



**STATEMENTS
FROM THE
CROSS**



BY GREG LAURIE



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The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the most important events in the history of humanity. It was at the cross that God and man were reconciled. It was at the cross that the Lord's righteous demands were met. It was at the cross that what was lost in the Garden was regained again. It was at the cross that a crippling and decisive blow was dealt against Satan and his demon powers. It was at the cross where our salvation was purchased.

We can never talk about it too much or reflect upon it too often.

In instituting what we call Communion, or the Lord's Supper, Jesus instructed us to eat the bread and drink the cup in remembrance of Him because He wanted us to repeatedly come back to the cross—to revisit its importance and think about all that transpired there for us.

In fact, the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ from the dead are the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Paul said,

If Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. (1 Corinthians 15:14 NLT)

The good news is Jesus did rise again from the dead, and thus our faith is valid.

As we examine the circumstances of the crucifixion, we find that humanity had done its absolute worst. Ironically, the very God who had made humanity was now going to receive the cruelest treatment of all from His very creation.

He was rejected even before He was born. There was no room for Him in the inn. In a sense, that became prophetic of the treatment that Jesus would receive during His entire earthly ministry and certainly at the crucifixion. *No room in the inn*. It seems like the only place there was ever room for Jesus was on the cross.

But you must understand that going to the cross was always His goal and His plan and His purpose—from the beginning.

In fact, before He even came to this earth, the Bible tells us a decision was made in Heaven that the events of the cross would take place. Scripture says He was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). God knew man would blow it in the Garden of Eden. He knew that man would mess up the privileges that were given to him. He knew that a provision would have to be made for man’s sin. It was foreshadowed throughout the Old Testament. So many events pointed to this great event that was yet to come.

Then when Jesus came on the scene and began His ministry, He talked to His disciples about it all the time. They repeatedly missed what He was saying. He said, “The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again” (Luke 24:7). I would say that is pretty specific. Wouldn’t you? Yet they missed it. It never seemed to make sense to them until after He was crucified, and He did rise again. It was all spoken of in the beginning.

Before we read about the seven statements Jesus made from the cross, let me briefly describe for you what happened when a man was crucified.

I don’t know if you have ever seen someone who has been through extreme trauma. I have in visiting people in hospitals.

It can be quite shocking and disturbing. I remember once my cousin was in a motorcycle accident. I went to visit him at the hospital. I walked in the room where he was, and there were a number of men in that room. I looked for him and I could not find him. It turns out that I looked at him a few times, but his body had been so traumatized by what he had gone through, it was so swollen and disfigured, I couldn't even recognize him.

That is how it was with Jesus. Isaiah 52:14 says, "His face was so disfigured he seemed hardly human, and from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man" (NLT). You have to imagine the extreme trauma that Christ endured from the beating alone. Just the Roman cat-o'-nine-tails (the whip they used) on His back was a horrendous thing. It was enough to kill most men. He not only survived it, but He managed to carry His cross through the streets of Jerusalem. Then they laid that shredded back down on the cross, and they pounded the spikes through His hands and feet.

Understand that crucifixion was not meant to immediately kill a person. There are faster ways to execute someone, such as beheading. Swift execution was not the goal. They crucified people because they wanted to torture them. They wanted them to suffer. They wanted to humiliate them. And they wanted to send a message to onlookers: *Don't mess with Rome or this can happen to you.*

A crucified person would usually live about 12 hours after being put on the cross, and sometimes even into the second or third day. While they were there, they would experience excruciating pain, a severe fever, the inflammation of the wounds on the back, hands, and feet. It would be the congestion of the blood in the head, lungs, and heart—and the swelling of virtually every vein in the body—that made crucifixion the cruelest of deaths.

Roman spikes would be driven through the hands and feet into the wooden cross, and the victim would have to push himself up to get a breath. Really, crucifixion is essentially death by suffocation. There was a little step where your feet would be. Thus, if you would push yourself up, you could get breath into your lungs. Then you would sink again because of the pain in your feet and hands.

Picture Jesus hanging on the cross with His shredded back and crown of thorns and pierced hands and feet. He opens His mouth. His tongue is swollen. He is in pain you could not even imagine. What words come out of His mouth? They must be very important.

He gave seven statements from the cross. Let's take a look at them.

Statement #1: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

The first words that fell from the lips of our Lord as He hung on the cross were a prayer for others.

We know that later on He said, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," which means "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" It would have been more understandable to me if those had been His first words from the cross. Or even if He had said, "I thirst." But no. The first words from the cross were a prayer for the people that had done this wicked thing to Him. His first statement was really a prayer: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

This was so typical of Jesus. He began His public ministry with prayer. Now, we see Him closing with it as well. Notice, this prayer is not for Himself. Nor is it for His disciples, or even for His own mother, who is standing at the foot of the cross. It is for His enemies. He modeled exactly what He taught.

On the Mount of Beatitudes, Christ gave what we know as the Sermon on the Mount. He made this statement: "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). What He taught on a sunny day by the Sea of Galilee; He modeled on the cross at Calvary. The natural inclination would be to pray, "Lord, help me," or "God, get me out of this."

Do you remember the story in the Old Testament about Samson? When he lost his life in the end, his final act was to bring vengeance upon his enemies. That is how he ended his life. He put his hands between two supporting pillars and literally brought the house down, destroying thousands of Philistines. It was payback time!

But for Jesus, there was no payback. There was no getting even. Instead He said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

This is a great example for us to realize that no one is beyond the reach of prayer. Why waste your prayer on a bunch of people like this? You would think that someone who would be capable of so wicked an action surely is beyond converting.

Have you ever met someone that just doesn't seem like they could ever be converted? Some people you meet are very nice, and you can envision them as Christians. They almost seem like Christians now in some ways. But then there are other people that you think, "No way, I can't see them ever being a Christian." But despite what you can or can't envision, the truth is that no one is beyond the reach of prayer.

Why did Jesus pray this prayer? It was as though He was saying to His Father, "Father, forgive them, for they need forgiveness so desperately. They don't even know how badly they need it. Father,

forgive them, for they have committed a sin that is so wicked that it is beyond human comprehension.” Can you imagine being responsible for the actual death of Jesus?

Some days later, the Day of Pentecost took place. Peter got up to preach. Present in the crowd that day were some of the very individuals that were personally involved in the crucifixion of Jesus. Peter, with a strong dose of Holy Spirit boldness, made this statement in Acts 2:36: “Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Understand when Peter made that statement he was not speaking figuratively. He was speaking literally. I even wonder if he pointed. There might have been present those who actually drove the nails through His hands. It is possible.

The Bible says that when he said this, they were “cut to the heart.” They said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (verse 37). This phrase, *cut to the heart*, is a phrase that appears only once in the New Testament. It means *to pierce* or *to stab*. It depicts something that is sudden and unexpected. Imagine a knife to the heart.

They are listening. Peter is saying that they were responsible. The Holy Spirit convicts them. They are cut to the heart, and they cry out in desperation, “What shall we do?”

Can you imagine if you had been one of the soldiers that took that hammer and pounded a nail into the hand of Jesus? Or in His feet? Or if you had been the soldier who took the whip and brought it upon His back 39 times? Then, later you realize that this Jesus was the very Messiah of Israel.

And can you also imagine if you were one of the religious leaders that played along with this charade of trying Christ on trumped-up charges and to suddenly discover this was the very Messiah

you had been longing for, hoping for, and praying for? Not only had you rejected Him, but you actually had a hand in personally putting Him to death. So, overwhelmed with guilt, they cried out, “What shall we do?”

The reason I bring this up is because it shows us that this prayer of Jesus was ultimately answered. We know that a number of those who were involved in His crucifixion did come to faith. So, don't ever give up praying for someone.

Being crucified along with Jesus were two criminals, one on each side of Him (see Luke 23:33). The Scripture says they were thieves, or criminals. A careful study of the word used to describe them would imply they were more than just your average thieves. They were probably revolutionaries—men who were basically dedicated to the violent overthrow of Rome.

Rome, of course, had come in and occupied the land of Israel. Israel was now under Roman control. The Romans did not worship the true God of Israel. They worshipped numerous gods, including the emperor himself. The zealots, or revolutionaries, felt it was their right, and even their duty, to overthrow the oppressor. So, here were two of them that were being crucified for their acts of sedition, rebellion, and trying to overthrow Rome.

In a sense, their objectives were valid, but their techniques were wrong. It was not a bad thing for a person of faith to want to see a pagan power removed. But the way they went about it was wrong. They tried to do it through violence, but they failed. Here was Jesus being crucified. In a sense they all, to some degree, wanted the same thing: removal of the pagan worship. But more than that, Jesus wanted the worship of the true God in place. He came to establish His kingdom on earth.

As we look at all of them hanging on crosses, who was victorious in the end? The zealots or Jesus? Whose approach was more effective? Obviously the answer is Jesus. He prevailed in the end. They did not. Christianity continues on.

It is a good reminder to us that we are to impact our culture. The way we are to do it is not through violent overthrow. God doesn't want us bombing abortion clinics. He doesn't want us shooting doctors. I don't think He even wants us conducting boycotts. I think we expend a lot of unnecessary energy when we do that. I think that, instead of boycotting, we ought to be invading the enemy's territory with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I want to reach these people. I want to reach the girl that is on her way to get the abortion. Do you think a picketer is going to stop her? Once in a while, maybe. I would rather reach out to her with the love of Jesus Christ and tell her that there is a God who cares about her, who can change her, and forgive her.

In the Scriptures, I don't read anything about boycotts. I don't read any campaigns that the early Christians engaged in to unseat the emperor. I see that they outprayed and outlived the pagans. They prevailed. We can do the same if we follow their example.

Coming back to our story, I want to look at another contrast between these three men hanging on crosses: the two thieves and Jesus. The thieves, or revolutionaries, were there for their personal crimes. Jesus was there for the crimes of all humanity. They were there against their will. He was there because He willingly went. They could not have escaped. He could have. Do you realize that? Jesus could have gotten out of it with one word.

Remember in the Garden of Gethsemane when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus, and Peter pulled out the sword and started swinging away. He cut off the ear of the high priest's servant.

Jesus put the guy's ear back on. He healed it. It is worth noting that the last miracle of Jesus was to cover up the blunder of one of His disciples. Here is Peter saying, "I will save You, Lord. I will protect You." Jesus was saying, "Put it away, Peter. Don't you know I could just give the word and legions of angels would come to help Me? Peter, you don't realize this. I could just say the word, and I would be out of here so fast. If you could see into the supernatural realm, you'd see that they have got their swords drawn." And the angels were most likely thinking, "Please call us. We would come in and get you out of there. We love you. Say the word." Jesus could have said, "Come save Me, deliver Me." He would have been out of that situation immediately.

But He wasn't there against His will. Nails did not hold Him to that cross. Love did. A commitment that He made to reach the people that were there. A commitment that He made to reach you and me—because He knew there was no other way to settle the sin issue.

Look at how these three men act as they face death squarely in the face. Initially as Jesus was nailed to the cross, two of these men momentarily forgot their personal pain and actually joined the chorus of onlookers saying, "He saved others, but He can't save Himself! So He is the King of Israel, is He? Let Him come down from the cross right now, and we will believe in Him! He trusted God, so let God rescue Him now if He wants Him! For He said, 'I am the Son of God'" (Matthew 27:42–43 NLT).

This was bitter and biting sarcasm. It wasn't enough to crucify Him. It wasn't enough to whip His back. Now they had to stand at the foot of the cross and taunt Him in His final moments of life making the experience even more difficult.

How this mockery must have pained the tender heart of Jesus. Even here at the cross they persist. He is atoning for their very sins and they are spewing out this venom.

Then Luke 23:40 says, “But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?’” In other words, one of the revolutionary thieves turned to the other and rebuked him. He effectively said, “What are you doing? We deserve what is happening to us today. This Man has done nothing wrong.”

To some, this looks like a contradiction in the Bible. Matthew’s Gospel tells us both thieves joined in the mockery. Luke’s Gospel tells us one of the thieves was rebuked by the other. A contradiction? No. A conversion. Something significant happened to change the heart of one of those thieves, bringing him to his spiritual senses. As Matthew says, both thieves did mock Him at first, but something happened and one thief believed.

What was that thing? Putting it together chronologically, it was most likely when Jesus made His first statement: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” That statement alone was enough to bring about the conversion of that man. That one thief had watched with amazement as Jesus had suffered the same crucifixion as he—yet without complaint, no angry protest, no cursing. Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” Those words reverberated. They were unbelievable and unexpected. Incomprehensible that Jesus would request that God forgive these guys that did this. This man’s rebellion, bitterness, and anger, that no doubt had driven him all of those years, suddenly dissolved right on the spot.

You say, “Greg, are you suggesting someone could be converted in seconds?” Absolutely. It is true. Maybe it has happened to you. For some people it takes a while. They think about it. They come to a few Christian meetings. They are getting closer. You are still praying for them.

For me it was an immediate, unexpected thing that I guarantee I did not plan for. I did not get up that morning and say, “Maybe

today I will become a Jesus freak. I will basically cut off all of my old friends. I will get involved in going to church. I will start carrying a Bible publicly. Then maybe down the road I will start a church somewhere. Riverside sounds good. Then I will lose my hair." I guarantee that was the last thing on my mind when I ended up at that Christian meeting on my high school campus. But when I heard the gospel, I believed instantly. That is how quickly conversion can take place. That man believed.

The first statement of Jesus was a prayer for His enemies. The second was an answer to the thief's prayer, "Lord, remember me when you come into Your kingdom." If you have wondered if God can save someone on their deathbed, He can. This was his deathbed, on a cross. Can you imagine the burden that would have been lifted when Jesus, the Son of God, the Creator of the universe, turned to him and said His next statement?

Statement #2: "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Talk about being in the right place at the right time! I say that with no irreverence. To be forgiven of all of his sins, of all of his wrongs, at the last hour of his life as he hung on the cross, must have been such a relief. I don't know that his physical pain went away, but his burden of sin was lifted in an incredible way.

Elvis Presley used to wear a lot of religious medals. Elvis was into all sorts of religious ideas. He was into astrology and occultism, a little bit of Christianity and a little Hinduism, a little of this and a little of that. He used to wear around his neck all kinds of religious medals. One day someone walked up to him and said, "Elvis, you have all of these religious medals. What exactly do you believe in?" Elvis, in that Elvis way, said, "I don't want to miss getting into Heaven on a technicality." Elvis figured that if he had a little of everything, he would cover all of his bases.

That is not the faith of this man on the cross dying next to Jesus. I don't think this was a guy who was trying to make sure all of his bases were covered. I think this guy honestly put his total faith in Jesus and Jesus alone. Right there, he believed.

With that done, Jesus looks down at the foot of the cross, and who does He see but His mother.

Can you imagine the anguish that she went through? I think only a mother can fully appreciate this. I don't think that I can. But I think for a mother, and certainly for parents as well, it is very hard to watch our children suffer. I think most parents in many situations would, if possible, take the pain of their children upon themselves in order to not see them suffer. Especially when they are very young.

Imagine Mary as she looks up. Here is Jesus, the Son of God. He is beaten and marred. His body is traumatized. That was her little boy. Don't forget that she remembered Him as a little baby. She kissed that once-tiny forehead that was now lacerated with the crown of thorns. She once guided those tiny hands that now had spikes driven through them. His disciples might have forsaken Him, but she was there by His side until the end.

I think that at this point a statement that was made to her some 30 years earlier probably came into complete focus. Remember when Mary and Joseph took Jesus into the temple to dedicate Him? There was a man named Simeon. He was an old codger who hung around the temple. God had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah of Israel. One day, Mary and Joseph came walking in. I don't think they had little halos around their heads like the religious paintings depict. I think they were ordinary looking people. Simeon had spiritual discernment. When he saw Jesus, he knew He was the One. He made this statement: "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen

Your salvation” (Luke 2:29). Turning to Mary and gesturing toward Jesus, he said, “Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, and a sword shall pierce your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed” (verse 34–35).

What kind of thing is that to say to some woman with a newborn baby who is going to dedicate Him? A sword is going to pierce your soul? What did that mean? Mary thought about that. As the years passed I think that statement began to make sense.

Mary experienced difficulties from the very beginning when God touched her, and Jesus was supernaturally conceived in her womb. Do you realize that most people thought she was an immoral woman and thought that she had had sex out of wedlock? The irony of that is Mary was a pure young girl who led a godly life and was so careful to do what God wanted her to do. But people accused her of being immoral.

One day the Pharisees said to Jesus, “We were not born of fornication” (John 8:41). Do you know what they were implying? They were suggesting Jesus was illegitimate. That He was born outside of wedlock. The sword would definitely have pierced Mary’s heart over such accusations.

When Jesus was a child, He and His family were in Jerusalem visiting the temple one day. Going home in a large caravan, the women would usually go ahead while the men would follow a little bit later. Joseph thought Jesus had gone with Mary. Mary thought Jesus had gone with Joseph. They both got home, and there was no Jesus. Where was He? They went back to Jerusalem, and they found Him in the temple teaching the scribes and the elders. They were upset, as parents naturally would be under such circumstances. They began to reprimand Him. Jesus said,

“Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). The sword pierced a little bit deeper.

On another occasion, Jesus was teaching. Someone said, “Your mother and your brothers are here.” You would expect the Lord to say, “My mother and brothers? Come on up here. Give a round of applause to Mary. Mary come on up. By the way, did I mention Mary is equal with me and she is a co-redemptress here?” No. Matthew 12:49–50 says, “He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.’” He did not exalt His mother. The sword pierced a little deeper.

Now, as she looked up and saw her son, Jesus, hanging on that cross, I think the sword pierced her soul all the way through. Maybe a new revelation came to Mary. Maybe she realized for the first time that although Jesus was her child physically, she was His child spiritually. Maybe for the first time Mary began to grasp the fact that this was not just her Son. This was God Almighty. Perhaps it all came into focus for her.

And Jesus, seeing His mother, says,

Statement #3: “Woman, behold your son.” Then looking over to the apostle John, “Behold your mother.”

In other words, Jesus is saying, “John, I am going to be leaving now. I can no longer take care of her. I am asking you to be responsible for her.”

It would appear from the gospel accounts that Joseph may have died some time earlier in the life of Jesus. Maybe when Jesus was still a young boy. After the incident at the temple, we don’t hear any more about him; he just disappears from the story. Jesus, being the firstborn, was apparently caring for His mother in some

capacity. You need to know also that there was a rift in the family of Jesus prior to His death and resurrection because His brothers did not believe in Him until after the resurrection. There was a division in His own home over His life and ministry.

Now with Him needing to go back to Heaven, He wanted someone to care for His mother. This is such a precious picture. Here is the Lord in excruciating pain and anguish, yet He remembers Mary. "John, take care of My mother. Look after her. She needs a roof over her head. She needs food. She needs to be cared for. John, I am committing that to you." And what a privilege for John, that he could carry a small part of Jesus' burden in that way .

After this statement, the sky suddenly turned dark. It was about 12:00 noon and something ominous was about to take place. Matthew 27:45 tells us, "Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice. . . "

Statement #4: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani."

This statement means, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" What happened during those three hours of silence?

His faith was not failing Him. He was not having the delusions of a man in pain. It was at this moment, I believe, that all of the sin of the world that has ever been committed was placed upon Him. My sin alone would be too much. Add yours, and then put the sin of the rest of humanity on top of it, and you get a sense of how bad this was. As Christ was hanging there, He was bearing the sins of the world. He was dying as a substitute for others. To Him was imputed the guilt of all of our sins. He was suffering the punishment of our sins on our behalf. The very essence of that punishment was the outpouring of God's wrath upon sinners. In some mysterious way that we can never fully comprehend during those awful hours on the cross, the Father was pouring out

the full measure of His wrath against sin, and the recipient of that wrath was God's own beloved Son.

Listen to this. God was punishing Jesus as if He had personally committed every wicked deed committed by every wicked sinner. In doing so, He could forgive and treat those redeemed ones as if they had lived Christ's perfect life of righteousness. In other words, the Father was treating Jesus the way we deserved to be treated, so now He can treat us the way that Jesus deserves to be treated. The righteousness of Christ was taken and placed into my account as He died in my place. The sins that were in my account were taken and placed upon Christ. It was the great exchange. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

We know that the Lord did bear the sin of the world. I believe this was the actual moment.

To be forsaken by God was more of a source of anguish to Jesus than to anyone else. Jesus never sinned. There was never a thought in His mind that was out of harmony with the heavenly Father. Therefore the physical pains of crucifixion, as awful as they were, and the desertion by His disciples didn't even come close to what He was experiencing when all of the sin of the world was poured upon Him. For Jesus, the most difficult thing was having to be separated for a moment from the close and intimate fellowship that He had with the Father as all of the sin was placed upon Him. Habakkuk 1:13 says, "[God's] eyes are too pure to look on evil" (NIV).

Why did Jesus have to go through this?

Because there was no other way to deal with sin. The Scripture says, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,

got to the root of the problem. Jesus was forsaken of God for a time so I don't have to be. Jesus took that sin upon Himself. Thus, I can be at one with God through Christ.

Let me illustrate it with a true story that I once heard.

There was a pastor who was holding a Sunday evening service. That particular evening, he asked an elderly man to come to the pulpit and tell his story to his congregation. This old man went to the pulpit and started right into his story.

He said, "A father, a son, and a friend of his son were sailing off of the Pacific Coast when a storm quickly approached, blocking any attempt to get back to shore. The waves were so high that even though the father was an experienced sailor, he could not keep the boat upright. All three of them were swept into the ocean."

There were two teenage boys sitting in the front row that weren't listening up to that point. Suddenly, they woke up and leaned forward. They wanted to hear what happened next.

The old man continued. "Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life. To which boy would he throw the other end of the line? He had only seconds to make the decision. The father knew that his son was a Christian. He also knew that his son's friend wasn't. The agony of his decision could not be matched by the torrent of the waves. The father yelled out, 'I love you, son' and threw the line to his son's friend. By the time that he pulled the friend back into the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beyond the raging swells into the black of night and his body was never recovered."

At this point these two teenagers in the front were sitting upright drinking in every word, waiting for the next words to come out of the old man's mouth.

He continued, "This father knew that his son would step into eternity with Jesus. He couldn't bear the thought of his son's friend stepping into eternity without Jesus. Therefore, he sacrificed his son." Then the old man concluded, "How great is the love of God that He should do the same for us in sending Jesus to die on the cross in His place." With that the old man ended his little talk and sat back down.

After the service was over, these two boys rushed to talk to this old guy.

They said, "We liked your story, but it just doesn't seem realistic. It is hard for us to believe that a father would give up his son's life in hope that this other kid would become a Christian."

The old man said, "You have a point there. It isn't very realistic. But I am standing here today to tell you that story gives me a glimpse of what it must have been like for God to give up His Son for me. You see," the old man said, "I was the son's friend."

This is what God did for us because there was no other way for us to come into a relationship with Him. It was God's most painful moment. His pain is our gain.

Imagine for a moment not only the pain of our Lord on the cross, but also the pain of the Father in Heaven as He watched this transpire. He loved His Son. Never for a moment during His earthly ministry was there one thought in the mind of Jesus that was outside of the Father's will. Never did Jesus spend a moment outside of the conscious presence of God. Never once did Jesus sin. He never messed up. Not even a little bit. He was perfect. He was God. And to have to pour His wrath upon His Son was painful. Even more painful than the spikes in His hands, even more painful than the cat-o'-nine-tails on His back, even more painful than His beard being ripped from His face was when He who was holy and sinless and perfect had to take everything

that was unholy, sinful, and imperfect upon Himself. When all of the corruption, filth, and junk of this world—all of the radical sins that you and I have committed—were dumped on the holy Son of God.

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Jesus was forsaken by God for you and me.

After this three-hour ordeal, Jesus gave a statement that speaks to His humanity. John 19:28 says, “After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled” said . . .

Statement #5: “I thirst.”

How interesting that first He prayed for His enemies. Then for the thief on the cross. Then He remembered His mother. Then He bore the sin of humanity. Then and only then did He speak of His own needs: “I thirst.”

Imagine, the Creator of the universe was saying “I thirst.” The God who made water was thirsty. He could have easily done a miracle. After all, in the Old Testament we read about God bringing water out of rocks. This would have been an easy one for the Lord. To bring water. To have a spring erupt right in front of Him so He could drink from it. He could have done a miracle on His own behalf, but He didn't.

Did you ever notice that Jesus never did any miracles for His own benefit? If He had to go somewhere, He just walked there. If He was hungry, He would go get food and cook it. He would even have His disciples go out and fish for the food. If I were God and I had the power to materialize things, there is no way I would walk everywhere. If I were in Galilee and I needed to be in Jerusalem, I would say “Jerusalem,” and instantly I would be there. “Fish on the plate. Now! And I want it Cajun.” I would enjoy that power.

But Jesus never did a miracle for His own benefit. He only did them for others.

There on the cross, He was crying out for water. This is not just any thirst; this is the thirst of a man who is completely dehydrated from going through this horrific ordeal. This is no ordinary thirst; this is a thirst that is burning and severe. Scientists tell us that thirst is the most agonizing of all pain. Every cell in the body cries out for relief and it only gets worse with time.

Let's not forget what Jesus has gone through at that point. He has experienced tremendous loss of blood through the scourging. He has been beaten. He has been hit. He has been nailed to a cross. Even more, He has borne all of the sin of the world upon Himself, and He is depleted. He is crying out because He is so thirsty. We can't even imagine the thirst He was experiencing. This statement of Christ shows His humanity.

Yes, He was God, but this was God in human form—100% God, yet 100% Man. He got tired. He wept. He felt the limitations of the human body. When those spikes went into His hands, He felt pain like any other man would feel. He felt thirst like you could not imagine. He went through all of this for us. That is why the Bible says that He is “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3).

Therefore, no matter how great your need or difficulty may be, you need to know He understands. That is why the Bible says, “Cast your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”

Is your body wracked with pain? So was His. Have you been misunderstood, misjudged, or misrepresented? So was He. Have you ever had even your closest friends turn away from you or betray you? So has He. They turned away from Him as well.

Here now, Jesus asks for help. “I thirst.” It is like He is saying, “Someone help Me.” Some brave individual dips a sponge in sour wine and holds it up to him. Man, I wish I could have given Jesus a cup of water in that moment, to bring a little comfort to Him. Guess what? You can be that guy. You can be that girl. You say, “What are you talking about, Greg? Am I going to get into a time machine and go back 2,000 years?” Here is how you can do it. Jesus said, “For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink” (Matthew 25:35 NLT). He said in verse 40, “When you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!” (NLT).

So, when you see someone who is hurting, you should say, “I will give you a cup of water,” “I will give you that meal,” “I will help put a roof over your head,” “I will put some clothes on your back,” or best of all, “I will give you the message of the gospel.”

Then Jesus uttered His sixth statement from the cross. Three words.

Statement #6: “It is finished.”

By the way, in the original language, “It is finished” is one word. That word, which He uttered from Calvary, was *tetelestai*. *Tetelestai* was a commonly used word in that day. You’d use it after completing a job. If you framed a house and you finished the job, you’d say *tetelestai*—it’s finished. Or you’d prepare a meal and say *tetelestai*—come and get it. *Tetelestai*: it’s completed, it’s accomplished, it’s done.

Jesus said, “*Tetelestai*”: I’ve done it. I’ve paid the price. I fulfilled the obligation. It’s completed. It’s accomplished.

The ordeal was now over. This was the battle cry of Calvary. I have no doubt that these words reverberated throughout all of Hell. The devil was now about to realize that his plan had horribly backfired. He thought he was in control. He thought he was

calling the shots: "I have this great plan. I am going to infiltrate the ranks of the disciples. I am going to inspire Judas to betray Him for 30 pieces of silver. Christ will be dead. I will prevail."

What the devil didn't realize is that it all came crashing down on him as Jesus was dying. That was Christ's purpose from the very beginning. That was always His goal.

There's a story about a very wealthy man who had a beautiful and palatial estate. He had his own personal forest. In the midst of that forest was a beautiful redwood tree that towered above all of the others. This wealthy man was so proud of his forest and specifically that tree, that every day He would walk out to look at it and admire it.

He had a neighbor who was just full of envy and jealousy. This neighbor was mad with anger that this wealthy man did so well, and he had not done well at all. One night he said, "I am going to go over to my neighbor's yard and cut that tree down. I am going to destroy it just because he loves it so much."

When night fell, the neighbor hopped over the fence, bringing his saw with him. He went over to that tree and began to saw away. He was so filled with anger. He had a lot of anger and strength. The hours started going by. The night was growing long. The sun was starting to rise. He was still sawing. He was covered in sweat. He was in pain. He was so determined to bring that tree down.

Then this jealous man looked and saw the man of the estate making his way to admire his tree, as he often did. This time he had visitors with him. The neighbor thought, "This is great. It is going to fall right in front of them. He is going to see it happen. I am glad he knows I am the one who is doing it." Just as he was finished cutting it through, he yelled out, "Timber" and the big tree began to topple.

But the jealous neighbor did not notice the direction the tree was falling. It came crashing down on top of him. He was smashed and crushed beneath the weight of the massive tree. He was almost dead. Just as he still had a little life left, he looked up and saw that man of the estate. He said, "I cut your tree down."

That man of the estate replied, "My friend, I am so sorry. You have to understand something. These men that are here with me are actually builders. We were going to build some new homes out here. We were talking about how we had to level the forest. We were discussing the best way to get rid of this one tree because it was so big. You have helped me to accomplish my purposes."

That is what happened at Calvary. Satan said, "I will cut Jesus down. I will destroy Jesus." No. The tree came falling down on Satan, and he was crushed beneath its weight. At Calvary, Jesus dealt a decisive blow to Satan and his followers. Satan was defeated.

Jesus said, "It is finished."

What was finished? What was made an end of? Our sins and the guilt that accompanies them. What was paid? The price for our salvation. What was performed? The righteous requirements of the law.

Finished was Satan's stronghold on humanity. Speaking of Jesus at the cross, Colossians 2:14-15 says, "He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross" (NLT).

After He made that statement, "It is finished," the Bible says the veil in the temple was ripped from top to bottom. Have you ever wondered what that was all about? In the temple they had this special section called the Holy of Holies. One time a year, the

priest would go in there to make atonement for the sins of Israel. This veil in the temple was not a sheer piece of material that you could see through. It was some 36 inches thick. It ripped when Christ cried out, "It is finished." Notice that it did not rip from the bottom to the top as though man were ripping it. It ripped from the top to the bottom.

God was saying, "You are no longer on the outside. You can come now into the inner court. You can come now into the Holy of Holies through Jesus. You don't have to come through a high priest any more. You don't have to come through a man slaying an animal anymore. My Son is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

Do you realize that we don't have to go through a priest today? We don't have to go through a mediator. We don't have to go through Mary. We can go straight to God 365 days a year, 24 hours a day through Jesus Christ.

After all of these things, according to Luke 23:46, Jesus gave His final words from the cross.

Statement #7 "Into Your hands, Father, I commit my spirit."

Some commentators believe that this statement was made before "It is finished." Whatever the case, Jesus completed the task that He had come to do and committed His spirit to God.

Jesus then died. He rose again on the third day. And afterward, He ascended to the Father.

What does all of that mean to you? It means everything. As I said in the beginning, this is what it comes down to. At the cross, Christ paid for your sin. "For God so loved the world that He gave His

only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

You say, "That is fine. That is the whole world and not me in particular." I love the words of the apostle Paul when he said, Jesus "loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Do you realize that when Jesus Christ died on that cross, He died for you? Yes, it is true He died for the world, for all of humanity, but it is also true that He died for you. He shed His blood for you as an individual.

The Bible says, "For the joy that was set before Him [Jesus] endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2).

What would have kept Jesus going during that long, horrific day? Going through the streets of Jerusalem, with the heavy cross on His shoulder, His back in pain. People laughing, spitting, mocking. Then, as He hung on the cross, they were crying out and continuing to mock. Something kept Him going. Do you know what "the joy that was set before Him" was?

It was you.

It was knowing that you would be forgiven of your sin. It was knowing that you could be a child of God. He died for you. He died for me. Because He loves us. He knew there was no other way that we could come into a relationship with God. Have you come into this relationship with God yet? Have you asked Jesus to forgive you of your sin?

When you say, "I don't need God. If you want to go through Jesus, that is cool. I believe that I go through my own route," that is an insult to Jesus and to the Father. When you say that, you are essentially saying, "Jesus, this whole crucifixion didn't mean anything. I will find my own way." I am sorry, but it is only through what Christ did on the cross that you can come to know God.

You can't earn your way into Heaven. You can't do enough good works to get you in. You need to come through Jesus. You need to say, "God, I am sorry for the sins that I have committed. I have broken your commandments. I have gone the wrong way. I have done the wrong thing. I believe that Jesus Christ, Your Son, died on that cross for me. Lord, I want You to forgive me now of all of the wrongs that I have ever done."

Would you like to do that now? Would you like Jesus Christ to come into your heart and forgive you of your sin? Would you like to know that when you die you will go to Heaven? You can do it. Come into an encounter with Jesus Christ. He will change you and forgive you. But first you must come to Him. Learn how at www.KnowGod.org.