



WORDS
from the CROSS

We will shortly celebrate the season of Eastertide. It is customary and good for us to examine the historical events leading to the resurrection of Jesus Christ because within His victory lies the basis for our hope. In John 14:19 we read: "Because I live, you will live also." This verse can be used to explain the Chief Apostle's year-beginning message: "Let us make 2016 a year of victories with Christ."

With this incredibly hopeful message in our hearts, I would ask you to consider the events of Good Friday in great detail. Specifically, please focus your thoughts on the seven sayings or last words of Jesus during the horrific moments of His crucifixion. Perhaps this is a topic we have avoided because the suffering of our Lord is disturbing, but within each of these words, we find another element of the victory of Jesus Christ. Each of these smaller victories together made up His supreme sacrifice that brings us the means of our salvation. And so our victory in Christ will also be made up of daily smaller ones.

WITHIN EACH OF THESE WORDS, WE FIND ANOTHER ELEMENT OF THE VICTORY OF JESUS CHRIST

When reflecting on the last words of Jesus and when discussing them together, please search for the relevance and power of His legacy in your own life that will help you win your personal victories with Him. And please don't limit yourself to the applications listed in this article. These are just the tip of the iceberg to whet your appetite. The Holy Spirit can go much deeper if you ask Him. He knows Jesus Christ intimately, He knows you, and He knows your life.

Likewise, please search for a deeper understanding of the true nature of Jesus' sacrifice, His selfless love for all mankind (and for you personally), His humility, His willingness to forgive, and His powerful drive to do the will of God. This understanding will help us all to experience Holy Communion in a continually more vibrant and renewed manner that truly transforms our inner being.

To find the seven sayings of Jesus on the cross, we must search all four Gospels. In the first three sayings, all happening within the first 3 hours on the cross, Jesus

speaks to or for other people. Despite His suffering, Jesus is still selfless and cares for the needs of others over His own.

LUKE 23:34 - FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY DO.

A victory of forgiveness over injustice.

- Despite the incredible injustice, His first words are of forgiveness.
- They fulfill Isaiah's prophecy: *He made intercession for the transgressor* (Isaiah 53:12).
- They satisfy His own teachings: *But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you* (Matthew 5:44).
- He wishes forgiveness even for those who show no remorse or repentance. Jesus wants them to be free of their guilt when they realize what they have done. That is the result of forgiveness, freedom from guilt.

LUKE 23:43 - TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, TODAY YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE.

A victory of grace over judgement.

Jesus gives a gift to one of the two criminals also being crucified based upon the man's humility and recognition of Jesus as the Son of God, even if at the last minute of his life. The phrase seems to indicate a pardon from judgement and an invitation into paradise and the presence of Christ.

- *We deserve to die but this man has done nothing wrong* (ref. Luke 23:41).
- *The wages of sin is death (what we earned) but the gift (what we were given but didn't deserve) of God is eternal life* (Romans 6:23).
- *Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom* (Luke 23:42). The man's request is critical. He didn't ask for relief from pain or death.

JOHN 19:26-27 - WOMAN, BEHOLD YOUR SON. SON, BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER.

A victory of love over the needs of self.

In the midst of His suffering, He cares for the needs of others. Also, we see a victory of love over fear on the part of the few who follow Him to the cross.

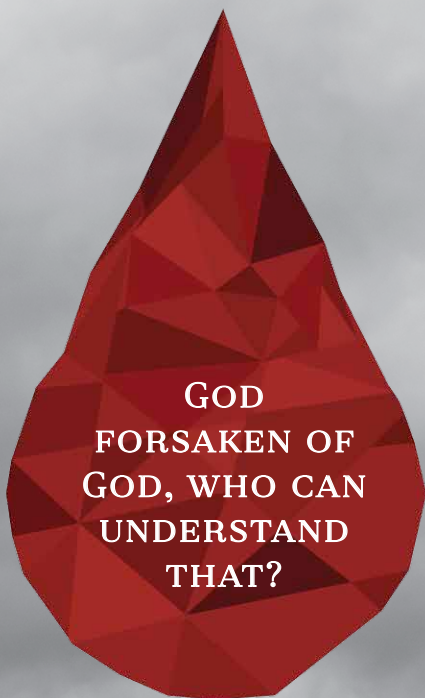
- It is revealing to see who is with Him at this moment: John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and a group of very brave woman, all who loved Him enough to follow Him to the end and witness His suffering despite their fears for their own safety.
- Mary, His mother, is a widow and now faces an anxious future all alone. Jesus acknowledges her need and the need of the church (in the person of Apostle John) to care for her and love her as a devoted son. He entrusts her to the church, thus pointing out an important future pastoral role of the church.
- In this way He teaches us the responsibility to care for one another even when we ourselves are suffering.

After these sayings, the sky turns dark and the sun is obscured for the remaining three hours of Jesus life, despite being in the middle of the day, and intensifies the feeling that something incredibly earth-changing and historic is taking place. The remaining four sayings of Jesus are directed inwardly or to God. They chart His final steps of suffering under the weight of all mankind's sin and His willingness to be abandoned by God in His final moments as the sacrificial lamb of all the world, to the declaration of His victory, and the completion of His mission to bring us back to God.

MATTHEW 27:46 & MARK 15:34 – MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?

It has been reported that Martin Luther secluded himself to prepare a sermon on this verse and sat in a trance-like state for many hours. Finally, he got up, and walking away remarked: “God forsaken of God, who can understand that?”

- It is the mystery of substitution. In this moment, Jesus substitutes Himself for mankind, takes on our every sin and punishes Himself so that mankind can escape God’s judgement. 1 Peter 2:24: says, *Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.*
- His words document that God does not acknowledge Himself to His Son at this moment. Jesus experiences His sacrificial death alone just as mankind does. God does not intervene or comfort Him as described in Psalm 22: 1-2, *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me?*
- In other moments of prayer, Jesus refers to God as Father, but not at this moment.
- This is the moment of payment for mankind’s sins and the victory of Jesus Christ that satisfies the righteousness of God.



The next 2 sayings are described in a sequence just before Jesus dies:

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst!” Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop [branch], and put it to His mouth. So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit (John 19:28-30).

JOHN 19:28 – I THIRST.

Jesus is confirming that He has experienced this moment of victory of love over self as a human being and is confirming His humanity. He suffered for us in human form with all our sensations.

This account also confirms that the scriptures are fulfilled in Him.

- *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).*
- *Isaiah says, Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows...But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:4-5).*
- *When I was thirsty they offered me vinegar (Psalm 69:21).*

JOHN 19:30 – IT IS FINISHED.

The victory of knowing and doing the will of God. This is a cry of victory, not despair.

His enemies thought **He** was finished, but He is declaring something else: **It is finished** - the purpose of My life and the will of God the Father to redeem mankind from sin.

- *Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work (John 4:34).*

What did He finish? See the many descriptions of His victory and the completed purpose of His life:

- *For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Romans 8:3-4).*
- *And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross (Colossians 2:13-14).*
- *He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13-14).*
- *For the sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God’s wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17 NLT).*

LUKE 23:46: FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.

The victory of trust in God. These are the last words of Jesus before dying.

- He gave His life voluntarily: *No one can take my life from me. I lay down my life voluntarily, for I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also the power to take it back again (John 10:18).* This reminds us that Jesus had the power to avoid the cross. He had the power at any moment to subdue His persecutors and walk away from the cross. So while it was physical nails that pierced His hands and feet, in reality it was His trust in God and His love for us that bound Him to the cross.
- His mission is complete and He is confident that His spirit will be welcomed and safe in God’s presence, despite the darkness and aloneness of His suffering, now that He has overcome the sin that separates from God. **-WJ/LRK**

SEARCH FOR A DEEPER
UNDERSTANDING OF
JESUS’ SACRIFICE

HIS SELFLESS LOVE

HIS HUMILITY

HIS WILLINGNESS TO
FORGIVE

HIS POWERFUL DRIVE
TO DO THE WILL OF GOD