

Seven Words From The Cross

Psalm 22

Pastor John Miller

Galatians chapter 6 verse 14, Paul makes this statement. He said, "God forbid that I should glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And then he went on to say, "By whom the world is crucified unto me, and I am unto the world."

Christians are to glory in the cross. Let me give you three reasons why we glory in the cross. We glory in the cross because it's the place of our salvation. We're pardoned from our sins when we come to the cross and we put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. So it's our place of pardon.

Number two, we glory in the cross because it's our place of sanctification when we are empowered now by the Spirit of God to live in holiness and true godliness and serve others sacrificially and self-denyingly. And then I would say, thirdly, we glory in the cross because it's the place where we have the pattern for our service, that we should give ourselves sacrificially for others in service in light of the cross.

So as believers, we glory in the cross and perhaps there's no greater passage in all the Bible than Psalm 22, which is the Psalm of the cross. It is a passion Psalm. Psalm 22 is the Psalm of the cross. It is messianic, it is prophetic. David the author is not just speaking of himself, but he's looking forward to the coming of Messiah who would be crucified on the cross for our sins.

Now I want to mention three thoughts. Psalm 22, we have the good shepherd who dies for the sheep. Psalm 23, we have the great shepherd who cares for the sheep. In Psalm 24, we have the chief shepherd who's coming again for the sheep. So actually Psalm 22 is a part of a trilogy of Psalms where we see the picture of Jesus, the good shepherd dying for the sheep, the great shepherd caring for the sheep, and the chief shepherd who comes for the sheep.

Now I want to look at it from the perspective of the seven words or utterances that Jesus made on the cross. And because we're going to look at all seven of them, obviously we can't tarry on any of them. But I want you to see them in the context of Psalm 22.

If you're taking notes, the first utterance is that of the word of agony. The word of agony, if you're taking notes verses one to five, follow with me in your Bible beginning in verse one of Psalm 22. The Psalmist cries, "My God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me? Why aren't thou so far from helping me and from the words of my roaring? Oh my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not. So he's saying, help me, you're not hearing me. And in the night season, then I am not silent, but thou art holy. Oh thou that inhabit us, the praises of Israel.

The Psalmist is actually perplexed here from verse three to five, wondering, Why don't you hear me? Why don't you help me? You're holy, you should be delivering me. And then in verse four, our fathers trusted in thee, looking back in the past. They trusted in thee and now did deliver

them. Verse five, they cried unto thee and they were delivered. They trusted in thee and they were not confounded.

Now the word that has the setting here for the background is verse one, it's the word of agony. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? I think this is the greatest utterance Jesus made on the cross and the most mysterious and difficult to comprehend or understand.

You know, Jesus hung on the cross for six hours, from nine in the morning till three in the afternoon. And the last three hours were times of darkness. And I believe that it was a universal darkness. The whole earth was shrouded in darkness. As God the Father must turn for a moment his back on God the Son, and there was a separation between God the Father and God the Son.

Now I've had people that have disagreed with that and they say God isn't going to forsake God. God isn't going to abandon God. But there's really no other explanation for this. Jesus wasn't just saying this because he's quoting Psalm 22. He wasn't just saying this or praying this because he was feeling abandoned. He was abandoned by God. I think it's important to understand that.

God the Father forsook God the Son in order that we might share in heaven with Him. Now I can't comprehend that, I can't explain that, but in some way, some shape, some form, Jesus was abandoned. And the only answer that we can come up with is there in verse 3, that God is holy.

Say, "What do you mean by that?" Well, when Jesus hung on the cross, He did not become a sinner. He was the sinless Son of God. But He bore our sin on the cross. It was our sin on His body. He didn't become a sinner. He became a sin-bearer. He's the pure, holy Son of God. And he became a substitute.

I've mentioned it so many times. You're aware of the fact that the death of Jesus Christ was a substitutionary death. He took our place. He died in our stead. Should have been you and I on that cross. We were the sinners. The wage of the sin is death. So Jesus stepped in, took our sin, and bore the penalty and the punishment for our sin.

So God the Father turned his back on God the Son so that I could be forgiven of my sins and have eternal life and never be forsaken or condemned. I love Romans 8 verse one, there's now therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, period. So if you're a Christian, God will never forsake you. He will never leave you. You cannot be lost. You are secure in Christ.

But Jesus felt this pain of the separation, the agony, and he cried. And it's interesting, it's the only time, especially on the cross, when Jesus used the word God. Instead of calling Him Father or using Abba, he said, "My God." But twice he says, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Even though he was suffering and he was dying on the cross, He still believed that God was his father and he could trust him.

So he said, "My God," but Jesus died in our place and he took our sin and God the Father in some mysterious way we cannot fathom or comprehend, had to turn for a moment his back on God the Son because he could not look on that which was sinful. So he took our sin, he bore our punishment.

So when you drink the cup and eat the bread they remember that Jesus Christ was forsaken of God so that you would never have to be forsaken.

Here's the word number two or the utterance number two. It's the word of forgiveness. And the background for in setting is in verses six to eight, the word of forgiveness. In verse six it says, "But I am a worm, a no man, a reproach of men, and despise of the people." In Hebrews chapter two it says that Jesus was made a little lower than the angels for the sake of the suffering of death.

Look at verse seven, "All day that seemed He laughed me to scorn. They shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying, 'He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him.'" Let Him deliver him seeing, "He delighted in him."

Now we know that that exactly happened when Jesus was on the cross. And if you read Matthew chapter 27 verse 39 to 44, you find there are these exact words where the religious leaders were mocking Jesus and scorning Him and calling out to Him. They laughed Him to scorn. They shoot out the lip. They shook the head. He trusted in the Lord. He would deliver Him, let Him deliver Him, saying He delighted in Him.

And this is where Jesus then uttered the word of forgiveness. In Luke chapter 23 verse 34, Jesus said, looking out in the jeering crowd, what? Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

Now that to me is unimaginable. If I were being crucified and I had the power that Jesus had, I would first of all call 10,000 angels to deliver me. And I'm going to call some angels to throw some lightning bolts their way and wiped them out. But instead, he prayed, Father, Abba, forgive them. They know not what they do.

This is a word of prayer. Jesus is actually praying for his crucifiers, those who were persecuting him and crucifying him. Jesus prayed to his father. He prayed for them to have forgiveness.

Now let me give you three thoughts on why he prayed this. Number one, it was to fulfill prophecy. Isaiah 53 verse 12, it said that he made intercession for the transgressors. So it was a fulfillment of prophecy.

Number two, it was actually the practicing, excuse me, what he preached. In Matthew 5 verse 44, Jesus said, Love your enemies. Bless them that persecute you and do what? Pray for them which despicably use you. You go, "I'll pray for them, all right?" David prayed, "Break their teeth and their mouths." That's in the Bible. But that's not how we're to pray. That's not how we're to pray. Father, forgive them. Those who were persecuting Him. Those who were crucifying Him.

They know not what they do.

And thirdly, it was the purpose for which He was dying on the cross. Jesus was dying on the cross so that we might be forgiven, amen. He came to seek and to save that which is lost.

Now here's word number three. It's called the word of affection. And the background for this is verses nine to verse 14. It says, "But thou art either took me from my mother's womb, thou did make me to hope when I was upon my mother's breast. I was cast upon thee from the womb, thou art my God, from my mother's belly."

So he looks back and he remembers the hand of God upon his life. You brought me out of the womb, you had me hope in my mother's breast, You hacked me, come from the womb, thou art my God, from my mother's belly. Be not verse 11, far from me, for trouble is near, for there is none to help me. How many times we pray that same prayer? Don't be far from me, Lord, be with me, help me, for trouble is near.

Many bulls have come past me, strong bulls of Bashan, have beset me round about Bashan, the beautiful plains in the center of the land of Israel and there were bulls out there. He says, "They gave upon me with their mouths as a ravening, roaring lion." So you have the bulls, you have the lions, the coming in verse 16, we see the dogs were attacking. These are all figures of speech for those who were persecuting him.

And then notice the graphic description of the cross, verse 14, "I am poured out like water, all my bones are out of joint. My heart like wax is melted in my bow. Remember they thrust the spear into his side and out came blood and water. Now I failed to mention the fact that this psalm was pinned, listen carefully, 1,000 years before the crucifixion. It was pinned before Rome ever had as a means of punishment, the crucifixion.

And a thousand years before the cross, David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was writing the Psalm. When Peter was preaching in the book of Acts, he actually quoted David from the Psalms about Jesus being crucified, buried, and risen from the dead, and that his holy one would not seek corruption.

So verse 14 is a perfect example of the prophetic facet, or aspect of the psalm, as Jesus was like water poured out, his bones out of the joint, my heart was like wax, it's melted in the midst of my bowels.

Now the word of affection takes us to John 19, verse 25 to 27. When Jesus was on the cross, he looked down and guess who was standing there? His mother. Now, moms, think of it from what can you imagine? Standing there watching your son being crucified. This is why Simeon said, "The sword is going to pierce Mary through your own heart."

So he looks down and he sees his mother and standing next to his mother was the apostle John. Now the other apostles that ran for their life, they were hiding behind locked doors, but John is there with Mary. And what did Jesus say? He said, "Woman, behold your son." He was

referring not to himself, but to John the apostle. And then he turned to John, and he said, "Behold your mother." And then John tells us in his Gospel, chapter 19, "From that day on, he took Mary into his home, and he cared for her and watched out for her."

Jesus is fulfilling what it says in Exodus 20, verse 12, "Honor your father and your mother, that it may be well with thee that thou mayest live long on the earth." So it's a promise with a, it's a commandment with a promise. So Jesus was taking care of Mary, even in his last moments of life on earth. Jesus actually came to die for our sins. And in the midst of doing that on the cross, He's showing his love for his mother, taking care of her. And John received a blessing in that he got to have Mary live in his home.

Now what's the fourth word or utterance? It's verse 15 to 18 where we see what I call the word of humanity, the word of humanity, number four. Now let's read it verse 15. It says, "My strength is dried up like a potter." I want you to take note of all the references to his physical suffering, his physical body and strength. My strength is dried up like a pot shirt, a piece of dry broken pottery. My tongue cleaves to my jaws.

So he mentions his strength, his tongue, his jaws. That's beset me, that's brought me, excuse me, into the dust of death. I'm at the point of death. The dogs have come past me, the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me. They pierce my hands and my feet. So I'll mention again how graphically it describes death by crucifixion. They pierce my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones, they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them and cast lots for my vestry.

All four gospels record the soldiers gambling over Jesus' clothes. Again, thousand years before the cross, this is specifically, prophetically, and providentially prophesied of Jesus Christ on the cross. So Jesus is actually there giving us the word of humanity.

You say, "What is the word of humanity?" John 19, verse 28. Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, and the Scripture might be fulfilled, he said, "I thirst." So this is the background for Jesus' words, "I thirst," which is actually direct quote from Psalm 69 and verse 21. Now, Jesus had two natures. He was both God and man. He was truly God and truly man. He was the second person that the God had, eternal, equal to God the Father and God the Spirit, came from heaven and in the womb of the Virgin Mary took on humanity, sinless humanity, but real humanity.

This is why you could say I thirst. This is why Jesus sat on Jacob's well almost thirsty and asked for a drink from the woman of Samaria. This is why Jesus slept in the boat on the sea of Galilee. He was so tired that they were in this little boat out in the sea of Galilee, and there was a raging storm. The water was splashing over the boat, and he was sleeping on this pillow in the boat, because he, at all points, was tempted like we are. Yet he was without sin.

He wept at the grave of Lazarus. He was hungry, he was thirsty, he groaned in his spirit. So whenever you're tired, whenever you're weary, whenever you're weak, whenever you're

suffering, Jesus knows, Jesus cares, and Jesus understands. But it speaks to the fact that He had two natures. So He had to be a man in order to die. He had to be a God in order to save us from our sins. But He physically suffered on the cross. And He who made all the fountains of water said, "I thirst."

Jesus said, "If anyone thirst, let him what? Come to me and drink, and I will give you living water." So he was thirsty so that he could satisfy our thirst by salvation.

Here's word number five, if you're taking notes. It's the word of committal. And the background for this is verses 19 to verse 23. He says, "But be not thou far from me. Oh my strength, haste thee to help me." So David now is crying out for Lord's help. Strengthen me, help me. Deliver my soul from the sword. My darling in the Hebrew is my holy one from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth for thou hast heard me from the horns.

My King James Bible has unicorn, which would probably better translation would be wild ox.

I will declare thy name unto the brethren, or my brethren, in the midst of the congregation. Verse 22, I will praise thee ye that fear the Lord. Praise him all ye seed of Jacob. Glorify him and fear him all ye seed of Israel.

Now this is when Jesus in Luke 23, verse 46, actually said, "Father," again, Abba, "into your hands I will commit my spirit." I commend my spirit. This indicates that Jesus' death on the cross was voluntary.

Again, why would I emphasize that? Because it's important to understand Jesus' words when he said, "No one takes my life from me. I'm powered to lay it down, I'm powered to take it up again." Jesus gave himself voluntarily on the cross. There's some modern theology today which is quite liberal that denies what's called substitutionary atonement on the cross and the accused God of being a cosmic child abuser, abusing his own son, he would never do that. So they deny the substitutionary atonement of Christ on the cross.

Jesus gave Himself willingly, voluntarily. Write down John chapter 10 verse 11, where Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Jesus willingly, voluntarily gave Himself.

Now as you hold the bread and you drink the cup, remind yourself today that Jesus lovingly, voluntarily, willingly laid down His life for you on the cross. So what a blessing.

So number six, the Word of salvation. Verse 24 down to verse 30, "Follow with me." He says, "For he hath not despised, nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted. Neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him, he heard. My praise shall be of thee and the great congregation. I will pay my vows before them that fear him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied." Verse 26. "They shall praise the Lord that seek him. Your heart shall live forever. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nation shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the governor among the

nations. All they that be fat upon the earth shall eat and worship. All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him, and none can keep a soul or keep alive his own soul. A seed shall serve him, it shall be counted to him for a generation."

Now I forgot to mention, again, I'm not studying this Psalm verse by verse in detail, but if you peek back at verse 22, there's a kind of a tone or emphasis that changes in the Psalm, where the first 21 verses, it's kind of, "Why have you forsaken me? Why aren't you helping me? Why aren't you near to me?" And then it changes in verse 22, and he says, "I will declare thy name into the brother in the midst of the congregation, I will praise thee." And he talks about praising him, verse 23, and glorifying him, "Those that fear him, all ye seed of Israel."

And a lot of Bible scholars believe that this is actually a transition into the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now that may be so. Some feel that even goes further beyond the resurrection, the ascension, exaltation and the second coming of Jesus Christ. And if you prophetically keep that in mind when you read these verses on from there, verse 21, it seems to make quite a bit of sense.

But going back to verse 24 to 30, in verse 26 is the key, go back there. He says, "The meek shall eat and be satisfied. They shall praise the Lord that seek him." I love that. "Your heart shall live forever."

The background for Luke 23, verse 43. Remember when Jesus was hanging on the cross? And he was hanging between what? Two other crosses. There were three crosses on Calvary's Hill. Two thieves were being crucified next to Jesus. And they were both reviling him. And then finally one of the thieves had a change of heart. And the thief said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when you enter into your kingdom."

What did Jesus say to that thief? He said, "Today you will be with me in paradise." Isn't that beautiful? The word of salvation. In the background, as I said, verse 26, the meek shall eat and be satisfied. They shall praise the Lord that seek him as the thief did, your heart shall live forever. "Today, you will be with me in paradise."

You know, the Bible says, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Even on your death bed, this is like being executed for a crime and getting saved in the electric chair before you're put to death. This is what you call a death bed or death cross conversion. "Lord, remember me when you enter your kingdom." You know that just looking to Jesus in faith, just calling on the name of the Lord, you shall be saved.

He didn't have to perform, he didn't have to do good deeds. Jesus didn't say, "You gotta get off the cross and get baptized. You gotta get off the cross and be confirmed. You gotta get off the cross and do some good works." He just said, "Today you will, what assurance? Be with me in paradise."

In Ephesians 2, verse 8 and 9, we all know it so well. "By grace you have been saved." And that not of yourself, that is salvation is not of yourself. It is what? A gift of God, not of works, let

anyone should both. So salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Jesus came to save sinners, and He was doing that even on the cross.

So as you take the bread, assemble the body of Christ, and you drink the cup, assemble of the blood of Christ and the new covenant, He did that to save you from your sin, so that you can have a home in heaven.

Now the last utterance, number seven, we come to the last verse. In verse 31, we have the word of victory. And they shall come and should declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born that, catch this phrase, He hath done this. Have a familiar ring? Remember when Jesus hung on the cross, John 19 verse 30, and he cried that word to telestai, which is actually finished or done or it is finished. Jesus said, "It is finished." He has done this. And the Hebrew there in verse 31, could be translated that it is finished, or it is done.

When a farmer was plowing a field and he came to the end of his day and laboring in the field and he unhooked the yawks from the plow, he would actually say, "To telus die. It is done, it's finished." When a painter was painting a picture and he put the last touches on the canvas, you that paint know that there comes a point when you're painting, you need to put the brush down and stop or you'll mess it up. So Jesus actually said, as the painter would, "To tell us die it is finished." Or you had a debt and you paid your debt, it would be stamped, "To tell us die it is finished," or it is done, paid in full.

So when Jesus died on the cross, He finished the work of redemption and salvation. Nothing more for us to do, Christ will not be crucified again. He doesn't need to come back and die again. The elements are just symbols of His body for us. He's not being crucified. He's already been crucified once. And the death of Jesus Christ was sufficient for redemption and salvation. So all we need to do is put our faith and trust in Him. It is a finished work.

Other religions say do, Christianity says, done. It's a finished work that we enter into by faith. And what a blessed picture that is. Someone put in the words of a poem, "It is finished, it is finished. My salvation, full and free. Jesus died the debt for sinners. He paid the debt for sinners when he died on Calvary."

Again, put that along John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not what perish, but have everlasting life." Thank God for the cross of Jesus Christ, amen.