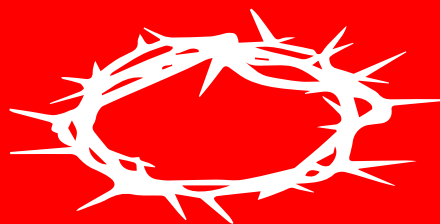


AT THE
THRONE
OF
GRACE



A PASSION WEEK DEVOTIONAL & PRAYER GUIDE

At The Throne of Grace

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of Grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”
(Hebrews 4:16)

Several other translations state the verse this way *“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”* (NIV) *“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*(NKJV) *“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*(NASU)

Due to the fact of the **THRONE OF GRACE** we can come boldly into His presence, but not only with boldness but with confidence and assurance that we will find the very thing we need and are desperately looking for: receiving mercy and finding grace to help in time of need.

How is that possible? The context tells us in Hebrews 4:14- 15 *“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”*

*“Let us then draw near to the **THRONE OF GRACE** fearlessly, with confidently and with boldness (the throne of God's unmerited favor to us sinners), that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find grace to help in good time for every need [appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it].”* (AMP)

This Sunday is Palm Sunday, which the universal Church calls “The Passion or Holy Week,” and is the last week of Lent providing for us a focus on the events which occurred to Jesus and His disciples on each of the days in between Palm Sunday and Good Friday. Palm Sunday must have been the height of joy for those early disciples as they marched triumphantly, waving palm branches, through the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem, shouting “blessed is King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest! (Luke 19:38).

Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem began the escalation of tension between Jesus and the Pharisees who were determined to permanently end His influence. The scenes of the last week of Christ’s life must have played out in the minds of his followers as they gathered in huddled groups, fearing Temple guards, religious leaders and the ruling Roman army. “what ifs,” must have made up moments within that week as they relived the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus. The brutal crucifixion took place

just north and outside the city in a place called “Golgotha,” meaning “skull” in Aramaic, so named for its shape.ⁱ In this public location, innocent Jesus was nailed to the cross between two who were guilty, elevated, rejected by men and suffering the humiliation of dying the death of the cross. Jesus said, “and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32). What a blessing! Salvation so rich, so full, so free and all for you and for me.

Suffering is not new to followers of Jesus as an example of Thomas Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer. Here is a brief account of their suffering.

In 1553, Thomas Cranmer Archbishop of Canterbury and two others were brought to trial for treason, found guilty, and condemned to death. On March 8, 1554 the Privy Council ordered Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer to be transferred to Bocardo prison in Oxford to await a second trial for heresy. During this time Cranmer wrote, "I pray that God may grant that we may endure to the end!"^[93] Cranmer remained isolated in Bocardo prison for seventeen months while the trials of Latimer and Ridley started shortly after with verdicts of guilty and they were burnt at the stake on 16 October. Cranmer was taken to a tower to watch the proceedings which led to four recantations. Cranmer had three more days to live. He was told that he would be able to make a final recantation but this time in public during a service at the University Church. He wrote and submitted the speech in advance. At the pulpit on the day of his execution, he opened with a prayer and an exhortation to obey the king and queen, but he ended his sermon totally unexpectedly, deviating from the prepared script. He renounced the recantations that he had written and signed with his own hand since his degradation and as such he stated his hand would be punished by being burnt first. He then said, "And as for the pope, I refuse him, as Christ's enemy, and Antichrist with all his false doctrine." He was pulled from the pulpit and taken to where Latimer and Ridley had been burnt six months before. As the flames drew around him, he fulfilled his promise by placing his right hand into the heart of the fire and his dying words were, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit... I see the heavens open and Jesus standing at the right hand of God."

The Seven Sayings of Christ from the Cross

The scenes of the last week of Christ's life must have played out in the minds of his followers as they gathered in huddled groups, fearing the guards, religious leaders and the ruling Roman army, as the arrest, trail and crucifixion occurred. "What if's," must have made up moments within that week...

The week had started with such a triumphant march into Jerusalem, palm branches now long discarded, the Passover feast a distant memory, the agonizing prayer in the garden, a kiss of betrayal on Christ's cheek, the arrest, the scattering of "the followers." The mock trials, the cry of "crucify him" having echoed through the palace halls and muttered in the streets, the sentence handed down by Pilate. The brutal crucifixion taking place just north and outside the city, in a place called "Golgotha" in Aramaic meaning "skull." It was named not from the collection of the skulls of the dead, but for how the hill protruded from the ground in the shape of a skull.ⁱⁱ In this public location, innocent Jesus, is nailed to the cross between two who are guilty, elevated, rejected by all and suffering the humiliation of dying the death of the cross. But Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). What a blessing! Salvation so rich, so full, so free and all for us, for me for you.

At the foot of the cross was an eerie scene made up of Jesus's mother, a disciple, some onlookers, a few guards and rulers. Most had come to scoff, rail or mock him, some mourning and lamenting for him. Even the two criminals being crucified with him represented two different views, one mocked, the other looked for salvation.

The parade had ascended the Hill of Golgotha, the nails piercing the hands and feet of the Lamb of God, the cross was lifted by soldiers and dropped with a thud into the hole and Jesus was elevated, rejected by earth and suffered the humiliation of dying the death of the cross. But what a blessing in the light of John 12:32, "and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." That is salvation so rich, so full, so free and all for me, for you. Before the last hammer blows, drive home the spikes, we hear Him begin to pray.

While Jesus Christ our Savior hung on the cross for six hours, he spoke seven phrases or 7 sayings. Much is revealed about His concern, love, suffering, and ultimate death by a careful understanding of these words recorded in the 4 Gospel accounts.

The 7 sayings include 3 prayers to God the Father, 1 promise to the dying thief on His right, 1 request to the Apostle John to be His substitute,

1 word of personal need fulfilling prophecy, and 1 triumphant proclamation of victory over Satan resulting in salvation purchased for lost mankind. To the question "What must I do to be saved?" The answer comes back through time as we hear Jesus say "finished." There is nothing left to do, it is done.

During this "Passion Week" we will study each one of the sayings, between Monday and Friday. Then Saturday will be a day of quiet reflection as we look at the chronology of the Passion Week. We will end on Sunday with the joy of all creation: "He is risen, He is risen indeed!"

Saying/Phrase uttered	Scripture	Substance
"father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."	Luke 23:34	Prayer
"Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."	Luke 23:43	Promise
"woman, behold you son, behold your Mother."	John 19:26, 27	Provision
"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"	Matthew 27:46 Mark 15:34	Prayer
"I Thirst"	John 19:28	Prayer
"It is Finished"	John 19:30	Proclamation
"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"	Luke 23:46 Matthew 27:50 Mark 15:37	Prayer

His suffering and death allows us now, at this very moment, to come with confidence to this Throne of Grace, receiving mercy and finding grace that help us in our time of need. He is our High Priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses, having been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Jesus said "Father,

forgive

them for they

do not

know

what they are doing

I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.

Dear woman, here is your son - Here is your mother.

My God, my God, why have You

Forsaken me?

I am thirsty.

It is finished!

Father,

into your hands

I commit my

Spirit.

1. "Father forgive them, they don't know what they do"

Luke 23:34 "A prayer!"

Monday before Easter

At a time when the normal reaction would be to curse and denounce the executioners, the sinless son of God prays for their forgiveness as he suffered. Not just a passing sentence prayer, once uttered soon forgotten, but rather that the Father will forgive them for their ignorance, they don't know what they were doing. Jesus offers no words of defense, rebuke, request for mercy, no word of pain, no plea for help or release, just forgiveness. "The amazing initial (and enduring) reflex of Jesus' crucified heart was to forgive. This is amazing, astounding grace!ⁱⁱⁱ Jesus fulfilled prophecy written in Isaiah 53:12 "He made intercession for the transgressors."

Some say that this prayer was for the Roman soldiers who are executing him in ignorance, just following orders. Others however feel that it was directed at the Jews who are ignorant and erroneous about God's activity. They just didn't get it. The word is uttered for the forgiveness of those engaged in ignorance. In Acts 3:17 Peter preaching to the crowds states that "and now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers." Paul add that, "had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory," 1 Cor. 2:8.

Jesus shows the compassion of his heart, and as they were "really" ignorant, whatever might have been the cause of their ignorance, he implores God to pardon them. He even urges it as a "reason" why they should be pardoned, that they were ignorant of what they were doing. Jesus is praying for His tormentors who bruise Him and bring agony to both body and soul, for they don't know the Lord of glory. We are left with quite a picture, Jesus was robbed of all His honor, His followers, His life, His clothing. He became absolutely poor for our sakes so that we might be made rich in Him.

It is interesting that the first words that Jesus says from the cross are Stephen's last words in **Acts 7:60**, as he is being stoned to death.

Forgiveness

I know someone who had been hurt. He had been "let go," and was now standing in line for unemployment insurance. He felt disillusioned, humiliated, discouraged, and angry stand in line with the "unemployed." He was mad at those who had orchestrated his "release." Their words hung angrily in his heart: "This is the best for you. We love you. I'm sure it will all work out...". My friend said he could feel bitterness and the desire for revenge grow in his heart.

For months, he battled with bitterness and the desire for revenge. He had written the events down in his journal, and over the months, the words repeated themselves again and again in his mind. Those people should come to him and make it right; they should ask him for forgiveness; they were wrong. My friend knew that before he could resume work in ministry, he would need to deal with, and overcome, these feelings of hurt, bitterness, and injustice. He was miserable, broken and frustrated. He would pray for a heart of forgiveness, but as soon as he got up from his knees, the feelings would return; he had been done wrong.

My friend told me about the day that he finally had victory. He was alone in the house, staring out his window on a sunny afternoon, his heart dark with defeat. He opened his journal, took a red pen, and wrote diagonally across the writing on the page – “today at this time and place I choose – through Christ’s power – to forgive those who offended me and the offenses against me, in the name of Jesus Christ. – Amen!” As he put the pen down, he realized... it was done. He had found release. He had found freedom. The spirit of bitterness and revenge were gone. Hallelujah! Those two events were now clearly linked forever: the offense and the forgiveness.

Forgiveness is an amazing thing. At the very point when our hearts so easily could turn to bitterness and a desire for revenge, we need to remember again the words of our Savior, “Father, forgive.” Paul said, “be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32). I believe that you will find freedom through forgiveness. Living with bitterness and revenge, destroys you and your loved ones. Choose forgiveness.

Talking with God :

- Ask Christ to help you forgive as even He forgave those who acted out of ignorance.
- Pray for your enemies, even when they seek to hurt you.
- Pray that God will pardon sinners and save them from their sins

Jesus said “Father,

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Them for they

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what they are doing

I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.

Dear woman, here is your son – Here is your mother.

My God, my God, why have You

Forsaken me?

I am thirsty.

It is finished!

Father,

into your hands

I commit my

Spirit.

**2. Truly, I say to you,
Today you will be with me in Paradise.**

Luke 23:40 A Promise.

Tuesday before Easter

Three crosses are silhouetted against the sky over Mount Calvary – Jesus is in the middle, being “numbered with transgressors.” (Isa. 53:12). The cross on the left and on the right are occupied by two convicted thieves. Both have joined with the crowd in mocking Jesus, whose superscription reads in three languages “The King of the Jews.” The thieves want release and let that desire be known (Mark 15:26-32). The thief on the left seems to be the most vocal and vile. He makes his request first. “If you are Christ, save yourself and us” (Luke 23:39). The answer is “No.” It is contrary to God’s will. Jesus must give His life a ransom for sin.

A dramatic change occurs in the thinking of the thief on the right. He turns from his mocking of Jesus to rebuking his comrade in crime (Luke 23:40, 41). Note his admission of guilt, his recognition of responsibility to God, his acknowledgment that they are receiving what they deserve, and his confession of Jesus’ sinlessness. He recognizes the fact that he is a sinner and confesses it publicly.

One thief moved past confessing his sin and his belief in Jesus to requesting that Jesus would remember him. He didn’t expect instantaneous release from the cross, but rather that he be remembered, which revealed much about his knowledge and faith: he asked for mercy. Both men were dying, yet he asked for remembrance in a coming kingdom. He acknowledged a belief in a place beyond earth, and the fact that he wanted a place there.

Jesus replied to his prayer with a “yes in the form of a promise. The time is “today,” not an unspecified future, but the immediate present; the place in “paradise,” the abode of the righteous (Leviticus 18:10-11; 2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7); the company is “with me.”

The word Paradise means “a walled garden.” When a wealthy landowner wished to bestow a special honor on a person, he would make him a “companion of the garden,” which meant he was chosen to walk in the garden with the landowner.” Jesus here promises more than eternal life, but also of having a place of companion in the courts of heaven.

This promise proves beyond any doubt that the gift of salvation is without works of righteousness, without the benefit of the ordinance of baptism, the Lord’s Supper, any alleged “second blessing” or membership in a Baptist church, even Cloverdale Baptist Church. Salvation then and now is freely given to all who believe without merit, works, color, nationality, or possible future service or that it is never too late to turn to Christ, even at the very last moment of life. “The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans. 6:23)

Salvation (a testimonial)

I grew up in a Christian home with parents who were very involved in their small local church, living by the creed, “if the doors of the church are open, we are there to support the ministry.” One day when I was nine, an evangelistic rally was being held at a nearby town, and so we attended the “Barry Moore Campaign.” At the end of the evening during the “invitation,” I went forward to accept Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. This was the first time that I had publically declared that I believed that Jesus Christ had died for my sins; he had forgiven my sins; and that I was now going to heaven. I viewed it as my “I’m not going to hell.” Card. Looking back, I don’t think any of my family or friends would have said that my life changed dramatically. However, I do remember desiring to make good decisions about who I hung around with, what I said, and how I acted in public, but I was not at a place where I trusted Him with the handling of my life.

At the age of 18 through a series of events, my plans for the future changed dramatically, and I was left at a cross-roads about what I would do after graduation. I still remember struggling with the idea of trusting and surrendering my life to Jesus Christ. It took about a week, but I remember saying “yes” to Christ; that I was willing to turn the control of my life over to Him; that I trusted Him and that I would surrender the right to rule my own life without having all the details. That decision has been used by God to lead me to full-time ministry; a beautiful, gifted wife; seminary; pastoring seven wonderful churches; and teaching at a college. God has used that decision to lead me through five major surgeries, kidney dialysis and three kidney transplants without doubting His love and care for me. I have never regretted the fact that I have believed, trusted, and surrendered my life to Him.

Talking with God:

Maybe you struggle with **BELIEVING** the claims of Christ, or haven’t made the things you heard about Him your own; they remain your spouse’s, or your children’s beliefs. If you have never confessed openly or publically that you believe in Him, pray and confess your doubt to Christ, and then talk to one of the pastors.

Or maybe for you it is a **TRUST** issue. We all struggle with keeping the controls of our lives; we want to have the last say, and be in charge. Can you trust Him? Can you live for Him?

SURRENDER flows out of belief and trust. To surrender is a daily challenge and we need to surrender our wills to Jesus absolutely and irrevocably. (Philippians 1:20).

“No Reserve, No Retreats, No Regrets”

Jesus said "Father,

forgive

Them for they

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what they are doing

I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.
Dear woman, here is your son - Here is your mother.

My God, my God, why have You
Forsaken me?

I am thirsty.

It is finished!

Father,

into your hands

I commit my

Spirit.

3. **Woman, behold your son, Behold your Mother**

John 19:26, 27 - Provision

Wednesday before Easter

Among the angry blood-thirsty mob, the religious leaders, the soldiers on duty, a small band of followers were well acquainted with Jesus. They are named in John 19:25, 26 and include Jesus' mother, John the disciple whom Jesus loved. (John 13:23). Most of the women were related in some way to the Twelve and were among Jesus's most loyal followers and contributors to His ministry (Matthew 27:56; Mark 10:35; 15:40; Luke 8:20).

The harsh brutality of the scene was softened by Jesus' care for His mother, who must have been in anguish and terror at the indescribable site surrounding the Crucifixion. His concern for her at this time of excruciating agony illustrates His true humanity and compassion. Jesus placed His mother under the protective care of John. All of Jesus's half brothers had abandoned Him (John 7:5), and the absence of Joseph in the story makes us suspect that Mary was not family present. At the time of Jesus's death, a woman on her own in her culture would be at risk. The beloved disciple was being called to take Mary into his family, and he did so obediently. In Jesus's culture extended families were extremely important, and cousin relationships were highly treasured. For Jesus to be linked to His extended family would be commonplace. It would seem that John apparently removed Mary from the scene, and they remained in Jerusalem, for she is present at the session of prayer that preceded Pentecost.

The Lord Jesus maintains a perfect, complete balance between His physical, natural responsibilities and His spiritual work of providing redemption for lost people. We tend to emphasize one duty as superior to another, thinking that if we work hard for God somehow He will either relieve us of the more mundane tasks, such as meeting our family obligations, or He will overlook our failure in that area. Jesus' third phrase from the cross would teach us to be faithful in both areas, not stressing one to the neglect of the other.

At the cross of Jesus the ground is level, there are no places of prominence or elevation. The one who bore the suffering Savior in her body needs the work of the Savior, no less than anyone else. What she does deserve and get is a substitute son to love and care for her during the remaining years of her life. I'm sure Mary must have recalled the prophecy of Simeon in Luke 2:34, 35:

And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

Provision

When I read George Muller's biography, I was interested to learn why he had established orphanages in England in the 19th century. His primary purpose was not to care for orphans, but rather to see how God would supply:

If I, a poor man, simply by prayer and faith, obtained without asking any individual, the means for establishing and carrying on an Orphan-Home, there would be something which, with the Lord's blessing might be instrumental in strengthening the faith of the children of God, besides being a testimony to the consciences of the unconverted, of the reality of the things of God. This, then was the primary reason for establishing the Orphan-Home... the first and primary object of the work was (and still is) that God might be magnified by the fact, that the orphans under my care are provided with all they need, only by prayer and faith without anyone being asked by me or my fellow-laborers whereby it may be seen, that God is faithful still, and hears prayer still.^{iv}

It is inconceivable to think that Jesus at a great point in agony, not only saw that His mother was in need of care, but that He then provided for her care through John, the disciple that He loved.

How, then, can we doubt that God will take care of our needs? We should not worry, for He will provide for us, even as He did for Mary, His mother through the disciple John.

Said the robin to the sparrow,
"I should really like to know,
Why these anxious human beings
Rush about and worry so."

Said the sparrow to the robin,
"Friend I think that it must be,
That they have no Heavenly Father,
Such as cares for you and me."

-Unknown Author.

Talking with God:

- Confess your worry to your Heavenly Father
- Review how God has met your needs in the past and thank Him
- Claim the promises in His word for you:
Matthew 6:25-34
Luke 12:22-34
Philippians 4:5b-6

Jesus said "Father,

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I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.
Dear woman, here is your son - Here is your mother.

My God, my God, why have you
forsaken me?

I am thirsty.

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Spirit.

4. My God, my God, Why have you forsaken me?

Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34 / Prayer

Thursday, the Day Before Good Friday

During the first three hours of the terrible agony that Jesus Christ suffered while hanging on the Roman cross, suspended between heaven and hell, God allows the laws of nature to operate normally, seemingly unconcerned that all is not well with His Son. Then at mid-day a dark veil was thrown across the sun. The day becomes the blackness of darkness. For three hours darkness had overcome the light. Nothing is revealed to us about those three long hours of total and absolute blackness. The one sound that could be heard was that of the voice of Jesus praying in Aramaic, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthan? – "My God, my god, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus was quoting from Psalm 22:1 an Old Testament picture of the three awful hours (also note vs. 2, 6, 7, 14, 15-18).

Jesus was conscious of being abandoned by His father; He who knew the intimacy of Matthew 11:27: "all things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (NIV). This was the agony that Jesus faced: The greater the intimacy, the greater the agony. In this cry of dereliction, the horror of the world's sin and the cost of our salvation were revealed.^v

Hell, like heaven, is a place mentioned but not fully described in God's revelation to man. In II Peter 2:17 it is described as being a place of "mist of darkness;" in 2:9 "a place of punishment;" and in Jude 13 as "the blackness of darkness forever." The hours from noon to 3 P.M. on the crucifixion day was a preview of hell for man, while Jesus experienced the full impact of that place of God forsakenness. Forsaken has the meaning of leaving behind, of being abandoned. It is not the cry of victory, but rather the Father's cup of wrath poured out on Him in divine judgement. Jesus bore the load of humanity's sin, but He became sin on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:21). According to Galatians 3:13, "cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

William Hendriksen writes, The darkness meant judgment, the judgment of God upon our sins, His wrath as it were burning itself out in the very heart of Jesus, so that He, as our Substitute, suffered most intense agony, indescribable woe, terrible isolation or forsakenness. Hell came to Calvary that day, and the Saviour descended into it and bore its horrors in our stead."^{vi}

Jesus' abandonment was horrific, but it was not without purpose. The cross of Christ is a revelation of both the love of God and His wrath. We see the grace and mercy of God in the Person of the Lamb of God giving Himself for the sins of the world. Yet God did not spare His Son any part of the horrors of hell after laying all the sins of all mankind upon Him.

Silence!

Many believers have struggled with injustice, persecution, temptation, doubt and great challenges to their faith. During these times of "crisis" they have cried out to God for relief, but instead have experienced the "Silence of God."

For a believer the "Silence of God" during a crisis of faith is the most difficult to handle. We twist and turn, wondering what to do next. We ask God, "what is the next move?" and are greeted by silence. Some have referred to this as the "heavens are made of brass." There is no response. All is quiet.

No thinking Christian will be able to evade the issue of God's silence and inactivity in the face of suffering. On some days we may find prayer impossible. Pain, anguish and grief is so consuming that there is nothing left to give to prayer. There are periods when the emotional insult of evil, injustice and destruction leaves us emotionally, intellectually and spiritually numb. It is precisely at such points when the intercession of the Holy Spirit on our behalf becomes especially important: "The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (Romans 8:26; cp. 8:34). We also need to be willing to "carry each other's burdens" (Galatians 6:2) in intercessory prayer.

Oswald Chambers said that just because "Jesus Christ keeps silent does not mean that He is displeased, but exactly the opposite. He is bringing us into the great run of His purpose, and the answer will be an amazing revelation."^{vii}

It is at these low points in our lives when we are tempted to doubt if God cares, or when discouragement grows and blooms into bitterness, that we need to be reminded of the word of God. In Psalm 78, the writer is telling one generation to tell their children about God.

*Arise and tell them to their children,
So that they should set their hope in God
And not forget the works of God,
But keep his commandments.*

- Psalm 78:5-8

Talking with God:

- Set your hope in God – it will destroy discouragement
- Don't forget the works of God – remember, remember, remember
- Keep His commands – we are tempted to devise our own way when He is silent

Jesus said "Father,

forgive

Them for they

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I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.

Dear woman, here is your son - Here is your mother.

My God, my God, why have You

Forsaken me?

I am thirsty.

It is finished!

Father,

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I commit my

Spirit.

5. I thirst.

John 19:28, 29 / A propetic plea.

Good Friday Morning

Jesus was consciously fulfilling the plan the Father had set out for him. "knowing that all was now completed," Jesus agreed with the prayer that He prayed in John 17:4 "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." The phrase "I am thirsty" comes from Psalm 69:21 "They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst." It is not difficult to imagine the physical need of moisture for the mouth, considering all that has occurred in the past twenty-four hours: the agony in the Garden of Gethsamene, the kiss of Judas, the arrest and trials before both civil and religious rulers, the scourgings, with the mockings and spittings, and the final assault on the human body by being nailed to a cross. All without rest, food, or water. Crucifixion is said to be the most cruellest of all executions, since death comes so slowly. To partially alleviate this physical suffering, there was provided the sponge with vinegar (sour wine) which is different from the "wine mixed with myrrh," a sedative that Jesus was offered and refused on the way to the cross (Matthew 15:33). The sour wine that Jesus was offered was also used by soldiers to quench their thirst. The hyssop which they dipped into the sour wine was a plant or shrub that grew in cracks, and had been used for putting blood on the doorposts at the original Passover (Exodus 12:22).

This one word sentence is the statement He merely states a fact of the exhausted wounded warrior Who asks nothing and expects nothing; He has met Satan for the final clash. Satan's head has been crushed and the heel of the seed of the woman has been bruised. (Gen. 3:15).

The last three sayings and meditations will need to be read today, Good Friday:

5. Thirst - Friday Morning

6. It is Finished - Friday Afternoon

7. Father, into your hands I commit my spirit - Friday Evening

Read these with a reflective, sober heart to increase an awareness of the great price that was paid for our salvation.

Jesus said "Father,

forgive

Them for they

do not

know

what they are doing

I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.

Dear woman, here is your son - Here is your mother.

My God, my God, why have You

Forsaken me?

I am thirsty.

It is finished!

Father,

into your hands

I commit my

Spirit.

6. It is finished

John 19:30 / A proclamation

Friday Afternoon Reading

"Finished." One word in the Greek (tetelestai) that means the end has come, the task completed, the debt has been discharged, the purpose accomplished, all of it has been finished. This single word sentence speaks volumes to a lost human race who can neither check its downward trend nor pay its debt for the past. Even if fallen man could reform and change his way of life to meet God's demand for righteousness, He still would be liable for a life of disobedience to that point. This is a debt that can only be paid by another who has no debt of His own. That is the reason mankind needs a Savior. Jesus is the only Savior, for He alone has no taint of sin by inheritance, and He alone lived a perfect life in obedience to the will of God. He is the only one eligible, "the lamb without spot" (1 Peter 1:19).

This is the most satisfying, comforting, blessed word a person could ever hear. It is the word of the workman laying down his tools after completing a task. It is the word uttered by the painter as they dip the paint brush in the paint for the final stroke on the canvas. It is the victorious declaration of the triumphant warrior as they return from completely destroying the last enemy.

In a real sense it was the successful completion of God's program of redemption that had begun before the foundation of the earth. It was the focal event of which the promises, prophecies and the pictures of the Old Testament pointed. God, who cannot lie, promised eternal life before the world began (Titus 1:2). With this word Jesus proclaimed the completion of that task. God had fulfilled His promise. All that could be done was accomplished, completed, concluded, and finished.

The task was not only finished, completed, accomplished, but its effects and results will remain for all eternity. It is different from completing the job of mowing the lawn, washing the dishes, or spring cleaning the house, all of which must be one over and over again periodically. The completed work of Christ on the cross, purchasing pardon, peace, and power is finished once and for all, with no repeat performance necessary nor possible. God is a just and holy God who would not exact the payment for the penalty of sin from His Son on our behalf and then turn around and expect payment from us again.

This saying was a victorious declaration to heaven, earth and hell that Christ has conquered and Satan has been crushed and destroyed. To mankind, the invitation goes out to come just as you are and join the triumphant Savior.

"It is finished!"

Jesus said "Father,

forgive

Them for they

do not

know

what they are doing

I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.

Dear woman, here is your son - Here is your mother.

My God, my God, why have You

Forsaken me?

I am thirsty.

It is finished!

Father,

into your hands

I commit my

spirit.

7. Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

Luke 23:46; Matthew 27:50; Mark 15:37 / A prayer

Good Friday Evening

A Jewish traditional evening prayer that orthodox Jews offered before going to sleep was, "Into your hands I commit my spirit." Jesus chose to pray it at the moment He entered the ultimate sleep – death. This prayer is from Psalm 31:5, a Psalm in which David describes what had happened to him from his enemies, concluding with an assertion of confidence in God. When David prayed, "Into your hands I commit my spirit," he was asking to be preserved from death. But when Jesus, the ultimate son of David, prayed it, it was a prayer of trust in the Father at the moment of death.

Luke records that "Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' When he had said this, he breathed his last" (23:46). It was a shout of victory. He gave up His soul because He chose to do so, with a shout of confident victory. God 'made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God' (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is the great exchange: His righteousness for our sin – our sin for His righteousness. How do we receive this? By Faith.

I could never myself believe in God, if it were not for the cross. The only God I believe in is the one Nietzsche ridiculed as "God on the cross." In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it? I have entered many Buddhist temples in different Asian countries and stood respectfully before the statue of Buddha, his legs crossed, arms folded, eyes closed, the ghost of a smile playing round his mouth, a remote look on his face, detached from the agonies of the world. But each time after a while I have had to turn away. And in imagination I have turned instead to that lonely, twisted, tortured cross, nails through hands and feet, back lacerated, limbs wrenched, brow bleeding from thorn-pricks, mouth dry and intolerable thirsty, plunged in God-forsaken darkness. That is the God for me! He laid aside his immunity to pain. He entered our world of flesh and blood, tears and death. He suffered for us. Our sufferings become more manageable in the light of his. There is still a question mark against human suffering, but over it we boldly stamp another mark, the cross that symbolizes divine suffering.^{viii} "The cross of Christ ... is God's only self-justification in such a world as ours."^{ix}

Most Bible scholars believe that Jesus was crucified and in the tomb part of Friday, all day Saturday and part of Sunday. Rabbinical literature confirms that they counted part of a day as a whole day, therefore three days in the tomb. (see Genesis 42:17, 18; 1 Kings 20:29; 1 Samuel 30:12, 13).

Having said this,

He breathed His last!

Saturday, the Day Between Good Friday and Easter Sunday

The Chronology of Passion Week

Jesus and His disciples began their trip to Jerusalem from alilee. They travelled south on the eastern side of the Jordan River and through the city of Jericho where Zaccheus met Jesus. On the Friday before the Triumphal Entry (Palm Sunday) they arrived at Bethany, a little village just east of Jerusalem where they more than likely stayed with His friend Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha. This family not only supported Jesus financially, but their home was His home whenever He was in the area. The chief priests and Pharisees hoped that Jesus would come to the feast, and had laid plan to arrest him (John 11:55-12:1). They were apparently offering a reward of 30 pieces of silver for the information leading to His arrest.

Friday Evening. Six days before the Passover

Mary (sister of Lazarus) anointed Jesus's feet with costly perfume (John 12:2-11)

Saturday

Jesus kept the Sabbath (shabat) with his friends.

Sunday. The Triumphal Entry (Matt. 21; Mark 11; Luke 19; John 12)

1. Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem on a donkey, fulfilling an ancient prophecy (Zechariah 9:9). The people welcomed Him with "Hosanna" and the words of Psalm 118:25-26
2. Jesus, at this moment, was officially presenting himself to the nation as the Messiah. This date, according to the Jewish calendar, was Nisan 10, the day pilgrims presented their Passover lambs for examination.

Monday. Cleansing of the Temple (Matt. 21; Mark 11; Luke 19).

Jesus returned to Jerusalem (He spent each night in Bethany). On the way He cursed the fig-tree, a highly symbolic act. He then entered the Temple and chased out the corrupt money-changers. This showed His Messianic authority ("My Father's House") and fulfilled another prophecy that implied the Messiah would appear there suddenly and take possession of it (see Malachi 3:1). They then returned to Bethany. On the way home they saw the withered fig-tree.

Tuesday. The Day of Controversy and Teaching in Parables

On this day Jesus personally confronted the authorities and defended His claims to be the Messiah. The occasion for their questions was His violent action from the previous day. (Mark 11:27-13:37) offers the most detailed account). The day ended with Jesus pronouncing a curse on the city and announcing that the Kingdom will be taken away from the nation (explained the significance of the cursed fig-tree. See Matt. 23).

On the return to Bethany the disciples were loaded with questions. Jesus stopped at the the Mount of Olives, overlooking the temple, and gave the Olivet Discourse (see Matt. 24, 25; Luke 21:5ff), a detailed prophecy largely about the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the temple due to the rejection of Jesus as Messiah b the Jewish authorities.

Wednesday. The Silent Day

After an exhausting day of controversy, Jesus more than likely spent this day resting and visiting with His intimate friends.

Thursday. Day of Preparation and Passover in the Evening.

1. On this day preparation was made for the Passover. Judas may have utilized this time for his betrayal (Matt. 26:1-5; 14-16; 17-19).
2. The Passover was celebrated on Thursday evening (Friday by Jewish reckoning) in an upper room. Tradition hs it that the room was owned by Mark's parents. At the end of the Jewish feast, Jesus instituted the Last Supper (Matt. 14:12-26; Luke 22:17-23).
3. The Last Supper - followed by the Upper Room Discourse (Jn 13-14)
4. Sometime in the evening, after the Passover, Jesus and His disciples left the Upper Room and went to Gethsemane, a place near the Mount of Olives, where it was Jesus often prayed (Matt. 26:36-46).
5. While in the Garden, Jesus was betrayed by Judas and arrested by the temple guards (John 18:2-12)
6. The Trials began. Before dawn Jesus was tried twice befere Annas and the Caiaphas. Everything about these trials was illegal.

Friday. Trials, Crucifixion, Death, and Burial

1. Jesus third trial was held early morning before the Sanhedrin. The first three trials were before the religious authorites and found guilty.
2. Jesus was then taken before Pilate (4th trial), where He was found innocent and then taken to Herod who also found Him innocent (5th Trial), and then back to Pilate who again found him innocent (6th trial), but under pressure of an uprising, found him guilty. The sign above Jesus head noted His crime: King of the Jews."
3. About 9 a.m., Jesus was crucified outside the city on a hill called "the Skull. At noon, the sky became dark, symbolic of the Father turning His back on His beloved Son. During the time the Savior experienced hell for us, being utterly forsaken by God.
4. At 3 p.m., Jesus cried with a loud voice his final word "Finished," "paid in full." The spotless Son of God became sin for us! The veil is torn in the Temple (Mark 15:38). He was on the cross for six hours.
5. Jesus is laid in Joseph's tomb before Shabbat (sabbath began)

Saturday

Jesus's body lay in the tomb till after the Sabbath was over (Mark 16:1).

Resurrection Sunday!

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the frist day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the otehrMary went to look at the tomb with plans to annointe Christ body with spices. A violet earthquake shook the ground as an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes wer white as snow. The Roman guards wer so afraid that they shook with fear and became like dead men. The angel spoke to the women, "do not be afraid, for lknow that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as He said. (Matt. 28:1-6a).

He is Risen

He is Risen

Indeed!

Easter Song

(Keith Green)

Hear the bells ringing
They're singing that we can be born again
Hear the bells ringing
They're singing Christ is risen from the dead

The angel up on the tombstone
Said He is risen, just as He said
Quickly now, go tell his disciples
That Jesus Christ is no longer dead

Joy to the world,
He is risen, hallelujah
He's risen, hallelujah
He's risen, hallelujah
Hallelujah

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Death, The Final Enemy

Who put Jesus to death? Who caused His life to be snuffed out? How did He die? These are questions that have occupied man's time and thoughts for many centuries. Much heated debate with few satisfied conclusions have resulted. The Jews have been blamed; the Roman soldier condemned; the religious leaders denounced all for their respective part in the dastardly deed. However, it was not people, nor governments, nor nails that held Jesus on the cross causing His death, but His undying love for lost mankind. In a very real sense it was your and my sins that caused His death. Death is the wages of sin (Rom. 3:23) and Jesus had no sin, so He need not die. If death over came Him then it cannot accurately be said that "He gave His life..." Death takes man without asking how convenient the time, place, or occasion might be.

This word indicates that Jesus laid His life into the hands of God as the substitute sacrifice for sins. For a holy God to forgive, His divine justice must be satisfied by the payment of the prescribed price. This price is not negotiable since it is against God and Him only that man has sinned against (Psalm 51:4). Man cannot change the wages of sin, he can only accept God's provision of forgiveness that His righteous justice has both demanded and provided.

Finally, this word indicates that victory is His over death. Die He must, but on His terms not deaths.' Jesus will die because He wills it, when He wills it and as He wills it. That is final, full, and complete victory.

Jesus' death was a miracle. Even the soldiers were astonished when ordered to break His legs to hasten death, found Him already dead. It would be considered a miracle for one to survive a gun shot wound in the chest or head, or hanging when the neck is broken, or a sword thrust through the heart. However, these were not the means chosen for execution. The one chosen leaves no doubt, but that death did not take Him, but He was the master in death as well as in life.

Though suffering the consequences of the sins of all man for all time, Jesus at no time lost His consciousness of His intimate relationship to God as a Son, a well beloved One. Now with the Apostle Paul we can say in the words of Rom. 8:38, 39 "I am persuaded that neither life nor death ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God..." "

Jesus proves Himself to be the voluntary, vicarious, and victorious Savior and invites all to come to Him for life. John 5:24.

End Notes

- ⁱ Plummer 1896; Fitzmyer 1985; Jeremias 1926b.
- ⁱⁱ Plummer 1896; 530; Fitzmyer 1985:1503; Jeremias 1926b.
- ⁱⁱⁱ R. Kent Hughes. Luke, Vol 11. Crossway books, p. 378
- ^{iv} George Muller, Answers to Prayer, p. 9-10
- ^v The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 8. P. 579
- ^{vi} Hendriksen, Matthew, p. 970
- ^{vii} Oswald Chamberfs. If You Will Ask, p. 54
- ^{viii} John R.W. Stott. The Cross of Christ. P. 327
- ^{ix} F.T. Forsyth. The Justificaiton of God, p. 32

For Further Study

- Morgan, G. Campbell. The Crisis of the Christ.
- Piper, John. The Passion of Jesus Christ
- Shepard, J.W. The Christ of the Gospels.
- Thomas, Robert L., and Gundry, Stanley N. A harmony of the Gospels.

LET US THEN WITH
CONFIDENCE
DRAW NEAR TO THE
THRONE OF GRACE
THAT WE MAY RECEIVE
mercy & FIND
grace TO HELP
IN TIME OF NEED.

HEB. 4:16

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