

Seven Saying from the Cross
The Word Forgive
Luke 23:34

INTRO: This first saying from the cross is recorded in Luke 23:34, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do." Thus, we begin our journey through the seven sayings of Christ from the cross. C. H. Spurgeon says of the seven sayings: "Like the steps of a ladder or the links of a golden chain, there is a mutual dependence and interlinking of each of the cries, so that one leads to another and that to a third. Separated or in connection, our Master's words overflow with instruction to thoughtful minds" (Lockyer 9).

As we now enter into our study, note the things that are now past for the Savior:

1. The agony of the garden.
2. The cruel scourging.
3. The weary cross-bearing.

Now Jesus is at the place called Calvary, Golgotha, the place of the skull: He is led like a lamb to the slaughter. His clothes are stripped from His body, and He is clothed now with thorns and blood.

He has been to the cross, big spikes are in hands and feet. The accursed tree has been dropped into the hole dug for it. Now, we hear the first words of Jesus from the cross. They are words of love and forgiveness as recorded in Luke 23:34.

I. "FATHER" THE SAVIOR'S RELATIONSHIP

A. "Father," a word of relationship.

1. God is His Father; He is the Son of God. This has always been. There has never been a time when God did not exist; never a time when He has not been God. Likewise, there has never been a time when Jesus did not exist; never a time when He was not the Son of God. Robert L. Moyer says: "John 1:12 and 18 distinguish between the only begotten Son of God and the many children of God. He is the Son from eternity; they become sons in time." (12)
2. This is the Savior's favorite term of address.
3. How could we ever measure the love, honor, and obedience wrapped up in this tender noun when used by the Son of God.

B. A word of trust and service.

1. No matter what the situation that Christ face, He trusted the Father saying: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."
2. He was made a curse for us; yet, He trusted and did not question the Father's will. His faith was unshaken (I Pet 3:18).
3. Even from the age of twelve, we hear the words of service from Jesus lips: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" At the garden in sweat and agony, He said: "Father....."

II. THE PETITION– "FORGIVE THEM"

- A. "Forgive them." The words of one willing to abundantly pardon.
 1. He never said, "forgive me."
 - a. We are in need of forgiveness.
 - b. Jesus had no sin; He was the sinless man.
 - c. On Christ, the sinless one, God laid the iniquity of us all. He could do that because in Jesus was no iniquity at all.
 - d. No sinner could ever be the sin-bearer. Only Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, could take away the sin of the world.
- B. His petition was one of love.
 1. Jesus could have called down fire from heaven upon His executioners.
 2. His prayer could have been one of anathema upon them; that the wicked be rewarded according to their deeds.
 3. But instead, He opened lips parched by the sin, lips of pain and uttered words of redeeming love.
 4. He exemplified His own teaching (Mt 5:44).
 5. Revenge is natural to the human heart, but love is the heart of God. Such love is revealed in the words of Christ. This is the love shed aboard in the hearts of believers (Rm 5:5).
 6. This is an example to us. "This is my commandment that ye love....."
 7. A. W. Pink, "Remember then the cross. Christ prayed for His enemies. Learn not to look on any as beyond the reach of prayer."
 8. Christ, filled the gap, throwing Himself between a Holy God and guilty sinners saying: "Father forgive them....."

- C. His petition was one of purpose.
1. That purpose is expressed in the words: "Forgive them," for only through the cross could God forgive sin.
 2. Forgiveness in both Testaments is always on the ground of the blood. The blood fully meets every claim of God's justice and holiness. "What can wash away my sins, nothing but the blood of Jesus."
 3. God remits the penalty of sins to the sinner because that penalty was borne by the Savior.
 4. Forgiveness is offered through the blood of the crucified Christ; He is the sacrifice for sinners. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I Jn 1:7).
 5. Before going to the cross, Jesus taught this great truth as we see it in Matt 26:28: "This is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission (forgiveness) of sins."
 6. In love, Jesus took our place (II Cor 5:21).
- D. His petition was oft repeated from the cross.
1. "Father forgive them" is in the imperfect tense in the Greek—meaning that Jesus spoke this over and over again.
 2. "Forgive them"
 - a. To those that parted His garments Lk 23:34
 - b. To the deriding crowd Lk 23:35
 - c. To mocking soldiers Lk 23:36
 - d. To Peter who denied Him
 - e. To weak Pilate
 - f. To sick Herod
 - g. False witnesses who testified against Him.
- E. Forgiveness includes all type of sinners:
- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. The moral sinner | 4. The Cheat |
| 2. The drunk | 5. The liar |
| 3. The prostitute, adulterer | 6. The hell deserving |

III. "THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO" THE PLEA

- A. Who was "included in this plea"?
- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. The soldiers | 4. The Sanhedrin |
| 2. The people | 5. All were included in this plea |
| 3. The rulers | |
- B. In rejecting and crucifying the Messiah, they knew not what they were doing.

1. They knew they were crucifying a man, but:
 - a. They knew not His divine origin.
 - b. They knew not His virgin birth.
 2. They should have known who He was, but they didn't. The Old Testament scriptures pointed to Him. His work on earth testified of Him, and His words were a witness of His deity. "Never man spake like this man"(John 7:46).
 3. They did it in ignorance as Peter points out in Acts 3:17, and Paul in I Cor 2:8. Ignorance and blindness as to who Jesus really was.
 4. God is just and through the blood of Christ He can be the justifier of all who believe (Luke 24:46-47).
- C. These folks needed forgiveness for sin. Sin is always sin before God, whether committed ignorantly or willfully.
1. Sinners are not fit for heaven, The Bible says, "Ye must be born again." The sin problem must be dealt with. Turning over a new leaf will not save you; resolving to do better will not get you anywhere spiritually. A. W. Pink says, "Of what use are shoes if our feet are paralyzed. Of what use are glasses if we are blind...It matters not that I am highly respected by a wide circle of friends if I am yet in my sins. It matters not that I have made good in business if I am an unpardoned transgressor in the sight of God. What will matter most in the hour of death is, Have my sins been put away been put away by the Blood of Christ?." (28)
 2. Ignorance does not deserve, but often finds pardon.
 3. Ignorance is the state of unbelievers and the past state of believers (I Tim 1:13-14).
- D. Those who cried crucify Him, those who whipped Him, those who drove the nails in His hands and feet, those who condemned Him were slaying the sacrifice for sin.
1. In ignorance, they fulfilled the Old Testament type of the sinner bringing the sacrifice, placing his hands on it as it was slain.
 2. Those who crucified Jesus, crucified the sacrifice for sin.
- E. When we believe, all our sins are forgiven: completely and eternally (Rm 4:8; Col 2:13).

CONCLUSION: Jesus Christ in abundant pardon cried: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The Father's reply was the salvation of thousands of souls a few days later at Pentecost. The saving work goes on. Has it included you?