the cross until He made it out of the city, and then when He could carry it no longer, Simon carried it the rest of the way, following behind Jesus.
- vii. Recall that Jesus had already been flogged before having to carry the cross. In a typical crucifixion, the flogging would occur at the execution site, but Jesus was flogged first. Do you remember what flogging was like?
 1. The criminal was tied to a post with his arms and hands tied up over his head to fully expose his entire backside – back, shoulders, buttocks, and legs. The whipping would usually last for 39 lashes, but sometimes more, depending on the mood of the soldiers.
 2. The special whip had several names: cat of nine tails; flagellum; flagrum; scorpion. It had nine braided leather strands with heavy metal balls woven into them. Whipping would create deep bruises which would eventually bust open as the flogging went on. The whip also had pieces of sharp bone, metal, or bronze woven into the strands. These would dig into the flesh as the whip hit the body, and then rip off flesh and cause deep cuts to the bone as the whip was pulled back.
 3. **One scholar** who studied Roman floggings said, "As the flogging continued, the lacerations would tear into the underlying skeletal muscles and produce quivering ribbons of bleeding flesh."
 4. **Eusibius**, a historian from the third century wrote about Roman floggings, "The sufferer's veins were laid bare, and the very muscles, sinews, and bowels of the victims were open to exposure."
 5. **Nabeel Qureshi** "They used what's called a flagrum, a whip that was designed to rip the skin off the body and cause excessive bleeding. After just a few lashes, the victim's skin began to come off in ribbons and their muscles tore. After a few more lashes, the muscles became like pulp. Arteries and veins were laid bare. Sometimes the flagrum would reach around the abdomen and the abdominal wall would give

way, causing the victim's intestines to spill out. Obviously many people died during the flogging alone."

6. The flogging was so severe that it would cause the victim to go into hypovolemic shock due to massive blood loss. At this point Jesus would have experienced four things. First, His heart would have been racing to try to pump blood that wasn't there. Second, His blood pressure would have dropped, causing him to fall down and pass out. Third, His kidneys would have stopped producing urine to try to hold on to fluid. Fourth, He would have been very thirsty to try to replace the lost fluids from blood loss. Many victims did not survive the flogging.
- viii. Jesus had to carry His cross on His shoulders after having been flogged. And to make matters worse, flogging would often continue all the way to the crucifixion site.
- ix. On the way to the execution site, the criminal would be led through as many streets as possible. This was done for two reasons:
 1. To warn the people of the consequences of crime against the Roman government.
 2. If anyone could still bear witness in his favor, the witness might come forward and do so. In this case the procession was halted and the case retried.
- x. Jesus was crucified at a place called Golgotha, which means Place of the Skull. The Latin word for Golgotha is Calvary, which is why that is a popular name for churches, and a popular word used in Christian songs and writings.

We are not sure why it was called Place of the Skull. It is most likely that the hill was in the shape of a skull.
3. *18 There they crucified him and two others with him, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle.*
 - i. When they finally reached Golgotha, Jesus was stripped naked. Then He was made to lie on the ground while His arms were stretched out and nailed to the horizontal beam that He carried. The nails were wrought iron spikes, five to seven inches long. They would have been driven through the wrists. In those days, the wrist was considered to be part of the hand. If the nails were driven into the hand, it would have ripped through the hand under the weight of His body. The nail would have pierced the median nerve, the largest nerve going out to the hand. Think of the pain you feel when you hit your funny bone. That nerve is called the ulnar nerve. Imagine squeezing and rushing that never with a pair of pliers. That's what Jesus felt.
 - ii. Then they would have lifted Jesus up and connected the horizontal beam to the standing vertical beam. All of His weight was hanging by His nail-pierced wrists. The weight of His body would have immediately caused His arms to be stretched an extra six inches, dislocating both shoulders.

- iii. Then the soldiers drove a single nail through His overlaid feet.
 - iv. Sometimes the vertical beam would have a small piece of wood that served as a kind of seat. The purpose of the seat was not to make life more comfortable, but to prolong and increase the agony (MacArthur Study Bible).
 - v. Mark says that they offered Jesus wine mixed with myrrh, which was a narcotic. The Jews had custom, following Pr.31:6, of giving this pain medication to victims of crucifixion. But when Jesus tasted what it was, He refused it. This was His most important hour, and He wanted to be fully present mentally, emotionally, and spiritually (Mk 15:23).
 - vi. Jesus was crucified along with two other men, with Jesus being in the middle.
 - 1. Traditionally these men have been called “thieves,” but the Greek word used to describe them, criminals (Mk 15:27; Gk. *lestes*), is the same word used to describe Barabbas. It probably refers to insurrectionists, or revolutionaries, or guerilla fighters who wanted to overthrow Rome. These were probably partners with Barabbas.
 - 2. At first, both of these men criticized Jesus. But eventually one of them became a believer in Jesus while hanging from the cross.
4. *19 Pilate also had a sign made and put on the cross. It said: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. 20 Many of the Jews read this sign, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. 21 So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Don’t write, ‘The king of the Jews,’ but that he said, ‘I am the king of the Jews.’ ” 22 Pilate replied, “What I have written, I have written.”*
- i. This is also typical of Roman crucifixion. A placard or sign was made with the criminal’s crime written on it. Sometimes the sign was carried by the soldier walking in front of the criminal, and sometimes it would hang around the criminal’s neck.
 - ii. Pilate had a sign made that read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”
 - iii. He knew that Jesus had not actually committed a crime, but this is what the Jews framed Jesus for, and Pilate needed a legitimate excuse for execution.
 - iv. The Jewish leaders opposed the wording on the sign. They said that it should read, “He claimed to be the king of the Jews.” But Pilate left it as written, probably to insult the Jewish leaders for forcing his hand in executing an innocent man.
5. *23 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, a part for each soldier. They also took the tunic, which was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. 24 So they said to one another, “Let’s not tear it, but cast lots for it, to see who gets it.” This happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled that says: They divided my clothes among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing. This is what the soldiers did.*
- i. One of the perks of being a soldier during a crucifixion was that you took the criminal’s clothes. Every Jew wore five articles of clothing – a head

- covering, belt, sandals, outer-clothes, and tunic (an undergarment worn next to the skin, from the neck to the knees or ankles). They divided the first four among themselves, but they cast lots for the tunic.
- ii. John points out that this is a remarkable fulfillment of prophecy. **Psalm 22:18** “They divided my garments among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing.”
 - iii. The Gospel of Mark tells us that as Jesus was hanging on the cross, He also had to endure the mockery and insults of the Jewish leaders, and the people passing by (Mk 15:29-32). They said things like, “If You really are the Messiah, the King of Israel, then save Yourself. If you come down from the cross, then we will believe in You.”
6. *25 Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.*
- i. It was always risky to publicly support a known enemy of the Jewish and Roman authorities. Yet Jesus was not alone during the crucifixion. He was supported by mostly a group of courageous women. John mentions four.
 - 1. His mother, Mary.
 - 2. His mother’s sister, who we know as Salome, the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee.
 - 3. Mary the wife of Clopas, the mother of James the younger and Joseph.
 - 4. Mary Magdalene, who Jesus delivered from seven demons.
 - ii. Mark tells us that these women followed Him in Galilee and took care of Him. But these were not fair-weather friends. They followed Him when He was popular, and they following Him when He was dying on the cross.
7. *26 When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.” 27 Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.*
- i. Even in His dying hour, He was focused on others.
 - ii. **Ephesians 6:2** “Honor your father and mother....”
 - iii. How do we honor our parents? By obeying them when we are young, and by taking care of them when they get old.
 - iv. It has been suggested that Jesus entrusted Mary to His friend John because His own brothers were not yet believers.
8. *28 After this, when Jesus knew that everything was now finished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, he said, “I’m thirsty.” 29 A jar full of sour wine was sitting there; so they fixed a sponge full of sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it up to his mouth.*
- i. Christ was thirsty. This is a reminder of His humanity – He was fully God, and fully man. He had to be human in order to die for our sins.
 - ii. They dipped a sponge in a jar of sour wine. Sour wine (NIV “wine vinegar”) was the cheap wine, the drink of ordinary folks (NIV Study Bible).
 - iii. And they held it up to his mouth with a hyssop branch. This was a name given to a number of different plants, so we’re not sure the exact type.

9. *30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished." Then bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.*
- i. Jesus died. Mark says that Jesus crucified at nine in the morning, and He died at 3 pm. Six hours on the cross (Mk 15:33-34).
 - ii. Christ's last words: "It is finished."
 - iii. These words are only recorded in John. The Synoptic gospels simply say that He gave a loud shout. John tells us exactly what He shouted.
 - iv. What was finished? We'll come back to that later.
 - v. How did Christ die? Probably from asphyxiation and cardiac arrest. Asphyxiation is a fatal lack of oxygen. Cardiac arrest is when the heart stops beating and you die. When Jesus was on the cross, His body hung in an inhale position. Every time Jesus needed to exhale, He had to push up on His feet, which would have caused the nail to tear through the foot and brace up against the tarsal bone. He would lift Himself up to exhale, and then sink down to inhale. This would have become exhausting over time. Eventually His breathing would have slowed down, leading to an irregular heartbeat, which eventually led to cardiac arrest and death.
10. *31 Since it was the preparation day, the Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a special day). They requested that Pilate have the men's legs broken and that their bodies be taken away. 32 So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man and of the other one who had been crucified with him. 33 When they came to Jesus, they did not break his legs since they saw that he was already dead. 34 But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. 35 He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows he is telling the truth. 36 For these things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: Not one of his bones will be broken., 37 Also, another Scripture says: They will look at the one they pierced.*
- i. It was the preparation day. On Thursday night they celebrated the Passover. Now it was Friday, the preparation day before the Sabbath.
 - ii. Crucifixions in Judea differed a little from a typical Roman crucifixion.
 1. By Roman law a criminal would hang upon the cross until he died, and this could days. He died from thirst, starvation, blood loss, suffocation. He hung for days in the heat of day, in the cold of night, tortured by insects and animals.
 2. But the Jews had a law that a person who is executed could not be left over night but had to be buried the same day (Dt 21:22-23).
 3. This meant that the criminals needed to die that day, and they needed to die before nightfall, because that was when the Sabbath began at sundown.
 - iii. In order to breathe, the criminal had to lift up his body by pushing on the nails in his hands and feet. So, to hasten death, the Roman soldiers broke the prisoners' legs so they couldn't lift up. They took a mallet and smashed their legs.

- iv. But when they came to Jesus, He was already dead, so they didn't brake His legs. Instead, to ensure that He was dead, they pierced His side with a spear.
 - v. Why did blood and water come out? They likely pierced His heart. This would have caused the bleeding, and there is a sac of fluid around the heart called the pericardium, and this would have looked like water.
 - vi. John points out that this too was a fulfillment of prophecy.
 - 1. Numbers 9:12 says that Passover lamb's bones were not to be broken, pointing to Jesus as the lamb of God.
 - 2. Zechariah 12:10 says they will look at the one whom they pierced.
- 11. 38 After this, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus—but secretly because of his fear of the Jews—asked Pilate that he might remove Jesus's body. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and took his body away. 39 Nicodemus (who had previously come to him at night) also came, bringing a mixture of about seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes. 40 They took Jesus's body and wrapped it in linen cloths with the fragrant spices, according to the burial custom of the Jews. 41 There was a garden in the place where he was crucified. A new tomb was in the garden; no one had yet been placed in it. 42 They placed Jesus there because of the Jewish day of preparation and since the tomb was nearby.*
- i. According to Roman law, a crucified criminal was not buried but was simply thrown away for the wild animals. But this was illegal under Jewish law. The body had to be buried that day.
 - ii. Two men stepped up to the plate: Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus.
 - iii. Both men were members of the Sanhedrin, the high Jewish council or senate, and they were both secret followers of Jesus before His death. But now they made their faith public.
 - iv. Joseph was a rich man. A good and righteous man. The Bible says that when the Sanhedrin decided to kill Jesus, he disagreed with their plan and action (Lk 23:50). He received permission from Pilate to remove Christ's body and bury it. And He buried it in His own tomb – a new tomb that had never been used. It was cut into the rock. It was likely meant to be his own tomb.
 - v. Nicodemus also came to help. This was the same Nicodemus, the Pharisee, who came to Jesus secretly at night to ask more questions. It was to Nicodemus that Jesus said those famous words, "Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3:3, 16)." Nicodemus brought seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes (perfumes) – enough for a king's burial. The two men wrapped Jesus' body in linen cloths, sort of like a mummy, placing the fragrant spices in the folds of the cloths). And they placed him the tomb (which was in a garden very near Golgotha).

III. PROPITIATION

1. Let's go back to Jesus' last words, "It is finished (v. 30)." This is one Greek word, *tetelestai*. What was finished?
2. To understand the cross of Jesus Christ, you need to understand the concept of propitiation.
3. **1 John 2:2 (ESV)** "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."
4. To propitiate means to satisfy God's wrath with an offering; to pacify or avert God's wrath.
5. What is the wrath of God?
 - i. **Theologian John Murray** God's wrath is "the holy revulsion of God's being against that which is the contradiction of His holiness."
 - ii. **J. I. Packer** "And this is righteous anger – the right reaction of moral perfection in the Creator towards moral perversity in the creature. So far from the manifestation of God's wrath in punishing sin being morally doubtful, the thing that would be morally doubtful would be for Him not to show His wrath in this way. God is not just – that is, He does not act in the way that is right, He does not do what is proper to a judge – unless He inflicts upon all sin and wrongdoing the penalty it deserves."
6. Romans 2 says that there is a day of wrath coming; a day when God's righteous judgment against sin will be revealed, when everyone will be repaid according to His works. Romans 3 says that we are all sinners; we all deserve God's wrath for our sins. But then in Romans 4 and 5 it says that forgiveness, acceptance, and peace with God are freely given to those who believe in Jesus Christ. What happened? The wrath of God that was set against us was satisfied by Christ's death on the cross. We deserve God's wrath for our sins, but Jesus Christ took that wrath upon Himself and satisfied it so that we could be forgiven and have peace with God.
7. The Greek word for "It is finished," *tetelestai*, was an accounting term. Archeologists have found ancient tax receipts from that time period with the word "*tetelestai*" written on them, meaning "paid in full."
8. That's why Jesus said, "It is finished." *Tetelestai*. By His death on the cross in our place, our debt has been paid in full. Nothing else is necessary for our forgiveness. Not good works. Not donations. Not baptism or communion or confession. Not church attendance. Not rule-following. Our debt has been paid in full. *Tetelestai*.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. How do we know that God loves us? That Jesus loves us? The cross of Christ.
2. **Romans 5:8-9** "8 But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 How much more then, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath."