



The General's 2023 Easter Message 'It is finished' (John 19:30)

This Easter comes as Salvation Army leaders from around the world have been called together to elect a new General. The privilege of serving in the role of international leaders is now coming to an end for Commissioner Rosalie and me, and we seek to complete what we had set out to do. Soon we will need to say, 'It is finished'.

So when I reflect on Easter, I am drawn to the words of Jesus on the cross: 'It is finished'. But how much more profound are those words on Jesus' lips as recorded in John 19:30. His earthly life and ministry – the greatest of all human lives and the most far-reaching of all ministries – was complete.

It is finished.

But the words 'It is finished' take on yet deeper meaning when we consider that Jesus spoke them in his own language of Aramaic, so the word he used indicates complete submission – completed *before* he died. In Christ, God-who-could-not-die voluntarily and completely submitted to becoming human. In so doing he experienced pain, suffering and death itself. Paul echoes this in Philippians 2:5-8 (NRSV) when he writes, 'Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.' Jesus clothes himself with our humanity. He understands us. He experienced the extremity of a public execution with all its humiliation. His identification with us in the human experience – including pain, suffering and death – stands completed.

It is finished.

When John later wrote his Gospel in Greek, he recorded 'It is finished' as the last words of Jesus, using a word from the world of finance meaning 'paid in full'. So the evangelist reminds us that, in Jesus' complete submission, he paid the debt of sin for all humanity. On the cross, our account has been paid in full. Paul connects 'paid in full' with no longer counting our sins and the important emphasis of reconciliation through the cross. He describes this in 2 Corinthians 5:19 (NIV): 'God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them...'. Sin is no longer the issue – the only thing of importance is how we will respond to a Saviour who has paid the account in full.

It is finished.

At the start of the year, I affirmed the **'once and for all God'**. In Romans 6:10 we read: 'The death he died, he died to sin *once for all*; but the life he lives, he lives to God.' God's provision



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for us began with a new covenant, commencing with the cross. Once and for all. Paid in full. Hebrews 9:28 reminds us that Christ was sacrificed *once* to take away the sins of many, including us, while John 1:29 proclaims, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world' (ESV). That is my sin, and your sin.

It is finished.

In the truth that Christ died once and for all, there is also the truth that he lives, and because he lives, we can live also. This is the essence of the Easter message. No matter what comes, the truth of God's action on our behalf remains rock solid. No matter what comes, we are safe in his hands and fully aware of his provision. No matter what comes, we can live as 'more than conquerors' and 'overcomers in the midst of all things', because his grace is sufficient and he is faithful. Romans 5:8 says: 'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' It's done! For once and for all time ... and that changes everything.

It is finished.

Commissioner Rosalie joins me in sending you warm Easter greetings.

Brian Peddle
General