

Seven Last Words of Christ from the Cross

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 July 2023

Preacher: Ron Gannon

[0 : 00] If you were here last week, Nathan started a study on Mark chapter 4 about the parables he was speaking. He quoted Isaiah 6 saying, You go to the people and say, You keep on hearing, but you do not understand.

And you keep on seeing, but you do not perceive. For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their eyes they scarcely hear. And they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes and hear with their heart and understand with their heart and return. Jesus had two reasons for this teaching in the parables. The first was to enable his followers to grasp the secrets of the kingdom of heaven more easily.

It was a teaching tool for them and for us. And the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer continues to use these parables today to teach us the secrets of the kingdom.

The second reason was just the opposite. It's to hide the secrets of the kingdom from those who have not committed themselves to his lordship.

[1 : 12] Those without faith and the spirit are unable to understand the truths of Jesus' parables. And that leads us to the topic that I have for today.

So if you turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 23. Let's start with verse 13.

Let's start with verse 13. Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people.

And he said to them, Now he was obliged to release to them at the first of one prisoner.

And that was the custom of the day. But they cried out all together saying, Away with this man and release for us Barnabas. He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city and for murder.

[2 : 45] Pilate waiting to release Jesus addressed him again. But they kept on calling out. Saying crucify him. Crucify him.

And he said to them the third time. Why? What evil has this man done? I have found in him no guilt. Demanding death.

Therefore I will punish him and release him. But they were insistent with loud voice asking that he be crucified. And their voices began to prevail.

Now these are the men. These Pharisees and Sadducees had heard these messages from the Old Testament about coming Messiah.

And they had seen the miracles and the preaching of Jesus Christ. But their hearts had become dull. And with their ears they could not hear. And they closed their eyes to what they saw.

[3 : 40] They could not open their hearts to the truth before them. So they put Christ on the cross. And today the message is going to be the seven last words of Christ on the cross.

The account of Jesus being crucified on the cross is included in each of the gospel accounts. However, we do not see all the seven last words of Jesus in each account.

In Matthew and Mark we only see one saying. They are the same in each account. Luke has three sayings. And John has three of these sayings.

So why doesn't each of the gospel accounts have the same sayings? Well, the four gospels are written to cover four aspects of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Each gospel writer wrote from a different perspective to a different audience. They each looked at the character of Jesus from different angles. So they wrote about different things.

[4 : 49] And we've got to remember, these people were not writing this when Jesus was here.

These letters came years and years later that we see the gospels were written by these four men.

So these men were not there saying, hey, Jesus Christ, this is what's going on right now. Because they weren't there. They didn't know. A few of them did because they were the disciples.

But Matthew and John knew Jesus and was his disciples. They had first-hand knowledge of what Jesus Christ was doing. Although they didn't write the gospels at that time, they were there when Christ was there.

They were his disciples. They went through everything that Jesus was going through at that time. Although Mark and Luke, they did not know Jesus on a first-hand basis because they are not mentioned in the gospels at all.

When we're talking about Jesus Christ and what's going on there. Although they wrote the accounts. Mark, as we know, was picked up by the apostle Paul when he went on his first missionary journey.

[6 : 04] And Mark was there with him going out to do mission work. Of course, we know at the end that he disconnected with Paul and went his own way.

And later on, he got in contact with Peter and was with Peter a lot of the time. But he didn't have that first-hand knowledge. So where did he get his information?

Well, he got it from different witnesses. From different people. Probably some of the disciples that he's talked to over the years that were still around. From Peter. From Paul.

Where did Paul get all his information? Paul is not mentioned there either, is he? As we'll see later on, you know, the apostle Paul got the knowledge. Not just from witnesses and for other people. But he got it from the Lord himself. He was taken. And he didn't know where he was taken. We see that in Corinthians. But he was taken above. Or some way.

[7 : 03] I won't say above. He was taken someplace. And he was given first-hand information from Jesus Christ. About this is what I want you to do, Paul.

Go out and teach this to the people. And what he gave him was also the mystery. Which is what we know today. And it's about the grace that we have the privilege of having today.

And this is what the apostle Paul did. And so these men, they wrote the gospels. And they had different things to say. And yes, there's different things in all the gospels.

Some people may read the gospels. And they say, come on. How could Mark know all these things? He's not even mentioned. He wasn't there. Luke wasn't there.

And it comes down to the fact that this was years later. They knew this information from the people that he talked to. Or a couple of them had the first hand.

[8 : 00] But by all accounts, Jesus did not do a lot of talking on the cross. He was silent during the hours he hung there, except for a very few words. But these seven last words provide a window into Jesus' soul.

A way to understand what is ultimately important to this one who is dying on the cross. Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed.

When they came to the place called the skull, there they crucified him along with the criminals. One on his right, the other on his left. The scene around the cross is crass and unfeeling.

The soldiers are part of an execution detail. Bored. They were bored with executions. They did this all the time. Perhaps this team would have executed several crucifixions this week already.

So this was a common thing. For thieves and murderers, what was their punishment? Death. It's not quite like it is here in the United States today.

[9 : 05] I mean, we have people that have been sitting in death row for years and years and years. Back then, no. If you were convicted, you were put on that cross very quickly.

And these men, these soldiers, had a lot of experience with that. First, the soldiers began with a cruel process of nailing the criminal to the cross, then hoisting him up.

The cross swayed forward, then back, until it was secured with wedges at the bottom to hold it upright. And when the task is gone, they sit around the base, waiting for the criminal to die, sometimes for days.

Crucifixion was a horrible, horrible death. They could hang there for days. We know Jesus Christ didn't hang there for days because God was with him, and he caused it for him to die very quickly.

And what a blessing that would have been. But to pass the time, they gambled, deciding by casting the blots who will be awarded the victim's last possessions. That is the scene of the cross.

[10 : 15] These men, these soldiers, they didn't have the money that a lot of people had. So, yeah, they gambled for the clothes and stuff that these prisoners and Jesus Christ had.

But in the midst of it comes all that stuff that's going on, all the nasty stuff about the cross. In the midst of it comes an astounding and powerful word from Jesus on the cross.

And if you turn to Luke 23, verse 34, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. They do not know what they were doing. Think about what we've already said about the Pharisees and the Sadducees and all those people, the leadership. They just didn't understand.

And Jesus is saying they did not know. This is an unselfish prayer. What Jesus is saying in his last hour, Jesus is saying a prayer of a request to God Almighty.

[11 : 22] It is remarkable, however, that Jesus isn't asking for himself. My goodness, if I've been hanging on that cross, would I have been thinking about anybody else?

I don't think so. Do you think that those two thieves on the cross were thinking about anybody else? Well, maybe one of them was. I would have been terrified and overwhelmed, trying desperately to retain my composure.

My prayer would probably have been, God, help me during this time. But Jesus' prayer is one of complete unselfishness. He is concerned for the people who are responsible for crucifying him and is asking God to forgive them.

Can you imagine? Can you imagine? If somebody had put me into a kangaroo court and said, I did all these type of things and the judgment came down, you deserve death.

It would be very difficult for me to forgive those people that would be responsible for that. Jesus Christ had no problem.

[12 : 36] But Jesus' prayer is one of complete unselfishness. He is concerned for the people who are responsible for crucifying him. Instead of thinking of himself and his own needs, he is thinking of those souls who are in much greater peril than his own.

Even through crucifixion, Jesus loves. He says, Father, a term of trust, confidence, and endearment. But his love is not merely from those dishonorable leaders who put him on the cross. His prayer reveals a gentle love for God himself. At the moment he begins a long course of death through executing pain, he speaks in love to the only one who can deliver him, God himself. He speaks not for himself but for others, and he speaks in love. Think about the word Father in this prayer and consider these alternatives.

God. That term is a generic term for deity. Lord is a term of respect and honor for one who is exalted in rank.

[13 : 43] This term was substituted by the Jews to avoid saying the divine name of Yahweh and Jehovah when reading the scriptures. Almighty God would be a bit formal at this desperate hour of one's crucifixion.

But it would express God's great power. Creator God is a common substitute for Father among Christians. When they see the word Father, but Creator God is not a term, a relationship, but rather one of function and of all.

Father, on the other hand, is first and foremost a term of relationship and endearment. It is a family term.

Spoken within the family circle, it is often expressed as Abba, which broadly translates, might correspond to our dad or daddy.

I have a girl that calls me daddy. And boy, that's such a good feeling. Daddy. It's endearment.

[14 : 50] That love that you see in the family. Jesus had used this intimate, endearing word to address his father in the garden of Gethsemane the night before.

Romans 8.15 For you received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you received the spirit of adoption, where we cry, Abba, Father.

In Galatians 4.6 And because you are sons, God sent forth the spirit of the Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. In this prayer, at his last hour, Jesus addresses the God of the universe with a simple term, Father.

And he invites us to do the same. When Jesus' disciples asked him how that they should pray, he gives them a model prayer that begins with what? Our Father.

Our Father. We see that in Matthew chapter 6. By beginning the prayer with the word Father, Jesus expresses at the same time a love and a confidence, a trust.

[15 : 57] Jesus knows him, trusts him, and is confident in the outcome. So who are these people that Jesus is asking for forgiveness for?

Let's consider the possibilities. Number one, the soldiers. They're the ones that's hanging him there. He could be praying for the Roman soldiers who routinely put men to death on the side at the cross.

They destroyed human life brutally without compassion, but they didn't initiate the action. They had no choice. They were merely following orders. Only after the fact did they realize with awe and terror that they had done.

Surely, he was a son of God, said the satirist in Matthew 27. It would have been the soldiers who he was forgiving at that time.

Could have been Pilate. Might have been a better candidate, however. Against all law, he had given the order for the crucifixion. He had found Jesus innocent of the crimes with which he had been charged.

[17:06] Yet the pressure of the Jewish leaders and his fear of a riot forced him to go against his better judgment. He signed a death warrant and then publicly washed his hands of it.

He said, I'm finished. I'm done. Do what you want to do. So, perhaps Jesus was forgiving Pilate for his weakness of his character.

The chief priests and scribes were the prime force behind the crucifixion. Once Jesus had cleansed the temple of their greedy trade in animals and money changing at an outrageous exchange rate, they were determined at that point, we're going to have to do away with this man.

He was going around and causing so much problem. He is saying things to get the people to come against us. So, is that who he was praying for?

Also, the priest and the scribes behind the scenes, they paid off Judas for his insider betrayal. In Matthew 26, sent temple soldiers to arrest him at the Garden of Gethsemane.

[18:20] In 26 also, tried to get the people to testify falsely against Jesus before the Sanhedrin and stirred up the crowd to demand that Jesus be crucified.

It may have been the chief priests and scribes that Jesus was asking for forgiveness. The Pharisees and the Sadducees were his early enemies. Jesus' plain teaching about the kingdom of God offended them both.

The Sadducees sought to discredit him. In Matthew 22, the Pharisees were the first to actively plot Jesus' death. In Matthew 12, the teaching of Jesus was too threatening to be the established religious power.

It might be that the Pharisees and Sadducees were the recipients of this cry. And here's another set.

Could it be you and I? But when you think about it, we are the real ones that sent Jesus to the cross.

[19:29] Our sins, our corruption, our weakness, and pettiness. The way we hid it on our own.

It is to our own doom. Jesus says the gate to eternal life is exceedingly nearer. He tells us so nearer that few find it on their own.

Why is that? The gate to heaven is narrow. I don't know the account of Christians in this country. But I know if you compare it to the account or the number of people that are not Christians. This saying is so true. The gate is narrow for those who come.

Without Jesus' acting campaign to bear our sins upon himself, the righteous for the unrighteous, in 1 Peter 3, none of us could be forgiven.

[20:35] That's the only thing. That we are forgiven because of Jesus and what he did on the cross. Jesus is in no illusion. He knows why he has come to the earth.

He explains it with utmost clarity to his disciples. All along, Jesus' teachings, he was letting this come out very slowly. I'm here for a purpose.

My purpose is to live as a man and to show people about sinfulness. He's also teaching them things that are going to happen.

They're going to come and they're going to take me by force and I will leave you. He'd been taught that the whole time that disciples were with him.

They just did not understand again. It's very hard to know and to understand and to do. And we see that in and out, even with the disciples.

[21:41] So, for the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. And we see that all the way through the Gospels, especially in Mark chapter 10.

You and I made the cross necessary. We are the ones he prays to forgive. Does God hold those who put Jesus to death responsible for their sins?

Oh, yeah. Yeah, he did. He is a just God. They had seen Jesus' miracles and they heard the truths broken by the Son of God himself and yet sought his death.

There was plenty enough rope to hang them with all justice. They had no excuse. None at all. Yes, they knew that this was dirty business.

Their hearts were corrupt. But what was lacking was a full understanding of the magnitude of their sin. That they lacked.

[22 : 42] That they lacked. And a lot of people today lack the same thing. Paul exclaims, none of the rulers of this age understood it.

For if they had, they would have not crucified the Lord of glory. In 1 Corinthians 2.8. Paul himself, who persecuted Christians to their death, did it because he just didn't understand.

When you read the first part of Acts, what is Paul? He is a Jew who is with those who would have put Jesus on the cross.

He may not have been there at that time. But if he would have been there, he would have been the ones out there hollering. He put him on the cross. Because what did he do when he came?

He said, give me letters. I will go out there to all these cities and all these places. Those who know Jesus Christ as Savior have come to that conclusion and are following Jesus.

[23 : 47] He says, I will bring them in to you. And you can do with them what you want. Put them to death. I will take that on as my job. That is what the Apostle Paul was.

Until that day, when he was going to Damascus. And he was knocked off his horse. And the Lord came to him.

Why are you doing this to me? And he was blinded. And he went in. And he was blinded for days. And he contemplated and contemplated. Until he did understand. What was going on. And he made a decision at that point to turn his life over to Jesus Christ.

And from that point on, he was the Apostle for Jesus Christ. For grace. For the mystery that we all share today. That we can know that we are saved by grace and through nothing else.

[24 : 54] So the Apostle Paul himself, who persecuted Christians to their death, did it because he just did not understand. Even though he was once a blasphemer and a persecutor, he came to know Jesus Christ.

Yes, each of us has plenty enough to condemn us. Each and every one of us. But God is looking deeper. He has made a way that we do not deserve.

Because he knows that if we really knew the truth, we would embrace his son in talking about forgiveness. Forgiveness. Our society has almost reached the pinnacles of being offended by every small misstep.

We are angry over the books people are reading. And the fact that someone dares to disagree with the way we think. You know, this nation is a mess.

Really. All the news about all the books that's going into our public schools. All the fighting that's going on. About the stuff that's coming into our schools.

[25 : 59] That, you know, 50 years ago would have been unthinkable. It would have been unthinkable. That there would be books in our school talking about men who are women and women who are men.

It's just amazing the stuff that's going on in our society. Forgiveness isn't given a second thought because bashing, burning, canceling, fact checking, and everything to give an air of superiority are the idols we place in front of our eyes instead of focusing on our Savior.

His sacrifice is an incredible example of showing love, grace, and forgiveness. To people that literally hate and kill.

Can you imagine a world where we take this example and actually follow through on it? Where we show grace and forgiveness to someone when we feel wronged? Wow.

What a different place it would be, right? I'm no different than everybody else. When I'm wronged, the first thing I want to do is fight back.

[27 : 14] And I think all of us are the same way. But we need to, once we say that, fight back. Think, oh, what would Jesus do?

What would Jesus do? Yeah, you wronged me. I'm going to tell you that you wronged me or that you hurt me.

And then I'm going to forgive you. And what is that forgiveness? That forgiveness is, like Jesus' forgiveness, should be permanent.

How many times do we forgive people and then, oh, remember what you did? Five years ago? That's not forgiveness. Forgiveness? Forgiveness is when we say, you are forgiven, and it's

forgotten about.

It's thrown into the deepest sea. Never to come back up again. That's what real forgiveness is all about. So can you imagine a world like that today?

[28 : 24] Wow, what a place that would be. Jesus, our Lord and Savior, God in the flesh, could have come down from the cross at any time. But he chose to forgive, and he chose to take our sin upon himself so that we could have eternity with him in heaven.

Jesus' prayer on the cross tells me that God has found a way to forgive us. This leads me to the next question, or the last question raised by this saying, What does it mean to forgive?

Forgive? The word in Greek is *afeme*, with the basic meaning is to just send away. The idea is to release from a legal or moral obligation or consequences.

Cancel, remit, pardon. It was used for legal documentation. He is speaking of sins as the debt owed to God, which must be paid.

The Lord's Prayer asks God to cancel our debts. As we cancel others' debts of sin committed against us. In the parable of the unforgiving servant, found in Matthew 18, Jesus illustrates the concept of forgiveness in terms of Massey's financial debt owed to a king.

[29 : 43] We owe a debt. We owe a debt. To God. God cannot take us as we are.

Because of that debt. But Jesus Christ paid that debt for us. That is amazing, amazing grace.

There's a song by Ellis Crumb that expresses the concept of God's forgiveness. He paid a debt he did not owe. I owed a debt I could not pay.

And now I sing that brand new song, amazing grace. How sweet the sound. For Jesus paid the debt that I could never, never pay.

That pretty well says it all, doesn't it? As Jesus begins the last phase of his life, dying on the cross, hung between earth and heaven, he prays for all of us who put him there.

[30 : 52] He calls out to his Father without shame, at the intimacy of his love and authenticity of his sonship. Forgive, Father, for they do know what they do.

You know, it's easy to live in forgiveness that Jesus died. But sometimes it's hard to pass it on to others. We are not to be mindful of what Jesus chose to say from the cross.

May we follow his example. That was Jesus' message. Forgive them. I forgive you. What does Ephesians chapter 4, 32 say?

It says it all. Be kind to one another. Tenderhearted. What? Forgiving each other.

Just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. What a message. We can be forgiven.

[32 : 01] God has done that. He did it on the cross. And he wants us to be forgiving people. He wants us to forgive people that we have differences with.

You know, most of the arguments we have, it just doesn't matter. When it comes down to the end, it don't matter how much you disagree. But do it in the right way.

And be forgiving. Even if somebody hurts you. So what a message. That's the first saying that Jesus said from the cross. Forgive them, Father, for they do not know what they are doing.

The second message, or the second word that Jesus uses, is found in also 23, verses 39 to 43.

This day you will be with me in paradise. Jesus' second saying from the cross. One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him.

[33 : 15] Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us. But the other criminal rebuked him. Don't you fear God? He said, since you are under the same sentence.

We are punished justifiably. For we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man who has done nothing wrong. Then he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

And Jesus answered him. I tell you the truth. Today you will be with me in paradise. It was a terrible thing to be unjustly condemned to be crucified.

It added insult to injury to be crucified between two obvious criminals. But there is a story here and a lesson. The brief passage relates one of the most amazing prayers and promises in the entire Bible.

Scripture is being fulfilled. Before we get into the story, however, it is important to realize that Jesus' crucifixion with other criminals was no accident of history.

[34 : 25] It is a fulfillment of prophecy. Isaiah 53, 9. He was assigned a grave with the wicked. And with the rich in his death.

Though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. He poured out his life unto death. And he was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many in the

intercession of the transgressors.

Of these criminals dying on the cross beside Jesus now takes up the catcall begun by the soldiers. You are the Christ, aren't you? Then save yourself and us.

The thief is making fun of Jesus' inability to do anything. Despite the exalted title of Messiah. They know he claimed to be the Messiah.

They put that up on the thing. If you're the Messiah, save us. You're dying just like us. The verb used for describing the thief's tomb is blasphemo.

[35 : 31] To speak in a disrespectful way that demands, degenerates, maligns, slander, reviles, and defames. The reason this is happening is not only because the thief was wicked.

But also an order, again, that the scripture may be fulfilled. Isaiah 53. He was despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows and familiar with suffering.

Like one from whom men hide their faces. He was despised and was esteemed. Him not. In Psalm 22, David expresses his trust in God in spite of his apparent rejection by God, by men.

In the face of the attacks by his enemies, we see Jesus facing the same thing as David. David went through so much. We just did a study here a couple weeks ago about David.

And all the things that he suffered. And all the things. The men that was against him. Why God wasn't with me. But God was with him. We know that.

[36 : 38] But it says there in Psalm 22. But I am a worm and not a man. Scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me. They hurl insults, shaking their heads.

He trusts in the Lord. Let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him since he delights in him. Dogs have surrounded me. A band of evil men has encircled me.

They have pierced my hands and my feet. I can't count all my bones. People stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them.

And cats slot for my clothing. Psalms 22, verses 16 through 18. These are old prophecies.

And they all come true. Now why didn't these Pharisees and these Sadducees. They read these scriptures. They knew the scriptures. Why didn't they recognize this?

[37 : 38] It just doesn't make sense, does it? But God said they had dulled their hearts. So even though they knew this in the scriptures.

And again another verse. Jesus below, just below Jesus' feet, the soldiers are cast these lots to see who gets his clothing. His last effects aren't given to this family.

They go to the soldiers and the spoils. As a fulfillment in scripture in Psalms 22, 18. It is the final insult. One criminal is blaspheming Jesus.

The other is not. The other criminal rebuked him. Do you not fear God? He said, since you are under the same sentence. We are being punished justly.

But this man has done nothing wrong. We see that again in Luke. The taunting was making the second criminal very uncomfortable. He may be condemned to death, but he has not lost his faith.

[38 : 39] For he asked, don't you fear God? To stand by and participate in such unrighteousness act was to execute an innocent man is an irreverent sinful act.

The second criminal refuses to desert his sense of right and wrong. You know, a lot of times, we may not be Christians.

I know for myself, especially, I grew up in a church ever since I was a little kid. I lived on Church Street. So you know what that means?

There's a church on that street. And my mom and dad says, you and your brother and sister are going to go to that church. They didn't go all the time, but they sent us.

So from a little boy, I learned about Scripture. Did I understand it? No, no way. But I heard it. I knew about God.

[39 : 43] I knew about Jesus Christ. He came and he died on the cross. Does that mean that I understood it? No. Matter of fact, I didn't understand it until I came to this church.

I did not understand it. And I was, I don't know how old I was. That was 1974. I know that. And the message came across that Marv taught that morning.

And it sent me home saying, something's wrong. And during that week, I accepted Jesus Christ. So I know that people know about God.

They know about religion. They've seen it all their life. But they do not accept Jesus Christ into their heart. It's hard to understand, isn't it?

But we know that's the truth. And it sounds like this may be what happened to this second thief. Now, I don't know if he may have been around when Jesus was out there teaching.

[40 : 54] He may have heard some of the things that Jesus was talking about. And he said, wow, this is making sense. Or maybe his mom and dad taught him when he was a small boy.

And he just forgot about it all and lived that nasty life that he was living afterwards. But for some reason, he knew, hey, this is not right.

This is not right. He claims to be the Messiah. Then he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Like Luke 23, 42. By any measure, this statement is astounding. Jesus' disciples have already fled or lingered, disillusioned at the margins of the crowd.

But here on the cross, a fellow condemned man, living life winning out of him, looks to the sinner cross and sees not just another dying man, but the Messiah himself.

[41 : 55] Somehow he understands that Jesus is not an imposter, that he will still receive the kingdom that belongs to the Messiah. How can this quality of faith exist at such a dark time?

Already the darkness is falling over the land, and yet a dying thief believes. Wow. Wow. Yes, we are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve.

We see that in Luke 23, 41. Does he repent? You know, it doesn't say anything. I mean, it doesn't say what he said there.

Not verbal, but yes, I think he did. His repentance and hope and prophetess plea of mercy.

Remember me. Something happened that day that he said, Lord, remember me.

I think that would have been a repentance. So many ask the question, is that thief saved? But was he really saved?

[43 : 05] Some say that according to Mark 16, Jesus commands baptism. In the longer ending of Mark's gospel, Jesus said, whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

But things don't always follow the prescribed order. At the house of Cornelius, for example, the Holy Spirit falls upon who? Gentiles. Why would they do that?

God doesn't want Gentiles. At least that's what it appears. At this house of Cornelius, Gentiles who believed the words of Peter and saying to them, so Peter baptized them after the Holy Spirit comes upon them.

Did you get that? After the Holy Spirit came upon him. So, the baptism was not what brought that Holy Spirit.

It was their belief of what Peter said. The key here is faith. The thief on the cross believes his prayer to Jesus is bursting with faith. He has more faith that day than any other human deserving this gruesome scene.

[44 : 16] Can you imagine that thief on the cross believing on Jesus Christ? Paul writes, For it is of grace that you've been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves.

It is the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast. You see that in Ephesians 2, 8, and 9.

The thief on the cross gives us an illustration of a saying of faith that is instructing to us as we seek to understand this mystery of our salvation.

Jesus' simple faith. That's all there is to it. This salvation thing. Some people make it very hard, but it's the easiest thing in the world.

Just believe on Jesus Christ. Read the word and believe it. That's it. Faith. How about deathbed conversions?

The example of the thief on the cross is often cited as a precedent for deathbed conversions. And so it is. I mean, he was at his last end, wasn't he? If that wasn't a deathbed conversion, I don't know what it would have been.

[45 : 28] And a lot of people, Baha about deathbed conversions. Oh, come on. That can't be right. You know, this person waited all these years. Now, all of a sudden, he's going to say, Oh, Lord, save me.

And he was a wretch to hold his life. Hmm. But if you believe scripture, and that man confesses his sins, and says, Lord Jesus, I know you, I believe you, come into my heart.

It doesn't matter if it's two minutes before you die. I had the awesome opportunity to save Joyce's dad, who was 93 years old.

Can you imagine? Living 93 years. did not know the message of Jesus Christ. And it just so happens that night, something was said, and he said, what does that mean?

And I had the opportunity. What a blessing. What a blessing. So, maybe the thief had attended one of Jesus' outdoor teachings, and that was some of the faith that he had.

[46 : 51] However, the difference between some sort of faith and saving faith is completely different. I had faith growing up. I knew about God, and I knew about faith, but I didn't have that saving faith, did I?

No. Not until I accepted Jesus Christ into my heart. It's true repentance and the commitment to Christ that repentance implies.

So, you have to do that. You have to come to grips with the fact that you're a sinner. And people don't want to hear that. But once you do, you can say, Lord, I come into your presence.

And he opens his heart and his hands. The criminal acts, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus answered him, I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.

What a promise. Jesus gives that believing thief presence with Christ in paradise. Today, he said, today, means this very day.

[48 : 07] That is, before the present day ends, when we are being crucified, the Greek word shows that today belongs with the phrase with me. Paradise here refers to the dwelling.

And I get confused about paradise. I don't know exactly what paradise is, what is a shoal, where believers go, the soul. The soul we know goes to be with Jesus.

The body goes down. So, I really don't know the paradise that Paul was talking about, the paradise. There's a paradise that's in Revelation. I think it's only mentioned three times in the scriptures. and in Revelation. So, we know that's got to be about the end times and what they will have to see in paradise. But, whatever it is, either way, it's a place of suppressing blessings because of the presence of the resurrected Christ.

This man was going to be with Jesus Christ. exactly when he said, Lord, Jesus, I'm going to come into your heart.

[49 : 14] When that man died, he was going to be with Jesus. Now, we know Jesus didn't go right away. He went into the grave. And it says, it was later on, he said, his spirit was, let the heaven be with the Father.

And I think that was probably because to finish off the punishment because of sin. And he went to be there with the rest. So, today, be with me in paradise.

And I know that this man, whether in the body or apart from the body, I do not know, but God knows, was caught up to be in paradise. He heard expressible things that man is not permitted to tell.

The Apostle Paul, in 1st, 2nd Corinthians, chapter 12. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him, whoever comes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Now, that's in Revelation. So, we know that that's at the end of the times. So, Paul seems to equate that the heaven, third heaven, may be paradise.

[50 : 29] And I really can't answer that. I don't know. There's a lot to be said about paradise. There's so many things out there about paradise. And, I think we could identify paradise with heaven and be pretty safe.

Jesus was promising the believer that the thief will be with Jesus today. So, we know Jesus, where is Jesus today? Seated in God but the heavens.

I believe the Father blessed his son with this strange companion during his last hours. A believer and a very strong believer at that, Jesus had often chafed at the unbelief he saw around him.

His disciples themselves often exhibited little faith. By the way, as you read further in Luke, where were all these apostles?

Where were they at? It seems like John was the only one there at the crucifixion. Were the others clear back here, back behind the trees because they didn't want to be identified with Jesus?

[51 : 42] And, we're going to see that in some of the next things. So, but they weren't there. But, occasionally, Jesus encounters someone with great faith.

A Roman centurion tells him that he doesn't need to physically come to heal his servant. We see that in the Gospels where he came and said, go and heal my son.

He said, Jesus said, I will come with you. And he said, you don't have to come with me. And Jesus just did it right there. All he had to do was speak the word.

Jesus is amazed at the man, I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel. If you ever taught, you know how encouraged it is to have a student, and this is being a school teacher, who grasps what you're trying to communicate.

Even if most students fail to understand it, at least your prized pupil does, and that brings great satisfaction. The centurion is one of those prized pupils. The thief on the cross is another prized pupil.

[52 : 46] Neither is accepted in religion. One a Gentile, the other a criminal. But each has great faith, and each, I am sure, brings joy to Jesus' heart today.

As Stegis dies for our sins, he does not die completely alone. The Father gives him a companion, a believer with mighty faith, a believer or believer who can look past the raw wood and the nails and the blood to the heavenly kingdom of Jesus, one Herod.

He is a believer who wants in. Jesus answered him as life on earth wanes. Yes, you will be with me there today in paradise.

We go together, you and I. What faith, what a promise, what privilege, what glory.

Wow. Now, the topic today was the seven last words of Jesus Christ on the cross. And as you can see, I didn't get but two. And I'm sure somewhere along the line I'll have the opportunity to speak again and I will probably save that for then because the other five sayings are also amazing that Jesus quoted these seven words on the cross before his death.

[54 : 14] These are the things he wanted people to know. So we can have this faith today, the same faith that this man at the cross had.

All we have to do is say, Jesus Christ, I believe. come into my heart. And they all shouted, Amen.

Father, we thank you today, Father, for your word. Father, we thank you for what Jesus said on the cross about forgiveness and the fact that at the moment we come to him, our sins are forgiven.

They're thrown into the deepest sea. And Father, we thank you for this man, this criminal who hung there beside Jesus who for some reason had this knowledge that there was something out there, something that was different.

And he wanted to know what it was. And he found out and he accepted Jesus and said, accept me into your kingdom. And Jesus accepted him.

[55 : 25] So, Father, today we thank you for the amazing forgiveness you give to us and the saving grace that we receive when we accept Jesus into our hearts.

So, we thank you today, we praise you, and we ask all this in our Lord and Savior's name, Jesus the Christ. Amen. Amen.