

Have you ever started a project and then never finished it? Maybe the project required much more work than you thought it was going to and so the project never got done. If we were required to pay for our own sins, that would be a project that would never be finished. First of all, our good works can never pay for our sins. And also God's law demands perfection and if we look seriously at God's Law we see that we pile up sins every day. If it were up to us, the work of paying for our sins would never be finished. But today on the cross Jesus says, "It is finished." What has been finished is the work of paying for our sins. On the cross Jesus finished what we would never even be able to start and that's paying for our sins. Today we are going to see that Jesus has finished the work of paying for our sins and then we are going to see what blessings we receive through faith in finished sacrifice.

First, Jesus has finished the work of paying for our sins. In our passage for today John wants to make it clear that Jesus has left nothing undone. John shows that Jesus completely fulfilled the prophecies about the suffering of the Savior. You see the Bible predicted what would happen to the Savior. One of the prophecies was that they would cast lots for his clothing. John points out that that's what happened to Jesus. The Roman soldiers cast lots for Jesus' clothing. Another prophecy was that they would give Jesus vinegar to drink. In Psalm 69 it says, "**They gave me vinegar for my thirst.**" (v.21) Well Jesus fulfilled that prophecy too. John says, "**Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, 'I am thirsty.' A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on the stalk of a hyssop plant and lifted it to Jesus' lips.**" (19:28-29) There is nothing that Jesus left undone. He fulfilled every prophesy about the sufferings of the Messiah. He completely finished his work.

Another way in which Jesus left nothing undone is that he made sure that his mother would be cared for. "**When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, 'Woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.**" Jesus is about to die, but he's thinking about his mother. And he makes sure that his mother will be cared for. Even on the cross he kept the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment, "Honor your father and mother." He made sure that his mother would be taken care of after he was gone.

There is nothing that Jesus left undone. He fulfilled every prophecy. He made sure his mother was cared for. And finally he gave up his life as the sacrifice for our sins. Our passage says, "**When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.**" It says "he gave up his spirit." Jesus willingly gave up his life as the sacrifice for our sins. chapter 10 where Jesus says, "**I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ... The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my father.**" (John 10:17-18) The reason Jesus willingly laid down his life, the reason Jesus willingly gave up his spirit was as the sacrifice for our sins. At the beginning of John's gospel, John the Baptist pointed at Jesus and said, "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." In the Old Testament many lambs were sacrificed and those sacrifices pointed forward to this sacrifice. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross which pays for all of our sins. And now that sacrifice is finished. Our sins have all been paid for.

Good Friday is a day that has a mix of emotions. Good Friday is certainly a sad day. It's the day that Jesus died. And we can't walk by the cross without breathing a repentant sigh. This is what my sins cost. But it's called Good Friday because Jesus willingly paid that cost. The price for all your sins has been paid. And now we are going to look at all the blessed results of that which we receive through faith in Jesus.

The first blessing that we receive through faith in Jesus' sacrifice is that we won't be punished in eternity by God for our sins. You see the punishment for sins is hell. But on the cross Jesus suffered the torment of hell in our place. Remember when Jesus said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." Hell is separation from God and so on the cross Jesus suffered the punishment of hell in your place so that you will never have to. Because Jesus paid the penalty, when a believer dies instead of going to hell they go to heaven. We have been rescued from hell. Heaven is ours. That is the blessed result of Jesus' sacrifice.

Another blessing that we receive through faith in Jesus' sacrifice is that Jesus has rescued us from the reign of sin, death and the devil. In our passage, John really emphasizes that Jesus is King. It says, "**Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.**" (John 20:19) Pilate didn't realize the profound meaning of this. But because we sinned we were under the reign of sin and death and the devil. But Jesus paid for our sins by his death on the cross. And now through faith in Jesus we have been rescued from the reign of sin, death and the devil and brought into Jesus' kingdom. There's a passage that says, "**God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves**" (Col 1). And so another blessing that we receive through faith in this finished sacrifice is that we have been rescued from the reign of sin, death and the devil.

And finally another blessing that we receive through faith in Jesus' finished sacrifice is that we get life. The place where Jesus was crucified was called the Place of the Skull. And we don't know for sure why it was called the Place of the Skull. Perhaps it was on a hill that looked like a skull. Or perhaps it was called the place of the skull because that is where executions were carried out. But no matter the reason why it was called that, the name place of the skull reminds me that God told Adam and Eve, "If you eat from this tree, you will surely die." And Adam and Eve did die. And ever since then death has been our great enemy. But Jesus defeated by death by dying in our place. You see Jesus died. But death couldn't stomach Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Jesus is too powerful, too righteous, too holy and so three days later death spit Jesus out. You see Jesus destroyed death from the inside. Jesus defeated death by letting death swallow him and then bursting forth from it. There's a Bible passage that says that Jesus Christ has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. And now believers still die but because of Jesus' sacrifice for the believer death is the gateway to eternal life. That's why Jesus can say, "Whoever believes in me will never die." The soul of a believer will never die. Death couldn't stomach Jesus and because you are connected to Jesus death won't be able to stomach you either. On the last day you are going to come bursting forth from your grave just like Jesus came bursting forth from his grave in glorious splendor.

One of the best feelings in the world is when a project is finished. On Good Friday Jesus finished the work of paying for all your sins. On April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1518, almost 500 years ago, Martin Luther presented a document that was just as important to his theology as the 95 theses.<sup>2</sup> It was called the Heidelberg Disputation and in the Heidelberg Disputation Martin Luther said, "**The law says, 'Do this' and it is never done. Grace says, 'Believe in this,' and everything is already done.**"<sup>3</sup> The law says "Do this" and it is never done. If we had to get to heaven by keeping the ten commandments, we would never get there, it would never be finished. But grace says believe in him, and everything is already done. It is finished. Just believe, by the power of the Spirit, and through faith receive all the blessings that flow from his finished sacrifice: the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from death and the devil, and eternal life. Whatever is bothering your anxious soul, find rest in Christ's sacrifice. Christ sacrifice means that all our sins are paid for. It means that we've been rescued from the devil and Jesus is our King. It means that death has been destroyed because death met its match in Jesus. It is finished! Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> This insight is taken from a sermon preached by WELS pastor Caleb Bassett of St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Fallbrook, CA.

<sup>2</sup> I owe this observation to Dr. Wade Johnston, a professor at WLC.

<sup>3</sup> Luther's Works, Volume 31, page 41.