

# Eternal Matters and the Faithful Women of the Cross

Well, good evening, everyone. Welcome to the auditorium at Calvary Road Baptist Church in near beautiful downtown Monrovia. It's a nice, warm, lovely day here in Southern California. This is what they would frequently refer to, when I was a younger fellow, as a chamber of commerce day. This is why people come to Southern California, for such days as this. So, I invite you to join with me as we go to the Lord in prayer, keeping in mind, as believers, we deal with matters of eternal consequence.

If you know somebody who is not a believer in Christ, I don't care who they are, and I don't care how smart they are, that person is almost inevitably a very shallow thinker. There isn't depth to their thought life, because if there was depth to their thought life, if they weren't birdbath shallow in their thinking, they would be thinking about eternity. And as they thought about eternity more and more and more and more, they would more likely consider the claims of Christ in the Bible and wrestling with those issues related to sin, salvation, and the security of the believer's state in eternity. Humanly speaking, they would come to Christ. So, as we go to the Lord in prayer, it has been basically pressed upon me that we deal with matters of eternal consequence. We had a beloved believer in Christ who was promoted to glory this afternoon, 99 years. I don't know how many years she was a believer, but she was 99 years old when she passed. So, most people do not get that kind of opportunity this side of eternity, and it is incumbent upon you and me and everyone who is a believer to press it home to the people you know who are not believers. They don't want to think about eternity, and it's up to us to bring it up to them. I'm not suggesting that would be offensive or rude or anything like that, but keep important matters ever before people that do not want to address important matters as a prelude to witnessing to them. So, with those things in mind, let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we come before you this afternoon. We thank you for your goodness. We so appreciate the word of God, which deals with us not only about the past and the present but also is so vital to preparation for the future. We pray for Ruby's family, that they might deal with her passing. We pray for Tim. We pray for Fine and his physical healing. We pray for Joe's ongoing health challenges as a Camp Lejeune Marine. We pray for Jackie's struggle to maintain her physical health and recover. The same with Sakura. We pray for Nazarin and her health challenges. We pray for Brian, and so glad to hear about the uptick in his physical health and some of the numbers that the doctors have given to him. We pray for Jim. We pray for Dan, suffering the loss of Donna. We pray for Erica's pregnancy. We pray for Bayong's safe delivery. We pray for Greg and the lymphoma that he is dealing with. I pray, Lord, that he exercises great wisdom in selecting where and how he will approach doctors addressing his concerns. I pray for our other sick loved ones and our through-the-Bible reading program. Life in this body is not for forever; it is appointed unto men once to die, and it is not the wise person, it is not the considerate individual, it's not the thinker who refuses to think about, much less prepare for, eternity. Such a person is not wise.

So, I thank you that you imposed upon me wisdom, that you challenged me with the gospel, and those who are here with us tonight who are believers in Christ, we're so thankful for the Savior. Pray that you might help us to be faithful in the discharge of our duties, obligations, and responsibilities as believers to do what we can to keep ever before the unsaved people that we know a consideration of eternal things. Bless to that end our Bible study, and we will thank you in Jesus' name, amen.

I want you to turn in your Bible, if you would, please, at this time, to Mark chapter 15. You know, we live in an era of feel-good Christianity, and nobody wants to address the challenges and the divine responsibilities that are set upon us as believers and the message that we, and only we, can effectively carry to the lost. One of the considerations that I would leave you with, in consideration of Ruby's homegoing this afternoon, is that please do not neglect your God-given responsibility to set before lost people that there is an eternity,

that it is not to be ignored, that there is a hereafter, that there is a God, as a prelude for witnessing to them. That's something that every right-thinking mother and father should constantly engage in with their children. So, it's so very important.

So, we are at Mark chapter 15, and we're going to look this evening at verses 40 and 41. We are resuming our concern and consideration of the four gospel accounts related to the Lord Jesus Christ's crucifixion and the giving up of the ghost and what immediately happened on Mount Calvary, on Golgotha's brow, right after the Lord Jesus Christ gave up the ghost and died. Mark 15:40 and 41 are the last two verses that we're going to look at before we start looking at matters related to the burial of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, read those two verses with me, if you would: "There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him; and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem."

Now, please keep in mind, as you're looking at your ever-present map in the back of your Bible—because you never read the Bible without looking at a map—you will notice that from Galilee to Jerusalem is south, and yet here in the Bible, it says that these women came up with him, because in the Bible, wherever you are, if you are going to Jerusalem, you are going up. If you're heading south, you're going up; if you're heading east, you're going up; if you're heading west, you're going up; if you're heading north, you're going up. That's kind of because Jerusalem is the center of the entire world as far as God's concerned, okay? That will be headquarters for the millennial kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, so it's always been that way. So, you say, "Well, that's kind of interesting; they went south and yet up." Not the way we orient our maps—it's not up—but the way you find it in the New Testament and in the Old Testament as well, it's that way.

So, Mark 15:40 begins with the phrase, "There were also women looking on afar off." I've commented to you before about why they were afar off, and the reason, of course—there are several, but one of the reasons—is because they're modest Jewish women, okay? And the men that were hanging on a cross were naked; there was no

covering over them. I know in Reformation and Renaissance art, you always have the Lord Jesus Christ hanging from a cross, and there's always a loincloth. In reality, the Romans would not allow any semblance of dignity on those that they were torturing and crucifying. Their goal was abject humiliation and degradation on the way to the most painful possible death. That's just how they rolled, okay? And these women, they didn't want to stand up close to the Lord Jesus Christ, the one they followed, and so they stood as far away as they could while still being in the vicinity.

So, there were also women looking on afar off. This is the first mention made in Mark's gospel of women following the Savior during his earthly ministry. The other gospel accounts do mention them; Mark mentions them only beginning here. Say, "Well, why would that be?" Because you always, when something happens, ask: who, what, why, when, where, how. Why would Mark not, until now, mention for the very first time that there were women who followed the Lord Jesus Christ? It might be a reflection of the Roman attitude toward women, which was far less appreciative of women's aptitudes and potential than was common in Jewish culture. Jewish women had it better off than any woman living anywhere in the entire world, okay? There was no culture anywhere on the planet—and of course, Amazons didn't exist, so you can't count them, except in Marvel comics, okay?

So, there may have been a considerable number of women gathered by this time in the late afternoon, and the approach of the Sabbath coming on. And so, we would ask another question: how would they know about this, huh? They saw it on CNN? Nah, CNN may be archaic, but it didn't exist even back then. Had they been alerted of the Lord's arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane? Had they found out 18 hours before when the hundreds of Roman soldiers and dozens of temple guards came to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest him, as they were led there by Judas Iscariot? Did someone who ran away from there beat it back to the city proper, which is from the Mount of Olives back into this part of the city, and mount it around: "They've arrested Jesus of Nazareth! They've arrested Jesus of Nazareth!"? Is that how these women found out about it? Was there, perhaps, not from the Garden of Gethsemane, but when the Lord Jesus Christ was

taken by the 500 or so Romans and several dozen or so temple guards to the home of the high priest Annas, which is relatively speaking about there? Did somebody from Annas' household go into the city and tell people? Or after the trial at Annas' home, who had been the former high priest, when they took the Lord Jesus Christ to the current high priest's home, Caiaphas? Was somebody there—remember, that's where the woman recognized Peter: "Oh, I recognize you, you're with him"? And, of course, Peter, being the brave Christian that he was, he cussed her out and denied that he was. Or was it somebody in the Antonia Fortress? Was it somebody who was Jewish, who was a servant to the Romans in the Antonia Fortress, which was in the northwest corner of the Temple Mount, and that was Roman headquarters in Jerusalem? Did somebody from there let it out to the community: "They have arrested him, and they are trying him"? We don't know exactly, okay? But it could have been somebody, or it could have been more than one person from each of these locations, got the word out.

The point is, you can't really keep secrets. You really can't keep secrets very well, okay? No matter how hard you try to keep secrets, they'll always get out by somebody, okay? As a matter of fact, when I was working for a secure endeavor early on as a young man, as they read us into each stage of the security measures, they informed us again and again: we try to keep things secret, but we are not very successful. And that's because people blab, blab, blab, okay?

Sometimes husbands talk in their sleep, sometimes wives talk in their sleep, those kinds of things. So, it's really very, very difficult for people to not find out about it. Let me give you an illustration: the entire world knows that Xi Jinping recently had a stroke. Did you know that?

Because everybody else on the planet knew that the guy running China recently had a stroke, okay? And then maybe six months ago, they suspected Putin had some kind of neurological event. You didn't know that? It got around.

And so now you're going to try to tell me that the reason these guys treated the United States with disrespect is not because they knew there was something wrong with the guy who was the president at the time? Of course they knew. Of course they knew. Everybody—the only

people who didn't know what was wrong with our president were the citizens of the United States. Everybody else on the planet knew that this guy's nonfunctional. All the foreign leaders knew it, all of our allies knew it, everybody highly placed knew it. The only ones that didn't know about it were the people that really, basically, weren't paying enough attention. So, somehow, and in some way, it got around town in Jerusalem that the Lord Jesus Christ was being crucified. Whether these women gathered at the Antonia Fortress or followed on the Via Dolorosa or they assembled straight at Mount Calvary, we don't know. But those that were interested, and those that wanted to be there, and those that followed the Lord Jesus Christ, somehow found out about it, and they were there.

Of those who gathered, Mark's gospel names three of them: Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome. Now, we already know about Mary Magdalene. She was the one that had the seven demons; she was the one who was from the little village on the northeast corner shore of the Sea of Galilee called Magdala. But we learn about her from Matthew chapter 27 and verse 56. But what about Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses? What about her? What does "James the less" mean? Because it means something; otherwise, it wouldn't be there.

Is it James, the guy who rides the short bus to school? Is it James, the guy who rides a tricycle to school? Is it a guy who's older but very small? Or is it a guy who's considerably younger? What do you think it means? Is it significant? Well, if it wasn't significant, would it be in the Bible? It would not be in the Bible if there was not some significance. So, again, we ask: who, what, why, when, where, how. So, this would be a "who" question, all right? Who? James the less, this woman, Mary, the mother of James the less and of Joses. Well, let's focus on this just a little bit. Is this the same Mary who's mentioned in Matthew 27:56 as the mother of James and Joses, but here it's James the less and Joses? Now, if so, then the Marys mentioned in Matthew 27:56 and Mark 15:40 are likely not references to the mother of our Lord, since the phrase "the mother of James the less and of Joses" would be a very clumsy way of referring to Mary the mother of Jesus.

Say, “Well, how would you refer to Mary the mother of Jesus?” Probably by saying, “Mary, the mother of Jesus,” okay? Or, “Mary, the mother of James, Joses,” if you wanted to call attention to her other sons. But “James the less”—why throw in that, okay? What’s the point? Now, keep in mind that James and Joses were very, very, very common names given to Jewish lads in those days, and that was back in the day when the Jewish women, and most women, typically had larger rather than smaller families. So, if that be the case, it could be that what we have in Matthew and what we have in Mark are two different Marys who both had boys named James and Joses. That would not be an unusual situation. Let’s say you’ve got a woman who’s got four, five, six, seven boys, and another woman that’s got five, six, seven boys. It would not be unusual for each of them to have a son named James and each of them to have a son named Joses. That would not be an unusual thing, okay?

So, I think that this is a Mary who had the younger of a boy named James, so it’s comparing her with another Mary who had a James, but this is the one who is mother to the younger of the two sons named James. And I think it would not necessarily be the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s not a unanimously held position, but it is a majority-held position by guys that take positions on such things.

Now, we have a third woman identified in this verse, and her name is Salome, not Salomi. You know, can you tell that I’m a word pronunciation snob? How many of you know that Pastor is a word pronunciation snob? Yeah, I’m a word pronunciation snob. I was watching a YouTube video, I think it was yesterday. One of my most entertaining YouTubers is a guy by the name of Scott Adams. He is the writer of the Dilbert cartoon, which has been going on for 30, 35 years. He’s a brilliant, brilliant, brilliant guy, very, very sharp cookie. And he announced yesterday that he has the same kind of cancer that Joe Biden has, but he has had his considerably longer than Joe Biden. And he said that the doctors tell him that he is going to be passing during the summer. So, in May, he tells about a million people that he’s going to be dead within two or three months, okay? But years ago, he is a very sharp fellow, and back when it was 2016, when Hillary Clinton was running against Donald Trump, one day Hillary

Clinton used a particular phrase to describe Donald Trump. She said, "Donald Trump is very dark." Well, Scott Adams pays attention to things, and he said, "It's interesting that not one time had she ever, on air or on video, ever described a single human being as dark." She had never said that before. And so, Scott Adams says, "I think she has a new political consultant. I think she's hired a new political adviser." Okay, and the guy has weapons-grade persuasion skills. I'm going to call him Godzilla. So, he named this guy Godzilla. Well, a week or two later, he said, "I'm going to tell you who I think Godzilla actually is. He is a professor at Arizona State named Robert Cialdini, and he is the guy who has weapons-grade persuasion skills." And it turned out, a couple of weeks later, somebody stuck a microphone in Hillary's mouth and said, "Is Robert Cialdini your new political advisor?" And she said, "No comment." Well, what does that mean? Well, "no comment" means, of course, okay? And then later, Robert Cialdini—well, the problem is, this guy is an Italian, and his name has been out on the internet, and it's been viewed by millions of people. And then, yesterday, a guy pronounces his name "Caldini." It's Cialdini! He's an Italian! And I'm a word pronunciation snob. I hate it like that. I can't stand it when preachers mispronounce a Bible word, a Bible name, when people are teaching a Bible study, and they can't—and you have versions of the New Testament that give you phonetic spelling cues so that you will know how to pronounce the name. Buy one of those Bibles and use them, okay? Why? Because the people that you are reading the Bible to or reading the Bible for, one of them may be a word pronunciation snob like me, and if you mispronounce the guy's name or mispronounce the word, he may judge you like I have a tendency to do. So, to avoid that, learn how to pronounce names. Well, anyway, Salome, not Salomi, all right? Salome. She is named only in Mark's gospel. She is first named here in Mark 15:40; she's also named in Mark 16:1. It turns out that she was the mother of Zebedee's sons. You remember, we all talk about the sons of Zebedee, the sons of Zebedee, the sons of Zebedee, without telling us who their mom is. Here, we are told who their mom is. And two of this woman's sons, her son James and her son John, were chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ to be two of His 12 apostles.



Salome may very well have been the sister of the Lord's mother, Mary, who is not mentioned, in my opinion, by Mark at all. And so, that causes me again to wonder, because you always want to ask: who, what, where, when, why, how. You always ask those questions whenever you read a statement in the Bible: who, what, where, when, how, why. So, I wonder, regarding Salome, what do you wonder regarding Salome? If she is, in fact, Mary, the mother of our Lord's little sister, so what do you wonder about Salome? Normal, natural, reasonable, rational questions and curiosities that little kids would think about. Any of you think about it? What do you think was her attitude toward her sister over the years?

If Mary was somewhere in the age of 16 or 17 years of age when the angel Gabriel appeared to her, and shortly after that, the Spirit of God overshadowed her, and she was with child of the Holy Ghost, and then she ran south to hide, basically, to hide with her cousin Elizabeth, okay? Because Elizabeth was pregnant. And then, when Elizabeth delivered John, she comes back home. Well, by the time she comes back home, she's out here. And where do you think "back home" was? Back in Nazareth. Well, who do we now know might have been her baby sister? Salome. What do you think Salome's attitude toward her big sister was when she found out her big sister was pregnant? What do you think ran through Salome's mind? Do you think that Salome was favorably inclined toward her big sister or judgmental toward her big sister? Interesting, huh?

So, I think when Mary's pregnancy was first evidenced, that Salome was likely not yet a teenager. She might have been 12, 13 years of age—I'm ballparking that, of course. And who knows what her attitude toward Mary and toward Mary's firstborn son? She kind of looked sideways at him, you know, "I'm wondering about him." Yeah, Mary says one thing, but come on, come on, we know how women get pregnant. Everybody knows how women get pregnant, okay? Come on. And she held that for all those years, for 30 years, perhaps she held that, until her nephew began working miracles. Maybe then she began to rethink. Maybe then she began to re-evaluate. Maybe then she was among the women who, along with her older sister, began to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in His wanderings in Galilee and in Perea

and down into Judea and then back up into Galilee and over into, and eventually all the way to Jerusalem. Interesting to reflect upon, is it not? At least, I think it is.

They, and others, ministered to Him. I think Mark wanted his readers to know that those named women—the three that he named—were among quite a large female following the Lord, a following that He had throughout His earthly ministry, beginning in Galilee and all the way through. Not that they were necessarily full-time; they probably followed Him until duties back at home—I don't know whether their children were grown to this point, whatever. All the way to Jerusalem, those three named women and the others that they were with, and it could have been a significant number of women, ministered to Him. Verse 41: "Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him." So, that's where the group of women started following Him and ministered to Him. Who knows, maybe they started following the Lord Jesus Christ when He healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law, so she could feed them, 'cause she was sick, and the Bible says the Lord Jesus Christ healed her. She got up from her sickbed and then served Him a meal. Is that very patronizing sounding, or what? You know. Anyway, maybe the women started following the Lord Jesus Christ from the performance of that. Or maybe they started following Him when He turned the water into wine, which was His first miracle in Cana. Maybe Mary talked about it with her sister and with the others: "He turned, He turned, He turned big pots of water into wine!" And, "Come on, sis, come on, you know how you like to exaggerate." "No, no, no, come over here, ask them, ask them!" And they go, "Yeah, yeah, He did, He did, He really did." So, these two verses, verses 40 and 41, they introduce to Mark's readers the unique place the Lord Jesus Christ gave to women, because they're not mentioned by Mark before this verse, different than any other belief system existing anywhere in the world. There is no belief system on the planet that deals with women the way biblical Christianity does, the faith once delivered to the saints. Say, "Well, what do you mean?" Well, unlike the Buddha—we know Buddha, right? The Buddha, born in what is today Nepal, okay? This guy left his wife and son to go find himself. In Southern California, that's called

being a hippie, where a guy just wanders off. That's abandonment, okay? That's wrong. And yet, an entire religion is built on a guy who did that, okay? He abandoned his wife and child at a critical time in their lives. That's the Buddha, okay?

Or consider Muhammad, who not only married a 9-year-old girl—yes, a 9-year-old girl. Did you know that in Lebanon now, it is legal for a 9-year-old girl to marry? In Lebanon, as I speak. Wow. But that's not all. He not only married a 9-year-old girl, but he also took the beautiful wife of his nephew. Even Muslims admit that Muhammad was walking by the home of his nephew and his wife, and he looked in the window and saw how lovely she was, and then he got a revelation from God that you should divorce your wife so that I can marry her, and he did. So, he did. That doesn't bother you? That would bother me. That would bother me.

The Lord Jesus Christ did not treat women the way the Buddha did his own wife, and the Lord Jesus Christ did not treat women the way Muhammad did his many wives and women in general, who, he said, if they're not Muslim, it's okay to kidnap them and enslave them and make concubines out of them. And if your woman gives you any resistance, you need to cuff her around, you need to actually beat her, you need to smack her. That's Islam. They actually say that you need to smack your women around, okay? So, find a belief system on this planet that treats women the way the Christian faith directs us to treat women, directs women to treat women, directs men to treat women, directs sons and daughters to honor mothers and grandmothers.

You're not going to find anything like it anywhere in the world.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your goodness. We appreciate so much the opportunity to study the word of God and these women who were wise enough, perceptive enough, discerning enough to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. And some of these women had known Him since He was an infant. They knew Him better than anyone, and they followed Him because they saw that He was who He claimed to be. Pray that you might give us wisdom, help us to be effective in our outreach, and we'll thank you in Jesus' name, amen.