

# TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

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## One Word... Three Worlds

**01**

Pastor Tim Dilena

Throughout human history, certain words have become iconic and ingrained in our society's fabric and collective consciousness. These words have endured for decades, spanning from Hollywood to historical events.

There is one phrase that stands out above all others. This phrase has a profound impact that reaches far and wide, from the highest of heavens to the depths of hell. It was the final words of a dying man, a cry that echoes throughout time.

"IT IS FINISHED" was the cry of a dying man but not just any man, it was the cry of the Son of man and the Son of God while on the cross. There are two things of note about the words, "It is finished," that Jesus uttered while on the cross. Firstly, Jesus did not say "I am finished," but instead "It is finished." Secondly, the emphasis is on the last two-letter word, "it." As stated in Matthew 20:38, this small two-letter word was a global assignment and the reason for Jesus' death: "Just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Ransom is the price paid for those held in captivity. Ransom was the "it"—the price that was paid. In Greek—the language that the New Testament was written in—the one word that describes the mission: "it is finished," is tetelestai.

There was a custom during the first century that you could be sitting around people who were in debt, but you wouldn't even know it. That was not the case, however, during the time when Jesus died. When a person incurred a debt that they could not pay, the person to

whom they owed it would write out their debt, listing how much they owed, and they would nail that on the doorpost of their house so that everyone who walked by or came to see them would know that they were in debt. Can you imagine if your credit card or utility bill was nailed to the door of your home?

**“ Can you imagine if your credit card or utility bill was nailed to the door of your home? ”**

But then there was another custom. The way for everyone to know that the debt was canceled was by driving another nail through that certificate of debt. Before the next nail would be hammered in, the word tetelestai was written on business documents indicating that a bill had been paid in full.

When those three nails were driven through Jesus, it meant: PAID IN FULL, IT IS FINISHED—TETELESTAI—one word for three worlds. When Jesus uttered those words from the cross, it was one word for three worlds: heaven, hell, and earth. Upon hearing the pounding of the nails, heaven rejoiced and got ready for a lot of people who were on their way. Colossians 2:13-14 (NASB) says, "When you were dead

in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." Hell shuddered in disbelief, and Earth was overwhelmed by the love that someone would pay their debt. TETELESTAI was one word for three worlds.



The cross was not just something done for me, it was something done by me. I sent Jesus to the cross—my sins, my debt! Jesus was punished for my sin because sin had to be punished. If my sin was not transferred to Jesus, then someone had to pay for it. Sin is a crime against God, and it is a known fact that all crimes must be paid for. You and I would not be here if we had to pay for our sin. Someone had to die for committing a crime against God. Jesus died. His death was the acceptable payment.

When hell started to hear the pounding of the nails, it shuddered in horror and disbelief. It shuddered because hell lost what it thought it controlled: death and hell.

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Revelation 1:18, KJV).

The keys to Satan's own house were snatched from him. He was rendered powerless!

Tetelestai meant to hand over control—hand over the keys.

When Earth started to hear the pounding of the nails, it was overwhelmed by a love that paid for their debt. Every step that Jesus took to the cross said, "I love you," to every person in history. If you have ever wondered if God loves you, just look at Calvary's cross.

We live in a time where people try to make God like them. They try to pay the sin debt with the wrong currency. As Martin Luther, the father of the Protestant Reformation said, "What makes you think that God is more pleased with your good deeds than He is with His blessed Son?"

There are three sacrifices or payments that God won't accept:

**SINCERITY:** Some think that meaning well is enough.

**SERVICE:** Some believe that basic decency is enough for God to owe them something.

**FEELING SORRY:** Some believe that being sorry is enough payment for their sins.

Romans 5:10 says, "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." And Romans 5:1 explains that "We have peace with God through Jesus Christ." Therefore, you can't leave Jesus out of the equation if you want to make friends with God. To make friends with God, it's not enough to make promises or to butter Him up. We try to fix the outside thinking it will fix the inside, but we end up being stuck. We must acknowledge that the real issue is the sin inside us, and that the debt for our sin has already been paid.

I'm reminded of an occasion at a restaurant when my family and I had finished our meal. Afterwards, I noticed that the waitress brought our check, took it away, and then brought it back again. She placed it on the table, smiled, and said, "Somebody in the restaurant has paid for your meal. You're all set." And then she walked away. I had a strange feeling sitting there. The feeling was helplessness. There was nothing I could do. It had already been taken care of. To insist on paying would have been pointless. All I could do was trust that what she said was true and then live in that, which meant getting up and leaving the restaurant. By accepting her statement, I faced a decision: to either live by it or make my own reality where the bill was never paid.

Are you feeling helpless? Are you trying to create your own reality because you believe that the bill has not been paid? This is your invitation to trust that you don't owe anything. To trust that something is already true about you, something has already been done, and something has been there all along. To trust that grace paid the bill—it is finished, "tetelestai." Since it is finished, stop trying to pay the debt yourself. Jesus paid it all!

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When it comes to surprises, there are those who love them, and there are those who hate them. Have you ever stopped to consider why that is? Perhaps some love the thrill of the unexpected. And maybe others prefer to remain in control—they want to determine the outcome. Most of us have experienced the exhilaration of being surprised by good news or even

expecting a certain gift only to be surprised by a different gift.

For one of my milestone birthdays, my family surprised me by giving me a trip with my two sons to Normandy, France to tour World War II battlefields. I'm not sure what I was expecting, but that gift genuinely surprised me and still brings back wonderful memories.

When I first became a born-again Christian, I experienced failure in some of my old habits, and it affected my witness and brought condemnation. Talk about feeling disappointed! My reversion to those old habits was not just disappointing, it was unexpected. I thought I had left them in the past. Disappointment in one's self can be the most spirit-crushing experience because my actions were under my control. In my despair, I cried out to God, and His presence filled my room, and He baptized me in the Holy Spirit. I expected condemnation for my failure, but instead I received the gift of the Holy Spirit that changed my life forever.

I think it is safe to say that we have all experienced failure in some form and expected judgment, but with God we found mercy instead.

When you experience failure, own the feeling of disappointment. Don't justify it—take it to the cross. The admission of failure and the humility of repentance brings the expectation of God's mercy and new beginnings! The Word of God and humility are essential! James 4:10 tells us, "Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."

What do you do, though, when you are suddenly faced with news or an experience that your mind can't immediately comprehend? What do you do when you're caught unawares—perhaps even blindsided? That sudden shock can cause an upheaval in your system and make you feel as if the bottom has fallen out from underneath you—like you have no control over the outcome!

Just over two years ago I received a phone call that took my breath away and dramatically altered my life and that of my family. The coroner's office called to inform me that my 42-year-old son was deceased. I was barely able to comprehend the shocking news when the coroner had to then inform me that my son had taken his own life. Needless to say, my world turned upside down. It was completely unexpected news, and the outcome was out of my control! My wife and I were left with a deep sense of emptiness—one that neither of us had ever known before. We had known our son was struggling with depression but never expected this sudden and dramatic life-changing event. We were expecting a different outcome for him, one of hope and freedom.

What were our options considering this unexpected news? We could have blamed ourselves, blamed others, or even questioned God. We



knew, however, that despite the excruciating pain and deep sense of loss, God's word is true, and that no matter what trials we may face or the adversities we may encounter, our trust and our hope are tethered to the promises in His word:

"Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted."  
—Matthew 5:4

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." —Isaiah 41:10

Sometimes our reaction is because we were expecting one thing and got another, and we're then left with a deep sense of disappointment. Expectations based on our assumptions can cause real problems and eventual disappointment. Some of us bring certain expectations into marriage, in raising children, in friendships, in ministry, in education—in life. For example, there might be an assumption that if I get a good education, I'll have a great career; or a misguided assumption that if I don't have an education, I'll be nothing. Both are reasonable assumptions, but they can lead to faulty expectations. These faulty expectations can also take the form of believing a lie that only the Word of God through the work of the Holy Spirit can correct. But assumptions based on the Word of God are essential and those who trust in God can expect good things!

"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him."  
—Psalm 62:5

"You can make many plans, but the Lord's purpose will prevail."  
—Proverbs 19:21

You can trust Him even with the unexpected as well as the expected!

# Congratulations to the Summit Class of 2024



Another year has flown by, and once again we've had the privilege of celebrating a Summit graduating class. This 2024 class was truly exceptional, marked by a desire to pray for their generation and a beautiful love for music. As we watch them embark on the next chapter of their lives, our hearts are filled with both joy and a tinge of sadness, knowing we'll miss their daily presence. However, we eagerly anticipate the extraordinary paths that lie ahead of them!

This class has truly epitomized love and care for one another. Pastor Carter Conlon urged the graduates to cherish the friendships forged during their time at Summit. He spoke to their future selves, encouraging them that though they are leaving Summit's gates with much zeal, there may be a day when some may hit a season of discouragement or frustration. It could be years down the road, it could be decades from now, but he encouraged them to remember his words. Pastor Conlon shared about his own journey, remembering a time when he cried out to the Lord after a season where his own strength and confidence had failed.

In those times, he heard the gentle whisper of the Lord asking, "Can you do it one more day?" Each day for months he felt the Lord ask him the same question. That season made him realize that it is the strength and faithfulness of Christ that sustains him, not his own zeal. He implored the graduates to forsake reliance on themselves in exchange for all that God has for them.

"By the grace of God," he told them, "you will stand in the power of God! Build your futures, and fight the battles that God places before

you, but remember it is God who wins your victories! When we get to the end we will say, 'Only Jesus could have done this in my life!'"

The light, life, and laughter on the faces of graduates, their families, and loved ones was a beautiful reminder of why Summit exists, and why we do what we do. We will miss seeing their faces every day, but we will always be family—we can't wait to see how they thrive in the years ahead! Congratulations to each one!

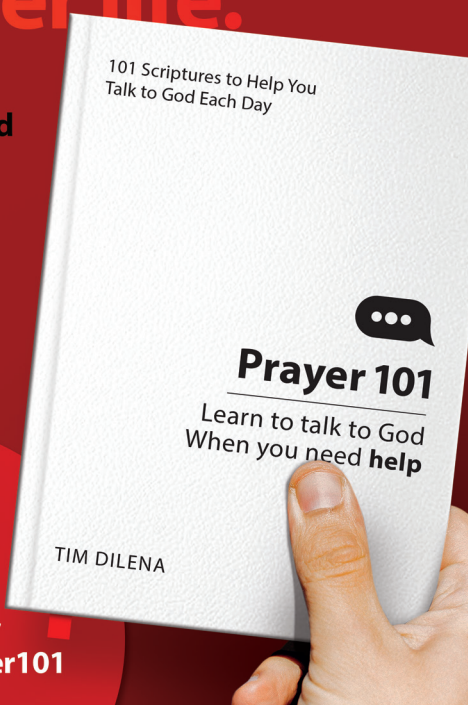


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