

Jesus, Lord of the Cross

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Bible Text: Luke 23:32-49
Preached on: Sunday, March 26, 2023

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Well, we'll continue to journey with Jesus to the cross and the tomb. We come this morning to the cross, and I want you to look at Luke 23. Would you go there, Luke 23. We'll begin in verse 32 and go down through verse 49. We've already seen the unrivaled greatness of Jesus from Luke 8 where he cleansed the woman with the issue of blood. We have looked at the glory of heaven on earth, Jesus' transfiguration in Luke 9, and now we journey on forward to the cross. Let's look at it together, Luke 23, beginning in verse 32.

32 Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him. 33 When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. 34 But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. 35 And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One." 36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" 38 Now there was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." 39 One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" 40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 "And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" 43 And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." 44 It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 because the sun was obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. 46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last. 47 Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent [or righteous]." 48 And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their

breasts. 49 And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee were standing at a distance, seeing these things.

Chronologically leading up to our text, Jesus has already been betrayed by Judas. He's been arrested and falsely accused in the courtyard. Peter has denied the Lord three times. He's mocked. He's beaten. He's blindfolded. He's enduring hideous blasphemy. He's tried before the Jewish Sanhedrin then he's moved on to the Roman governor Pilate. He's tried before Pilate where Pilate declares, "I find no guilt in this man." Pilate sends him on to Herod. Herod looks at him and mocks him and ridicules him, reviles him even further. Then he's sent back to Pilate. Pilate again has Jesus before him and he asserts once again Jesus is innocent but the people demand that he be crucified, and in the Passover custom of releasing a Jew to the Jews on the part of the Roman government, they want to release Jesus and the people said, "No, release Barabbas instead." So Jesus is kept in custody, and Barabbas, the convicted murderer, is released in his place. Then through Pilate's jurisdiction, Jesus is sentenced to execution on a cross. He's led away accompanied by two criminals who will also be executed, and the Bible says following him was a crowd of people and the women.

I've entitled the exposition of our text "Jesus is Lord of the Cross." Jesus is Lord of the cross. Far too often we are prone to fall into gushy human sentimentality when we view Jesus on the cross. If we're not careful, we'll teach or preach the text like, "Don't you feel so sorry for Jesus that you ought to believe in him?" Well, there's certainly human emotion here and powerful sentiments come to our minds, but we must not forget the divine purpose of God in the cross. Actually verse 46 is a centerpiece and a foundation stone to understand. Look at verse 46 again. He's on the cross and the Bible says, "And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, 'Father, Into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Jesus in full charge of his life and his death. "Having said this, He breathed His last." So this verse is the key that unlocks the great foundational truth behind the crucifixion. Matter of fact, if you miss this truth, I think you miss everything. To miss this main truth is not a small mistake, you forfeit everything that really matters because Jesus is always Lord and Jesus is Lord of the cross. You see, the cross did not take his life. The text clearly says he yielded his life back to the Father. Jesus does not become overpowered by the cold power of nature and die. Jesus is not a victim. He's the victor. In his own timing, by his own will, he gives himself not to the power and authority of death, but he gives himself back to the Father. The cross did not kill him in the truest sense. Quite the contrary. He's Lord of the cross.

John, 10:17 and 18 could not be clearer on this. In John 10:17 and 18, the Bible says, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me," not Jews, not Romans, not the centurion, not the cross, "No one has taken it away from Me, I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father." Jamieson0Fasset-Brown in their excellent, brief commentary on the whole Bible, said said this, "It is impossible for language more plainly and emphatically to express the absolute voluntariness of Christ's death." He gave his life.

He says in John 10:17, that first phrase, "for this reason the Father loves Me because I lay down My life and I take it back up again." The point is, "To obey My Father's will and fulfill the office of Messiah. Savior, I am commanded to go to the cross, but My Father loves Me because I joyously desire to obey His command." And that's what's true of a Christian. When you're a Christian, your heart is changed and you begin to desire what God commands, and God loves you for that. It's no longer a an external, "Woe is me," coercion, "I have to do these rules and keep these laws," no, the the new heart change enables you to be like Christ, not perfect yet but have a new heart that delights in the law he commands of us and Jesus perfectly lived out that principle. "The Father commands that I, the one in the office of Messiah Savior, set there by My Father, gladly submit and obey His command."

Well, let's go to the text and let's roll through the first part of it and then come to four glorious truths about the cross itself. In verse 33, the Bible says, "they came to the place called The Skull," or you could say to Skull Hill. Numbers 15 prophesied that there was a particular place outside of the city where the Savior would die. Historians tell us that these convicts were led by a centurion, Roman soldier on horseback. A herald would precede them, and the herald would cry out the sentence that was against them, conferred on them by a Roman court. And you'll be reminded that only the most infamous heinous of criminals were ever crucified. It was such an indignity, such a shameful humiliation, and so tormenting and excruciating that a Roman citizen was not even allowed to be crucified, or we should say, executed by crucifixion. Each criminal was first scourged, and then he was required to carry his own cross, and in addition they would hang a tablet around their neck stating their crime. And Jesus comes to the place called The Skull, kranion, or the English word cranium. It means skull. Some scholars say it looks like a skull. It's a hill and the tombs are hewed out over it, under it, and a couple of those tombs are like eye sockets in a skull.

It was the place of grotesque horror and execution, and the text simply says they crucified him. Typically they nailed nails in the hands and the feet, and there was a a board put on the the vertical post so they could put their feet on that board and find some relief, and after three to four days the victim would die of exhaustion. But what a moment this particular crucifixion is. A place, a moment that divides all of history. For 4,000 years, man had lived under the lash of the law with little to no hope of redemption and then at the sad time, the strong centurion raises his iron hammer and and the hammer comes down on the spike that tore through Jesus' flesh and into the wood and the powerful muted ring of the hammer sounds out the note of redemption that had not been heard for 4,000 years. This Roman soldier could not have possibly known the significance of his actions. He was just following orders. He was executing on this day an innocent man, but God was exonerating a guilty world. With every crash of the hammer, salvation and redemption's note rang out. The note of victory rang out penetrating the depths of earth and into the far reaches of heaven. The Bible says there it was him in verse 33 again, Jesus and the criminals were being led out. This was a mockery of Jesus, sort of a comic display on the part of the the Jews and the Romans to say here's the king and here's his court, these two criminals hanging beside him.

Look at verse 34 now as we continue on, "But Jesus was saying, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves." The Lord of glory is now crucified, hanging between these criminals, and Jesus is hanging there with them and he is in agony like no agony mankind has ever known. His hands and his feet are being pierced and it's likely that's when the phrase came out, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." But more than that is spoken to us here. Here he is the Son of God in full authority telling us, "I will, heavenly Father, that you would forgive them." And this is more than a hopeful request. There's full assurance in this because he held the office of high priests, the one and true only high priest. Jesus' whole life was an expression of love and as his death that love still flows to the full. Jesus prays not for himself. He certainly does not pray for his own forgiveness because he needs none, he's righteous, but even in his agony, he has time to pray for his murderers.

This gives us hope, brothers and sisters. Think about it. He prays while he's being crucified. He prays to his Father. No other can go directly to the Father as he can. He prays for others and prays even for his enemies. That's to remind us there's hope for all. If someone is alive and breathing there's hope. No matter how vile, how criminal, how wicked, how depraved, how ungodly, there's hope in a Savior like that. Praise his name. The best thing you can ever pray for another person is for the forgiveness of their sins and that's what Jesus prayed on the cross for those who are crucifying him.

The Bible says in verse 34 while Jesus is praying, they begin to cast lots, dividing up his garments among themselves. Another application for us here is what a picture this is of the blind depravity of men's hearts. The sinless Son of God is in agony atoning for the sins of the world, he hangs just above these soldiers' heads and they nonchalantly are gambling, vying for his clothes, the last indignity cast upon our Lord as they crucify him naked on the cross.

Verses 35 and 36 now. "And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers," the dignities of Israel, "were sneering at Him, saying, 'He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One.' The soldiers," this is the Romans now, they "also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine." The mockery of the wicked against the truth, against the Son of God who is the truth, is the deepest form of ungodliness. Christ hangs dying, praying in love, and there they stand blaspheming. The Jews, of course, mock his messiahship. They didn't want him to be their Messiah. They didn't want him to be branded or labeled as their promised coming Savior and King. The Romans had no, uh, hope in any Jewish Messiah so they mock his kingship and denied he's any kind of king or any kind of authority.

In verse 36, the Bible text tells us that they, um, give him sour wine. The wine was given to mute the pain. The Bible also tells us that Jesus refused the wine because he would drink the bitter cup of suffering down to the very last dreg. The Roman soldiers here begin to join in with the Jews, "Save Yourself. If You are this King, come down off the cross." But he would not save himself so that he could save others and now he can save others because he would not save himself.

Verse 38, "Now there was also an inscription above Him, 'THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.'" Now Pilate had that placard put over his head. Pilate, the Roman governor, had this placed there to illustrate how absurd this must be to any thoughtful and logical human being that this shameful, humiliated, weak, pathetic, dying spectacle is the king of you Jews. He was mocking Jesus with it and certainly making a jab at the Jewish religious authorities, because the Jews who were under the slavery of Rome at this time were always back and forth with the religious authorities and the the Roman authorities picking at each other, undermining each other. They never got along. It is interesting in having that placard over Jesus' head the Roman government and divine providence proclaims the truth. He is the King. You just don't know it yet.

Look at verse 39. "One of the criminals," now he joins in, "who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, 'Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!'" But once again, a picture of the depravity and hardness of men's hearts. We have to remind ourselves that suffering isn't what saves someone, difficult seasons don't save people, it's the gospel that saves people. This man's about to die, Jesus is right beside him and he can't do anything but hurl abuse at him. Someone said, you see the fire that softens the gold hardens the clay. Some are softened but some are hardened. God is sovereign.

Well, Jesus is Lord of the cross. If you will, for some reason I watched a documentary on cowboys the other day. Not the Dallas Cowboys. And it's amazing how those cowboys know how to lasso those calves and tie up a back leg and the front leg and they completely bring that calf into submission and do whatever they want with it. In effect, our Lord comes to the cross and he goes on the cross and he lassos the cross and he brings the cross to its knees and he brings the cross into full submission to his own purposes.

So four things I want to point out from this cross, as our Lord apprehends and takes captive and brings to submission this execution event to fulfill the plan of him and his Father laid out from the foundation of the world. I. Let's note the cross is the means of the children's salvation. It is the means of the children's salvation. We see this illustrated powerfully, first of all, in the criminal who is saved on this very day. Look, if you will, at verse 40 of our text, "But the other," that's the other criminal on the other side, "answered, and rebuking him," rebuking the first criminal that was rebuking Jesus, "said, 'Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?'" Go on to verse 41, "And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." Verse 42, "And he was saying, 'Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!'" So here we have this convicted criminal becomes something of a gospel preacher. In the fog of mockery, a lightning flash of faith and truth breaks forth. It reminds us, brothers and sisters, God will always have his remnant. God will always have those who trust him. God will always have his church. There will never be a time when there's not a faithful remnant in the earth and that's what this criminal in this dark hour speaks to us about as he becomes a believer in Jesus Christ. We don't see the ordained apostles and disciples, hadn't heard from them in a while, they're not mentioned in the text in this whole event, we've covered. But if the

apostles and the disciples fall back, God will bring forth a repentant murderer to proclaim his name. You listen to me: our God will be praised.

He will be praised and this man gives good evidence of saving faith. He confesses his own guilt. He testifies to the innocence of Jesus. He turns to Christ the Savior to save him and he's concerned about others. He rebukes his fellow criminal and said, "Don't you fear God? Aren't you concerned about what you're doing here?" In verse 43, the Lord responds to this criminal after the criminal said in verse 42, "Remember me when You come to Your kingdom," in verse 43, "And He said to him, 'Truly I say to you,' um, it's not quite kingdom time on earth yet but "today you will be with Me in Paradise." How about that? How about that? "I'm not building an earthly kingdom right yet, that's coming, but I tell you what, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." An amazing thing. This phrase has glorification for its end and this illustrates, again, his priestly office, he forgave this man his sins, and his kingly office. He said, "You're going to My home and be with Me in Paradise."

I don't know where I found this, but Psalm 77:6 has a phrase in it, "remembering his song in the night," and the the the the context, the meaning is in your darkest hours God will give you a song in that night. So here we have our Lord expiring on the cross and here in our Lord's deepest and darkest season we have this tender voice of sweet repentance and faith as a song in the night. Brothers and sisters, listen to me: you may be going through your darkest nights, but you listen to God and you may hear some of the sweetest songs, the most wonderful insights. Some of the most powerful blessings come in the darkest seasons.

This speaks of Jesus' divine authority. He says there, "Truly, I say to you, today you'll be with Me in Paradise." It means Jesus can indeed grant what he promises. No one ever cries to Jesus in vain. No one ever looks to Christ in vain. "Truly, truly," is a phrase Christ often used when he wanted to assure someone that something was absolutely certain. So to this repenting criminal, this murderous thief hanging on the cross beside Jesus, Jesus in effect says, "Your prayer is immediately answered. My mercy is granted to you. I will take you as My own. Your eternal future is secure." I don't know if anybody has ever told you, but salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone and that's what this fellow had. He couldn't come down from the cross, he couldn't illustrate any repentance, he couldn't go through any ordinances or sacraments, or join any churches, or morally clean up anything, but he could look to Christ and he has.

Romans 4:25 reminds us, "He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification." Romans 5:18, "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men," when our first father, Adam, in the garden sinned, we all inherited his sin nature and we've all sinned and in that first Adam, we're all condemned. Look at the last part of 5:18, "even so through one act of righteousness," that's Christ's death here on the cross, "there resulted justification of life to all." And Jesus says to this criminal who cries out to him in tender mercy and begging for a future, Jesus says, "Today," this criminal who deserves nothing says, "Lord, would

You remember me when You come in Your kingdom?" Jesus said, "How about today? How about today you just go with Me to Paradise?" Powerful stuff.

That's the power of the cross. The cross is the means of the children's salvation. Today. The cross was God's judgment seat. Sinners' sins are placed on Jesus and effectively effectually, I should say, atoned for there, and the cross is the throne of grace where this condemned murderer any condemned person can find full and free forgiveness and instantly become a child of the King. Just a few hours later, this thief will die and he'll be with Christ in heaven. We no longer then start weeping for the dead in Christ and they are already rejoicing in heaven. That's a hope, brothers and sisters. That's a glorious hope.

Look, if you will, at verse 44, "now about the sixth hour, it was now about the sixth hour and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour." Jesus was crucified about 9:00 AM and it became dark around noon and stayed dark until 3:00 PM. Literally becoming dark is translated out the sun was obscured. God just put a veil over it. The sun failed, if you will. How did that happen? I have no idea. It's as if nature was in mourning as her Creator and her Lord died. You know, when a king dies, the empire, the empire rather goes into mourning. Here the King of kings is dying. Isn't it interesting that as his at his birth, the night became as day, and now at his death, the day becomes as night.

Why the darkness? Well, I think the reason is because God the Father and God the Son were about the business of divine redemption for their elect children. It was their work and their work alone, so God cast a veil over that event. It was unspeakably holy, and it was unspeakably solemn, and no one could enter in that work but God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Oh, what happened as our Lord hung in agony and the crushing weight of divine retribution falls on him in our place. No wonder the songwriter wrote, "No one knows how dark the night or how deep the waters crossed, ere he found his sheep that was lost." That's what he was doing on his cross. He was finding all those lost sheep and securing them in his blood.

Verse 45, "because the sun was obscured," last part, "and the veil of the temple was torn in two." This speaks of the passing away of the old Jewish religion of law-keeping, of temple ordinances and temple sacrifices and ritual, and a new dispensation of grace has now begun for perfect atonement has now been made, and all of those others pointed to this atonement, this sacrifice, this ordinance. So those are past ordinances are now all obsolete. Literally, the text says it was torn in two or or in the midst. The the veil hung by corners and when it was torn it was split right down the middle so that the middle fell and fell to the side, leaving open a wide gaping space signifying man now can come into the holiness of God through the door of Jesus Christ because Christ went to the cross. The cross is the means of the children's salvation. That's where our sins were atoned for. That's where his blood cleansed us. That's where the payment was made. That's where the guilt was taken. That's where the retribution was received in our place.

Verse 46 again, "And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said," this cross is killing me, I'm dying. No, he did not. No, he did not. "Father, it's time. Into Your hands I commit My spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last." Jesus again is not the subject of the blind

power of nature, but he dies by his own will and in his own timing. It's not a death cry, a struggle that we see here, but a majestic word of divine authority. He yields himself into his Father's protection and care. He was loyal to his Father in all points of his life and at all points in his expiring death. And like his birth, his death is one-of-a-kind. No other, no one else dies like this. No one else could die like this. He came from the Father to earth and now he departs to go back to the Father. He breathed his last and in this cross, in this death he secures the children's salvation.

II. The cross is the means of the children's salvation, but secondly, the cross is the means of Christ building one church out of all peoples. The cross is the way Christ can save into one glorious church. We'll all be together one day, one glorious glorified church in the eternal state. How can God do that? The power of the cross. Look at verse 47. We see this so powerfully in the testimony of not a Jew this time, not a Jew this time, but but a brutish, coarse, Roman soldier turning to Christ. Why? Because Christ is not just the Savior of the Jews. He's the Savior of all people.

Verse 47, "Now when the centurion saw what had happened," you just gotta picture this. This guy could care nothing about Jesus and nothing about the ridiculous Jewish religion. That's his mindset. And now he's beside himself publicly, what's the text say verse 47, "praising God, and saying, 'Certainly this man was innocent,'" or could translate it righteous. So after the cross this centurion, this Gentile, this Roman, makes his first public profession of faith, or makes the first first public profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Again, not a Jew, not a Jewish man, not a Jewish leader, not a Jewish woman, not a Jewish child, one of you, a non-Jew, a Gentile.

That moment of Christ's death was the moment of new life for this soldier. This is what Jesus was referring to in John 10:16 when Jesus said, "I have other sheep. I have other sheep which are not of this fold, not not of the Jewish heritage and I must bring them also and they will hear My voice." On this day, this man heard the wooing voice of God's Spirit and they will become one flock with one shepherd. A couple of hours earlier, the Roman soldier was totally disinterested, gambling at the foot of the cross for Jesus' clothes as he'd done so many other times, dozens, maybe hundreds of times, I don't know. Now he's transformed to a believer in Christ and something of an evangelist.

Now, if you will, look at verse 48, "And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their breasts." The mockery is all over now. The blasphemous, vile, evil rantings and revilings and degradation of Jesus has all silenced now. After watching how he died, their conscience is pricked and they leave Calvary convicted and self-condemned. Certainly even the Pharisees as they watched this, did not sleep much that awful night. Beating their breast. Not not converted necessarily but knowing knowing this was wrong. This is evil. This man was righteous.

There's a real application for us here because in our hearts there's almost always a season of conviction before there's the evangelistic harvest. Probably around a million, 2 million people could have been here at Passover, but very soon Peter's going to preach and the

Spirit is going to fall and some of these very people convicted on this day will believe on Christ and become a part of the first church. And they're people from everywhere. So how is it that the Lord will make one church out of all peoples, tongues and tribes and nations? It's the power of the cross. It's the power of the cross. Anyone, anywhere, at any time, that will look to Jesus, he will save them. It doesn't matter their heritage, their background, their skin color, their ethnicity. It just doesn't matter. The right side of the tracks, the wrong side of the tracks. You look to Christ and because of the cross he is mighty to save.

The cross is the means of the children's salvation. The cross is the means whereby Christ can build one church out of all peoples. And thirdly, the cross is the means of the children's continued forgiveness and service. It's the means of the children's continued forgiveness and service. Look at verse 49, if you will. "And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee were standing at a distance," standing at a distance, "seeing these things." No disciple has been mentioned in our text. In one degree or another, every single follower of Christ had forsaken him at the cross at his hour of deepest need. The Shepherd was smitten and the sheep were scattered.

The women are singled out. You know, Scripture warns about the vulnerability of women to false teachers and false philosophies and false doctrines. Women think through their emotions more than men, that gives them a strength that we don't have, but God gives men a strength that women don't have. But the Bible also shows us there are times when godly women of principle and truth hold to Christ and hold the sound doctrine when others seem to stray away. These women are the last ones seen at the cross and they will be the first ones at the tomb.

Jesus is resurrected from the dead. He tells the disciples to meet him in Galilee, this same bunch, these acquaintances and the women who who are are back from a distance. Peter's already denied him three times in the courtyard while he was on trial. And then Jesus appears in Galilee. What could those guys be thinking? "Is He gonna banish us to hell? Is He gonna condemn us? We failed Him at His most trying and most important and most difficult moment." And Jesus walks up to them and Matthew 28:18 through 20 records. He says, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." You, you failures, you that denied me, you that forsook me when it was most important. You now, "Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Pastor, how can that be? It's the power of the cross. The power of the cross. It's the power of the cross and as Christians we struggle and we strive and we fail and we deny and we love the world too much, and we fall on our faces and say, "How could He use me? How could He use me? How could He forgive me?" I'm gonna tell you how: the power of the cross. He's cleansed you of your sin and your iniquity. He's forgiven you of your sin of your past and sin of your present and these eternal sin of your future. Yes, there's the Christian must repent and return to Christ to restore the fellowship and his empowerment, but he doesn't throw you away. You can come to these huddled little band of fearful disciples and say, "Now you go and change

the world." In effect saying, "Now you know what you can do in your strength. Now go out and do My work in My strength."

You see, listen to me church, you don't just need the gospel to come to the initial moment of salvation, you need the gospel every day, every hour, every minute, every moment. You keep casting your eyes on the expiring Savior and see his bloody hands and his bloody feet and the gaping wound in his side, and see him expiring, taking the weight and the load of our guilt on himself, and you look afresh and say, "O Christ, thank You again for the cross. Thank You again." And we look to the cross again, and we look to the cross again, and we look to the cross again, and we look to the cross again, and then we walk away saying based on him and his goodness and his mercy and his faithfulness for his children, I'm forgiven again, just like these folks were. It's the means of the children's continued forgiveness and service.

Number 4, this is the last one very briefly. It's the means of Christ's glorious eternal prosperity. The cross was the means. The way the Father had ordained that the Son Jesus would have eternal glory and majesty and a prosperous eternity forever and ever and ever. He tells the thief on the cross who believes in him, "Today you're going to be miss with Me in Paradise." Paradise. It speaks of glory. It speaks of a kingdom. He will return to his Father. That's what he's saying. He's saying, "I'm fixing to return to the Father. I'll tell you what, I'll just take you on with Me. You're gonna go early and we're just gonna go into paradise." But like the victorious Roman commanders of old, they always brought the spoils home with them, and he's bringing his spoils home with him. The first little spoil, the first little gem, the first little treasure, the first little trophy of grace was that thief on the cross.

So the cross was the means to his glorious eternal prosperity. Isaiah 53:12 reminds us, "Therefore, I will allot Him," that speaks of Christ, "a portion with the great, And He will divide the spoil with the strong." Why? Why is he able to do, to take the spoils of his work and have them forever in glory? "Because He poured out Himself." Romans 5:12 last half, "He poured Himself out to death and was numbered with the transgressors, yet He Himself bore the sins of many and interceded for transgressors." Revelation 5 we have that glorious scene in heaven where the the John the Revelator writes, "I see this lamb and he's bought with his blood men from every people, tongue, tribe, and nation, and they're His forever. They're His spoils of victory." You know why we Baptists and those who believe the Bible believe in the eternal security of the believer? Because God the Father is not going to allow Jesus to get to heaven without his spoils, without his trophies, without his team, without his family, without his children. He's going to heaven and every single one he atoned for that the Father gave him, he purchased them, he used the cross to do it and they will make it home because our Lord will have a glorious worship, treasured, prosperous, eternal glory, and you are key to that. Not what you do but the fact that he saves you and keeps you is going to get you all the way home. A prosperous and eternal rather glorious future.

Hebrews 2:7 says due to his willingness to humble himself and die, God has crowned him with glory and honor. Philippians 2:9 says due to his willingness to die on the cross, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.

The Bible text shows the cruelty and viciousness and deep suffering of Jesus' death on the cross. Death by hanging on a cross was beyond description. The cross had only known victims. The cross had no challengers. The cross had no rivals. The cross had only known victory and conquest. The cross took full control over its subjects. No one had ever gone to a Roman cross and lived to tell about it. It was the design of Jesus' enemies to use the cruel cross to bring him to an end. To brutalize him. To shame him. To punish him. And to kill him. To be rid of this Jesus once-and-for-all. And to to them the cross was the infallible executioner. It appeared their plan had worked. They got Pilate to condemn him to the cross. He's going to the cross and they knew none had ever been nailed to the cross and survived. Pain was its banner and death was its was its product. Absolutely no one survived the cross, that is, no one except this one. The King immortal. Chosen one. The one blessed of the Father. This one faced the cross, embraced the cross, walked through its threats, took on its torments, and was not conquered by it but did himself conquer. Jesus went to the cross and he brought it to submission. He not only conquered the cross as a foe, but he transformed it to become his friend. It became the means to his end. Its nature is now changed from a curse to a faithful servant. The cross, in a sense, has become now his ministry assistant and ambassador for him. He made it become the indispensable foundation to building his eternal kingdom.

The cross. Jesus embraced the cross. He embraced its shame and its suffering because it served him and his holy Father's divine purposes and ends. Jesus is Lord of the plant kingdom. He's Lord of the animal kingdom. He's Lord of earth. He's Lord of heaven. He's Lord of angels. He's Lord of all spirits and he's Lord of man. He is Lord of lords and he was Lord of the cross. The cross was not an ambulance sent to the scene of an accident but the purpose of God to fulfill their holy ends and Jesus orchestrated it all perfectly. Jesus Lord of the cross.