

Seven Last Sayings Of Christ

THE FOURTH SAYING: "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" by Foley & Acevedo
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INTRODUCTION: THE FINAL WORDS OF JESUS

The final moments of a person's life often carry profound weight. In Christianity, no final words are more treasured, analyzed, and meditated upon than the **Seven Last Sayings of Christ**. These utterances, recorded across the four Gospels, form a tapestry of human anguish, divine love, and redemptive purpose. They have inspired countless sermons, works of art, and theological reflections for two millennia. But beyond their religious significance, these sayings offer a window into the heart of a man facing the most agonizing death ever devised, while simultaneously revealing the mission of a Savior redeeming the world.

Each saying is a pearl of wisdom, a cry of pain, a declaration of victory, or an act of intercession. Together, they tell a complete story of forgiveness, salvation, relationship, abandonment, physical suffering, completion, and ultimate trust. Whether you are a lifelong believer, a curious seeker, or a student of history, the **Seven Last Sayings of Christ** provide a rich field for contemplation. This article will explore each saying in its scriptural context, unpack its theological meaning, and demonstrate how these ancient words remain powerfully relevant today.

THE FIRST SAYING: "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM"

Context and Scriptural Reference

The first of the **Seven Last Sayings of Christ** is found in Luke 23:34: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" Jesus spoke these words as the Roman soldiers were nailing his hands and feet to the cross. The scene is one of brutal violence and utter humiliation. Yet, amid the tearing of flesh and the mocking of onlookers, Jesus does not curse. He does not threaten. He prays.

Theological Significance

This saying establishes the entire tone of the crucifixion narrative. It reveals that the cross is not an act of vengeance but an act of divine mercy. Jesus intercedes for his executioners, for the religious leaders who condemned him, and for all humanity whose sins make the cross necessary. The phrase "*they know not what they do*" has been interpreted in various ways. Some see it as an excuse based on ignorance of Jesus's true identity. Others view it as a profound statement about the blindness of sin. Regardless, the request for forgiveness is unconditional.

This saying challenges every reader. If Jesus could forgive his torturers in the very act of torture, what does that mean for our own capacity to forgive? It sets an impossibly high standard, but one that becomes possible through the grace that flows from that same cross. The first saying reminds us that the **Seven Last Sayings of Christ** begin with the theme of radical, undeserved forgiveness.

THE SECOND SAYING: "TODAY YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE"

Context and Scriptural Reference

Recorded in Luke 23:43, this saying is addressed to one of the two criminals crucified alongside Jesus. Initially, both criminals mocked him. But one had a change of heart. He rebuked the other criminal, acknowledged his own guilt, and then turned to Jesus with a simple request: "*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*" Jesus replied, "*Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.*"

Theological Significance

This is one of the most comforting passages in all of Scripture. It demonstrates that salvation is available until the very last breath. The thief on the cross had no opportunity for baptism, no chance to perform good works, and no time to attend a church service. He simply recognized who Jesus was and asked for mercy. And mercy was granted immediately.

The word "*today*" is crucial. Jesus did not say, "Someday, after a long purification process, you will join me." He promised immediate entrance into Paradise. This affirms the Christian doctrine that at death, the believer enters the presence of God. The second of the **Seven Last Sayings of Christ** is a powerful testament to the inclusivity of the Gospel and the immediacy of grace. No one is beyond reach, and no deathbed confession is too late.

THE THIRD SAYING: "WOMAN, BEHOLD YOUR SON"

Context and Scriptural Reference

Found in John 19:26-27, this saying shifts the focus from the cosmic to the personal. Jesus, hanging on the cross, sees his mother Mary and the beloved disciple John standing nearby. He says to Mary, "*Woman, behold your son,*" and then to John, "*Behold your mother.*" From that moment, John took Mary into his own home.

Theological Significance

Even in his own excruciating suffering, Jesus was attentive to the needs of others. As the firstborn son, it was his responsibility to ensure the care of his widowed mother. He entrusts her not to his biological brothers, who were not yet believers, but to the disciple whom he loved. This act establishes a new spiritual family based not on blood but on faith. It also highlights the humanity of Jesus. He was fully divine, but he was also a son who loved his mother.

This saying reminds us that the **Seven Last Sayings of Christ** are not only theological declarations but also deeply human moments. They show a man who cared for his family even while bearing the weight of the world's sin. It is a model of selfless love and practical responsibility. Jesus fulfilled the law by honoring his mother, even from the cross.

Context and Scriptural Reference

Perhaps the most anguished of the **Seven Last Sayings of Christ** is recorded in Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34: "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" which means, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" This cry came around the ninth hour, after three hours of darkness had covered the land.

Theological Significance

This saying has been the subject of intense theological debate. Some interpret it as a moment of human weakness and despair. Others see it as the fulfillment of Psalm 22, a Messianic psalm that begins with this exact phrase but ends in triumph. The most profound interpretation is that this was the moment Jesus experienced complete separation from the Father. He took upon himself the sin of the world, and sin separates from God. In that moment, the intimate communion between the Father and the Son was broken so that believers could be reconciled.

This saying gives voice to every person who has ever experienced the silence of God. It validates the feeling of abandonment. But it also points forward. Psalm 22 ends with declaration of God's faithfulness. The cry of dereliction is not the final word, but it is a necessary part of the redemptive work. The fourth saying is the darkest moment of the **Seven Last Sayings of Christ**, but it is precisely in that darkness that the deepest work of atonement was accomplished.

THE FIFTH SAYING: "I THIRST"

Context and Scriptural Reference

John 19:28 records the fifth saying: "*I thirst.*" The Gospel writer adds that Jesus said this to fulfill the Scripture. Immediately afterward, the soldiers offered him sour wine on a hyssop branch. This is a short saying, but it is packed with meaning.

Theological Significance

On a purely physical level, this saying reveals the extreme human suffering of crucifixion. Death by crucifixion involved massive blood loss, dehydration, and asphyxiation. Jesus was truly thirsty. He experienced the full range of physical pain and bodily need. This affirms the reality of the Incarnation. Jesus was not a phantom or a spirit. He was flesh and blood.

On a deeper level, this saying echoes the Old Testament and points to its fulfillment. In Psalm 69:21, the psalmist writes, "*They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.*" Jesus is consciously fulfilling the Scriptures. But there is also a symbolic dimension. Jesus had earlier declared himself to be the living water. Now, the source of living water is thirsty. It is a profound paradox. The fifth of the **Seven Last Sayings of Christ** reminds us that Jesus entered fully into the human condition, experiencing every form of need, so that he could satisfy the deepest thirst of the human soul.

THE SIXTH SAYING: "IT IS FINISHED"

Context and Scriptural Reference

John 19:30 contains what is perhaps the most triumphant of the **Seven Last Sayings of Christ**: "*It is finished.*" The Greek word is *tetelestai*, a single word that carries immense weight. It was a cry of victory, not a whimper of defeat. After speaking these words, Jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Theological Significance

Tetelestai was a common term in the ancient world. Servants would use it to announce that a task was completed. Merchants would stamp it on invoices to indicate a debt was paid in full. When Jesus cried out "*It is finished,*" he was declaring that the work of redemption was complete. The debt of sin was paid. The sacrificial system was obsolete. The barrier between God and humanity was torn down.

This saying is the cornerstone of Christian hope. Jesus did not say, "I am finished" in the sense of being exhausted or defeated. He declared that the mission he had come to accomplish was fully and perfectly completed. Nothing more needs to be added. No further sacrifice is required. The sixth saying transforms the cross from a symbol of shame into a symbol of victory. It is the climactic moment of the **Seven Last Sayings of Christ**, the point at which salvation is secured.

THE SEVENTH SAYING: "FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT"

Context and Scriptural Reference

The final of the **Seven Last Sayings of Christ** is found in Luke 23:46: "*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.*" Having cried out in victory, Jesus now entrusts himself to the Father. He speaks these words with a loud voice, indicating strength, not weakness. Then he breathes his last.

Theological Significance

This saying is a direct quotation of Psalm 31:5, but with a crucial difference. The psalmist says, "*Into your hand I commit my spirit,*" but Jesus adds the word "*Father.*" This is deeply significant. The fourth saying expressed the anguish of perceived abandonment. The seventh saying expresses the confidence of restored communion. The relationship between Father and Son is intact. Jesus dies in an act of trust, placing his life into the hands of the one he called Father.

This saying also demonstrates that Jesus died voluntarily. No one took his life from him. He gave it up freely. He committed his spirit. The cry was loud, showing that he was in control until the very end. The seventh saying completes the journey of the **Seven Last Sayings of Christ**. It begins

with intercession for others and ends with an act of personal trust. It is a model for how every believer can face death: with faith, with peace, and with the confidence that we are held in the hands of a loving Father.

THE UNITY OF THE SEVEN LAST SAYINGS

While each of the **Seven**