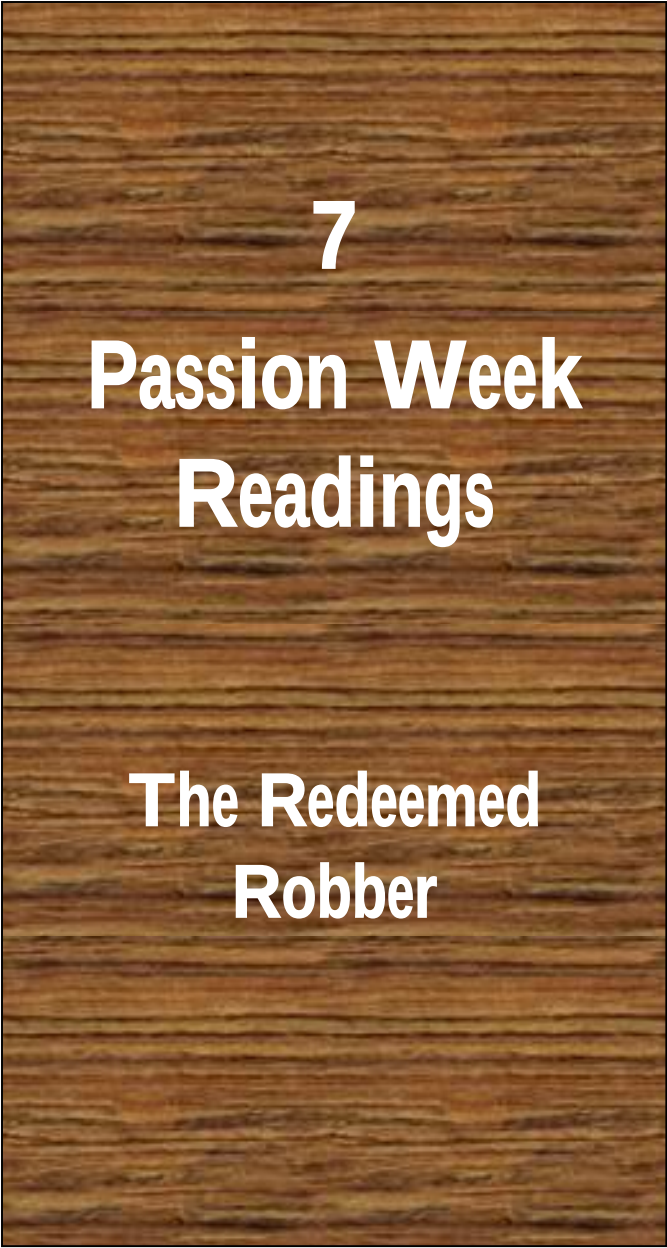


The background of the page is a vertical rectangle with a wood-grain texture, featuring horizontal lines and varying shades of brown.

**7**

**Passion Week  
Readings**

**The Redeemed  
Robber**



The streets are friendless, choking with dust and crowds on every side. What sick people enjoy this kind of parade? This is why I hate this place, this world that's given me nothing but trouble.

Around every corner is another hit on the head or a strap to the back. He carries his cross and I carry mine. Every man for himself. We climb the same hill, cut our feet on the same rocks.

They separate us and strip us naked, preparing us for an audience of shame, ridicule and pious hypocrisy. When they wrestle me to the ground, I fight every inch. He lays down, no fight, no argument. Obediently.

The pain begins and never stops. My feet,  
my arms, my lungs – it hurts to breathe.  
The agony spreads the higher they hoist us.  
I never knew shame like this.

Below me, soldiers bored and angry, fight  
over His last piece of clothing because it  
was seamless, untorn, untattered. They tore  
our backs open and ripped away whatever  
was left of our dignity.

The man dying next to me is silent, in pain  
but almost composed. I can barely read the  
billboard over his head - “King of the  
Jews”. What King dies like this? Where are  
his subjects, his throne, his treasures? What  
rule does he hold over our executioners?

My cellmate echoes the mockery coming  
from the crowd. “Save yourself and us too,  
you big talker!”

Why doesn't he lash out? Why doesn't he curse? Say something!

His lips move. "Father, forgive them."  
He's praying? And not for Heaven above but for the scum below. They spit on us and mock us, and he prays for them.

What kind of criminal acts like this?

I **KNOW** how criminals act. I've been my own king my whole life. But not anymore. There's no life left.

I have no fight left. I have nothing, no one left. I'm afraid — of being alone, the emptiness, what's next.

This man who prays for murderers, this king, does he have a kingdom? If he does, it must be on the other side. Is this why he seems like he is waiting instead of despairing? And he prays for forgiveness.

Like one last offer of mercy from God  
Himself.

If he prays for them, would he pray for  
me? Is he still conscious? Would he even  
talk to me?

“Jesus?” He slowly turns and meets my  
eyes.

“Would you remember me, whenever,  
wherever, however your kingdom comes?”

His gaze pierces my heart. He knows me  
instantly, sees my desperation.

“This very day, you will meet me in  
Paradise.”

I begin to weep and can't stop.

He said, “Today”.

He said, "Paradise".

I have no one else but him. And He is all I need.

My collapsing body holds a grateful heart. Not for very much longer. Our crosses didn't touch but I knew my hand was in His. And in minutes, maybe hours we will talk again. We will walk in some kingdom where He is King.

My tears wash over this dark and evil hill. I can see something even his friends can't – I see a victor's crown and a king's scepter. I am 20 feet away from an escort into Paradise – an escort by the King Himself. "Remember me, Jesus."

He said, "Today" and He said, "Paradise."

## 2

So, the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle. Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.” Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.” John 19:16-22

*The chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! Let this Messiah, this king of*

*Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him. At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. Mark 15:31-33*

*One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? 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, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.” Luke 23:40-43*

I have two questions for you to consider this Easter season.

**#1 What questions would this redeemed robber ask us today?**

**#2 Why was Jesus murdered in the middle of two thieves?**

Question 1. This story tells us that when the thief closed his eyes in death, he opened them in Paradise. His broken rebellious life was replaced with the blameless life of Christ. He was forgiven and met Jesus there in Paradise that very day. If he met us today, what questions would he ask?

Let's recall his conversation from the cross when he rebuked his cellmate.

*“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, "Truly I  
tell you, today you will be  
with me in paradise." Luke  
23:40-43*

If this thief (or I should say, former thief) could re-enter our earth space from Paradise and ask us a few questions, I wonder what they might be?

After experiencing lifechanging news within minutes of his expiring time on earth, what would he say to you?

**"Are you living with shame?"**

Shame hides things we say and regret. Shame haunts us when we can't undo something we did. It's hidden deep inside and piles up under the carpet of our lives. We don't know how to get rid of it.

The criminal by Jesus' side - he lived in shame, acted out of shame and died in shame. But on death's doorstep his shame was removed and carried to the grave by another. And in his heart, he died without shame and stood before God in Paradise - blameless.

Your shame can be removed too. And the habits we use to cover our shame can be abandoned. Like the thief, Jesus can carry your shame away. How is this possible?

*“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” 1 Peter 2:24*

He experienced the shame of the cross even though He was innocent. He carried our shame on His body, and it was buried right along with His body.

When you trust Jesus, your shame goes right to the grave. It's gone! "By His wounds, you have been healed" of your shame.

*Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit...I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And you forgave the guilt of my sin. Psalm 32:2,5*

Here's another question this redeemed thief would put to us.

**"Are you suffering the consequences of your own bad decisions?"**

If anybody could answer this question with a painful, regrettable "Yes", it's this criminal on the cross. He would go on though to tell you to not let those consequences keep you from finding peace

and forgiveness. Don't think you have to make up for them first before God will hear you. Stop trying to balance up your bad decisions with good ones before God will accept you.

Look at this robber. No opportunity to balance the scales. The scale was stuck and not in his favor at all! Jesus listened to his humble helpless prayer and gave him an incredible promise: "It's OK. I paid for your sins. I'll see you later in paradise."

His promises work for you too, in spite of all the bad decisions and their consequences.

To the woman who had a string of five failed marriages He said, "I will give you the water that satisfies your deepest thirst." The love and security she couldn't find with the men in her life, Jesus would satisfy.

To the outcasts Jesus gave dignity. Ask the prostitute and the woman caught in adultery. (Luke 7:47; John 8:11)

The cheating Roman collaborator, He forgave and restored at dinner in front of all his friends. Ask the disciple Matthew. That's his story.

*Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you." Matthew 21:31*

He embraced Peter the Good-Friday-Denier and Thomas the Easter-Doubter and gave them keys to the kingdom and a worldwide commission of love.

To this criminal hanging next to Him covered in shame, He gave an eternity of forgiveness and hope. He didn't give a book of theology to memorize. He didn't give a membership class or a list of FAQs.

Just a simple trustworthy promise –  
“Today you will be with Me in paradise.”

## **PRAYER**

*God, forgive me for the times when I kept  
my distance because I didn't think you  
would want me after what I've done.  
Thank you for taking my shame and my  
sin away from me and onto the cross and  
into the grave. Give me the joy of  
forgiveness and freedom from all that.  
Amen.*

### 3

#### **“Do you fear God?”**

He asked it right there on the cross. He asked his cellmate.

*“Don’t you fear God?” Luke 23:40*

He could have asked anyone glaring up at him from the crowd – the gawkers who came for a show, the religious teachers and priests, the Roman guards.

Do you fear God? Well, you should. Why? Because God judges us. Because we all will get what we deserve.

That’s a harsh message our culture runs from. Well, honestly, we all run from it. We’d rather sweeten the image of God into a Heavenly therapist who acknowledges that life is tough for every human. Since imperfections, bad decisions, neglect and downright disdain is what it

means to be human, I guess He'll let it slide. Nobody's perfect, right?

Wrong. God is Perfect in His love and also in His Holiness – His Right-ness. And that means He is a Perfectly Fair and Just Judge. We have a very good reason to fear a Powerful and Perfect Judge.

*Now we know that whatever  
the law says, it says to those  
who are under the law, so that  
every mouth may be  
silenced and the whole world  
held accountable to God.  
Therefore no one will be  
declared righteous in God's  
sight by the works of the law.  
Romans 3:19-20*

We can't run from this truth. And in our bones, we know it to be true. Our world shouts the truth that something's wrong! That "something" lies within each human being – the inability to do what's right

perfectly. We all fall short of perfection – God's standard.

And no amount of good deeds or good karma can add up to perfection. Can't be done - no matter how hard we try.

Was there ever a man who embodied this verse like the criminal next to Jesus?

*For the wages of sin is  
death, but the gift of God is  
eternal life through Christ  
Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23*

He knew painfully the wages of his sin – he was sentenced to death. He was minutes away from facing a perfect Judge. And he had nothing to offer God in response to God's question, "Why should I let you into my Perfect Heaven?"

Until he spoke with Man in the middle.  
Until he admitted his fear of God and his trust in Jesus. He had nothing – until that

moment of simple desperate trust upon the Man in the middle.

That's when the thief found the gift: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."

A never-ending life is a gift. We can't earn it – you don't earn a gift. If you could earn it, it wouldn't be a gift!

The redeemed robber would tell you the gift is unimaginable! It is truly Paradise! He would grab you and shake you and say, "Get the gift! Don't miss it. Get the gift from the Man in the middle!

I believe he would also ask you,

**"Do you feel you don't deserve love?"**

That's exactly what he felt. He even said that "We are getting what we deserve." They deserved the judgment of Rome

because they broke the law of Rome and - since they broke the law of God - the judgement of God. Certainly not His love.

He looked at Jesus and asked him a question. Essentially, he asked, “Is there enough love for me?”

Jesus saw his heart and offered him grace and mercy.

Mercy is *not getting* what you deserve – judgement.

Grace is getting what you *don't deserve* – life.

If you're feeling like you don't deserve God's love, grace and mercy are exactly what you need.

*Let us then approach God's  
throne of grace with  
confidence, so that we may  
receive mercy and find grace to  
help us in our time of need.  
Hebrews 4:16*

## **PRAYER**

*Thank you for the gift of life, Lord.  
Forgive me for when I am flippant and not  
reverent. Thank you for Your mercy for  
not getting what I deserve. And for Your  
grace in getting what I don't deserve –  
Your love and Your help. Amen.*

## 4

The robber, if he were here, would look us square in the eye and ask:

**“Do you believe that God has forgotten you?”**

His prayer that day was, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

*Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.” Luke 23:42-43*

“Remember me,” he said. He spent years ignoring God. I’m sure he felt God had forgotten him. Why would He even care about a man who had no room for God for years?

Would Jesus ignore him? Would Jesus treat him like the thief that he was or maybe, just maybe...

This may have been the only prayer he prayed in decades. Why would anyone listen to him now? Imagine his shock when Jesus turned to answer him.

Not only did Jesus *remember* him, but he also gave him a promise. "Today, I'll see you in Paradise."

Imagine the darkness in his soul replaced with the light of life! The heavy burden of shame and fear fell off of his dislocated shoulders!

*"For God so loved the world  
that He gave His one and only  
Son." John 3:16*

The redeemed robber would tell you God has not forgotten you. He sees your heart

and your hurts. He knows your circumstances and your sorrows.

Regardless of your hang-ups, He wants to give you a promise too. He remembers you and is ready to draw you into life.

To the thief, the most relevant question might be this one:

**“How sure are you that you’ll see  
Paradise?”**

Jesus responded to the robber and said, “Not only will I remember you, but I will give you a promise: Today we will see each other in paradise.”

No intermediate state, no purgatory,  
**TODAY.**

I don’t know much about the theory of purgatory. But I know enough that this thief blows up that theory.

If there was ever a person who needed to make amends in the afterlife to make himself worthy of Paradise, this was the guy. He had zero opportunity to deal with the consequences of his sin which is what purgatory handles.

And yet, Jesus said essentially, “I’ll see you later today.” No waiting, no working it off, no probation, no wondering how long.

A robber welcomed into Heaven by the Redeemer!

People say there are many ways to God. However, if God is a perfect God, there is really only one way to meet Him. Once a person is perfect, he can stand before God and embrace Him.

So, the question then is: How is one made perfect? No religion or spiritual practice on the planet answers that question adequately.

But here is a sinner of great degree being promised Paradise within hours. How can he enter a perfect world filled with a Perfect God after the life he led?

The answer lies in the Man in the middle. His escort is a Perfect man, the Son of God. And somehow, being led by Jesus makes him perfect – and perfectly able to enter Paradise.

*For by one sacrifice he has  
made perfect forever those  
who are being made holy.  
Hebrews 10:14*

Don't plan on entering Paradise without an escort. As hard as I try, I cannot clean up good enough for a place in a perfect world. I'm counting on Christ who as our Good Shepherd says:

*I am the gate; whoever enters  
through me will be saved.*

*They will come in and go out,  
and find pasture. John 10:9*

## **PRAYER**

*To be honest, at times I feel You have forgotten me. Teach me that Your silence doesn't mean Your absent. Speak to me because I need to know You're here. And thank you for the sacrifice that brings me Paradise. I am forever grateful. Amen.*

## **5**

Question #2 Why was Jesus murdered in the middle of two thieves? Was there any purpose in how the crucifixion went down?

We know God does everything with a purpose. Many of His purposes are mysterious to us. I believe there are at least six reasons why it happened this way.

We can discern them from the Scriptures and the larger story of Jesus.

In each reading that follows, allow me to share two reasons.

I believe that Jesus died between these robbers, first of all, because it shows...

### **The depth of God's loving reach**

At his birth, he was in a cave with barn animals. At his death, he was on a cliff with the animals of society. How low will God go to rescue a person? How deep is the love of God? How long is God's arm?

*Surely the arm of the LORD is  
not too short to save, nor his  
ear too dull to hear.*

*Isaiah 59:1*

Jesus was not deaf to the sorrowful request of a dying criminal. That's how far God will go to rescue a broken heart.

*“My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.” Psalm 51:17*

Even as He was being despised by the crowd, Jesus could not despise this broken heart next to him.

Do you know what that means in real terms? There is no distance God won't travel to reach a broken heart. There is no crime so heinous that God will not move to forgive. There is no sin so great that His grace would be insufficient to cover. There is no prayer so small that He won't hear and respond.

No one is beyond His loving reach. You're not beyond no matter what you've done. Your loved one with all their baggage – not beyond His love.

If He reached this executed criminal next to Him, he can reach that loved one.

Why else did he hang between two criminals? I think it shows...

### **The intense shame Jesus carries**

When a person stands before God, clothed in only his own works, he knows he has fallen short. I know today that I have fallen short of God's perfect ways and standards. And when we know that, really know that – we're ashamed, even humiliated before God.

Think of that time when you were found out. When it was noticed that you weren't good enough at your job, or your white lie

was revealed, or a well-hidden flaw was uncovered in public. What did you feel? Shame and humiliation.

If Jesus purpose was to carry our sin, he must carry our shame too. His company at the cross was shameful company, humiliating people to associate with. He bore our shame, so we don't have to. We can stand without shame before God every day because Jesus took it.

On the other side of shame, when shame is removed – there is joy.

*Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2*

Jesus scorned the shame as if he was mocking its power. The shame had no grip on Jesus as He buried it for good in the grave and walked out of that grave ALIVE and triumphant!

Friends, that's where Jesus took your shame. You too can walk out of that grave triumphant, forgiven and with joy. Fix your eyes on Jesus the perfecter of your faith. The One who shook off the shame and sat down victorious by the throne of God!

## **PRAYER**

*God, I'll never understand the depth of Your love. How You keep loving me through my ups and downs. Keep my heart contrite toward You and others. Teach me to leave the shame and guilt in the grave. And instead, live a life of freedom and joy because of Your work. Amen.*

## 6

This scene that plays out every Good Friday in churches all over the world portrays...

### **The only two responses to Jesus**

*“Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.” Matthew 27:38*

At first, they both hurl insults at him along with the crowd. There was no break from their lifetime of rebellion, even as they were dying. Both knew they deserved their sentences. They both watched the spitting and hitting, the soldiers gambling for the cloak of Jesus. They both saw the sign above his head, heard the priests and teachers mock Jesus by twisting his words.

They both watched His response, watched him pray for his enemies.

One heart hardened; the other heart softened. One continued to revile, the other began to repent. Both needed forgiveness and time was running out.

What was pictured on that hill? God's provision and humanity's responses — rejection or repentance. And the person of Jesus, who they regarded him to be, determined their response.

One man died angry, fighting, unforgiven. The other died a forgiven man. Only minutes after Jesus died, he awoke to a reunion with him in Paradise.

Why else did he die with these criminals, one on either side? To demonstrate that...

## **Salvation comes by grace alone**

The forgiven thief had no moral life to stand on prior to his sentencing. He couldn't appeal to good morals or produce character witnesses. And he had no ability to rectify his wrongdoings or pay restitution or change his lifestyle after he met Jesus. There was no time to prove he was different, to change his ways.

And yet, before the day was done, he embraced Jesus in Paradise, forgiven and fully cleansed in God's presence.

We bristle at this truth. This guy was guilty enough in the public sector to warrant an execution! How does he get to go to Heaven?

By grace alone.

*For it is by grace you have  
been saved, through faith—  
and this is not from  
yourselves, it is the gift of  
God—not by works, so that  
no one can boast. Ephesians  
2:8-9*

Here's the truth. You have as much a chance to get to heaven on your own merit as does Nikolas Cruz who murdered seventeen high-schoolers in Florida in 2018.

“Whoa, now. Wait a minute! You can't compare me to that scumbag!”

I'm not. I wouldn't dare compare you to him or compare me to him. Because comparing ourselves to each other doesn't mean anything.

However, comparing Dave Allem to God, that's a different story. And that's the only comparison that matters! There's really no comparison. I fall way, way short of the glory of God. We all do.

And the repentant thief teaches us that all we get from God – forgiveness, His spirit, power, a future home – all of it is by grace and not on our own merit.

Grace is the only currency accepted in the economy of heaven. Merit is worthless because we can't earn favor with God.

We must see ourselves in this thief if we are going to see the kingdom of God.

God will save in childhood, at college, during middle-age, in adulthood and even at death's door. And it is by grace alone at each and every rescue.

## **PRAYER**

*I pray for those who have yet to respond to you, Jesus. My friends and family, may they trust You and only You to rescue them from themselves. Show them their merit won't get them to Paradise. Help me love them to respond, "yes" to You.*

## **7**

When we look closely at Jesus' interaction with the thief, we see...

### **The power of His presence**

When this thief encountered Jesus, Jesus wasn't a hero. He didn't look like a King or Messiah. Arthur Pink writes his encounter "occurred at a time when to outward appearance Christ had lost all power to save either himself or others.

This thief had marched along with the Savior through the streets of Jerusalem and had seen him sink beneath the weight of the cross!”

“It is highly probable that as one who followed the occupation of thief and robber, this was the first day he had ever laid eyes on the Lord Jesus, and now that he did see him, it was under every circumstance of weakness and disgrace. His enemies were triumphing over him. His friends had mostly forsaken him. Public opinion was unanimously against him. His very crucifixion was regarded as utterly inconsistent with his Messiahship.”<sup>2</sup>

And yet, this robber trusted this broken, bloodied Jesus as the King and his way into the kingdom.

How do we account for that? The power of His presence.

*For in Christ all the fullness of  
the Deity lives in bodily form.  
Colossians 2:9*

*God was in Christ reconciling  
the world to Himself, not  
counting their trespasses  
against them. 2 Corinthians  
5:19*

In Luke 4 Jesus is taken to the edge of cliff by an angry crowd. They were going to throw him over, but he stopped them and walked right through the middle of them. How? The power of his presence.

We see his powerful presence In the Garden where he enjoyed praying. However, on the night before His death, His prayers were full of agony and sorrow. It's the garden where he was arrested.

*Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"*

*"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.*

*"I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.)*

*When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.*

*Again, he asked them, "Who is it you want?"*

*"Jesus of Nazareth," they said. Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go." John 18:4-8*

They had the clubs, the swords and the chains. Why did they reel from his voice and fall to the ground?

There is power in the name of Jesus. Here is power in the presence of Jesus. He chose to do nothing from that cross when 60,000 angels were always on standby to help him, according to Matthew 26:53. Imagine that display of power!

But this robber saw only the dying Jesus - and the power of His presence melted his heart.

Finally, the scene with Jesus on the cross between two criminals, all of them helpless and slowly dying, illustrates that...

## **Saving is God's work and not ours**

There was no preaching, no music, no altar call, no booklet. There wasn't even an explanation of the gospel.

The gospel was hanging right there between heaven and earth. The gospel was stripped naked of all the things we add to it to make it - in our minds - more effective or appealing.

The gospel that rescues is a Person. He needs no decoration or sweetener. He needs us to introduce Him and He does the supernatural work of saving, sanctifying and securing our place in Paradise.

*"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."  
John 14:6*

Paradise is not about church attendance or affiliation. It's not about what you do. It's about Who you know. That's what the cross tells us. God needs very little to save people.

Here it was a simple conversation at death's door. What He does need are people to show-and-tell about Jesus. Because no one comes to the Father except through Him.

## **PRAYER**

*Remind me daily, Lord, of the power of Your presence and sacrifice. Your sacrifice frees me from all my guilt and its chains.*

*Your Presence guides me to overcome whatever I face. Even as You overcame the grave! Hallelujah! Amen!*



In this criminal are all the nobodies of this world, the forgotten, the wayward, the undeserving. Jesus told him in one sentence! *Today* you will see Paradise.

**When his last day on earth ended,  
his first day in Paradise began.**

He wasn't alone. Jesus promised His presence. Jesus would meet him, befriend him, escort him. The cross of the criminal was not the end. His story didn't end in darkness. In fact, his story has never ended. He entered the very kingdom he saw in Jesus by faith. The place Jesus is preparing.

*"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I*

*am going there to prepare a place for you?*

*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”*

*Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.  
John 14:1-6*

The movie *Hacksaw Ridge*<sup>1</sup> tells the true story of Desmond Doss, a man who wanted to serve his country in WW2 without picking up a rifle. He was a

dedicated Christian whose convictions prohibited him from breaking the sixth commandment against murder.

When his conviction was discovered, his superiors tried to get him to quit through intimidation and quite frankly, religious persecution. But he wouldn't break.

He ended up before a court martial who amazingly ruled in his favor. He was permitted to serve without a rifle.

Hacksaw Ridge was an enemy position on top of a sheer cliff. It was named *Hacksaw Ridge* because of the human carnage that remained on the battle line.

One bloody day, another retreat off the ridge was sounded and survivors repelled down the cliff. Critically injured and helpless soldiers were left up on Hacksaw Ridge.

Soon the enemy would move in and finish the job as survivors repelled to safety. Doss decided to disobey the retreat order. He entered the danger zone to retrieve men who were injured and get them off the ridge.

One by one, he located the critically injured, tied them in a harness and lowered them down the cliff. A few sentries saw the injured lowered down the cliff in harnesses and unlatched them. The rope would go up and soon another body would come down. All night long, Desmond Doss rescued helpless soldiers and lowered them to safety.

He survived injuries of his own and won the medal of honor from President Eisenhower for saving 75 men that night.

We are all helpless, and critically injured spiritually. We cannot save ourselves.

We must trust another, to heal us and bring us new life. We need to trust a Savior to bring us to safety. Jesus sacrificed Himself to offer us a rope to abundant life and eternal safety.

The thief on the cross, in his last hour, found healing and life everlasting. The doorway to life and healing is a Person. The thief found Him only twenty feet away. The Man in the middle.

He's right next to you, too. Have you found Him? If you haven't personally met Him, personally trusted Him – do it now. Get the gift! By His wounds you find healing and in Him you receive paradise.

If you already know Jesus in this way, share Him. Share His story and His presence. Be part of the greatest rescue effort this world has ever known.

Our world needs rescue desperately. Not just the world; people around you.

Find the injured, the forgotten, the lonely.  
Love the outcast, those who have given up,  
who feel too far gone.

Introduce them to the Man in the middle.



**<sup>1</sup>Gibson, Mel. Hacksaw Ridge. Lionsgate, 2016**

**<sup>2</sup>The Seven Sayings of the Savior on the Cross**, Arthur W. Pink  
<https://www.amazon.com/Seven-Sayings-Saviour-Cross/dp/0801065739>

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**Booklet written by David Allem, 2024**

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