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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 19:25-30

"The Messiah Dying"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Now we are turning to John chapter 19 and verse 25 through verse 30. John chapter 19 and verse 25 through verse 30. We are in that section of the passion account in which our Lord is hanging upon the cross. And now we are going to look at some of the things that he said as he was hanging upon the cross.

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved (That, of course, was the Apostle John), he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. (Now if you're reading this carefully you might ask yourself the question as you read, does this verse mean that all things were now accomplished that the Scripture might now be fulfilled. Or does John mean that the Scripture might be fulfilled he said, "I thirst." In other words, does the fulfillment refer to the accomplishment of all things. Or does it refer to this simple statement, "I thirst" actually one word in the Greek text? It is possible to take it both ways, but we are making the decision "that the Scripture might be fulfilled" refers to the statement, "I thirst." And thus what we have is a fulfillment of Psalm 69 and verse 21 where we

read, "They gave also gall for my meat and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. So I'm just suggesting to you that it seems more likely that John the Apostle intends that we understand this "I thirst" as the fulfillment of that Old Testament Scripture. All of the words that our Lord speaks on the cross may be related to the Old Testament, so it's more likely, it seems that this too would be referred to the Old Testament. Now the apostle continues.) Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar (One might puzzle at this particular thing, because remember in the earlier stages of the passion, some of the men sought to give our Lord wine mingled with gall and our Lord refused it. But now, the vinegar is a posca or a highly diluted wine. So one might ask the question, why did he refuse the wine mingled with gall? Why does he now accept the wine? Probably the reason is simply this, it was customary, and incidentally in Jewish literature you will find reference to this, to give those who were to be crucified some drink in which a narcotic was mingled, the gall, in order to deaden the pain. It was simply a means of softening the effects of the crucifixion; which incidentally, reveals that there was some form of compassion on the part of the people. But our Lord refused that. And evidently he refused it because he wanted to suffer the crucifixion with his senses unimpaired. In other words, no deadening, no sense of he was avoiding the pain or the suffering. But then one might ask, why then does he take the wine near the end of his passion? Well, probably for precisely the same reason. By now he would be even more weakened, and thus there would be danger that he might even by exhaustion lose his senses physically. And so he took the wine in order to in a sense strengthen himself for the completion of the physical aspect of his sufferings. So that is the reason probably he refused in the one case the wine mixed with the gall, but in the other case he did take the wine. Now he says according to verse 30), he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

Let me just make a comment about that last expression, "Gave up the ghost." Strictly speaking that text means simply this, 'He handed over the spirit.' Or we could translate it, "He

handed over his spirit." Now a great deal of stress is laid upon his authority, "He handed over his spirit," that is to the Father. If you look at the accounts of the death in the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, they record it in a slightly different fashion, but not out of harmony with John. One of them says, "He released his spirit." That gives great stress upon the authority of our Lord. Even in his death by crucifixion it was he was in authority. "He released his spirit." Then the other gospel writers say that, "He breathed out his spirit" or "He breathed his last." He expired. That is somewhat undecided so far as authority is concerned. But the essential of all of these things put together is that there is a stress upon our Lord's authority. And even in his death he is in sovereign control of these affairs.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for this privilege that is ours again of opening the Scriptures and reflecting again upon this most significant event, the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, upon which ultimately all of our hopes for eternal life rest. We thank Thee for the merits of the Son of God gained through the sacrifice that he offered on Calvary's cross. We thank Thee that he died this humiliating death, because it reminds us of the humiliation of our own sin, and rebellion, and disobedience. But it also reminds us of the exalted glory of the Son of God who voluntarily became the penal sacrifice through substitution and bore our guilt. We are grateful to Thee, Lord. We could never express to Thee fully what it means to have our sins forgiven. And we thank Thee that throughout the ages of eternity the significance of that shall grow and grow in our understanding. May, Lord, in the life that Thou hast given us to live here we be faithful that which Thou hast done for us, and serve Thee in a way that will please Thee. We ask, Lord, for a new sense of our dependence upon Thee and a new sense of our responsibility before Thee, and a new zeal in the service that Thou wouldst have us render to Thee. And to him who loved us and gave himself for us.

We ask Thy blessing upon those who are needy in our congregation, and there are many. We pray, Lord, that Thou wilt minister to them. To the sick and bereaved, O God, dispense Thy mercies and Thy blessings in a rich and full way. And for those others of us, Lord, who have the various problems and trials of life to think about, we ask that Thou wilt minister to us and hold us up and keep us for Thy glory. We thank Thee for this church and for its elders, and deacons, and members, and friends, and for its outreach and ministry that literally stretches to the four corners of this earth. We thank Thee out of such a small group there should go such a widespread ministry. And we {are} grateful, Lord, for that. And we pray that Thy blessing may rest upon it for the glory of Jesus' name. And give us, Lord, a vision of that which is possible as we seek to serve Thee under the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Supply the needs that exist. We pray for all who minister, those who teach Bible classes, the publications ministry, the radio ministry, all of the forms of ministry that go forth from this place. O God, may Thy blessing rest upon them. And now we pray for the whole body of Christ, and we pray for our country. We ask Thy blessing upon them. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] We're turning to John chapter 19 and verse 25 through verse 30 and our subject this morning is "The Messiah Dying." Golgotha is the converging point of all ancient history and the origin of all modern history. The prophets, we are told in the Old Testament times, looked forward to the cross. The church in New Testament times constantly looks back to the cross; for it is there that the church's life is ultimately grounded.

One of the striking things about human history and particularly our western world history is the fact that time has been unable to blot out the memory of Jesus Christ. Many people, no doubt, would love for that to take place. But it has not taken place and it, I do not believe, ever will. For example, every calendar that hangs on the wall testifies to the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every check that is drawn, even those that come back marked NSF providing they're dated, testify to the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every letter that is written when you date it is

a testimony to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every newspaper that we read connects our day with his. This is 1983 A.D., A.D. 1983 *anno domini*, in the year of our Lord 1983. So it is true time has been unable to blot of the memory of him.

In fact, the whole life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ is so remarkable and so unique that the French skeptic Rousseau said, "It would take a Jesus to forge a Jesus." Our Lord uttered seven words on the cross of Calvary. Now, when we say seven words, we mean seven words or seven sayings. Luke records three of them, and only Luke records those three. John records three of them, and only John records those three. And then the seventh saying, the central one, "My God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me?" that is the only one recorded by two gospels, the gospels of Mark and Matthew. So John records three and Luke three, and John's three, which happen to be the third and the fifth, and the sixth in the chronological order of the seven sayings, we are going to look at now. The third is "Woman, behold thy son; behold thy mother." The fifth "I thirst." The sixth, "It is finished." And we're going to allude to the seventh in some detail, which Luke records, "Father into Thy hands I commend or commit my spirit."

When [one] reads the death of the Old Testament patriarchs there are some interesting things that are noticed. For example, in the death of Jacob, that magnificent man of God. In the 48th chapter of the Book of Genesis we read in the 1st verse, "And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed." And perhaps you'll remember when we were going through the Book of Genesis we devoted a message to Jacob's blessing of the sons of Joseph. And then we devoted more than a chapter, as I remember, to Israel's blessing of the tribes. And then at the conclusion of Jacob's blessing of the twelve tribes, Moses records Jacob's death. And he records it in this way, "And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered upon his feet into the bed and yielded up the ghost and was gathered unto his people." Notice the order, he sat up, he greeted the world as he greeted Joseph and his sons, and then blessed the tribes, and then he

gathered his feet into the bed, and then he greeted God. Well if you'll think about that, that is just about the order in which our Lord meets the father in this passage. He greets the world with the sayings that he makes concerning the world and concerning the saints. And then he gathers his feet, symbolically, and greets God with, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit."

Now we're going to look at these three statements. And first of all we look at the Messiah and the virgin, verse 25 through verse 27 in which the third of the seven sayings is recorded. Now when we think of the words of dying men, we generally think that they must be important. The things that we hear people say when they're on their deathbed do mean a great deal to us, because all of the unnecessary things generally fall by the wayside, and people say the essential things. Now, if that is true, and I think it's true the last words of dying men are important, how much more are the dying words of the Savior. And they are surely extremely important.

Some time ago I read the last words of Herman Bavinck the well-known Dutch theologian of the 20th century, one of the two greatest Christian theologians of the 20th century. Professor Bavinck was probably, if not the most learned the second most learned man of Christian orthodoxy in the 20th century. When he died he made an interesting statement. He said, "All of my theology does not help me now, only Jesus Christ, and what he has done avails for me now." Now, of course, Professor Bavinck if he had been in a classroom and I had raised by hand at that point and said, "But isn't that your theology?" He would have said, "Of course." But what he meant was, "So many of the things that I've been concerned about are secondary, the important thing at this point is my hope is built on nothing else than Jesus' blood and righteousness." That was an important saying for one of the great theologians, and if his words are important how much more our Lord's.

Now this third of the statements is made to Mary and to John. "Woman behold thy son." And then to John as he points to Mary, "Behold thy mother." Mary was the first to plant kisses on the brow of Jesus Christ. She was first to guide his hands and feet in infantile movements. She was the one who ministered to him in his earliest days as his mother. But she had been warned ahead of time that the time would come when she would feel a sword. And in fact in Luke chapter 2 in verse

34 and verse 35 it is Simeon who greeting our Lord's mother in the temple says these words with reference to her. He blessed them, and he said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against." And then a parenthesis, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." Well this is the time for the sword to pierce through the soul of Mary.

The Lord never spoke of Mary as his mother, that's rather surprising when you think about it because so many people think of our Lord's mother as Mary. And they think of her as Mary the mother of our Lord. But he never spoke of Mary as his mother. I don't mean by any means to suggest that if someone had said, "Who is your mother?" He would not have said, "Mary is my mother." But it's almost as if the Holy Spirit has with wisdom guided the authors of Scripture in the things that they have written, so that never is the term mother on the lips of our Lord as a reference to Mary, specifically and directly to her. It's striking that he does refer to her as mother in this very passage, but in this instance the words are spoken to John. "Behold thy mother." The implication, of course, is that since I am dying, I am committing my mother into your hands. But nevertheless our Lord never speaks of Mary as his mother.

I think the reason for that is very plain, because in the flow of human history, and particularly religious history far more has been made of Mary, the virgin mother of our Lord, than ought to have been made. Now, let me say right at the beginning, I do not in any way mean to be understood as saying that Mary was not what she was, a lovely, devoted, dedicated, Christian or believing mother. She was undoubtedly a very, very unusually gifted and spiritual person. But that is far less than has been said of her. It has been said that Mary exists to dispense blessings. Mary does not dispense blessings; she is the receptacle of blessings. And when it is stated that she is blessed among women, it is not because she dispenses blessings but because she has been so remarkably blessed by God. She was a remarkable woman, and one no doubt that we should admire. But at the same time Mary is unique because our Lord is unique. And let us not forget that.

And when he says, "Woman, behold thy son," he does not mean by the term woman to denigrate her in any way. That was a rather common way of expressing the particular sentiment that he wanted to express. If we said that to someone it would indicate that we did not have proper attitudes to them. But that is not the force of the scriptural statement. "Woman, behold thy son," is no attempt to denigrate her. But she is unique because our Lord is unique.

What is the meaning then of this little interchange, "Woman, behold thy son." And then to the apostle "Behold thy mother." John, remember, and our Lord were first cousins. Their mothers were sisters. And remember also that our Lord's brothers were unbelievers. And you will notice that all through these days of our Lord's passion no reference is made to Joseph. So we can assume that Joseph had died some time back, a good bit of time back probably, so that the responsibility of caring for the mother rested upon our Lord. And remember, in the Scriptures reference is made to that, honor thy father and thy mother. And then remember also that Paul in 1 Timothy chapter 5 says, "But if any provide not for his own and specifically for those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." So our Lord recognized his responsibility. And in this statement, "Woman behold thy son," in the committing of Mary to the care of his cousin John, the believer. For his mother was a believer too, he was in effect making provision for his own.

One can see the many ways in which he did at the time of the cross, in that well he gave the executioners themselves a delay in judgment for he prayed, "Father, release them for they know not what they do." And then with reference to the dying thief he said, "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise," dispensed forgiveness to him. And now to Mary and John, he commits Mary to John in order that the precious Christian fellowship and the care that John would be able to give her might be consummated. So he provides for his own. He fulfills the law, for "Honor thy father and mother" was one of the commandments. And so our Lord fulfills the law to the end. He never broke any of the commandments. And right here is still fulfilling the law, honoring his mother by giving her into the hands of John. He wasn't able to say, "I have made my will. I have a lengthy portfolio of common stocks and bonds and other properties and I am giving them to you," because

our Lord had nothing. "He had not where to lay his head." But he had something far more valuable. He knew the relationship that John had to him and that he had John's heart in his hand, and also that he had dispensed the forgiveness of sins to John. And so he commits Mary to the Apostle John.

It also is the proclaimer of a new relationship. Because he speaks to Mary and he says, "Woman." I think that statement has a very important intent. He didn't say mother but he said, "Woman." Now it is striking that this statement was not made on Sunday. It was not made on the day of the ascension when our Lord was finally separated from the apostles. But it was made on the day of the cross. And I think that there is some purpose in that. In other words, this statement is to be related to what is happening on the cross. And the first thing that is happening is the final completion of the fact that earthly relationships are over. Only the relationship by virtue of the new birth have significance now.

Do you remember the incident when our Lord's mother and his brethren came to seek him to talk to him? He had been said by others to be mad. And evidently they were come in order to be of some help to him, take him home and make him an appointment with a Jewish psychiatrist or psychologist or something like that. And the Lord Jesus was told, "Behold your mother and your brethren are standing without." And he looked at the gathered people and he said, "Who is my mother and who are my brethren?" And then he went on to say, "Those are my mother and my brethren and my sisters who know the will of God and who do it." In other words, the spiritual relationship for our Lord was even more important than the blood relationship.

Now that is something that is difficult for us to understand unless we think biblically. But the closest relationship that any person can ever have to another person is the common new spiritual birth. Now, of course, if we also have blood relationship that's an additional relationship. But the spiritual relationship is more important than the blood relationship. And the authority for that is the Lord Jesus himself. "Behold my mother and my brethren," as he looked out among his friends. "For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and my sister and my mother." I think that this is something that Christians forget. They tend still to think that their closest

relationships are their blood brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers and cousins and other members of the family. But the closest relationships of Christians are other Christians. And our Lord is the authority for that. These are our eternal brothers, sisters, cousins, *et cetera*. And the man who thinks biblically and spiritually should recognize that.

Our Lord said, "Woman, behold thy son." The corollary of course is that believers are all in one family, as Paul said, "We are all one through faith in Jesus Christ." So "woman" assigns her her position in her body, not assigns him his position in her church." In other words, he's leading Mary gently from the natural union that she shared with him because she was the mother of his human nature, to the mystical spiritual union that all believers share with him.

Now we're all acquainted with the fact that there is a large religious organization that has made a great deal over this human relationship. And out of the human relationship has sought to draw spiritual parallels. It was not Mary who needed John, so they tell us, but John and with him and in him all other Christians who needed Mary. And so when our Lord turned to John and said, "Behold thy mother," we are to understand him as saying he was committing the apostles and all believers into the care of the Virgin Mary. How false to Scripture that is, when just in the preceding statement he has said, "Woman behold thy son." And he has committed Mary into the hands of the Apostle John. One of these Mary worshipers writes that "In the person of John Mary receives all Christians as her children."

Now, to give an illustration of the kinds of prayers that in that religious organization people are asked to prayer. Listen to this one called Salve Regina or "Save O Queen." "Hail, holy queen, mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness, our hope. To thee we cry, poor banished sons of Eve. To thee we send up our sighs, morning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then most gracious advocate," and the prayers go on. One can see that what this does is really to take glory from the Lord Jesus Christ to Mary. And who would take anything from the glory of the Son of God and give it to someone else who does not deserve that. We are actually heretical. Our Lord is to have all of the glory of our salvation. And to divert the worship of men from the Son to someone who is less

than the triune God is to turn from the teaching from the word of God alone. I do not think that anyone would be more upset by what has taken place than Mary herself in the light of Scripture. Well that's one of our Lord's statements.

Now the next one is very interesting too. We read, "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." "He who began his ministry by hungering for forty days and forty nights ends it by thirsting," someone has said. Now remember this, our Lord has just uttered the statement, "My God, my God why hast Thou forsaken me?" That is not stated in the Gospel of John, but when the accounts of the four gospels are put together it is evident that just after the statement, "Woman behold thy son; Behold thy mother." Our Lord cried out with a great cry, "My God, my God why hast Thou forsaken me?" At that moment he was bearing the punishment of eternal spiritual death. In other words, he was suffering the infinite punishment for infinite sinners' sins.

Now eternal death, eternal spiritual death our Lord is suffering when he cries out "My God, my God why hast Thou forsaken me?" Before him still lies the physical death when he must breathe his last. Our Lord must die spiritually first and then physically in order that we might know that he has borne spiritual death, the important death. In Adam's case, of course, Adam as a man and other men we die physically and then if we die outside of Christ we die eternally. So it's physical death then eternal death. For our Lord the order is reversed. Behind him is the eternal death, before him is the physical, because he must show us that he has truly finished his word both spiritually and physically.

Now he said, "I thirst," and I'm inclined to think, I say this with a little bit of unaccustomed modesty, but I'm inclined to think that there is some connection between this, "I thirst" and "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me," in this sense, that our Lord bore the extreme of punishment that no man has ever or ever could bear when he suffered the infinite punishment for human sin. Now, that must have meant a great deal to him both spiritually and physically. And I am just making the suggestion that this statement, "I thirst" is not simply physical.

Now, of course, it is physical. And there are some lessons that we are to note. First of all it is a word of submission. To think that the person who is responsible for the creation, for the seas, the one who led Israel through the wilderness and supplied water from the rock, is the one who says at this point, "I thirst." He was well able to satisfy all of his thirst but he submitted as the mediator to the will of God. It is a word of divine sovereignty in that the last great priest strengthens himself for his death. He must not die by exhaustion. And so he asks for the *posca* by which he might be strengthened in order to be in full command of his senses unto the very end. And then, of course, it was a word of suffering. And this is where I would suggest to you that perhaps there is some indication of the effects of the eternal death. In other words, "I thirst" may be not simply an external word of bodily need, but also an internal word expressing not simply the reality of his suffering eternal death but the severity of it.

Now, let me suggest why. One thing you notice is that there is a connection between the divine penalty in judgment and chastisement, a connection between the spiritual and the physical. Think for a moment of Psalm 22, the great Messianic Psalm. The Psalmist says, and this is the Psalm that looks forward to the coming of our Lord. "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." In other words, the spiritual experience, the mental experience, is reflected in the physical. Listen to Psalm 32. David, remember, has committed his sin and for months he has been under divine discipline, chastisement, he has felt it, he's been very unhappy. Anyone who has ever been under conviction for sin understands what I am talking about. And listen to what he says, "For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." In other words, there is a connection between the physical sin and the mental and spiritual effects of it.

In the Proverbs the 17th chapter and the 22nd verse we read, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones." And then finally, in a book with which you all are familiar, the Book of Lamentations, when was the last time you read it? We should have a time out for lamenting the fact that we so rarely ever read Lamentations. But there is a line in the 13th

verse of the 1st chapter that may have bearing upon this. The writer Jeremiah says, "From above hath he sent fire into my bones." And so I suggest then that this expression, "I thirst" is not simply physical but expresses the feelings that he had as he had just gone through the bearing of the eternal judgment for human sin.

Now finally, in the last word or two our Lord evangelizes and commends his spirit to the Lord. There was set a vessel full of vinegar before him. They filled the sponge full of vinegar or *posca*. They put it upon a hyssop and put it to his mouth. "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished." What a supreme spiritual joy it must have been for the Lord Jesus to finish his work.

Think of the joy that Dante had when he finished his *Divine Comedy* and was able to write *finis* underneath it. Or think of the joy that Milton had in finishing *Paradise Lost* after wearing himself out for many years in his task. Or think of the joy that Columbus had after he had worn out his life seeking the patronage necessary for the undertaking and endured the perils of voyaging in stormy seas and among mutinous mariners to at last see sunlight on the peaks of Darien. It must have been a tremendous sense of accomplishment. And our Lord who has now accomplished the greatest work of all says, "It is finished." It is a triumphant cry with dogmatic significance. He doesn't say, "I am finished," but he says, "It is finished." "It is not the last gasp of a worn out life," as Arthur Pink has put it.

Now he says, "It is finished," and one is justified in asking the question, what does he mean by "it"? That's a very indefinite expression. In the Greek text as is well known it is one word, *tetelestai*. "It has been finished," literally. It's possible to understand the subject as the prophecies. The finally reached their culmination in the death of our Lord. There is a sense, of course, in which that is involved. Others have suggested that it is the passion, that is his sufferings of the atoning death. And of course, that too is included. Many commentators feel, I rather tend to think that more truth lies with them, that the absence of a definite subject forces the reader to call up all of the aspects of our Lord's work that is now brought to an end. And there are many suggestions that

perhaps that is what our Lord has in mind. In other words, the whole of the atoning work, in so far as it has to do with prophecy and so far as it has to do with his sufferings, it has been finished, *consumatum est* the Latin text reads. It is consummated.

This word which is rendered here, "It is finished" is one that sometimes in the New Testament is rendered "to pay." It has been paid, the penalty is paid. It's sometimes rendered "to accomplish," it has been accomplished, the work is done. It is translated "to make an end." We would say an end has been made of the intent of God. It's interesting I think to know that in the Old Testament only one time did God ever say that he was completely satisfied with things. In other words, the divine self-satisfaction is mentioned, that's in connection with the creation. And one time in the New Testament we have it here, and both ultimately are of our Lord. We sometimes sing, "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins. And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stain." Well, that's involved in this. It has been finished.

That is why it is so important in our concept of eternal salvation to be sure that we understand the nature of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has accomplished the saving work by which he has made it possible for men to receive the forgiveness of sins. And the only required is to receive the benefits as a free gift. That's faith. That's man's responsibility, and it is a responsibility to believe. But when we believe we discover in the word of God that the capacity to respond is itself also a gift of God. And our salvation is of the Lord.

For example, when we believe that we are saved by grace but we have to keep working in order to stay saved we are in effect saying Jesus did not do it all. He did sufficient to get us started but we must also add our works thereafter in order to stay saved. We are actually taking away from the glory of our Lord to teach that a man may lose his salvation after he has been saved. That is why we are so adamant about the fact that the Scriptures teach that salvation is of the Lord. He says, "It is finished," or literally, "It has been finished." No repetition of it can be allowed at all.

One of the great missionaries of a few generations back was Hudson Taylor, so wonderfully known because of what was accomplished in the land of China by the China inland mission of which

he was the founder. Hudson Taylor had a very interesting early experience. He was from a Christian home. His mother prayed for him constantly. She prayed that he might come to salvation. For a long time he resisted and finally one day someone put in his hand a little tract and in that tract was the expression, "It is finished." It troubled him a great deal. He didn't understand exactly what that meant. In fact, he went up into a hay loft and there with the tract he meditated upon it. "It is finished," and finally out of that experience came his conviction of his own salvation. And he puts it this way, "Then there dawned upon me the joyous conviction that since the whole work was finished and the whole debt was paid upon the cross there was nothing for me to do but to fall upon my knees, accept the Savior and praise him forevermore." That's what it is to be saved, to realize that Christ has paid it all. "Upon a life I did not live, upon a death I did not die, another's life, another's death, I stake my whole eternity." And Hudson Taylor rested himself for time and eternity upon the merits of the blood of Christ and God used him to the salvation of many thousands of people.

It is finished, if you are in the audience this morning and you have been trusting in anything that you have done, ah you are not upon this way of salvation. "It is finished," the Lord Jesus has accomplished the work. We are to receive it as a free gift. Salvation is by grace through faith in him.

Now, he dies, what a wonderful way to die. "And he bowed his head and gave up the ghost." The sixth stated "It is finished" expresses his satisfaction with respect to the past; the seventh, his satisfaction with respect to the future. What a pattern for dying manners. "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." So he said according to Luke 23 and verse 46. Notice what the Bible says, "He bowed his head and he gave up the ghost." What a different way for him to die when compared with the way we die. We don't bow our heads and give up the ghost. We give up the spirit and our head collapses. But our Lord bows his head. He's in thorough control. He bows his head. He releases his spirit.

Listen to what Augustine wrote. I better pull out my glasses, because I wrote it in my own handwriting. It's from Augustine's expositions of John chapter 19. This is what he said, "Who can thus sleep when he pleases, as Jesus died when He pleased? Who is there that thus puts off his

garment when he pleases, as He put off His flesh at His pleasure? Who is there that thus departs when he pleases, as He departed this life at His pleasure? How great the power, to be hoped for or dreaded, that must be His as judge, if such was the power He exhibited as a dying man!"

Now when we think of this statement, "Father into thy hands I commit my spirit," we often think of this as simply a dying utterance. I wish I had a lengthy time to talk to you about this. But I often used to lecture for an hour on the use of that statement in the New Testament in Luke chapter 23. The statement comes from Psalm 31. Now, Psalm 31 is not a Psalm of a dying man so much as it is of a man who is in troubles and difficulties and who expects to be brought through them through trust in the Lord. Of course, he may die in the process, but he knows, of course, that he is ultimately going to be delivered by the Lord God. In fact, the Psalmist in that Psalm says, "And has not shut me up into the enemy, Thou hast set my feet in a large room." He says later, "How great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee." He writes, "My times are in Thy hands, deliver me from the hand of my enemies and from them that persecute me." So it's one who is in persecution and difficulty and trial. But he commits himself to the Lord in trust, and he expects to be brought through it. So it's not a Psalm of a dying man so much as it is of a man who is in difficulty but who expects to live through it.

In fact, to illustrate it, ancient Jewish teachers, the rabbis, taught that children in school should repeat when they went to bed Psalm 31. Now Psalm 31 is the Psalm that contains "Father into thy hands I commit my spirit," or "I commit my spirit." So it was a prayer that children prayed each night as they went to sleep. It's the Old Testament equivalent of what I was taught when I was a child, "Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray Thee Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray Thee Lord my soul to take." Now it was a great prayer life I had. I used to pray that every night. Well, that was the prayer of a professing Christian family which they taught their children and everybody else knew that prayer. Well this Psalm 31 is the Old Testament equivalent of, "Now I lay me down to sleep." In other words, it's not a prayer of a dying man who knows only death, but it's a prayer of a person who may experience death but expects to be brought through to

life. So when Jesus said, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit," this is only a milestone in his uninterrupted life. It is what someone has called, "The hymn of his continuation." "Father into Thy hands I commit my spirit." The activity is primary. The dying is secondary. This, after all, is the one who will say according to the Book of Revelation to the Apostle John, "Fear not, I'm the first and the last. I am he that liveth and was dead." That's at a point in time I was dead, yes, but I'm alive forevermore. So, "Father into Thy hands I commit my spirit." I expect to live through this experience.

When Jesus began his ministry one of the first things he said, the first recorded utterance is, "I must be about my Father's business." Well that is still primary. No wonder the cross is the converging point of ancient history and the origin of modern history. Because it has to do with the foundation upon which all ultimate spiritual life is built. May God in his marvelous grace illumine our minds to understand what Christ has done. What we are and what we need, and may in his marvelous grace, effectual grace, we be drawn by effectual grace to the confession of the Lord Jesus as our own personal Lord and Savior. May God bring you each into that experience. It is my prayer, the prayer of the elders of the Chapel, and the deacons, and the members if you're a visitor here today.

[Prayer] Father, how grateful we are for this magnificent account of the ministry of the Suffering Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. O much of the grace of God we sense that we Gentiles have been included in the ancient covenantal promises. How marvelous that it has reached to us. O God, if there is any one person in this auditorium who has never come in genuine faith to Jesus Christ...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]