

Father, Forgive Them

Luke 23:34

Luke 23:33a – And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him. These are the solemn words that Luke records concerning the crucifixion of our Lord. There is no great detail, just a simple statement, there they crucified him. This was the moment in time that forever changed humanity. It was there that the sin of mankind met redemption. It was upon the cross that the holy, sinless, eternal Son of God became our sacrifice, atoning for sin.

We cannot begin to imagine the agony that Jesus endured while upon the cross. The physical suffering would have been horrifying, but the presence of sin being laid upon Him would've been the worst. As Jesus hung upon the cross for six long hours, He uttered seven statements. In the final words of Christ, just prior to His death, we get a glimpse of His compassion, His obedience, and His commitment to fallen man.

Three of these sayings were addressed to God the Father. Four were addressed to man. The three addressed to God were prayers (1st, 4th, and 7th). Luke and John each record three of the seven accounts. Matthew and Mark only record one and they both record the same saying.

As we look toward Easter Sunday and the resurrection, I want to spend the next several weeks examining each of the seven sayings of Christ upon the cross. This morning we have read the first of these. Let's take a few moments to consider the [eternal truths](#) revealed as Christ prayed unto His Father: [Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do](#).

I. Words of Sovereignty – Then said Jesus, [Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do](#). And [they parted his raiment, and cast lots](#). Jesus spoke sovereign words. Consider:

A. An Unnatural Request – We must keep in mind that Jesus was fully God and yet He was fully man. He felt the same emotions we feel. He felt the same pain we feel. He dealt with the same temptations we endure. This was an unnatural request for the humanity of Christ. The flesh doesn't want to seek the good of the offender. It wants to bring retribution for the wrongs the aggressor has committed.

- As Christ hung upon the cross, robed in human flesh, wrongly accused and beaten, He prayed for the Father to forgive the wrongs that were committed against His only begotten Son. How many of us could pray that prayer? How many of us would be willing if we could? Christ did!

B. An Unselfish Request – If this had been a mere man hanging upon the cross, he would likely have prayed for God to judge the injustice of the cross. Humanity would have wanted the Lord to pour out His wrath upon those who had committed such an atrocity. Our prayers would have been directed toward our needs and the desire to escape the suffering.

- Christ was not concerned about His physical well-being. He did not pray for the suffering to end and His accusers be judged. He did not seek a means to escape this awful torture and death. He prayed for the needs of those who were responsible for His crucifixion. He prayed an unselfish prayer and died an unselfish death for the needs of all humanity. He realized this was the sovereign will of God and He must endure the cross.

C. An Unhindered Request – At this moment in time Christ was limited in His ministry. I say that with all due respect, but He was no longer walking among the multitudes. He was no longer healing the sick, raising the dead, calming storms or expounding the Word. He was separated from that aspect of ministry, but that doesn't mean He was hindered in His request.

- He was hanging upon the cross, beaten and bloody, but He still had power with God. He lived a perfect life, free of sin, and remained able to talk with the Father. Even though He was bound to the cross, committed unto death, Jesus exercised the power of prayer. What a challenge and encouragement to each of us. There is power in prayer!

II. Words of Sympathy – This was also a prayer of sympathy as Christ well understood the need of mankind. Notice:

A. His Persistence – [Then said Jesus](#). The word [said](#) is translated from the Greek word *lego* and is in the *imperfect tense*. That simply indicates a continuous action. That confirms to us that Christ prayed this prayer more than one time. He maybe only spoke it audibly once, but He prayed Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do over and over and over again!

- I can imagine as they threw Him to the ground to place Him on the cross, Jesus prayed this prayer. Likely as the spikes ripped through His flesh, He prayed forgive them. As the soldiers gambled for His garments, as the crowds mocked and railed, even spitting upon Him, and even as the sword pierced His precious side, He was praying this prayer! Christ continued to pray for those who had wronged Him. His wasn't a brief and thoughtless prayer. He prayed over and over again for their forgiveness.

B. His Petition – Christ could've prayed for anything at this moment and yet His focus was on man's greatest need. He prayed for the forgiveness of sinners. He knew mankind was separated from God in sin. He knew unless we were pardoned and forgiven, our sin would result in eternal separation and death. He didn't pray Father condemn them or destroy them. He was not seeking their judgment and peril. He sought their forgiveness.

- He could've prayed for comfort while enduring the pain of the cross. He could've prayed for strength to endure. He could've prayed for the angels to rescue Him from His torment. None of those petitions were offered. He pleaded with God for mercy and forgiveness for sinful men!

C. His Passion – One could never doubt or deny the passion of Christ. It is beyond our ability to comprehend the torment of the cross. We cannot begin to fathom the pain Christ endured. He was scourged and beaten of the soldiers prior to the cross. The cross was devised as the cruelest method of execution known to man. Not to mention the fact that Christ would bear the sins of humanity within His body. He, who knew no sin, became sin.

- As he endured the torments of the cross, His genuine passion was revealed. His desire was to see men receive salvation. His passion was to provide for their redemption. His passion was forgiveness and reconciliation of humanity to God.

III. Words of Sincerity – Then said Jesus, **Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.** Notice:

A. Man's Ignorance – Jesus declared they didn't know what they were doing. They hadn't perceived the enormity of the injustice that was being carried out that day. Many were unaware of the lies that had been told. Most were unaware of the holiness and perfection of Christ. The Sanhedrin and His accusers were aware that Christ was innocent, but the multitude and the soldiers were caught up in the moment. To many this was just another criminal, accused, condemned, and sentenced to death. They were ignorant of the fact that Christ was the Messiah, Savior of the world.

- I rejoice that God is patient and loving. I am glad He sent the Holy Spirit to convict my heart and open my eyes to truth. Ignorance will not be a viable argument when we stand before God and give account of our lives. Our blessed Lord doesn't want any to be ignorant of Him.

B. Man's Indifference – Surely there were those who had been exposed to truth. There were those who had witnessed the miracles. They had heard Christ speak with authority and power. They had acknowledged that He was not like other men. They knew Jesus was special and yet most rejected Him. They were indifferent to Christ and their need for Him. They were not even aware of the enormity of their decision.

- I am convinced Christ was praying even for those who rejected Him. He desired them to realize their need and turn to Him for salvation. There were those who had been confronted with truth and rejected it. These too needed salvation.

C. Man's Inadequacy – Our Lord knew He was humanities only hope. Apart from Him they would remain in their sin, condemned before God. Christ prayed for mercy upon sinful men. He wanted them to have the opportunity of salvation and forgiveness of sin.

IV. Words of Sufficiency – To many who looked upon Calvary's hill that day, this Man might have looked like a failure. He had claimed to be the very Son of God. He had talked of His kingdom and reign. He even had those who had left everything they had in this life to follow Him. This appeared to be a tragic end to One many considered to be a rebel and blasphemer. There is no royal crown, only a crown of thorns. There are no crowds of followers, only a multitude who cried for His crucifixion.

- The world may not have cared or noticed as Christ prayed upon the cross, but I can assure you heaven paid attention. This was God's Son. He had been faithful to the work God had given Him. He was obedient to the cross. His life had been lived in perfect harmony with God. The prayers of our Lord were heard and they were answered. God did have mercy upon those who stood around the cross that day. He spared their lives, likely providing another opportunity for salvation. The prayers of Christ were heard and they were sufficient!

- We too can rejoice in the sufficiency of our Lord's prayers. He is no longer upon the cross or in the tomb. He has ascended back to God in heaven, but He has not ceased to pray. In fact, He is right now making intercession for us before the throne of God. [Heb.7:25 – Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.](#) [Rom.8:34 – Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.](#)

Conclusion: Christ was concerned for those who needed a Savior. He prayed for a sinful world as He bled and died. He endured the cross so we might be forgiven and have eternal life. Do you

know Him as your personal Savior? If not, I urge you to come to Him and receive Him. You have heard the gospel truth and you are without excuse. Don't be indifferent as many were in that day. Christian, maybe you just needed to be reminded that our Lord continues to intercede on our behalf. If you have a need, why not bring it to the Lord.