

Father Into Thine Hands I Commit My Spirit

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[0 : 00] The Gospel according to Luke, chapter 23, verse 46.

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. And having said thus, he gave up the ghost. Amen. We come now to the seventh and the last of the sayings of our Lord from the cross.

And as I have had occasion to say, when I attempted other series of studies on a Sabbath evening, I want to say the same thing again tonight.

And that is, though some people may misunderstand what I'm going to say and perhaps even misquote me, well, that's the risk that you always run in the pulpit.

[1 : 33] But I think it's only right that I should, as the minister of this congregation, express my deep gratitude to you, and especially if I may say so to the young people, for continuing to attend so regularly upon the means of grace and on such a series as this on a Sabbath evening, the sayings of our Lord from the cross.

Because there have been times, as I indicated last week, when perhaps I was afraid that this kind of theme might not be all that appropriate for a Sabbath evening.

But then, you see, it is not in our hand to bless the word. We can only try and expound it and try and explain it to you. It is in God's hand to bless it.

And if I may encourage you by saying this, you are in the place where the blessing of God is present. That is where his word is proclaimed. It is the word that God blesses.

And my prayer is that you may benefit from having sat through this series. And I must say for myself that it has been a benefit for me.

[2 : 57] And on more than one occasion, I must say that I have had a very real sense of the presence and the power and the blessing of God in this building during these weeks.

And it is almost a sense of sadness that I come to the last of these sayings on the cross. But I must say that having, as it were, lingered around the cross for these seven weeks, that finding it so difficult to leave that scene, my intention is having, once we finish this service tonight, my intention is God willing in the weeks to come to linger around the same theme, the same scene rather, and perhaps have a look at the funeral and the burial of Jesus.

And the miracles that attended his death and the wonder of the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. Tonight, however, it is the last of these sayings.

He cried with a loud voice, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. And having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

Now, the way in which the Gospel, though, Matthew or Luke is the only one who records the last say, they all record the unusual circumstances of his death, the actual death.

[4 : 30] And the unusual circumstances were these, that just as he entered death, he cried with a loud voice.

Now, some may say, why is that unusual? Well, it was unusual because of the circumstances of the death, naturally, physically. It was death by crucifixion.

And it seems that the actual putting to death by crucifixion resulted in a paralysis, if that's the right word to use, in a paralysis of the respiratory system of the person being crucified.

So that they reached a stage in death where they found it extremely difficult to breathe. One doesn't want to spend too much time on this.

It seems that they had great difficulty almost. They were gasping for air as they died. But here is one who, far from gasping for air, as he dies, and there's a sense in which it is wrong even to use the terms, as he dies, because he gave himself to death, far from gasping for air.

[5 : 58] Here is one who cries out with a loud voice, It is finished. Farther into thy hands I commend my spirit.

And he gave up the ghost. You see the loud cry that we have referred to in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is a cry which is associated with the cry of triumph.

It is finished. And Farther into thy hands I commend my spirit. Well, now, as we turn to this saying, this last saying on the cross, what really does it have to say to us?

Well, it tells us, and I want to deal very briefly tonight with six or seven things, and very, very briefly, and then apply them. First of all, here we have the word of God focusing attention for us on the Godhead of our Lord.

Now, that is focused for us in this way, that here we have a person who was in complete control and in complete command of the situation on the cross.

[7 : 12] You see, there are people who picture Jesus and his death as though he were the helpless victim of circumstances. But he wasn't. You remember what he himself had said concerning his life.

I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. So the actual death of Jesus was an act of his own will.

You see, the words that are used here when he says, having said thus, he gave up the ghost, he breathed out his spirit. Or as John puts it, he delivered his spirit up.

Or as Matthew puts it, he released his spirit. There you have words which tell us that here was a person who was in control of these circumstances.

It was he who released, who dismissed his own soul from his body in death.

[8 : 23] That is death. The soul being severed from the body. Now it wasn't taken from him by death. He gave it himself to death.

He poured out his soul unto death. He gave his soul to death. Now of course you know that that therefore was no ordinary death.

You people who are here tonight, you who are in the medical and the nursing profession who deal with this kind of thing from time to time, you know that when death comes into the experience of an individual, that person fights, naturally fights against death.

there is a struggle waged in death. But in the course of time, the person really is overcome by and is taken by death.

No matter how much they may struggle and no matter how much they may fight, death overcomes them. But you are never to think of the death of Jesus in that term.

[9 : 31] He conquered death by actively dissolving the union that existed between a soul and his body.

That was the death of Jesus. It was a voluntary one. He gave himself to death.

death. So here you have an indication in the first place of the Godhead of our Lord on the cross in complete control of the situation.

Not a victim of circumstances. Not a martyr to his cause. Not crucified in weakness. But mighty in the actual act of dying.

And then secondly, you have also here an indication of the humiliation of our Lord on the cross.

Now he was of course the son of God in our nature.

[10 : 34] And in our nature he submitted to all that God demanded of him in the life that he lived. He entered into a state of dependence.

When you read the term the son of man in the New Testament that's the meaning of it. God coming into a state of dependence. In our nature.

Dependence upon God. Waiting upon God. Trusting in God. Believing in God. Looking to God.

Longing for God. And in these circumstances feeling his need of God.

Feeling in the circumstance in which obedience placed him. Feeling that he needed support. He needed strength. He needed grace.

He needed comfort. Some if you look through the messianic psalms you'll find them full of this kind of thing. Take Psalm 89 where God is saying of his son before he ever came into the world I will keep grace for it.

[11 : 40] In the same way as in the situation confront you and me we need grace and grace is available. So it was for the Lord Jesus in our nature dependent looking waiting needing wanting support.

And our Lord here when he said father into thy hands I commend my spirit was saying absolutely nothing in his death that he had not said in his life.

His death as it were was in this sense but an extension of his life. This was the way he lived in other words when he came into the world I commend my spirit to thee.

In every step that he took I commend my spirit to thee. And now in the last act of his humiliation or of his humiliation in the world in the last act perhaps to be accurate I should say in the second last act because his being laid in the grave was the last act of his humiliation.

Here in the second last act of his humiliation as he died on the cross he continued saying what he had always said Father into thy hands I commend my spirit.

[12:59] I say that for this reason. There are some people who take these words and who say that here is a motto for us in death. This is the way that we should die. My friend Jesus died like this because he lived like this.

This was the extension of his whole life. This was the last act of that life on earth in that state of humiliation.

He commended his spirit into the hand of God. He had traveled the road. Here he knows now at the end of the road.

He had reached the destination. He had gone to the uttermost. there was no other signpost left of that road. Every step that he took was leading him to death.

And as we saw in the past few weeks, he had gone to that abyss and there was nothing beyond.

The first land of forsakenness, the desolation and the darkness of the cross, there was enough step of the road beyond.

[14:12] and he surveyed the whole road that he had traveled. He knew that he had covered the distance, that the journey was finished and he cried with a loud voice, Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit.

He had gone. God didn't want him to go any further. There was, he couldn't go any further because the road away from God.

led to the abyss of forsakenness and he went there that he may deliver his people from it and bring them back to God.

And having gone to the end of the road, he cried as he had lived traveling to that point in his experience, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

night. You know that does go right here at night. This is a quotation from Psalm 31 and the psalmist in that psalm is speaking of the whole of his life and he's saying this, in spite of all I'm going through from my enemies, I will trust in thee.

[15:31] Jesus was saying exactly the same thing. in the face of all that I have endured, Father I will trust thee and now in death I commend my soul or my spirit to thee.

He wasn't saying anything different to the psalmist, but he was saying more than the psalmist.

That's it, that's it, if I may make that point just in passing for those who may be interested in it.

You know that when you study the messianic psalms, the psalms that speak of Jesus, these psalms all had their origin in the experience of the psalmist himself.

And you know that you've heard this illustration already. The messianic psalms are like rivers. They run out from the experience of the psalmist, but the longer they run, the deeper they become.

Until you know that the psalmist could never ever stand in the depth of that psalm. Only one person could stand there, namely the Lord Jesus.

[16:40] He alone could stand there. Now that's what I mean when I say Jesus, in quoting the psalms, isn't saying anything different to what the psalmist said, but he's saying more than the psalmist said.

He's going deeper, as it were, and he's shedding light for us on the psalm that the psalmist himself couldn't say, couldn't shed.

And as someone has put it, here our Lord is just going on with God, as he had always done. This is his life's prayer.

And now, in the eventide of his life, if you want to predict that, in the evening of his life, he closes it, as he had opened it, and as he had lived it.

Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit. You know that in Jewish life, this 31st Psalm, and especially verses 5, 6, and 7, had become a short evening prayer.

[17 : 51] Pupils in school, for example, you know that in our days, at least in some schools, they begin the day with the Lord's prayer, Our Father, which art in heaven. Well, you know, in those days, pupils who attended school, they prayed these words of Psalm 31.

And indeed, the Israelites were encouraged and advised to close the day with this as their evening petition.

But you see, this is not just a death wish for Jesus. This was his life's attitude. And he continued to express it in death.

And the point I want to make this, and I apply this later on, when you're encouraged to die as Jesus did, you remember the best way to do it is to live as he did.

Because he died as he lived. Committing his way to the Lord. The third point I want to make is this. The connection that you always find, I just want to make this very briefly, the connection you always find in scripture between prayer and scripture.

[19 : 06] Now I know that there are people who will tell you that you shouldn't use scripture at all in prayer to God. God. But if you look at the prayers that you have in the Bible, you will surely be impressed by the place that the truth has in these prayers.

And the place that the truth had in the life of these men and women of God in the Old and the New Testament. If we just focus attention for a minute on Jesus, this wasn't the only time that he used the scripture itself in prayer.

He used the scripture to resist the devil in the temptation in the wilderness. And I do not subscribe to the view that people should not use scripture in prayer.

By all means, I don't think that prayer should be just the piecing together of scripture passages taken from the whole Bible and pieced together. That's not what I'm saying. But what I do feel is this, that in our age, now to our age, I think that we are losing a lot of the content that was part and partial of the church's prayer life in the past, because people are not making use of the scriptures of the truth in their prayer life.

Let me give you a very simple example. When you study the word of God in the morning, when you read a passage of the word of God in the morning, in your own devotions, or at family worship, do you know that the passage that you read ought to color the prayer that you address to God if you do pray after it.

[20 : 49] Bring the truth in the other words, bring the truth and the meaning of the truth, and the teaching of the truth, bring that into your prayer life. I would exhort young people to that.

You young men who are here and who lead in prayer, and who find it difficult, and it is difficult, to lead in public prayer, make no mistake about it, it is difficult, but you will be helped if you bring the truth more and more to bear upon your mind, and therefore bring it into your prayer life.

prayer life. I just want to make that point, that there is a real connection between prayer and the use of scripture in the prayers of the church.

Fourthly, there is this point made with the cry of Jesus on the cross here, it is a cry of satisfaction, of contentment, of fulfillment, and of rest, into thy hand I commend or commit my spirit.

You see, he had finished the work. He was now entering into his rest, and he could commit himself to God in prayer. And you know that this is exactly what God himself did, that God himself took rest when he finished the work of creation.

[22 : 08] You know what is written in the book of Genesis, and scattered throughout the Bible, the rest that you have to the seventh day and the way that we ought to take rest? God also rested from all his work on the seventh day.

When he had completed his work, he looked on it all and he said, it was good. And here our Lord, as I've said earlier, has traveled the road. He has come now to the destination to his own death.

The road for him ended here. He could go no further. He was satisfied, content. He could take rest in all that he had done, satisfied with a completed and perfected work.

Father, into thy hand, I commend my spirit. And that's the way, though I'll come again to that in a minute, that's the way in which you and I are to apply this as well to the work that God gives us to do.

We are to do it with all our might, and we are to commit ourselves to commend our spirit, our life, unto him, in all that we do in his name.

[23 : 19] Fifthly, it was an act of faith. How appropriate that our Lord should die as he had lived.

That he should die in the act of trust, in the act of commitment to the Lord. Here he is now, everything is being left behind.

But one thing remains, God the Father. And the God whom he had served, and the God whom he had loved for the whole of his life for 33 years, the God whom he had loved and served perfectly, is now being served by him in his death, as he had served him in his life.

Only God remained. Father, into thy hand, I commend my spirit. And again, though I will come back to it, let us remind ourselves of this, that this is also the way in which we are to live and to die, remembering that we will leave everything behind us.

But God remains. What a blessing it is to live in dependence upon him, and then to die in the same way as we have lived.

[24 : 56] Sixthly, and I'm nearly finished, there is this about the words of Jesus, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. Here is a man who is dying, not just in the act of faith, but in the act of communion with God the Father.

On the cross, he had entered into the darkness of the forsakenness of our sins. That was the hell to which you and I were exposed, and he went there for us.

And from that land of forsakenness he cried, my God, my God, why is no forsaken? I don't believe that Jesus, in the forsakenness of the cross, lost his faith in God.

He didn't. He didn't lose his faith in God. It was a cry of faith from the darkness of the abyss. As I said that night that we preached on this, it was the only cry of faith that this world has ever heard ascending from hell.

He was the only one who cried in the experience of this world from hell. My God, my God, there are lost souls tonight crying.

[26 : 17] and crying from hell, but none of them is crying to God in faith.

yes, in hatred, yes, in anguish, yes, in despair, but not in faith, but he did. But no, of course, the darkness is past.

The light now shines. The consciousness and the awareness of the Father's presence and the Father's love is now restored to his soul.

It had been cut off from him in the darkness, but he believed in God. But here now the light and the favor and the fellowship of God are restored to his soul.

And he cries for the conscious assurance of that presence. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

[27 : 38] Even in the unpleasant circumstances of the cross, he was ridiculed and reproached and mocked and maligned by the forces of hell, through man and devil.

Even in these unpleasant circumstances, he rejoices in the fact that God is near, that God is there and that he is to be with him.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit. And you know, it is possible for people in the most trying circumstances in life, it is possible for Adanael in the lion's den, for Paul and silence in the Roman prison, for David facing death as we sang here at night in the 23rd song, and for Christ on the cross, it is possible to the conscious assurance of the most delightful possession you can ever have in the midst of it all.

Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit. Did you know this? If I were going to ask you tonight, what are the first recorded words of Jesus in the New Testament?

What are they? Do you know what they are? What he said as a 12-year-old boy to his father and mother in the temple in Jerusalem?

[29 : 34] Wist he not that I must be about my father's business? And do you know now what the last recorded words of Jesus?

In his humiliation on earth, where, Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit.

All is one. all his desire, all his hopes, all his prayers, were co-opped out with the glory and the blessedness of his father.

And you know, there's an easy application of that, you know, father. And it is this, that there is no life, and that there is no death, comparable to that which is caught up in the glory and the blessedness of God the father.

and finally, in connection with this, the resting place that his faith had, father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit.

[30 : 53] safety, in the refuge, in the strength, in the power, in the security, in the solace, in the tenderness, and in the love of his father's hands.

That's where he had always been. And you know, the wonder of the grace of God, and the wonder of the cross is this, that the father, if you think of the father's hands, this is the way the Bible speaks figuratively, figuratively, of course, of God the father having hands.

He doesn't have hands as you and I have, he is a spirit. But the Bible uses these terms, you and I can understand something of the power and the glory and the love and the tenderness and the security that is in God for those who put their trust in him.

This is what the Bible tells us, that that God, his hands delivered his son into the hands of sinful men, delivered his son out of love for his people into the hands of the devil.

He was there for 33 years and they did what they could with him. They tried to destroy him. But here he is now at the end of his sufferings, never again to be in the hands of sinful men, never again in his human nature to be in the hands of the devil.

[32 : 20] Do you know that when the Bible next opens its pages on the resurrected Lord, he is never seen in the company of sinful men. He was never seen in the company of those who hated him and who wanted to destroy him after his death, after this he is only with his friend.

He will never again be nearer to the hands of sinful men in his human nature than he is on the throne of glory. And no sinful hand, no hater of the Lord will touch that throne.

And what a relief for the Lord in such circumstances to say, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

He had said of his own people they are safe in my father's hand. No man will pluck them out of my father's hand. And he could say the same of his own soul.

And it gives us an insight as well into the nature of death or into this, not the nature of death, but the question, where does the soul of man go at death? Well, we know where the soul of Jesus went.

[33 : 42] Without a shadow of a doubt, it went into the immediate presence of his father. As he died, he placed it, or rather he left it, where it had always been, in his father's protecting care.

What then are we to make of this and apply it to ourselves before we close this service? Well, surely this one or two things. In the first place, it tells us how we are to live, as it tells us how we are to die.

He quoted Psalm 31 and the psalmist was saying, in all my circumstances, in the face of all my difficulties, I will commit my way to thee.

And that's what this word encourages you and me to do as well. In all our circumstances tonight, whatever our situation in life, whatever problems we may have, whatever difficulties are confronting us, in life, as in death, we are to commit our way to the Lord.

That's the first place, the first application show. The second is this, we too are to seek rest in the completed work of Jesus.

[35 : 14] He surveyed the whole of his work and he said, it is finished. Nothing was left undone. The work of redemption was completed.

The work of atonement was ready. He could now give himself to death. And the application of that is this, see that you add nothing to what Jesus has already completed.

Having done it all, he commended his spirit to God. He bids you now come to him who has done it all for us.

The third application I've already mentioned and I just mentioned in the passing, saturate your prayer life with the scriptures. Students of the world generally become men of prayer and it is a study of the truth that gives birth to Christian experience in the life.

Sculpture your life with the truth. He did. Oh, he did. And you know, I often think, do you know, do you wonder what you would have done if you had been a disciple of Jesus nearly 2,000 years ago?

[36 : 31] Well, it's not right for us to really envy people, but I must say that there was one day that I often feel I envied the disciples.

That was after the resurrection of Jesus when he came and they were gathered in the upper room and he came into the room. And he, and this is right, this is written for us by this man Luke himself.

In the very next chapter, he puts it like this. Permit me just to read this verse to you. Remember he gave him a piece of a broiled fish and a honeycomb and he took it and it did before them and he said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled with written in the blood and the prophets and the psalms concerning me.

Then opened he the understanding that they might understand the scriptures. You know, I must say I would have loved to have been there, to hear Jesus speaking about himself from the Old Testament, to hear him taking passage after passage after passage and interpreting the truth in their hearing.

What a wonderful privilege to have the word interpreted for you. What a wonderful privilege when the Holy Spirit stamps its meaning upon your heart.

[37 : 57] And you know, this was a privilege, to hear him speaking about himself from his own word. you know, some of you may have missed the story.

I like it so much, I make no apology for telling it again. You remember I told you the story of the some of you knew the old lady in the Isle of Skelpe who composed that Gaelic spiritual song This love is so strong.

Well, you know that the minister, one of the ministers who was Skelpe took a visiting minister to visit this old lady. Now, some of you haven't heard this already, others have, so bear with me when I tell it.

The minister was there, took a visiting minister to visit this godly old lady. Now, the visiting minister had often heard the song being sung, the hymn being sung, but her minister prevailed on the old lady to sing it herself.

And this is what the visiting minister said. I had often heard it said that hymn sung by others and sung beautifully. But I had never heard it sung as it was sung that day, because who could sing it so well as the one who had composed it herself?

[39 : 16] No one could sing it like her. No one could put such feeling into it as the one out of whose experience the hymn was born.

So it was with Jesus and the scriptures no one could interpret the scriptures that spoke of himself quite like Jesus himself.

The Bible is full of Jesus. If you want to know him study it. Saturate yourself with the truth and bring the truth more and more into your life and into your prayer life.

That's the other application I want. The fourth application is I have only one left. Live as you would want to die. When Jesus died here on the cross and said Father into thy hand I commit my spirit he was placing himself into the hand of God.

He was alone in that death. No one could die that death but himself. This is what the Old Testament tells us. He trod the wine press alone and of the host there was no one with him.

[40 : 32] They all forsook him and fled. I looked at my right hand and knew there was none. I looked to my left there was none to help. I cried to thee and he was there.

He was alone in his death because he alone could go where you were to save you from the hell into which your sins had brought you.

But though he was alone in his death his people were united to him and as he commended his soul to God in his death so he was making his people over as well and into the hand of the father and he was claiming for them as for himself protection love tender care and the fulfillment of all the promise that God had made to you and now you and I are encouraged to come to stand with the Lord Jesus to stand in his name and on the ground of his finished work to claim the blessing of the covenant which has been sealed with his blood father into thy hand I commit my spirit can you do that tonight in life as you would want to do it if none perish that him trust and the final application

I want to make follow on for that here is a motto for you and for me in life and in death these words as some of you may know were the dying words of the life of Polycott Jerome of Prague Luther Melanthin and that great reformer John Huss and you may know that when John Huss was being led to his execution that day the priests who were with him placed a paper hat on his head and scrawled on that hat were pictures as they thought of devils and these men as they were leading that man of God to his execution were consigning his soul to the devils themselves and he said father into thy hands

I commend my son what a different attitude to the attitude of that and I tell the story not to evoke any emotionalism or sentimentalism in any heart here tonight but what a difference between that attitude and the attitude that I knew of some years ago in a town outside Glasgow where a woman was dying in hospital a young mother and her distraught husband was sitting beside her sitting by her bedside and her last words on earth were these addressing her husband don't leave me don't leave me you know my friend that you and I will have to leave everybody behind and they will leave us in death there'll be just you and the maker your maker to whom you are accountable to whom

you will go what a wonderful privilege would be tonight what assurance you would have in your heart if you could face that prospect with this assurance that your life is already in the hand of the heart

[44 : 27] Jesus was placing his life in the father's hand and death because it had been there from the very beginning of his life there's no point in leaving this great act to the moment of dying because you may not be given the opportunity to place your life then in the hand of God this world of trouble a world of distress and darkness a world of temptation and trial and stress your soul is exposed to so much of that it is difficult to look after yourself in life powerless in death on every hand as someone put it there are dangers and pitfalls here is the beacon of light amongst that darkness here is the harper of shelter from all these storms one who is a shelter from the storms of life and a shelter from the terror of death the father hands from which no one can pluck the soul that is placed there do you realize this if your life tonight is not in the father's hand it is in someone else's hand it is in your own if it is not in his it is in the devil's if it is not in his it is in the world's if it is not in his therefore no matter the difficulties that confront you and the problems that you may have surely these words come to you yet again encourage you to place your life in the hand of the father you know this you couldn't place them in better hands but in the hands of a god who has power to save the hands of a god whose love embraces all would trust in him you remember the dying testimony of that man of god stephen who when he was being stoned to death saw jesus standing at the right hand of god and as he saw him he said into thy hands i commit that lord bids you tonight put your trust in him for time for all it might it is plain blessed to us lord thy word we thank thee for thy great goodness to us for thy forbearance and thy compassion thy mercy and thy love we would ask thee to make thyself known to us to take us under the shelter and the shadow of thy wings to give us safety in thyself to make us aware that thou art near oh lord draw us in faith to thee and enable us to live as our lord and to die as he died in commitment in dependence and in trust commanding his spirit unto thee the father bless to us thy word and part us this night with thy blessing giving your sins for

Jesus sake amen