

# THE LAST SEVEN STATEMENTS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS

As Easter approaches, our thoughts should turn to the ultimate act of love bestowed upon humankind – Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus was crucified at approximately 9:00 a.m. and remained on the cross until 3:00 p.m. when He died. Jesus made seven statements during those six hours of excruciating pain and anguish. It is significant that there are seven statements. In the Bible, the number seven signifies completeness and perfection (both physical and spiritual). The Tyndale Bible Dictionary explains:

In Scripture, seven symbolizes completeness or perfection. On the seventh day God rested from his labors and creation is finished (Genesis 2:2). Pharaoh in his dream saw seven cattle coming from the Nile (Genesis 41:2). Samson’s sacred Nazirite locks were braided in seven plaits (Judges 16:13). Seven devils left Mary of Magdala, signifying the totality of her previous possession by Satan (Luke 8:2); "seven other devils" will enter the purified but vacant life of a person (Matthew 12:45). However, on the positive side, there were the seven spirits of God (Revelation 3:1). In the seventh year the Hebrew slave was to be freed (Exodus 21:2), having completed his time of captivity and service. Every seventh year was a sabbatical year (Leviticus 25:4). Seven times seven reiterates the sense of completeness. In the Year of Jubilee (at the completion of 7 x 7 years = the 50th year), all land is freed and returns to the original owners (Leviticus 25:10). Pentecost, the Feast of Weeks, is seven times seven days after Passover. "Seventy," which is literally "sevens" in Hebrew, strengthens the concept of perfection. There are 70 elders (Exodus 24:1) in Israel. Israel was exiled to Babylon for 70 years (Jeremiah 25:12) to complete its punishment. "Seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22) reiterates this still further. The Lord was not giving Peter a mathematical number of times that he should forgive another person, but rather was insisting on limitless forgiveness for a brother’s sin.

Christ’s final seven statements signal the completion of His mission and the perfection of God’s plan of salvation for us. In addition, the sayings reveal Christ’s depth of love and compassion for us and reminds us of His humanity.

**Statement one: Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. (Luke 23:34)**

The fact that Jesus' first statement concerned forgiveness of others speaks volumes about Him and about what we ought to strive to become. The whole purpose of Jesus' crucifixion was to secure forgiveness from sins for all humankind. It is through the shed blood of Jesus that our sins are washed away and we are grafted into His family as dear children who will live with Him for all eternity.

While the executioners were crucifying Jesus, He repeatedly prayed for their forgiveness. It is noteworthy that Jesus did not first pray for His followers, family, or supporters. His first act of intercession was to pray for the very men who brutally whipped Him with a cat-of-nine-tails, placed a crown of thorns on His head, beat His face with their fists, and yanked out His beard by the fistful. Not only was Jesus practicing what He taught (Luke 6:27–28), but He was fulfilling prophecy and making “intercession for the transgressors” (Isa. 53:12). The very people who were causing Jesus' physical anguish were the first recipients of His loving intercession and supplication.

It is important to understand that ignorance is no excuse for sin nor is it the basis of forgiveness. The men Jesus prayed for were not automatically forgiven. In his book, “Commentary on the New Testament, Dr. Wiersbe clarified, “Certainly both the Jews and the Romans were ignorant of the enormity of their sin, but that could not absolve them. Our Lord's intercession postponed God's judgment on the nation for almost forty years, giving them additional opportunities to be saved.” God still forgives sin. We should confess our sins to the Lord daily so they we, too, can experience His love and forgiveness.

**Statement two: Today shalt thou be with me in paradise. (Luke 23:43)**

Jesus' second statement also concerned forgiveness of others. Jesus was crucified between two thieves. While the thieves were crucified for the crimes they committed, Jesus was wholly and completely innocent. He never sinned and never did anything wrong (II Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15, II Peter 2:22) yet He died as a criminal. As He was on the cross, the crowd, the soldiers, the executioners, and one of the thieves taunted and mocked Jesus. The Bible says:

The crowd watched and the leaders scoffed. “He saved others,” they said, “let him save himself if he is really God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.” The soldiers mocked him, too, by offering him a drink of sour wine. They called out to him, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” A sign was fastened above him with these words: “This is the King of the Jews.”

One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, “So you’re the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you’re at it!”

But the other criminal protested, “Don’t you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn’t done anything wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.”

And Jesus replied, “I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Luke 23:35-43 NLT

While one thief joined in the heckling, the other had the courage to ignore the others and ask Jesus to remember him. We are not told that this thief was a follower of Jesus or that he was a believer in any way. However, as he faced certain death, the thief grabbed ahold of the only thing he could – faith that Jesus could offer him salvation. Dr. Wiersbe said, “The man was saved wholly by grace; it was the gift of God (Eph. 2:8–9). He did not deserve it, and he could not earn it. His salvation was personal and secure, guaranteed by the word of Jesus Christ. The man hoped for some kind of help in the future, but Jesus gave him forgiveness that very day.” Oh what a comfort it must have been for the dying thief to hear Jesus’ astounding and encouraging response to his plea, “Today you will be with me in paradise.”

### **Statement three: Woman, behold thy son!... Behold thy mother!** **(John 19:26-27)**

Jesus’ mother, Mary, was the vessel God used to bring Christ into the world. She was a pure young woman, both spiritually and physically – a virgin. She became impregnated through a miracle of the Holy Spirit and bore Christ into the world. After this miraculous conception, she married Joseph. By the time of Jesus’ crucifixion, Joseph was no longer on the scene – more than likely dead by this

time. Mary was present at the crucifixion and stood near Jesus' cross along with three other women and Jesus' disciple, John. The other disciples had earlier fled in fear. The presence of Mary at the cross reminds us that not only was Jesus God-incarnate and the savior of the world, He was also a beloved son. It was no doubt extremely painful for Mary to watch her son suffer. This fulfilled the prophecy of Simeon, who when Jesus was a baby, told Mary that "a sword would pierce her very soul." (Luke 2:35).

When Jesus looked on His mom as He hung dying, He was moved to assure her that someone would take care of her after His death. He had no wealth or possessions to leave to her. The only thing He could leave her was His love. Jesus assured her of His love, and He gave His closest disciple, John, to be her adopted son and to care for her. Dr. Wiersbe explained, "Whether that moment John took Mary away from the scene and took her home, we do not know. We do know that he cared for her and that she was among the believers in the Upper Room as they awaited Pentecost (Acts 1:14). Even while He was performing the great work of redemption, Jesus was faithful to His responsibilities as a son. What an honor it was for John to take his Lord's place in Mary's life!"

### **Statement four: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?** **(Matthew 27:46)**

Jesus hung in the daylight from 9:00 am until approximately noon. But at noon, a miraculous darkness descended upon the land. God sent this darkness and it lasted for three hours until 3:00 p.m. It was during this darkness that Jesus cried out "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The statement was a quote from Psalm 22:1. Jesus was experiencing a separation from God the Father, and it was probably even more agonizing than the physical pain of the crucifixion. Why was there a separation? God is holy and cannot look upon sin. God turned from Christ at this moment because Christ had taken upon Himself the sins of the world. He was covered with every sin that had ever been committed up to that point and that would be committed in the future. From Adam's disobedience in the Garden of Eden to the murders of the early Christians by the Romans to the abortions performed today to the sins that will be committed tomorrow – Jesus bore them all. In a recent article featured in Jack Van Impe Ministries' magazine, "Perhaps Today," Dr. Van Impe explains, "Never in the annals of history had so much sin been carried at one time. God could not look upon the scene." Jesus bore our sins and endured separation from the Father so that you and I would not

have to be separated from God. That was the greatest act of love in the history of humankind.

### **Statement five: I thirst (John 19:28)**

Jesus, no doubt, had lost a great amount of bodily fluids by this time as a result of the beatings and torture He endured before the crucifixion and the crucifixion itself. Therefore, His physical thirst is understandable. One of the nearby soldiers give Jesus a sip of cheap vinegar wine that the soldiers drank. Jesus' thirst is reminiscent of the conversation He had with the Samaritan woman at the well:

Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink." He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.

The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?"

Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."

"But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?"

Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."

John 4:5-14 NLT

The living water Jesus described is salvation! Once we choose Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit, the empty void within us will be filled. Choosing Jesus will satisfy

every desire and longing for all eternity. Jesus suffered dehydration and thirst upon the cross so that we could drink of the living water and never thirst again. And He is still quenching thirst today! The Bible says, “Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life.” Revelation 22:17 NLT.

### **Statement six: It is finished. (John 19:30)**

The statement “it is finished” is the most important statement, perhaps, of all time. What was finished? Dr. Wiersbe listed what was finished, “While it is true that our Lord’s sufferings were finished, there is much more included in this dramatic word. Many of the Old Testament types and prophecies were now fulfilled, and the once-for-all sacrifice for sin had now been completed.” God’s plan of salvation was completed when Christ shed His precious, soul-cleansing blood on the cross. Jesus accomplished His mission, which was to die for the sins of the world and open up a way for all to be saved. Dr. Wiersbe further explained, “When He gave Himself on the cross, Jesus fully met the righteous demands of a holy law; He paid our debt in full. None of the Old Testament sacrifices could take away sins; their blood only covered sin. But the Lamb of God shed His blood, and that blood can take away the sins of the world.” Praise God it is finished!

### **Statement seven: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. (Luke 23:46)**

Christ’s last statement shows the peace He had about going home. He came into the world, lived a sinless life, and accomplished His mission. Now, He was at perfect peace and was ready to return to the Father. Jesus died confidently, willingly and victoriously. Those who choose Jesus today as their Savior can die with the same confidence, assurance, and victory that Jesus had.

All praise and honor to our Lord and Savior who died, was buried, and arose from the dead! Jesus conquered life and death; all power in Heaven and earth is in His hands (Matthew 28:18). Don’t you want to be with Him for all eternity? Choose Life. Choose victory. Choose Jesus today!

*God bless!*