



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

TRANSCRIPT

John 19:16-20

“Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, Divine Side of Jesus’ Suffering on the Cross”

[Message] Beginning this Sunday and continuing for the next few Sundays I want to give a series of messages on “Leading Figures and the Drama of Golgotha or God Unveiled and Man Unmasked.” And we’re going to be studying some of the great characters who appear in the passion of our Lord Jesus, men like Pilate and Herod and Caiaphas and Ananus and Simon of Cyrene and others, the people on the cross, and in preparation for that, I want to speak this morning on the 19th chapter of the Gospel of John and the picture that is given there of the Passion of Christ. So for our Scripture reading will you turn with me to the 19th chapter of the Gospel of John for the Johannine account of the death of Christ? John chapter 19 verses 16 through 30, we often read in our newspapers in accounts that have to do with the religious features of the Church of the Via Del A Rosa, now that is a Latin expression which means, “The Sad Way.” Via is V-I-A in case you didn’t take Latin. “The Sad Way” is the way is the way that our Lord took to Golgotha, or the place of the crucifixion and so it is the description of what it meant for him to go out to be sacrificed. Now this is John’s account of the Via De La Rosa, the sad way. Beginning at verse 16,

“Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst. And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, what I have written I have written. Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves; Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, they parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did. Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and 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 that disciple took her unto his own home. After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”

May God bless this reading from his word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and Heavenly Father, in the presence of the triune God, we give the thanks that we are able to read the word of God in a public company such as this. We know Lord, that there are many places upon this globe where it is impossible for men to read the word of God, and we want to give Thee thanks that we have this privilege here in the United States of America. And so Lord, we acknowledge our gratitude to Thee for the word. We acknowledge also our deep gratitude to Thee for the living Word, Jesus Christ. When we were dead in trespasses and sins, Thou didst come in and give us life and set our hope and trust upon him who Thou hast raised from the dead. And so Lord we thank Thee that we are able in a meeting such as this to acknowledge our faith in him the living Word openly as well. And Lord, we rejoice in the way in which Thou hast manifested Thy work in our hearts according to the principles of grace. We know that we did not deserve this blessing which Thou hast bestowed upon us, that it is purely because Thou hast set Thy love upon us in electing grace, chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. And so Lord, we thank Thee and praise Thee that the purposes of God are impossible to thwart, and that Thou doest work all things according to the counsel of Thine own will. We know Too Lord it’s not an accident that there are a great number in this auditorium who are here together in this meeting and we know that Thou doest have plans and purposes for each one of us, believer and non-believer alike. And may O God, the purposes of our Sovereign God be accomplished through the ministry of the word today, thy word which is a saver of life unto life, and a saver of death unto death. And O Father if it should please Thee and if it should be in accordance with Thy will, may today it be a saver of life unto life.

We pray again for our country, for our president, for his cabinet, for men who have the responsibility of making important decisions. We pray O God that they may be truly the ministers of God as Thou doest say in Thy Word. And then Lord, we pray for the ministry of the word wherever it may be going forth today, not only in Dallas and Texas and the United States, but to the uttermost part of the earth. We pray especially for

the college ministry which is so strategic, and would bring to Thee Lord the ministry of organizations such as Campus Crusade for Christ and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and especially for those who are engaged in important activities in the next few days. May the ministry of the word be fruitful, and may many young people be won to the Lord Jesus.

We know Lord that there is no leader who is so great as he, and may some of our youth catch the vision of our Lord and enroll in his army and carry his banner into the battle fray which is before us on every hand. We know that the powers of darkness are about us, and are active and vigorous and strong and our hope and trust is in Thee. And may Lord as a church, this assembly of Christians walk in the light of the word and in the conscious sense of the Lord Jesus and relying upon his power and upon his headship and captaincy accomplish great things for Thee. And so Lord, we commit our meeting to Thee, the ministry of the word to Thee, may Thy name be glorified in it, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] When we look again at the study of Golgotha, or the cross work of our Lord Jesus Christ, we come to the converging point of all ancient history, and the origin of all modern history. The prophets looked forward to the coming of Christ. They of course did not know all of the lineaments of his person. They did not know all of the facts of his life, though they knew certain things. But they looked forward to one who would come and suffer, and also they looked forward to glories that would follow. In the first chapter of Peter’s epistle, he makes reference to the fact that they searched the Scriptures seeking to determine the circumstances and the time under which the sufferings and the glories of Christ should occur. And the answer was given to them that it was not for them but for others that the spirit ministered the word through them. So when we think of Golgotha, we are thinking of that which is central in the history of man. And though of course the world has rejected our Lord Jesus Christ, in accordance again, with the

prophetic word, still even in the world’s activities, there is an acknowledgement of the fact that the cross of Jesus Christ is central.

Now my wife and I like calendars. She especially likes calendars because she paints, and so we have calendars from Switzerland and calendars from Europe and calendars from Great Britain, from Scotland and from England, and calendars from the United States, and all of these calendars acknowledge that the cross of Jesus Christ is the converging point of all history. We read on them the year, nineteen hundred and sixty-seven. Anno Domini, that is in the year of our Lord. Every check that we write acknowledges that the cross is the central feature of human history. Even those that come back marked NSF, and I suppose that some of you have had checks like that, they too have the date upon them, January the first, nineteen sixty-seven, or whenever it may have been dated. Our newspapers that we read, though written by men who generally speaking are not noted for their allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ, still date those newspapers in accordance with his coming. We say AD and BC, almost everything that we do finds in it a silent acknowledgement of the fact that the cross of Jesus Christ is the converging point of history, ancient and modern. A French skeptic, I think his name was Rousseau said it would take a Jesus to forge a Jesus and the world has implicitly acknowledged that because it acknowledges in all of its activities the greatness of one whom it actually dishonors.

Most studies of the death of Jesus Christ stress the human side of the suffering, the shame, and it was great, the scourging, and it was bitter, the blood that he shed, and that surely was painful, the spitting that he received, and that surely was dishonoring. But we want to stress this morning, because the Johannine account stresses it, the divine side of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. Humans are active in John chapter 19, and human beings are active in the sufferings of Christ, but God is especially active in his suffering. In the Old Testament we read that it pleased the Lord to bruise him. We read in Psalm 22, a Psalm that we studied not long ago which is very closely related to this passage, we read

there that the Psalmist speaks of the fact that God had put him to death, and so the sufferings of Christ are sufferings that preeminently are brought upon him by God. They also are brought upon him by man and he willingly endured them. But they are sufferings that are produced by God; it is his love work for men. And it’s an amazing thing to think that he loved us enough to give his only begotten son that we might have everlasting life. And when we think of the regard that the Father had for the Son, then surely this is a tremendous testimony to the love that the Father has for us.

Now in this particular account, I’m going to stress seven things, and since I only have thirty-one minutes according to my watch, we’re going to make a kind of review of them and hit the high spots. But the first thing that we will notice is “Messiah Crucified.” In verses 16 through 18. The High Priest’s duty was to prepare the sacrifices of Israel, and in this particular incident, the suffering of Christ, the High Priests, in spite of themselves prepare God’s last sacrifice. We read in verse 17, “And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. Now he went forth, outside the camp, in the Old Testament, you’ll remember the sin offering was taken outside the camp and there it was burned.

Now Jesus Christ is the antetype of the sin offering. That is, all of those offerings the sin offerings of the Old Testament, pictured him in his work. Every time one of those animals was slain and separated, part burned upon the altar, and then part taken outside the camp and burned there. Every time that was done, there was an illustration of the fact that someone ultimately would come to die for the sins of men. God exhausted grace and exhausted his wisdom in trying to prepare man for the coming of the Lord Jesus. And now when we think of the antetype carrying out his work, he who stands over against the illustrations of the Old Testament, we see in a remarkable way that now God, in the sufferings of Christ, brings to pass in these sufferings that which is the exact fulfillment of the illustrations of the Old Testament. I have often said, and I think this is the way we are to read these accounts, that we are to read them in the light of the

offerings of the Old Testament, and when those animals were taken out, parts of some and almost all of others, they were in the eyes of the Jews cast forth as unclean and so we are to regard our Lord Jesus, typically, illustratively here, in the mind of God now, as he is about to bear the sins of the human race, we are to look upon him as cast forth unclean, for there is to be no more fellowship now between the camp, that is the nation, and the sin laden animal.

The ugliness of the sin offerings should be stressed here too. In the sin offerings, the entrails of the animals were taken out, the blood of the animals was taken out, the dung of the animals was taken out and burned upon the heap, and it is not wrong for us to think that in a sense, this is the way in which our Lord Jesus went out. That is, he is going out now as the sin sacrifice and we are to look at the Via De La Rosa as the way of the stench. And of course, we should not stop there, we should realize that this is all because you and I are in the sight of God, that which he is trying to illustrate. So the ugliness of the sin offering is designed to show us spiritually the ugliness of sin. And if we by the Spirit of God, have our minds open to the word of God, then we will realize that what Jesus Christ endured for us is what we ought to endure. In other words, the picture is really a picture of us, of you and me, because he is our representative.

In the 18th verse, it is stated that two others were crucified with him and that Jesus was in the midst. Since in a few weeks, we’re going to study these two individuals, I want to say only this right now that Jesus Christ coming into the world, lay amid the magi, amid the shepherds, and amid the angel, but going out, he hangs upon a cross amid the bandits. Now sometimes we’re inclined to think this is an accident, it’s not an accident at all; it is God’s purpose that Jesus Christ should hang on that cross between two robbers, between two insurrectionists. It was his purpose that he should come in among the angels and among the shepherds and in the presence of Mary and Joseph, but going out he is amid the bandits, again because he represents us. It is God’s pictorial way of showing us just what it means for the Son of God to suffer for men.

Some commentator has said this was his inevitable company, and it was. Because you see, he must as he suffers give a visible representation to the world of what we are. And that’s what we are, bandits and criminals and crooks and above all, under the judgment of God. And so our substitute our representative must hang upon the cross in that way must die crucified.

The next thing that John writes about is the Messiah entitled. He tells us of the superscription that was placed upon the cross of our Lord Jesus. It was the custom for the title which would give the reason for the crucifixion to be attached to a sign and then there would be painted upon that sign the charge, why the person is crucified. And so the Lord Jesus has a superscription, and his superscription reads, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” Now in the course of putting this superscription over our Lord Jesus, Pilate and the Jews engaged in just a little bit of an argument over it. Pilate I’m sure had his tongue in his cheek when he said, “Write on that superscription this is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” And the Jews sensed that, because they knew that Pilate did not believe that Jesus was the King of the Jews, but he was putting it there because it was a way of getting back at the Jews. So he could put that on the board and say behind his back and say, “Look what I did you see, the Jews are always talking about a king, and there’s their king, take a look at the King of the Jews.” He had some much trouble with the Jews that this afforded him an admirable opportunity of pulling their leg, and that’s what he was doing. Now the Jews recognized that that’s what he was doing and so they came to him and said, “Write not the King of the Jews, but that he said that he was king of the Jews.” So they wanted him to change the superscription to, “Jesus of Nazareth, who said that he was the King of the Jews,” but Pilate says in the 22nd verse, “What I have written I have written.”

Now of course, Pilate thought that in this crucifixion of the Lord Jesus that he was really sovereign within it, but he was not. In fact, now if we could see Pilate and if we could hear the words that were really spoken through the words that he spoke, we would

read these words in an entirely different way. For what Pilate wrote, he really did not write, it was God’s desire you see that on that superscription there should be, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” Because he wanted men to see that this really is the truth and that even in his crucifixion, there is a testimony given by God to the fact that he is Jesus of Nazareth, and he is King of the Jews. And so if we had Pilate in our presence, we could say to him, “Pilate, what you wrote you did not write.” And that really what he did was say what I have written I have not written, that is God’s word behind the word of this procurator of Judea.

Thirdly, in verses 23 and 24 we have Messiah disrobed. I’ve often said this, and I think it’s true, that we pay entirely too much attention to the birth of our Lord Jesus at Christmas time, not that I’m against Christmas, I think it’s a time in which we have a good time, but all Christians should realize the real significance of Christmas. But we pay a great deal of attention to Christmas, but we don’t pay nearly so much attention to the death of our Lord Jesus. It’s rather startling isn’t it that we don’t really have any acknowledgment in a public way of the death of Christ such as we have of the birth of Christ. We have Christmas and we have Easter and of course Good Friday is there, but who pays much attention to Good Friday today? We pay much more attention to his birth than to his death. But when Jesus died upon the cross, there was a tremendous symbol in that which took place upon Golgotha.

We read here of the fact that Messiah’s clothes were taken off of him and that he was hanging naked upon that cross. Now this is not unimportant, when the birth of Jesus was announced, it was said that he should be found in a manger, “This shall be a sign to you, you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.” That was the sign. Now when he hung upon the cross, the sign was the sign of his nakedness. In fact, if we were to put it in that way, we would say in this sign language, we would write something like this, “This shall be the sign unto you, you shall find the surety, not

wrapped in swaddling clothes, but hanging naked upon a tree. That is the evidence that he is the sin offering.

Now the nakedness of the Lord Jesus is something that goes right back to the second chapter of the Book of Genesis. You remember when God created Adam and Eve, he created them and the text says in verse 25 I think it is of chapter 2 that they were both naked, Adam and Eve his wife, but they were not ashamed. And then in the 3rd chapter we read that when they sinned they looked at themselves, they saw their nakedness, and they were ashamed, and they ran to hide themselves. In fact, made clothes of fig leaves, in other words, the picture in Genesis that we get is the picture that when sin came, shame for what they had done came to them. Now we’re not going to engage in a long discussion of the kind of clothing if any they had before, some had suggested they had a covering of glory, and they lost that covering of glory when they sinned, and thus they saw themselves really naked. That’s really not the point of the message this morning. The message this morning’s point is simply this that shame is the inevitable consequence of the realization of lost innocence, and hence shame belongs to sin. When a man sins, he’s ashamed of it, inevitably, we feel guilt and we feel shame. Now the Lord Jesus must die not only for our guilt, but he must also bear our shame. And to show this outwardly, the Lord Jesus was hanging upon the cross of Golgotha naked. It was inevitable, it was required that Jesus should hang there naked, and that is what he did.

Now it’s also striking that they take his garments and they cast lots among them and the soldiers take these garments and clothe themselves. And if you’ll remember that back in the Old Testament, when Adam and Eve are naked in the Garden of Eden, God when they come to faith in him and Adam says he’s going to name his wife’s name Eve, then God takes off the fig leaves of man’s clothing, slays an animal, takes the skins of the animal, and with the skins clothes Adam and Eve. In other words, the clothing comes by way of sacrifice. And here on the cross at Golgotha, this whole drama again is played out

like a pageant before men. Here is the shame, here is the one who bears the shame of sin, he’s hanging upon the cross, the garments are taken from him and they’re given to others. And so the soldiers find themselves clothed in the garments of one who typically bears the shame of sin. And so we have right on Golgotha again a picture that God is active in the cross of Christ and those garments which are taken are figurative, illustrative of the righteousness that comes to us when we put our faith in this one who was hanging naked upon the cross at Golgotha. Someone has said, God could put clothing upon the first Adam, only because he would one day take it off of the second Adam. But at least it’s true that all of this was an acted drama.

Now I want you to see you see that through all of this, God is active. Much more active than men, men are little puppets who are moving about, moved by their base passions, they are moved by their antipathy and rebellion to God. But over and above all of this activity of the cross, it is the Father who has really acted, and he is controlling all of the events of Calvary. I’ve been greatly impressed this week in the North, as I’ve been reading and studying God’s word on my own, of how we ought to be thankful for the sovereignty of God. I think I’ve become a deeper and even stronger believer in the sovereignty of God, his complete sovereignty in everything from beginning to end. And you surely can see it in the cross of Christ.

Now fourthly, the Messiah and the virgin, verses 25 through 27. The last words of dying men are very important, just recently, we listened with bated breath to see what Jack Ruby would say in his last words. And I think that we must acknowledge though we may have different opinions of what really happened November the twenty-second, nineteen sixty-three, that the last words of a dying man are more likely to be true words than other words. What men say when they die, has been always been given supreme recognition and respect. Now the last words of our Lord Jesus are also important, and a great deal of study has been devoted to them. Some of them are given us in the 19th chapter of John and he has some words here for Mary and for John. They really go

together; primarily they are words that concern the Virgin Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. She was the first to plant kisses on his brow, she was the first to guide his hand and his feet in infantile movements, she was the first to feed him and clothe him and care for him. And now she feels the sword through her heart that long before, Simeon has said would come, that a sword would pierce through her heart, and standing beside the cross, looking upon the Lord Jesus in almost total isolation from the men, for the men are sunk in consuming disappointment and are afraid and have fled for the most part. John has come back to the cross, and so Jesus speaks and he says, “Woman, behold thy son.” And then to John, “Behold thy mother.” The Lord never spoke of Mary as his mother as you know, I don’t think that that’s because he would not have used the term, I think he probably would have used the term, the Bible does speak of Joseph as his father and Mary as his mother, I see nothing wrong in that if we realize that Mary was the mother in a sense of the human nature of our Lord Jesus. It is very very misleading to say Mary was the mother of God, she was the mother of the human nature of our Lord Jesus, but she was his mother in his human life. Mary is unique because Jesus is unique.

But in the words that are given here, we see one or two things which I want to just say a word about very quickly. First of all you notice the Lord Jesus is the provider for his own. Now back in 1 Timothy, it is stated that one of the marks of an unbeliever, is the fact that he doesn’t care for his own. Our Lord Jesus, even in the last breaths that he draws as a man cares for his mother. And so he says, “Woman, behold thy son.” That is John the apostle now is to take care of you. We also notice him here as the fulfiller of the law. The law said that a son should honor his father and his mother, and Jesus completely fulfilled the law. And so even to the last, he must honor Mary, so, “Woman behold thy son.” And now to John, John, I want you to care for her, “Behold your mother.”

One last thing, notice the day on which this statement was made, it was not made on the day of the ascension, it was not made on the day of the resurrection, it was made

on the day of the cross. Because the ultimate significance of what Jesus was doing is related to the cross of the Lord Jesus. And he is telling Mary something like this, “Earthly relationships are over, you’re only related to me by the new birth now.” Believers are all in one family, and Jesus relates Mary, gives her no special position, but relates her to the apostle John. Woman assigns her a position in his body, he is not part of her body, she is to be part of his body. And so in a sense, our Lord Jesus naturally and gently, leads her from the natural union which she had with him through the human nature to the mystical union which she has through the new birth. And Mary, the mother of our Lord is given typically her place in the body of Christ with others, for now she is united with them who are typically his body.

Fifthly, the Messiah thirsting, and I imagine some of you are thirsting because this room is a little warm, but I noticed some of you are like this and one of the elders caught the hint and maybe we’ll get a little air. But I hate to disturb you now and talk about thirsting, but will you notice the 28th verse, “After this, Jesus.” Perhaps it’s because you’re excited about what’s going to happen this afternoon at three o’clock, I don’t know. “After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.” This is the fifth statement that Jesus made. Now behind our Lord Jesus is his eternal death, for remember the fourth statement that he uttered is, “My God my God why hast thou forsaken me?” And so when he uttered that statement at the ninth hour that was a token of the fact that the Lord Jesus was bearing the separation from God that we should have born. And so that marked his eternal death, shortly there after, he said, “I thirst.”

And I want you to notice that this statement, “I thirst” is in very close relationship to that “My God my God why hast Thou forsaken me?” Now I think it’s so important, because ordinarily when we read the Bible, and we come to this statement, “I thirst,” we think that this is just an incidental remark which the evangelist threw in in order that we might just kind of catch the scene so to speak that we might put ourselves there on the

cross with him and just realize some of the little insignificant details that transpired on that point. But that is not the reason Jesus said, “I thirst.” I have no doubt that he was genuinely thirsty, but he was not thirsty simply because he was hanging upon a cross. This thirst is related to what was going on in Jesus Christ’s soul. In other words, the thirst that he speaks of is ultimately the thirst of one who has had to undergo the fires of divine judgment.

Now the reason for that I think can be found in the study of passages of Scripture in the word of God. Back in the 22nd Psalm for instance, when the psalmist speaks of the suffering of this servant of God, he describes his sufferings in terms of thirst. He speaks about the thirst that he had, “My strength is dried up like a potsherd, my tongue cleaveth to my jaws, Thou hast brought me into the dust of death.” And then David, you remember David’s experience when he sinned? He said in the 32nd Psalm in verse 3 when he kept silence and didn’t confess his sin to God, “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long, for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” You see, when a man sins against God, and then doesn’t confess that sin even though he a believer as David was, he senses this lack of fellowship with God and judgment begins to work in Christians if we should judge ourselves we should not be judged Paul says. And judgment has the effect of bringing to us this sense of thirst, because the fires of divine judgment work. They work of course most of all in the man who has not received our Lord Jesus as Savior. That’s why the ultimate penalty for rejection of Christ is to be put in the Lake of Fire.

And so when Jesus said, “I thirst” of course he meant physically, I need some liquid to assuage my physical thirst, but that was not the primary thirst that he was feeling, he was feeling there the results of the fact that God had brought judgment into his soul, and he had cried out “My God my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” because he was enduring everlasting judgment and now there results from this agonizing cry, “I thirst!” Messiah thirsting.

And now, sixthly, notice in verse 30 the Messiah evangelizing. In verse 30 we read, “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar he said, it is finished.” It is a supreme spiritual joy to finish the spiritual work of redemption, and so Jesus says, “It is finished.” You know, it’s a kind of joy to finish anything. I know it especially because I hardly ever finish anything, but when I am able to finish something you know there comes that feeling of satisfaction over you when you’ve really done something that you wanted to do. I think that Dante for example must have had a wonderful sense of completion when he finished one of his great works like the *Divine Comedy*. Or how must Milton have felt when he wrote the last words of *Paradise Lost*? Or how must have Columbus have felt after he had endured all that he had endured including the mutinous soldiers on the way over, when he saw the Peaks of Darien? And so, the Lord Jesus, when he finally was able to say, “It is finished.” Tremendous spiritual joy must have flooded his soul. This someone has said is a triumphant cry with a great dogmatic significance, you can talk for hours on the subject “It is finished.” By the way, he doesn’t say, “I am finished.” This is not the last gasp of a worn out life, as Mr. Pink said, this is a triumphant cry, the work of God is done, “It is finished.” Now of course, he must die physically, and we’ll say a word about that in just a moment, but when he says, “It is finished,” this means the work of redemption is done.

Sometime ago I mentioned an experience that happened to Mr. Ebenezer Wooten, a well known evangelist of a few generations ago, he was holding some meetings in Brittan, and they had been tent meetings. And when the meetings were over, he had been out on the village green pulling up the tent pegs in order to move on to the next location. A young man came up to him and said, somewhat casually, “Mr. Wooten, what must I do to be saved?” He didn’t seem to be interested according to the tone of his voice, and so Mr. Wooten didn’t even bother to look up he said, “Too late son, too late.” Then there came a note of urgency and earnestness into the man’s voice and he said, “Oh Mr. Wooten, you mean it’s too late because the meetings are over, I can not be saved

now?” And he stood up and he looked at the man and he sensed that he was earnest and he said, “Son it’s still too late, the work of salvation was done nineteen hundred years ago, you sad, what must I do to be saved, it’s too late, Jesus has died and has already done it, now if you want to be saved, all you need do is to say, thank you for the work that has been done.”

Hudson Taylor you know put it so wonderfully, he said, “I finally came to sense that the work of redemption was done. And there was nothing more for me to do but to fall down and worship the one who had done it all for me.” That’s all we need do to be saved. Not join the church, not pray through, not be baptized, not learn the catechism, not be confirmed, not become good, all of these things are impossible far as obtaining for us salvation. God wants us to say we are lost and we need a Savior, and he wants us to see that Christ has done it for us and then he wants us to say in our hearts just, “Thank you Lord for giving Jesus Christ to die for me.” That’s all that’s necessary, all mind you, nothing else, just say thank-you Lord from your heart. That moment you have everlasting life, born again, wonderful do you have it? Have you been born again, do you have that everlasting life?

One last thing, “he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.” Now over in Luke chapter 23, when he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost, he gave it up with a word, and that word was, “Father into Thy hands I commit my spirit.” You know John has it very wonderfully here, we give up the spirit, and then we bow the heads as you know. When we die, we die quite differently then our Lord Jesus. You see the spirit leaves us and our head collapses, because our strength is gone, but Jesus Christ is in complete control of this situation even in his death, and so he bows his head and then gives up the ghost. Now Jesus of course had died spiritually when he said, “My God my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” But he must show us that the work was done, and so he must die physically which was an effect of sin, and hence the work while complete spiritually, when he said, “My God my God why hast Thou forsaken me?” And said, “It is finished,”

he must pass finally into the experience of physical death. And so he dies physically after he has died spiritually.

But the words on his lips were, “Father into Thy hands I commit my spirit.” We have misunderstood that. Unfortunately we have never learned as a Christian church to read the New Testament in the light of the Old Testament. “Father into Thy hands I commit my spirit.” is not a kind of resigned cry when Jesus Dies, it is a triumphant affirmation of the resurrection. Where do you get that Dr. Johnson? Just reading the Bible, you get lots of things when you read the Bible, get lots of things when you ponder the Bible. It so happens that “Father into Thy hands I commit my spirit,” is a citation from the Old Testament, did you know that? Now if you turn back to Psalm 31 and verse 5, you needn’t do it, it’s alright it’s there. If you turn back to that Psalm, you will discover that in the context of that Psalm, the psalmist is having a great deal of difficulty, and he’s speaking about his difficulties. And then he says, “Father into Thy hands I commit my spirit,” and shortly he says, “Thou has brought me into a large place.” He knows you see that the conclusion of these difficulties is the fact that he has gone through them, he has surmounted them.

Now it just so happens that this petition, “Father into Thy hands I commit my spirit,” was the Jewish equivalent of “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray Thee Lord my soul to keep, if I should die before I wake, I pray Thee Lord my soul to take.” I said that pray thousands of times before I was converted. That’s a child’s prayer isn’t it? We teach our children that. The child’s prayer among the Jews was, “Father into Thy hands I commit my spirit.” They knew that that petition did not mean really death, that it meant life. That it was the committal of the spirit into the hands of God in the light of the day that would come tomorrow. And so when Jesus said in the last word that he uttered, “Father into Thy hands I commit my spirit,” he was not resigning himself, he was simply saying, I know that there is a life beyond this life, I know that this life that I have is

absolutely interrupted and that Calvary is only a milestone in the uninterrupted and eternal life that I have.

So even in dying, the first utterance that he ever uttered, “I must be about my Father’s business,” is uttered again, “Father into Thy hands I commit my spirit.” He’s still engaged in the work that God gives him to do. In the Book of Revelation, John the apostle sees this one whom he saw die, and Jesus said to him when he saw him, “I am he that liveth and became dead, and behold I am alive unto the ages of the ages, and have the keys of death and Hades.” And so he has, and your destiny is bound up in the destiny of the Son of God. Do you have him as personal Savior, do you know him as the one who has died for you and do you know because of this that no matter what lies ahead of you in the future, you know that you are in hands that are secure? May God help you if you’ve never put your trust in him to say thank-you Lord for dying for me and becoming my Savior. May we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the fact that the work of Jesus Christ is the work of our Father God, and we thank Thee that as we look at it we can see the sovereign providence of an overruling God. Lord we pray for any who are in this auditorium who have not yet turned to him who is life and who is alive. May the Holy Spirit bring conviction and conversion. Now may grace and mercy and peace go with each one who knows him in sincerity. And may the convicting power of the Holy Spirit go with those who do not know him until that hour when they turn to him. We commit the issues of the preaching of the gospel to Thee Lord, knowing that the issues of men’s destiny lie within Thy hands. These things we ask in Jesus name and for his sake. Amen.