

11

Statements from the Cross

Matthew 27; Mark 15;
Luke 23; John 19

“But Jesus was saying, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing’” (Luke 23:34a).

Nothing reveals God like the cross, and nothing exposes man like crucifixion. The cross is repulsive and grotesque; only God could glorify a death on a cross. Crucifixion was chaos, profanity, agony, pain, and venom.

We would not expect profound philosophy to be on the cross, yet some of the greatest statements in all of history were made from it. Jesus made seven statements while on the cross. The first three focused on others; the final four concerned Himself.

Forgiveness. Jesus first said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). This was a prayer, not a declaration. Jesus’ first and last statements were prayers to His Father.

Jesus desired mercy for His tormentors. However, to receive God’s forgiveness, those who crucified Jesus would have to submit to the biblical repentance that leads to reconciliation.

Jesus looked down at those who had nailed Him to the

cross and said, "I want you to know God's forgiveness." Prayer was rare on crosses. To pray for the executioners was unthinkable. However, this is what Jesus did. While dying, Jesus prayed for forgiveness for those who were committing the crime of killing God's Son. Some scholars think Jesus repeated this statement throughout His first hours of suffering. The cross is the greatest exhibition of forgiveness that the world has ever known.

Salvation. Jesus said to the thief beside Him, "... today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). The first statement was for the crowd in general, and the second was for the thief in particular. Jesus promised that the penitent thief would be with Him after he died!

Was this thief more lost than we are? It takes a blood-stained Savior to save sin-soaked sinners! Jesus had power to forgive sin (Matthew 9:6; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24).

The prophet Isaiah said that Jesus would be numbered with the transgressors (Isaiah 53:12). He was crucified between two thieves.

Responsibility. Jesus said, "Woman, behold your son!" (see John 19:26, 27). The "woman" was Jesus' mother, Mary. John was the "son."

Jesus saw His mother. He forgot His own pain to care for His mother, saying, "John, take care of her." Perhaps this was not permanent. It was necessary for that day.

Pathos. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). This is a quotation from Psalm 22:1. From this point on, Jesus' words focused on Himself and the Father.

That moment was the only time in all eternity that God and Jesus were separated. No wonder Jesus was sorrowful "to the point of death" in the garden (Matthew 26:38).

God did not abandon Jesus; He abandoned sin! God forsakes sinners who have forsaken Him. Jesus called upon God twice from the cross. Here, He found that God would be God. To accept us forever, He had to reject His Son temporarily. That is part of the mystery of the cross.

As usual, man missed the point. The people thought Jesus was calling for Elijah! Jesus did not fear nails or death, but He did shudder at the loneliness that came with being made sin. How horrifying that was to Him! Jesus was made everything that sin is to God, and He had to suffer through this awful agony *alone!* He never tried to save Himself. This is the depth of His vicarious death. If He was to save us, He could not save Himself. He could not do both.

Thirst. After six long hours, He said, "I thirst" (John 19:28; KJV). His words fulfilled another Scripture (Psalm 69:21).

Not every statement made by Jesus on the cross was recorded in every Gospel Account. Basically, one writer revealed what the others did not.

Jesus kept His full senses and a clear mind while upon the cross. He first refused a drink that would dull His senses. Here, He requested a drink to keep His senses. He had kept His composure and alertness upon the cross.

Of all the pains and discomforts He experienced upon the cross, thirst is the only one He mentioned. These two words comprise the only physical need that Jesus mentioned from the cross. It was the only personal favor He requested. His short statement is power-packed with thought. Only when He knew He had fulfilled His task (John 19:28) did Jesus ask for water.

Victory. He said, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). It is one

word in Greek—*tetelestai*. This is the greatest single word ever said. When we hear this word, we realize how little we know. Only Jesus, with one word, could sum up the entire plan of redemption!¹

It will take all eternity for us to grasp what our salvation means! Jesus is the only person who fully did what God wanted done! He said, “*Tetelestai!*” Jesus came to do God’s will. He did it! Man, lost in sin, now has a Savior. *Hallelujah!*

Faith. Jesus said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23:46). He did not die in doubt. He died in joyous faith!

Yes, man in a human sense killed Jesus, yet in another sense man did not. Jesus chose when He would die and when He would be resurrected. He said, “No one has taken it [My life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again” (John 10:18). Jesus told Pilate that his power was only allowed by God (John 19:10, 11). The spirit of Jesus was not taken from Him; He voluntarily gave it to the Father.

Think of how Jesus lived! Think of how Jesus died! His final words also fulfilled a Scripture (Psalm 31:5). Jesus, the Word (John 1:1), respected “the Word.” We must have the same attitude toward it!

Jesus spoke in triumph!

*The cross . . .
there is no other way!*

¹God’s plan to save mankind from sin (see Hebrews 2:9).