

## DONE > DO

Quick poll. How many of you keep “to do” lists? A note tacked to your refrigerator, a little notepad on your desk, an app on your phone? Something like that? How many of you keep “done” lists? If we get everything crossed off, we just throw it away. Start a new list. It’s in the rearview mirror. What usually happens, though, is my to-do list is bigger at the end of the day than it was at the beginning.

No matter what kind of “to do” list you use – post-it notes, Microsoft One Note, Monday.com, I remember back in the day, I got myself a Day-Timer. Had so much stuff stuffed in that thing, I called it my life. Now I just tell Teresa to remind me. That way if I forget something, I can just blame her.

No matter what method you use, the stuff to do just keeps piling up – emails keep arriving, people keep calling, grass keeps growing, laundry keeps getting dirty, kids keep crying, stuff keeps breaking, deadlines keep looming. It never ends. It’s a constant cacophony of Do. Do. Do. Do. Do. Do.

Rarely do you ever just get to that point where you can sit back, kick your feet up, grab a cold one, and say, “Done.” Because by the time the game is over or your show is over, there’s 5 more things to do.

It can feel the same way in our relationship with Jesus. Our faith can feel like one long to-do list. We’re serving in three different ministries at church, there’s that person I hurt with my careless words last week and I need to talk to them and ask for their forgiveness. There’s that new guy at work, who seems to be going through some rough times, and I’m looking for the right opportunity to talk to them, there’s that THING I’ve been needing to talk to my wife about, but I just can’t start the conversation, I can feel several areas of my life beginning to slip. I’ve been losing my patience and getting angry. I’ve been stretching the truth, and I know I really should be reading my Bible more. It becomes a treadmill of do, do, do, do.

For some of us, we want to love Jesus. We want to follow Jesus, to have a relationship with him, but it feels like we started off in a hole. No matter how much we climb, no matter how much dirt we try to throw in the hole, it just keeps deeper. Failure layers upon failure. One mistake leads to three more. We feel like we can never get to that point where Jesus would ever want to have a relationship with us. No matter how much we do it’s never enough

Well, on this Easter morning, I’ve got some bad and I’ve got some good news. **The bad news is no matter how much you do, it is never enough.** You can do and do and do some more, but you will never catch up. You will never get ahead. You will never be good enough.

The prophet Isaiah understood this problem 2,700 years ago. He writes in Isaiah 64:5, *“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel*

*up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away."*

The prophet is comparing our spiritual selves. Our hearts and our souls to the skin of leper. Someone whose skin is covered with sores and boils and peeling skin. They have to go around telling anyone who comes near, "unclean, unclean." Don't touch me. Don't even get too close.

If there was a camera that could capture a shot of your spiritual self, that's what it would look like. It's not just failures and mistakes. It's all those deliberate things. The things that we intentionally do even though we know we shouldn't do.

The hateful and hurtful words that spill from our lips. The little lies that stab like a hundred needles. The exaggerations that inflate our pride like a helium birthday balloon. Taxes are due tomorrow, so about all those 1040s that we mail in or click "Submit" knowing that the numbers aren't really that accurate, but they'll never check. The outbursts of anger that go off like a shotgun, hitting everyone standing in the blast radius. It's the lust that causes us to use another human being as a mere thing to satisfy our own pleasure.

Our uncleanness is also the things we willfully don't do, even though we know we should; like a little kid who's told to clean his room. He says, "Okay, mommy." He scampers off to his room and proceeds to play with his Legos. There's the person in need that God placed in our path to help, but like those with the upturned noses in the parable of the Good Samaritan, we walked on by. Those times we should have opened our mouths and said something, but we kept them shut. James 4:17 declares, *"Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."*

That's the word the Bible uses to describe this whole mess – sin. It is to miss the mark. To not measure up. We fall short of the glory, the majesty, the beauty, the perfection that is God. We fall so far short that we are hopelessly separated from our Creator.

Do you know just how bad our problem is? Isaiah says that even our righteous acts are like filthy rags. Isaiah is admitting that even the good works we do are tainted with selfishness. I hope someone notices my serving. They're tarnished by pride. Look how generous I am. Even the best things we do are polluted like dirty laundry. You got a favorite blouse, a favorite pair of pants, but they got a stain on them. You'll never wear them on a night out again. They're good for nothing but mowing lawn. Isaiah says that's what our best words and best actions are.

That's the bad news. No matter how much you do, it is never enough. We just can't undo all of that.

But I've got some good news for you this morning. I mean some really good news. **It doesn't matter how much you do, because it is already done.** You don't have to do it all, because it's already done.

We're in the middle of a series here at Son-Rise called Greater Than. We're taking 10 weeks to

look at the things that are truly greater than. We're looking a ten spiritual greater than equations that equal true joy. So, here on Easter Sunday, you've caught us in the middle of this series. But our greater than this week is perfect for Easter. It's the greater than that's greater than them all. The good news of Easter is that it's already done. **Done > Do.**

The apostle John includes a very interesting detail about the crucifixion of Jesus. Matthew tells us that before he gave up his spirit, Jesus cried out in a loud voice. Mark says he, "*uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.*" But John fills in the missing detail of what Jesus yelled out in this final moment.

*28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." 29 A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. 30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

We need to focus in on his declaration that "*it is finished.*" Three simple words in English. In the Greek, it's one word. Picture Jesus on the cross and he yells out this one word before breathing his final breath. He draws up all his last remaining bit of strength to make this one final proclamation, "*Tetelestai!*"

**(Advance Slide)** Jesus made seven statements from the cross. This is the last and the greatest. I love how Charles Spurgeon describes how much meaning is crammed into this one word.

an ocean of meaning in a drop of language, a mere drop. It would need all the other words that ever were spoken, or ever can be spoken, to explain this one word. It is altogether immeasurable. It is high; I cannot attain to it. It is deep; I cannot fathom it. IT IS FINISHED is the most charming note in all of Calvary's music...This is the royal dish of the feast of love.

"*It is finished*" is only one way to translate this word. It means to finish, to complete, to accomplish. In a military sense, it would be "mission accomplished." Jesus achieved every objective he set out complete when he came to earth as a baby born in a manger. Not one item on his checklist left unchecked. Nothing undone. Nothing dropped from the agenda. He finished every single bit of his purpose.

"*It is finished*" looks back over time all the way to when the serpent first tempted Adam and Eve in the garden and they took a bite of the forbidden fruit, and God foretold that one day the seed of the woman would trample the head of the serpent. Jesus says, "*It is finished.*"

All of the expectation. All of anticipation of dozens of prophets over hundreds of years are all fulfilled in Jesus. He did it all. They sacrificed so much. They suffered so much, all because they had just a glimpse of what was to come. But now it is finished. No more waiting. No more longing. No more hoping. "It is finished," Jesus says. You don't have to do it, because it is done.

*Tetelestai* was also an accounting term. It was used in the business world to signify the full

payment of a debt. Say you went down to the local dealer and bought a new donkey and cart on credit. You paid on that new donkey and cart every month, until finally you make that last payment. The donkey dealer will hand you a bill on a piece of parchment, and stamped on that parchment is the word "*Tetelestai*." It means "Paid in full."

Your debt has been paid. As far as God is concerned, when you receive Christ as your Lord and Savior, your debt is paid in full. You don't owe him a thing. You have nothing to make up for. So many people think they can't really have a relationship with God until they get some stuff straightened out.

If God has a list in heaven of stuff you got to get straightened out before you can have a relationship with him, you know what's on that list? You know how many items there are that have to get checked off? None. Zip, zero, zilch, nada. Why, because they are all D-O-N-E. "*It is finished*." Paid in full!

Think about how it felt when you made that final payment on your house, the last payment on your car, the last student loan check you ever had to mail. It's all of that multiplied by a million. Because it's a debt you could never pay, and someone else paid it for you because they love you that much.

Here's the problem. We have a hard time believing in the gospel of DONE. We believe it's finished except for this, except for that. Surely Jesus wasn't including this problem. Jesus didn't mean that issue.

Here are some things that keep us from believing it is truly finished.

### **1. Accusing Conscience**

God created us with an inner voice to help guide us in right and wrong. This is what we call a conscience. This is what helps us feel good when we do the right thing, and it needles us with guilt when we do the wrong thing. A healthy conscience can drive us to make good decisions, right wrongs, seek repentance, and reconcile and heal broken relationships. Guilt, at the right time, in the right place, can be a very healthy, positive thing.

The problem is that our consciences can be miscalibrated. They can become far too sensitive, registering guilt and shame for things that were never wrong, or for wrongs long forgiven. Our consciences can also have their volume knobs either turned all the way down, where they're of no use, or cranked all the way to 11, where we can never hear the grace and mercy of our Savior when he says, "You are forgiven." The decibels of our shame are just too loud.

When this happens all we hear from our inner voice is "Do, do, do, but we never hear Jesus say, 'Done.'"

The literary giant, Samuel Johnson, who according to the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations is the second most quoted Englishman. Listen to what he wrote in his daily journal, "I have now spent

fifty-five years in resolving; having from the earliest time almost that I can remember, been forming schemes of a better life. I have done nothing; the need of doing therefore is pressing, since the time of doing is short. O God, grant me to resolve aright, and to keep my resolutions.”

That is the inner voice of conscience that said, “do, do and keep on doing,” but it was never enough. It’s a constant struggle. Do. Do. Do. Fail. Guilt. Shame. Remorse. Do more. Do harder. More failure. More guilt. More shame. More doing.

We need to recalibrate our conscience according to the grace of God. We need to hear the words of Jesus from the cross. *“It is finished. It is paid in full.”* Done!

## **2. A Demanding Church**

Another thing that keeps us bogged down in the religion of do rather than believing in the gospel of done is a demanding church. The very institution that should be proclaiming “It is finished,” sometimes lays burdens on people’s shoulders instead of helping remove them.

Sometimes, it’s unintentional. Practical sermons tend to focus on do this; do that. Don’t do this; don’t do that. This can lead to a subtle shift from DONE to DO. Don’t get me wrong. God cares about what we do. He saved us, so that we could do the right thing, but sometimes we get the order backwards. We think he saves us because we do the right thing.

Too often, though, churches can become purposefully demanding. Some of us grew up in spiritual traditions where the sermons were guilt trip after guilt trip. Do. Do. Do. Sermon upon sermon, each demanding more money, more time, more zeal, more doing, and if you didn’t keep up the shame was shoveled thick and heavy.

The church must be careful that all of the shoulds and oughts sail in the river of grace and mercy that flow freely from the cross.

## **3. Our work for wages culture**

Some of our problem with the gospel of DONE may be inherited from the church, but a lot of it is inherited from our culture. The third thing that keeps us from believing in the gospel of DONE is our work for wages culture. One of the basic rules we learn in American culture is work = reward. You work and earn what you get and hard work = great reward. Do = Dollars. You get what you give.

There is such a thing as a biblical and healthy hard work ethic. Capitalism may not always get it right, but it’s the best we’ve got. To plagiarize Churchill, Capitalism is the worst form of economics we’ve tried except for all the others.

But this work for wages societal norm can handicap our spiritual understanding. Surely, God won’t reward me with something I didn’t earn. Grace can’t be totally free. Those of us that have hard work as a core value, often struggle with the idea of grace. We must understand,

though, that you can't work hard enough or long enough, to be good enough. It's all about the grace of God and finished work of Jesus on the cross.

#### 4. Failure

Number four is failure. Sometimes it's difficult to believe it is truly finished when we keep failing, even after we believe everything Jesus did for us. God might let us into the Christian family through his divine Done, but we've got to stay in by our own doing, right? It's only fair. Isn't it? God might let me in the door, but if I don't do the right thing once it, surely, I'll get thrown out.

But grace isn't just about getting in. It's about staying in. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8-10

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

Do you hear that? You have been saved by grace through faith. It's not your own doing. It's not a result of works. You don't earn it.

Yes, we were created to do good works, but we don't get there, or stay there by our works. What we're able to DO is because of what he has already DONE.

Whether this message is a much needed reminder of what you already know, but you are hearing it with fresh ears, or you are hearing this for the very first time, and it hits you like cold water quenches the parched lips of one lost in the desert, what is needed is this – to **believe or rebelieve in the Gospel of DONE**. "It is finished" is our only real hope.

"It is finished" isn't something you come to only once when you first believe in Jesus. We come back to it again and again and again.

Your identity in Christ is not defined by a list of dos and don'ts. You are a son or a daughter of God because of what Jesus has already DONE for you. The most successful Christian lives are those that manage to keep the spotlight on Jesus, the divine DONE, not the divine DEMAND.

When we build on the foundation of what Jesus has done, then, and only then, can we do what He's called us to DO. What we do as Christians is not about what we do FOR Him. It's about what we do WITH Him.

How do we keep the spotlight on Jesus? How do we keep our spiritual lives focused on the right place?

Faith. It's all about faith. There's multiple words that inform our understanding of what faith is. It is belief. It is trust. It is acceptance. I love what David Murray writes in "The Happy Christian"

Faith in Jesus is the entrance fee. Faith carpets the foyer. Faith unfolds the seat. Faith's program notes list Jesus as the only actor in the one-man show. Faith's spotlight fixes on Him alone and refuses to allow anyone or anything else onstage. Faith's ears hear the show's final line, "It is finished!" and Faith says "Amen!" Faith's hands applaud and praise Christ alone.

If you go to a secular counselor to help you find peace, they will employ one of several popular methods, some more helpful than others. At some point in the process they will tell you to empty your mind of fear, to empty it of guilt, to empty it of anxiety, of shame, and so on. These are called unwanted, intrusive thoughts. To find peace we are to put them out of our mind.

One clinical psychologist writing in the Harvard Business Review calls such thinking cognitive errors – distortions in our thinking. We shouldn't feel fearful. We shouldn't feel guilty, We shouldn't feel regret.

She says we need to train our brains to become non-sticky. As soon as we find ourselves feeling guilt, shame, anxiety, fear, we should try to distract ourselves for a few minutes. Refocus your attention on something else. Engage in a rigorous physical activity that distracts you. She actually offers this suggestion – spend "10 minutes filling out an expense report."

Is that really our best way of handling these things – distract, disguise, deny? Just train your brain not to acknowledge those things. That's like saying, "Don't think of pink elephants." All you can think of is pink elephants. So many try to empty their mind of these thieves of peace and joy and fail. There's only one thing that can empty your mind of fear, of insecurity, of anxiety, of regret, or shame, and lead you to real peace and true joy and that is this – "It is finished."

We can stick our fingers in our ears and tell our guilt, "I can't hear you for only so long." There's only one thing that can erase our guilt, and that is placing your faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. When Jesus said, "It is finished," your guilt was paid was in full. We can never do what Jesus has already DONE on the cross. DONE is greater than DO. It's already been done for you.

We can know that what Jesus said is true, because three days later He rose again. The one who defeated death has the power to take our place in death. He died our death, then rose again so we can live his life. That's the message and the miracle of Easter.