



LESSON 10

It is Never Too Late



“And JESŪS said to him, ‘*Assuredly*, I say to you,
TODAY you *will be* with ME in Paradise.’”

Luke 23:43

It is Never Too Late

LESSON 10

Luke 23:39-43

I've made several trips to visit my relatives in Southern California. One particular journey was to spend time with my cousin, whom I hadn't visited in several years—she was very ill with cancer. It was a season for me to come alongside to pray for her and assist her two teenage daughters in caring for their mother during this difficult time.

The cancer had spread throughout her body. Therefore, she was suffering in tremendous pain and was bedridden. She was apparently angry about having this disease and extremely uncomfortable. It was heartbreaking for me to see her in so much physical, emotional, and spiritual pain; however, I was grateful for God's grace and strength to care for her.

There were moments when we could reminisce about some of our childhood memories; we laughed and cried together. She did mention to me that she was mad at God for allowing this to happen to her. Hearing those words from her, I knew how to pray specifically. I believe she accepted the Lord as her Savior in Sunday School when she was a child, but I really couldn't say for sure—only God knew.

We never really know what goes on in the hearts and minds of people, especially when they are near the point of death. My prayer for her in this season of her life was for her salvation—that the Lord would draw her to Himself, comfort her, surround her with His love, and replace bitterness with His peace. *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed"* (Psalm 34:18 NLT).

She needed emergency medical attention one day, and I called for an ambulance to take her to the hospital. She spent several days in the oncology ward; her girls and I would visit her daily, and some of the relatives.

I had spent two weeks with her and the girls— it was time for me to head back home to Northern California—she was still in the hospital when I left. I said my goodbyes to her and her girls, mentioning that they would be in my heart and my prayers.

A few days after I returned home, I received a phone call from one of my cousins. She and her husband were in the hospital when she passed away. They prayed with her; they shared with me that she had made peace with Jesus—they witnessed her last words to Him, saying, "I love You, too." She went peacefully home to be with Jesus.

What a blessed phone call that was! The Holy Spirit ministered to her in those last minutes of her life on this earth in His special way that was specifically for her.

We should never quit praying for our loved ones or ourselves, even though we may feel that our prayers are redundant or repetitious. The Bible tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 that we are to *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."*

It is Never Too Late

LESSON 10

We may never see the outcome of our prayers as quickly as in the situation with my cousin, but we may see the answer come years later, or we may never experience God's answer in our lifetime—our prayers do not stop then. *“But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:8-9 NKJV).

We can be encouraged that God's timing is perfect, and our hope is in Jesus Christ, our Savior. It's never too late for someone to be saved.

1. Read Luke 23:39-43 below, then write it in your prayer journal or another piece of paper.

Then one of the hanged criminals blasphemed Him, saying, *“If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.”* But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, *“Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.”* Then he said to Jesus, *“Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”* And Jesus said to him, *“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”* (NKJV)

2. Fill in the blanks.

“Then one of the _____ who was hanged _____ Him, saying, ‘If You are the Christ, save _____ and _____.’” (vs. 39)

3. What does the word **blaspheme** mean? (Refer to a dictionary or Bible dictionary).

4. What do you observe about the criminal's behavior in vs. 39? How did He blaspheme God?

5. Fill in the blanks.

“But the other, answering, _____ him saying, “Do you not even _____ God, seeing you are under the same _____?” (vs. 40) And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our _____; but this _____ has done _____.” (vs. 41).

6. What does the word **fear** mean in verse 40? (Refer to a Bible dictionary).

7. What is your observation of the criminal's behavior in vs. 40 and 41?

It is Never Too Late

LESSON 10

8. Read Matthew 27:38-44 below, then write it in your prayer journal or another piece of paper.

Then, two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left. And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." Likewise, the chief priests also, mocking the scribes and elders, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him, for He said, 'I am the Son of God.' Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing. (NKJV).

9. Fill in the blanks.

"Then the two _____ were _____ with Him, one on the _____ and another on the _____."
(vs. 38)

"Even the _____ who were _____ with Him, _____ Him with the same thing." (vs. 44)

10. What does the word **revile** mean? (Refer to the dictionary or Bible dictionary).

Jesus was crucified between the two thieves, one on the left and one on the right—they committed crimes—Jesus did not. Jesus was crucified and identified with them in the same manner; however, this was His choice to endure the pain and suffering for us as sinners—this was His Father's will. Read John 10:17-18 below.

"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

11. Write out what you observe of each man's heart:

- Criminal on one side of Jesus (Luke 23:39):
- Jesus (Luke 23:34, Matthew 5:44-45, and John 10:17-18):
- Criminal on the other side of Jesus. (Luke 23:40-42):

Read the Scripture below:

"There were also two others criminals, led with Him [Jesus] to be put to death. And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the other criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left"

(Luke 23:29-33 NKJV)



IN SEASON

It is Never Too Late

LESSON 10

12. Where did the crucifixion take place?

Calvary is the location outside Jerusalem where many people were crucified; it is also where Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross. Also known as Golgotha, meaning skull. (English Bible Dictionary).

We learn this from the scriptures in Matthew 27:33, Mark 15:22, and John 19:17. Read the scriptures and write them down in your prayer journal.

13. Re-read Matthew 27:38. Write out the meaning of **crucified** or **crucifixion**. (Use a Bible dictionary or dictionary).

This was an extreme, slow, excruciating, painful process that took place when criminals were crucified—they were referred to as victims. However, Jesus was not a victim nor a criminal—He chose to be crucified and be identified with sinners. Re-read John 10:18.

“Beyond the extreme pain, the major effect of crucifixion was to restrict normal breathing...each effort to get a proper breath was agonizing, exhausting, and led to a sooner death” (David Guzik).

“As Jesus hung on the cross for us, He prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34).

When Jesus prayed, He often went by Himself to the mountains to pray, but in this situation, as He hung there in pain on the cross, He prayed, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”* We can conclude that this was heard by the crowd, especially by the thieves being crucified along each side of Him.

Jesus’ prayer included everyone, even the thieves on the cross. The one criminal continued to mock Jesus and came to his own reasoning that Jesus wasn’t the Savior because He wouldn’t save Himself (Luke 23:39); the other criminal recognized his own sin and acknowledged that Jesus was the Savior—his Savior (Luke 23:40-41).

14. What did this thief believe? (Luke 23:42).

“It is worthy of remark that this man appears to have been the first who believed in the intercession of Christ.” (Clarke).

As this thief hung dying a slow, painful death for his criminal act, he knew his own sin. He also recognized Who Jesus was (and is) and that He did nothing wrong, Then he called out to Jesus, *“Lord”* and believed Jesus was Who He said He was. *“Remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”* This thief

It is Never Too Late

LESSON 10

believed the promise of everlasting life.

Jesus replied so beautifully to this thief, *“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”*

15. When did this thief receive salvation?

Paradise comes from a Persian word meaning *a garden or a park*. Paradise was promised for this thief—his future with Jesus. *“...today you will be with Me in Paradise.”*

16. Draw a line from the phrase to the scripture verse using the NKJV. You may want to write out the verses:

Place of a Skull	Luke 23:41
Calvary, there they crucified Him and the criminals	Luke 23:43
One of the criminals blasphemed Jesus	Luke 23:34
Jesus said, “Father forgive them”	John 19:17-18
One of the criminals said, “This Man has done nothing wrong.”	Luke 23:39
One of the thieves said, “Lord, remember me.”	Luke 23:42
Jesus said to the thief, “Today you will be with Me in Paradise.”	Luke 23:33

When the thief was being crucified, in order to get a good breath to even speak to Jesus, he had to push against his feet, and flex his elbows, pulling from his shoulders, producing more pain, as well as pain on his back from scraping the rough wooden post. This is to give you an idea of what the criminals went through when being crucified. (David Guzik)

As the thief witnessed Jesus’ crucifixion, he had to muster up enough breath to speak the words, *“Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom”* (Luke 23:42). Jesus had to move into position for breath to reply to this thief, *“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”*

We may wonder if this dying thief ever prayed before, but Jesus heard his humble and repentant prayer. Jesus answered immediately while He was dying on the cross for all sinners to have the opportunity to accept Him as Lord and Savior and to live in heaven with Him for all eternity.

“While there is life, there is hope, and while there is hope, there is room for prayer.” (Matthew Henry).



IN SEASON

It is Never Too Late

LESSON 10

17. Write down specific encouragement or scriptures that the Lord shared with you while reading and doing the study for this week.

18. Has the Lord shown you how to earnestly pray for someone this week? Write out your prayer for them in your prayer journal.

19. Jesus Christ died for you, then rose again on the third day as He promised (Luke 24:6-7). When did you accept Jesus as your Savior? Write out a brief testimony in your prayer journal or another piece of paper.

20. Have you had the opportunity to be with a relative or friend when they accepted Jesus as their Savior? Write out your experience.

Remember: Jesus is always ready to receive the lost, so keep praying. It is never too late for someone to be saved.

