

Father, Forgive them

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[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's blessing, let us turn now to the portion of scripture that we read in the New Testament in the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 23, and we'll read at verse 34.

And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. The words that Luke records here are the first of what is known as the seven sayings or the seven words of Jesus Christ on the cross.

He may have said more, but we are not told what these may have been. But we have the seven, and they are sufficient to tell us what Jesus was thinking and experiencing when he was hanging on the cross.

I am sure that we are all familiar with the seven sayings, but I do hope that it will benefit us to revisit them again.

Not all the seven sayings are found together in any single gospel, but Luke records for us the first one here in verse 34, and the second in verse 43, and the seventh in verse 46.

[1 : 32] There are many significant features that belong to these sayings of Jesus from the cross. That Jesus spoke seven times is significant, as we know that the number seven in the Bible speaks of completeness.

And the order in which he speaks these sayings is also significant. The first three sayings were uttered before noon, and in them he brings before us his relationship to men.

They register for us his relationship to others. In the first saying, he intercedes to the Father on behalf of others. He says, Father, forgive them.

And the second saying, he speaks to the thief who has repented and who has exercised faith in him and gives him a word of promise and assurance today you will be with me in paradise.

And in the third saying, he speaks to Mary, his mother, and his disciple John. And there he shows his concern for his mother.

[2 : 47] To Mary he said, woman, behold thy son. And to John, behold thy mother. Then at noon we find that the cross was shrouded in darkness until around three o'clock in the afternoon.

And then we come to the fourth saying, when Jesus cried out the first words of Psalm 22, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Then he cried out, I thirst, after which he has offered a drink. Fulfilling the Masonic prophecy found in Psalm 69, verse 21, where we read, And for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.

Then cometh the sixth saying, it is finished. His final act of obedience was complete. Then we have the seventh saying, where Jesus closes with the words of Psalm 31, speaking to the Father.

And in all these sayings we find his complete trust in the Father. Jesus entered death in the same way that he had lived each day of his life.

[4 : 01] Offering up his life as the perfect sacrifice. And placing himself in God's hands.

These last four sayings took place very close to one another within minutes of each other. After which he bowed his head and died.

These last four were uttered after three o'clock. And the Sabbath began at six o'clock. And so that all the events that took place were done in a kind of rush.

You find that regarding the burial. And that's why the woman came back on the day after the Sabbath. In order to finish off the work.

So it was hurried. And it is also significant that the first and last sayings are addressed to the Father.

[5 : 05] In fact, Luke lays great emphasis more than any other of the Gospel writers on the prayer life of our Lord. And Luke records for us that at the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

When he was baptized by John. That when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying. That the heavens were opened.

And that the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And that a voice came from heaven. You are my beloved son.

With you I am well pleased. And now we find Jesus coming to the end of his earthly ministry. And no longer free to move. But nailed to a cross.

His ministry is now so restricted. But yet he prays. We have Jesus here as an example for us.

[6 : 08] Here as he was about to enter his darkest moments. He is giving priority to prayer. Earlier he had prayed for himself.

He had prayed for the disciples. He had prayed for the church. As he entered into the garden of Gethsemane. And in the garden it is recorded for us. The intensity of his prayers.

When he rested in prayer. That was so passionate. That his sweat became as great drops of blood. As he laid prostrate on the cold ground.

Of the garden. And now on the cross. He turns to a prayer. Of intercession. The example of Christ here on the cross.

Is an encouragement. For those who may feel that their own ministry. Is so restricted. Perhaps by ill health. Or old age. Or other circumstances.

[7 : 04] That they are no longer able to do. What they once were able and willing to do. But this is one thing that we can still do. You can pray.

There is no place from where you cannot pray. Jesus is no longer able to do. What he used to do. But he can pray. He began his public ministry with prayer.

And now as he ends his public ministry. He does so by praying. Although many things in our Christian life. May fail us.

Because of the frailty. And weaknesses that belongs to us. And to our bodies. Nevertheless. We can all pray. Another significant feature of these sayings.

Is that they of course fall. From the lips of Jesus Christ. Who is the son of God. When we come to reflect upon.

[8 : 07] The person of Jesus Christ. And the work of atonement. And his actions on the cross. We must do so. Remembering his relationship.

With the father. And with the Holy Spirit. And with us. On the cross. His relationship.

Is that he is. Unique son of God. God. But he is also. Not only the unique son of God. But he is also the unique servant.

Of God. And we must be mindful. Of the unique relationship. In which he stood. To us. As the mediator. Of the church.

A relationship. In which he could say. My father. Is greater. Than I. As mediator. He is in. Covenant with the father.

[9 : 05] Which we call. The covenant of redemption. That is a covenant. That was. Transacted between. The father. The son. And the Holy Spirit.

And what is the essence. Of that covenant. Of redemption. Well the father. Says to the son. I will be your God. And you my son. Will be.

My servant. It is a relationship. That requires him. To call. His father. God. Now that. Is. A unique relationship.

But nevertheless. It is a covenant. Relationship. In which the son. Is a servant. To the father. Psalm 40. Brings before.

Us the essence. Of this relationship. In these words. And sacrifice. An offering. You have not. Delighted. But you have given me. An open ear.

[10 : 02] But offerings. And sin offerings. You have not required. Then I said. Behold. I have come. In the scroll. Of the book. It is written. Of me. I delight.

To do your will. Oh my God. Your law. Is. Within. My heart. He came. A servant. To save us. From the consequences.

Of. Our sin. And it is. On our reflection. Of Jesus. And his. Relationship. To God. The father. As the servant. That we can truly.

Understand. These sayings. Of the cross. What is the relationship. Of Jesus. As servant. To the father. And the holy spirit. As a servant.

He has come. To do the father's will. And purpose. And to do so. He is dependent. Upon the holy spirit. One of the unique features.

[10 : 58] Of the atonement. Is the fact. That it is the work. Of the triune God. Father. Son. And holy spirit. The father. Is giving the son.

The son. Gives himself. And through the spirit. He can offer up himself. Without spot. To God. As a servant.

Jesus. Jesus is dependent. Upon the father. And the holy spirit. His prayer life. Is evidence for us. Of that. Very. Fact.

Itself. That he is dependent. Upon the father. And the holy spirit. Such was the greatness. Of the condescension.

Of the second person. Of the trinity. The son of God. Would condescend. To the holy spirit. Of the holy spirit.

[11 : 58] That brings before us. The greatness. Of our. Salvation. For me and you. To be saved from hell. For you and me.

To be saved from. Our sin. It required. That the second person. Of the trinity. The son of God. Would condescend. Descend. To the point.

Where he was dependent. Upon the father. And. The holy spirit. Great. Is the condescension. Of the son of God.

For my salvation. And for your salvation. As the servant. Of God. What is this relationship. To me and you.

Well. He is acting. As the mediator. Of the church. And in his. Mediatorial role. He functions there. As prophet. Priest.

[12 : 56] And king. On the cross. We have the son of God. The servant. Of Jehovah. And the mediator. Of the church.

And when we. Look upon Jesus. On the cross. We must remember him. In these relationships. Here we have. The son of God. We have. The servant of God.

Or the servant. Of Jehovah. And we have. The mediator. Of the church. Now as we come. To this place. The skull. For these soldiers.

This crucifixion. Seemed no different. From previous ones. And perhaps. The only detail. That interested them. Was which of them. Would take home. The garments.

Worn. By the condemned man. And especially. The seamless coat. Of the man. Jesus. One of the few activities. Of the soldiers.

[13 : 51] After nailing the victim. To the cross. And lowering it. Into the hole. Was to gamble. For the victim's clothes. Now I am sure. That in crucifying. The condemned persons.

There would be cries. Of pain. Possibly often. Intermingled. With blasphemy. But here. They come across one. One who does not curse.

Or blaspheme. Despite the intense pain. That he is suffering. After the scourging. And all the other physical. Abuse. That his body.

Had undergone. So that. The prophet said. As many were astonished. At you. His appearance. Was so marred. Beyond human semblance. And is foreign.

Beyond that. Of the children of man. And added. To the physical pain. Of Jesus. There was the emotional pain. Of the betrayal. By one of his disciples.

[14 : 48] The injustice. From the Jewish Sanhedrin. And the denial. Of Peter. And the scattering. Of the other. Disciples. All that was.

Emotional pain. For Jesus. As he was on the cross. So he suffered. Not only. Physical pain. But emotional pain. However. Instead of showing.

Any anger. He makes this prayer. And Jesus said. Father. Forgive them. For they know not.

What they do. Now the word. Translated here. Said. Is in the Greek. And. An imperfect. Tense.

And in the Greek. An imperfect. Tense. Means. Or indicates. Or indicates. Continuous. Action. This means. That Christ.

[15 : 42] Prayed this prayer. Over. And over. And over. Again. Father. Forgive them. For they know not.

What they do. And he continually. Uttered. That prayer. Father. Forgive them. For they know not. What they do.

Now. We know. That this. First saying. Is the fulfillment. Of scripture. For. Isaiah. Predicted. Regarding the servant. That he was numbered. With a transgressor. Yet. He bore the sin. Of many. And makes. Intercession. For the transgressors. Remember. That Jesus. Was. Truly man. He felt the pain. And suffering. Nevertheless. Although. He has come. Into the very depths. Of his. Suffering. Physically.

[16:35] Emotionally. Mentally. Yet. He prays. For the transgressors. What great evidence. We have here. Of his. Great love. For sinners.

His great love. For sinners. Like. Me and you. Listen to him. He has no thoughts. For himself. His first cry. Is. For the transgressors. The wrongdoers. The lawbreakers. He is praying. For sinners. And as he offers.

This prayer. To the father. He is establishing. Actually. The basis. Of which. Forgiveness. Can be given. And enjoyed. By men. For. Forgiveness. Is only obtained. Or based. On the atoning. Sacrifice. And the intercessory. Minister. Ministry. Of the one. Who makes.

[17:29] The sacrifice. As he offered. This prayer. He is actually. Establishing. The basis. On which. This prayer. Can be answered. In his own.

Atoning work. He pleased. To the father. Is pleased. To the father. Is not. To destroy them. But to forgive them. Here is one. Who knows. The father. He is one. With the father. And he knows. The father's delight. In showing mercy. He knows. That judgment. Is a strange work. For him. He is. Revealing to us. The father's heart. And his own heart. For they are united. In the salvation. Of the sinner.

And the delight. Of the holy spirit. To apply to us. The benefits. Of the atoning work. Of the son. The delight. Of the triune God.

[18:27] To show mercy. To sinners. Like me. And you. Do we know God. We know God. Through the revelation. He has given to us. Through his son. A God. Who is full. Of mercy. For sinners.

Like you and I. Now the first saying. Outed by Jesus. From the cross. Is unique. For he has never. Pleaded in this manner. Before. He has.

Forgiven sin. Before. He himself. On several occasions. Pronounced. The words of forgiveness. He on several occasions. Said to people. Your sins. Are forgiven. And many wondered. At that. For they said. Who can forgive sins. But God only. And yet. Here he was. Forgiving sins.

[19:23] And he told them. Himself. That the son of man. Has authority. On earth. To forgive sins. The authority. Power. And right. To forgive sins. Belong to him.

But on the cross. He does not announce. The forgiveness. Because he is now. Acting. In his. Office.

As mediator. And intercessor. For the transgressor. Here he is. Working out. His role. As given to us. In Psalm 2. Ask of me.

And I will make. The nations. Your heritage. And the ends. Of the earth. Your possession. As mediator. He is required. To ask. And here.

He is acting. In that role. As a mediator. Of the church. And he is asking. Father. Forgive them. For they know. Not what they do.

[20:22] And there is. A particular reason. Why he craves. The mercy of heaven. For those. Who are crucifying him. For he says. They do not know.

What they are doing. Of course. This does not mean. That they were ignorant. Of the fact. Of his crucifixion. They did know. That they were crucified. They are watching him. And they are crying out. For his crucifixion. What then does it mean. When he says. For they know not. What they do. They were ignorant. Of who he was.

That they were crucified. They were ignorant. Of the person. That they were crucified. Their minds. And understanding. Were so darkened. That they did not. Realize. Who he was. That they were crucified. Paul writing. To the church. At Corinth says. None of the rulers.

[21 : 20] Of this age. Understood this. For if they had. They would not have crucified. The Lord. Of glory. They did not realize.

That the one on the cross. Was the Lord of glory. The people standing. At the cross. Do not know it. Because. There is. Blindness.

Over their hearts. And. That is always. The devil's method. To hide the truth. From the people. He blinds. He veils.

Their mind. And. He veils. Their heart. Paul writes. If our gospel. Is veiled. It is veiled. To those. Who are perishing.

In their case. The God. Of this world. Has blinded. The minds. Of the unbelievers. To keep them. From seeing. The light. Of the gospel. Of the glory.

[22 : 15] Of Christ. Who is. The image. Of God. And because. Of the. Blindness. Of their hearts. They had. Rejected. Jesus. And they were.

Ignorant. Of the. Enormity. Of their sin. Of what. They were. Actually. Doing. Father.

Forgive them. For they know. Not what. They are doing. They are. Ignorant. Of the person. That they. Are.

Rejecting. Ignorant. Of who. He is. Ignorant. Of the. Very. Fact. That he is. Here. Working. Out. Mercy.

Forgiveness. The basis. For mercy. And the basis. For forgiveness. Here.

[23 : 07] We come. To see. The perfection. Of the atoning. Work. Of Jesus. With a picture. Of it. In the Old Testament. For in the Old Testament. Law. There was a specific.

Provision. Made. For the sins. Of ignorance. There had to be. A sacrifice. For those sins. Just as much. As for known sin. And in the perfect.

Atoning work. Of Christ. He is covering. Every sin. The sins. Of omission. Things that ought to have been done. And weren't. And the sins.

Of commission. Things that should never have been done. And were. This atonement. Covers. Them all. It covers the sins. That we know. And the sins.

That we. Don't even know about. These people ought to have known better. But unbelief. Blinded their minds.

[24 : 02] And understanding. And Jesus recognizes this. And he pleads on their behalf. For forgiveness. For what. They are doing. We can perhaps ask the question.

For whom did he pray? Was it simply for the soldiers. Who were crucifying him. Or those around the cross. That were watching him. Father forgive them.

Who is the them? Father forgive them. For they know not what they do. Was it just simply the soldiers. Or the people around the cross. That is crying out for his crucifixion.

Was it simply a prayer. Such as Jesus taught all his followers. To pray for their enemies. You will recall. That the sermon on the mount. Includes this.

You have heard that it was said. You shall love your neighbor. And hate your enemy. But I say to you. Love your enemies. And pray for those who persecute you. So that you may be sons of your father.

[25 : 04] Who is in heaven. Is he here teaching them. By example. That he never taught anyone to do. What he was not prepared. To do.

Himself. At the beginning. He taught them. Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you. And pray for them.

Which despitefully use you. And persecute you. And now here at the end. He is giving himself. As the perfect example. For all that he taught.

Is he here praying. For the very ones. Who caused his pain. And suffering. He is praying. For the very ones. Who shouted out.

For his death. Who shouted out. Get rid of him. Destroy him. Crucify him. Well I think. That we should look upon.

[25 : 59] This prayer. And as we asked. For whom did he pray. That we should look upon. This prayer. As a part. Of his official. Intercessory work.

Of Christ. Daphne. Believes. That it was. And that the objects. Of this prayer.

Were later. Were later. Converted. Jesus prays. For all those. For whom. He was hanging. On the cross. For all those.

Who. Whose sins. Had been. Reckoned. To him. And for those. Only. In John 17. Jesus tells us.

That he prays. For his immediate. Disciples. And those. Who would believe. On him. Through their word. I am praying. For them. I am not praying. For the world.

[26 : 55] But for those. Whom you have given me. For they. Are yours. And these are the people. That were included.

In this prayer. Father. Father. Forgive them. For they know. Not what they do. And soon. His plea. Bears fruit. For we see. One of the Roman centurions.

Coming to faith. And we find. People belonging. Beholding. That they would be holding. The things. That were done. They were smiting. Their breasts. And the return.

And six weeks. Later. We find. About three thousand. People. On the day. Of Pentecost. Falling down. And repentance. And believing. In the Lord.

And I believe. That some of them. Were around the cross. I believe. That some of them. Were among those. Who were shouting out. Crucify him. Crucify him.

[27 : 51] Get rid of him. Peter. Preaches to them. And we read. That they were. Preaked. In their hearts. The conviction. Of the Holy Spirit. Set in. And the guilt.

Of their sin. Came upon them. The fact. That they were. Responsible. For the Savior's death. Overwhelmed. Their souls. And their cry. Was men.

And brethren. What shall we do? And they were. Pointed to the Savior. Again. By the Apostle Peter. And as we said.

Three thousand. People. Were converted. The Savior's. Prayer. Is been answered. The prayer of Golgotha.

Is answered. And repentance. And remission of sin. Is granted. We are told. In Acts. Chapter 6. That a great company. Of the priests. Were obedient.

[28 : 44] To the faith. And the word of God. Increased. And the number of the disciples. Multiplied. In Jerusalem. Greatly. And a great company. Of the priests.

Were obedient. To the faith. The very people. Who were shouting out. Crucify him. Crucify him. Get rid of him. The priests. Many of them.

Converted to faith. You may be sitting here tonight. And maybe you have never sought Christ.

And you know. That you have never sought him. Perhaps he doesn't really. Mean anything to you. His atoning work on the cross.

Really has no value whatsoever. For you. You can hear about him. And you can hear about the cross. And you can read about him. And it never moves.

[29 : 41] Your heart. It is all an abstract thing. All together for you. Something on the perimeter. Of your life.

And of your thinking. And of your thinking. What Jesus did on the cross. To secure the forgiveness of sin. Has no bearing on your soul.

Whatsoever. And yet. And yet. This is the greatest need of the hour. For you. This is where the hope of a fallen world lies.

And the fact. That there is one mediator. Between God and man. The man Christ Jesus. And that in his office. As mediator. He functions as the priest.

In his atoning death. And as the intercessor. For the transgressor. How can I have. The assurance. That my sins have been forgiven.

[30 : 42] Well the only way. Of having. That assurance. Is by trusting. In Jesus Christ. In his atoning death. And in his intercession. The writer to the Hebrews.

Says to us. That Jesus can save. To the uttermost. All those. Who come to God. By him. Because he ever lives. To make intercession. For us.

What he prays. For he receives. As Psalm 22. Tells us. The king is joyful. For he receives. Whatever his lips craved. Yes.

You have given him. His heart's desire. And have not withheld. The request. Of his lips. We see. In this prayer.

A picture. Of Jesus. His desire. For sinners. If we had gone. To the place. Called the skull. That day. We would have observed. That his paramount desire.

[31 : 41] Was for sinners. To be pardoned. And if we could ascend. To the throne of God. Tonight. Where the once crucified. Christ now is.

We would discover. That his desire. Is still. That sinners. Will be saved. What joy. There is. In the heart. Of the ascended Jesus. When sinners.

Are converted. We see. In this saying. Father. Forgive them. For they know. Not what to do. The importance. Of forgiveness. For our sins.

It may not be. The first thing. In your list. Of priorities. But it is the first thing. That you really need. Whatever your list.

Of priorities is. My unconverted. Unbelieving friend. Tonight. Let it be this. Forgiveness. For my sins.

[32 : 44] Brought into. A reconciled. Relationship. With God. That ought to be. On the top. Of your list. Of priorities.

And do we. As Christians. Value for ourselves. What the son of God. Wanted us to have. Pardon. For all our sins.

You know. Sadly. And perhaps. Surprisingly. We can reach the stage. Where we take our forgiveness. For granted. And our petitions. For pardon.

Can become such routine. When this attitude occurs. When this attitude occurs. We need to take our place. Alongside the soldiers. And others.

And they admire the one. Who not only prayed. On the cross. But who suffered there. Instead of his people. Who suffered there. The awful wrath of God.

[33 : 44] Against the sins. That was reckoned. To him. It is good for me. And you.

Always to. Set time aside. And to think of. The cost. Of my forgiveness. God created the world. With his word. But in order for me. And you to receive forgiveness. He had to send the son. Of his bosom. Into the world.

He had to lay our sins. What our sins deserved. Upon him. He laid on him. The iniquity. Of us all. The father.

Was not absent. At Calvary. There was that. Unseen hand. Laying on the son. The iniquity. Of us all. Laying on his son.

[34 : 46] What our sins. Deserved. The hell of his people. Were reckoned. To him. And he willingly.

Suffered. It is always good. For us to lay moments aside.

And to think of the cost. Of our salvation. And as you as a people. As a congregation. Preparing yourselves. To remember that.

In a visible form. You see. The Lord is so wise. He knew how apt. We are to forget. And there is one thing.

That he did. In order that we would never. Ever forget. The cost. Of the forgiveness. Of our sin. He instituted. He instituted. The Lord's.

[35 : 42] The Lord's. Supper. Emblems of his broken body. And of his shed blood. Because. He in doing so.

Gives us. To understand. The importance. And. The priority. That we must give to this. The cost. Of our.

Our salvation. The cost. Of our salvation. Father. Forgive them. For they know not.

What they do. Hanging. On the cross. Laying the very foundation. By which. Our forgiveness. Could be achieved. What.

What love. What mercy. What salvation. No wonder. The writer. To the Hebrews. Says. How shall we escape.

[36 : 38] If we neglect. So great. A salvation. How can we escape. If we neglect. This salvation. There is no way. And you.

My friend. Tonight. An unbelieving. Friend. You may be promising. Yourself. Much. Robert.

Murray. McChain. Once preached. And said. The road. To heaven. Is paved. With good.

Resolutions. People.

Who say. I will give. That consideration. At a later time. In my life. Now. Is not the time. I'm so full. Of other things. And I've got to achieve. These other things. And I've got to do this.

And do that. My friend. The road. To hell. Is paved. With good. Resolutions. What the Bible. Tells me. Is this. Now.

[37 : 35] Is the accepted. Time. Now. Is the day. Of salvation. And my. Unconverted. Friend. Do not spend.

Another minute. Another hour. For we know. Not what a day. Nor an hour. May bring forth. You may be. Urshed out. Of the scene. Of time. In a moment. Are you ready?

Are you ready? Well. My word message. To you tonight. Is. Prepare to meet. Your God. And prepare. To meet him. By trusting. In the Lord.

Jesus Christ. The one. Who said. Father. Forgive them. For they know. Not. What. They do. Because.

I know. Not what. Will be. In. Your providence. Tomorrow. I don't know. What you will be doing. Tomorrow. But one thing. I do know. That if you die.

[38 : 31] Without Christ. You go to hell. You go to a lost eternity. That. I am sure of. And my friend.

Is this that not. Lead me and you. To see the urgency. Of this matter. The urgency. Of closing in. By faith. To Christ. Trusting.

In him. For your. Salvation. May you do so. And may you do so. Now. And for the believer.

There is an urgency. And you know. The urgency. Of this matter. Give time. To the consideration.

Of. What your forgiveness.

Meant. The cost. That was paid. So that you. Would have. Forgiveness. And I pray. And hope. That you will know.

[39 : 29] The blessing of the Lord. As these. As that matter. Will be brought before you. In a symbolic way. In the Lord's day. God willing. May you know.

May you consider well. And may your heart. Be raised. In thankfulness. And joyfulness. To the one. Who has provided.

That. Salvation. May the Lord bless. Our thoughts. Which are.