

The Three Prayers (Part 5)

by Ron Bailey

Jesus' words on the cross reveal his selflessness, his concern for others, and his trust in God's plan, ultimately leading to his surrender and his triumph over sin and death.

Duration: 58:24

Scripture: Psalm 22:16-21, Mark 15:27-28, John 17:6-26

Topics: "Prayer Example"

Description

In this sermon, the focus is on Jesus' words and actions during his crucifixion. The speaker highlights how Jesus' attention was on others, even in his own suffering. Jesus asks God to forgive those who crucified him, showing his selflessness and love. He also promises one of the thieves being crucified with him that they will be together in paradise. The speaker emphasizes that Jesus' testimony is unique and powerful, as seen in his surrender to God and his prayer for forgiveness.

Transcript

John's Gospel, chapter 19. And I want to talk about the cross, and what happened on the cross. And I need to give you a little bit of a framework, a little timeline, so that you can see how things fit together.

So we're in John chapter 19, and are we from verse 25? This will give us a sufficient section to start with. Verse 25, Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleopatra, Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son.

Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother. And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home. After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, says, I thirst.

And there was set a vessel full of vinegar. And they filled the sponge with vinegar and put it upon his hip and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished.

And he bowed his head and handed over his spirit. That's what it says. It's really quite remarkable in all four records of the events on the cross that none of them say that Jesus died.

They all say something like this. Here in John, he handed over his spirit. I think it's in Matthew and Mark, he dismissed his spirit.

In Luke, he breathed out his spirit. It's all part of something that Jesus has said back in John chapter 9. When he had talked about being the good shepherd who would lay down his life for the flock. And then he said this.

He said, No man takes my life from me. I have received authority to lay it down and to take it up again. This is the commandment that my Father has given me.

You have this amazing outworking of something here. That although the Lord had given himself into the hands of men, and apparently it was their will that was being worked out in the events that followed. In fact, he was always in control of his own spirit.

No man could take his life from him. And you've got this testimony four times. Well, I think in Luke actually it says he dismissed his spirit.

It's such an amazing statement. When he had done what he needed to do, when there was no more need for him to remain alive in pain upon the cross, he dismissed his spirit. He breathed it out.

Or as it says here in John, he handed it over. It is exactly the same word that's used when it talks of Judas handing over Jesus to the soldiers. Jesus handed over his spirit to the Father.

No one took his life from him. So you can see the pattern of something there. Let me take you to Mark's Gospel.

And we'll pick up this little timeline here now. If we go to Mark chapter 15. I've missed out the trials.

You can read that yourself and put it together yourself. This is verse 25. And it was the third hour and they crucified him.

Usually when you get reference made to hours like this in the Bible, third hour or sixth hour or ninth hour, there's a very easy way of working out exactly what it means. All you need to do is imagine a clock and think of what's on the opposite side of the clock. In other words, when it says it's the third hour, it means an hour time, it's nine o'clock.

When it says it's the sixth hour, it means an hour time, it's twelve o'clock. When it says it's the ninth hour, it means an hour time, it's three o'clock. All you need is a clock and you can just kind of imagine what it means.

Let's say they started their day at six o'clock in the morning. So, let me just kind of explain here then. So it says here in verse 25, it was the third hour, that's to say nine o'clock in the morning, and they crucified him.

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

And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself and come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests, mocking, said among themselves, with the scribes he saved others, himself he cannot save. 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. And when the sixth hour was come, that's midday, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani, which is being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? And some of them that stood by when they heard it said, Behold he calls for Elijah.

And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar and put it on a reed and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice and dismissed his spirit. And the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom.

That's linking again with what Dion was saying this morning. So if you have followed the timeline of this, apparently it was nine o'clock in the morning that the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. And the Bible is very, very restrained in what it says about him.

It doesn't go into gory details of what the pain was and what the ultimate cause of death would have been. It just simply says he was crucified. There's one of those remarkable little personal testimonies of the Lord Jesus that shines through here.

You needn't turn to it, it's just Isaiah chapter 50. You know, I've said a couple of times that there's a verse in the Scripture that says the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Now just listen to this little testimony coming out in a prophet.

I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off their hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting. That's not Isaiah's testimony.

That's the testimony of Jesus. The testimony of Jesus, the spirit of prophecy, is coming through in what this man is saying. But the reason that the Bible doesn't go into great detail about the physical consequences of crucifixion is because that's not the focus.

Yes, crucifixion was a cruel means of execution. Public humiliation. The Romans really only executed non-persons.

Romans could not be executed. Only thieves and people who were literally non-persons. If you didn't count, you were of no significance, then they executed you by crucifixion.

So you have the one who made the world who was actually executed as a non-person. But here in Moscow it tells us that in the first three hours from nine o'clock till twelve o'clock there was obviously a lot of activity. It's almost, if you've ever read or thought about scenes of public execution, even in this country, up until only a couple of hundred years ago, they were like a holiday.

There were people who just went along to see people dying. You can see all the bustle and the busyness. You can see people laughing and joking.

You can hear these trumps that go up to the cross. If you're the Christ, the Son of God, bring yourself down on the cross. He saved others, he can't save himself.

You can just hear all this dialogue going backwards and forwards of the crowd around the cross. And in the first three hours, Jesus has nothing at all to say about himself. It's almost as though he's hardly thinking about himself.

He's very aware of the people who are around him. And you have what some people have called the first three words of the cross. And the first one is, Father, forgive them.

They know not what they do. Listen to it carefully. Father.

We're back to that word again. We saw it in John chapter 17. Father.

We saw it in Gethsemane, in Mark. Abba. Father.

And here he is now on the cross and his first prayer, Father, forgive them. They know not what they do. Then you have this event with, to begin with, as we read here in Mark's Gospel, both of the thieves, each on either side, reviled him.

They both taunted him and said these, the same things that the crowd was saying. But then there's something that happens with one of them, I think it's Luke's Gospel, but it's recorded, you can look it up for yourself. And he obviously has a change of mind and it is a fascinating little cameo of something that happens.

I'll just sketch it out for you and you can follow it up yourself. Way back in kind of Reformation times there were some people who said we shouldn't get too theological. We should only need the theology of the penitent thief on the cross, they said.

Which was their way of saying you didn't have any and we don't need any. So I'm just going to tell you a little bit about the theology of the thief on the cross. Just very, very briefly.

You know this story, don't you? They had both been railing on him as the old English word says, both taunting him, accusing him. And then one of them says this to the other thief, he says Do you not fear God? He's the first point in the thief's theology. He begins to take God into consideration.

He's lived his life recklessly. Later on he'll say something that makes it quite clear that they deserve to die that particular death for what they've done. But at some point in this man's experience he begins to think about God.

It says in the Bible, and the Bible reserves the word fool for people like this, it says the fool has said in his heart there's no God. In other words, people who lead God out of the equation, the Bible calls them fools. It says we should never call people fools.

But there's a story in which Jesus told of a farmer. A good farmer, successful farmer. He'd had good harvests and he was trying to decide what he would do.

And he decided that what he would do is he'd pull down his barns and he'd build bigger ones and he'd store much goods up for many years. And he'd say to his soul, So take your ease, eat, drink and be merry. You have much goods up, saved up for many years.

And God said to him, fool. Why? Because it left God out of the equation. If this isn't a kind of criticism of capitalism and its different ways of investing your profit back into a business.

The whole point is he left God out of the equation. He's got his whole life mapped out. The only thing he's missed out is God.

People who miss God out, people who say in their hearts or think in their hearts, there's no God, the Bible uses the word fool for them. Well, I don't know what kind of fool the penitent thief would be, but at this point he ceases to be a fool. Because he says, Do you not fear God? And then he says to the other thief, Seeing that we are in the same condemnation and we indeed justly.

There's a lot of theology in that. That's the man saying, this situation that we are in, we deserve it. There's crime and punishment.

There's cause and effect. What's happened here is a right consequence of what we've done. He's acknowledging his sin.

He's acknowledging the rightness of the punishment that he's suffering. Then he says to the other man, and he says, I'll go through it again, he says, Dost not thou fear God? Seeing that we are in the same condemnation and we indeed justly. And then according to Jesus he says, But this man hath done nothing amiss.

It is another one of these remarkable things in the Scriptures, how many people said that in different ways of Jesus. We can find no fault in him. It says part.

The line on the cross says, He's done nothing amiss. If you look at the Gospel writers, you can almost see their character coming out in the way that they express this. Peter, you know, who's behind Mark's Gospel really, Peter's a man of action, always doing things, always on the move.

Peter in his letters speaks of Jesus and he says, Who did no sin. Then you've got someone like Paul later on. And Paul speaks of Jesus on one occasion we've quoted the verse often.

And Paul says, Who knew no sin. Paul was a man of the mind in many ways. He was a man of the heart too.

And some people would say that John possibly was the one who knew him best, who got closest, who leaned his head on his chest. And John simply says in his letter, In him is no sin. It is the universal testimony of the entire human race, to speak honestly, that in him there is no sin.

He is unique. We are suffering justly, but he has done nothing in this. And then he addresses the Lord, and this is wisdom.

And he says, Lord. He acknowledges his Lord. In the one word he surrenders to him.

In the one word he turns away from all he's done, all his rebellion, and says yes to God. Remember me when you come into your kingdom. There's a fair bit of theology in that.

You can work it through. Maybe you need to take some of those steps. But that was the second thing that Jesus did.

That was his second word. His second word was, This day I say to you, you will be with me in paradise. So his first word is, Father forgive them.

They don't know what they do. His second word is, This day you'll be with me in paradise. His third word, we've already read it here.

It was this little exchange between himself and John and Mary. Where Mary, his mother, is watching him, and he commends her into the care of John. And he says to John, I put her into your hands.

You take care of her. So in all these events, can you see how the whole focus of his attention is other people? Father forgive them. They don't know what they do.

This day you'll be with me in paradise. This mother who was bereft of her beloved son, he makes provision for her. John, he reminds, he's all the time thinking of other people.

Not a thought for himself. In the first three hours, in the increasing heat of the sun as it comes up to midday, as the discomfort increases, his only thought is of these people who are around him. And then at midday, something extraordinary happens.

At the brightest time of the day, it becomes dark. The Bible says in one version, the sun was darkened. This isn't an eclipse.

It couldn't be an eclipse because these events link in, they synchronize with the Jewish Feast of Passover. And Passover is a lunar feast. It's linked in with the stages of the moon.

And the Passover is linked in with a full moon and you can't have an eclipse of the sun and a full moon. Okay? Any scientists here? Well, I promise you, you can look it through. It was not an eclipse.

It's almost as though at this point of time, God brings down the curtain so that no one will see now what happens. And for three hours, three solid hours, there is darkness and silence. Can you imagine this? All this busy, bustling crowd enjoying the holiday atmosphere and the public execution.

All the banter going backwards and forwards. All this thing listening and joking and making a day of it out in the country watching someone die. And it goes dark.

The birds stop singing. And the animals become quiet. And no one knows what happened.

And it's absolutely pitch black. What's happening in this blackness? There are things happening in this blackness that are beyond human comprehension. They're beyond anything that we could even begin to explain.

In this blackness, Jesus is becoming the sin bearer. He is taking into his own body the sins of the world. He is, according to Paul's language, becoming sin.

He who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. Using our language of last night, this is his baptism. This is his total immersion into all the human race and become.

And the three silent hours when there are no witnesses. He is utterly and absolutely alone in the darkness. He's lifted up between heaven and earth.

Rejected by the one and forsaken by the other. Absolutely alone bearing the sins of the world. There's a verse in Isaiah where it says all we like sheep have gone astray.

We've turned everyone to his own way. And then it says, and the Lord has gathered together unto him the sins of us all. That's what was happening in those three hours when he became our representative, our substitute.

As you come to the end of those hours, you hear this word here in verse 34 that you've got. At the ninth hour, I think it's Luke's Gospel that says about the ninth hour. Just at this end of this particular period of three hours of darkness.

At the end of the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice saying Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthaneh which is being interpreted my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Let me move on a little bit and then I'll come back to this. The next thing that happens, the Scriptures put it in different ways. Some of the Gospels says he cried with a loud voice.

John tells us what he cried with a loud voice. What he cried was, It is finished, this triumphant cry that comes from the last moments of darkness on the cross. And then, I think it's Luke's Gospel, you can check the effect yourself.

You've got the very last word from the cross where it says, he bowed his head and he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. I don't know if you've noticed anything. At the beginning on the cross he says, Father, forgive them.

They know not what they do. At the end of the period of the cross he says, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. There's a point upon the cross where he can't call him Father and he says, My God.

My God. One of the reasons I took you into John chapter 17 is I wanted to show you the relationship between the Father and the Son. I wanted to show you its intimacy, the preciousness of it.

I wanted to show you how Father and Son delighted in each other's company. How they're delighted to be together from an eternity past to an eternity way, way, way in the future. That was always the way.

Do you remember at Lazarus' tomb, Father, I thank you that you hear me, that you always hear me. That this constant, throughout John's Gospel, this constant testimony of his consciousness, of his perfect fellowship with his Father. And this lovely little word that comes out in Mark's account of Gethsemane, Abba, Father.

But here at this point, not Father, not Abba, my God. At this point in time, He is paying the price for our sin, our separation. He has stepped into our shoes, into our humanness, and His Father has forsaken Him.

Let me turn you back. I said I wanted to show you the prayer. The third prayer of the Lord Jesus in this hour wasn't heard by anyone during the period of darkness, but it was heard by someone a thousand years before.

Psalms 22. This is another one of those amazing passages of Scripture which, um, in which you will see the testimony of Jesus as the Spirit of Prophecy. If you look at the top of it, if your Bible says this, it probably calls it a Psalm of David.

And I have no doubt that David wrote it down. But if you look at something like this, verse 16, The dogs have compassed me, the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me, they pierced my hands and my feet. And you know the story of David, you'll know that that's not David's testimony.

That's the testimony of Jesus. It's the Spirit of Prophecy. It's broken through into this experience that David has had that his heart is open to God.

And the other little part that goes on in verse 18, They part my garments among them, they cast lots upon my vesture. That's not David's testimony. That's the testimony of Jesus.

It's the Spirit of Prophecy. It's breaking through. Some people, I think I've said this before, some people say that Jesus was quoting Psalm 22.

I don't think He was. I think David is quoting Jesus. In His Spirit, David has heard something.

He's heard something that's timeless. Although there was a point in time on the cross in a place that this took place, coming back to my interpretation of the verse that dies on this morning, it was through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot unto God and it was an eternal moment. It's almost as though it's not frozen because that would mean there was no life in it.

But it's a moment that is caught in time. It's the reason that you can say to people now, look to Jesus. You can say to them now, look, He's bearing your sin.

He is the sin bearer. Now He is. It's because this moment is captured and it's alive forever.

And David hears it. And you've got this psalm here. There are some people who think maybe Jesus said this whole psalm on the cross.

In fact, one of the possible ways of translating the very last verse of Psalm 22, my authorised version says, He has done it. One way of translating it would be to say, It is finished. So it begins with, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And it ends with, It is finished.

This is our third prayer. Let's look at it. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? I do wish we had the time to go through this almost, not just verse by verse, but word by word.

Why? My God, my God, why hast thou? Everyone else has forsaken Him. His friends, the disciples, everyone else. But thou, why hast thou forsaken me? This word forsaken, when Jesus uses it in the New Testament.

We've got kind of the Greek words that the Holy Spirit gave to the translators, people like Mark and John and the others. He prayed part of it in Aramaic, as we know. Of course, the whole book is God's book anyway.

Some people, I won't overlook in case you're one of these people, some people who have Bibles that have the words of Jesus in red, or special Bibles. I've got a special Bible that's got the words of the Holy Spirit in black. I think I prefer mine, actually.

Actually, I'm slightly colour-blind, so I don't see the red very clearly. But this is it, this word forsaken. There's a word forsaken which means forsaken.

And then there's a word of intensifying it, which means absolutely forsaken, absolutely abandoned. Why have you absolutely abandoned me? That thing we sang almost just before I stood up to speak. The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose, he will not, he will not, desert to his foes.

That soul that all hell should endeavour to shake, he'll never, no, never, no, never forsake. It's quoting from the book of Hebrews. And there's a strange thing that happens with the Greek language.

If you put two negatives together in the English language, they cancel one another out. If you put two negatives together in the Greek language, they intensify each other. And in the little verse in Hebrews when it says, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, there are five negatives.

And it's been captured in that hymn, I will never, no, never, no, never forsake. It's a wonderful hymn, that wonderful last line to it. But here, this sense of having been forsaken, the old theologians used to call this the cry of dereliction.

It was in a derelict house, absolutely abandoned, gone, just memories left. The sound of children vanished, the gardens overgrown. It's an amazing picture.

He's abandoned. Why? This is the greatest focus of what he's come to do. Why at this moment is he abandoned of his Father? Why at this moment is his unique relationship lost? It goes on, Why art thou so far from helping me and from the woods of my roaring? Oh my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not, and in the night seasons, and I'm not silent.

And here in verse three is part of the answer to the question. The question is, why hast thou forsaken me? Here's part of the answer. Thou art for me.

When Jesus became the sin bearer, when He was baptized into what we have become, when He became sin for us, He who knew no sin, it was not possible for His Father to continue with Him in the relationship with His Father. He still acknowledges Him as God. He won't fight Him.

He'll still submit to His will. But that intimacy, that always being in the bosom of the Father as it's described in John's Gospel, it's gone. It's lost.

Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in Thee. They trusted in Thou that's delivered them.

They cried unto Thee and were delivered. They trusted in Thee and were not confounded. But I am a worm and no man.

What an amazing statement that is. You know, don't you, that when God created the human race, He created it in this way. He said, let us make man in our image and in our likeness.

And the first man was in the image and likeness of God. But he sinned and the image was defaced. And the spoiled image has been passed on to all the generations.

So that although we are to still respect one another because in one measure we are still in the image of God, in another we've lost the image. We are a hideous caricature. We are defaced.

It's the work of a cosmic vandal who has tried to erase from the creation anything which reminds men and women of God. There's a story. I think I've quoted this to you before.

One of C.S. Lewis' books, he writes this kind of trilogy, this science fiction trilogy. And the little one is called The Voyage to Venus. And I won't try and go into all the plot.

But it's a man from Earth who has gone to Venus and he arrives there just at the time, at the beginning of Venus' creation. And Venus has its own Adam and Eve of all the equivalents. And it has its own Tempter.

And the man who's gone from Earth is part of God's answer in defending this new creation from the Tempter. And at the end of it, we're kind of cut right to the end of the story. It's a fascinating story.

It cuts right to the end of it. And they are so grateful, this man and this woman, this Adam and Eve. And they've gathered together around them all the creation, all the animals of Venus.

And everything is in perfect harmony. And some of the animals speak. And it's the way it ought to have been in Eden.

And this man from Earth is there watching all this and watching the splendour of this first couple on Venus, their coronation, as God gives them their authority to rule this world for him. And they want him to come and share this moment of glory, because he's been part of it coming to pass. And C.F. Lewis puts these words into the mouth of the man from Earth.

And the man says this, Don't raise me up. Let me lie here on the ground. I've never seen a real man or a real woman before.

I've lived all my life among shadows and broken images. You and I have never seen a real man. It's not in the image and likeness of God.

We've lived all our lives in shadows and amongst broken images. And only once in the history of the world was God ever able to say, This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. And this is the one man who says, I am a worm and no man.

One of the places in Isaiah, just before that bit of Isaiah chapter 53, where it speaks of the Lord Jesus and it's talking about the way that He was handled even before the cross. And it speaks of His beatings and His bruising. And it says this, and it says, His face was marred, and literally the Hebrew says, more than the face of a man.

It's almost as though, and I don't want to go into the human pain aspect of things, but it's almost as though physically He had been so battered and bruised that it was hardly recognizable as a human being. But that's just a symbol, that's just the outward symbol of something that was taking place. When He became sin for us, He was a worm and no man.

This is His identification. This is why John in his gospel says, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that those who believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Here He is.

I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men and despised of the people. And they that see Me laugh with a scorn, they shoot out the lips, they shake their heads, saying He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him. Let Him deliver Him, saying He delighted in Him.

You see, He's actually praying about the things He's just heard the people say around the cross. It's, He's saying, touching. Verse 9, But thou art He that took me out of the womb, that is, make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.

I was cast upon thee from the womb. Thou art my God, still my God, no, that is not my Father. Thou art my God from my mother's belly.

Be not far from me, for trouble is near and there's none to help. I said that this was a psalm of David. It has a strange title.

If you go back to the very beginning of Psalm 22, before verse 1, you'll probably see that I'll say something like a psalm of David to the chief musician upon Ejelof Shaha, or something like that. I've often said it. If you say these words confidently, no one will ever challenge you.

It's something like that. But what it means, translated into English, is the title of this psalm is The Hind or the Young Deer of the Morning. And it's almost as though David has given this psalm a title which brings to mind pictures of a deer being hunted to death.

A young deer that's running for its life. It's being chased and its enemies are gathering round it. The dog pack has trapped it.

It's tender. Let me read it to you. Trouble is near.

There's none to help. Many bulbs have compassed me. Strong bulbs of bastion have beset me round.

They gait upon me with their mouths as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax.

It's melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a pot shard and my tongue cleaves to my jaws and that has brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me.

The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me. They've pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones.

They look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture. But be not thou far from me, O Lord.

O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword. Do you remember? Zechariah last night.

Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow. Your only one from the power of the dog. The power of the dog is literally the paw of the dog.

I don't know if you know why you should never put your hand on the head of a strange dog. It's because if you ever watch a kind of a female dog with its puppies when they're beginning to get kind of stropy and are chasing around and fighting she will exert her authority by putting her paw on the head of the dog. And the dog interprets that as a statement that this thing is dominant.

And when the dog grows up you put your hand on its head and it doesn't like your statement of dominance. It will tell you. That's why you shouldn't put your hand on a dog's head.

But this is a paw. He's under the paw. It's this picture almost of he's trapped now.

There's nowhere to go. He's utterly under the power apparently of something else. This is such powerful language.

It speaks here of something like a roaring and ravening lion. Which is one of the pictures that the Bible gives us of Satan. You've got this picture here of these bowls of Bashan.

In the country in which this psalm was created the most powerful being that they ever saw on an ordinary day was the bowl. In fact the most powerful thing they ever saw was the wild ox. A thing called the

aurochs.

And that's referred to a little bit later on down here in verse 21. Save me from the lion's mouth for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorn. I remember Eric Beard.

A brother who's from Herefordshire and whose job is to take pictures of cattle. And I remember him telling me at one time maybe some of you remember this he had a broken ankle because he'd got a bit too close to one of his critters. And I always remember him talking with him and I'm looking at all the do with this stuff and I just remember him saying that's his profession.

He said really the strength of the bowl is just awesome. He said I've seen people get trapped in the stockade with the bowl. He said I've seen the bowl put its head on the man's chest.

He said I've heard the ribs cracking. They really are just an immensely strong creature. And the wild aurochs is the strongest of all.

And you've got this picture up here of Jesus being impaled on the horns of the wild aurochs. This is our sin. Did you think it was the nails that nailed him to the cross? It is our sin.

He's held there by his determination to go through with the will of God and break this power once and for all. And if you've not discovered it I have to tell you that there is a power in you that when it comes down to the bottom line you will kill rather than surrender. You will.

There's something in you that will kill rather than surrender. It's this thing that the theologians call original sin. It's the spirit of the rebel.

It's an alien spirit that's come in that will not say yes to God. And here it is. It's almost as though it's pinned him.

I don't know. Some of you will be using a different version of the Bible and if you are you'll probably notice that there's a break in the middle of verse 21 and there should be. So it'll read something like this.

You've saved me from the lion's mouth. You've heard me from the horns of the unicorn. That's what it says.

In fact some of you may even have Yay! You've heard me. That's equivalent to Yes! You've heard me. You see this is still in the darkness.

In the darkness he's pouring out his heart to God. He's paying the price for our sin. This separation from God.

This is literally what I've referred to the other night. This is literally hell on earth. This is separation from God.

This is hell on earth and he's going through it. And he's going through it to bear the price to pay the cost for you and me. He's identifying.

He in our shoes is going through this. And in the midst of this and in the midst of pouring out his heart there comes this conviction that his sacrifice is accepted by the Father. That it's done.

He who in the days of his flesh cried out to God with strong cries and prayers was heard. And here is the conviction that it's heard. And if you, please do read this psalm.

We haven't got time to go through every part of it. But it's an amazing psalm. It's amazing because the first half of it up to verse 21 is dark and heavy and brooding.

And then you get to verse 21 and suddenly it's bright sunshine. Here it is. Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorn.

I will declare thy name unto my brethren. Don't lose Psalm 22 but please just come with me to John chapter 17 and notice how all this links together. You see that little phrase? I will declare in verse 22.

I will declare thy name unto my brethren. Verse 6. John chapter 17. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me.

I will... Understand that there's a thousand years between these two passages of Scripture and yet there's this amazing connection. And it goes on in the last verse of John 17. It says, And I have declared unto them thy name and will declare it.

Jesus declaring unto us the name of God is Jesus revealing to us the character of God. I know I have said this often here that our names really, they're just labels. They're just almost random things that our parents kind of give to us.

And they tell us hardly anything at all about the person who bears the name. My name is Ronald. Shortened to Ronald.

I only get called Ronald when I'm in trouble. I get the full name then. And the reason I got this name is because in the early 1940s when my mother was carrying me she went to the cinema and saw a good looking American who was kind of playing a cowboy and didn't know he was going to be a president one day but liked the name and liked the voice and decided she'd love her son with this name.

Now that's how I got my label. It tells you nothing at all about my character. I sometimes say it tells you quite a lot about my mother's character.

But it tells you nothing at all about mine. It's just a label. But God's names aren't labels.

They're revelations of His character. Every single one is an expression of who He is. And Jesus says, I've declared to them your name.

This is Bible language for saying I've shown them what you're like. John chapter 17 last verse I have shown them what you're like and I'm going to carry on showing them what you're like. That's His promise.

Here it is back to Psalm 22 now. I will declare thy name unto my brethren in the midst of the church. Where did that come from? Do you see this? Suddenly, because of the joy that was set before Him, He's endured the cross and the shame.

And now He begins to see of the travel of His soul and the joy comes. And He's thinking, He's still on the cross. And He's thinking about the church.

The work's done. The work's done. God can carry on.

Now I can build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. You've got the word congregation. It's just the Hebrew word for church.

In the midst of the church I praise Thee. Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him. All ye that see the seed of Jacob, glorify Him.

Have you noticed how totally different the mood of this second half is to the first half? Verse 23 Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him. All ye that see the seed of Jacob, glorify Him. And fear Him, all ye that see the seed of Israel.

For He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath He hid His face from Him. But when He cried unto Him, He heard. Hallelujah.

He heard. In John 17, the Father heard. In the garden, the Father heard.

Here on the cross, the Father heard. We are here today because of answered prayer. The whole church of Jesus Christ exists because of answered prayer.

Because He was heard. My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation. I will pay my vows before them that fear Him.

The meek shall eat and be satisfied. They shall praise the Lord that seek Him. Your heart shall live forever.

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord. And all the kindreds of the nation shall worship before Thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is the governor among the nations.

And they that be found upon the earth shall eat and worship. All they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him. None can keep alive his own soul.

A seed shall serve Him. It shall be written to the Lord for a generation. One of the things that Isaiah the prophet said about Jesus is, Who shall declare His generation? It was a matter of great shame in the Hebrew family if there were no children.

Jesus, of course, had no children. Who shall declare His generation? But the result of these birth pangs upon this cross, He will bring forth a family of sons. You sisters are included in sons.

And every one of the sons, according to Hebrews, is a firstborn one. It is the church of the firstborn ones. Every single one.

This is His family. This is His generation, shall I say. Yes, I'll say it because I need to say it.

There's no such thing as the next generation of the church of Jesus Christ. This is this generation. And when a child or a teenager is born again and brought into the church of Jesus Christ, they immediately become part of this generation.

And when the Bible speaks of the next generation, it means people who are not born yet. The church is this generation. I won't get on my soapbox on this one.

But I have really strong feelings about things which I would say ghettoise the church. I think it's great that young people can have meetings together, but I'm not in favour of a young people's church because you

ghettoise them. I think it's good that sisters can support each other, but I'm not entirely in favour of women's meetings and I don't go to men's meetings.

And part of the reason is I don't want to ghettoise the church. To me it's one body. One.

Maybe I've gone over the top and I need to kind of balance it a bit. But I do that sometimes. You know, I have to kind of work things through your system.

That's okay. You can do that with the Lord. But it's one generation.

When someone is born again of God's Spirit, they don't come in as an apprentice. They become part of the church of God from day one. It's a whole generation.

A seed shall serve Him. They shall come, verse 31, and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born. Now that is the next generation.

So part of the purpose of this generation is that they will declare the truth of God to the next generation. That's to say the people who are not born yet. In other words, this is mission.

This is people who have God's life revealing it to people who don't have it. It's all from the cross. It's all this great prayer that comes from the cross.

Unto a people that shall be born, that He has finished this. Very quickly, let's go back to John chapter 17. I've almost done that.

John chapter 17. Verse 28 of John. John 19.

Verse 28. There's something in verse 28 which the translator has kind of, he's done something. It's probably my friend Tyndale.

But he's done something which has lost the link. Can you see in my verse 28, it says, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, and then it uses the word that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Now that fulfilled and accomplished are both the same words in the original.

In fact, it's the same word that's used here in verse 30 when it says it is finished. So what you've got in verse 28 is this. Jesus knowing that all things were now finished, that the Scripture might be completely finished, said, I thirst.

Why does he say this? All the travail is done. It's all done. It's all finished.

And he simply says, I thirst. And previously, he had refused the drugged vinegar, which will have dulled his senses, but now he's given this vinegar, sour wine on a cane of hyssop, and he puts it, and it just swipes his thirst, just wets his lip, because he's got one last thing to do. And gathering all his strength, he makes this triumph cry which rings down the centuries and touches the heart of everyone who knows him.

It is finished. That's it. It's finished.

The Greeks, when they got into debt, when they paid their debts, the people would look at the accounts and they would write across it one single word in Greek, tetevesta. It means, it's paid. It's finished.

This is the word here. This is the word he cried from across. It's done.

It's done. The Father had heard him. Just turn back just briefly to John 17 and we'll say one last little thing.

This is the earlier prayer. Verse 25. O righteous Father, the world has not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me.

And I have declared unto them Thy name and will declare it. And now here's one of those in order that. This is the last little one.

We've talked about these before. Here's another one. He's going to, he has revealed the name and nature of God.

He is going to continue to reveal the name and nature of God for this purpose, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them. This, we've just talked about the love of God. We've seen the demonstration of it.

And his prayer here is that through his continued ministry of revealing to us what God is like, the consequence of that will be that God's own love will be in us. Not just love for God, but the love of God. What a prayer.

How can that be? Well, the last four words. And I in them. It's not detachable.

The love of God isn't detachable from Jesus Christ. Eternal life isn't detachable from Jesus Christ. It's all in him.

Hallelujah. Praise God. I'm so glad.

There's a little verse in the Psalms where David describes God like this. He says, O thou that hearest prayer. I'm glad God hears prayer.

I'm glad he's heard these prayers. Let's pray. It's done, yes, it's done.

It's done, yes, it's done. Through the precious blood of Jesus the battle is won. It's done, yes, it's done.

It's done, yes, it's done. Through the precious blood of Jesus the battle is won. Hallelujah.

I praise you, Jesus. You did it all for me. Have you seen him? Have we been able, Guy and I and others, have we been able to open your eyes and turn you from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God? Have you seen something you haven't seen before? Have you seen Jesus? It's not an exhibition.

It's not a gesture. If you've seen him, it's because he is continuing to declare his Father's name to you. He is revealing himself even through preachers like us.

And if he is revealing himself, it's not so that you can understand it academically. It's so that you can give yourself to him and receive from him the grace to be all that he has wanted you to be. The grace that is to be given us at the appearing of Jesus Christ, said Peter.

Has he appeared? Have you seen him? Alright, there's grace here now. What you've seen of him, receive him in that capacity. If you've seen him as Saviour, receive him in that capacity.

If you've seen him as Deliverer, receive him as Deliverer. If you've seen him as Enabler, receive him. If you've seen him as Lover and you know your own heart is so shrunken, receive him.

Just open your heart to what God has revealed to you of your son. We'll just have a few moments and you can pray as long as you don't give him any information. Just ask him or thank him.

Bless his heart.

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