

SEVEN SAYINGS FROM THE CROSS

1 – CHRIST'S PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS

Luke 23:34

INTRODUCTION

- Many people have the view that there are some crimes so heinous that forgiveness becomes impossible.
- Many of us have a “limit” to what we will forgive.
- But God is “a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness” (Nehemiah 9:17)
- Even where sin abounds, God’s grace does much more abound.
- The greatest of sins committed by the greatest of sinners is not beyond God’s forgiveness.
- Today we are considering what is assuredly the greatest crime that was ever committed – when wicked men brutally nailed the eternal Son of God to a cross to die in humiliation and agony.
- There never was a crime like it, and there never will be.
- Yet upon that cross, Christ pleaded for His murderers’ forgiveness.
- Jesus might well have pronounced the fiercest curses upon them.
- He might have called those twelve legions of angels to annihilate them.
- He might have called down fire from heaven, or commanded the earth to swallow them.
- He might have prayed, like Samson, “let me be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes!”

- But He cried “Forgive them!”
- It seems from Luke’s account that these words were spoken very soon after He was nailed to the cross (v.34)

I. HIS PRAYER TO THE FATHER

- A. Christ’s first word uttered from the cross is “Father”
 1. In His darkest hour, He turns first to the Father in prayer
 2. His whole life was centred on fulfilling the Father’s will (Luke 2:49; John 6:38)
 3. The Father sent Him perform the work of redemption on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:19)
 4. In that moment, He knew the Father was with Him (John 8:29)
- B. It was with a spirit of prayer that He suffered on the cross
 1. He began His public ministry with prayer (Luke 3:21) and concluded it in the same manner
 2. Though He was hindered from performing other forms of ministry, He could still pray
 3. Christ had full confidence that the Father heard Him (John 11:41-42; cf. 1 John 5:14-15)

II. HIS PETITION FOR FORGIVENESS

- A. On the cross, Christ was performing His ministry as High Priest
 1. He made an offering for the sins of the people
 2. He interceded for them
 3. This intercession was a fulfilment of prophecy (Isaiah 53:12)

B. This is God's love towards rebellious sinners

1. Christ practised what He commanded others to do (Matthew 5:44)
2. The cross is the demonstration of God's love to us (Romans 5:8)

C. Who is Christ praying for in this prayer?

1. The soldiers
2. Pilate
3. The Jewish leaders
4. The multitude who demanded His death
5. For every sinner who made His death necessary

D. The ignorance of sinners

1. They were not ignorant of the fact of Jesus' death
2. They were not ignorant that Jesus was innocent (Matthew 27:24)
3. They were ignorant of the fact that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God (Acts 3:17; 1 Corinthians 2:8; cf. 1 Timothy 1:13)
4. Their ignorance was no excuse for their sin
5. All sin, whether knowingly or ignorantly, must be dealt with.
6. Their forgiveness was conditional upon their repentance (Acts 3:19)
7. Mankind is in gross ignorance as to the magnitude of his sins against God

III. THE POWERFUL FULFILMENT

- A. Christ's prayer was answered even as He hung on the cross
 - 1. The thief was converted soon after hearing Christ's prayer (Luke 23:41-42)
 - 2. The centurion beheld Christ's death and confessed Him to be the Son of God (Matthew 27:54)
- B. Christ's prayer was answered when thousands of Jews repented and believed
 - 1. Three thousand souls (Acts 2:41)
 - 2. Five thousand souls (Acts 4:4)
 - 3. Even "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7)
- C. This prayer is still answered today when a sinner repents and believes in Christ

CONCLUSION

- 1. What a merciful and kind Saviour, that He would pray for wicked sinners like you and me!
- 2. The scene of the Saviour praying for our forgiveness should drive us to our knees in repentance and faith in order to receive it
- 3. For those who "sin wilfully" by rejecting the free offer of the Gospel, "*there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.*" (Hebrews 10:26-27)
- 4. Those who have been forgiven are expected to forgive "*even as Christ forgave you*" (Colossians 3:13)
- 5. Forgiveness means to not retain injuries done to us, but to pass over them with a spirit of gentleness and love (cf. Acts 7:59-60)
- 6. We need God's grace to forgive even those who have done even great harm to us.