

it is finished

F A M O U S L A S T W O R D S

Dr. Rob Godard



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Dedication

To my family, and our family: Lori, Ryan, Jeff, Ben & Graeme, I love you. My prayer is that you would experience the richness of the Gospel so strongly that your lives would never be the same; that you would grow in the depth of your understanding and experience of it richly so that you know you are never alone, always loved and that your lives matter as His Work of Art.

To our church family: As Spurgeon has said to those who listened to him, "We preach Christ, and him crucified." A sermon without Christ in it is like a loaf of bread without any flour in it. No Christ in your sermon, sir? Then go home, and never preach again until you have something worth preaching [Exposition of Acts 13:13-49 published in 1904].

This is the heart of preaching Christ, the heart of the Gospel on display in the beauty and horror of the cross.

May we rejoice as the Gospel is preached every Sunday, and repeat it to ourselves during the week, and never lose sight of the greatness of who our Saviour is, and what He has accomplished for us!

Acknowledgments

It is exciting to serve God at Cloverdale Baptist Church. I am thankful for great elders and deacons, and a staff that seeks God-glorifying excellence. Pastor Les and Elias, well done again on pushing for this to get done. It is good to serve Jesus together in this local church!

I love Jesus' church and am honored to serve her!

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It is finished



Introduction

Last words can be sad, funny, and when they are from someone that we love, extremely meaningful! Knowing the last thoughts of those whom we love, or of famous people, can cause us to laugh or cry. The most precious last words ever spoken are those spoken by Jesus on the cross.

When we talk about the last words of Jesus, we must be very clear on what we mean, for not only do we find Jesus speaking on the cross before His death, we find Him speaking after His resurrection before His ascension, interacting with churches in Revelation, speaking at the end of Revelation of His return, and we believe in God's Word being from Him, so in that sense, it is all from Jesus. Because Jesus has risen from the dead, He in reality does not have any last words, as He speaks to us through His Word, and will speak to us when He returns, and for all eternity His voice will warm our hearts. However, to define Jesus' last words as the last words He spoke before he willingly gave up His life for all who believe, we can through this seek to understand this display of His heart.

For this series we are defining the "last words of Jesus", as those He spoke from the cross, in excruciating pain. We believe that in these words we discover one of the great pictures of the passion of the One who loved us so much that He was willing to die for us.

Jesus speaks these words while being crucified, and this form of execution literally would have taken his breath away. "The weight of the body suspended by the arms caused immediate pain in the chest, paralyzing the pectoral muscles and making breathing extremely difficult. The person being crucified could inhale but had great difficulty exhaling. To exhale he had to push on his feet and straighten his legs to release the pressure exerted on his arms and chest. But the pain that this caused to his feet was so excruciating, because of the nails, that he would immediately cease any such effort. Death usually occurred within two or three days. But when the Romans wanted to shorten his agony, they would break his legs. So, unable to straighten himself with the help of his legs, the man would suffocate rapidly" (Bible.Org/article/last-seven-words-jesus).

Each word that Jesus spoke would have come at tremendous physical cost. He is speaking so that we can hear Him, He is speaking so that we can know what was going on in His mind as an overflow of His heart. He is speaking, and has had this recorded for us so that we can know Him more intimately, experience His love more richly, and obey Him more fully.

For the follower of Jesus, each word is therefore priceless!

We hope this study helps you deepen your appreciation for what Jesus did, your knowledge of who Jesus is, and your intimacy with your Lord and Saviour!

Easter is the most important celebration that we are involved in as Christians. It is the very heart of our relationship with our God. We are called to remember this in our communion celebrations, to picture its reality for each saved individual in our baptism, and to live in light of it every day.

We are called to never forget.

This Easter we are taking five weeks to deepen our grasp of the greatness of our salvation and our Saviour. We hope this journey deepens your love for God, your grasp of the greatness of your salvation, and your passion to live your life for His glory.

The Gospel changes everything!

A good way to summarize this good news is to biblically unpack the words God, Man, Christ, Response. (<https://www.9marks.org/answer/what-gospel/>)

1. **God.** God is the creator of all things (Gen. 1:1). He is perfectly holy, worthy of all worship, and will punish sin (1 John 1:5, Rev. 4:11, Rom. 2:5-8).
2. **Man.** All people, though created good, have become sinful by nature (Gen. 1:26-28, Ps. 51:5, Rom. 3:23). From birth, all people are alienated from God, hostile to God, and subject to the wrath of God (Eph. 2:1-3).
3. **Christ.** Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, lived a sinless life, died on the cross to bear God's wrath in the place of all who would believe in him, and rose from the grave in order to give his people eternal life (John 1:1, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 7:26, Rom. 3:21-26, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Cor. 15:20-22).
4. **Response.** God calls everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and trust in Christ in order to be saved (Mark 1:15, Acts 20:21, Rom. 10:9-10).

(Some of this material has been adapted from The Gospel and Personal Evangelism by Mark Dever, p. 43)

May we know this, experience this, and make it our lifelong passion to live in light of it as we share it with as many people as we can!

Growth Groups

There are three reasons that we make the putting together of these study books a priority at Cloverdale Baptist Church:

1. We want to prioritize the hearing and applying of God's Word.

This is essential for the authentication of who God's people are (Matthew 7:21-28); and our growth into being who God wants us to be (Psalm 138:2; James 1:22-25). It is our prayer and desire that this book helps you to focus on what God's Word is saying, and that it helps to lead you into applying His Word to everyday life.

2. We value small group ministry.

It is our belief that small group ministry can produce passion in God's people (Hebrews 10:25), and serve as a protection for God's people (Hebrews 3:12-14). Sin can be deceitful, and hardened hearts can lead to despair. Small group ministry protects us from sin, and engages our hearts for devotion. We would love for all of our people to be engaged in small group ministry and in that grow to love one another, and God, more and more.

3. We are looking for long term change.

It is our hope as we interact with God's Word together that these books will help you remember what you are learning and longing to apply. It is our desire that they become for you a tool to look back at, and grow with in the coming years as you continue to grow in conformity to the image of our Lord Jesus (Galatians 4:19). We believe that God's Word is powerful and will not return void (Isaiah 55:11), and it is helpful for His people to have reminders of where He has equipped them for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

If you are not in a small group we encourage you to join one, and until you do, to use the questions part of this notebook not only for reflection, but to interact with your family and/or friends in a way that is actively seeking to apply the Bible to your life (Deuteronomy 6:1-9).

May our God use this book through the Power of His Spirit to bring change in His people for His glory.

It is finished



***Father forgive them for they know not
what they do***

LUKE 23:26-29

Quick thoughts from Pastor Rob

Forgiveness is a difficult subject, for it involves at the very least the feeling that you have been wronged. At the most, it includes incredible pain that is overwhelming at times, and drives emotions that can feel uncontrollable.

On the cross Jesus models for us a response to wrongful pain in a way that we can follow when we experience His love and grace.

Our own forgiveness from Him will always produce thanksgiving, and the ability to forgive those who sin against us! These words help us to see Jesus responding to horrific wrongdoing in a way that Stephen (Acts 7:20) and other Christians can follow when we know and experience His love (Ephesians 3:14-21).

It is finished

FAMOUS LAST WORDS / LUKE 23:26-29

Father forgive them for they know not what they do

Introduction

1. Relational Intimacy

2. Radical Forgiveness

3. Real Ignorance

Implications:

- Experience

- Expression

- Enter

"Where sin is not taken seriously, forgiveness is received too lightly" (Lutzer).

It is finished

EXTRA NOTES



Father forgive them for they know not what they do



Growth Group Questions

LUKE 23:26-49

- Why is understanding the “last words” of Jesus so important to seeing His heart?
- Why is it important in this text that Jesus calls God, *Father*.
- How does this help us to know who we cry out to, and how to cry out when we feel we are being treated unjustly?
- Why does this specific prayer of Jesus help us to understand the importance of radical forgiveness?
- How does this give us hope for our own forgiveness from Him? ROMANS 5:6-11

“Christ’s petition was in one sense a general prayer, revealing that there is no sin against the Son of God so severe that it cannot be forgiven of those who repent...if forgiveness is available for those who crucified Him, it is available for anyone”(J. MacArthur).

- Why is it important that we understand our own sin, so that we can grasp the beauty and value of Jesus' forgiveness? PSALM 51:3-5

- How does Job's response to the glorious self-revelation of God in the midst of our suffering help us to understand what a good response to God should be in the midst of our own suffering and brokenness? JOB 42:1-6

INTERACT WITH THE IMPLICATIONS

- How can we, as those who are forgiven, more richly experience this forgiveness so that it changes our lives?

- How does our experience of the forgiveness of God help us to be able to forgive any and all who sin against us? MATTHEW 18:21-35

- How can we learn from this prayer to cry out to our heavenly Father in our time of need? How does this prayer help us to see the heart of Jesus more profoundly? How does it help us forgive others around us more freely?

It is finished

EXTRA NOTES



Father forgive them for they know not what they do



Prayer

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Ephesians 3:14-21

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

-
- *Pray this for one another.*
 - *Pray that we would be active forgiven forgivers.*

Father forgive them for they know not what they do



It is finished



Jesus cares

LUKE 23:26-43

Quick thoughts from Pastor Rob

We live in a broken world, where sometimes it feels like no one cares, and sometimes it feels overwhelming to care! As Jesus sought to breathe and speak, His pain would have been overwhelming — every breath a painful effort, every word gasped out. This increases the meaning of His love.

As Jesus is paying the price for our sins, as He is on the cross, and experiencing the wrath of God upon Himself, He takes the time to glimpse into His heart. He uses His last moments to show us what it means to truly care about other people. He cares about our eternal well-being. This is one of the reasons He is on the cross. He also cares about our current life situation, and this display of tender love is a huge encouragement in our own brokenness.

These last words on the cross are life changing if we can understand them, and through them see the love of our Saviour! Jesus truly cares about eternity. Jesus truly cares about women who lose their sons. Through this we see His tender care for individuals, even as He has billions to pay the price for as He suffers spiritually and physically!

It is finished

FAMOUS LAST WORDS / LUKE 23:26-43

Jesus cares

Introduction:

1. Jesus Cares About Individuals: Eternal Welfare. ROMANS 10:9-10

2. Jesus Cares For Individuals: Every Day Life

Implications

- Faith

- Assurance

- Love

- Purpose

It is finished

EXTRA NOTES





Growth Group Questions

LUKE 23:26-43

- Why do you think it is important to know these last words of Jesus?

- How are you doing on following the forgiveness model that Jesus displayed?

- How does Jesus' care for the thief show us He values the individual when it comes to eternal life issues?

- How does Jesus care for His mother show us the value of the individual when it comes to temporary issues?

- Jesus instructs John to take care of His mother...how does this help us to understand our role in caring for others on Jesus' behalf?

- How can we represent Jesus well in our care for people? Eternal care, and temporary care?

- As we meditate on Jesus' love for others while He is experiencing excruciating pain, how does it help us to know and experience His care for us in our brokenness?

- How can we experience this more richly?

- What can we learn about our own assurance through Jesus' treatment of the thief on the cross?

- Pastor Rob quoted another pastor in his sermon, *"At the cross, we like John, are asked to take Christ's place in the world"*...interact with this in terms of understanding and application.

- What are some ways that this prayer helps us to understand and pursue our purpose for living?

It is finished

EXTRA NOTES





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- *Pray this for one another.*
- *Pray that we would experience God's love so richly that we would care enough to give our lives to helping people with eternal and temporary needs.*



It is finished



Jesus' pain

MATTHEW 27:32-56

Quick thoughts from Pastor Rob

The reality that our Saviour had to suffer so immensely is overwhelming when we take the time to understand it. Jesus' pain began in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He literally sweated drops of blood. We believe this was Jesus experiencing hemathydrosis (or something like this), in which "capillary vessels that feed the sweat glands rupture, causing them to express blood....this usually occurs under conditions of extreme physical or emotional stress (Mark Eastman)". This was only the beginning, as the trial included physical and emotional abuse that feels overwhelming, as blindfolded He is struck and abused, as the whip rips apart His flesh, as the crown of thorns is pressed on His brow. Our LORD, 39 times receiving the lash, a leather whip 18-24 inches long, with glass, bone, metal, or other objects that would cause the shredding of flesh.

Crucifixion, invented by Persians, we think, sometime between 300-400 BC, and then intensified by the Romans for maximum pain, was usually reserved for the lowest of the criminals. It was designed for extreme physical pain, and horrific emotional humiliation. The pain, not only from the nails that were specifically put in to sever the largest nerve in the hand called the median nerve, but also the asphyxiation that would come as the body could not be held by the muscles of the thigh. We could go on, and sometimes it is helpful to reflect on this... (Dr. Mark Eastman, Article: The Agony Of Love), but even worse, is the spiritual pain Jesus endured.

Jesus became sin (2 Corinthians 5:21) and took upon Himself the wrath of God deserved by those who sin. He paid the penalty for the sins of all who would believe. 1 Peter 2:24 tells us that He bore our sin, or 2 Corinthians 5:21, became sin...and the cup of God's wrath was poured out on Jesus. This is the cup that caused the sweat drops of blood to be produced, far more severe than the physical pain. This love is overwhelming, especially when we realize that we have earned by our sin is death (Romans 6:23), and this death is eternal conscious punishment in hell. This kind of love — that He would lay down His life for us (Romans 8:5-11) — is LIFE CHANGING (2 Corinthians 5:14). Now we are driven to be those who might die to sin, and live to righteousness (1 Peter 2:24). We are forever marked by His love through His Spirit. Meditation on this will never leave us the same! Oh to grasp the love of God (Ephesians 3:14-21).

It is finished

FAMOUS LAST WORDS / MATTHEW 27:32-56

Jesus' pain

Introduction

1. Jesus Pain Was Real: Physically

2. Jesus' Pain Was Real: Spiritually

It is finished

EXTRA NOTES





It is finished

EXTRA NOTES





Prayer

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- *Pray this for one another.*
- *Pray that we would so understand and experience the Gospel that it would drive and define everything else we do.*



It is finished



It is finished

JOHN 19:28-20:18

IT IS FINISHED. Spurgeon stated that this one word, "would need all the other words that were ever spoken, or can be spoken to explain it...it is altogether immeasurable. It is high; I cannot attain it. It is deep; I cannot fathom it"

I agree, and yet our goal is to try, and perhaps, every day grow a little deeper in our understanding of this text, and through this become a little more intimate with our Saviour. When Jesus spoke these precious words, they announced to all that His task was done!

The great exchange had occurred...2 Corinthians 5:21. The price was paid in full...Hebrews 9:22. This is so rich because now, for those who believe, there is freedom from condemnation (Romans 8:1); and passion for living (2 Corinthians 5:14). *IT IS FINISHED* (Colossians 2:13-15).

This Easter Sunday reality should change everything else about us! May our God help us to experience the richness of what Jesus finished in a way that will cause us to rejoice and reveal Him and His Gospel to others through our lives and lips.

It is finished

FAMOUS LAST WORDS / JOHN 19:28-20:18

It is finished

Introduction

1. Who Said This?

2. What Does It Mean?

3. When Did This Happen?

4. Where Did This Take Place?

5. Why Did Jesus Declare This?

Implications

- Stop Being A Fool: PSALM 53:1

- Live In Freedom

- Follow Jesus

It is finished

EXTRA NOTES





It is finished

EXTRA NOTES





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-
- *Pray this for one another.*
 - *Pray that we would live our lives free from condemnation (Romans 8:1) and passionate about ministry (2 Corinthians 5:14), individually, as a growth group, and as a church.*



It is finished



Rest & Refocus

LUKE 23:26-49; MATTHEW 28:16-20

When Jesus shouts out, “It is finished”, this incredible reality can now dominate our lives; however His speaking from the cross is not done. In full faith, the one who has become sin and taken upon Himself the wrath of God, now commits His spirit into His Father’s care. Even as He experienced the terror of the cross, Jesus trusted in His Father’s love. He knew His hands were open to Him, and having accomplished His task, He rests in faith in the One who loves Him.

When Jesus rises from the dead, He gives His disciples (and through them us), the great commission. The mission of our life is to live for the purpose of seeing people trust in Him, and live in active obedience to His word. As we have been privileged to see the majesty of the heart of the Saviour on display through His words on the cross, may we also see that He is our Master, and so be those who follow His Word with our lives. Our mission from the Master, MAKE DISCIPLES!

It is finished

FAMOUS LAST WORDS / LUKE 23:26-49; MATTHEW 28:16-20

Rest & Refocus

Introduction

1. Calmed In Chaos:

2. Conscious Of His Presence:

3. Called To His Purpose:

Implications

- Practice His Presence

- Conform To His Likeness

- Be On His Mission

It is finished

EXTRA NOTES





Growth Group Questions

- What do you think you would like your last words to be?

- What do you see about Jesus heart of trust, through His words, "Into your hands I commit my Spirit?"

- How can we follow this in our own lives when we are experiencing chaos?

- What does it mean to be conscious of His presence?

- How can we live our lives in a way that shows that we are living our lives conscious of His presence?

- What are some reminders that you can set for yourself that will help you with this?

- Interact on Psalm 16:8-11: What does it say? What does it mean? How does it apply to my life?

- When Jesus says that He has all authority, what does this mean for us?

- Matthew 28:16-20 outlines the purpose of the believer, and perhaps more specifically the purpose of the church. How can you be on this mission for Jesus? What are ways we can be more effective at making disciples as a church family?

- What does it mean to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus?

- How can we do this in our lives?

- Who are three people I can pray for that are Christians that I want to help to hear and obey God's Word?

- Who do I know that needs encouragement to be baptized?

- Who can I pray for that does not yet know Jesus (pick 3), and what can I do to seek opportunities in the Spirit's leading to share the Gospel with them?

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-
- *Pray this for one another.*
 - *Pray that we trust our LORD, and rest (Philippians 4:4-6).*
 - *Take any issues to our King in prayer and trust.*



Passion Week Devotionals & Prayer Guide

PASTOR RAY

These are a set of devotionals put together for you to use each day of the passion week. It is our prayer that these devotionals will remind you of what our Saviour has done, and engage your heart in the depth of His love for us!

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, and not only with boldness but with confidence and assurance that we will find the very thing we need and are desperately looking for, which is to receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. How is this possible? Well the context tells us in Heb 4:14–15: *“¹⁴Since 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 fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace (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).

Hebrews 4:16 *“Let us come therefore boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”*

This Sunday is Palm Sunday — what the church calls “The Passion or Holy Week. It is the last week of Lent and provides 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.

Why Did Christ struggle with death when so many other martyrs have not – Radical p. 34 & 35.

Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, and four others were brought to trial on 13 November, 1553 for treason, found guilty, and condemned to death. It was now time to deal with the religious leaders of the reformation and so on 8 March 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 under interrogation before the trial, Cranmer admitted to every fact that was placed before him, but he denied any treachery, disobedience, or heresy. The trial of Latimer and Ridley started shortly after Cranmer's but their verdicts came almost immediately and they were burnt at the stake on 16 October.

Cranmer was taken to a tower to watch the proceedings. In his final days Cranmer's circumstances changed, which led to four recantations. On his final recantation, a broken man, announced his joy of returning to the Catholic faith, asked for and received sacramental absolution, and participated in the mass. 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 a 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 or 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 closed 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 took 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.¹ In this public location, innocent Jesus, is nailed to the cross between two who are guilty.

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 Saviour 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, one promise to the dying thief on His right, one request to the Apostle John to be His substitute, one word of personal need fulfilling prophecy, and one 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.

SAYING	SCRIPTURE	SUBSTANCE
Father, forgive them...	Luke 23:34	Prayer
Today, with me	Luke 23:40	Promise
Mother, your son	John 19:25-27	Provision
My God, my God why?	Matt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34	Prayer
I thirst	John 19:28	Prophetic plea
Finished	John 19:30	Proclamation
Father, into your hands	Luke 23:46; Matt. 27:50; Mk. 15:37	Prayer

¹ Plummer 1896: 530; Fitzmyer 1985:1503; Jeremias 1926b.

EXTRA NOTES

Monday

"Father forgive them they don't know what they do" Luke 23:34 "A prayer!"

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 didn'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.

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 adds 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.

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 is an amazing thing. At the very point when our hearts so easily could turn to bitterness, we need to remember again the words of our Saviour. Paul in Ephesians 4:32, *"be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."* Marcus Aurelius, the great Roman Emperor and Stoic saint, used to say to himself every morning, "today you will meet all kinds of unpleasant people; they will hurt you, and injure you, and insult you; but you cannot live like that; you know better, for you are a man in whom the spirit of God dwells."²

As we experience the rich forgiveness of Jesus this week (and beyond), Let's ask Christ to help us forgive as even He forgave those who put Him on the cross.

² William Barkclay. The Gospel of Luke, rev. ed. p. 286

EXTRA NOTES

Tuesday

"Today with Me you will be in paradise" Luke 23:40. A Promise.

Three crosses are silhouetted against the sky over Mount Calvary – Jesus is in the middle, being *"numbered with transgressors"* (Isa. 53:12). The crosses 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 (Mk 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" because it is contrary to God's will. Jesus must give His life a ransom for sin. The thieves must pay their debt to society for the crimes committed. Justice will not be denied.

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 publicly his condition. Then in his limited ability to move, the thief on the right turns to Jesus and utters his prayer. *"Lord remember me..."* this prayer reveals much about his knowledge and faith. Both men are dying, yet he asks for remembrance in a coming kingdom. He calls Jesus Lord. He acknowledges a belief in a place beyond earth, and the fact that he wants a place there.

This prayer is in the revealed will of God and receives a yes answer in the form of a promise. The time is "today," the place is "Paradise," 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."³ 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 at CBC. Salvation then and now is freely given to all who believe without merit, works, color, nationality, or possible future service and 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"* Rom. 6:23.

³ Ibid. p. 287

EXTRA NOTES

Wednesday

"Woman, behold your son." John 19:25. A Substitute for the Substitute.

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 and John, the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23).

Before the cross of Jesus the ground is level, there are no places of prominence or elevation. The one who bore the suffering Saviour in her body needs the work of the Saviour, 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. Here Mary was going through the experience predicted by Simeon in Luke 2:34, 35.

As the eldest son, Jesus has the responsibility of caring for His aging mother. 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 replacing the other, 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 the overflow of His love in every area of our lives, not stressing one to the neglect of the other.

Jesus is on the cross dealing with the spiritual need of forgiveness and reconciliation. He is literally paying the penalty for sin so that the spiritual needs of people who believe are satisfied, and yet even here we find Him gazing with love and acting in tender care for the physical needs of those whom He loves.

May God use us to be a part of the avenue of His grace that leads people to Jesus, and as we do this, may our lives reflect Jesus concern for those around Him who needed physical care.

EXTRA NOTES

Thursday

"Why...forsaken me?" God Forsaken by God.

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 is thrown across the sun. The day becomes the blackness of darkness. For three hours darkness has 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 *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."* We can also be sure that no one went home, for how could anyone see? When the sun refuses to give its light rays, the seeing eye has no power of sight. Psalm 24 is an Old Testament picture of these three awful hours.

Hell, like heaven, is a place mentioned but not fully described in God's revelation to man. In 2 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. What makes hell unbearable is the total absence of God. From Cain onward, the punishment that is greater than man can bear is to be excluded from the presence of God. Gen. 4:13, 14.

Forsakenness - This word has all the descriptive elements of hell:

- The blackness of darkness.
- The tormented mind expressed in the question *"why?"*
- The absence of God or God-forsakenness.

The child of God may read about, hear about, but never shall experience it. Jesus, who was made sin for us (I Cor. 5:21) suffered the wrath of God and the pains of hell on our behalf. We see the depths of hell and the breadth of God's love in the cry of the Saviour, *"My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken Me?"* The cross of Christ is a revelation of both the love of God and His wrath. Love, because on the cross we see the grace and mercy of God in the Person of the Lamb of God giving Himself for the sins of the world; the wrath of God in not sparing His Son any part of the horrors of hell after laying all the sins of all mankind upon Him. All sins' penalty, except final rejection of God's provision in the person of Christ is here paid in full, but that sin alone becomes fallen man's ticket to hell.

EXTRA NOTES

Good Friday

"Father, Into Your hands." Death, The Final Enemy

Who put Jesus to death? Who caused His life should 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 satisfying conclusions have resulted. The Jews have been blamed; the Roman soldier condemned; the religious leaders denounced for their respective parts 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 yours 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 overcame 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 (Psalm 51:4). Man cannot change the wages of sin, he can only accept God's provision of payment that His righteous justice has both demanded and provided. Finally, this word indicates that victory over death is His. Die He must, but on His terms not death's. Jesus will die because He wills it, when He wills it and as He wills it. That is the final, full, and complete victory.

Jesus' death was a miracle. Even the soldiers were astonished when ordered to break His legs to hasten death, they found Him already dead. It would be considered a miracle for one to survive a gunshot 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 method 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 Saviour and invites all to come to Him for life. John 5:24.

EXTRA NOTES

Saturday

"I Thirst" Very man of very man. John 19:28,29.

After spending three hours immersed in the putrefying stagnation of sins, then unfolding the dimensions of hell, Jesus reviews in His mind all the Old Testament Scriptures to find that there remains yet one prophecy that awaits fulfillment (Psa. 24:14,15). 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 Gethsemane, 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 the most cruel of all executions, since it does not kill but only wounds. It is time that kills as wounds fester, the blood pools, the temperature climbs to a throbbing fever, and the tongue cleaves to the roof of the mouth, swollen and dry. (Psa. 69:21). To partially alleviate this physical suffering, there was provided the sponge with vinegar (sour wine). It was this potion that numbed the physical senses that Jesus refused at the beginning. (Mk. 3:15).

This one word sentence is a statement, 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).

Yes, physically the man Jesus thirsts. He poured Himself out, an offering for sins that the invitation issued in Isa. 55 and John 7: 37-39 might find fulfillment.

There was also the spiritual thirst implicit in this word, that of a yearning desire for the salvation of lost man and the glorification of His Father in heaven. Perhaps this thirst can best be seen in the incident recorded in John 4: 3-15 when Jesus encountered the woman at the well in Samaria, meeting her need for spiritual satisfaction, extending the message to the other people in the town, and finally revealing His Father's essential nature and desire for worship as God, the Creator of heaven and earth and provider and sustainer of His creation, man.

EXTRA NOTES

Sunday

"Finished" The Victor's shout. John 19:30.

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 be paid only by another who has no debt of his own. That is the reason man needs a Saviour. Jesus is the only Saviour, for He alone has no taint of sin by inheritance and He alone lived a perfect life in obedience to the will of God. Only He is eligible as the *"lamb without spot"* I Peter 1:19.

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

In a real sense it was the successful completion of God's program of redemption begun before the foundation of the earth. It was the focal event to which the promises, prophecies and the picture of the Old Testament pointed. God, who cannot lie, promised eternal life before the world began (Titus 1:2). With this word Jesus proclaims the completion of that task. God has fulfilled His promise. All that could be done was accomplished, completed, concluded, and finished. "Tis done; the great transaction's done; I am my Lord's and He is mine" (from Hymn: O Happy Day, That Fixed My Choice).

The task is 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 done over and over again. 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 being a just and holy God would not exact the payment for the penalty of sin from His Son on my behalf and then turn around and expect payment from me also.

This saying was a victorious declaration to heaven, earth and hell that Christ had conquered and Satan was crushed and destroyed. To man, the invitation goes out to come just as you are and join the triumphant Saviour. It is finished. Price paid in full! Our saving accomplished in His work on the cross! Halleluiah what a SAVIOUR!

EXTRA NOTES

At the throne of grace.

(THE PASSION WEEK PRAYER GUIDE)

1. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. (A Prayer)

PRAYER FOCUS

- Ask Christ to help you forgive as He forgave even those who crucified Him
- Pray for your enemies/adversaries, even when they seek to hurt or offend you
- Pray that God will continually convict people of their sin and draw them to Himself.

2. Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise. (A Promise)

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray that God will help you overcome your doubts, and believe the claims of Christ. Confess openly or publicly that you believe in Him.
- Pray that God will help you to trust Him fully, give up the “controls of your life” to Him. Tell Him you trust Him with your life.
- Surrender flows out of belief and trust. Today, at this moment make Him Lord of your life, surrender all you have and hold dearly to Him.

3. Woman, behold your son, behold your Mother (God provides)

PRAYER FOCUS

- Confess your worries about the future to your heavenly Father
- Review how God has met your needs in the past
- Claim the promises in His word for you
 - » Matthew 6:25-34
 - » Luke 12:22-34
 - » Phil. 4:5b-6

4. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (A Prayer)

PRAYER FOCUS

- Ask God to help you set your hope in Him – it will destroy discouragement
- Ask Him to remind you of His provision – remember, remember, remember
- Ask Him to help you keep His commands – we are tempted to devise our own way when He is silent.

5. I Thirst (A plea)

PRAYER FOCUS

- Pray that God will answer that special need that you have in your life
- Pray that God will help you overcome the hurt that you have experienced in your life.
- Jesus said in John 7:37 *"if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."* Come to Him and drink deeply of His promises.

6. It is Finished (A proclamation)

PRAYER FOCUS

- Thank God for the plan of Salvation
- Thank Christ that He has been victorious and Satan has been crushed
- Thank Him that we can be victorious over sin in our own lives.

7. Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit (a Prayer)

Prayer Focus

- Review each of the 6 previous focuses of prayer, and make them your prayer today.
- Take time to review the story of the resurrection (Matt. 28:1-10; Lk 24:1-12; Jn 20:1-10)
- Greet a fellow believer with "He is Risen, He is Risen Indeed."

REJOICE IN YOUR SALVATION