

Voices From Calvary

Introduction. From the moment Adam and Eve fell from grace in the Garden of Eden, God had a plan for the redemption and eternal salvation of humanity (Genesis 3:14-16). God promised Abraham that through his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3; 15:5; 17:1-8; 18:18; 22:17-18). We can trace the lineage of Abraham and see that Jesus was the promise's fulfillment (Matthew 1:1-17). Christ emptied Himself of the glory of His deity and took the form of a bond servant (Philippians 2:6-7). He then became obedient to the point of death in order to become the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all men, thus fulfilling God's plan (Hebrews 5:8-9).

Today, we assemble to worship God. We sing, pray, listen to a sermon from God's word, give of our means and partake of the Lord's supper. However, sometimes I wonder if we understand and recognize the incredible significance of the memorial to our Lord. It is for this reason that I would like for us to examine the seven sayings of the Lord as He gave His life upon the cross. It is encouraging to see the progressiveness of the will and purpose of God for the redemption of mankind. These sayings seem to sum up in themselves the whole of the gospel (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Not all of the seven sayings of Christ on the cross are recorded in one gospel, so some of us may not know all of the sayings and certainly we may not realize the order in which they were uttered. It is significant to note before we go on that the first three sayings were uttered in the light. These were statements of forgiveness and fellowship. The next two sayings were spoken in the darkness. These were statements of conflict and exhaustion. The final two sayings were uttered in the emergence of light, which represented completion and victory.

I. ***The Voice Of Intercession -- "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).***

- A. In His first three statements, Jesus revealed striking characteristics about His work as High Priest. This statement was a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12 which reads, "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."
- B. This was a prayer for those who were guilty of putting Him to death. It is not quite certain whether the Lord referred to the Jews or the Romans or both. The Romans were really ignorant

that He was the Son of God and were obeying the commandments of their rulers. The Jews knew He was innocent and had the evidence, if they would have examined it, to determine that He was the Messiah (Acts 3:17; 1 Corinthians 2:8).

- C. Jesus here forgets about Himself. In His deepest moment of human abasement, the Divine bursts forth. The cross was the most humiliating of all ways to put a man to death. Jesus here turns to Divine mercy and the conquered becomes the conqueror by asking for them what their deed had forfeited.
- D. This voice from Calvary teaches us the responsibility of praying for our enemies, even when they seek to do us harm (Matthew 6:14-15). No other religion teaches men and women to pray for the forgiveness of enemies. Men and women of the world seek revenge, but the Christian bears patiently reproaches and persecutions (James 1:3-4).

II. ***The Voice Of Mercy -- "Today, thou shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).***

- A. In this statement, Jesus proclaimed pardon to the penitent. Jesus abundantly showed mercy to all whose hearts were pure (Matthew 5:8). The thief on the cross realized the power Jesus had and Jesus looked into that man's heart and forgave him. The thief fully believed Him to be the Messiah and had faith that the Lord would establish His kingdom. Christ wonderfully fulfilled the role of High Priest by exonerating sinners.
- B. The word "paradise" is of Persian origin. It originally meant a garden and particularly a garden of pleasure, filled with trees, shrubs, fountains, and flowers. In hot climates these gardens were particularly pleasant; and therefore they were attached to the mansions and palaces of nobility and of the rich. The word came to denote any place of happiness and then to denote the abode of the blessed after this life passes away. This was the same paradise to which Paul was taken in 2 Corinthians 12:4.
- C. It must be noted that this thief does not constitute a pattern of salvation for us today. This was before Jesus died on the cross (Hebrews 9:15-17). In other places before His death, He had forgiven the sins of people who lived under the Law of Moses (Mark 2:5; Luke 7:47; John 8:10-11). But now, we must follow the current terms of pardon.
- D. This voice from Calvary not only reiterates the theme of forgiveness, but it also teaches us that the souls of the righteous will be made happy. The other thief merely sought to be delivered from death, not to be delivered from his sins. The penitent thief

would have the security and assurance of the future resurrection and of a glorious immortality (Revelation 2:7).

III. ***The Voice Of Affection -- "Woman, behold, your son! ... Behold, your mother!" (John 19:26-27).***

- A. Jesus also demonstrates His role as High Priest by bestowing blessing on His own. Jesus shows not only His Divine thoughtlessness for Himself but also His human thoughtfulness for others. Mary was poor and it would seem now that she had no home. Jesus in His dying moments, filled with tender regard for His mother, secured for her an adopted son, obtained for her a home, and consoled her grief by the prospect of attention from the most beloved of His apostles.
- B. This wonderful example of the Lord's care should be etched in our hearts (1 Timothy 5:8). He made her welfare one of His last cares on the cross when He was making atonement for the sins of the world. There is something infinitely moving in the fact that Jesus, in the agony of the cross, when the salvation of the world hung in the balance, thought of the loneliness of His mother in the years ahead. Even in the moments of the world's most significant battle, our Lord never forgot the simple affairs that lay close to home. Tradition says that Mary continued to live with John in Judea until the time of her death, which occurred about fifteen years after the death of Christ.
- C. A long space of time intervened between the third and fourth sayings. Three gospels affirm that three hours of silence and darkness reigned on Calvary. It is the climax of the sufferings of our Lord. The biblical account is silent as to the content of this period of time (Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44). We can only get a glimpse of how terrible these three hours were when that awful voice of desertion rose from Calvary.

IV. ***The Voice Of Desertion -- "My God, My God, why has thou forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46).***

- A. This was the only time Jesus called the Father "My God." This was the combination of the Old Testament idea of sacrifice, and the idea of the willing suffering of Jehovah's Servant. It found its fullest expression in the language of Psalm 22. To be the perfect sacrifice, Jesus must experience the separation which sin has wrought between man and God (Isaiah 53:4-5; 59:1-2; John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- B. How great a blessing it is that the Lord died in our place, on our account, that He might bring us near to God. He experienced in

that dreadful hour God's hatred of sin. It was suffering, endured by Him, that was due to us; and suffering by which we can be saved from eternal death.

- C. The fourth and fifth sayings were spoken in the time of darkness. Nature was wrapped in gloom as Jesus, bearing the burden and the curse of sin that was not His own, revealed to us something of the mystery of suffering. These two sayings demonstrated the aspects of His divinity and His humanity.

V. ***The Voice Of Humanity -- "I thirst" (John 19:28).***

- A. It is here that Jesus shows His humanity. After several agonizing hours upon the cross, Jesus cries out that He is thirsty. After He saw that all was fulfilled in accordance with the scriptures, He yielded Himself to the physical needs of the body.
- B. This saying reminds us that while Jesus suffered for the sins of many, He still had to become the world's redeemer in a man's body (Hebrews 2:10). When John was writing his gospel near the end of the first century, a certain tendency had arisen in religious and philosophical thought called Gnosticism. One of its great tenets was that the spirit was altogether good and matter altogether evil. God, who was pure spirit, could never take upon himself a body, because that was matter, and matter was evil. Therefore, they taught that Jesus never had a real body. They said that He was only a phantom.
- C. This teaching went on to argue that God could never really suffer, and that Jesus never really suffered but went through the whole experience of the cross without any real pain. However, if Jesus was to ever redeem man, He must become as a man. He had to become what we are in order to make us what He is. John stresses the fact that Jesus was really human and really underwent the agony of the cross.

VI. ***The Voice Of Victory -- "It is finished" (John 19:30).***

- A. In one Greek word, He sums up the whole of man's redemption. In the word "finished" was all that prophecy had foretold and type foreshadowed (Luke 18:31; 22:37). Jesus knew the relationship between His death and redemption for us. "Finished" was the work which His Father had given Him to do (John 17:4).
- B. He looked back on His life from the time when He said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:9), and is able to say with regard to every job and title of His life's work, "It is finished." Christ encountered death, not as the conquered, but as the conqueror. Through Christ, we can be conquerors as well

(Romans 8:37).

- C. The other three gospel do not tell us that Jesus said, "It is finished." But they do tell us that He died with a great shout on His lips (Matthew 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46). On the other hand, John does not speak of the great cry, but does say that Jesus' last words were, "It is finished." The explanation is that the great shout and the words recorded here are one in the same.
- D. Jesus did not die in a weary defeat, but He made that great statement as one who shouts for joy because the victory is won. Although He seemed to men to be broken on the cross, He knew that He had prevailed. The sufferings and the agonies in redeeming man were over. The toils in His ministry, the persecutions, mockeries, the pangs in the garden and the cross are over, and the doors to the kingdom of God could now be opened in just a short while for all those who believed and obeyed Christ.

VII. ***The Voice Of Death -- "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).***

- A. The word of victory was followed by a word of rest. It was a demonstration of what physical death would be for all saints. It was not a leap into the dark, unknown afterworld. It was a homecoming.
- B. After John records that Jesus said, "It is finished," he said that Jesus bowed His head and gave up His spirit. The word that is used here means to "settle back upon a pillow." For Jesus the strife was over and the battle was won; and even on the cross He knew the joy of victory and the rest of the man who has completed His task and can lean back, content and at peace.
- C. The word "commend" simply means to "put in charge with." He was depositing or committing His soul for safe keeping. Death was robbed of its sting (1 Corinthians 15:54-55). Because of these words, the believer can say with the apostle Paul, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

Conclusion. As you have studied and reflected upon these voices from Calvary, do they make you think about your life? Do they make you think of perhaps shortcomings where you have missed the mark in relation to God's law? Are you ready to respond to these voices? Do these voices call to you from your guilt and sin? We stand ready to help you in your obedience to the sacrifice of Christ.