

The First Saying: Forgiveness

Luke 23:33-34

The last words uttered by someone before death are very powerful, important, and revealing. Herbert Lockyer wrote a book *called Last Words of Saints and Sinners*. This series examines Christ's last words. The first of these seven sayings of Christ from the cross is a prayer. How significant! His public ministry opened with prayer (Lk. 3:21) and His ministry is concluding in prayer. What an example to us all. Jesus hands no longer can minister – they are bound. His feet no longer can carry him – they are nailed. He can no longer teach His disciples – they have fled. But He can pray. Notice, Jesus prays for forgiveness.

I. The people for whom Jesus prayed . . . "Father, forgive *them* . . ."

These people are those who crucified him. They are His foes. They are the enemies of Jesus Christ.

A. Nothing or no one is outside the realm of prayer for us.

Are you burdened? Does it seem a waste to pray for that son who has rebelled or a daughter who has grieved your heart? Does their case seem hopeless? How about a family member or former friend who has turned on you? Christ prayed for his murderers! This encourages us all!

B. Our Father is in the habit of answering the prayers of His people.

The people who shouted crucify Him are the same people who heard Peter preach at Pentecost. 3,000 people saved on that day! (Acts 4:4). This was a genuine revival. Why were 3,000 saved? Good preaching? No! Great worship? No! PRAYER. Prayer is power! "Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart" (Ps. 32:4). There is a valuable principle in this. "God only gives to you your desires when ask Him, trust Him, and submit to Him." Why? If He worked in your life giving to you what you before you turn to Him, then you'd take credit for it.

II. The person to whom Jesus prayed . . . "Father, forgive them . . ."

To the woman who washed His feet with her tears in the house of Simon Jesus Christ said, "Your sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:48). To the man sick with palsy He said, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you" (Matthew 9:2). In these instances and others, Jesus Himself forgave sins. Now, Jesus says, "Father, forgive them." Why?

A. Forgiveness of sins is a Divine prerogative alone.

The Scribes correctly said, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" The Scribes desired to put Jesus to death because He did and said what only God could do and really say. Of course, Jesus is God. Remember this when someone tries to attempt to shame you into believing a lie about your past.

B. Christ died as our human substitute, in our place.

On the cross, Christ no longer spoke to forgive sins. He was our substitute! In a human court of law when one is guilty, the judge must choose between two alternatives: enforce the penalty of the law (justice), or disregard the requirements of the law (mercy). God is merciful and just.

III. The purpose for which He prayed . . . "Father, forgive them . . ."

Forgive them of their sin. Forgive them for beating, mocking, and nailing me to the cross at Calvary.

A. These enemies of Jesus were blind to the enormity of their crime.

They were blind to the fact of the enormity of their error regarding Jesus. What they did to Him Isaiah prophesied: "And he was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12). God uses man's mistakes for His glory.

C. These enemies of Jesus became a blessing to the Kingdom after the Father forgave them.

Pentecost began at Calvary. Saints are formerly sinners. The power of God brings blessing to us. The greatest blessing of all is to have the spirit within that desires God to forgive your enemies.