

The Words at Calvary that changed lives

Reading Luke 23 :11 – 56

Here was our Lord on the cross enduring what historians call the most painful death known to mankind. Multitudes had gathered to this execution of the saviour. The Pharisees and the leaders, all unmoved, unaffected what was before their eyes. They mocked and threw scorn upon the saviour in the last moments of His agonies. Yet we read about one Centurion. A Roman, a gentile, one most unlikely to be moved and touched. Yet what He saw and heard affected Him deeply.

It is so easy to discriminate, saying he is just a soldier a Roman officer they are all bad people. We should always avoid passing judgement upon certain groups of people. Four Centurions are mentioned in the New Testament remember in Matthew 8 A centurion came saying “Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.” Jesus says I will come, He says I’m not worthy you should come under my roof. but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. The Lord marvels and says truly I have not found such faith in all Israel. Then Cornelius converted when He heard the Gospel. Then the Centurion at the shipwreck who spared Paul. Centurions were not ordinary people they were highly trained and were the very best men appointed to position.

We want to look this one Centurion at the cross. He was appointed to stand Guard at the cross. He could have never imagined what was going to take place what His eyes would behold. He would have never believed if people had told Him how the events would affect His life. Many people would say it was coincidence that that soldier was chosen for that duty. But it was not it was the providence of God. *Romans 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*

Here we see the words of Jesus fulfilled when He said “ And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me.” **This centurion is drawn unto the Lord**, but He was a gentile, He was a Roman soldier. He was lost, believed in a different God every day of the week. Believed in sun moon and stars. A very unlikely one to be affected. But what was it that drew Him. He saw the saviour breath His last upon the cross. He saw the Lord praying for those who murdered Him, praying for those who drove the nails into His hands and feet. **“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”** Here was one who turned to a thief on the cross next to Him and spoke peace to Him. Here was one who addressed John regarding His mother. The Centurion had never seen someone die like this.

He exclaimed. *Luke 23:47 Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, certainly this was a righteous man.* In Matthew and Mark's Gospel it's recorded He said, *“Truly this was the Son of God.”* The centurion determined that Christ was no ordinary person, but one stirred

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up by and sent of God. The Lord had a good testimony from all manner of men except the Pharisees and scribes. Even Pontius Pilate and Herod declared him innocent. Pilate's wife acknowledged him a righteous person. The thief on the cross testified he had *done nothing wrong*. Judas the traitor confessed he had *betrayed innocent blood*. And all the multitudes that came together to this sight, when they beheld the things that were done, returned smiting their breasts. What had happened now they were influenced by a divine power. Before they were just swept along with what the Jewish leaders. A wave of sorrow which seems to have swept across those wavering, unstable hearts. As prophesied Long ago "they shall look upon *me* whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son"

The Centurion saw such moral goodness like no man had ever displayed, He saw the sun darken for 3 hours, it's possible news got to Him that the curtain in the temple had torn from the top to the bottom. Now was there an entrance made into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus; and a way of access to God was opened for every sinner who trusted in Christ's atoning sacrifice. He must have felt the earth quake and the rocks split. CH Spurgeon puts it in a beautiful way. *Thus did the material world pay homage to him whom man had rejected; while nature's convulsions foretold what will happen when Christ's voice once more shakes not the earth only, but also heaven.* **And the graves were opened** To show that death was now swallowed up in victory by Jesus Christ. Oh How much was done for us at Calvary.

This Cry "Father Forgive THEM for they know not what they do" was not limited to the 4 Roman soldiers who put the nails through His hands and feet, It was not limited to the crowd that cried crucify Him. "Father forgive them" who does the word "them" include? All who are willing to be included and every man that sees His need to be included. All who the Lord would draw. You see when the Holy Spirit is at work He opens your understanding, He brings Conviction of Sin and unrighteousness. Without the Lord opening our understanding the preaching of the Gospel is foolishness. But to them that are being saved it is the wisdom of God. If you want to be included, you know, that your sins fastened Him to the cruel tree? You know you are guilty and need forgiveness. Then, when Jesus said, "**Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,**" He included you in that prayer, and me in that prayer, and tens of thousands in that little word, "them."

The Centurion was convinced, that Jesus was innocent, convinced He is the Son of the Living God. The Centurion GLORIFIED God. The original word infers he went on and on glorifying God.

This cry from the cross **Father Forgive them for they know what they do** also has application or a lesson for every believer. As do all the 7 cries from the cross. *"Father, forgive them," in effect, He said to us, "Forgive your enemies." Even when they spitefully use you and put you to terrible pain,*

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be ready to pardon them! Be like the sandalwood tree which perfumes the axe that fells it. Be all gentleness, kindness and love—and be this your prayer, "Father, forgive them." CH Spurgeon

Even the Thief upon the cross. One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" :40 But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? "And the thief said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom". He had lived his whole life in sin now in the closing moments of His life He is granted exceptional eyesight He see Jesus as King. He experiences life flowing from Christ Jesus, He feels the indiscernible pull of another world. He realises here is the King. He didn't deserve it but he makes a supplication. LORD Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.

He is saying Lord acknowledging Him as King and Lord of all. He had never been so close to a king before. And He made good use of it. What about the other thief. Alas He did not call upon the Lord. He was so close but so far. He was now so lost. What a tragedy He did not, hear. He would never hear those comforting words the other thief heard. "*Truly I say to you, Today you shall be with Me in Paradise.*" Every man and every woman needs to make supplication, needs to ask for forgiveness and cleansing. Needs to say "remember me" Lord. ***No one is born a Christian. No one becomes a Christian by going to church. It is*** He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Jesus said I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.

The first step in the thief's repentance was his concern about his companion's wickedness in mocking Christ. "**Dost thou not fear God,**" he said, "seeing thou art in the same condemnation?"—The second step was a full acknowledgment of his own sin. "**We indeed are justly in condemnation. We receive the due reward of our deeds.**"—The third step was an open confession of Christ's innocence. "**This man hath done nothing amiss.**"—The fourth step was **faith in Jesus Christ's power** and desire to save him. The fifth step was prayer. **He cried to Jesus when he was hanging on the cross,** and asked the Lord to Remember Him. Few dying people have ever left behind such good evidences of conversion as were left by this man. *The time when the thief was saved was the hour of our Lord's greatest weakness. He was hanging in agony on the cross. Yet even then He heard and granted a sinner's petition, and opened to him the gate of life. Surely this was "power"!* JC Rhyle

Here we can clearly see Salvation is by grace through faith, The dying thief was never baptized, belonged to no visible church, and never received the Lord's supper. But he repented and believed, and therefore he was saved. The Lord who saved this violent thief, has not changed. No sinner is too bad to be saved if they repent and believe will be saved.

Have you, like this thief, confessed your sin? Have you his faith and his prayerfulness? Then you shall be accepted even as he was! We learn then that we must repent and acknowledge our guilt

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and turn to the Lord. We must believe and place our faith in Jesus Christ. This is the duty we learn from this second cry from the cross.

The next cry from the cross. "Woman, behold your son!" He taught us the duty of family love. No Christian must ever be short of love to his mother, his father, or to any of those who are endeared to him as family. let no man here unman himself by forgetting his mother! She bore you—bear her in her old age and lovingly cherish her even to the last. We read of this only in John's eyewitness account of the Gospel. The Lord entrusted His Mother to John the disciple He loved. He knew John would be faithful to carry this out, He knew John would not fail. Can it be said of us that we have the same faithfulness. Would my Loyalty pass this test.

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? This cry came at the ninth hour when there was darkness over the land. But the darkness over his spirit was heavier than was over all the land, and out of that darkness came this cry of agony.

With All His might He turned to His God. My God, My God So we learn to cling to God, to grip Him with a double-handed faith. If we feel Forsaken, say Lord it must be my folly show me Lord That I may repent, I cannot bear to live without you.

The fifth cry, "**I thirst,**" teaches us to set a high value upon the fulfillment of God's Word. "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst." The terrible tiredness, the grief he had felt, the heat of the day, and the loss of blood, all were the natural causes of this thirst.

Yet by saying "I thirst," He was more careful here of fulfilling the Scripture and working out our salvation, than of satisfying his own most thirst. The Lord even in His pain and suffering found it necessary to obey the scripture considering the Glory of the Lord. How much more should we obey the scripture in all our earthly affairs. We should do all our earthly business with Heavenly Wisdom.

"It is finished," teaches us perfect obedience. "I have executed the great designs of the Almighty - I have satisfied the demands of his justice - I have accomplished all that was written in the prophets and suffered the utmost malice of my enemies; and now the way to the holy of holies is made manifest through my blood."

Leave out no Command of Gods Word, keep on obeying till you can say, "It is finished." OBEY The Lord serve according to His will, and rest not till you can say "It is finished." "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do." Christ faithful till the end, we too must be found faithful till the end.

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Christ's Final Cry. "**Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit,**" teaches us resignation. Surrender of all unto the Lord. We know that if we commit our lives into the faithful hands of God there is no better place to be. He upholds everything, **Psalms 75:3** When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I **who keep steady** its pillars. Selah. I hold up. Who else can hold up our lives. Oh commit your life into His hands. He is well able.

The Lord's words "**Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit,**" supply a lesson to all true Christians. They show us the manner in which death should be met by all God's children. They provide an example which every believer should strive to follow. Like our Master, we should not be afraid to confront the king of terrors. We should regard him as a vanquished enemy, whose sting has been taken away by Christ's death. We should think of him as a foe who can hurt the body for a little season, but after that has no more that he can do. We should await his approaches with calmness and patience, and believe that when flesh fails our soul will be in good keeping. This was the mind of dying Stephen; "Lord Jesus," he said, "receive my spirit." This was the mind of Paul the aged, when the time of his departure was at hand. He says, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." (Act 7:59; 2Ti 1:12.) Happy indeed are those who have a last end like this! JC Ryle

1 Corinthians 15:55 O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?"

Hosea 13:14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

"Repentance shall be hid from Mine eyes," what does that mean? the lord will never turn, repent or change from the victory gained over hell, death, and the grave. This is an eternal decree; death destroyed for ever, salvation available for all ages as long as the earth exists. That which Christ Jesus has accomplished shall never be reversed nor recalled but remain unshakable for ever and ever.

One of the writers of old says, "*What harm can death now do unto believers, more than a wasp, or hornet, or bee, that has lost its sting?*" Matthew Poole

I urge you if **you have not yet called upon the Name of Jesus** – Bow you heart and knee to Him call upon His name. Be like the Centurion, Be like the thief on the cross. But never, never be hard hearted and ignore the Lord like the Jewish leaders. Father Forgive **'them'**. **You are included in that prayer**; you are one of them who's sin placed Christ upon the cross. You are one of them who is in great need of forgiveness. If you call He is faithful to forgive you.

In 10 thousand years from now. We will still remember Calvary. We will forever sing a new song unto the Lamb of God. "*Thou art worthy... for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to*

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God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation" (Rev. 5 :9). We shall see our Lord and our saviour the nail prints in His hands -

But even now as we reflect on the great victory gained, the forgiveness of sins Let us be sure to give thanks for His unfailing mercy and compassion He has shown to us.