

On the Way to the Cross - The Final Seven Words

Tonight we will focus on Jesus' seven words, or seven sentences, from the cross (**John 19:17-19**). I want to remind you that Jesus was in enormous physical pain, the worst human pain imaginable, as He spoke His famous words, His seven last sentences from the cross... The Roman soldiers all expected Jesus to shout out with obscenities and cursing and swearing. One Roman philosopher, Seneca, said that all people, when being crucified and nailed to the cross, cursed the day they were born. Another Roman philosopher, Cicero, said that the cursing was so violent and wicked that the soldiers often cut out the tongues of men who were being crucified, because their language was so filled with pain, rage and hatred. Instead, we hear nothing of this. Jesus did not curse His tormenters at all. Yes, He did not curse the soldiers; He did not curse the religious leaders; He did not curse the gawkers. Instead of cursing, as we would expect, we hear the seven incredible last words of Jesus:

(1) **Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.** Pure grace. A word of pure grace. This may be the most powerful example of grace and forgiving love in the whole Bible. While in so much pain, Jesus asked God to forgive His tormenters. They didn't ask for forgiveness; they didn't deserve it; but Jesus gave them forgiveness. His prayerful words to God were pure grace. Notice that the first word from the cross that day was the word, "Father." And the last word will begin with the simple word, "Father." Jesus did not come down on His tormenters, but up to God, and Jesus began His prayer, "Father..." All prayer begins with an intensely personal word to our loving God. So from the cross, Jesus teaches us how to pray to the "Father." Personal and intimate. Not by looking down, but by looking up!

(2) **Today you will be with me in paradise.** Jesus makes a huge promise to the robber next to Him on the cross. "Today..." In your hearts, write down the word "today." Immediately - instantaneously. Now. Not tomorrow. Not in a hundred years. Not in a in a thousand years. Not in a in a million years. Not after the rapture and before the millennium. But today! Immediately! I don't fully understand it. I cannot prove it. I can't tell you where paradise is. But Jesus said, "*Today you will be with me in paradise.*" The next word is "you." In your hearts, write down the word, "You." At Christmas time, we often say, your name needs to be on the present for you to receive the gift. Christ's promise is not only towards the thief on the cross but Christ's promise is directed towards you and me as well. Christ's gift is for you personally.

(3) **Woman, your son; Son, your mother.** Again, we find Jesus is in the middle of enormous pain and He is thinking about someone else. When in pain, He is still compassionate for others. His focus is not His own pain but the pain of His mother and the pain of His closest friend, John. He asks the two of them to take care of each other. He makes a new family. Again, in the midst of pain when He could focus on His own needs, instead He is caring for the needs of His mother and best friend. Remember, Mary was with Jesus at the foot of the cross. This would have been the most awful and gut wrenching experience of her life, to see and experience His crucifixion. The nails that went through His wrists could have just as well gone through her wrists. The sword that pieced His side could have just as well been thrust through her side. Jesus' pain was her pain. That is the way it is with mothers. It is always the same: the mother totally feels the pain of her child, and Mary felt the excruciating pain of Jesus. One of the last acts of Jesus was to care for his mother by entrusting her future to his best friend and cousin, John, the faithful disciple.

(4) ***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*** In this statement, Jesus is most human. He shares with us His emotional pain, that God has abandoned Him. That is what all human beings feel sometimes during their lives. As human beings, we all at some time feel abandoned by God, and we all cry out to the sky, "Where are you God?" So it was with Jesus. Let me give you some examples from the Bible. King David wrote the famous words in Psalm 22: "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" His words continue: "*why are you so far from saving me Lord? Why are you so far from my groaning? Why do I cry out to you, but you do not answer?*" King David had these feelings in his heart that God had forsaken him, abandoned him, deserted him. Why? Because of the personal tragedies in his life.

Similarly with Job. Job experienced many personal tragedies. He lost his farms, lost the animals, lost his children, lost his wife. Job lost everything. And he felt that God had abandoned him, deserted him, and Job was angry with God and even raged at God. Those feelings were all normal. God still loved David when he expressed those feelings and God loved Job when Job expressed those feelings. And God loved Jesus when Jesus expressed those feelings. Therefore, God still loves us when we express those feelings.

(5) ***I thirst.*** Jesus experienced physical pain. The whip lashing on His back hurt. The thorns in His head. The ten inch spikes through His wrists and feet. "I thirst," means that Jesus was thirsty and experienced the physical pain of life. Again, this reveals the humanity of Jesus. It is the shortest of the seven last words. In English, it is two words long. In the Greek language, it is only one word. It means that Jesus/God knew physical pain. His physical pain was not make believe or pretend, it was real!

The previous question focused on the intense emotional pain of Jesus; this single word focuses on the intense physical pain of Jesus. Jesus experienced the enormity of human pain There were 39 lashes across His back. There was a crown of thorns stuck into His head. There were the ten inch spikes through His wrists. There He was, hanging on the cross for three hours. God experienced the enormity of human pain because God became human flesh and suffered on the cross. The Son of God, the Mind of God, the Heart of God, was fully human just like we are. Jesus was a true incarnation of God. Jesus was fully God but also fully flesh or fully human. He suffered intense emotional pain. He suffered intense physical pain. That means that God knows and truly understands physical and emotional pain. There are times in life when we feel physically awful. But it's comforting to know that God knows exactly what we are going through!

(6) ***It is finished.*** This sentence should be translated: "*It is accomplished.*" The word, finish, means the race is over and done with. It is a different to say, it is accomplished! That is, the plan of God for my life is accomplished. The plan of God for Jesus was for Him to be perfectly obedient unto death and Jesus accomplished that plan. This sentence is a note of victory. An example in the Scriptures is found in 2 Timothy 4:7, when the Apostle Paul (who had drawn close to the end of his life), wrote similar words, "*I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.*" So as Paul came to the end of his life, these were his feelings: that he had fought the good fight of life, that he had finished the race that God had placed before him; that he had kept the faith." So Paul was feeling victorious about his life, not that his life was perfect, but that he had done God's will in his life. God wants us to feel that way about our lives too. "*It is accomplished.*" I have accomplished my God has given assignment.

(7) ***Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit.*** The last sentence, begins with the same word that was

found in the first sentence: "Father." Our heavenly father. Our personal father. The Father who will welcome us with open arms when we go on to heaven to be with Him.

Jesus started and finished the same way. He kept His eyes on the Father and kept the intimacy going. Why? Because out of that personal intimate relationship He knew that nothing could go wrong. He totally trusted in His Father. He knew His Father's heart. He wasn't afraid because of the Father love! This is a great lesson for us all. Broken intimacy with the Father only accentuates the pain we are suffering! Therefore, it is not wrong to commit matters into the capable hands of God the Father and let go!

Father.... Father.... It started with personal intimate relationship and ended with personal intimate relationship!