

## Introduction

Luke 23.46 records the very last word from Jesus during the time of His humiliation. Luke's Gospel also records His first word (**2:49: And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"**).

I would like to make some observations about the seventh and last saying of Jesus from the cross. In outline, I want to cover the following four things regarding the seventh saying: its nature, time, content, and result. These things will enable us to remember the Lord Jesus in a distinct way today.

### 1A. The nature of the seventh saying

**Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last (Lk. 23.46).**

Two things here direct us to the nature of this saying: it is with *a loud voice* that Jesus spoke *to the Father*.

This is a prayer: *Father*, into your hands I commit my spirit. It is an audible prayer. It is audible for our hearing and edification. Three of the sayings from the cross are prayers (forgive them, why, and into your hands). They contain the intimate conversation of Christ with the Father in the time of His greatest suffering. Marvelously, this fellowship with the Father is on record. The Holy Spirit led the biblical authors in this way to share this intimacy with us, that we may share in it, that we may stand in awe, and that we may benefit.

Furthermore, when I read that Jesus spoke "with a loud voice," it reminds me that this is not an account of the weakness of our Lord. It reminds me that nowhere in the crucifixion narrative do we have an over-powered victim. This saying is in keeping with all the others that reflect His strength of resolve, determination, and purpose:

**After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said ( to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."<sup>29</sup> A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. <sup>30</sup> When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (John 19.28-30).**

Strength goes with the fact that He considered the entire event of crucifixion as so necessary that He intervened for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him lest final judgment fall on them all immediately; then there would be no great work of redemption. The strength of Christ in audible praying goes with His "Amen" to the thief on the cross. It goes with His compassion on Mary as He observed her there at the foot of the cross, considering her needs in His hour of need. Even the deepest distress in the darkness has in it the strength of prayer grounded in Scripture, as does the exclamation of thirst. Nor is the very last word from the cross a manifestation of weakness because He prayed *to the Father* with *a loud voice*.

The nature of the last word of Christ during the time of His humiliation is an audible prayer reflecting further the strength of heart and determination of purpose of our Lord in saving us by His death on the cross.

### 2A. The time of the seventh saying

We can sketch the time in general and in particular.

In general, if we survey the narrative, we may notice that *when* they crucified Jesus *then* He spoke these words (vs. 33, 46). Of course, there are details in between this "when...then."

**And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>34</sup> And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. <sup>35</sup> And the people**

stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!"<sup>36</sup> The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine<sup>37</sup> and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!"<sup>38</sup> There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."<sup>39</sup> One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"<sup>40</sup> But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?"<sup>41</sup> And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."<sup>42</sup> And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."<sup>43</sup> And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."<sup>44</sup> It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour,<sup>45</sup> while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.<sup>46</sup> Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.

Luke tells us of the prayer of Christ for the forgiveness of those who crucified Him (v. 34). Protected from judgment (the prayer of Jesus was surely answered), those who crucified Jesus cast lots for his garments (v. 34) as if to say because Jesus interceded for them they were able to go about their business as usual, a business that included access to the spoils of execution. Luke then tells us about "the people" who simply "stood by, watching" while in contrast the rulers, the soldiers, and even a crucified criminal scoffed, mocked, and rebuked Jesus. However, the other crucified criminal defended Christ and asked that Jesus remember Him "when you come into your kingdom" (v. 42). Marvelously, Jesus gave His "amen" to the thief on the cross (v. 43).

In general, Jesus spoke the words of verse 46 from the cross in the context of public display and mockery counterbalanced by words of intercession and promise. The narrator gives us some indications of time that are particular. These are surely important.

He says, <sup>44</sup>**It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour,** <sup>45</sup>**while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.** <sup>46</sup>**Then...** (vs. 44-46a). Luke states two basic facts that precede the seventh saying from the cross. First, he cites the three hours of darkness in which "the sun's light failed." Second, he mentions the fact that "the curtain of the temple was torn in two." Luke also states what happened immediately after the seventh saying: **"having said this he breathed his last"** (v. 46b).

#### 1) The three hours of darkness

Remarkably, Jesus uttered the final saying *after* He endured the "second death" of punishment in the outer darkness. It was after He endured the alienation, the loneliness, and the suffering of hell in the place of His people. A couple of key verses seem most appropriate to connect with this time of darkness:

**Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire (Rev. 20.14; cf. Mat. 13.49-50)**

**Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'** (Mat. 22.13)

#### 2) The tearing of the temple curtain

He spoke these words after the tearing in two of the curtain of the temple, which signifies the opening of a way of access to God.

**Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,** <sup>20</sup>**by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,** <sup>21</sup>**and since we have a great priest over the house of God,** <sup>22</sup>**let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith** (Heb. 10.19-21)

**Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need** (Heb. 4.16).

What is the point of connecting the final saying with these things?

What impression does it make on our hearts and our thinking?

The answer to these questions has to come from consideration of the content of the last saying, which is our next point.

### 3A. The content of the seventh saying

There are a number of observations to make and ponder in this connection.

1) First, this is a saying that Christians use all the time. It is common to use these words for the end of things when we have said and done that we can say and do: “Lord, we commit this matter into your hands” or “Lord, we commit ourselves to you in this present trial.” We say these things in a special dependence on our Father in heaven. The issues are serious and we commit our souls, our very selves to the Lord with due awareness of the challenges of life, dying, and death. Some pray this prayer every night before they go to sleep (*In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum*, “into your hand I commend my spirit”). Of course, it ought not to be a thought of as a magical formula. For years now I repeat this prayer when, with all my fear of water, I lay back and float in a swimming pool: “Lord I commit my spirit into your hands as I face the challenges of another day and my fear.”

2) Second, it is important to note that this saying draws from the OT. It draws from the experience of the OT saint expressed in Psalm 31.5 (**Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God**).

As is the case earlier in the crucifixion, Jesus expresses His experience in the language of Scripture as the true Israelite. The reference to thirst comes from Psalm 69 (vs. 9, 21). “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me” comes from Psalm 22.

Thus, appropriately, we can speak these words of the seventh saying every day: “I commit my spirit, my inner being, at every turn in the road, in every disappointment, in every foreboding...into your hand O Lord.”

3) Third, the flow of thought in Psalm 31 guides us in understanding what Jesus is saying on the cross.

In effect, Jesus sends us back to the OT to gather our thoughts in order to share in this prayer to the Father at this momentous time.

**In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me! <sup>2</sup> Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me! <sup>3</sup> For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me; <sup>4</sup> you take me out of the net they have hidden for me, for you are my refuge. <sup>5</sup> Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.**

What is going on here in the experience of the Psalmist? He is in danger and needs “a rock of refuge.” The danger is the unsettling kind that involves the trickery of enemies and a “net they have hidden for me.”

In this context, as the Psalmist faces the possibilities of entrapment and shame, he sings. This is a Psalm of David “to the choirmaster.” How can he sing in times like these? He can sing because “you are my rock and my fortress... you lead and guide me; you take me out of the net.”

What we have here is a combination of things. 1) The glory of God is the overarching principle that guides God’s providential care of His people (for your name’s sake you lead me and guide me). This is fundamental in the faith of OT people of God. The Psalmist acknowledges it. 2) The song is a proclamation: that God is rock and redeemer. 3) The proclamation voices a commitment of faith. 4) This commitment proclaims the faithfulness of God. Importantly, he entrusts himself to the Lord *who is faithful*. He trusts the trustworthy one and proclaims His faithfulness.

These things come to expression in a pointed way in the experience of Jesus as the Israelite of Israelites, as the true Isaac on the altar (cf. Gen. 22). The loud voice is a song. Our Saviour sings as He completes our salvation; the darkness is past and the way of access to the

Father is opened for us. The loud song proclaims His trust in God and the trustworthiness of God in whom He trusts.

Per Psalm 31, we know that this is not a dying utterance but a word of life. Therefore, He sings (cf. Rom. 14.9). This is not an end statement but a milestone statement, a statement regarding another turn in the road. God will deliver Him out of the net. The resurrection is around the next bend in the road.

Therefore, this is a commitment to God *through* death (not so much to death, as is indicated by the meaning of this commitment based on Psalm 31).

The other day I watched Jonathan feed little Jonah and when breakfast was over, Jonah raised up his arms. What a picture: his arms extended upward toward the hands of his father! So many things are at work at once: trust, entrustment, and a symbolic gesture that says, "Father, you are trustworthy." Jesus is saying to the Father in this song, prayer, and proclamation: "in you do I take refuge, you are my rock, you are a strong fortress for me, you lead and guide me, and you take me from the net of this darkness and death."

#### 4A. The result of the seventh saying

Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, **"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.**

The narrator tells us that the aftermath of this song, proclamation, and last saying from the cross was the death of Jesus. To say "He breathed His last" means obviously that He breathed His last breath. Literally, "He breathed out." He expired perhaps in the way of the last cycle of breathing in and finally expelling the last breath from His lungs.

There is an interesting interplay between the commitment of His spirit to the Father and the result that He breathed His last breath of life. You will recall that when God created man of the dust of the earth that He breathed into his nostrils and man became a living soul. The breath of life speaks of the life principle of the inner man of the heart. Man is a body-soul unity or a material-immaterial unity. This unity has an ultimate inseparability to it. That is, without the soul (spirit, inner person), the body is dead and without the body the soul is in an unnatural state (cf. 2 Cor. 5.1-5).

Therefore, in the final saying, Jesus is voluntarily giving himself over to death in a way that surely no one else could do, He expels His spirit and sends Himself into the unnatural state of death. Why does He do this? There is only one reason: given His mission to save sinners for the glory of God, He saves completely. He saves from eternal death in outer darkness but He also save from the degraded state of the self in physical death. Most of His people will go through this valley of death. God will spare only those alive at His return from this dissolution of body from soul, from this separation of the material and immaterial components that make a human being human. Jesus went through it in order to take us through it and beyond it to our home in heaven.

**Let us bow down before our Sabbath King in thanksgiving for His great high priestly work. To Him be the glory forever, amen.**

What then shall we say to these things?

I need this great high priest: I need Him, "O Lord Jesus I need you."

I own this determined Savior as my Savior.

I own His redeemed family as my brothers and sisters in Christ.