# Grace at the Final Hour: Lessons from the Thief on the Cross



Explore God's grace and the assurance of salvation through the story of the thief on the cross in Luke 23:39-43.





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#### Introduction

The story of the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39–43) is a profound narrative that reveals God's grace extended to even the most desperate and last-minute repentance. As Jesus hung on the cross, suffering for humanity's sins, one of the criminals beside Him turned in faith and received a promise of paradise. This encounter powerfully demonstrates that salvation is not earned by works but received as a gift of grace, even at the final hour.

Why is this story important? Often, we wrestle with the fear that we are too far gone or too late to experience God's forgiveness. The thief's transformation debunks this fear and offers hope—that no matter our past or the timing of our turning, God's mercy is available. This study will explore the rich truths found in the Gospel of Luke surrounding this event, weaving in lessons from the other Gospels to deepen our understanding of grace, repentance, and assurance.

As you journey through these seven days, you will gain insights into how Jesus' interaction with the thief reveals God's heart for sinners, the nature of faith, and the certainty of salvation when we surrender to Him. Let your heart be open to the message that no one is beyond the reach of God's love and forgiveness. Prepare to encounter the life-changing reality of grace at the final hour.









## Day 1: W Encounter with Grace









Day 1: W Encounter with Grace

#### Your Verse

Luke 23:39-43 NIV - "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

#### **Supporting Scriptures**

- Ephesians 2:8 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves."
- Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."







Day 1: W Encounter with Grace

#### Devotional: Grace Is Given Freely at Any Moment

The thief on the cross approached Jesus at a moment of suffering and desperation, yet he found grace. Despite a life of wrongdoing, his faith in Jesus' kingship and innocence led to an immediate assurance of salvation. This encounter reminds us that grace is not reserved for the perfect or those who have meticulously prepared. Instead, grace is freely given to all who turn to Jesus in faith.

Grace reaches us where we are. It meets us in brokenness and offers hope. The promise Jesus gave, "Today you will be with me in paradise," shows the certainty of forgiveness and eternal life when we rely on Him. How incredible that no matter our past, God's mercy can embrace us instantly.

Today, consider where you need to experience God's grace. Trust in Jesus' promise – salvation is never too late.







Day 1: 😂 Encounter with Grace

### Reflect and Apply

| 1. | What does the thief's immediate salvation teach you about God's grace?               |
|----|--|
|    |  |
| 2. | Have you ever felt it was too late to experience God's forgiveness? Why?             |
|    |  |
|    | How does knowing grace is available at any moment affect your relationship with God? |
|    |  |
|    |  |







Day 1: 😂 Encounter with Grace

### **Journaling Prompts**

| Write about a time you experienced unexpected grace in your life.                 |
|---|
|   |
| List areas where you need to surrender to God's grace right now.                  |
|   |
| Reflect on how the thief's story changes your view of repentance and forgiveness. |
|   |
|   |







Day 1: 😂 Encounter with Grace

#### Prayer for Today

Lord, thank You for Your incredible grace that meets us where we are. Help me to remember that no matter my past mistakes, Your forgiveness is available to me today. Strengthen my faith to trust Your promise of salvation and to live in the freedom You provide. May I never forget that it is by Your grace alone that I am saved. *Thank You for loving me unconditionally.* Amen.



















#### Your Verse

Luke 23:40 NIV - "Don't you fear God, since you are under the same sentence?"

#### Supporting Scriptures

- Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
- Psalm 51:17 "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."







#### Devotional: Humility Opens the Door to Grace

The first thief mocked Jesus, failing to recognize his own need for mercy. Jesus challenged him, asking if he feared God despite being under judgment. This moment calls us to honest self–examination about our spiritual condition.

Recognizing our need for repentance is the first step toward grace. None of us are exempt from falling short of God's perfect standard, yet God calls to broken and contrite hearts. The second thief's openness contrasted sharply with his companion's hardness. When we admit our guilt and turn to God, we position ourselves to receive His mercy.

Reflect on where you may be denying your need for grace. Embrace humility, for as Psalm 51 reminds us, God honors a broken and contrite heart.







### Reflect and Apply

| 1. | Do you honestly acknowledge your need for God's forgiveness?              |
|----|---|
|    |   |
| 2. | In what ways might you be resisting recognizing your spiritual condition? |
|    |   |
| 3. | How can humility transform your approach to God?                          |
|    |   |
|    |   |







### **Journaling Prompts**

| Write about barriers that keep you from admitting your need for grace. |
|--|
|  |
| Describe what a contrite heart looks like in your daily life.          |
|  |
| Pray through Psalm 51 and record your response to God's mercy.         |
|  |
|  |







#### Prayer for Today

Father, help me to see my need for Your mercy clearly. Remove any pride or resistance that keeps me from coming to You honestly. Create in me a broken and contrite heart, ready to receive Your forgiveness and love. Teach me humility so I may walk in Your grace daily. In Jesus' name, Amen. 🙌 😂 🙏

















#### Your Verse

Luke 23:42 NIV - "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

#### **Supporting Scriptures**

- Acts 3:19 "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out."
- 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins."







#### Devotional: Faith Expressed Through Humble Prayer

The thief's simple yet profound prayer reveals the heart of true repentance. He did not ask for works or proof—just for Jesus to remember him. This reflects a deep trust in Jesus' mercy and kingship despite his own failings.

Repentance is turning toward God with humility and faith. It is acknowledging our sins and depending on Christ's finished work for forgiveness and salvation. The thief's immediate reception of grace assures us that there is power in heartfelt confession.

Today, consider your own prayers of repentance. Are they simple, trusting, and focused on Christ? Let the thief's prayer inspire yours to be genuine and full of faith.







## Reflect and Apply

| 1. | How does the thief's prayer reflect true repentance?                           |
|----|--|
|    |  |
|    | What might be holding you back from praying a simple prayer of faith to Jesus? |
|    |  |
| 3. | How can you grow in trusting Jesus as your King and Savior?                    |
|    |  |
|    |  |







#### **Journaling Prompts**

| 1. | Write your own prayer asking Jesus to remember you in His kingdom. |
|----|--|
|    |  |
| 2. | Reflect on moments when genuine repentance changed your life.      |
|    |  |
| 3. | List ways to deepen your trust in Jesus daily.                     |
|    |  |







#### Prayer for Today

**Jesus, I come to You humbly, asking You to remember me.** Thank You for Your kingdom and Your grace that covers all sin. Teach me to repent with sincerity and trust in Your promise. Help me live each day anchored in Your love and mercy. Amen.  $\bigwedge$   $\Leftrightarrow$   $\bigvee$   $\updownarrow$ 

















#### Your Verse

Luke 23:43 NIV - "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

#### **Supporting Scriptures**

- John 10:28 "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish."
- Romans 8:38–39 "Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God."







#### Devotional: Peace in the Promise of Paradise

Jesus' promise to the thief gives us confidence in the assurance of salvation. Salvation is a present and eternal reality for those who place their faith in Him. The word "today" highlights immediacy—our forgiveness and fullness with God begins now, not just after life ends.

This assurance transforms fear into peace. It frees us from doubts about God's acceptance. No matter how undeserving we feel, faith in Christ secures a place in paradise. Like the thief, we receive this priceless gift through grace alone, not by deeds.

Reflect on Jesus' promise and cling to the assurance it offers you. Celebrate the peace that comes from knowing your salvation is secure in Him.







### Reflect and Apply

| What does Jesus' promise to the thief teach about salvation's timing? |
|---|
|   |
| Do you struggle with doubts about your salvation? Why?                |
|   |
| How can you remind yourself daily of God's unbreakable promise?       |
|   |
|   |







### **Journaling Prompts**

| 1. | Write about what assurance of salvation means to you personally.      |
|----|---|
|    |   |
| 2. | List fears or doubts you need to surrender to God's promise.          |
|    |   |
| 3. | Record Bible verses that affirm God's unwavering love and protection. |
|    |   |
|    |   |







#### Prayer for Today

**Lord Jesus, thank You for the assurance of salvation You give.** Help me rest in the certainty that I am Yours forever. Strengthen my faith so I live each day with peace, knowing nothing can separate me from Your love. Teach me to share this hope with others. Amen. 😂 🎔 🕰

















#### Your Verse

2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV - "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come."

#### **Supporting Scriptures**

- John 3:3 "No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."
- Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."







#### Devotional: Forgiveness Brings Transformative New Life

The thief's story is not just about the moment of salvation but a new life in Christ. Being forgiven means becoming a new creation, transformed from the inside out. Though the thief's life ended on the cross, the transformation he experienced points to the deeper truth of rebirth in Christ, which all believers can live out.

This new life is marked by freedom from sin and a fresh identity as God's child. We no longer live for ourselves but for Christ who lives within us. Like the thief, every believer is invited to embrace this transformative power.

As you meditate today, consider what new life in Christ means for your daily walk. How does forgiveness empower you to live differently?







### Reflect and Apply

| 1. | How have you experienced new life through forgiveness in Christ? |
|----|--|
|    |  |
| 2. | What changes might God be calling you to in your daily life?     |
|    |  |
| 3. | How can you live out your identity as a new creation?            |
|    |  |







### **Journaling Prompts**

| 1. | Write about ways you see evidence of new life in your heart and actions.    |
|----|---|
|    |   |
| 2. | Reflect on what it means to be 'crucified with Christ.'                     |
|    |   |
|    | List habits or thoughts you want to surrender to Christ for transformation. |
|    |   |
|    |   |







#### Prayer for Today

**Father, thank You for making me new in Christ.** Help me to walk daily in the freedom and power of forgiveness. May Your Spirit guide my thoughts and actions so I fully reflect the new creation I am in You. Teach me to live for You alone. Amen. \*\*\forall \text{ \( \Limbsiz \) \( \Limbsiz \) \( \Limbsiz \)

















#### Your Verse

Luke 23:42-43 NIV - "Remember me when you come into your kingdom."

#### **Supporting Scriptures**

- Titus 3:5 "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy."
- Hebrews 4:16 "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence."







#### Devotional: God's Mercy Knows No Boundaries

The thief's last-minute faith challenges our view of God's mercy and timing. It teaches us that grace transcends human judgment and time. Salvation is possible even in the final moments of life when a heart truly turns to God.

This truth offers hope to many who fear their past or delayed faith disqualifies them. God's mercy surpasses all limitations, and His grace invites everyone to come boldly to Him. This assures us that no one is beyond the reach of His saving power.

Reflect on the breadth of God's grace. Are there people or situations you know that seem hopeless? Remember the thief's story and pray for God's mercy to move mightily.







## Reflect and Apply

|                    | How does the thief's last-minute salvation affect your understanding of God's mercy? |
|--------------------|--|
| -                  |  |
| <b>2.</b> <i>I</i> | Are there areas in your life or others' that need to experience this grace?          |
| <u>-</u>           |  |
| -                  |  |
| 3. I               | How can you extend God's grace to others who feel hopeless?                          |
| _                  |  |
| _                  |  |







### **Journaling Prompts**

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#### Prayer for Today

**Lord, Your mercy amazes me.** Help me to trust that Your grace is big enough for all, no matter the circumstances. Teach me to extend this grace generously and to pray earnestly for those who feel lost or beyond hope. May Your kingdom come and Your will be done in every heart. Amen.

















#### Your Verse

Revelation 3:20 NIV - "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock."

#### **Supporting Scriptures**

- Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened."
- John 1:12 "To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."







# Devotional: Answer the Knock: Embrace God's Invitation

The story of the thief ends with an open door to all who will respond. Jesus stands ready to welcome anyone who turns to Him in faith. The invitation is clear and loving: come as you are, no matter your history or timing.

Salvation is an open invitation, not a closed opportunity. Like the thief, we are invited to receive forgiveness and eternal life freely. The Gospels consistently call us to respond to Jesus' knock with faith and repentance.

As this study concludes, reflect on your own response to this invitation. Are you ready to welcome Jesus fully? Remember, the promise of paradise awaits all who believe.







Day 7: Invitation to Salvation

## Reflect and Apply

| 1. | How will you respond to Jesus' invitation today?                            |
|----|---|
|    |   |
|    | Do you know anyone who needs to hear this invitation? How can you share it? |
|    |   |
| 3. | What practical steps will you take to open your heart more fully to Christ? |
|    |   |
|    |   |







## **Journaling Prompts**

| 1. | Write a prayer inviting Jesus to be Lord of your life anew.                    |
|----|--|
|    |  |
| 2. | Reflect on the significance of Jesus standing and knocking in Revelation 3:20. |
|    |  |
| 3. | Journal about ways to share the Gospel invitation with others.                 |
|    |  |
|    |  |







#### Prayer for Today

**Jesus, I hear Your knock and open my heart to You.** Thank You for inviting me to come as I am and receive Your grace. Help me to walk faithfully with You and to share Your love with others who need to know You. May Your kingdom grow through my life. Amen.  $\blacksquare$   $\heartsuit$   $\bigwedge$   $\heartsuit$ 







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