

AT THE CROSS

Grace for the Condemned

5-Day Devotional from "A Condemned Criminal"

A five-day journey through the dying thief's encounter with Jesus, showing how honest repentance and simple faith receive full salvation.

Sermon Text: Luke 23:39-43

Introduction

This week, you will stand near the cross and listen to the testimony of a dying man who found life in Jesus. Sunday's message showed that grace can save, even at the end. These readings will help you face your sin honestly, call on Christ, and rest in His promise.

This Week's Journey

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Monday – Awakening to God (When God Gets Your Attention)

Letting God's truth interrupt your excuses and bring you to honest awareness of your condition before Him.

Tuesday - Owing your sin (Saying the Same Thing God Says)

Agreeing with God's verdict, confessing sin honestly, and stepping out of denial into grace.

Wednesday - Calling on Jesus (Turning Toward Jesus)

Moving from talking about Jesus to calling on Him personally with humble faith.

Thursday - Resting in Christ's promise (A Promise You Can Lean On)

Anchoring your assurance in the certain, personal, and powerful word of Jesus.

Friday - Living in the hope of grace (Nobody is Beyond Grace)

Rejoicing that nobody is beyond saving mercy and seeing others through the lens of Christ's grace.

5-7 MINUTES EACH DAY | READ SLOWLY, PRAY HONESTLY, RESPOND PERSONALLY

When God Gets Your Attention

Scripture Reading: Ecclesiastes 12:9-14

Reflection

The thief's first step toward salvation was not self-improvement, but honest realization. As death closed in, he stopped blaming circumstances, stopped echoing the crowd, and started fearing God. That matters for you, because grace begins when excuses end. There are moments when the Lord lovingly interrupts your self-protection and helps you see that your deepest problem is not bad luck, difficult people, or a hard season. It is sin before a holy God. That kind of awakening is painful, but it is also mercy. The fear of God does not have to drive you into hiding; it can drive you toward wisdom, truth, and repentance. Today, ask God to make you honest. Let Him show you where you have minimized sin, softened truth, or avoided His searching light. The doorway to peace often opens where honesty first begins before Him in humility. Grace often starts where honesty bows before God.

Application Question: Where in your life is God pressing you to stop making excuses and face the truth in His presence?

PAUSE FOR PRAYER: ASK THE LORD TO MAKE TODAY'S TRUTH PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL IN YOUR LIFE.

Saying the Same Thing God Says

Scripture Reading: Psalm 51:1-9

Reflection

The thief did something many people resist until the very end: he agreed with the verdict against him. He did not rename his sin, defend his choices, or hide behind comparisons. He said, in effect, 'We deserve this.' That kind of confession is hard, because pride always wants softer language. You may be tempted to call sin a struggle, a pattern, or a mistake, while avoiding the deeper truth. But healing begins when you say the same thing about your sin that God says. Confession is not self-hatred. It is surrender to reality. It is stepping out of denial and into the cleansing light of grace. The cross teaches you that judgment is deserved, and mercy is therefore precious. Today, do not offer God a polished version of yourself. Bring Him the truth. Confession does not push grace away; it prepares your heart to receive it with gratitude and freedom.

Application Question: What sin or pattern do you need to stop softening and confess to God with full honesty today?

PAUSE FOR PRAYER: ASK THE LORD TO MAKE TODAY'S TRUTH PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL IN YOUR LIFE.

Turning Toward Jesus

Scripture Reading: Luke 18:9-14

Reflection

Everything changes when the thief turns from speaking about Jesus to speaking to Jesus. He does not deliver a long prayer or make grand promises. He simply says, 'Jesus, remember me.' That is the language of a heart that has run out of self-reliance and found hope in mercy. You may think your prayer has to be impressive, polished, or emotionally strong before God will hear it. But this man shows otherwise. Saving faith is personal. It calls on Christ directly. It stops negotiating and starts trusting. Notice also what he believes: that Jesus is King even while hanging on a cross. That is faith. He sees suffering, yet trusts sovereignty. He sees weakness, yet believes in a kingdom. Today, let his prayer become your pattern. Speak to Jesus plainly. Bring Him your need, your guilt, your fear, and your future. Mercy still answers those who call His name today.

Application Question: What would it look like for you to stop circling around Jesus and speak to Him directly about what you need most?

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A Promise You Can Lean On

Scripture Reading: John 14:1-6

Reflection

Jesus answered the thief with a promise stronger than his past: ‘Today you will be with Me in paradise.’ Notice what makes the promise precious. It is certain because Jesus speaks it. It is immediate because He says ‘today.’ It is personal because He says, ‘with Me.’ The thief had no time left to build a new record, but he had the word of Christ, and that was enough. You need that anchor. Your assurance cannot rest on your feelings, your consistency, or your ability to measure spiritual progress. It must rest on what Jesus has said. He is able to save completely, and His promises do not weaken with your weakness. When doubts rise, return to His word. When shame revisits failures, answer it with His voice. The Savior who welcomed a criminal still gives hope to all who trust Him, and He never speaks comfort to desperate souls.

Application Question: Where do you need to stop leaning on your feelings and begin leaning more fully on the promise of Christ?

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Nobody Is Beyond Grace

Scripture Reading: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Reflection

The story ends in paradise, but it also sends a message into your week: nobody is beyond the reach of grace. The first man Jesus promises paradise is not a polished disciple, but a condemned criminal. That means you should never measure saving grace by worthiness. It also means you should not give up on people too quickly, including yourself. Some stories look too damaged, too late, or too unlikely. Yet Jesus saves at the edge of death and does it with joy, authority, and fullness. If He can welcome this man, then you can live with humility and hope. Humility, because you were saved by mercy alone. Hope, because the same mercy is reaching sinners today. Carry this truth into the weekend. Come back to worship ready to thank Christ for His grace, and ready to see every person around you as someone Jesus is able to save completely.

Application Question: Who have you quietly considered too far gone, and how might God be calling you to see that person through the lens of grace?

PAUSE FOR PRAYER: ASK THE LORD TO MAKE TODAY'S TRUTH PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL IN YOUR LIFE.

Weekend Reflection

As you look back over this week, remember the path: honesty before God, confession of sin, a direct cry to Jesus, and confidence in His promise. Bring that testimony with you into gathered worship this weekend, and thank God with His people that the same Savior who welcomed a dying thief still saves sinners completely today.

Prepared for congregational use and personal reflection.