

(Through the Bible) Mark 15-16

by Chuck Smith

The sermon explores the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, highlighting the themes of silence, sacrifice, and the importance of making a choice about Jesus.

Duration: 1:31:59

Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 14:62, Mark 16:15-16, Mark 16:20, John 3:36, Acts 1:8

Topics: "The Cross", "Redemption"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker encourages the audience to surrender their lives to God and trust Him to bring purpose and wholeness out of their brokenness. The speaker emphasizes that Jesus came to seek and save the lost, offering redemption to all who believe in Him. The sermon also discusses the crucifixion of Jesus, highlighting the significance of the third hour (9 o'clock in the morning) when He was crucified. The speaker explains the practice of prisoners carrying their own crosses and the Roman soldiers accompanying them with a sign stating their charges. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the Great Commission, urging believers to go into the world and preach the gospel to all people, emphasizing the importance of belief and baptism for salvation.

Transcript

Let's turn to Mark's Gospel, chapter 15. Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane in the evening, or late night, and immediately brought before Caiaphas, the high priest, and some of the rulers, where they held an illegal night tribunal. And they tried to develop charges that they could bring against Jesus before the Roman court, because they were determined that Jesus must be put to death.

But they did not have the power of condemning a prisoner to death. That was Rome's power. So, their trial against Jesus was basically a religious trial.

And they had many witnesses that came. None of them could agree together. And finally, the high priest said directly to Jesus, I adjure you by the living God, tell us, are you the Son of God? And Jesus answered in the affirmative and said, henceforth you're not going to see me until you see me in the right hand of power.

And the high priest tore his clothes and he said, what need we of any further witnesses? In other words, we don't need witnesses. This guy's witnessed against himself. What do you think of this? And they all said, it's blasphemy.

What shall we do to him? Let him be put to death. Well, there's no way the Roman court is going to put a man to death for blasphemy against the Jewish religion. So, they had to develop other charges when they brought Jesus before Pilate, because their religious charges would not hold any credence in a Roman court.

So, in the morning, this trial was at night. Now, in the morning, they gathered together the whole council. Verse 1 of chapter 15, and they held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and they bound Jesus and carried him away and delivered him to Pilate.

And Pilate asked him. Now, no doubt the charges that they brought against Jesus were charges of insurrection against Rome, claiming that he was a king. And they did throw in the charge, though it was a false charge, that he said they should not pay taxes to Caesar.

So, basically, the only charges that they could bring against the Roman court against Jesus would be insurrection against Rome. And these would be capital offenses for which he could be put to death. So, Pilate asked him, Are thou the king of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, You said it.

Now, the chief priest accused him of many things, but he did not make any defense for himself. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Don't you answer anything to these charges? Behold, all of these things that they are witnessing against you. But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.

Now, at that feast, that is the Feast of the Passover, it was the custom of the Roman government to honor the feast by turning free a prisoner unto the people, a prisoner of their choice. And so, there was a certain prisoner named Barabbas, which was bound with those who had made insurrection and who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude, crying aloud, began to desire him to do as he was accustomed to do on this particular day of the year, release a prisoner.

But Pilate answered them, saying, Do you want me to release unto you the king of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priest had delivered him for envy. But the chief priest moved the people that they should rather release Barabbas unto them, or that he should rather release Barabbas. And Pilate answered and said unto them again, What will you then that I shall do with him whom you call the king of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him! And Pilate said unto them, Why? What evil has he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him! So Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them and delivered Jesus when he had scourged him to be crucified.

So we find the account of Jesus before Pilate. For many years, there were certain Bible critics that found what they felt to be a discrepancy in the scriptural record because of the reference to Pilate. And within the Roman records that have been discovered up to that point, there was no record of any man named Pilate ever being a governor over Judea.

And so, those Bible critics who are so willing and ready to find some discrepancy in the Bible began to aver with all of their scholastic pomp that the Bible was not a credible record at all because it listed people who never did exist. People whose names were absent from any other record or any other source. And because there was no other source naming Pilate as a Roman governor, then surely the Bible account has to be spurious and you cannot rely or trust in the Bible.

And these men gained great notoriety by their proclamations and the papers were only too happy to publish them and their findings. However, when excavations were being done in Caesarea, they

happened across an interesting stone that had the record of Pilate inscribed upon it, the governor of Judea, and telling a little bit about his office as governor. And so, all of the scholars and all of their discrediting of the Bible was, of course, discredited itself.

And the Bible stood once more as an anvil, as the hammers that were beaten against it were worn out and tossed aside. And now it is thoroughly recognized and there has been much more discoveries by the archaeologists that have proved that Pilate did indeed live and governed over Judea. In fact, we know quite a bit about Pilate's history now.

But it's interesting how that people are so ready to find fault with the Word of God, are so ready to discredit it, and how much publicity they can get on any statement discrediting the Bible. Yet, when they found this stone of Pilate, very little was mentioned about it in the press. You know, the guys just sort of bow their heads and put their tail between their legs and slink away and hope that people will forget their, you know, assertions that Pilate was not a real person.

Jesus is accused of being the king of the Jews. He's more than that. He's the king of glory.

But Jesus did not defend himself. Now, in Isaiah it said, And as the sheep before her shears is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. It is possible that this crowd that had gathered before Pilate had not gathered on the account of Jesus.

It is quite possible that the crowd that had gathered was drawn together by Fonda and Haden in order to have this man Barabbas released. It could be that was the purpose of the crowd being there. Now, we find the charge against Barabbas was insurrection.

That would not be a bad or evil thing as far as the Jew was concerned. In fact, this was a common problem that Rome had with Judea. The many insurrections.

For there were many Zealots who hated that Roman occupation of their land. And they were constantly having uprisings against the Roman occupiers. And there was, of course, this man Barabbas.

It could be that to the people he was a national hero because he dared to stand up against Rome. So that it is quite possible that the crowd that was there was not actually there to witness the trial of Jesus, but were there for the purpose of getting the release of Barabbas to put the pressure on that Barabbas might be released as sort of a popular hero. And that this trial of Jesus was just something that was thrown upon them, but they themselves actually weren't too aware of Jesus or who he was.

That is a possibility. There are many times those who say, well, now look at the fickleness of the crowd. The few days before they were saying, Hosanna, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

And now they're crying crucify him. It could be that you're dealing with two entirely different crowds and not with a fickle condition of the multitude. But those that were there to really see the imposition of death upon Jesus were the priest, the high priest, the scribes.

And that these other people were actually there and have gathered there on this day in order to help facilitate the release of their popular hero Barabbas. So that we so oftentimes hear Barabbas cast in an evil light. How would they choose this man who was a murderer and insurrectionist and all? Well, it's because he was an insurrectionist that they sort of admired him.

And he could have been a real people's hero as far as Rome, insurrection against Rome was concerned. Nonetheless, however it may be, the people chose a lawless man over the law. Over a man who was obedient to the law.

Their choice was a sad choice indeed. And it so often reflects the attitude of people of choosing lawlessness over the law. Pilate asked them a question that is a question that is very relevant to each one of us.

What will you then that I shall do unto him whom you call the king of the Jews? What shall I do with this man? That's something that every one of you have to determine in your own hearts. What are you going to do with Jesus who is called the king of the Jews? You see, you've got to do something with him. He is a radical and as a radical, you cannot be neutral towards him.

You've got to have some kind of an opinion. You've got to do something with him. And you see, you've got to either believe him or not believe him.

You've got to receive him or reject him. Now, not to believe in him is to not believe in him. In other words, you can't be neutral.

You've got to take a stand one way or the other. You either believe or you don't believe. You can't be neutral.

Not to receive him is to reject him. Not to confess him is to deny him. And each of you must determine what you are going to do with this man Jesus who is called the king of the Jews.

For you either confess or deny. You receive or you reject. You believe or you don't believe.

Pilate was the judge. He is asking the people to give him direction for his decision. A very unusual move on the part of Pilate.

On the part of the judge. But yet, in this case, it's a significant move because really it's the people's choice. It's a personal choice.

And each man must make the decision for himself. You can't leave it up to Pilate to make the decision for you. You make the decision for yourself.

And you are responsible then for that decision that you make. In a sense, each of you stand as the judge of Jesus Christ. Was he really the son of God or was he a charlatan and a fake? Did he really die for the sins of the world? Was he really risen from the dead or is it all a farce, a hoax? And each of you must stand as judge of the facts of history to determine whether or not these are accurate or inaccurately reported to you.

So, you must finally decide and determine what you are going to do with this man Jesus, who is called the Christ, the King of the Jews. But the ironic twist of the whole thing, your being the person who must judge for yourself concerning Jesus Christ, the ironic twist is that your decision concerning Him has absolutely nothing to do with His destiny. Though you have to judge, you are not determining His destiny, but in reality, you are determining your destiny.

To believe in Him, to receive Him, to confess Him is to receive eternal life. To not believe in Him is to receive eternal damnation. And thus, you as the judge are determining your own destiny when you make

your determination concerning Jesus Christ.

It's a very heavy thing. I am the judge, but yet it is my fate that is being determined by the judgment that I make. What Jesus is, He is.

You can't change it. What He is, He has always been and will always be. Your decision concerning Him will not affect Him at all, but it will determine where you spend eternity.

Pilate, willing to content the people. This is justice of convenience, which is not true justice. To give in to the will of the people, though you know it is wrong.

To yield to the pressure of the crowd, though you know it is wrong. It's always a hard position to be in. In your heart, you know what is true.

In your heart, you know what is right. In your heart, you know what you ought to do, but there is this pressure against you. The pressure to make the wrong decision, to do the wrong thing.

And how sad it is when a person yields to that pressure, rather than to stand up for that which he knows to be right and true. Pilate, in order to placate the people, freed Barabbas, but delivered Jesus to be crucified. And he scourged Him.

Now, we have it only in one word, scourged Him. Yet, that scourging was one of the cruelest forms of punishment administered by Rome. In fact, it was such a horrible punishment that there was a law that no Roman prisoner, being a Roman citizen, could be scourged without, first of all, having a formal trial.

The purpose of scourging was to discover information. You've heard of the old third degree, which, of course, the Supreme Courts have outlawed now. But you know, where they turn the hot lights on and they don't feed you, and they keep asking you the questions, and they wear you down mentally until finally you're ready to sign your confession and all.

Where they take the pliers and pull out your fingernails, and they pinch your ears, and they slap your face, and all of the old third degree thing to get a person to confess. Well, this was the tenth degree kind of exercise of the Roman government, where they would tie the prisoner over a post so that his back was stretched out and exposed. And then they would use this leather whip with sharpened bits of lead and glass tied in it, and it would literally tear the prisoners back to shreds, as they would lay this lash over their back 39 times.

They always had a scribe standing by who was recording the confessions that the prisoner would cry out. And the idea was as the stripe was laid upon you, you would cry out a crime that you had committed. You confess to some crime.

And that way, they would make the next lash a little easier and a little easier. And it was to help the Roman government solve a lot of the unsolved crimes prior to putting the man to death. It was to clear up the police blotter of a lot of the unsolved crimes in the community.

And it was very effective. It was so painful that there are records of many men who went insane through the beating, and rarely would a man survive it. Usually, he would die from the loss of blood and just the horrible painfulness of this experience.

And many prisoners died during the scourging. Many went insane. As a lamb before her shears is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

As they were scourging him, he had nothing to confess. And of course, the idea was if there was no confession, then he lays the whip on a little harder and a little harder until you're forced to confess your sins, your crimes. Having nothing to confess, Jesus took the full brunt of that scourging.

But it wasn't over. It was just the beginning. The soldiers led him away into the hall called the praetorium.

And there they called together the whole band of soldiers. Now you're going to have some barracks fun. These Roman soldiers are going to take this man who has been condemned to die, the man who made claim to be the king of the Jews.

And they're going to make fun of him and have just a ribald type of a time as they mock and make fun of the prisoner. So they clothed him with purple, the kingly color. And they wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head.

The king of the Jews, his only crown, a crown of thorns. How significant. Where did thorns come from anyhow? Going back to the book of Genesis, when Adam rebelled against God and God began to pronounce the curse upon man and upon woman.

And God said, cursed be the ground, thorns and thistles shall it bring forth. Those thorns were the result of God's curse against sin. Here was Jesus ready to bear the curse of sin.

How appropriate that they should crown him with a crown of thorns. They smote him on the head with a reed, with a club. They just were hitting him on the head.

Now, earlier he had been buffeted in the court of Caiaphas. They put a sack over his head and began to beat him in the face with their fists, palm at him, and then to slap him and say, prophesy, who is it that hit you? Now he is scourged and now he is being hit over the head with a reed. And they spit on him and they bowed their knees in mock worship of him.

You can almost see them. You can almost hear their laughter. They're not to be blamed too much.

Theirs isn't really hatred. Theirs is just a big laugh, a lot of fun. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him and put on his own clothes.

And they led him out to crucify him. Having had their fun, now they get down to business. And they compelled a man whose name was Simon, a Cyrenian who was passing by.

He was coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross. Now, all a Roman soldier had to do is lay his spear on your shoulder, flat side on your shoulder, and tell you what to do. And you had to do it.

If you were walking along the path and you came to a Roman soldier who was carrying his gear down the road, he could lay his spear on your shoulder and say, carry this for me one mile. And the paths were all marked out with milestones by Rome. And you can see these milestones even today.

And legally, you were obligated to carry that load for that soldier one mile. He could force you to do it. That was the law of Rome.

However, the law of Rome would only compel you to do one mile. You could carry it for one mile, then you could dump it and go. But he had the power to compel you to carry it one mile.

Now, that is what Jesus was talking about when he said, if they compel you to go one mile, go two. So they laid the sword on Simon's shoulder, flat side down. And they said, carry this man's cross.

Simon had no doubt come to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover, as the adult male Jews came from all over the world for this particular feast. And he just happened to be there and just happened to be the man that the Roman soldier laid his spear on, so that he was forced to carry the cross of Christ. But there is interesting indication that though it is possible he never knew Jesus up to this point, that Simon actually became converted and became a very important part of the early church.

There's a reference in Acts chapter 13, verse one, to Simeon, who was called the Niger, indicating that he was from Africa, who was among the group of the ordaining elders that sent Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey. Rufus and Alexander being his son's name, there are references in the Bible to Rufus. And it is quite possible that Mark tells us he is the father of Rufus and Alexander in order to identify Simon, who was well known in the early church and became a very vital part of the early church.

There are those bits of evidences, and there are others in the New Testament that indicate that particular possibility. And it is interesting to speculate. And they brought him unto the place Golgotha, which is being interpreted the place of the skull.

Now, it is assumed that it was called the place of the skull today because across from the wall of Jerusalem between the Damascus Gate and Herod's Gate, there is a barren side of a cliff which was created from an ancient stone quarry, where as the result of the stones being quarried from there and landslides and so forth, there is definitely the appearance of a skull as you look at the cliff. And it could be that Golgotha got its name from the appearance of the face of that jagged cliff. It is also possible that it got its name, the place of the skull, from the fact that this was perhaps the place where the Romans crucified most of the prisoners.

And when they were crucified, they were usually left there on the crosses until they died. And sometimes it took as many as six days for a person to die. He would die by exposure, malnutrition, and starvation.

And they leave them hanging until they die. And then they would oftentimes continue to leave them hanging, or they would just cut them down and the dogs and the birds would come and feed on the bodies. And so it could be that there were just a lot of skulls of men who had been crucified at that place around that had been left after the dogs and the birds had done their job on them.

And it is possible that that's where it received the name, the place of the skull. My personal opinion, and it is the first, and as you go over there today, you can surely see that appearance of a skull on the face of the mountain, or on the face of that hillside there. It's the top of Mount Moriah, actually.

And a very definite impression or face of the skull upon it. And I believe that that is the actual site of the crucifixion of Jesus. Now, they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh, but he would not receive it.

There were a certain group, a society of ladies in Jerusalem a society of mercy, who would make up this concoction of wine with myrrh that had the effect of an anesthesia and would stupefy the prisoners so that they would not experience so badly the suffering and the pain of crucifixion. And so they would come out when prisoners were ready to be crucified and they would give them this stupefying drink so that the

person would sort of be out of their head and not experience as badly the terrible pain and suffering of crucifixion. And they offered it to Jesus, but to me it is significant that he refused it in order that he might taste of death for every man and know what it was.

Many of his followers in time to come were to be crucified also for their belief in Jesus Christ. When Peter was condemned to die by crucifixion, Peter requested that he have the privilege of being crucified upside down as he was not worthy to be crucified as his Lord. Jesus, no doubt knowing that many of his followers would be stoned to death, would be crucified, would be beaten to death, would be burned to death, refused that stupefying drink in order that he might know and be able to comfort those who later on would go through the same pain and torture for his sake.

And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments. Now he would have had sandals. He would have had an inner robe.

He would have had the sash that they tied their robe with, his turban. And then that beautiful outer robe that was made by loving hands, a coat that was sewn or an outer robe that was sewn without any seams or woven without any seams. And so they parted his garments.

One fellow took the sandals, another the sash, another the inner robe, another the turban. But they cast lots for his robe for they said, there's no sense of tearing this thing up. It won't do anybody any good.

So they threw dice to see who would get that outer coat. And it was the third hour, that is nine o'clock in the morning, and they crucified him. The day began at six o'clock in the morning.

Ended it, that is six hours the night, the day watch. The night watch began at six in the evening. But the day watch began at six in the morning.

So at nine, the third hour, they crucified him. And the superscription of his accusation. Now, when a prisoner was condemned to death, they made him as the rule carry his own cross to the place of execution.

And they would have four Roman soldiers that would be marching with the prisoner in the middle. And one Roman soldier would go in front with a sign that bore the charges against the prisoner. And they would never walk the shortest route to the place of execution, but would take the longest route through the city, making a lot of clamor and a lot of noise, so that the people would have fear struck in their heart against rebelling against Rome or whatever.

So they would carry, the fellow in front would carry the wood with the accusation written, the reason why the prisoner was being crucified. And so they took Jesus through the streets. And finally, when they came to the place of the cross and nailed him upon the cross and raised it up, they took the charges, the king of the Jews, and they nailed it on his cross, the accusations that were made against him.

And so the superscription of his accusation was written over the king of the Jews. And with him, they crucified two thieves, the one in his right hand and the other on his left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, and he was numbered with the transgressors.

And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads and saying, Oh, thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save yourself and come down from the cross. Jesus one day said to them when they asked for a sign, destroy this temple and I will build it in three days. And they thought that

he was talking about the temple that Herod had begun construction on.

They said, 47 years have we've been building this temple. And you say you're going to rebuild it in three days. But they didn't realize he was talking about the temple of his body.

And they were indeed destroying the temple of his body. But in three days, he was going to raise it up. He was going to rebuild it.

He said, no man takes my life from me. I give my life. I have power to lay down my life.

I have power to take it up again. Wagging their heads, get now the mental picture. And you have to almost have visited the east to get the mental picture and to catch the fervor of these people and their temperaments.

When you see them on the streets, as they are bargaining or dealing with each other, as they are expressing their views, they are very demonstrative people. When you go to the sheep market and watch the haggling for goats and sheep and all, you'll see them yelling at each other. They stomp, they wave their hands, they wag their heads, you know, and they just are very demonstrative that way.

And as you stand there listening to them, you swear that they're going to pull out knives and kill each other. Of course, you can't understand what they're saying as they're yelling at each other and stomping and shaking their heads and everything else. And finally, you'll see them strike their hands.

And it means it's a deal made a bargain. So the guy will take the goat and give the guy the money and walk off with it. And that's just a part of their culture, their temperament, their nature.

And so you can visualize these fellows just full of emotion, shaking their heads as they yell these taunts at Jesus. Likewise, also the chief priest, mocking, said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others, Himself He cannot save. Two statements.

One of them was true. One of them was false. It is true He saved others and they recognized that.

It was an admission that they had to make. People all around them had been saved by Jesus. There were blind people who could see.

There were lame people who were walking. There was Lazarus who was raised from the dead. He saved others.

That they had to admit. They could not deny the evidence. He saved others.

A interesting confession of His enemies. The false statement was Himself He cannot save. That is wrong.

He could have saved Himself. Actually, He could have appealed to Pilate. Pilate was doing his best to free Jesus.

As you get into John's gospel, he points out even more clearly how anxious Pilate was to set Him free. But Jesus was not cooperative with Pilate at all. Jesus wouldn't answer him.

He could have just said the right thing to Pilate and Pilate would have just said, well, you know, you Jews go your way. I think that Jesus probably could have appealed to the crowd. Emotions were high, but He could have just appealed to the crowd and saved Himself.

Or, as He had said to Peter earlier, hey Peter, put away your sword. Don't you realize that at this moment I could call for ten legions of angels to deliver me from their hands? The cup that the Father has given me to drink, shall I not drink it? He could have saved Himself by calling on the angels to come and to deliver Him out of the hands of these wicked men. He could have saved Himself, but He didn't save Himself.

Now, there is a bit of irony here. He saved others. Himself He cannot save.

The whole statement taken as a whole is true as a whole statement, though a part of it is false. As a whole statement, it is true. If He is to save others, He cannot save Himself.

You see, if He saves Himself, then He can't save others. The only way He can save others is by not saving Himself. So, the statement as the whole is true.

He saved others. Himself He cannot save. You can't do both.

You can't save yourself and others. You can only save others. He could only save others by giving Himself as a sacrifice.

They said, Let Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with Him reviled Him. Now, Luke's Gospel tells us that later on, one of them had a change of heart.

And we will get to that when we get to Luke's Gospel. And when the sixth hour was come. Six hours on the cross.

You remember it was three, the third hour when they put Him on the cross. The sixth hour being noon, high noon, was come. There was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, three o'clock in the afternoon.

It became midnight at noon. Darkness over the whole land. There is no particular phenomena that you can blame for the darkness.

It could not have been an eclipse of the sun. For this was Passover. And it was full moon.

And the sun and the moon were opposite of each other during the Passover, during full moon. So it's impossible that it could have been an eclipse. It was as though heaven was veiling itself from this horrible crime that man was committing.

This dark shroud covered the earth from the sixth hour from 12 noon until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon, Jesus cried with a loud voice saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? Which is being interpreted, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Mark gives it, the words of Jesus to us in the language that Jesus spoke them. And very rarely do we have the actual words of Jesus.

We have the translation of the words of Jesus. And usually translation into Greek and then from Greek to English. But here he gives us the actual words in order that we might understand why some of those who were standing by thought that he was crying for Elijah.

Eloi, Eloi. They thought he's crying, Elijah, Elijah. But in reality, he was crying, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? The answer to it is found in Psalm 22, which begins, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from the cry of my roaring? I cry unto thee in the day season, thou

hearest not, or I cry into the daytime, thou hearest not in the night season, and I'm not silent.

But thou art holy, O thou that inhabits the praises of thy people. It was because of the holiness of God that Jesus was forsaken of God. For sin always separates a man from God.

And when the sins of the world were placed upon Jesus, that fellowship that he had experienced, that coexistence, that oneness with the Father was broken. He who had existed with God from the beginning, he who shared the glory of God before the world's ever existed, was forsaken of God when God laid on him the iniquities of us all. He tasted of death for every man, tasted of death for you.

He experienced the consequence of sin, spiritual death, separation from God. And thus the cry, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? He was forsaken of God in order that you would never have to be forsaken of God. God help you that you never echo that prayer of Jesus.

Those who live in sin, those who refuse Jesus as their Savior, experience separation from God, spiritual death. And the Bible says they are dead while they yet live. But it will eventuate in eternal death, the second death, as Jesus said, and I will say to those on my left hand, depart from me ye workers of iniquity.

Depart from me. Separation from God. First Thessalonians 1.9 speaks again of that eternal separation from God.

Some of them that stood by when they heard it said, hey, he's calling for Elijah. And so one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar and put it on a reed to give him to drink. They thought he was getting delirious.

The one did. The other said, hey, let him alone. Let's see whether Elijah will come and take him down.

You know, this might be interesting, exciting. And Jesus cried with a loud voice. And we were told in the other Gospels the cry was, it is finished.

And he gave up the ghost or he dismissed his spirit. As he said, no man takes my life from me. I give my life.

I have the power to lay it down. I have the power to take it up. That is why it is so wrong that the church for so many years tried to blame the Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus.

They're not responsible. We're responsible. Jesus gave his life.

No man take his life from him. He gave his life. He bowed his head and dismissed his spirit.

And the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. At this point, God took the veil of the temple, which some say was 18 inches thick, woven cloth. And God took the thing and just ripped it from the top to the bottom.

What did the veil of the temple represent? The unapproachableness of God by man. Only the high priest dared to go in behind that veil. And he only one day of the year.

God was unapproachable by man, by sinful man. But when the death of Christ was accomplished, God ripped that veil of the temple and was in fact declaring, now we may come boldly unto the throne of grace to receive mercy. Because Jesus has made the way to God for every man.

God is no longer unapproachable. But you and I can come to God today through Jesus Christ. The veil has been rent.

The way has been made. The approach to God is now possible for just the common person like us. Oh, how glorious that we can come into the presence of God through Jesus Christ.

And we don't have to go through a lot of washings and sacrifices, everything else. There has been one sacrifice for all. It's so complete.

It's so full that it satisfies for all of us. And God is now approachable. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life.

No man comes to the Father, but by me. But the glorious thing is we can come to the Father through him. And when the centurion, which was standing by, saw that he had cried out and was able to dismiss his spirit, he said, truly, this man was the son of God.

He saw that he had the power of just saying, okay, that's it. You know, spirit, you can go now. And he marveled that the man had the power to lay his life down.

Now, there were also women who were looking on a far off, perhaps over on the city wall, which is not that far away, maybe 200 feet, among whom was Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, the less and of Joseph and Salome. Now, his mother, Mary, was standing right there near the cross. She was close enough that Jesus could speak to her from the cross, which he did.

John was standing with the mother of Jesus close by the cross. But these other Marys, Mary Magdalene, and she is always identified as that title, Mary Magdalene, a woman from whom Jesus had delivered from seven devils. And Mary, the mother of James, the less, so not James and John, but James, the less and Joseph, probably the wife of Cleophas or Altheus.

And so you have in the disciples, James, the less to his Altheus, the son of Altheus. So this is Mary, the wife of Altheus, the mother of James, the less and Joseph and Salome, who also, when he was in Galilee, these women followed him and they ministered unto him. Now, you probably not thought too much about when Jesus was traveling around the country with his disciples and all, they have to eat.

If they rip their clothes, they've got to be sewn and all. And so there were the group of women who went around and fixed the meals and ministered to those practical aspects of life and took care of those things. And so these are three of the women who were following with the disciples and ministering unto Jesus.

And many other women, which came up with him unto Jerusalem. Now, when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is the day before the Sabbath. You remember it's three o'clock in the afternoon that Jesus dismisses his spirit.

You have now three hours before the Sabbath begins, sundown. So they had to prepare for the Sabbath because you couldn't cook on the Sabbath day. You had to get everything all set.

So everybody is scurrying. Usually the businesses over there closed down Friday afternoon at about one o'clock. And everybody goes home and starts to prepare for the Sabbath day, get all the food cooked and everything all set so that you get all the hot plates plugged in.

So you don't have to plug anything in on the Sabbath and you get the whole thing set. So you don't have to kindle any fires or anything on the Sabbath day. So you have to prepare for the Sabbath.

And so time is running out. They didn't want anybody hanging there on the Sabbath day. So they had to get the whole thing over before sundown.

And so it was evening. It was the afternoon preparing for the Sabbath. Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counselor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came and went in boldly unto Pilate and craved or begged for the body of Jesus.

And Pilate marveled if he were already dead. He couldn't believe that he was dead this quickly. So he called the centurion and he asked him whether Jesus was already dead.

And when he found out that from the centurion that Jesus was dead, he gave the body to Joseph. And he bought fine linen and took him down and wrapped him in the linen and laid him in a sepulcher, which was hewn out of the rock. And he rolled the stone unto the door of the sepulcher.

And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph, those women who were far off, they watched where he was laid. One of the gospel writers tells us that near the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden. And in the garden, there was a tomb that had never been used.

And that it was this tomb where Jesus was laid. They have discovered right near Golgotha. In fact, just over the edge of Golgotha, the remains of an ancient garden.

There are the cisterns there that were used to water the garden. And in this garden, of course, there is a tomb. And it is my feeling, conviction, that this is the actual tomb where Jesus lay for three days and three nights.

It's always a very moving experience to step in that tomb and to look at the slab that is there and to realize that is probably the place where Jesus' body lay for three days and three nights. In front of this tomb, there is a track which they often had in front of the tombs where they would roll these stones along the track and cover the opening into the tomb. There is no stone at this particular tomb, but there is the remains of the track where a stone once rolled.

We are told here that the tomb belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. He was a wealthy man. He begged the body of Jesus.

He wrapped it in this fine linen and laid him in the sepulcher. However, because of the timing, they did not have the opportunity to put the spices and all on the bodies, which they often did. But he was wrapped carefully, and they wrapped bodies in a scientific way, wrapping around and around this shroud around the body.

Now, when the Sabbath day was over, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, so we get these two Marys and Salome, who was, of course, standing afar off watching the crucifixion with them. They brought sweet spices, excuse me, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came into the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.

And they were saying among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher? And when they looked, they saw the stone was rolled away for it was very great. And entering

into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, and he was clothed in a long white garment, and they were frightened. And he said unto them, Don't be frightened.

You seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified, but he's risen. He is not here. Behold, this is the place where they laid him.

But go your way and tell his disciples and Peter that he goes before you into Galilee, and there you shall see him as he said unto you. So here we find that first Easter morning, the women coming to the sepulcher. As we go back to the previous chapter, and they rolled the stone unto the door of the sepulcher, we realize that behind that sepulcher there did lie a dead concept of God.

For Jesus came to reveal the Father unto man. Man had lost sight of God. Man had so many false concepts of God.

Even those who studied the scriptures had developed false concepts of God. And Jesus came to reveal the truth of God to man. No man has seen the Father at any time, but the only begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath demonstrated, declared him, made him known.

To Philip he said, Have I been so long in time with you, Philip? Have you seen me? If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. He came to reveal the Father, and he revealed a God of love, a God of compassion, a God who was sensitive and cared about the needs of man. For you see, Jesus said, If you've seen me, you've seen the Father.

And if you think of Jesus, you see how he went about doing good, how he went about helping those that were oppressed, opening the eyes of the blind, giving strength to those that were lame, giving life to those who were dead. If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. You've seen the desires of God for man.

But man had rejected that concept of God. They rejected that concept of a God of love, and with cruel hatred, they crucified Jesus and placed his body in the sepulcher and rolled the stone over the door of the sepulcher. And behind the stone, that dead concept of God.

Also behind that stone, there lay a dead religion. For Jesus had brought to man a new religion that was different from all other religions. For man's religions all had man reaching out to God.

But Jesus declared that God was actually reaching out to man. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. All of the religions had the specified works whereby man might become worthy of God.

Jesus said the work that God is interested in is that you just believe on him who he has sent. And rather than specifying the works whereby you might be approved of God, he told of the work that God had done for man. And that man's salvation rested not on his works, but upon God's work and man's faith in God's work.

But they rejected that religion. A religion that taught of redemption. Greeks said redemption was impossible.

Once a man went bad, there was no hope of redeeming him. It is interesting that our penal system is beginning to recognize this fact. A tremendous volume, two volumes have been written by psychologists who have been in a study for 15 years on the rehabilitation program of our correctional institutions.

They used to be called penal institutions. Now they're correctional institutions after the sociologists got into the game. And, you know, man's problem is only his environment.

And all you have to do is give him the right environment and he'll do right. And so these two sociologists or psychologists studied for 15 years the case history of over 1,000 inmates back in Illinois and made detailed studies of the whole process of their incarceration and all. And of those over 1,000 men that were studied in this particular study that was made, only one man was rehabilitated through the modern correctional institutions.

Only one man. And when he was released, he was very sick and died shortly afterwards. The only successful case.

This book is shaking up the whole judicial, police, and penal institutions. I mean, it's damning evidence against the philosophies and the concepts. In fact, it almost agrees with the Greek philosophy that redemption is impossible.

Once a man has gone bad, there's no hope. But Jesus said there was hope. He said, I've come to redeem.

I've come to seek and to save that which was lost. And he brought really a hope to man. But they rejected that and they crucified him.

And behind the stone, there was a dead hope of redemption. But they came early the first day of the week. And what did they find? The stone was rolled away.

Why? To let Jesus out? Nope. They didn't have to roll the stone away to let him out. He could have passed right through.

He was in his new body. Later on, he passed right through the walls into the house where they were visiting. So obviously, the stone wasn't rolled away to let him out.

It was rolled away to let them in so they could see what God had done. Interesting to me that as they were on their way, they were worried among themselves as to who would roll away the stone. So typical of worry.

Because in reality, they were worried about something that they never needed to worry about. And so much of your worry is about things you don't need to worry about, because by the time you arrive at that scene, God has already preceded you there and taken care of it. And that's what they discovered.

Who's going to roll away the stone, you know? Worried about how they were going to get the stone away. But by the time they got there, God had preceded them and had already rolled it away. Those stones that you're worried about this week, how are you going to roll them away? Don't worry about them.

God's going to precede you there. And by the time you get there, He's going to have the whole thing all covered. Taken care of.

Worry is needless expenditure of time and energy. Lord surely doesn't want us to worry. So the good news.

So they went out quickly and they fled from the sepulcher. They trembled and were amazed. Neither said they anything to any man for they were afraid.

Now the angel that was there said, go tell the disciples and Peter. Where was Peter the last time we saw him? In the depths of despair because of his failure. The last time Jesus looked at Peter was when the rooster had crowed.

And Peter had fulfilled the prophecy of Jesus and had denied him three times. And when the cock crowed, Jesus looked at Peter and Peter went out and he just wept bitterly. He had so miserably failed.

Jesus said, all of you are going to be offended tonight because of me. Peter said, Lord, if they are all offended, I'll never be offended. Jesus said, oh, Peter, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.

I'll never deny you. Though they kill me, I wouldn't deny you. And the little girl came up and said, aren't you with him? No, I don't know.

I don't know what you're talking about. Surely you're one of them. I've seen you.

No, no, not me. Those that were around began to say, well, you must be. You're a Galilean.

You've got the accent of a Galilean. He began to curse and swear and say, I don't know the man. And the rooster crowed and Jesus looked at Peter.

Failure, failure. I failed you, Lord. I failed you, God.

Oh, Lord, I'm a failure. And he went out and was weeping bitterly. That's the last time we saw him.

Now, as as as the first message of the resurrected Lord, there was a special little addendum. Tell Peter, you know, I'm not through with you, Peter. Sure, you fail.

But, hey, I'm risen, Peter. It's going to be a new game, new life. Go tell the disciples and Peter the Lord's special interest in Peter and following it.

It's interesting. The special way by which Peter was restored by Jesus. Now, when Jesus was risen and it might be noted that there are those certain scholars.

That say that this part of the gospel of Mark should not be in the record from verse nine to the end. That this was added by some other writer later on and was not a part of the original, but was added by someone who was copying the scriptures at a later date. Their authority for this is that this particular portion of Mark's gospel is not found in two of the ancient manuscripts, the Sinaiticus and the Vatican, which are two of the oldest manuscripts that are in existence today.

And because from verse nine to the end of the 16th chapter of Mark are not in these particular in these particular two manuscripts, they are declared to be that's declared to be spurious. The Codex Sinaiticus dates back to about the year 400, and it is one of the oldest manuscripts that we do have full type of manuscripts. Now, there are little codices and all which predate this, but it's one of the oldest full fuller type manuscripts that we have.

It was found on Mount Sinai there in the St. Catherine's Monastery by Tickendorf. And it is true that this is not in that particular manuscript. However, in the vast majority of manuscripts, it does exist manuscripts that admittedly are written later.

However, two church fathers, Irenaeus and Hippolytus, both quote from this particular part of Mark's gospel. The interesting thing is both Irenaeus and Hippolytus lived between the years 200 and 300. So they were quoting from older manuscripts, no doubt than the Sinaiticus, because they died before the Sinaiticus was ever copied or made.

So the strong evidence is that this does belong in the Gospel of Mark, that it was deleted for whatever reason from the Sinaiticus and from those manuscripts, the Vaticanus, that originated in Alexandria, Egypt. But all of the manuscripts that come out of the area of Antioch, the Syriac, the Eastern and all, all have this last portion of the Gospel of Mark. So there are hundreds of manuscripts with the last portion of Gospel of Mark omitted from two, but yet quoted by church fathers who predate the manuscript of the Sinaiticus.

So they've got to be quoting from something that they had as a record prior to the Codex Sinaiticus. So I accept it as genuine. Now, when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

John will give us a more full account of his appearance to Mary. And she went and told them that had been with him as they were mourning and weeping. Now, this is the third day after and they're still mourning and weeping.

I mean, it was a wipe out. You can be sure all of their hopes were pinned in Jesus. They were hoping for the kingdom to be established by him.

And they're devastated that he was crucified. And they're still weeping and mourning three days later. And Mary came and she said, I've seen Jesus.

He was there. He appeared to me in the garden. And they said, I go on hysterical women.

And after that, he appeared in another form under two of them who were walking in the country. In Luke's gospel, he'll tell us more fully about the two men on the road to Emmaus, to whom Jesus appeared and we'll study that in Luke. And they came back and they told it unto the rest of the disciples, but they wouldn't believe them.

Afterward, he appeared unto the eleven as they were sitting at meat. And he read them the riot act for their unbelief. And the hardness of their heart.

Because they did not believe those who had seen him after he was risen. You know, in a sense, it's sort of comfortable that these guys were such skeptics. It's all the more proof of the risen Christ.

Of course, tremendous proof in just their changed lives. Look at them before the resurrection and after the resurrection. And the changed lives testify of the resurrection.

And he said unto them, go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Now the commission is to all the world. Originally, Jesus sent them out to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Now the commission is to the whole world. And he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believeth not shall be damned.

That's what I told you before. You can either believe or not believe. He that believes and is baptized will be saved.

He that believes not will be damned. I mean, the Bible doesn't really mince much words. John, we read.

He that hath the son hath life. He that hath not the son of life shall not see life. But the wrath of God abides on him.

I mean, you're in one of two boats. You either believe or don't. You're either saved or damned.

And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name, they will cast out devils. They will speak with new tongues.

They will take up serpents. And if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them. They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.

Now, these signs are given in context of going into all the world and preaching the gospel to every creature. As they're preaching the gospel to every creature. Yes, they will be speaking in new tongues, new languages.

I think of the tremendous translation work of the Wycliffe Society today. Casting out devils. That's a task that the missionaries find quite common.

It isn't as common here in the United States because of the powerful Christian influence. But you get into some of the foreign lands and demonology becomes a very heavy issue. Taking up serpents.

You remember when they were building a fire on the island after the shipwreck? And a poisonous asp fastened on Paul and the natives said, wow, he must really be a wicked man. Because even though he escaped the judgment of the storm and the shipwreck, yet the gods aren't going to let him live. And they waited for Paul to roll over in convulsions and die.

And after a while, Paul just shook the thing off into the fire. And after a while, when nothing happened to Paul, he didn't go into convulsions and die. They said, he must be a god, you know, and they were ready to worship him as a god.

There are those cults today who foolishly gather rattlesnakes and they get into some kind of a spiritual frenzy, speaking in tongues and all. And then they take the rattlesnakes and they begin to pass them around the circle. Down in the hills of Kentucky, there are quite a few of these snake handlers.

And actually, they're not, they were not all in Kentucky. There were some people over in Long Beach who were involved in this cult. So it's close to home.

Another radical pastor took poison around and had each one of his board members drink the poison to prove their faith, whether or not they had enough faith to serve on the board of the church. Some of the board members did not have enough faith. And the pastor was charged with second degree murder.

When Satan took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple, he said unto him, jump, for it is written he will give his angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways, lest any time you dash your foot against the stone. And Jesus said, it is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. The Lord never intended anybody to deliberately put themselves into jeopardy to prove anything.

He doesn't expect you to go out and take up rattlesnakes to prove that you have faith or to drink poison to prove that you have faith. Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. You are not to do any foolish rash act to make a proof of your faith.

So after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. Henceforth, you will not see the son of man until you see him sitting at the right hand of the throne in glory. And they went forth and preached everywhere.

The Lord working with them, confirming the word with signs following. Now, there is an order in the scripture and the signs are never to be used as gimmicks, as extravaganzas, as a spectacular display to draw attention of people. The signs in the scripture were used to confirm the truth of what they were declaring.

And those today who are going around advertising miracle services, come and see a miracle, come get your healing, and who are going around advertising and are using signs, miracles and wonders as a tool to draw people's attention or to draw the crowd, are not following the scriptural pattern. That was not the purpose. The purpose of the signs and the wonders were to confirm the truth of the message that they were declaring that Jesus was risen from the dead.

The signs followed, not preceded. And anytime you put the signs up front and make the big thing over signs, you are reversing God's order. The big thing was the proclaiming of God's truth.

That was foremost, that was first. The signs only confirmed that what they were proclaiming was indeed true. Next week, we start the Gospel of Luke.

Father, we thank you for the power of Jesus Christ. We thank you, Lord, that through him we have life and that more abundantly. Lord, help us as we go forth this week to share that life in Jesus, that his light might shine forth through us, that those who are in darkness may see the light, might come to the light and be saved.

Thank you, Lord, for your word, a lamp unto our feet, a light unto our path. May we walk in its light. In Jesus' name, amen.

What shall I do with this man, Jesus, who is called the King of the Jews? You've got to determine that yourself. You're the judge, but you're also the plaintiff. You're judging yourself.

If you haven't received him, you have rejected him. If you haven't confessed him, you have denied him. If you don't believe in him, you're lost.

I would encourage you tonight to confess Jesus as your Savior, to believe in him, to submit your life to the King. Bow before his throne. Kiss his scepter.

You'll find that to serve him is to reign in righteousness and in love and peace. Maybe tonight you'd like to make your commitment to Jesus Christ. I would encourage you to go back to the prayer room and there

just get on your knees before the Lord and just ask God, take over your life.

Give him the loose ends, the broken pieces. You'll be amazed how he can put it together and make something worthwhile out of you. For Jesus declared that redemption was possible.

That's why he came to seek and to save those who are lost. God bless you. Fill you with his love, with the power of his spirit, and may you be obedient to his commission as you go into your world and declare his gospel to those around you by your life that you live and by the opportunities he gives for you to speak.

May the Lord make it a very profitable week to you spiritually as you grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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