

The Finished Work of Christ
John R Gavazzoni
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Thousand Oaks, CA

In the light of the true relationship with our heavenly Father that we share with our Lord Jesus Christ, the expression, "the finished work of Christ," tends to be misleading. What do I mean? Allow me to explain:

I've come to realize, though it is an expression that commands great respect among evangelical Christians, albeit with various shades of interpretation as to its meaning, that it has a shady past with roots sunk deep in the soil of a perverse perception and portrayal of God. Christians of the Protestant tradition are most often unaware of how they have had Romish doctrines handed down to them in disguise. Such is the case with our subject. Though things are changing, still, a most basic tenet that helps to energize the religious system called the Roman Catholic Church, is the diabolically crafted thesis that merit is at the heart of a true relationship with God. From this has evolved, directly or indirectly, such other expressions as, "the meritorious work of Christ" "through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ," etc.

Since that "church" cannot avoid the biblical fact that salvation is through Christ and that, by some definition, grace must be considered a factor, it has come up with the idea that Christ has gained merit for us by His obedience to the Father's will in all His life, especially in His suffering and death, and that we can access or appropriate the grace of God earned (merited) for us by Christ through our faithful reception of the sacraments of the "church."

Ingenious, isn't it? With that doctrine they can claim to honor the grace of God and what Christ has done for us while putting a theological spin on both so as to effectively lock the faithful into a system that dishonors grace and makes salvation a matter of gaining points with God, claiming that they don't really teach that you can be saved by your own works, but only through the works of Christ. Don't forget though---here's the biggie: the grace provided by Christ is only available, to repeat, through the sacraments of "the Church."

Out of the murky depths described above has come the idea of the finished "work" of Christ. This is utterly contrary to the relationship of (within) the God Family which extends to us in Christ. God does not relate to His Son or us in Him according to a point system. The Son of God does not merit anything for Himself or for us before the Father.

The Father does not relate according to a merit system. He relates to us according to the value that His own unconditional love places upon us which flows out to us freely, that is, by grace. If we must speak of merit, let us speak of such love and grace meriting our joyful reception. God values us as He does His Son, and the Son of God does not need to earn His place in Father's heart. What we should be teaching, rather than "the finished work of Christ," is "Christ, God's finished Person." And add that we are complete in Him.

God's purpose, from eternity, has always been to birth a Son, and, in Him, many sons, to bring them all to glory, and do so with the dimension of creatureliness incorporated into their Being. Now here's the kicker, guys and gals; He's done it. He, the Father, has perfected His Son in His humanity by the things which He suffered. (Note: the Greek word, translated as "suffered" in most translations, is not limited to painful experiences, but carries the thought of everything Jesus underwent in his human experience). Christ is the finished work of the Father and we are complete in Him.

Isn't there more to be done? NO, what is left, is the proving in us, by God, that the lie is a lie and the truth is the truth. If you're looking to experience something that needs to be completed by your experience, then you've fallen from grace. To experience grace is to experience the already complete work of God which is His Son and you in union with Him.

God is not into you completing someTHING with His help. God is into birthing many sons by His Seed, then bringing forth from their God-substance the totality of creation that the sons themselves share, and then subjecting that creation to futility so that the creation is led to seek their essential internal glory which is the contitution of their being. By that experience-crucible, the glory of God fully unfolds

in a Way that it would not have otherwise.

What I've discovered of late is how subtle is the intrusion of this misunderstanding even in the minds of brethren of great piety mixing there with genuine revelation. Recently it came up in this form; that "the finished work of Christ," though a perfect provision for the soul, must be appropriated.

In so many ways, the idea is promulgated that provision is God's part, but the appropriation of the provision is ours. We are urged, very solemnly not to forget that. But, I must protest that such a perception is a corruption of the perfected work of God in Christ.

God's perfect Man is the Man in whom both the provision and the appropriation have occurred. That is, it is the work of God, not only to provide but to see to it, yes, even to cause the provision to be received. In Christ, God has done this. In Christ, in Whom we are complete, God's provision of the fulness of Deity and the reception of that fulness have been accomplished.

You see, Christ is the express Image of God. In Him is everything that is in God, exactly as it is in God, and in God ONLY is there to be found both provision and reception (the word reception is much to be preferred over appropriation). Within the dynamic of the God Family there is giving and receiving, impregnation and conception. God is internally the great Giver and Receiver, the Impregnator and Conceiver.

What is given in/by God is received in/by God, and we are made to participate in Christ in this aspect of the Divine Nature. If it were a matter of God doing His part--giving, and we doing our part--receiving, the process would never be completed for it has been proven under the dispensation of the law that man never does fulfill his part. Christ is the embodiment of God's giving and receiving. The Bride which receives from the Groom is all One Christ; She proceeding out of the essence of Him.

When we limit the work of God in Christ to God's provision, leaving the reception open-ended, then the provision is not a complete one. I need Him to be, in me, both Giver and Receiver. I need for there to

be nothing left for me to do to complete the work. I need to experience a completed work and I need to have it revealed to me that it is, in every sense, by every definition, complete, leaving no loose ends.

The principle is clear: As it is not I who lives, but Christ in me, so, included in Him in me is the truth that it is not I who receives from God, but Christ in me doing the receiving. He is my life, my living, my receiving, my believing. He is my willing and doing. He, indeed is All in all.

In the dynamic interaction of the true Deity and Humanity of our Lord Jesus, Deity gave its all and it was fully received by the Humanity of Christ, which is our Humanity. Such is the full measure of the mediating ministry of the one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

If, for instance, we are to accept the truth of 2 Cor. 5, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and that it is particularly in respect to God's work of reconciliation that Jesus had in mind when He cried, "It is finished," then we must realize that the reconciliation could not have occurred unless both the conciliating overture of God and the surrender to that overture had to have been finished in Christ.

I think I've made myself clear. I have NOT maintained that NO further experience is necessary in our lives. What I am standing firmly for is that our experience completes nothing, it manifests a perfection, a completeness that is wholly of God and has been accomplished in Christ, with us, in Him, (in)cluded. There is a carnal mentality that struggles with this and resists such a conclusion, thinking that honesty insists we admit to being something less than complete in Him.

That is not the mind of Christ speaking. That is the mind that insists on subjecting the truth to the darkness of the lie, the lie that seeks to steal from God the principle of incarnation, modifying the truth to accommodate the lie and claiming that its incarnation in our flesh is proof that it is the truth or part of the truth.

God's passion is to totally invest Himself and commit Himself to corporality so as to grant that corporality all His fulness, all His glory. The devil (however you conceive of "him") is insanely jealous of such a passion and plan. With nothing of his own to compare with it, he has sought to steal it and make it his own. To repeat myself for emphasis, He seeks to incarnate the lie, which he has fathered, so that it, the lie, can walk around in human expression claiming to be true and claiming to be at least a part of what we call reality.

It is the passion of the devil to counterfeit the incarnation, to incarnate himself in opposition to the true and only incarnation, which is God in Christ. This insane insistence of his to be recognized can be likened to the attempt to place his brand on our flesh, but regardless of how he may sear us, the brand cannot remain because the true nature of our flesh, which is the Word ("The Word became flesh... "Thy Word is truth") is sealed by the Spirit, and the brand, finally, will be overcome.

We cannot "hold" such a branding. It is contrary to our true nature. The devil's brand will finally disappear for we were not made to receive it.

I have spent many years in the leather business. Some of you ladies may remember how popular tooled purses were many years ago. You cowboys out there like your tooled (carved) western belts, wallets and saddles.

For this purpose, some leather is tanned in such a way that it is "toolable." You can easily press an image into it, and you can carve designs into it that will "hold" on its surface indefinitely. Other tannage resists being tooled. Of course, any leather surface can be, to some degree, altered, so the illustration is not perfect. But it serves to give us a helpful mental picture.

The devil may stamp his image on us temporarily, but it won't hold, it can't, and it will only serve to confirm whose we really are, to whom we really belong and the divine origin of our humanness that subjects itself to the false brand, only to prove the true nature of our corporality.

In closing I must point out again how indisputable the truth is that God is all in all to us. Reconciliation is a matter of God reaching out to us

in conciliating love and bringing us to respond in faith to His conciliating work in Christ. In order for Christ to reconcile the world to Himself, which He did, both had to occur, and both did occur. It really is FINISHED.