

# Weekly Encouragement

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Incorporated non-profit in New Jersey, USA

## He Spoke Peace in Pain

By Rev. Peter Eng



Victims of crucifixion cursed the day they were born. They cursed everyone who in anyway could have contributed to their sheer agony.

The very first words Jesus spoke from the cross concerning the Roman soldiers who crucified him, were a prayer to God, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" ([Luke 23:34](#)). Jesus felt the pain. But there was something more urgent than his pain. It was his love for those who crucified him. He asked God to be merciful to them for their cosmic crime, and prays for their forgiveness. This is the benchmark of Jesus'

forgiveness. Even the pain on the cross does not detract from it. What can we do that Jesus will not forgive? Think of Jesus on the cross interceding for the Roman soldiers who crucified him, and you have your answer.

"Today you will be with me in paradise" Jesus said to the criminal who asked for mercy ([Luke 23:43](#)). In this promise Jesus prophesied that the criminal would die the same day. Victims of crucifixion often took several days to die. But this criminal's legs were broken and he died the same day as Jesus. So he entered paradise as Jesus said.

This promise dispenses with [Purgatory](#). Some people get the impression that after death, they need to go to a place called Purgatory to pay for their wrong deeds. This criminal had no good deeds but many evil deeds to his spiritual account. Jesus did not send him to Purgatory but to Paradise. It is human nature that we want to say we worked for heaven and paid for our sin. When we do that, we nullify what Jesus did on the cross. We are saying his death is not enough penalty for our sin, we need to do something for ourselves.

We think we are spiritually sick when we are really spiritually dead. The dead cannot help themselves. We cannot help ourselves.

This powerful promise also confronts those who think their baptism saves them. Look at this criminal. He was never baptized but he was fully saved for paradise. Baptism is an essential expression of faith, but God's grace is not limited by the act of baptism, nor is baptism necessary to convey God's grace.

Most remarkable of all, we see God's grace in Jesus. The criminal did nothing to deserve paradise. Yet he inherited it. We become God's children by his grace alone. We don't have to work to become qualified for it. Instead, we are transformed by the experience of grace. The criminal at Jesus' side asked for grace, and received it. If we miss this point, we miss the most important message in Jesus' words to the criminal.

I cannot fathom the greatness of the love of Jesus. I love my family but tiredness or hunger easily makes me irritable towards them. How could the love of Jesus be so great that while he suffered unspeakable pain, that pain could not drown out his love. He should be thinking about his pain, not our peace...

But he loved.

And from his love, he spoke peace to the Roman soldiers who caused him pain. From his love, he spoke peace

to the criminal who made a halting request for mercy.

If you were at the foot of the cross what would you say to Jesus? What would Jesus say to you? Today, Jesus is enthroned in heaven interceding for you. Might he not be saying still to the Father, "Forgive them for they know not what they do?" And when we are ready for glory, will we not hear "Today you will be with me in paradise?"

Greater love has no man than this.

Note: The ESV is used unless indicated otherwise.

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**Rev. Peter Eng** is an ordained minister from the Reformed Tradition, but he is truly global in perspective. He served the Lord in various capacities starting from his teenage years in the 70s. His undergrad studies were done in Singapore, his grad studies in the USA, and post-grad studies in the United Kingdom, with additional post-grad research in Germany.