

WORDS FROM THE CROSS - PART 1

Forgiven!

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Luke 23:34
Subject:	What request Jesus made to His Father as He was hanging on the cross
Complement:	Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.
Exegetical idea:	When Jesus was hanging on the cross, He prayed, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they were doing."
Preaching idea:	Jesus wants to forgive all your sins!
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to accept the forgiveness that Jesus offers them.

About ten days ago, Pastor Dany Hernandez stood at the bedside of a 24 year old young man who was dying. Standing by Pastor Dany's side was this young man's fiancée and also his parents. As you can imagine, it was a very intense and emotional visit. At the end of their time together, Pastor Dany mentioned that, in a couple of days, he would be speaking to a group of about 400 young adults and asked this young man if he would like to share any words with that group. The young man's spoke in a voice that was barely audible, but the message that he shared brought tears to Pastor Dany's eyes. Two days later, Pastor Dany shared those words with the hundreds of young adults gathered for worship at our Deeper service and many lives were forever changed.

You can learn a great deal about people by listening to their last words. I've heard patients in the hospital cursing God until their dying breath. That tells you a great deal about a person's heart. I learned this past week the last words of the great English preacher, John Wesley. He ended his earthly life with these words: "The best of all is, God is with us!"

Yes, you can learn a great deal about people by listening to their last words. Today, I invite you to stand with me in your imagination beside another young man who is dying. This young man is 33 years old. He isn't lying in a hospital bed in Orlando, Florida. This young man

is hanging on a cross outside of Jerusalem. His name is Jesus. I invite you to listen to the words that Jesus speaks from the cross. His voice may also be barely audible at times, but if you listen carefully, your life will be forever changed.

No one Gospel writer records all of the words of Jesus from the cross. Matthew records one saying. Mark records that same saying. Luke records 3 additional sayings of Jesus from the cross and the apostle John records 4 more sayings. Eight sayings in all, though some commentators link two sayings together in order to speak of the seven last words of Jesus from the cross. I'm thankful that the Holy Spirit inspired each of these Gospel writers to record their testimony because we can learn valuable lessons from all of these words of Jesus from the cross! It is my prayer that as we make this journey together, our lives will be forever changed!

It appears that the first words of Jesus from the cross are recorded in the Gospel of Luke. If you read the Gospel record, you'll discover that Jesus has just been through a mockery of a trial. He has been beaten and abused. False witnesses have testified against Him, even though Pilate has declared "I find no basis for a charge against this man." Jesus has been spat upon and flogged, and now, having stumbled up Golgotha's hill, He is being nailed to a cross. As you may know, Dr. Luke was not present at the cross. According to his own testimony, he gathered information from eyewitnesses as the Holy Spirit guided him in the writing of record of the life and teachings of Jesus. We don't know which eyewitness Luke talked to. Was it Mary, the mother of Jesus, or Mary the wife of Clopas, or Mary Magdalene? Or perhaps it was the Roman centurion who would later declare, "Surely this was a righteous man!" We'll have to ask Dr. Luke when we gather together in the kingdom of heaven! But I'm thankful that Dr. Luke records the first words of Jesus from the cross because those words of Jesus have changed my life!

Those words are recorded in Luke 23:34. “Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’”

The first words that Jesus speaks from the cross are a prayer. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Notice the first word in that prayer of Jesus—Father. This is not the first time that Jesus has prayed to His Father. In Luke 10:21, Jesus prayed, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.” Shortly before His arrest, Jesus had prayed, “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.” John 17:1 And in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” Luke 22:42

Jesus had also taught His disciples to pray to “Our Father in heaven.” And now, hanging on the cross, Jesus prays to His Father. But Jesus is not praying for Himself. Jesus is praying for others. Let’s listen again to His words. “Father, forgive them.” Who is Jesus referring to when He prays, “Father, forgive THEM”? Well, let’s look at the context in Luke chapter 23. Roman soldiers have just crucified Jesus, pounded huge metal spikes through his hands and his feet and then suspended him naked between heaven and earth. Luke records that those same soldiers stood at the foot of the cross and mocked Jesus. “If you’re the king of the Jews, save yourself!” Cold, callous words from cold, callous hearts. They also gambled for His clothing, totally unconcerned about His suffering and shame. Perhaps Jesus is referring to those Roman soldiers when He prays, “Father, forgive THEM.” What do you think?

But there are others gathered at the foot of the cross who can hear the words of Jesus. We read in the second part of Luke 23:35, “The rulers even sneered at him. They said, ‘He saved

others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.” These rulers had seen clear evidence that Jesus was no ordinary teacher. They had heard Pilate declare, “I find no basis for a charge against this man” (Luke 23:4). The false witnesses that they had bribed to testify against Jesus couldn’t even agree on their false testimony. And now these rulers are standing at the foot of the cross sneering at Jesus: “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.” Perhaps Jesus is referring to them when He prays, “Father, forgive THEM.” What do you think?

Matthew records in Matthew 27:41-43 that the chief priests and teachers of the law are also gathered at the foot of the cross, along with the elders. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.” But even if Jesus had come down from the cross, they would not have believed in Him. That had seen evidence upon evidence that He was the Christ. The sick had been healed. Demoniacs had been set free. The Gospel had been preached. But the hearts of the chief priests and many of the teachers of the law were hardened against the truth. And now they stand at the foot of the cross, mocking Jesus: “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.” Perhaps Jesus is referring to them when He prays, “Father, forgive THEM.” What do you think?

But there are others listening to the words of Jesus from the cross. Luke records in Luke 23:39, “One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: ‘Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!’” Matthew records, in Matthew 27:44 that both criminals who were crucified on either side of Jesus heaped insults on him. They were being executed for crimes that they had

committed, but Jesus was without fault. Yet still they hurled insults at Jesus! Perhaps Jesus is referring to them when He prays, “Father, forgive THEM.” What do you think?

But there are others passing by the cross. Matthew records that these passers by had something to say. We read in Matthew 27:39, “Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, ‘You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!’” Perhaps Jesus is referring to them when He prays, “Father, forgive THEM.” What do you think?

And then there are those, according to Luke, who stood watching. (Luke 23:35). They said nothing, but just stood there in silence. They could have said something. Many had witnessed the wonderful works of Jesus. Many had listened to His powerful teachings about the kingdom of heaven and had testified that Jesus spoke with authority unlike their teachers of the law. They could have spoken up in defense of Jesus. They could have given their testimony, but they just stood watching, in silence. Perhaps Jesus is referring to them when He prays, “Father, forgive THEM.”

So which of these groups is Jesus referring to when He says, “Father forgive them”? Well, the answer is found in the text! We passed quickly over the verb at the beginning of Luke 23:34. That verb helps us to answer our question. To which of these groups is Jesus referring when He says, “Father, forgive them”? What does it say in your Bible? “Jesus said.” In the Greek text, that verb is in the imperfect tense (iterative imperfect). The imperfect tense implies repetition or continued action. In English, we might say, “Jesus kept on saying, ‘Father, forgive them.’” As Jesus was nailed to the cross by the calloused Roman soldiers, Jesus breathed a prayer to His Father in Heaven: “Father, forgive them.” As He was mocked and scorned by the rulers, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them.” As

criminals crucified on either side of Him heaped insults on Him, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them.” As passers by ridiculed Him, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them.” As He looked down at the people stood silent at the foot of the cross, some of whom may even have experienced blessings from His hand, and yet they stood silent rather than speaking up, when Jesus saw them standing at the foot of the cross in silence, He prayed, “Father, forgive them.”

So who is included in this prayer of Jesus from the cross? The soldiers, the rulers, the chief priests and teachers of the law, the criminals crucified on either side of Jesus, the passers by who mocked Him and those who just stood there, silent—they’re all included in the prayer of Jesus, aren’t they? “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

But you say, “Pastor, they knew what they were doing!” Didn’t they? Did they really believe that Jesus was a criminal, worthy of death? They knew that what they were doing was wrong. It was evil. They knew what they were doing, didn’t they? Or did they really understand the immensity of their guilt? “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Did they comprehend that they were brazenly mocking the One before whom angels bow and cry “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty”? Did they comprehend that they were killing the Author of life? Did they really understand what they were doing? Did they understand any more than our first parents understood the torrent of sadness, sin and death that would be unleashed on the human family?

“Father,” Jesus prays from the cross, “forgive them for they know not what they do.”

“Father, forgive the soldiers, the rulers, the chief priests and teachers of the law, the criminals crucified on either side of Jesus, the passers by who mocked Him and those who just stood there, silent. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

But are they the only ones included in the prayer of Jesus on the cross? “Father, forgive them.” What about us? What about you? What about me? Are we not included in the prayer of Jesus? “Father, forgive them.” Seven hundred years before Jesus hung on that cross, the Holy Spirit inspired the prophet Isaiah to write these words, recorded in Isaiah 53:4-6. “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” The prayer of Jesus from the cross is also for us! “Father, forgive THEM.” We are included in that prayer, aren’t we? Yes! Praise God, we are included in that prayer! Father, forgive them. Father, forgive Derek. Father, forgive Susan. Father, forgive Daniel. Father, forgive Gene. Father, forgive the members of the Forest Lake Church family. We are all included in that prayer of Jesus from the cross! “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!

The prophet Isaiah testified in Isaiah 53:12, “Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” Forgiveness is extended. Forgiveness is provided—for all of us. Will

you choose to accept that forgiveness for your sins? The apostle John who also stood with the mother of Jesus at the foot of the cross and heard that prayer of Jesus, the apostle John testified, as recorded in 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Someone ought to say, “Hallelujah!” Someone ought to say, “Thank you, Jesus!” “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” Jesus prayed for you on the cross. And for you, and for you, and for me. Jesus prayed for us on the cross. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Will you accept that forgiveness? Will you confess your sins to Jesus your Savior today and rejoice that He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.? And He will do more than forgive us. He will do more than purify us. He will save us by His grace to spend an eternity with Him. But that is another topic in our series on Words from the Cross. And I hope that you’ll join us for part 2 in this series.

But today, I pray that this truth will sink deep into your mind and heart. **Jesus wants to forgive all your sins.** Did you hear me? **Jesus wants to forgive all your sins.** He does not want to hold your sins against you. He wants to forgive you and purify you. He wants to make you clean.

Jesus suffered all of the agony of crucifixion, the public humiliation and shame of the cross. He endured the cross, despising the shame, all because of love. And while hanging naked on that cross, bleeding and bruised, He prayed for you and He prayed for me: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. You will bring great joy to the heart of Jesus if you

accept His gracious offer of forgiveness. You will bring joy to the heart of Jesus if you let Him purify you from all unrighteousness. **Jesus wants to forgive all your sins.**

WORDS FROM THE CROSS - PART 2

Paradise Promise

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Luke 23:42-43
Subject:	How Jesus responded to the thief on the cross next to Jesus who said to Him, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom"
Complement:	Jesus promised that thief that day that he would be with Him in paradise
Exegetical idea:	When the thief on a cross next to Jesus asked Jesus to remember him in His kingdom, Jesus promised that thief that he would be with Him in paradise.
Preaching idea:	Jesus wants you to be with Him in paradise.
Purpose	To encourage my hearers to let Jesus save them so they can be with Him in paradise.

I am always amazed when I hear the testimony of a person who has been radically transformed by a life-changing encounter with Jesus! The apostle Paul describes that transformation with these words: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor 5:17).

The apostle Paul knew first-hand what he was talking about. He himself had experienced a radical transformation as a result of his own life-changing encounter with Jesus. In fact, Josh McDowell, in his powerful book about Jesus entitled *More Than A Carpenter*, maintains that the radical transformation of Saul of Tarsus into the apostle Paul is one of the greatest evidences of the truth of the claims of Jesus. Listen to Paul's own testimony before King Agrippa, recorded in Acts 26:9-19: "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them. If you read on in this same chapter, you will hear Paul's remarkable testimony of a life-

changing encounter with Jesus. Saul of Tarsus was so radically transformed by a life-changing encounter with Jesus that he became Paul the apostle. No longer a persecutor, but a preacher! Yes, Paul knew what he was talking about when he testified to the Christians in Corinth, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

Today, in part 2 of our 5-part series on Words from the Cross, we are going to consider the story of another individual who was radically transformed by a life-changing encounter with Jesus. I’m praying that, as we study God’s Word together, someone listening to this message would also have a life-changing encounter with Jesus!

Only Dr. Luke records this second saying of Jesus from the cross, though all four Gospel writers record the setting for these words from the cross. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John testify that two robbers were crucified with Jesus, one on His right and one on His left. Two of the Gospel writers, Matthew and Mark, tell us that both of these robbers heap insults on Jesus! (Matthew 27:44, Mark 15:32). But only Dr. Luke records a life-changing encounter that one of those criminals had with Jesus—an encounter that radically transformed his life!

Let’s pick up the story in Luke 23, beginning with verse 32. “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. Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’” If you were with us for part 1 in this series on Words from the Cross, you’ll remember the important insight that we gained from Luke 23:34. The text literally reads, “Jesus kept on saying...” When the cold, calloused Roman soldiers pounded the huge metal spikes into His hands and feet, Jesus prayed for them, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” When the rulers, chief priest and teachers of the law stood at the foot of the cross and mocked Jesus, Jesus prayed for them:

“Father,forgive them!” When the two thieves, crucified on either side of Jesus heaped insults on Him, Jesus prayed for them: “Father,forgive them.”

We don't know all of the insults that those two thieves heaped on Jesus, but at some point in the events of that day, Luke records that one of the thieves accosted Jesus with these words, recorded in Luke 23:39. “Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” We can't hear the tone of voice that this thief used, but from the context it is clear that this thief is not humble and penitent. He is not saying, “Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” (in a warm and tender tone of voice). Rather, this thief is snarling, “Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” (in a harsh, bitter tone).

How do we know that? Well look at the words that precede his comment, and the words that follow. At the beginning of Luke 23:39, Luke records, “One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him.” And then notice what follows, in Luke 23:40. “But the other criminal rebuked him. Apparently, these two robbers knew each other. Maybe they were partners in crime, or at least they had become acquainted while awaiting execution. “Don't you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence. We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve.” No excuses now. No lies about it being someone else's fault. This one robber is under conviction that he is a sinner and he deserves the penalty that has been passed against him.

But then this penitent thief utters a word of faith. A confession. Notice what he says, recorded at the end of Luke 23:41. “But this man has done nothing wrong.” This penitent thief has been listening and watching for the past several hours. He has noticed the purity of Jesus in the way that Jesus has responded to His violent accusers. And this penitent thief has heard a simple prayer repeated from the lips of Jesus. What was that prayer? “Father, forgive them.”

“Father, forgive them.”

As the penitent thief rebukes his fellow robber, and makes the confession that Jesus has done nothing wrong, where is Jesus? He is right between them. In the middle. The penitent thief has to look right past Jesus to rebuke his fellow robber and to make his confession. Luke doesn't tell us at what point Jesus and that penitent thief made eye contact. That was a life-changing moment for that penitent thief. You see, my friends, when you turn your eyes upon Jesus and look full in His wonderful face, the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

Deep in his heart, this penitent thief begins to pray a prayer. Before we read the words of that prayer, I want you to notice the first three words of Luke 23:42. “Then he, the penitent thief, said...” I was surprised to discover that this verb is also in the imperfect tense. Literally, “the penitent thief kept on saying, ‘Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’” Why did this thief have to repeat himself? Wasn't Jesus listening? Were the shouts of the crowd too loud? What do you think?

I want to suggest to you that this penitent thief prayed silently in his heart before he ever opened his mouth to speak. His silent heart cry to Jesus was, “Jesus, remember me when you come into Your kingdom.” “Jesus, remember me when you come into Your kingdom.” While the penitent thief was praying this prayer, the rulers were still sneering, the chief priests and teachers of the law were still mocking, his own friend was still heaping insults on Jesus. It wasn't easy to publically confess faith in Jesus. But as this penitent thief turns his eyes upon Jesus and looks full in His wonderful face, the things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

And finally, the penitent thief verbalizes his silent heart cry. “Jesus, remember me when

you come into Your kingdom.” He didn’t know much about that kingdom. He didn’t know much about what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus. But this penitent thief cried out in simple faith. And notice the response of Jesus, recorded in Luke 23:43, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” At least, that’s the way that it is translated in my NIV Bible. “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” There have been some lively discussions about these words of Jesus from the cross. Did Jesus really promise the thief that he would be in paradise that day? Today? Or was the paradise promise given that day?

Well, let’s examine these words from the cross more carefully. The first word that Jesus utters is “amen”. My NIV translation translates that word as “I tell you the truth.” The KJV says “Verily.” The NASB says “Truly.” Now Jesus always speaks the truth. He IS the Truth. So why does Jesus use this word AMEN at the beginning of these words from the cross? Jesus is emphasizing the truth of what He is about to say. On occasion, Jesus even says, “Amen, Amen, I say to you!”

So Jesus is emphasizing the truth of what He is about to say. Amen, I say to you, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” Now many of us are familiar with the word “paradise” but it was not a common word in the New Testament. In fact, it is only used two other times besides in this saying of Jesus from the cross. In 2 Corinthians 12:3-4, Paul says, “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 paradise.” Someone, and most scholars believe that Paul is referring to Himself, was caught up in vision into the very presence of God, to paradise.

Now look with me at the third use of this word paradise in the NT, found in Revelation 2:7. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.” The

author of the book of Revelation has more to say about this tree of life which is in the paradise of God in Revelation 22:1-5. “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”

Where is this CITY that John keeps referring to? John gives us the answer in Revelation 21:1-5. “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’” So where is Paradise? Paradise is the place where God dwells, and when God creates a new heaven and a new earth and makes His home with us, Paradise will be right here on the earth made new.

Someone might be thinking, “Well, was the dying thief in Paradise that day? In order to answer that question, we need to look more carefully at the words of Jesus from the cross. In Greek, the words of Jesus are literally translated as follows: “Amen to you I tell today with me

you will be in paradise.” Let me read that again. “Amen to you I tell today with me you will be in paradise.” In the Greek text there is no punctuation. That is supplied by the translators. It simply reads, “Amen to you I tell today with me you will be in paradise.” So is it, “Amen to you I tell, TODAY with me you will be in paradise”? Or is it, “Amen to you I tell today, with me you will be in paradise”? Which one is it?

We don't have to guess. The Word of God gives us the answer in John 20:10-17. John records the meeting of the Risen Christ with Mary Magdalene: “Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, ‘Woman, why are you crying?’ ‘They have taken my Lord away,’ she said, ‘and I don't know where they have put him.’ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ‘Woman, he said, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?’ Thinking he was the gardener, she said, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’ She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means Teacher). Jesus said, ‘Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

What day is this? Sunday. The first day of the week. The day that Jesus was raised from the dead. What day did Jesus die? Friday, the preparation day. And what was Jesus doing between his death on Friday and His resurrection on the first day of the week? He was resting in the tomb. On Sunday, He testified to Mary, “I have not yet returned to the Father.”

If you believe the words of Jesus recorded here by John, and I do, then Jesus could not possibly have been promising the penitent thief on Friday that he would be with Him in paradise

that day? Jesus wasn't even in Paradise that day. He was on the cross, and resting in the tomb. He did not ascend to His Father until after His meeting with Mary Magdalene on Sunday.

So what did Jesus promise to the penitent thief as they were both hanging on crosses on Friday? Simply this: "Amen, to you I tell today, with me you will be in Paradise." Because whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved! Whoever cries out in simple faith to Jesus, like this penitent thief who cried "Lord remember me when you come into Your kingdom," whoever calls upon the name of the Lord, can claim that paradise promise "you will be with Jesus in Paradise!" You will be with Jesus when God makes all things new! You will be with Jesus when there is a new heaven and a new earth. You will be with Jesus when there is no more death. You will be with Jesus when there is no more sorrow. You will be with Jesus when there is no more crying. You will be with Jesus when there is no more pain. For the former things have passed away!

Charlie Weider's father was dying. Not on a cross, but his days were numbered. Charlie was an elder at the Allentown church, and he asked me to visit his father. Charlie told me that his dad would have thrown me out of the house a few months earlier, but now his heart was open. Charlie's father was afraid to die. So I went to the Weider home and Charlie's dad greeted me. I still remember his first words: "I need help!" "What kind of help do you need, Mr. Weider," I asked. "I need help from up there." It was the same heart cry as the dying thief. Lord, will you remember me when you come into Your kingdom. That day, Mr. Weider accepted Jesus as His personal Savior, He claimed the paradise promise. Ten days later he fell asleep in Jesus, but his family told me that those were the most peaceful 10 days of his life. That's what happens when you claim the paradise promise.

Violet Bauman was also dying. But she was not afraid. She had already trusted in Jesus

as her personal Savior. She had already claimed the paradise promise. As I stood by her bedside in the Intensive Care Unit, she whispered to me in tones that were barely audible, “The Lord has me in the palm of His hand and no-one can snatch me out!” Hallelujah! That’s what happens when you claim the paradise promise.

Have you claimed that paradise promise as your own? Have you looked to Jesus in simple faith and asked Him to remember you when He comes into His kingdom? Have you asked Jesus to save you? I invite you, like that dying thief, like Mr. Weider, like Violet Bauman, to turn your eyes upon Jesus today, look full in His wonderful face, and let the things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

WORDS FROM THE CROSS - PART 3

Behold the Son

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	John 19:26-27
Subject:	What Jesus said to his mother when He saw her standing at the foot of the cross
Complement:	Behold, your son!
Exegetical idea:	When Jesus saw His mother standing at the foot of the cross, He said to her, "Behold, your Son!"
Preaching idea:	Stay focused on Jesus!
Purpose	To encourage my hearers to stay focused on Jesus, both in times of joy and in times of sorrow.

The Gospel of John is my favorite book in the whole Bible. I love John's Gospel because John is always talking about Jesus and pointing people to Jesus. There are many sayings of Jesus and sayings about Jesus which are only recorded by John. Today, as we continue our series on Words from the cross, we are going to consider some words that Jesus spoke from the cross which are only recorded in John's Gospel.

This is part 3 of our series on Words from the Cross. I don't know about you, but it's been a life-changing journey for me! The first words from the cross are only recorded by Dr. Luke: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." We learned from our study that Jesus kept on saying those words: "Father, forgive them. Father, forgive them." To the calloused soldiers, to the mocking religious leaders, to the ridiculing crowd, and also to us! Father, forgive them!

The second words of Jesus from the cross are also only recorded by Dr. Luke: "I say to you today, you will be with Me in paradise!" What joy must have come to the heart of Jesus when that penitent thief cried out, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom!" And we decided that Jesus wants each one of us to claim the paradise promise. If you missed

any of the first two messages in this series on Words from the Cross, you can get a copy of the sermon manuscripts at www.powerfulbiblicalpreaching.com.

Today, we are going to consider the third sayings of Jesus from the cross. I refer to these words of Jesus as “sayings” because there are really two parts to these words from the cross. Only the apostle John records these words of Jesus from the cross, which I will suggest later in our study is very significant. These words of Jesus are found in John 19:26-27. “When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, ‘Dear woman, here is your son,’ and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.”

The second half of this third saying from the cross seems very clear: Let’s read the first and last part of John 19:26-27 again, “.....” The disciple whom Jesus loved is a reference to the apostle John, the author of this Gospel record. John clearly understood the request of Jesus. “John, please take care of my mother. Care for her as if she were your own mother.” John understood the request of Jesus. He records in his Gospel record, “From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.”

What a beautiful picture of compassion even in the midst of terrible personal suffering! Jesus has suffered every kind of physical and emotional abuse, but as He sees his weeping mother at the foot of the cross, Jesus longs to care for her. Jesus longs to provide for her, and so Jesus entrusts His mother into the care of His faithful disciple John.

That’s the simple part of these third words of Jesus from the cross. The first part of these words of Jesus from the cross present a greater challenge for us! What did Jesus mean when He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son?” Well, there are two possible explanations here. When Jesus spoke to His mother and said, “Woman, behold your son,” Jesus may have been

directing her attention toward the disciple John who was standing next to her. In other words, “Mother, look at John. He’s your son now.” That’s certainly a possible explanation. As I mentioned earlier, Jesus definitely wanted to care for His mother. John 19:25 tells us that the mother of Jesus was standing at the foot of the cross. Can you imagine the emotional anguish that she was experiencing? This is her son, her only son. That becomes clear in a few moments. She has no other children of her own to care for her, and her husband Joseph is gone. But it’s not the feelings of impending aloneness that weigh heavily upon her. Mary is suffering great turmoil over what is happening to her Son. Jesus has been abused, beaten, flogged, stripped naked, and nailed to a cross. Her son is dying a shameful death, and there is nothing that she can do to rescue Him.

Is it possible that when Jesus says to Mary, “Woman, behold your son!” that he is asking His mother Mary to now relate to John as a son? After all, Jesus follows these words by turning to John and saying, “Behold, your mother.” And John understood the request of Jesus. His own testimony tells us in John 19:27, “From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.” It is certainly a possible explanation of the words of Jesus from the cross, “Woman, behold your son!” that Jesus is telling His mother to view John as her son now, and asking John to view Mary as his mother.

But I want to suggest second explanation for these words of Jesus from the cross. I have no doubt that when Jesus says to John, “Behold, your mother” that Jesus is asking John to care for His mother. That is clear, and the text confirms that John clearly understood the request of Jesus. But when Jesus says to His mother “Woman, behold, your Son!”, I want to suggest a second possible explanation—that Jesus is actually appealing to His mother Mary to stay focused on Him. Yes, Jesus wants to care for His mother physically. That’s why Jesus says to John,

“Behold your mother!” But Jesus also wants to care for His mother spiritually. That’s why He appeals to her to stay focused on Him. “Woman, behold your Son!” Stay focused on Me!

Now let me suggest some evidence to support this second explanation for these words of Jesus from the cross. May I remind you that only the apostle John records this third saying of Jesus from the cross. No mention of this saying is found in the Gospel records of Matthew, or Mark, or Luke. Only John. Only John records the words of Jesus, “Woman, behold your son!” Let me ask you a question. Does that appeal to “behold Jesus” remind you of another time in the life of Jesus? It’s another occasion, also only recorded by the apostle John. When else do we find this appeal to “behold”? That’s right. At the very beginning of the ministry of Jesus, when He came to be baptized by John the Baptist in the river Jordan. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to the river Jordan, what did John the Baptist cry out? John 1:29 , “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” The KJV and the NKJV translate the first word of John the Baptist, “Behold.” Look, behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

That’s the very same word that Jesus uses from the cross at the end of His ministry when He says, “Woman, behold your son!” Is that a coincidence? I don’t think so. The apostle John records both of those sayings, at the beginning and the end of his Gospel record, and I am convinced that both are referring to Jesus! In the third saying of Jesus from the cross, He isn’t saying to His mother, “Woman, behold John, he’s your son now!” Rather, Jesus is saying, “Woman, (which was not an impolite way of referring to his mother, but rather a term of endearment), Woman, behold your Son!” Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Focusing on Jesus is a theme throughout the Gospel of John. Only John records the

words of Jesus, found in John 3:14-16. “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Only John records the words of Jesus found in John 5:39-40. “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”

Only John records the words of Jesus found in John 12:32. “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”

Only John records the words of Jesus found in John 14:6. “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

And only John records this testimony at the end of his Gospel, John 20:30-31. “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

The message of the Gospel of John is clear. It’s all about Jesus! When you are looking for salvation, focus on Jesus. When you read the Scriptures, focus on Jesus. When you are looking for truth, focus on Jesus.

And now, when Jesus is dying on the cross, He turns to His mother and says, “Woman, behold your Son!” Stay focused on Me.

Why was it important for Mary, the mother of Jesus, to stay focused on Jesus during this terrible ordeal of crucifixion? Because it would have been easy for Mary to have given up in despair. It would have been easy for Mary to have abandoned all hope. Mary needed to

remember the message that the angel Gabriel gave to Mary before Jesus was even conceived in her womb. That message is recorded in Luke 1:31-35. “You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.” When Mary asked the angel how this was possible, since she was a virgin, the angel answered, as recorded in Luke 1:35, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”

Mary needed to remember the message that the Lord gave to Joseph in a dream, when he was contemplating setting Mary aside and cancelling the marriage? Those words to Joseph are recorded in Matthew 1:20. “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

Mary needed to remember the words of Simeon at the time of the dedication of Jesus in the Temple. Luke 2:34-35 “Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: ‘This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.’”

But most of all, Mary needed to remember the words of John the Baptist when Jesus came to be baptized in the river Jordan. Mary was not present at the baptism of Jesus but I am absolutely certain that the words of this great prophet concerning Jesus were reported to her. What did John the Baptist declare about Jesus? John 1:29 “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

And now, as Jesus is hanging on the cross, is it possible that He is appealing to His mother to keep her eyes fixed upon her Son, to stay focused on Jesus, especially through this most difficult time. “Woman, behold your Son!”

And that counsel is valuable for each one of us. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Behold the Son! Stay focused on Jesus, especially in the midst of life’s most difficult moments. The author of the book of Hebrews puts it this way in Hebrews 12:2-3, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.” I like the KJV and NKJV translations, which speak of looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith! But notice, this is not a one-time glance, but an ongoing focus. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

My family has been through a challenging time in the past few months. About two months ago, my father had open-heart surgery to replace his aortic valve. That’s a major surgery. The nurse warned me that when I first saw my father in CVICU that I would be shocked. And she was right! He looked like he was hanging on to life by a thin thread. Slowly he regained his strength, moved from ICU to a progressive care unit and was within a day or two of being sent home when his temperature began to spike and he began to shake. We found out later that my father had three bacterial infections and he was battling for his life!

Our whole family has been reminded of a very important truth through this difficult time. Stay focused on Jesus. Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim

in the light of His glory and grace.

My father was anointed two weeks ago. He was also covered in a prayer quilt from our Forest Lake Church prayers and squares quilting ministry. God gave my father and deep peace to face life or death unafraid! Just stay focused on Jesus. I have seen the miracle with my own eyes. And I'm happy to tell you that my father came home this past week, and today my father and my mother joined us for Hope Sabbath School on the Hope Channel!

My friend Les McCoy was a Air Force pilot before becoming a literature evangelist. Les told me that when your flying a plane and your world turns upside down, you have to stay focused. You can't just trust your feelings. You have to trust your instruments or you'll surely crash and burn. And it's the same in life. When your world turns upside down, stay focused on Jesus. Don't just trust your feelings. Your feelings can be all mixed up. Stay focused on Jesus!

I don't know what challenges you are facing in your life today. Perhaps, like Mary, the mother of Jesus, you are going through the most challenging experience of your life. Perhaps you feel like your world has turned upside down. I appeal to you, "Behold the Son!" Stay focused on Jesus. He is your Savior. He will never leave you or forsake you. Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

WORDS FROM THE CROSS - PART 4

Forsaken

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Matthew 27:45-46
Subject:	What Jesus cried out cross the cross after darkness had covered the land for three hours
Complement:	My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Exegetical idea:	After hanging on the cross in darkness for 3 hours, Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
Preaching idea:	God will never leave you or forsake you.
Purpose	To help my hearers understand that God will never leave them or forsake them.

Idrissa felt forsaken. His father had just died and now his mother was being banished from their village. Idrissa lived in the small West African nation of Burkina Faso. It was the tradition of his Muslim village that if a man died, his wives would be banished from the village. Idrissa was only five years old, but when his widowed mother was banished from the village, she was forced to leave her son Idrissa behind. Can you imagine how Idrissa felt? Idrissa felt forsaken.

What would you have done in that situation? For little Idrissa, only one option made sense: he would run away from his village and search for his mother. How old was Idrissa? Only 5 years old. But run away he did, and for the next 2 years he roamed about in a wild, hostile environment searching for his mother. He survived against impossible odds. Finally, after 2 years of searching, Idrissa found the village where his mother was now living. She had come to that village in mourning two years earlier and had become one of the secondary wives of a village elder. Can you imagine Idrissa’s joy as he made his way to that village? He had found his mother! But when he got there, the entrance to the village was blocked by the village elders. Idrissa was told that he was not welcome there. He was not part of their family. And so little

Idrissa, now still only 7 years old, was driven out into the wild again. Once again, he felt forsaken. Totally abandoned.

Have you ever felt forsaken? Totally abandoned? Perhaps you are feeling forsaken today. You may not be wandering in the wild and hostile territories of West Africa, but you may find yourself in a hostile, hurtful environment. And you also feel forsaken. If so, you'll discover today that Jesus understands how you feel. Jesus also felt forsaken.

This is part 4 of our series on Words from the Cross. Today we are going to consider the most heart-wrenching cry of Jesus from the cross. These words of Jesus are recorded by Matthew and Mark. Their accounts are virtually identical. We'll focus our attention today on Matthew's account, recorded in Matthew 27, beginning with verse 45. "From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?'" That is a curious combination of Aramaic and Hebrew which Matthew translates for us: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

I want you to imagine this cry of Jesus this morning. He has been hanging on the cross for the past 6 hours, since 9:00 AM. For the past 3 hours, since 12 noon, Jesus has been enveloped in darkness. Now it is around 3:00 PM—the time of the evening sacrifice. Suddenly, Jesus cries out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

What can we learn from this cry of Jesus from the cross? Matthew and Mark record that Jesus cried out in a **LOUD VOICE**, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" There is intensity in this cry of Jesus. Jesus feels forsaken. Abandoned by God. And that experience is causing tremendous spiritual distress.

But there's something else that I want you to notice. In the midst of that spiritual distress, in the midst of feeling forsaken, Jesus is also confessing his faith in God. Jesus doesn't just cry out in a loud voice, "Why have you forsaken me?" or "God, why have you forsaken me?" What are the words that Jesus cries out in a loud voice from the cross? My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? The cry of Jesus is a confession of faith, a confession of trust. Jesus is crying out to His Father.

His enemies would have heard this cry as a confirmation that Jesus had indeed been abandoned by God. Jesus was indeed an imposter. But actually these words of Jesus from the cross speak more of hope than we might first realize. Did you know that when Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" that he was quoting an ancient prophecy, written 1,000 years earlier? Where are those words from the cross found elsewhere in Scripture? Psalm 22. I am convinced that Psalm 22 provides the key that helps us to truly understand this loud cry of Jesus from the cross. In fact, I am convinced that Jesus would have quoted the entire psalm while hanging there on the cross, if his strength had been sufficient.

Please turn to this ancient Scripture song, found in the book of Psalms. Psalm 22 "....." Do you notice that this psalm begins with a desperate cry of feeling forsaken but it ends with words of praise and hope? It was not by accident that Jesus quoted Psalm 22. It had been prophesied that Messiah would feel forsaken, but it was also prophesied that Messiah would hold on in faith, and confess that His hope was in God.

Now, I have an important question to ask you. Was Jesus really forsaken by God at the cross, or did Jesus just feel forsaken? What do you think? The prophet Isaiah tell us in Isaiah 53:4-6, "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him

stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Jesus our Savior carried the weight of all of our sin on the cross. Have you ever sinned and felt separated from God? Can you imagine how Jesus must have felt when the iniquity of us all was laid upon Him? I’m convinced that’s what killed Jesus. That’s what broke his heart. Not the beatings. Not the dehydration. But the weight of our sins. And under the weight of that sin, Jesus felt forsaken.

But I ask again, Was Jesus really forsaken by God? I looked up that word “forsaken” this week, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. It’s found in 2 Cor 4:9 where the apostle Paul testifies that he was persecuted but not forsaken. This same verb is also found in the book of Hebrews. The author of the book of Hebrews reminds us in Hebrews 13:5 that “God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’”

That’s actually a quotation from the Hebrew Scriptures. Where are those words found? Does anyone know? Deuteronomy 31:6. “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” That promise is repeated in Deuteronomy 31:8. And the psalmist David confesses in Psalm 27:10, “Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me.” Listen to the word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah 49:13-16 “Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; burst into song, O mountains! For the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. But Zion said, ‘The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has

forgotten me.’ Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands...”

I’m thankful for those promises, aren’t you? Some of you have been forsaken by your father and mother. Some of you have been forsaken by your spouse. Some of you have been forsaken by your best earthly friend. But God promises that He will never leave you or forsake you. He will receive you. Aren’t you thankful for those promises today?

Now, I have a question for you. Is God faithful to His promises? He promises that He will never leave us or forsake us. Is He faithful to His promises? If He is faithful, then the Father did not forsake His Son when Jesus was hanging on the cross. Even in His darkest hour, God did not forsake His Son.

But you say, “Jesus felt forsaken! He cried out in a loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” And you’re right about that. Jesus experienced the spiritual distress that the lost will experience when they face the final judgment without a Savior. Jesus tasted that anguish.

This past week, I was reading my favorite book on the Life of Jesus, *The Desire of Ages*, and the author describes this scene on the cross with these words:

Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours He had relied upon the evidence of His Father's acceptance heretofore given Him. He was acquainted with the character of His Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. By faith He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of His Father's favor was withdrawn. By faith, Christ was victor. {DA 756.3}

Yes, Jesus felt forsaken on the cross. The weight of the sins of the world was crushing His heart. But He was not alone. His Father was with Him. And He will also be with us. He will not leave us or forsake us!

Perhaps you're wondering whatever happened to Idrissa. Well, he didn't die out in that wild, hostile environment. He survived lion and snakes. He moved to a small town in the center of the province and lived in the market place. When Idrissa was 9 years old, a U.N. worker came to that market place and noticed this helpful young boy. The U.N. worker was single, but God impressed him to adopt Idrissa as his own son. It was in his new home that Idrissa learned about Jesus. It was there that he learned that even though everyone on earth forsakes you, God will never leave you or forsake you. And that's a lesson that we are need to remember!

Idrissa's story is just one person's experience. But we each have a story, and at some point in our lives, we all come to the place where we know that we are facing more than we can handle. That's when we especially need to remember than even when we feel forsaken, we are not forsaken by God. Even if your mother forsakes you. Even if your father forsakes you. Even if your husband forsakes you. Even if your wife forsakes you. Even if your child forsakes you. No matter who forsakes you, God will never leave you or forsake you. .

There was a time in my life when I felt forsaken by God. For too long, I'd been telling God to get out of my life, to leave me alone. And one Friday night, I felt that God had finally answered by prayer. I felt forsaken. Totally abandoned. And I was desperate. But God had not abandoned me. He is more willing to hear my cry than I am willing to cry out to Him. He will never leave us or forsake us. Oh, we can forsake Him. We can't beat our way past His love and mercy. It is possible to be lost. If we insist that He forsake us, He will honor our demand. But

that is not God's will for any of us. He wants to save us all. And when you feel forsaken, remember that God is faithful to all of His promises. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. God will never leave you or forsake you!

WORDS FROM THE CROSS - PART 5

Finished

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Luke 23:46; John 19:30
Subject:	What Jesus cried out in a loud voice before He committed His Spirit into His Father's hands
Complement:	It is finished!
Exegetical idea:	Before Jesus committed His Spirit into His Father's hands, He cried out in a loud voice, "It is finished!"
Preaching idea:	Jesus fulfilled His mission-to provide salvation for everyone.
Purpose	To encourage my hearers to rejoice that Jesus accomplished His mission and to urge them to accept His salvation personally.

According to Dr. Luke, the last words of Jesus from the cross were these: Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit." Having said this, Dr. Luke tells us in Luke 23:46, Jesus breathed His last. But according to the apostle John, there is one other saying from the cross that Jesus uttered right before these final words. Just one word in Greek. Tetelestai. Three words in most English translations. Those words are recorded in John 19:30. "It is finished!"

This word, tetelestai, was commonly used by the people of Jesus' day. When a servant had completed an assignment that His master had given to him, he would say, "Tetelestai." When a merchant received full payment for a debt that was owed, he would give a receipt saying, "Tetelestai."

What did Jesus mean when He said, "Tetelestai," "It is finished!"? Was He referring to the fact that His life was over? He had been beaten, flogged, nailed to the cross and now He was about to breathe His last breath. Is that what Jesus meant when He said, "It is finished!"?

A clue is found in John 19:28, for the same Greek word, tetelestai, is found there. John 19:28 "Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled,

Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty.’” The KJV translates this verse “that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.”

This word that Jesus spoke from the cross, tetelestai, is referring to the fulfillment of all that was written in the Scriptures concerning Himself. Every prophesy regarding Messiah had been fulfilled. The prophecies in the books of Moses, the prophecies in the prophets, the prophecies in the psalms. All had been fulfilled. Tetelestai. It is finished.

But there is more to the meaning of this word tetelestai that Jesus spoke from the cross. I’m convinced that the primary meaning of this word from the cross is revealed through a careful study of the Gospel of John. Let’s begin our study in John 4. Jesus has been meeting with a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well, just outside of Sychar. He has revealed to this woman not only the secrets of her own life, but He has revealed to her that He is the Messiah! We can pick up the story in John 4:27. “ Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, ‘What do you want?’ or ‘Why are you talking with her?’ Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ‘Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?’ They came out of the town and made their way toward him. Meanwhile his disciples urged him, ‘Rabbi, eat something.’ But he said to them, ‘I have food to eat that you know nothing about.’ Then his disciples said to each other, ‘Could someone have brought him food?’ ‘My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.’” Did you notice that last sentence? ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish **his work.**’

Some time later, Jesus had healed a man by the pool of Bethsaida. When the Jewish leaders criticized Him for healing on the Sabbath, Jesus had this to say, recorded in John 5:36 –“I

have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me.”

At the very end of His earthly ministry, Jesus gave this testimony in prayer to His Father: John 17:4 “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.” How does the KJV translate that verse? “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”

And then, less than 24 hours later, Jesus utters this cry from the cross, recorded in John 19:30 “‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” Now you can clearly answer the question that I asked at the beginning of this message. What was finished? The work that His Father had given Him to do. His mission to provide salvation was accomplished! It is finished! Then He bowed His head and died.

But before He died, Jesus looked down by faith through the corridors of time and He saw all of those who would accept the salvation that had been accomplished. He saw you. He saw me, and Jesus willingly pressed on to the very end that our salvation might be sure. And then, in a shout not of despair, but of triumph, Jesus said, “Tetelestai,” “It is finished!” Mission accomplished!

Can you imagine how much joy comes to the heart of Jesus when individuals receive Him as their personal Savior and accept the gift of salvation that He offers? Scripture tells us that there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. Saul of Tarsus had been an enemy of Jesus Christ. He had persecuted the followers of Christ and when they were put to death he cast his vote against them. But when Saul met the Risen Christ on the road to Damascus, Jesus worked a miracle in Saul’s heart. Saul realized that Jesus was the Messiah, and he received

Jesus as His personal Savior and Lord! Can you imagine how much joy that brought to the heart of Jesus? Mission accomplished!

The apostle Paul gave this testimony, recorded in Acts 20:24 “I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.” Just as Jesus had finished the work of salvation that His Father had given to Him, so the apostle Paul desires to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given to him—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace, the task of telling the world about Jesus and the mission that He accomplished.

Several weeks ago, when we were studying part 2 of this series on Words from the Cross, God worked a miracle in Arnaldo’s heart. Arnaldo was not an enemy of Jesus, like Saul of Tarsus, but Arnaldo realized that it was time to surrender His life wholly to Jesus as His personal Savior and Lord. As Arnaldo was listening to the message about The Paradise Promise, he realized that if Jesus could save a dying thief, then Jesus could save him too. And deep in his heart, Arnaldo wanted to cry out, “Jesus, remember me when you come into Your kingdom!”

At the end of that service, I gave a simple invitation. And I can still remember seeing Arnaldo walking to the front of the church with tears rolling down His cheeks. His wife Laura has been praying for him for many years. Can you imagine the joy that filled her heart when her husband stood up in church and responded to the call of God?

Jesus looked down from heaven and rejoiced. Mission accomplished. Another precious child of God has made a personal confession of his faith in Jesus as His personal Savior and Lord. Hallelujah!

Jesus longs for that story to be repeated over and over again. When He was hanging

there upon the cross, He rejoiced that His mission had been accomplished. He had finished the work that His Father had given Him to do. It is finished! Now He longs for people to respond to His invitation to accept Him as Savior and Lord. That's why He came, to seek and to save the lost!

I'm thankful today that the mission of Jesus was fulfilled for me! Aren't you thankful that the mission of Jesus was accomplished for you! Tetelestai! Mission accomplished!

Some weeks ago, I read an anonymous testimony of a follower of Jesus. That anonymous testimony made such an impact on my life that I wanted to make it my own. I give this confession with joy in my heart that Jesus died to save me, His mission was accomplished and I have accepted Him as my personal Savior and Lord!

Fellowship of the Unashamed

Author unknown, adapted by Derek J. Morris

I am part of the fellowship of the Unashamed.

I have Holy Spirit power.

The dye has been cast.

I have stepped over the line.

The decision has been made.

I am a disciple of His.

I won't look back,

let up,

slow down,

back away,

or be still.

My past has been redeemed,

my present makes sense,

and my future is secure.

I am finished and done with low living,

sight walking,

small planning,
smooth knees,
colorless dreams,
tame visions,
mundane talking,
chintzy giving,
and dwarfed goals!

I no longer need preeminence,
prosperity,
position,
promotions,
plaudits,
or popularity.

I don't have to be right,
first,
tops,
recognized,
praised,
regarded,
or rewarded.

I now live by presence,
lean by faith,
love by patience,
live by prayer,
and labor by power.

My face is set,
my gait is fast,
my goal in heaven,
my road is narrow,
my way is rough,
my companions few,
my Guide reliable,
my mission clear.
I cannot be bought,
compromised,
detoured,
lured away,
turned back,
diluted,
or delayed.

I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice,
hesitate in the presence of adversity,
negotiate at the table of the enemy,
ponder at the pool of popularity,
or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up,
shut up,
let up,
or slow down
until I've preached up,
prayed up,
paid up,
stored up,
and stayed up
for the cause of Christ.

I am a disciple of Jesus.
I must go til He comes,
give as He gave,
preach all I know,
and serve til He stops.

And when He comes to get His own,
He'll have no problems recognizing me--
my allegiance will be clear.

I'm thankful that the mission of Jesus was accomplished. Aren't you? Jesus didn't moan, "I'm finished!" He gave a shout of victory! Tetelestai! It is finished. Mission accomplished!

At the end of my days, I want to confess with the transformed apostle Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." 2 Timothy 4:7

Do you want to be part of the vast multitude that have longed for Christ's return and welcome Him with joy as their Savior and Lord? Is there someone here today who needs to cry out, "Jesus, please save me! I want your mission to be accomplished in my life! Please be my Savior and Lord." I'm going to give a simple invitation right now, as we bow our heads in prayer. With every head bowed and with every eye closed, if you want to cry out today, "Jesus, please save me!" I invite you to raise your hand toward heaven. Praise God. Many hands are raised. Now I want to challenge you to follow up on that decision. Some of you need to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of you have already been baptized, but you need to just publically confess that you have asked Jesus to save you today. I urge you to tell someone—one of the pastors, a family member, a friend. Give testimony of the commitment you have made.

We thank you, our Father in heaven, that every decision made here today was noticed by you, and that there is joy in heaven right now! In Jesus' name, Amen.