

THE FIRST WORD FROM THE CROSS
Luke 23:27-38

Intro: We have been considering certain passages in the Gospels having to do with our Lord's death of the Cross. Tonight I want to pass over all of the circumstances which led up to the Cross, except as I may need to refer to some of them, and move directly to the Crucifixion itself. Counting tonight there are seven Sundays before Easter, which comes this year on April 14. For these seven Sundays I want to direct your attention to the words which our Lord spoke from the Cross. He spoke seven times. Listen as I read them to you.

Luke gives us three of them. John gives us three. Matthew and Mark give only one each, but they give us the same one. Luke and John do not duplicate each other.

Here they are:

- (1) "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).
- (2) "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).
- (3) "Woman, behold thy son! . . . Behold thy mother!" (John 19:26, 27).
- (4) "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46; repeated in Mark 15:34).
- (5) "I thirst" (John 19:28).
- (6) "It is finished" (John 19:30).
- (7) "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

Will you make these your most serious concern for these next weeks as we consider them together? No one but the Lord Himself knows how much our eyes could be opened to see things we have not known before concerning our Lord's death on the Cross.

Tonight we want to look at the first one. Will you notice that this is the first of three in which our Lord is manifesting a concern for others? In the last four we seem to enter within the veil of His sufferings where the world is forbidden to go.

(Read Luke 23:34 again.) What can we see here?

I. WE SEE THE MAIN PURPOSE FOR OUR LORD'S DEATH: FORGIVENESS.

What a wonderful word this is! See how it comes at the head of the list with David in Psa. 103:1 ff. Paul speaks of it in relation to the death of Christ in Eph. 1:7 and

Col. 1:14.

This means that we are no longer answerable to God for those sins. In Heb. 10:17, 18 we read, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission (forgiveness) of these is, there is no more offering for sin."

How wonderful it is to know that you are forgiven!

But, this raises a problem. Does this mean that that whole multitude will be in heaven? Was the Lord forgiving their sin even though they had not turned in faith to Him?

Looking a little more closely

II. WE SEE THAT THERE IS A SPECIAL MEANING ATTACHED TO THE WORD HERE, and yet it is not uncommon to find this in the NT.

Bound up in this idea of forgiveness is the thought of being released from a debt—just as all debts were forgiven, cancelled in the year of jubilee in the OT.

Every time a man commits a sin, his debt increases. He comes under greater judgment from God.

Now, let me ask you a question: Of all of the sins which have ever been committed, what would you say was the greatest? Would you not agree that the crucifixion of Christ was the most ~~terrible~~ ^{terrible} of all, and that it might even be considered unforgiveable. How could a man ever be forgiven who had any part at all in the death of the Son of God?

By rights there should be no escape. AND THIS IS WHAT SEEMS TO BE WHAT OUR LORD IS CONCERNED ABOUT. His prayer means, not, Father, forgive them from all sins—he cannot do that apart from their faith. But, Father, forgive them, release them, do not charge them with this sin—or there could be no forgiveness.

Why?

This leads me to my third point. Now we are in a position to see why our Lord prayed this way.

III. WE SEE THE MAIN PROBLEM IN THE LIVES OF THESE PEOPLE: They were ignorant; they were spiritually blind.

"They know not what they do."

This is why Stephen prayed as he did in Acts 7:60.

And Paul tells us the same thing regarding the rulers of the people who were responsible for crucifying the Son of God. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:8.

And even in Paul's experience itself we find this principle was involved. Cf. 1 Tim. 1:13.

Peter touches on this theme in his message in Acts 3:17.

Even our Lord pointed out Pilate's ignorance to him in John 19:11.

Other passages could be added.

So it seems that for a knowledgable part in the death of Christ there would be no forgiveness, but these men were doing what they were doing in ignorance.

But look for a moment at the other side—and you did not need to be there to be guilty of the same crime. Cf. Heb. 10:26-31 and Matt. 6:23.

So the Lord was not praying for their salvation, i.e., for the forgiveness of all of their sins, but He was praying that they be released from the responsibility of this sin or they could never be forgiven of any of them.

Cf. 2 Cor. 4:3, 4.

This, then, raises a final point. IF THESE PEOPLE, UNREGENERATE JEWS, UNBELIEVING GENTILES, WERE NOT RESPONSIBLE, THEN WHO WAS? Suddenly

IV. WE SEE THAT THE ONE MOST RESPONSIBLE IS NOT EVEN MENTIONED IN THIS PASSAGE.

But he is mentioned at the very beginning of the Bible in Gen. 3:15. Cf. Mt. 23:41.

Note also John 13:2 and 27. "And, supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son to betray him . . . And after the sop Satan entered into him"—Satanic possession.

Who was the Lord talking about when he said to Pilate, "Therefore, he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." Surely about Judas—who could not be saved, but also about Satan, the enemy of Christ and the enemy of men.

What evidence of Deity there is in this statement!

In Heb. 4:13 we read, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

He saw right into the hearts of that crowd. He knew that they were the ignorant dupes of an unseen foe. And so he prayed,

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Concl: How gracious God was not to destroy the whole city of Jerusalem that day! Instead, that is one sin none of them will ever be charged with.

And could I do a little reading between the lines? Do you suppose that when Peter preached the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 and said, "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel . . .," that some of the three thousand who were saved had been among the crowd at the Cross on that darkest of all days in human history, and had shouted, "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him" (Matt. 27:42).

And, do you think that, if there were such people saved on Pentecost, that they could ever think back to Calvary with dry eyes?

Oh, how wonderful it is to be forgiven--forgiven of all sins because we have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour!

Have you trusted Him? If not, you are still in your sins, still under the judgment of God. God is the only One who can forgive you, but he does it only when you take His Son by faith as your own personal Saviour. If you have not trusted Him, will you trust Him now?

#296 at Calvary

THE SECOND WORD FROM THE CROSS

Luke 23:35-44

Intro: Tonight we come to the second word from the Cross.

It is closely related to the first in that it seems to have followed soon afterwards. As I mentioned last week, Luke is the only one who gives these two sayings.

Note all of the confusion, the mob spirit which seems to have possessed the hearts of the crowd. In the midst of it all there was that tormenting challenge of Satan, reminiscent of the Temptation, "If . . ."

I want us to direct our attention tonight especially to the one who is called, the penitent thief. This is a most amazing story and one that is filled with the greatest possible hope.

But, first of all, let us ask,

- I. WHAT IS A "MALEFACTOR," OR, AS HE IS CALLED BY MATTHEW (27:38) AND MARK (15:27, 28), A THIEF.

The word which Matthew and Mark use indicate that these men were not ordinary robbers, or thieves. Evidence of this is seen in the fact that Barabas is called a "robber" in John 18:40. The Greek word is λησται.

The Greeks had another word (κλέπτης) to describe one who took things by deception and stealth, but the word we are concerned with here describes one who is violent, open, bloody in his plundering.

They were insurrectionists.

Archbishop Trench supposes that these men were cohorts of Barabas, but possibly even worse than Barabas.

These insurrectionists were stormy zealots, hoping to overthrow Rome and to free Israel. They were misguided men, possibly noble to begin with, but ultimately stooping to any means necessary to obtain their goals. As their cause became more hopeless, they became more violent. They plundered Jews as well as Gentiles.

A good picture of them is in Luke 10:30.

These men who had lived violently, were now dying violently. BUT AT LEAST THE THIEF WHICH WE ARE CONCERNED WITH TONIGHT NEVER THOUGHT THAT THIS WOULD BE THE END OF THE ROAD HE HAD CHOSEN TO TAKE. He had probably been disillusioned for a long time. BUT SOMETHING HAD ATTRACTED

HIS ATTENTION TOWARD THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (as the narrative clearly indicates).

Recognizing what kind of a person he was, let us consider

II. HIS WORDS TO THE OTHER ROBBER. Cf. Luke 23:40, 41.

He was amazed to hear the other thief join in with the crowd. He may not have been surprised at the crowd, but his own heart was so overwhelmed with a sense of guilt that he wondered why the other thief did not feel the same way.

(Read his words.)

The important thing that he said was not so much his own admission of guilt, but it was what he had to say about the Lord!

In his mind Jesus Christ was absolutely innocent of all of the charges brought against Him, but, at the same time, every claim He had made for Himself was absolutely true.

The testimonies which Jesus Christ received at the Cross are very, very important.

"This man hath done nothing amiss." How he had arrived at this conclusion we do not know, but he was there!

Because of what he said to his fellow-thief, it is not surprising to read

III. HIS WORDS TO THE SAVIOUR. How simple they are, and yet how much there is to be seen in what he said.

Remember how this man had come to this place. He had originally been motivated by patriotic feelings for his people. He hated Rome. He wanted to see the kingdom established. But it was only after he had gotten so involved that he could not get out of it that he had come to see the folly of his ways. BUT HE HAD NEVER GIVEN UP THE IDEA OF THE KINGDOM.

Note: In his words we see an expression of hope while all around him there was the atmosphere of death and defeat. The Jews and the Gentiles were jubilant over the fact that the lips of Jesus Christ were being closed for ever—at least this is what they thought. But, by his words, this thief expressed at least four things:

- (1) His belief in life after death.
- (2) His belief that Jesus was the King he had been looking for.

- (3) His belief that Jesus Christ had the authority to say who would enter the kingdom, and who would have to stay out.
- (4) His faith in Jesus Christ--that the Lord could get him in.

"REMEMBER ME." When you finally establish your Kingdom, please don't forget me. In that hour make provision for me, take care of me.

Possibly he was thinking of Isa. 49:15, or maybe Matt. 10:32, 33.

What simplicity there is here! What hope! Just hours (at the most) before death, this man who has nothing to commend himself to God, cries out for help to the Lord Jesus. Will he get help?

Let us look at

IV. THE WORDS OF THE SAVIOUR TO THE THIEF. Cf. v. 43. (Read)

Only three times does the word Paradise appear in the Bible: Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7.

The first thing we recognize is that, wherever the Lord Jesus was going, that was where the thief would be too. This is the way the Lord had spoken of heaven. Cf. John 14:1-3; John 17:24.

This interpretation is strengthened when we read 2 Cor. 12:4 where it is called, "the third heaven," where God dwells.

Finally, in Rev. 2:7 the mention of "the tree of life" links it with the garden of Eden. One of the meanings of Paradise is garden.

Some feel that the garden of Eden is now in heaven. I will not argue that point. But I do believe that heaven is called Paradise because it is a place of beauty, a place where every need is met, a place of uninterrupted fellowship with God, a place where there can be no sin.

The kingdom was hundreds of years away; Paradise was to be his "today." THE THIEF HAS THE FIRM PROMISE OF THE LORD JESUS THAT ALL OF HIS DESIRES WOULD BE SATISFIED IN HEAVEN.

Does this not make the words of the other thief sound hollow and short-sighted? "If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us."

Concl: What are we to learn from this incident? Far more than we have time to mention tonight, and perhaps far more than any of us can yet see in this account.

But there are four things I do want to mention.

First, we see that, though our Lord "was numbered with the transgressors" (quoted in Mark 15:28 from Isa. 53:12), yet the Cross was not a defeat but a glorious victory--over sin, over hopeless despair, over the grave.

Second, this story illustrates how simple it is to be saved. The thief, as an insurrectionist, was trying to do something for Israel which only the Messiah will be able to do. His biggest need was for salvation. The Lord knew his heart, and met his need, even though his theology may not have been accurate. The important thing was that he looked to Jesus. Cf. John 3:14, 15.

Third, this story indicates that salvation is by grace. He did not deserve anything but judgment by his own admission, but the Lord saved him.

Finally, this shows that salvation is by faith alone. He had no time to work, or to be baptized, or to make things right with the people he had wronged. He only had time to trust the Lord, but that was all that was necessary. It would have been wonderful if he could have done some of those other things, but the point is: they were not necessary for him to get to heaven.

We go to heaven not because of what we do for the Lord, but through what He did for us when He died on the Cross for our sins.

If the thief on the Cross could be saved, anyone can be saved, any place, any time.

But do not wait. You have no guarantee of tomorrow. Today is the day of salvation.

72

THE THIRD WORD FROM THE CROSS

John 19:16-27

Intro: One characteristic of human nature seems to be the tendency to go to extremes. It is exceedingly difficult for us to maintain balance.

This is especially true where the truths of the Word of God are concerned.

As an example, the Church has been divided historically into two camps: the Calvinists, and the Arminians. One is heavy on sovereignty, the sovereignty of God; the other is heavy on freedom, the freedom of man to determine his own destiny. There are elements of truth in both, but either one pressed to extremes (and by extremes in this case I mean so as to exclude the other) becomes error.

The answer to any doctrinal problem is to be found in a return to the Word of God. That is where we find the answer.

The Church has been guilty of similar extremes in connection with the Virgin Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Roman Catholic Church has gone completely beyond the teaching of Scripture in declaring the immaculate conception of the virgin Mary. This doctrine states that "the blessed Virgin Mary" was "from the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, . . . preserved free from all stain of original sin" (ISBE, III, 1456).

This was not decreed by a Pope until December 8, 1854--just 114 years ago!

Just in the lifetime of most of us here tonight there has been another Papal decree--that of the bodily assumption of the virgin Mary into heaven, giving her an ascension comparable to that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Evangelicals cannot accept such dogmas because they do not accept the authority of the Pope. We accept the authority of the Word of God alone, and you cannot find these doctrines in the Scriptures.

So--what have we evangelicals done?

In order to counterbalance this overemphasis of error by the Roman Church, the virgin Mary has received the worst possible treatment at our hands. WE HAVE FOUND IT VERY DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN BALANCE, A BALANCE OF TRUTH, AT THIS POINT!

What do the Scriptures teach about Mary, the mother of our Lord?

Primarily two things--one negative, and the other positive:

- (1) The Scriptures do not teach that she was without sin. We have her own words for this. In her famous Magnificat she said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior" (Luke 1: 46, 47). NEVER DID THE LORD JESUS SPEAK OF THE FATHER USING THESE WORDS. They can only mean that Mary was herself a sinner, in need of a Savior, and that she had found this salvation in God--just where every other sinner must find salvation.
- (2) Positively, I believe the Scriptures indicate that Mary must have been one of the most wonderful of all women who ever walked the face of the earth. Listen to the words of the angel Gabriel at the annunciation of the birth of our Lord: "Hail, thou who art highly favored, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1:28).

The Scriptures show that she was a virgin, morally pure, that she was modest, humble, given to retirement from the hustle and bustle of life, and one deeply taught in the Old Testament Scriptures.

One writer has said that, according to "Luke's conception of her nature, . . . she is not accustomed to dwell much upon herself . . . , and that her mind is saturated with the spirit and phraseology of the OT" (ISBE, III, 2002).

Mary was a holy woman, but not a sinless woman. She was the personification of what every woman should be, but of what no woman can be without a deep work of grace having been done in her heart.

I am prepared to say that you will not come upon a finer person in all of the Scriptures--with the one exception of our Savior Himself.

So we have need for balance here.

There are five times that we find Mary in the Scriptures--that is, in the NT.

- (1) In the events concerned with the birth ^{and early life} of our Lord (Matt. 1,2; Luke 1, 2).
- (2) At the marriage in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11).
- (3) At the turning point in our Lord's ministry to Israel (Matt. 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21).
- (4) At the Cross (John 19:25-27--our text tonight).
- (5) In the upper room (Acts 1:14).

If you are interested in Bible biography, the study of these passages of Scripture will be most rewarding.

Tonight, however, we are thinking of the words spoken by our Lord concerning His mother who was with Him at the Cross.

Will you note, first of all, the significance of

- I. THE FACT THAT SHE WAS THERE. Cf., "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother . . ."

The meaning of these words is brought into focus when we think of other words used to describe the activities of the followers of our Lord during those most tragic moments in all human history.

John was there with her. He modestly refers to himself as "the disciple . . . whom" Jesus "loved" (John 19:26). (John refers to himself at least 5x in this way: 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20)

What is said about others not mentioned here? It is said of Peter that he "followed him afar off" (Matt. 26:58; Mark 14:54; Luke 22:54). So also of other women. Cf. Matt. 27:55; Mark 15:40; Luke 23:49.

In Rev. 18:10, 15, 17 this term, standing afar off, is expressive of fear of being involved in the same judgment.

Was this what was going through Peter's mind? I am not criticizing him. I might have been standing with him-- not with Mary, the mother of the Lord, and the Apostle John. BUT THE FACT WE ARE LOOKING AT TONIGHT IS THAT MARY AND JOHN WERE STANDING "BY THE CROSS," CLOSE ENOUGH FOR THE LORD TO SPEAK TO THEM.

Does this not speak of the deep devotion that was in their hearts? You mothers should be able to understand this. But I dare say that this was not only the devotion of a mother's heart; THIS WAS THE DEVOTION OF A BELIEVER.

One of the saddest statements in the Gospel of John is found in chapter 6, v. 66: "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Then the Lord said to "the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

How easy Peter found it to talk (like most of us do), but at the Cross he was "afar off"; John, who had said nothing in ch. 6, "stood by the cross."

There was a love for the Lord Jesus in their hearts that would not let Him, that caused them to throw caution to the wind. Do you love Him like that? What would you do

or what would I do if suddenly our relationship to Jesus Christ endangered our lives.

But let us look at another aspect of this event. Notice

II. THE EXAMPLE OF OUR LORD WITH RESPECT TO HIS MOTHER.

When God gave the ten commandments to Moses, the first one which had to do with people, the fifth, was, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Ex. 20:12).

And, it was on this very point that the Lord Jesus denounced the Pharisees (cf. Mark 7:9-13). By their tradition they had freed the sons and daughters from any responsibilities to their parents, "Making the word of God of no effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered; and many such things do ye."

IN OTHER WORDS, THE WAY A MAN HONORS HIS PARENTS CAN BE A COMMENTARY ON THE CHARACTER OF THE MAN HIMSELF. IF HE FAILS HERE, BEWARE OF HIM IN OTHER RELATIONSHIPS.

The Lord Jesus is no disappointment even here. His greatest concern was for His mother. "Woman, behold thy son . . . Behold thy mother."

"Woman"--not a term of disrespect, but just the opposite. It was one of admiration, of kindness, respect, and love (Thayer, p. 123).

How precious to see this in our Lord!

The point for us to see is this, however. IF YOU CAN TRUST THE LORD TO PROVIDE FOR HIS MOTHER, YOU CAN TRUST HIM TO MEET YOUR NEED. This was a crucial test. Our own faith in the Lord Jesus should grow as we read this account and come to understand what it means.

Remember also that when Paul lists disobedience to parents as one of the signs of the times he is saying that the very foundations of human relationships is gone.

But there is one other thing before I close. Will you look at

III. THE ONE INTO WHOSE CARE OUR LORD COMMITTED HIS MOTHER.

It was to "the disciple standing by, whom he (Jesus) loved."

Do you realize that this is the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the kind of a person John was?

Doesn't Jesus love everyone? Didn't He love all of His disciples the same?

Yes--BUT! Please turn back and read something with me which Jesus said in the Upper Room. It is recorded in John 14:21.

How do we express our love for the Lord? By our obedience to His Word--not just by our knowledge, but by our obedience!

What does this do? This brings us into the experience of the love of God in new and wonderful ways.

He doesn't want our promises of all of the things we expect to do for Him. HE WANTS OUR LOVE. That is all. If He has our love, He needs nothing else.

AND IT WAS TO ONE WHO HAD ENTERED INTO HIS LOVE THROUGH A LIFE OF OBEDIENCE TO HIS WORD THAT OUR LORD COMMITTED THE DEAREST HUMAN TREASURE HE HAD: HIS MOTHER.

Concl: As I close, may I go back to Peter and his experiences at this time.

Do you remember the bitter tears which were his? Somehow he had not learned what John had learned, even though he was older than John. He had made great promises, only to fail miserably.

How did the Lord restore Him? How did the Lord point out his need?

The answer is in John 21:15-17. "Lovest thou Me?" If so, Shepherd my sheep. Peter could shepherd the people of God; John was to care for our Lord's mother.

It is not surprising to learn that "from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home" (John 19:27).

Do you want to serve the Lord? Then you must love Him. How do you show your love for Him? By your obedience to His Word. May God continue to teach us from this third, wonderful word of Christ from the Cross!

THE FOURTH WORD FROM THE CROSS
Matthew 27:45-54

Intro: This fourth word from the Cross marks a change, or transition, in the expressions Christ made as He died. The first three had been for others: for the crowd, for the thief, and then for His own mother. The last four have to do especially with Him.

As one searches the Gospels for these words of Christ he soon learns that this fourth word has special emphasis, for two reasons:

- (1) It is the only expression of the seven which is given more than one time. Matthew records it in Matt. 27:46, and Mark records it in Mark 15:34.
- (2) Furthermore, it is the only word from the Cross which these two writers record. Luke gives three, and John gives three. But those who read the Gospels of Matthew and Mark find only this one--undoubtedly the case for emphasis.

There certainly is none of the seven which is filled more with mystery than this one is. It is almost unbelievable that the Lord Jesus would utter words like this.

All who have written on this subject confess their inability to exhaust its meaning. We are certainly conscious that we are on "holy ground." And yet they would not be here if the Spirit of God had not intended that we get something from them.

What can we see here?

- I. GOD'S GREAT OBJECT LESSON: THE THREE HOURS OF DARKNESS (Matt. 27:45). It is recorded by all three Synoptics (Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44). This, too, emphasizes its importance.

What did it mean? How extensive was it?

Some feel that it covered the entire earth (and there is some evidence to this effect). Others say it extended only to the whole Roman Empire. Still others say it was limited to the land of Israel. While others say it affected only the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem.

It would be meaningless to argue this point. What we do want to visualize is the effect that it must have had on the people, and what God intended that it should mean.

One thing we notice is that this put an end to the accusations.

Rudolf Stier in his eight-volume set on The Words of the Lord Jesus gives this thought-provoking comment: (VII, 480, 481)

"Let us imagine the impression of this darkness on Golgotha and throughout Jerusalem; let us depict to ourselves the individual details of terror and fear--the stings of conscience, the interrupted lusts, the disturbed midday meals, the derangement of the temple-service, the confusion as to the evening sacrifice, and so forth. Most assuredly all blasphemy and mockery is now silenced . . . Anxious silence reigns over the place of a skull; so should it be, for the Divine sign cried then, as it cries ever, Be silent and think! . . . Not a few, it may be, then expected that something more would follow--His coming down from the cross, the revelation of His kingly power, and the destruction of His enemies. But neither punishment come to them nor help to Him: the darkness continues. No man dares to go away; all are laid under a spell; others, rather, are attracted to the place. The very drops of blood are heard falling, and the gentle sighs; all listen to the cross in the middle, passing by the lamentations of the other crucified ones, and the murmuring of the crowd around."

There is no mistake that the darkness put an end to the revelry and to the blasphemy which had filled the air before.

What did God want it to mean?

There were probably hundreds of Jews in that crowd whose minds went back to Egypt and to the darkness which came over that land as a warning! God was using the darkness to speak to a stubborn Pharaoh, and to the Egyptians. For this warning to go unheeded, as it did, meant only greater, more severe judgments.

The same method will be employed during the Great Tribulation when "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light," and God plunges the whole earth into darkness.

Therefore, though God did not speak a word, man was given an ancient object lesson to show that what men were doing was greatly displeasing to Him.

II. THE WORDS WHICH BROKE THE SILENCE (Matt. 27:46).

Two aspects of these words surely must reach our hearts.

A. First, the awfulness of the words, "My God, my God."

In the first and last words of Christ on the Cross he called God, "Father." Here He speaks as a man, as a creature. And He cries out to God, His God, and by the

very use of the name, God. He is addressing the one, true God, the One who is sovereign over every creature, the One with Whom we have to do.

The repetition makes it more ominous than ever!

See how this seems to be in the mind of the Apostle Paul throughout the first ~~book~~^{two} and one-half chapters of Romans. (Read from Rom. 1:17 on.)

Cf. also the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:11, 13). Also, Heb. 10:31.

After three solid hours on practically unbearable consternation, the One on the center Cross seems to be the only One who knows what is going on.

Oh, how men need to fear God!

But there is another fact here, with two parts.

B. As strange as it might sound, there is COMFORT for all men to be found in these words.

1. Comfort for the people of the world.

Why had God forsaken Him? For what purpose (lit.) had the Son of God been left helpless? Why had God abandoned Him to His enemies, especially in view of v. 43.

Was this not the right time for God to come to the defence of His Son?

Do you know the answer to this great question?

Please turn to Isa. 53:6. Here is your answer.

But add to this now Isa. 53:10, 11.

Then add to these such verses as John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 4:10; and many others.

Jesus Christ had to die, and God had to let Him die, because there was no other way to deal with the sins of the whole world. THAT IS WHY GOD ABANDONED HIM AT THIS CRUCIAL MOMENT.

The Gospel can now be preached to every creature throughout the world because Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for our sins. This is the COMFORT of

God for the world.

But there is also in these words

2. Comfort for the child of God.

Do you remember where these words of the Saviour came from? They were first expressed by David in Psalm 22.

Why did David say such a thing, just as a prophecy of Christ? Not at all!

He said this because, to a lesser degree, he was experiencing just what the Lord Jesus experience to an infinite degree on the Cross.

David felt that God had failed him in his hour of greatest need, and he did not know why--SO HE ASKED HIM!

Have you ever felt this way? You have made great claims for God, and just when you have needed Him the most it has seemed like He has been busy doing other things.

Do you know what it means to be surrounded by darkness?

Then listen to these words in Heb. 2:17, 18 and Heb. 4:14-16.

Whenever you as a Christian read these words, let them remind you that you can never go through anything that will even begin to compare with what the Saviour endured on the Cross--and, therefore, He knows what you are experiencing, and is able to help you BECAUSE YOU WILL NEVER HAVE TO EXPERIENCE WHAT HE EXPERIENCED.

Read Heb. 13:5 where the same word, forsake, is used.

Concl: Is it not amazing to see the riches we find in the Word. There is often so much in so little. Here there is enough to get every sinner to heaven, and to keep every saint along the way.

THE FIFTH WORD FROM THE CROSS

John 19:23-30

Intro: There is a division evident between the first three expressions Christ uttered from the Cross, and the last four. That division was the three hours of darkness, from the sixth hour to the ninth hour (Matt. 27:45, 46; Mark 15: 33, 34).

At the end of this three hour period, or as it was drawing to a close about 3 in the afternoon, Jesus uttered the last four sayings, beginning with, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The importance of this saying is to be seen in the facts that both Matthew and Mark record it, and it is the only saying which they do record.

Soon after we have His next cry because, although Matthew and Mark do not record the words, "I thirst," they do speak of the vinegar which was offered to Him right after He cried, "My God, my God . . .?"

This is the second time our Lord was offered vinegar. The first time He refused it (Matt. 27:34); the second, He accepted it. The first was "given to criminals just before execution, to deaden the sense of pain" (Brown, V, 470). But the Lord chose to die with all of his physical faculties clear, but with it experiencing the pain and agony to the full.

After about six hours on the Cross, His body having been torn and bleeding until it was almost beyond recognition, thirst now overwhelms Him. It is very possible that the last strength He did have was spent when He cried out loudly, "My God, my God . . . ?"

What does the Holy Spirit want us to understand as He directs John in giving us vv. 28, 29?

I. HIS SOVEREIGNTY: "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished" (John 19:28a).

Three times John uses this expression, "Jesus knowing," in connection with His death on the Cross. Cf. John 13:3 and 18:4.

While the Lord had not experienced these sufferings before, nothing happened which took Him by surprise. And nothing happened which He could not have avoided.

However, all through His earthly ministry there was one dominating objective in all that he did. He expressed it in John 6:38, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."

This was evident at His baptism (Matt. 3:13-17).

It was also evident at His temptation (Matt. 4:1-11).

It was evident when Peter rebuked Him when He spoke of dying in Jerusalem (Matt. 16:23).

It was evident again when Peter tried to defend Him in the garden (John 18:11).

It was evident when He refused to come down from the Cross in response to the taunts He was given by the crowd (Matt. 27:39-44).

When He was with His disciples in the upper room, He told Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly." Cf. John 13:27. And later, to Peter, James, and John He said in the garden, "Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand" (Mark 14:42).

All through the Gospel of John we read, "Mine hour is not yet come" (John 2:4). Then, suddenly in prayer to His Father He says, "Father, the hour is come."

THE LORD WAS ALWAYS INTENT ON DOING SOMETHING WHICH HIS DISCIPLES DID NOT UNDERSTAND, INTENT ON FINISHING THE WORK WHICH HE CAME TO DO.

"Accomplished" in John 19:28 is the same word as "finished" in v. 30.

In spite of all of the obstacles that stood in our Lord's way, from friends and foes, He did not stop until His work was finished--and He now knows that that time has come.

No other person has ever been able to say what our Lord said in John 10:17, 18.

But there is a second thought here. It is expressed by the word

II. PROPHECY. We find this in the phrase, "that the scripture might be fulfilled." Cf. John 19:28.

See how John uses this phrase in John 13:18; 17:12; 19:24, 36, 37.

Early in His ministry He had sounded this note. Cf. Luke 4:16-22, esp. v. 21, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

Please do not imagine that the Lord Jesus mechanically went around saying things and doing things just because He knew that the Scriptures said He would, and so He did. Remember that in most of these instances it took certain acts of men to set the stage. But, when He came to the Cross, IT WAS ALL FINISHED. PROPHECY HAD BEEN FULFILLED. THERE WAS NOTHING LACKING OF ALL THAT THE PROPHETS OF ISRAEL HAD PREDICTED--PERHAPS THE GREATEST EVIDENCE WE HAVE TODAY THAT THE BIBLE IS REALLY THE WORD OF GOD.

The Jews were looking for a King. Those prophecies have not yet been fulfilled. THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR THE SAVIOUR PROMISED IN ISAIAH 53 AND PSALM 22--and other passages.

"Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3).

But let us look at one other truth in our text. It is

III. HIS HUMANITY: "I thirst" (John 19:28).

THIS IS OUR LORD'S ONE EXPRESSION FROM THE CROSS WHICH POINTS TO HIS PHYSICAL AGONY. The fourth word showed His distress of soul; His fifth word, His distress of body.

Undoubtedly His body was torn by excruciating pain. Fever must have been rapidly dehydrating His body. Medical authorities believe that now his heart was carrying an unbearable load, seeking to maintain life in His body.

No one ever suffered as He suffered.

Read Psalm 69:1-4, 7-12, 16-21.

Who gave Him the refreshing vinegar. Probably no one but a Roman soldier would dare offer it. Edersheim suggests that possibly it was a Roman who had trusted Him as Saviour while watching the proceedings of those six dreadful hours. No one knows for sure.

But here again, as last Sunday night, we see how the Lord Jesus is able to enter into the sufferings of His people.

Concl: For the application of this word, turn to Heb. 12:1-3.

No one has ever suffered like the Lord Jesus did because He was suffering for the sins of the whole world. He was "made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). Because of His sufferings, He can enter into our sufferings. And just as God delivered Him, so He will deliver us!

THE SIXTH WORD FROM THE CROSS
John 19:30
Scripture Reading: Hebrews 10:1-14

Intro: If it is proper to place some words of the Saviour above others (and I am not sure that it is), two expressions which He made from the Cross seem to have special significance. His fourth expression surely defies explanation -- "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The other is the word that we come to tonight, His sixth: "It is finished."

I immediately detect a note of triumph. The fourth word was one of tragic mystery, emphasized exclusively by Matthew and Mark, uttered in a cry which seemed to rend the heavens. But now we come to victory!

The question we need to answer tonight is this: WHAT IS FINISHED?

His earthly ministry was over. No more would He speak to the multitudes. For some "forty days" (Acts 1:3) after His resurrection He "shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs," but this was only to His own disciples.

So, whatever He had come to do was "finished." One of the amazing parts of this which we will not have time to deal with tonight is that His enemies, in seeking to destroy Him, had actually set the stage for the finishing of His work.

Anyone who has read the Scriptures knows what His primary purpose was in coming into the world. It is stated in many places. Let me select one from the Apostle Paul found in 1 Tim. 1:15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners . . ."

Let us look at this finished work tonight in some of its different aspects as presented especially in the Gospel of John. *All are interrelated with each other.*

I. When Jesus Christ died on the Cross, HE HAD FINISHED DOING THE WILL OF HIS FATHER.

Cf. John 4:34; then see John 5:30; 6:38; 10:17, 18; 18:11.

Behind all of the suffering of the Cross stands this glorious truth. Christ came because it was the will of His Father that He come to die on the Cross for the sins of men.

Cf. John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 2 Pet. 3:9.

The Lord Jesus seems to have been motivated by this more than anything else. John still is writing about it in his epistles (1 John 4:9, 10).

When He cried, "It is finished," He knew that He had fully done the will of His Father.

II. HE HAD FINISHED DOING THE WORKS OF HIS FATHER.

Cf. John 5:36; then see 9:4; 10:24, 25, 32; 37-39; 14:8-11, 15:24.

What was the purpose of His works, and of His words (which were a part of His works)?

Did you notice how this is woven together with something very basic that the Lord Jesus was seeking to do? It is stated specifically in several of these passages, and also in John 20:31 (which read).

The object of doing THE WORKS of the Father was TO REVEAL TO MEN ON EARTH, FINALLY AND COMPLETELY, THE VERY CHARACTER OF GOD.

Cf. John 1:14; 12:45; 14:7, 9.

BUT IN THIS CONNECTION NOTE ESPECIALLY JOHN 17:4!

The main reason Jesus Christ performed His miracles was not to meet human needs. IT WAS TO CONVINCe MEN BEYOND ANY DOUBT THAT HE WAS COME FROM GOD, WAS THE SON OF GOD, AND THAT HE WAS IN HIMSELF A REVELATION OF THE VERY NATURE OF GOD.

All that the prophets had said about God was confirmed and completed by Jesus Christ. No further revelation of God is necessary. This was "finished"!

III. THE SCRIPTURES WERE FINISHED. Cf. John 19:28.

We saw last week that this had to do with the prophecy of Scripture.

Cf. John 5:39; then see 2:22; 7:42; 13:18; 17:12; 19:24; 19:36.

When Jesus Christ died on the Cross every prophecy concerning His birth, His life, His ministry, and His death had been fulfilled to the letter.

A great portion of prophetic scripture was finished, completed, fulfilled, brought to an end, accomplished.

Finally,

IV. THE WORK OF SALVATION WAS FINISHED.

Nowhere in the Scriptures is this made clearer than in the book of Hebrews. We have already read Heb. 10:10-14. Note also Heb. 9:11-15, 24-28; 12:2.

As evidence of this great truth we have the rending of the veil, recorded in Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45.

What a cost! How great was our sin! But what mercy, love, and grace!

Concl: No longer was there any need for the Jews to bring their sacrifices to the priest.

No longer is it necessary for any Gentile to think that there is some work that he must do.

"It is finished." Nothing needs to be added. Nothing can be added. The work of salvation is complete.

Have you trusted Him? Is he your Saviour? Young people, you have been raised in a Christian home and possibly have attended Central Bible all your life. But have you personally trusted Jesus Christ as your Saviour?

(Close with Rom. 6:23.)

#73 on 214

THE SEVENTH WORD FROM THE CROSS
Luke 23:44-49

Intro: In this last word we have the third prayer: the first, fourth, and seventh words are prayers. Two, the first and the last, are addressed to the "Father." The fourth is addressed to "my God."

This was clearly audible. Jesus "cried out with a loud voice." And, like many of our Lord's sayings, it was taken from the Psalms. Cf. Psa. 31:5.

Since it is the last word of the Lord Jesus, it has special significance. Let us examine it carefully.

I. IT IS A WORD EXPRESSING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE SON OF GOD.

Do you remember his expression in John 10:17, 18?

This was the test of the truthfulness of that declaration. But only half. The other was His ability to raise Himself from the dead. Cf. Matt. 27:62-66.

Was there any possibility that He could have died before He got to the Cross? Cf. Luke 22:44. NONE WHATSOEVER! He was the one Person ever to live upon the earth who had the power to choose the very moment of His death.

II. IT IS A WORD EXPRESSING THE CONFIDENCE OF THE SON OF GOD.

I am thinking particularly of that title which He uses for God, "Father." Not in Psa 31:5, but added.

Thus, emphatic.

*A truth
often greatly
perverted.*

Please turn to Luke 10:21, 22. (Relate all of the truths of this verse to Luke 11:2 where He teaches His disciples AND US to use this title for God when we pray.)

God is the Father (not of all men) but of those who have trusted His Son as Saviour. As such He is over all, He does only that which is good, He measures out our life to us, and He is constantly revealing, revealing.

He had used this word in Gethsemane.

It was in the story of the prodigal son--recorded by Luke.

When the Lord Jesus died on the Cross He called to His aid this wonderful truth concerning the Father. It was His comfort then, and it can be our comfort now.

Cf. 1 John 3:1. "Our Father." Enter into the truth of this wonderful relationship which exists between God and us, His children.

III. IT IS A WORD EXPRESSING THE NEED OF THE SON OF GOD.

All of the forces of hell were arrayed against Him. He was tasting death. He was being made sin. The sins of all men were laid upon Him. He was not the great Sin Bearer.

He needed the hands of God. Cf. 1 Pet. 4:19; 2:24.

Cf. also Psa. 31:15, the Psalm from which this expression from our Lord is taken.

But perhaps the greatest explanation of the meaning of this expression is found in Psa. 139:5-12.

His hands were nailed to the Cross, the hands which uphold all things (Heb. 1:3).

The hands of the Lord--the place of safety, the place of security. And our Lord needed it.

Ill. Going into the supermarket, Kenny spotted the rides. He placed his hand in mine and said, "You watch where we are going; I'm going to look at those rides."

If the Lord needed this comfort, this rest, how much more do we need it.

IV. IT IS A WORD OF TESTIMONY FROM THE SON OF GOD.

He was placing Himself down in the Father's care, and leaving Himself under the Father's protection.

Stephen did this ("Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" - Acts 7:59), AND HE DIED IN ABSOLUTE PEACE. "He fell asleep."

Dr. Ironside used to say that we could go to heaven first class, or we could go to heaven second class. Second class is described in Psa. 56:3, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." But first class is described in Isa. 12:2, "I will trust, and not be afraid."

FOR THE LORD JESUS TO TRUST THE FATHER SO COMPLETELY AT SUCH A TIME MEANS THAT THERE IS NEVER ANY TIME WHEN IT IS A MISTAKE TO TRUST HIM. Cf. Matt. 27:43.

Concl: How wonderful it is to see all of this about our Lord Jesus! You ask Him what to do in your tests and trials. The answer is here. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." This is the place of victory. This is the place of rest. This is the very place of death from which the glories of resurrection are to be manifested.

THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS

The Fourth Word: Matt. 27:46, "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The Fourth Word: Mark 15:34, "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God my God, why has thou forsaken me?"

(He was crucified in the third hour - MK. 15:25)

The First Word: Luke 23:34, "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

The Second Word: Luke 23:43, "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

The Seventh Word: Luke 23:46, "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."

The Third Word: John 19:26, 27, "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

The first three words spoken during first six hours - probably very early. After that his sufferings became acute! (as Fourth word shows.)

The Fifth Word: John 19:28, "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst."

The Sixth Word: John 19:30, "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."