

The Crucifixion

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[0 : 00] If there's somebody next to you that doesn't have a Bible, turn around and give them one. It's good to share. So we're Luke 23, 32.

Welcome. Good to see you. Okay, Luke 23, 32. Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed.

When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals, one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.

And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, He saved others. Let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.

The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, If you're the king of the Jews, save yourself. There was a written notice above him, which read, This is the king of the Jews.

[1 : 40] One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him. Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us. But the other criminal rebuked him.

Don't you fear God, he said, since you are under the same sentence. We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.

Then he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus answered him, I tell you the truth. Today you will be with me.

In paradise. It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining.

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. When he had said that, he breathed his last.

[2 : 46] The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, surely this was a righteous man. When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away.

But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things. Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action.

He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he was waiting for the kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body.

Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth, and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. It was preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

Amen. Thank you, Lord. Thank you. Thank you, Phil. A punishment worthy of the crime.

[4 : 11] I will have my revenge. I will, I must make him or her pay for what they have done.

All common phrases spelling out punishment. Punishment for the big offenses in life.

And then, of course, there is the lighter ones, such as the very common three strikes and you're out. Now this one, this one seems to come up everywhere, from teenagers at school or a local youth group, right through to adults in our jobs, and so on.

And I suppose the truth is, we, we as everyday people, are rather okay with the three strike rule.

[5 : 21] As a society, we have grown to accept it as the norm. And I suppose when you look at the world at large, all the nations, societies, cultures, and so on, it is evident that indeed, wherever people are, wherever it may be in the world, there is a common understanding by the people of each particular society, culture, or nation, as to how and when a person within that culture or society or nation has blown all their chances.

And is no longer good enough to be accepted by them or even be with them. As humans, we are ready and expecting to have to do something to make up for what we have done wrong.

And all of the world's religions indeed teach that very same theory. The world's religions teach, if you want to be forgiven by God, if you want to make up for your sins, if you want to please God, then do this act.

Carry out this ritual. Say this list of prayers. Read this religious scroll. Pay this amount. Travel this pilgrimage. Walk to this monument.

Pray to this saint. And an amount of other rituals, regulations, and rules. All in the aid of getting forgiven.

[7 : 32] And when it comes to the question of actually getting in, getting into the religion, or getting close to the God, they again say similar things.

Become like this. Reach these standards. Abide by these instructions. Travel to these holy sites. And the more you do, the more God will love you.

And again, the whole world has gotten on with that and accepted that as normal. The world is prepared to work for forgiveness.

The world is prepared to strive for God's love. But, you know what the world is not prepared for? What the world is not prepared for? The world, for some reason, isn't prepared for a system, or a nation, or a culture, or a society, or even a God.

[8 : 53] Where things like this three-strike rule doesn't actually exist. where everyone is forgiven all the time, no matter what. Where no one ever needs to be punished.

No one ever needs to be cast out, barred, or expelled. Where you are not demanded to do this ritual, reach this standard, pay this Jew to get in.

Where you do not need to keep reaching new levels, or keep living by particular standards to be able to remain a member. The world certainly isn't prepared for a God, yes a God, that does not require one to be a good person to get in.

They're not prepared for a God that does not require one to work through their issues. They're not prepared for a God that demands people to get cleaned up to make amends before they can even be close to Him.

In fact, you know what the world has found extremely challenging? The world has really challenging us. The worldwide Christian church labelled religion by God.

[10 : 13] The world finds it so, so difficult when we say God will take you exactly as you are. God will take you and when we tell them Jesus is not telling you that you must get cleaned up, you must become good and all proper to get in.

Jesus is not telling you you must take a punishment for your wrongs. Jesus is not telling you that you must do and perform certain things to please Him and Jesus is absolutely certainly not telling anyone three strikes and you're back out.

In fact, the opposite. He tells us that our chances with Him are completely unlimited. No, the world can't handle it.

It really can't. And the world cannot handle it when we Christians use the word grace. God's riches at Christ's expenses.

And when we say our God is graceful, how absurd that an incredible message of love, forgiveness, joy, peace is so often put down and cut short by everyone from the local office and factory worker right through to the writers and thinkers of our day.

[11 : 50] Why is this? Why do people reject it like this? We can say things like it sounds too good to be true and so on.

But on a deeper look at scripture, there is only one answer. The answer simply is God's enemy, Satan, knows, he knows that God's grace is the one and only single thing, force, movement that can restore, that can change, that can forgive, that can fix people.

And therefore, he has made it his biggest project to do his best to keep people from going anywhere near it. And to do so, he uses his biggest weapon, lies.

Jesus called him the father of lies for a reason. He fills the human race with lies that there's no grace for you, there's no forgiveness for you. He tells people they must work at being good in their own strength.

He tells people they must pay their own way. He tells people they must make their own way, strive for God's love. And you know, his craftiness has no limits to it.

[13 : 15] No limits. Because even he knows it's only natural for people to believe in something higher, to believe in God. So to get around that, he has devised an entire list of false religions where people can indeed believe in the something higher, but they will hold that belief on his terms rather than God's terms.

And so they will work for forgiveness instead of freely receiving it. And they won't hear about grace and keeping people away from God's message and God's grace is his biggest aim and has been since the start.

Back when God first told Abraham that he will raise a numerous people through him where light, love and grace will abound. Satan made a decision that very day, as God said that to Abraham, he made a decision that very day to twist and disturb the followers of God, so that light and love and grace don't abound, so that grace would be hard to find.

And we see the results of his work very often, as everyone from farmers to kings attack their neighbours, take from each other, hate each other, declare war on each other, and all such things, all in the name of punishment and revenge, rather than grace and forgiveness.

And likewise, we see the same God as today, back then in the Old Testament, still declaring and giving grace. As in spite of Abraham's continued lies, God loves him and restores him.

[15 : 07] In spite of Moses' temper and doubt destroying the tablets, God forgives him, loves him, restores him, and ultimate favour for me, in spite of Samson's complete disregard for him.

Even so, at the very utter of that little prayer between three pillars, God picks him up, completely and graciously forgives him, restores him, and puts him back to his job at the very end of the whole thing.

In spite of David's lies, lust, and murder his horrific lifestyle, God forgives him and anoints him king. And ultimately, and mainly, in spite of Israel, as a whole nation, continuously turning back to their sin, continuously giving up on God, walking away from God, there is God every time just waiting for them.

And every single time they come back, God, without hesitation, fully forgives, without a second thought, without any questions, without any demands, without any reconciliation talks, he just simply and fully gives them grace.

And ultimately, and wonderfully, we see the great big finale of the full thing, when God himself arrives on earth in human form.

[16 : 39] people. And just like many scenarios today, still back then, we see the main religious leaders teaching, exercising, and calling the people to a religious system, which is filled by Satan's lies, where people are told to abide by an awful, awful list of demands.

People are given a massive amount of burdens to carry, all with the aim of getting yourself forgiven, and getting yourself closer to God. And again, as for grace, nowhere to be seen, hidden in the background, but wonderfully, joyfully, right within all of that, there was Jesus.

There was Jesus. There was Jesus, walking the streets, declaring forgiveness, forgiveness for all who do nothing more than simply accept it.

He tells no one to reach a status before he will bring them in. No one is required to become good before they can join a discipleship group.

No one is required to change their life around before he takes them in. He summarizes it all up with his very precious for God so loved the world that if anyone, anyone, just anyone simply believes, they won't perish, they won't be punished, but instead will have eternal life with him.

[18 : 23] And back then, when this was happening, first century Israel, just as with people today, it was mind blowing. it was far too difficult to accept. They cannot allow it, to the point of saying, just get rid of Jesus, just kill him, crucify him, because his teaching is far too radical.

And if, if for a moment, I can dare you to imagine a popular Christian leader in 2025, journey in our country, in the eyes of the media, going to our prisons, standing in our courthouses, going into the most violent housing areas, and declaring, everyone here, in this prison, in this courthouse, in this housing area, everyone can be freely forgiven.

There is grace for you all. The exact same thing would happen. The general public, as back then, would call it an anger, away with him, arrest him.

We cannot have such teaching. People cannot be given such freedom and forgiveness. Franklin Graham, Billy Graham's son, didn't even get as far as the prisons and the housing schemes.

He got as far as Glasgow Arena, and the public demanded the government ban him from the UK. And what was his message? God loves you, there's forgiveness for you, just believe him and you'll be saved.

[19 : 57] the world is disturbed by the enemy from understanding grace. But the truth is, grace is real.

Grace is a real and literal truth from God to me and you. So my challenge to us today as God's church in Westerhills is what are we going to do about this?

what are we going to do about the world's misunderstanding? Who are we going to go and explain the truth about God's grace to? For the truth is, no matter what Satan is telling people, no matter what religions are requesting from their followers, the truth is that when it comes to the one true living God, there is zero requirement, zero things to do, zero work to do.

You do not have to become good to get in. And your chances are truly unlimited. Why? Because absolutely none of us can.

Not me, not any of you, not anyone can. Not one single human from Adam and Eve right through has ever been able to be good, has ever been able to make up for our wrongs.

[21 : 24] And as our creator, God fully knows this. And as our creator, he loves us far too much to leave us out on our own. And he even goes further than we could possibly ever imagine when he tells us in the Bible that he actually doesn't even want to punish us.

It's his will that no one should actually be punished and perish. It's mind-blowing. Not only are we reading, he will freely forgive and freely show grace, but we're also being told that in spite of how we humans have destroyed the world and each other, in spite of what we've done, in spite of our filth, he, the one righteous, clean, almighty God, doesn't even want to punish us, doesn't even want to.

Another question, why is God like that then? Why is God so graceful? Why? Well, mankind has long asked that question.

The Christian church itself has long wrestled with it and wondered about it and the answer is found rather centrally in the Bible. If you have a Bible with you, that's okay.

If someone wants to help someone who doesn't have a Bible, that would be brilliant as well. This comes up towards the end of the Old Testament as the Old Testament enters its last league. It's Hosea.

[22 : 56] It's Hosea, okay? As Holy Spirit pens this book with a main focus of displaying God's love for people, particularly for his rebellious people. Okay?

So Hosea chapter 11. God declaring his undying love.

Chapter 11 there. The Lord said, I'm reading from the Good News Bible, by the way, just to turn up here. The Lord says, when Israel was a child, I loved him and called him out of Egypt as my son. But the more I called to him, the more he turned away from me. My people sacrificed to Baal, they burned incense to idols, yet I was the one who taught Israel to walk.

God, I took my people up in my arms, but they did not acknowledge that. I took care of them, I drew them to me with affection and love.

[24 : 19] I picked them up and held them to my cheek. I bent down to them and I fed them and they refused to return to me.

And so they must return to Egypt and Assyria will rule them. War will sweep through their cities and break down the city gates. It will destroy my people because they do what they themselves think is best.

They insist on turning away from me. They will cry because of the yoke that is on them but no one will lift it from them. How can I give you up Israel?

How can I abandon you? Could I ever destroy you as I did Admah or treat you as I did Zeabin? My heart will not let me do it.

My love for you is too strong. I will not punish you in my anger. I will not destroy Israel again for I am God and that man is the long searched for answer.

[25 : 37] God is so loving. God is so forgiving. God is so full of love. God is filled with grace after grace after grace because put very clearly he's not a human.

He is not grudge holding bitter man filled with utter filth and sin. None of God and he is beautiful and he's clean and he's righteous and he's all loving and he's all good and he's totally man I am the holy one among you and I will not come to you in my anger to finish verse 9 there.

All the people when they have no idea how to handle grace believe it or accept it is simply grace is true real and designed and given by God from the heavens above and not by a man on this earth and that's it in a nutshell that's the answer.

We genuinely have the greatest most exhilarating message ever. So we must tell everyone out there about this because they don't know about the truth of grace and our closing piece of proof and evidence is found back where we originally read from today in the chapter detailing the crucifixion as we heard and as we found out these last six months working through Jesus' biography the crucifixion has been on Jesus' agenda since he was born and we heard last week how he used the last supper to initiate the new covenant and he told us that ultimately the new covenant would be sealed by his death and his death would cover as the punishment for every single human meaning that if anyone anyone at all who only believes in him they will definitely be fully forgiven just by grace no works no demands no rituals no regulations just grace by faith and so here he is now in chapter 23 now dying that horrific evil death the most evil painful death ever devised by a human mind and there on the cross next to him is those two other criminals murderers thieves they are the worst of society if you want to put it that way they are the lowest they are the most awful one in particular who according to Nicodemus' first century scroll he tells us he is called

Demos and again according to Nicodemus' first century scroll he tells us he was a criminal of the guerrilla murderous warfare type so according to Nicodemus he was the worst of the worst of the worst well this criminal having now lived a full life of nothing but evil and mayhem is now dying that same agonizing death as Jesus and since he is dying it's very fair to say he will never be able to go and make up for the wrongs he has done can he he will never be able to turn his life around he is dying he is never going to be able to go and start and live good he is dying he can't even lift his nailed hands and show his intention to change he is dying he is blowing his chances it is far too late for him he has lived a guerrilla warfare type life he is dying it is done yet yet literally just minutes before his dying breath he says

[30 : 04] Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom remember me when you come into your kingdom and bang it's done that's it he's in he's a member he's a disciple he's a Christian he's a preacher he's a priest he's been given full grace he's gone to heaven he's fully forgiven as Jesus simply says I tell you today you will be with me in paradise why think about it this criminal was never going to go and make up for his wrongs he was never going to go and make up of those he hurt he was never going to go and start doing good he was never going to go and help the poor or visit the sick he was never going to go and get involved in church work he wasn't going to go round the doors he wasn't going to start preaching or do evangelism he was never going to do anything he wasn't going to get baptized he wasn't going to sing a worship song he wasn't going to read his bible or anything else of the kind he couldn't even lift that nailed hand to shake

Jesus' hand and say thank you he couldn't do one single thing nothing no works no efforts no pilgrimages no payments nothing nothing nothing yet Jesus says that's it you're in you're forgiven you're a Christian you're part of the priesthood of all believers I'll see you in paradise very very very shortly all because of what he said there Jesus remembered me and when he said Jesus remember me he showed he believed who Jesus was and simply and only because he believed Jesus was able to give him full grace and take him to heaven it's the greatest example of what Jesus meant when he said for God so loved the world that he gave Jesus that if anyone anyone including this guy here just believes in Jesus then they will be saved and in heaven forever and the only reason Jesus was able to do that is because as we learned from Hosea he's not a man he's God oh for sure a human would have said no way son you're far too late we would have fully begrudged him but not

Jesus nope Jesus said you're in because Jesus isn't a riddled filth sin filled human he is God our God and this incredible message of grace still exists today in the exact same way Jesus did for the criminal he still does for me and you today and by the work of the enemy the world still doesn't get it but Westerhill Baptist Church let's tell them let's tell them because I've read that chapter all my life and if I went through it this week I was still as excited and umphed up by it if not more more actually for the older I get the more I realise what I would be without him please be excited by this enjoy this this is the greatest thing that you can ever hear get into this go home and read it over and over again and actually learn get your mind around what he's done for you because you couldn't have this you wouldn't be here without him and so as we hear that our reading finished with

Jesus dies as our punishment but next week resurrection resurrection comes back out of the tomb to go forth and we have the privilege of remembering him and we'll have communion as we remember him and have our remembrance Sunday as well but please capture the excitement of what Jesus is actually saying I've done for you here of what he's actually offering you in this this here you couldn't be anywhere without him it's grace and grace alone let's pray Lord Jesus Christ we we do we thank you so so much Lord just to think about all of us and all of our wrongs whether it's just telling simple lies or whether it's something that's put us in prison or anything in the middle Lord doesn't matter doesn't matter because you forgive the entire amount you forgive the entire amount and when we come to you and we have this great life with you Lord no matter how many times we mess up and mock up Lord you forgive forgive and forgive again grace unlimited this really is the message of the second third fourth fifth sixth and beyond chance so let us be excited by it Lord happy by it Lord overjoyed by it Lord and tell everyone about this Lord let us mull and think about your sacrifice and what you've done thank you Lord Jesus Amen and so that very song Jesus Christ I think upon your sacrifice do stand if you're able as we enjoy this closing song Jesus Christ [36 : 41] Jesus Christ I think upon your sacrifice you became the king thrown out to death many times I've wondered at your gift of life and I'm in that place once again I'm in that place once again and once again I look upon the cross where you died I'm humbled by your mercy and I'm broken inside once again I thank you once again I pour out my life now you are exalted to the highest place king of the heavens where one day

I'll bow but for now I marvel at the saving grace and I'm full of praise once again I'm full of praise once again and once again I look upon the cross where you died I'm humbled by your mercy and I'm broken inside once again I thank you once again I pour out my life do join us at 6pm if you're able that would be really really nice and may you go forth from here knowing the vast and mighty love of Jesus all wrapped up in those famous words for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever whoever believes will not perish but have eternal life until the Lord bless you the Lord keep you the Lord make his face shine upon you Lord Jesus thank you so so much for really dying for all of us thank you so much for really really taking all of our sin and death for taking our burdens we're so thankful let us go forth bold and courageous to tell all in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Amen holy