

“Love Lifted Me Recovery” - October, 2025
Newsletter for July, August, September, 2025
Pastors/Chaplains Tom & Dottie Hooper
Web Site: www.Loveliftedmerecovery.com

Lessons from the Thief on the Cross

•**Luke 23:32-43** “And two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him. And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.....Now there was also an inscription (sign) above Him, written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, ‘THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.’ And one of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, ‘Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!’ But the other answered, and rebuking him said, ‘Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.’ And he was saying to Jesus, **‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!’** And Jesus said to him, **‘Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.’”**

There are several lessons we can learn from the Scripture’s account of the thief on the cross, but we will concentrate on this one lesson - **it shows that salvation is not by good works, but by faith in Jesus Christ alone.** The thief had no time to do any good works, not even be baptized, and yet Jesus promised him that he would be with Him in Paradise that very day. The thief did not fully understand who Jesus was or what He was doing, but he acknowledged Him by recognizing that Jesus had done no wrong, and by calling him Lord (Romans 10:9-10, “**....If you shall confess with your mouth that Jesus is LORD, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved**”).

Of course Jesus had not yet risen from the dead, but the thief did not have to understand that. He was not required to understand the deity of Christ, or the plan of salvation, or know how many prophecies had been fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. The thief could not get down from the cross and be baptized, or participate in any rituals or ordinances, or do any other religious work or good deed. **He just recognized Jesus as the Messiah, and cried out to Him for mercy, and he was immediately saved!** The sad thing is that Jesus, as He hung there on the cross, was paying the price for the sins of both thieves, but only the one availed himself of God’s mercy and received forgiveness and eternal life.

•**Titus 3:5** “**NOT by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy** He saved us; by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.”

•**Colossians 2:13-14** “And you, being dead in your sins, has He made alive together with Him (Jesus), having forgiven you all your trespasses, **canceling out** the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, **nailing it to His cross.**”

•**Acts 16:30-31** “And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ So they said, **‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved,** you and your household.’”

•**Ephesians 2:8-9** “For by grace **you are SAVED by faith,** and that **NOT** of yourselves, it is the gift of God: **NOT BY WORKS,** lest anyone should boast.”

Monthly Evangelistic Outreach to Venice Beach

Saturday, July 5, 2025 - Praise the Lord! Our ministry teams today consisted of Tom, me, Felipe, Kathleen, Sheldon, Luis, David and Ulysses. Sheldon, Kathleen and I went to the north end of the Boardwalk, and Felipe, Luis, David and Ulysses covered the south end of the Boardwalk, and Tom stayed home to keep us covered in prayer. Felipe, David, Luis and Ulysses also went out to the streets and store parking lots to find homeless people. We had 184 lunches, lots of socks, used clothing, hygiene/toiletry packets, shoes, and some blankets to give to the homeless, and dog food for those who had dogs. Felipe gave Ulysses charge of the dog food, and they said the people were “full of joy” to get

dog food for their pets. Felipe also said that Luis was very happy and said, "Thank you so much, I enjoyed being on the team!" Felipe said they gave out everything, including some lunches from another church and some food boxes from the food bank. Sheldon offered a pair of shoes to a man named Yaya, and they fit him perfectly, and he also got a lunch and a "hoodie" sweatshirt, and he was so happy. Kathleen gave a pair of new sandals to one woman, and she was thrilled that they fit her. Matthew got a lunch and a sleeping bag, and many others whose names we didn't get received food, clothing and hygiene items. Kathleen saw a man in his thirties, and she said, "He was sitting alone, dressed nice but looking dejected. He had no backpack, not anything, and was eager to get a lunch and toiletries. When I asked him if he needed any clothing, he asked what we had. I showed him some different pants and a shirt, but he said no. I got the impression he hadn't been homeless long and was very discerning about his appearance. Then I remembered there were more clothes in the second cart and found a like-new, blue T-shirt with a silk-screened "Maui" logo in his size medium. His face lit up and he said, "YEAH" and reached out for it. Customer satisfaction! From your Personal Shopper to the Homeless!" Kathleen also saw a couple who had a puppy, so she gave them two packets of dog food, because she thought he would need it, because puppies are still growing. I gave a lunch, a summer dress and underwear to a young lady named Paloma. Everyone was very thankful for all the things they received, and we had a great time meeting people's physical needs, and each lunch contains a gospel tract for their spiritual needs. We continued going down the Boardwalk giving out gospel tracts in English and Spanish to people who were just walking around at the beach.

Saturday, August 2, 2025 - For our outreach today, the Lord provided volunteers to help me and Tom, and they were Kaela, Andrew, Kathleen, Felipe, Ulysses, and David. We had 184 lunches, lots of socks, used clothing, hygiene/toiletry packets, hats, belts and shoes for the homeless, and dog food for those who had dogs. We also had three sleeping bags, and they were very much appreciated by those who got them. Kathleen and I went up to the north end of the Venice Boardwalk, and Kaela and Andrew went to the south end. Felipe's group went to the streets, shopping center parking lots, and wherever homeless people could be found in Venice and West Los Angeles. Tom stayed home to provide prayer cover for all of us. Kathleen and I gave out all of our lunches and clothing, shoes, and some satchels and a rolling suitcase (for people to carry their belongings in - those were a big hit!). A young woman named Julie got a large satchel, a lunch, toiletries and some shoes that fit her perfectly. She was so happy! A man named Jason got food, toiletries and some other items, and he was especially grateful for a bag to carry things in. Kathleen said one man opened his lunch and started to read the gospel tract that was inside. The man next to him said, "Oh, that's a Chick tract, I've always liked those." Later, when giving out more lunches and clothing, we handed some tracts to a woman, and she said, "I remember my dad used to give these out." (Chick tracts are comic-book-style booklets from Chick Publications, Jack Chick, the originator of these tracts, has already gone to be with the Lord, but his work keeps on going). As for the shoes and clothing, Kathleen said, "What I noticed were more than the usual shoeless people. It was very gratifying to be able to provide the right size shoes and sandals for them. That's a pretty basic need, especially as they are out walking so much and on hot sidewalks that burn their feet." Also at the Boardwalk, the people standing in line to get food from another ministry got lunches and clothing from us, as well. One woman spoke with an accent, so I asked her if she spoke Russian. She said she did, and she and two other women with her took tracts in Russian. These are elderly women, not homeless, but perhaps just on a limited income and they come for the free food (also, being from the former Soviet Union, they are used to standing in lines to get food). There is a senior residence on the Boardwalk, so I assume they live there. There are some elderly people who are homeless, and one of them is ninety-year-old Jean, who lives in her van, and we saw her today and gave her a lunch and some other stuff. Kaela and Andrew gave out all their lunches, shoes, dog food, and most of the clothing. Felipe, Ulysses, Jose and David went to find homeless people, some living in their motor homes along Washington Blvd., to the skateboard park and recreation area at Venice Beach, and to the Ralph's and McDonald's on Lincoln Blvd. They gave out one of the sleeping bags, and most of their lunches, clothing and everything. After we

gave out all the lunches, I continued giving out gospel tracts in English and Spanish to passers-by on the Boardwalk. Praise the Lord!

Saturday, September 6, 2025 - We had a great group of helpers today, and there were Tom, me, Kathleen, Felipe, David, Ulysses, Stephani, Michele, and a friend of Felipe's, Mr. Schaefer, who is 84 years old. For the homeless, we had 181 lunches, socks, shoes, toiletry/hygiene packets, clothing, backpacks and tote bags, a couple of sleeping bags, and dog food for the homeless with pets. We followed our usual routes of going up and down the Venice Boardwalk, and also to the streets, parking lots, and anywhere we could find homeless people to whom we could minister the gospel and help with their physical needs. Kathleen and I gave out all of our lunches, most of the clothing and shoes, and everything else. We met a man named Danny who said he used to be the "resident Satanist" down at the Boardwalk, but now he's a follower of Jesus. We saw him later, sitting on a bench, witnessing and sharing his faith with another man - praise the Lord! We found a young woman named Marina, and she got a pair of shoes that fit her perfectly, and some clothing, toiletries, one of the tote bags and a lunch. Many others were happy to get shoes that fit them, clothing that fit them, and one man said, "Oh, yeah! That shirt is perfect!" We found 90-year-old Jean, who lives in her van, and we gave her a lunch, a towel and washcloth, and some crossword puzzle books. A young man got a lunch and told us there was another guy who needed one down the alley. We went down the alley and found him in a wheelchair, and we gave him clothing, food and toiletries, with a bag to carry them in. He said his name was "D" and he asked if we would hang the bag over the wheelchair's handles in the back. Everyone was very grateful and thankful for the food and clothing they received, and those that received the sleeping bags and tote bags really appreciated them. Stephani said she and Michele gave out most of the lunches and clothing, and the first people they saw were two women who said they had recently had all of their belongings stolen. Stephani said they gave them two lunches each, and lots of the clothing. The younger woman said she was diabetic and she asked if she could use Michele's phone to call her aunt to get some help. Felipe and his group went to reach the homeless out on the streets and in parking lots, and some living in their motor homes. While giving out lunches to the homeless on Pico Blvd., a man saw them and came out of his house and invited them in to celebrate his grandson's birthday. Felipe said they were surprised, but accepted, as they were finished and had given out all of their lunches and clothing. Those of us who were on the Boardwalk also gave out gospel tracts to passers-by, in English and Spanish, and every lunch contains a gospel tract. One person said, "Oh, those are Chick tracts" - another fan! Praise God!

Prison Ministry

Eduardo Gonzalez, CSATF State Prison, Corcoran, CA - "I would like to thank you guys for donating your time for prisoners like myself, even though you have tons of things to do in the free world. May God reward you with tons of blessings. I have been in prison for the past 24 years, and it's nothing to be proud of. I took an innocent person's life, and for that I am ashamed and really regret my actions. I am now fifty years old. Here are my Bible lessons, and I thank you - you guys are incredible. Sincerely, Eduardo"

Anthony M. Newell, North Kern State Prison, Delano, CA - "I just wanted to send you a quick note telling you 'Thank you for sending me the Serenity Bible!' I really do appreciate you guys. I will read it from front to back, and I look forward to learning from it. Sincerely, Anthony"

Russell King, High Desert State Prison, Susanville, CA - "Thank you for your Bible program. I'm struggling with 100% commitment to the Lord, but I'm working on it daily. I grew up in an abusive household. My dad was a drunk and was physically abusive, but I would take the beatings for my mom and sisters. I ran away at age fourteen, lived on the streets, drinking, drugs, fights, stealing, hung out with

biker gangs, then went to prison for the next 42 years off and on. I finally got tired, as the question in your lessons asked, so I dropped out of the gang and started working on myself. I'm sixty-one years old now, but the last three years I have been trying to follow the Lord. I was a pagan for over twenty years, but I know the Bible tells me to give that up and follow the Lord completely. I struggle daily with being vulnerable and humble and a whole new way of life. Thank you again, Rusty"

Dennis Jimenez, Mule Creek State Prison, Ione, CA - "Thank you both so much for your caring hearts for your help and kind words. Your card brought tears to my eyes. I told my wife, and her reply was that I have just nice people helping me. I also appreciate your newsletter and the photos you sent. I apologize for not writing sooner, but this prison has me engaged in many more groups. This prison is a level three which is much more crazy than a level four, but I will persevere. Thank you for your Bible lessons. Sincerely, D. Jimenez"

Dillon Martin, Corcoran State Prison, Corcoran, CA - "I just wanted to thank you both for the Serenity Bible you sent me, and for sharing your testimonies with me. Here is a little bit of my testimony, and you're welcome to share it: I grew up with a lot of violence and chaos in our house, and at any early age was introduced to the drug crystal methamphetamine. Because of that, by the time I was thirteen I was homeless and living on the streets. At age sixteen, I was arrested for burglary, sent to juvenile hall, and later to a "rehab" place in Mexico where I was physically and sexually abused. After two weeks, I escaped and walked all the way back to the border and into the US. I stayed clean of drugs for the next few years, but circumstances caused me to commit a crime that got me a 27-year sentence in prison. I was a broken human being, but still refused to take responsibility for my actions. As a result, I spent my first five years in solitary confinement at Pelican Bay State Prison. Sitting in solitary confinement, I decided I wanted to learn about God, so I found a Bible and began reading. In 2023, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, dropped out of the gang I had been in since I was 14, got clean and sober, and I'm in the process of earning my certification to be a substance abuse counselor. I want to do God's work by sharing my story and helping others see how Jesus Christ can change their lives. I'm confident that whatever happens is all a part of God's plan for me. I am meeting with the chaplain here to see about getting baptized soon. I appreciate you both for all your help and support. Take care and God bless, sincerely, Dillon"

Robert Armijo, Corcoran State Prison, Corcoran, CA - "I received my homework for Step 10, and yes, I've been keeping a daily inventory as I pray and ask God to help me with this course. I will be honest with you, I never thought I would change until two years ago, and I wanted to thank you for being a big help in making this happen. I've been in prison for forty years, and I've had a hard life, but with God with me I am very happy and stress-free. Thank you both for giving me this chance to do the 12-Step program. Sincerely yours, Robert"

Dario Alfaro, Kern Valley State Prison, Delano, CA - "I wanted to tell you both how appreciative I am for receiving the Bible study packets and your thoughtful letters. It's good to hear how you are spreading the gospel and God's love throughout the community. I was raised in church, but made wrong decisions as a troubled teen, and reading the Bible verses helped me remember certain things about God and His love, nature and redemption. Being in prison is discouraging, but through your course I was able to gain hope and strengthen my faith. Sincerely, Dario"

John Coleman, CSATF State Prison, Corcoran, CA - "First of all, I want to thank you for showing me who I am in Christ and helping me to come to know my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I also have a better relationship with my sister, as we talk all the time now, because of you guys and your 12-Step program opening my heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has shown me how to open up to my sister. Thank you very much. Bless you, John"