

IT IS FINISHED

John 19:16-42

Key Verse: 19:30

“When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

Good evening! I am Gustavo Prato from Venezuela. Though I wanted to attend this conference in past years, I was rejected for a US visa three times. But at last God brought me here to talk to you about God’s love for all the world. There are many expressions of love: giving flowers or chocolates, writing letters, singing songs, etc. What is the greatest expression of love? God demonstrated the greatest love by sending his one and only Son to die for our sins on the cross. Jesus’ love from the cross embraces not only each person, but also all peoples around the world.

Part One: Jesus was crucified as the King of the Jews (16-27)

On the night before the crucifixion Jesus loved his disciples. He washed their feet. He taught them that he was the only way to the Father. He commanded them to love one another. And he prayed for them. After that the hour came for him to reveal the full extent of God’s love through his sacrifice on the cross. The Jews arrested Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. The next morning they took him to Pilate and falsely accused him. Pilate had found Jesus innocent, but he wanted to appease the Jews (18:38; 19:4, 6). Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, **“Hail, king of the Jews!”** And they slapped him in the face (Jn 19:1-3). Later, Pilate tried to release him, but the pressure of the people was very strong. So he finally gave in to the Jews and condemned Jesus to death. The form of execution was crucifixion which was reserved for only the worst criminals, slaves and political prisoners.

Verse 17 says, **“Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).”** Jesus carried his own cross to the place of execution. That was a painful way, full of suffering and tears. Jesus carried his own cross along this hard way to fulfill his mission. He arrived at Calvary, a hill outside Jerusalem where he was publicly exposed. There they crucified him, and with him two others — one on each side and Jesus in the middle (18). His hands and ankles were nailed to a cross. He was hung between two criminals. According to the Law of Moses every man hung on a tree was under the

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curse of God (Dt 21:23). Why was Jesus condemned and hung on the cross? Because he bore the curse that we deserved. Isaiah 53:5-6 says, **“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”** Jesus was exposed shamefully as a criminal in order to bear all our shame because of our sins. Jesus was beaten, wounded and crucified to take our place, paying for our sins.

Pilate placed a notice on the cross. It read, **“Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews”** (19). The notice was written in three languages widely used at that time: Aramaic, Latin and Greek (20). Jesus is the Savior for all peoples of all nations. Jesus is a spiritual king. He said, **“My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place”** (18:36). Jesus was scourged, spat upon, beaten, mocked and finally crucified. But through his suffering and humiliation, he defeated Satan (Heb 2:14-15). Jesus is the humble king who came to conquer our hearts, not by force, but by sacrificial love.

After they crucified him, the soldiers took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. Then they took the tunic, and cast lots to decide who would get it (23-24). It seemed that the Roman Empire and the Jewish leaders were in charge and that evil was running out of control. But the Bible says that this happened so that the Scripture might be fulfilled: **“They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment”** (24; Ps 22:18). God was always in control fulfilling his plan of salvation. The soldiers were ignorant of Jesus’ suffering. However, Jesus was mindful of his mother as she suffered. From the cross Jesus said: “‘Woman, here is your son,’ and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ From that time on, this disciple took her into his home” (26b,27). In his most difficult moment, Jesus was more concerned about others than himself.

Part Two: The last words of Jesus: “It is finished” (28-42)

Verse 28 says, **“Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty.’”** After breathing heavily on the cross and losing body fluids, Jesus was very thirsty and had a severe headache. Psalm 22:15 prophesied about Jesus’ thirst on the cross, **“My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.”** In that hard condition, Jesus knew that he had one more thing to fulfill: a Scripture regarding the Messiah. So he said **“I am thirsty”** (Ps 69:21).

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Even in his agony, Jesus was absolutely obedient to God the Father to fulfill his salvation plan.

Finally, the moment arrived which Jesus had anticipated. Let's read verse 30a. **"When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.'" Jesus said, "It is finished."** What do these words mean?

First: "It is finished" means that God fulfilled his promise to send a Savior. God had promised Adam and Eve that he would send a Savior who would suffer, but would crush the devil's head (Gen 3:15). Throughout the centuries, God confirmed this promise through his prophets. Human beings often forget or break their promises. But our loving God did not forget his precious promise. He fulfilled it by sending us a Savior.

Second: "It is finished" means that by dying on the cross, Jesus fully completed God's salvation work. He became the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Formerly, God provided the way for people to approach him through animal sacrifice. These sacrifices needed to be made every day. They were only a shadow of the perfect sacrifice to come. God sent Jesus who lived a sinless life in complete obedience to God on this earth. Jesus was this perfect and unblemished lamb. John the Baptist said of him, **"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"** (1:29). In giving his body and shedding his blood he paid for the sins of all people. Through the sacrifice of this Savior, God completely solved the problem of human sin.

The sin problem is the most serious problem. At first sin looks enticing but then brings terrible consequences. Sins such as adultery, lust, strife, jealousy, envy, murder cause broken relationships, depression and anxiety. This makes it difficult to love others, even ourselves. It also leads to destroying lives, families and society. The root problem is that sin separates us from God. Sin causes us to feel guilty and ultimately leads to eternal condemnation in hell, for the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). But the terrible suffering of Jesus and his death paid in full all the consequences of our sins. At that time vendors used the phrase, *It is finished*, to show that all the debt was paid. Not 90% nor 99.9%, but 100% paid. Now we have no more debt to pay because God fully paid for our sins by giving us his Son. What do we have to do to receive this grace? John 3:16 says, **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"**. To receive this salvation, God asks only that we *believe* what he has done for us through Jesus.

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“It is finished” is written in the Greek perfect tense. This indicates that the atoning sacrifice of Jesus continues to be effective in the present and into the future until Jesus comes again. Now we can go to Jesus any moment every day and receive his forgiveness again and again because “It is finished.” 1 John 1:9 says, **“If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”** Praise Jesus!

Romans 8:1 says, **“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”** Sometimes we are tortured by guilt and shame and we cannot sleep. We may think that we will always be haunted by our past. But no matter how dirty our sins are, God completely paid for them through the death of Jesus. Now we can be free from condemnation. We have peace with God. Our relationship with God is restored. We can be called the children of God. We experience his company and love each day. We also receive eternal life, and we will enjoy the company of Jesus forever in the kingdom of heaven (17:3).

Jesus broke the power of sin. Therefore, we can leave behind past failures and have a new beginning. Sin is like an iron chain. We cannot break it but Jesus can. Then we can be set free and our lives can be changed. Selfish people can be transformed to serve and love others with the love of God. Lustful men and women can be purified to form healthy families. A married couple nearly got a divorce because of the sin of adultery. But both repented and believed in Jesus. They renewed their marriage vows at the church. After some years they went to another city and planted a new church. Last march they finished their first discipleship program. Five brothers and sisters were raised as Jesus’ disciples. How is this possible? Because there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus! The grace of God allows us to have a new beginning.

After saying, **“It is finished,”** Jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit (30b). Here “gave up” indicates a voluntary act. Jesus endured all the pains and voluntarily laid down his life (10:18). 1 John 3:16 says, **“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.”** Jesus shows us that true love is not just a feeling, or words like “I love you,” but true love is action (1 John 3:18). It is to lay down one’s life for others. God really wants us to love each other in this way. **“As I have loved you, so you must love one another”** (13:34b). It’s not easy to love one another in this way. But we are so loved by God through the death of Jesus that we can grow in God’s love until we can love our brothers just like Jesus.

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The soldiers confirmed the death of Jesus by piercing his side with a spear. Thus, the Scripture was fulfilled: **“Not one of his bones will be broken,”** (Ps 34:20) and **“They will look on the one they have pierced”** (Zech 12:10). John the gospel writer testified, **“The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe”** (35). God did all the work to pay for our sins. He provided the perfect Lamb in Jesus. God also gave this testimony in the Bible so that we who live 2000 years later also may believe. Let’s believe in Jesus and receive his forgiveness.

I suffered from an inferiority complex. I had many failures in love. I was a slave to pornography. I had a hidden resentment towards my parents because of poverty. I thought studying Petroleum Engineering at the university in Venezuela was the way to be happy. Despite being one of the best students, I felt empty. I suffered from depression and restlessness. One day I went to my room and suddenly started to cry. Then God showed me his love. In 2002 I was invited to a Bible conference. There I heard the voice of Jesus who said to a woman, **“Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin”** (8:11). For the first time, I understood that lustful desires were sin. I had to repent of them. I prayed, “God if you really want this for me, please show me.” After seeing the drama about the crucifixion and hearing the message of the cross, I could not hold back the tears. I couldn’t speak, feeling really guilty for the pain suffered by Jesus. I made a decision to write a reflection. I confessed my sins voluntarily that night and accepted Jesus as my Savior. I received forgiveness of my sins and a heavy burden left me.

Through Bible Study I could deepen my understanding that the cause of all my pains was sin, like an impure heart and pride. I also heard Jesus saying, **“It is finished.”** Through his suffering and death, Jesus defeated Satan and paid for all my sins on the cross. So every day I can have a new beginning. I was strengthened inwardly. Gradually I overcame bad habits and depression. The Holy Spirit is with me. He comforts me and gives me joy in all circumstances. I also forgave my parents and became thankful for them. This gave me peace. I overcame my fatalism about marriage and married the best woman in the world: Shepherdess Katuska. God took away a sense of meaninglessness. He gave me mission to raise disciples among college students through one to one Bible study. He raised me as pastor of the Venezuela UBF, succeeding Pastor John Seo. Latin Americans have many problems like broken families, immorality, pride, violence, drugs, etc. How can I help them? I must love God’s flock of sheep by laying down my life for them

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as Jesus did for me. I must believe and teach Jesus' words, "**It is finished.**" Then God will raise Latin Americans as a source of blessing for the world.

Jesus said, "**It is finished.**" Our life was impoverished by sin. But God so loved us that he fully paid our debt through Jesus' death. He did all the work so we can have a new life. Let's come to Jesus by faith and receive His forgiveness. Let's live a new life of sharing the love of God. Amen.