

The journey to the Cross – A journey leading to Easter 2017

Luke 23:33 (NLT)

³³ When they came to a place called The Skull, they nailed him to the cross. And the criminals were also crucified—one on his right and one on his left.

Last week we started the journey to Cross with two phrases out of seven that Jesus spoke when he was on the Cross, the first was **a word of grace**, the second was **a word of compassion**. This week we will continue our journey to the cross with two more phrases.

A word of hope

Definition of hope for English Language Learners : the feeling of wanting something to happen and thinking that it could happen : a feeling that something good will happen or be true. : someone or something that may be able to provide help : someone or something that gives you a reason for hoping.

Hope in the Biblical Dictionary. [\[N\]](#) [\[T\]](#) [\[E\]](#)

To trust in, wait for, look for, or desire something or someone; or to expect something beneficial in the future. Hope is the proper response to the promises of God. Hope leads to joy ([Rom 12:12](#)) boldness ([2 Cor 3:12](#)), and faith and love ([Col 1:4-5](#)). Hope also leads to comfort; we are to encourage one another with the knowledge of the resurrection ([1 Th 4:18](#)). Though boasting in our works is disallowed, we may boast or exult in hope of sharing God's glory ([Rom 5:2](#) ; cf. [Heb 3:6](#)).

Hope has a sanctifying effect. We who look expectantly for the return of Christ, knowing that when we see him we shall become like him, purify ourselves "as he is pure" ([1 John 3:3](#)). Hope also stimulates good works. Following his teaching on resurrection of the dead, Paul exhorts his readers to do the Lord's work abundantly since such "labor is not in vain" ([1 Cor 15:51-58](#)).

Hard working people wonder if they will be able to pay-off their bills on time. Unemployed wonder if they will get the job they applied for. Single parents wonder if they will have enough to feed their children. Sinners like you and me wonder if we will ever make it to heaven. We do believe in Jesus, but we still keep sinning. How depressing! What if he stops loving us? What if he finally gets sick of us? What if we are disqualified? When doubts and fears like these creep into your mind, let your eyes look at the evil criminal who was being crucified next to Jesus. In shame and urgency, he cried out to the Son of Man in the middle, *“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](#)).

What magnificent comfort! What an incredible display of the gospel! What priceless hope! This man had done nothing to earn his way into God’s favor. All he had was his sorrow and his

confidence that Jesus had come to bring him the rescue he needed. Jesus' mercy was greater than his evil. A lifetime of crime was washed away in the moment of his repentance and faith. He was now Jesus' friend. That very day the angels would come to bear his soul home to paradise.

A word of desolation

Definition of desolation. 1 : the state of being deserted. 2 : sadness resulting from grief or loneliness.

Desolation in the Biblical Dictionary.

Its primary sense is "left lonely," , With the meaning "comfortless," "afflicted," for this scripture.

The fourth word was the worst. It revealed how utterly alone Jesus was in his death struggle with Satan.

This battle was fought not with swords or spears, light sabers or lightning bolts, energy blasts or physical strength. The battleground was in the mind of Christ himself, where he fought Satan's temptations alone and physically exhausted. He had been abandoned by his disciples (but one John), condemned by the religious leaders of his own people, and condemned by the Roman government that was supposed to dispense justice.

All Satan had to do was get him to sin once. Just once. Satan was whispering constantly that the foolish mortals on earth were vermin not worth dying for, that there were far easier ways to do this. Just one little act of rebellion against his Father. And now the Father had abandoned him!

“From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ (which means ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’)” (Matthew 27:45,46). Why? Jesus knew why.

Because he alone had agreed to pay the price for human sin. What he was really crying out was his shock at how awful it was to have God turn his back on Him and withdraw all love, mercy, hope, and support.

At that moment Jesus was experiencing hell. For you and me.