

# *Seven Statements from the Cross*

## PART 2

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If you have been with us over the past month or so, then you know that we are in the middle of a series of lessons based on favorite scenes from the life of Jesus Christ. Last week, of course, we started looking at the seven statements that Jesus made from the cross. Since we studied all of these in detail back in 2010, we are just doing a brief overview. Last week, we looked at the crucifixion itself, and we learned that after a night of various trials and beatings, the Lord was finally nailed to the cross at 9 o'clock on a Friday morning. We also learned that as he was on the cross, every spoken word would have involved excruciating pain.

And yet, as that process begins, we find the Lord saying over and over again, ***“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”*** Instead of cursing (as most people in that position would have done), the Lord prays that his tormenters may some day be forgiven. And then we found that his prayer was answered in a positive way on the Day of Pentecost several weeks later, as 3,000 people were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.

We then looked at the Lord's second statement. As he was hanging on the cross, the two thieves on each side were hurling abuse at him, but as the morning progressed, one thief had a change of heart and asked the Lord to remember him when he came in his kingdom. And in response, the Lord said to the repentant thief, ***“Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise.”***

And then at the end of our time together last week, we saw the soldiers dividing up the Lord's clothing. And when they got to the tunic, the seamless inner garment that was traditionally handmade as a mother's very personal gift to her sons when they left home, when the soldiers get to that piece of clothing, Jesus looks at his mother and says, ***“Woman, behold, your son!”*** Then, Jesus looks at John and says, ***“Behold, your mother!”*** The Lord set an example there, as he made sure that his mother was cared for in her old age.

These three statements were made at some point between 9 a.m. and noon. At noon, however, the situation changes, and we find that darkness covers the land. This was not an eclipse, this was not a dust storm; instead, according to Luke's account, the sun was ***“failing.”*** In other words, the sun stopped shining. In my own mind, at least, I picture this as one of those situations where we can't even see our hands in front of our face. The light of the sun was simply gone. For those who knew the Old Testament, though, the darkness should not have been a surprise. Listen, please, to what the prophet Amos said in Amos 8:9-10, a passage we will look at

on Wednesday evening in a week or two. The words of Amos, ***“It will come about in that day,”*** declares the Lord God, ***“That I will make the sun go down at noon and make the earth dark in broad daylight. Then I will turn your festivals into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring sackcloth on everyone’s loins and baldness on every head. And I will make it like a time of mourning for an only son, and the end of it will be like a bitter day.”*** Sometimes I wonder when all of this got started whether there was anyone in Israel at that time who thought of Amos as this was happening. Nevertheless, the sun fails, and darkness covers the land.

I want us to try to imagine what that must have been like. What do you do if you are the Roman centurion coordinating these executions? Here we have three men on crosses, we have thousands upon thousands of visitors from all over the world who are in town to celebrate the Passover. And here you are alongside one of the main roads leading into city. As the man in charge, what do you do when the sun suddenly goes out at noon? What do you do when everything goes black? I can imagine that it probably got pretty quiet very quickly. After that, maybe some panic sets in. Nothing like this has ever happened before. I can see the Roman soldiers scrambling for a torch. When they left the barracks that morning, they had no idea that they would be needing a source of light in the middle of the day. But this darkness goes on for three hours, from noon until 3 o’clock in the afternoon. Three o’clock, by the way, is the exact time that the Passover Lamb was to be slaughtered.

**I. At that moment, at 3 o’clock in the afternoon, a voice pierces the darkness, and Jesus speaks up for the FOURTH TIME.**

I would invite you to look with me at Mark 15:33-36 (p. 1591). We are at the very end of the Lord’s life at this point, death is just minutes away, and the last four statements come very close to each other. Notice, please, the Lord’s fourth statement from the cross, starting in Mark 15:33,

***When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour. At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which is translated, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” When some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, “Behold, He is calling for Elijah.” Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink, saying, “Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down.”***

Of all the words that Jesus spoke while on the cross, these are certainly the most difficult to understand. God forsaking God, how is that possible? There are two main schools of thought on this. On one hand, some have suggested that Jesus was not really forsaken by the Father, but that he simply felt forsaken, that he was using a figure of speech, that he was simply quoting Psalm 22 in order to get people to think about the fact that he was the fulfillment of those prophecies. On the other hand, though, the Lord does say that he was ***“forsaken.”*** Some, then, have suggested that for at least a brief moment, God the father turned away (at least in some sense), and in some way, this is tied to the fact that his Son was bearing the sins of the world. And so, as you can see, this is a difficult passage.

I want us to back up, though, and I want us to take this statement as a reminder. Whether Jesus was actually abandoned at this point or whether Jesus just felt abandoned, this passage reminds us that sin is serious. The cost of sin, in fact, is enormous. Sin put the Lord in this predicament – not his sin, but our sin. As Paul explained in 2 Corinthians 5:21, ***“[God the Father] made [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”*** Or, as Peter explained in 1 Peter 2:24, ***“...He Himself***

**bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”** All of this goes back to Isaiah 53:4-6, a prophecy from more than 700 years before the time of Christ, a prophecy studied by the Ethiopian Officer in Acts 8,

***Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried;  
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.  
But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities;  
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.  
All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way;  
But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.***

On the cross, Jesus carried the sins of the world, and God the Father allowed it to happen. Every sin ever committed fell on the Lord as the perfect sacrifice – all of the lust that has ever been committed, every murder, every act of adultery, every sinful thought, every cutting remark from a husband to a wife or from a wife to a husband, every act of hatred and racism, all of the drunkenness and drug abuse, all of the rebellions and unjust wars that have ever taken place, every act of genocide, every act of violence that the strong have carried out against the weak (including every act of violence against those who are not yet born), every word of gossip and slander, every act of division in the church – all of it fell on Jesus as he hung there on the cross. The Lord took on every sin so that we would have the chance of avoiding God’s wrath ourselves. He came here to give his life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). He died for us. And under the crushing weight of sin, the Lord cried out, ***“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”***

## **II. In very quick time sequence, we get to the NEXT STATEMENT in John 19:28-29.**

In the Greek language, this is the shortest of all of the statements. In fact, in Greek it is only one word. And in some ways, this is the easiest of all of the statements for us personally to understand. Obviously, all of us here this morning know at least something of what it means to be thirsty. Most of us drink something almost all day long. We seem to drink wherever we go – sometimes we even take water with us – in the car, on our bikes, as we go to work or school. And yet, in spite of all of the water we normally have all around us, all of us have had the experience of being thirsty. So, when we read in the Bible that Jesus was thirsty, we know at least some small part of what he was going through on the cross. If you will then, please look with me at the fifth statement from the cross in John 19:28-29, ***“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, ‘I am thirsty.’ A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth.”***

As we look at this statement, I should point out that this is different from the earlier accounts when the Lord was offered and refused a drink of wine mixed with myrrh or gall, a drug that was mixed with the wine to dull the pain of those who were about to undergo crucifixion. When we put the accounts side by side in chronological order, we find that the earlier offer was made after they arrived at the site of the crucifixion, but before they nailed him to the cross. In Matthew’s account, we find that the Lord tasted it briefly, but he was unwilling to drink it once he realized what it was. In other words, the Lord was thirsty then, but he did not want to go into the crucifixion in any kind of a drunken stupor. He did not want any kind of a narcotic to take the edge off, but he chose to go through it with a clear mind. And with that, they nailed him to the cross. Now, though, we are six hours down the line, he is right at the point of death, and the drink that is offered now is different. This was not meant to dull the pain, but this was the common drink of a Roman soldier, this is what they would have had in their canteens. The Lord cries out that he is thirsty, and perhaps in an act of compassion, a soldier shares his own cheap wine with the Lord. And as we will find in just a moment, the Lord

needs that drink so that he can go on and make two more statements in the few moments that are left before he dies.

And with this, it seems the big reminder here is that the Lord was fully human. He was God, but he was also a man, and as a man, the Lord was thirsty. We know from Hebrews 2:17 that Jesus came in human form so that he could fully empathize with our struggles. As the writer of Hebrews explains in Hebrews 4:15, Jesus was tempted in all things, as we are, and yet he was without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

I would also point out the context of this statement back in John 19:28. According to John, Jesus said this in order ***“...to fulfill the Scripture.”*** How interesting! On the cross, Jesus was apparently thinking about a number of prophecies that were made hundreds of years earlier. Back in Psalm 69:21, King David said, ***“They also gave me gall for my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”*** And then in Psalm 22:15, King David also predicted, ***“My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and You lay me in the dust of the earth.”*** With one word, therefore, Jesus was basically saying, “Remember the book of Psalms! Remember the prophecies that were made about this very moment!” He spoke of his thirst, ***“...to fulfill the Scripture.”*** This God who caused water to gush from the rock to quench Israel’s thirst in the wilderness is now thirsty himself (Paul will go on to tell us that Jesus was the rock that provided water in the wilderness). This God who changed water into the best of wine at a wedding feast for his very first miracle is now thirsty himself and is given sour wine to drink. This God who asked for a drink at Jacob’s well and promised the woman ***“living water,”*** this God is now thirsty, and he did this in order to fulfill the Scriptures.

**III. There is so much more we could say, but let us move on and look at STATEMENT NUMBER SIX, as it is recorded for us in the next few verses in John 19.**

Right after he mentions the sour wine, Luke continues with John 19:30-31, ***“Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.”*** Like the last statement, this statement (in Greek) also comes in the form of a single word. And from what I have read, the word was used quite often in the ancient world. A slave, for example, would use this word when reporting back to his master at the end of the day, “It is finished. I have accomplished all that you have given me to do,” or, “Mission accomplished,” as we might say today. When a priest would examine an animal before making a sacrifice, he would use this word to declare that the animal was fit or complete and ready to be sacrificed. When a painter completed his work, he would lay down the final brushstroke, and then he would step back and use this word to declare that the painting was complete, that it was done, that it was now exactly as he had imagined it. In the financial world, this word was used to refer to a debt that had been completely paid off. Today, when we pay off a car or a house, we get a letter from the bank or the lender, allowing us to remove the lien from the title. In the ancient world, this is the word that would have been printed or stamped across that document, “Finished! Paid in full!”

When the Lord spoke this word, then, he was saying that the Law of Moses had come to an end. Some might say, “But didn’t Jesus say that he did not come to abolish the Law?” Yes, he said that, but I want us to look at that statement in context. The passage is found in Matthew 5, in the Sermon on the Mount. Here is the what the Lord said (in Matthew 5:17-18), ***“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”*** Did you catch that? Jesus came here to ***“fulfill”*** the Law, and then he said that the Law would not pass away ***“UNTIL all is accomplished.”*** With this one word, therefore, it seems to me that Jesus is saying here, “You know when I told you three years ago that the Law of Moses would not be abolished until all is accomplished? Well, as of right now, all has been accomplished. It is

finished!" The Law of Moses, then, has been **"nailed to the cross"** (Colossians 2:14). The debt of sin has been paid in full.

**IV. As we come near the end of our time together this morning, I want us to look at THE VERY LAST STATEMENT JESUS MADE, and this final statement is found in Luke 23:44-49.**

We might think that **"It is finished"** would have been the last statement, but when we piece it all together in chronological order, we find that there is something else. Matthew and Mark tell us that the Lord cried out with a **"loud voice,"** with a **"loud cry,"** before he died, but only Luke tells us what that cry was. If you will, then, please look with me at Luke 23:44-49,

***It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, because the sun was obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last.***

***Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent." And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their breasts. And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee were standing at a distance, seeing these things.***

As we look at what happened here, as we look at what the Lord said with his dying breath, we find that the crucifixion ended just as it began, with a prayer from Jesus to His Father in heaven, **"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit."** If you are using one of our pew Bibles, or if you are using any kind of a reference Bible, if you are using a Bible on your phone, I want you to look very carefully at the formatting of the Lord's prayer here in Luke 23:46. In our pew Bibles, when we look at what the Lord said here, we find that the words of his prayer are in all capital letters. I don't know how your Bible formats this, but in many of our modern translations, when someone in the New Testament quotes from the Old Testament, the translators will put that quote in all caps, and that is what happens here. In fact, in our pew Bibles, there is a reference – there is a tiny little "a" right by the word **"INTO."** If you look at the end of the verse (or maybe in a center or side column of a reference Bible, or maybe in a little pop-up window on your phone), you will notice the reference given is from Psalm 31:5. This may be old news for many of us, but I just want all of us to be more aware of how our Bibles are formatted. And so if we were to go back and look at Psalm 31:5, we would find that Jesus is quoting scripture.

And how appropriate it is that Jesus would end his life with a statement from the Bible. He began his ministry by quoting scripture to Satan in the wilderness. He began his public ministry in the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth by reading from Isaiah 61 and then saying, **"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."** Over and over again as he taught and preached, the Lord would say to those in the audience, **"Have you not read? As it is written..."** and so on. He was always pointing people back to the word of God. And so it is appropriate that the Lord ends his life with a reference back to the book of Psalms. When we go back to Psalm 31, we find an interesting passage. In Psalm 31, King David was facing a difficult situation, and then he breaks out in praise. Notice, please, the opening words of Psalm 31 and how it applies to the Lord's situation here on the cross,

***In You, O Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be ashamed; in Your righteousness deliver me.***

***Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly; be to me a rock of strength, a stronghold to save me.  
For You are my rock and my fortress; for Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me.  
You will pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me, for You are my strength.  
Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have ransomed me, O Lord, God of truth.***

The Lord, then, was quoting from Psalm 31, ***"Father, into your hands I commit My spirit."*** Matthew's account says that, ***"...Jesus cried out with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit."*** It is almost as if he said, ***"It is finished,"*** and then he chose to die. He was saying here that his death was not an accident. Instead, he willingly laid down his life for us. With his last breath, he was telling us to go back to the Bible. The Lord was basically saying, "Pay attention to this book!" He was saying, "Go home today and look up this reference!" He was saying to those who witnessed the crucifixion, "Look up this quote and figure it out!" Jesus died by pointing us back to the scriptures.

### **Conclusion:**

As we close our thoughts on these seven statements, I want to end by looking back at what happened as soon as the Lord died. Did you notice what happened there? Luke tells us that, ***"...when the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God saying, 'Certainly this man was innocent.'"*** In Matthew 27:54 (as Chris read it for us earlier), in that passage, Matthew tells us that, ***"...the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'"*** This morning, if you agree with the Roman centurion, if you believe that Jesus truly is the Son of God, we would invite you to obey the gospel. The gospel is the good news about the Lord's death, burial and resurrection. We look at what the Lord has done, and we respond in faith. We turn away from sin, and we allow ourselves to be baptized, just as God has commanded. We allow ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins. We look at the Lord's death on the cross, we look at his last words, and we know that no one else ever died like this. ***"Truly this was the Son of God!"*** If we can do anything to encourage you to follow the Lord's instructions, we hope you will let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

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