**THE LAST WORDS OF A DYING SAVIOR**

The gospels record the last words of Jesus before He died on the cross for our sins. As a matter of fact, there were “seven sayings” He uttered from the cross, and they would make a fine study for us. Since we have limited space, let’s get right to it!

**The cry of forgiveness: *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do”* (Lk.23:34).** Whenever I read those words, I marvel that this prayer was offered for the very ones who are abusing and murdering Him. Not only that, but His prayer is offered while the crime is being perpetrated! This was not an “after the fact” situation, where people are trying to make amends; but right in the midst of their presumptuous rebellion against the God of Heaven. Yet the forgiveness for which Jesus prayed would not come without conditions; for their forgiveness would not come for another fifty-one days (cf. Ac.2:36-38).

**The cry of salvation: *“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise”* (Lk.23:43).** Here we see the famous “thief on the cross” having a last-minute change of heart – a true, “death-bed conversion.” In the process of his conversion, he realized the need to fear God. He knew that Jesus was innocent. He knew that Jesus was “Lord,” and that He had a “kingdom.” And, he knew that Jesus had the power to remember (help) him after they have both died. Jesus responded with words of comfort – which would be experienced on that very day! (cf. 2Cor.5:8)

**The cry of concern: *“Woman, behold your son! …Behold your mother”* (Jn.19:26-27).** Even in this very difficult time, Jesus shows concern for His mother. When most people would be focused on themselves, Jesus thinks of family. He wanted to make sure Mary was taken care of after He was gone; and He turned to a man he knew He could trust to do it: John. These words reminded me of the words my father spoke to me when he was nearing death: *“Boy, take care of your maw!”* I was only eighteen years of age; but I took on that responsibility with gladness. And, given the chance, I would do it again! (cf. 1Tm.5:8)

**The cry of abandonment: *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me”* (Mt.27:46; Mk.15:34).** Jesus is not asking this for His own benefit, for He knows why He is on the cross (Jn.12:32-33). Instead, His words are spoken for the benefit of those present. No doubt, they would call to mind David’s words in Psalm 22, where a detailed picture of that very day is painted. Like David, Jesus was “forsaken” in the sense that God was “far from helping” Him (Ps.22:1). *He was abandoned to be mocked, scourged, and crucified; with no help from the Father to escape* (Mt.20:17-19). As an aside, if Jesus was “separated from God,” as some falsely claim, then this prayer was worthless (cf. Isa.59:2).

**The cry of distress: *“I thirst”* (Jn.19:28).** Clearly, Jesus is vulnerable, and in real physical distress. The horrors of crucifixion would certainly include extreme thirst. In these words, we see the genuine humanity of Jesus. It is just as wrong to deny His humanity as it is to deny His Deity (cf. 1Jn.4:1-3). Jesus willingly took on humanity and all the vulnerabilities thereof for our sakes (Hb.4:14-16). He endured a horrific death to demonstrate the horrific realities of sin, and to pay the horrific price of forgiveness (1Cor.6:20).

**The cry of triumph: *“It is finished”* (John 19:30).** But it’s not just His earthly life that’s finished. This moment was the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament (Mt.5:17-18). It was the end of the Old Testament Law (Col.2:14-16). And it was the end of Satan’s power over death (Hb.2:14-15). And, with the ending of those things came the beginning of some new things (cf. Hb.9:15-17).

**The cry of reunion: *“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit*” (Lk.23:46).** With His mission completed, He entrusts Himself to God (cp. Jn.17:4-5). And, likewise, when *our* life is over, we can entrust *ourselves* to God! (2Tm.4:6-8)

When one considers the extreme difficulties of crucifixion, it is amazing that Jesus could speak at all. Being hung in that awkward position would make it difficult to even breath – let alone speak! But His dying words, intentionally uttered, are excellent ones for us to contemplate. Taken together, these words demonstrate the unwavering love of God for his wayward creation. May we truly appreciate our Lord and Savior!

--Lanny Smith