

LORD JESUS CHRIST ON THE CROSS: WHAT THE WOMEN HEARD ***

Let us look at something that we all know about, something we love to hear about, something we have read much about, the subject of many sermons and bible studies: The Cross at Golgotha, on Calvary's hill, of The Lord Jesus Christ.

Holy Angels View the Cross with Delightful Puzzlement

The apostle in 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 12 mentions the Gospel, the Good News, preached "through The Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things that the angels desire to look into". I like how the New Living Translation puts 1 Peter 1 verse 12: "And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preach in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen". These holy angels whom apostle Peter talks about were eye witnesses of the treachery and arrogance of Satan who was cast out of the presence of GOD Almighty with a cohort of rebel unholy angels, and who plotted the Fall of Man with the subsequent disastrous alienation from The Creator. The obedient angels puzzled over how The Holy GOD could ever have dealings with wretched, disobedient, sinners deserving of His wrath. How was this ever possible?

When the holy angels saw the Plan of Salvation and its execution, involving God's own sinless Son, and the energies of God The Holy Spirit, they could not stop admiring and wondering at the infinite wisdom of what was unfolding before their very eyes. Golgotha was astonishingly amazing – that HE Who knew no sin was actually made to be sin that we the rogues would be made to have the righteousness of The Lord Jesus, and be counted blameless amazed them.

Apostle Paul's Cardinal Aim in Preaching

Writing his letter to the church at Corinth, a church beset by many, many problems –lack of church discipline, idolatry (chapter 10 verses 14 to 22), gross immorality (6: verses 9 to 11), conflicting loyalties, mistaking the display of spiritual gifts for a sign of true spirituality, doubting the bodily resurrection of The Lord Jesus, lack of concern and genuine love for each other – one would have thought Paul would have chosen any of these problems to major on. But no, Paul chose The Cross of The Lord Jesus Christ as his *sine qua non* ie "If I am to choose one single thing to major on, it is Golgotha, The Cross, Calvary!"

This is how he puts it in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 2 "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified". Again, friends who have never read a bible would appreciate how the New Living Bible renders apostle Paul's concern: "For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified". Nothing to Paul is more important than God's holiness vindicated, and His love displayed.

What the Women heard at The Cross: Seven Sayings

It is a matter of historical fact that as The Lord Jesus hang on the cross all his men, except John, had fled. But the fearless women watched and heard what happened. These godly women who owed so much to The Saviour were the last at the Cross, and first at the open tomb on resurrection day. Let us examine what these faithful women heard. Let us look at the Seven Sayings of our Saviour on the cross. To help us remember exactly what happened imagine a blackboard with 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 written vertically downwards – with 1 on top, and 7 at the bottom. To introduce some symmetry into the sayings (I am obsessed with symmetry), I have noted that the first, the middle, and the last statements were those addressed by The Lord Jesus Christ to GOD The Father. So number 1, number 4, number 7 are words directed to God The Father. Keep that in mind before we look at them in detail.

The two statements of the Lord Jesus between the first and middle statements ie number 2 and number 3 were addressed to particular people. The Lord Jesus' statements between the middle and last ie number 5 and number 6, are statements of fact announced to those standing by to take note. To repeat for us to fix in our minds: Statements 1, 4, 7 made to GOD The Father. Statements 2 and 3 to particular persons. Statements 5 and 6 are pronouncements of fact. Let us now look at what these good ladies heard as part of an exercise of surveying The Cross as Isaac Watts advises us in his hymn [263]

When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Now have you ever seen a surveyor standing still taking only one view? Or imagine yourself surveying some extraordinary spectacle; do you stand still, and not go round the object of admiration? Let us therefore survey the Cross from the angle of what these godly women heard on that spectacular day when the earth shook, and there was darkness for hours, and the curtain in the Temple protecting entry into the holiest of all was split from top to bottom:

Statement 1: **“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”** [Luke 23 v 34]

O what a statement! This does not mean those who pierced The Lord Jesus, and the high priests, and Pontius Pilate. or Judas Iscariot would be forgiven. Of course not! They knew exactly what they were doing. Severe judgment awaits such as them. No, they will not be forgiven. But the centurion supervising the execution, who did not know what he was doing,

and who repented, would be forgiven. There is no forgiveness without repentance. But the repentant were saved, are being saved, and will be forgiven. [[Hymn 565](#)]

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| There is a path of pardon in His blood; | m: l:- l d t l t m l se: l: |
| There is a sure salvation in His blood; | t: d:- d m r d r s d t: d |
| The law's full consummation, a Father's approbation | d: m:- m r d d: t: t: d:- d t l r: r |
| Hear Zion's acclamation! in His Blood, in His blood, | t: d:-l d l m: m: r d r:- d t d:- |
| Atonement and redemption in His blood! | l: f:- f m r m l d:t: l:- |

O come, ye sons of Adam and rejoice!

And trust the God of Abraham and rejoice!

O hasten, happy sinner, to life in Christ for ever,

To bonds that; nought can sever; O rejoice, O rejoice!

In full and glad surrender, come, rejoice!

Statement 2: "Truly I say to you: Today you will be with me in paradise" [Luke 23 v 43]

The women were astonished to hear this. What! The armed robber going to Paradise with The Lord Jesus? What a privilege for the holy women to hear this! The repentant thief, acknowledging his own sin, and realising that The Lord Jesus was unjustly sentenced and convicted, this armed robber repented, was forgiven, and saved. Instantly! These holy women saw a death bed conversion, and rejoiced.

Statement 3: "Woman, behold your son ...Behold your mother!" [John 19 vs 26 & 27]

Mary, standing there grief-stricken, saw and heard her exhausted, suffering son address her personally to advise her to adopt John the apostle as her son. And in the same breath The Lord Jesus said to John "Here is your mother". Impossible to imagine how they both felt at that very moment.

Statement 4 "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? (My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?)" [Mark 15 v 34]

O if ever there was a rhetorical question, this was it. A rhetorical question is a question whose answer is already known. The Lord Jesus Christ knew perfectly well why He was forsaken – the first time ever. He was forsaken so that you and I would not be forsaken. In his hymn "Man of sorrows! What a name for the Son of God, who came ruined sinners to reclaim! Hallelujah! What a Saviour!" [248] Philipp Paul Bliss (1838-76) spells it out beautifully in verse 2

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood;
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

The holy women heard the Son of God scream out the fact that God The Father had wounded Him for sins He had not committed, He paid the price in full, to reconcile us to God The Father.

Statement 5: "I thirst!" [John 19 v 28]

O how heart wrenching for a mother to see her beloved son stretched out on a cross, sweating and bleeding for hours, not having slept a wink all night, in agony, whispering "I thirst!" The one who could produce loads of bread to feed thousands, the one who could turn water to wine, the One who created water to be heard saying "I thirst!". All in fulfilment of a mission – to prove that GOD Almighty is just, and at the same time the justifier of the sinner. Watts again:

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did ever such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Statement 6: "It is finished!" [John 19 verse 30]

This is an amazing statement of Achievement. O, the work that has been assigned Him is finished. The Lord Jesus says 41 times in John's Gospel the reason why He was sent. Please read and mark all the 41 words "**sent**" and you are bound to react as I did at the end, asking myself: "Felix, what have you done with God's messenger?" This statement, number 6 most impressed the women, as we shall see in a moment as we conclude this survey of the Cross.

Statement 7: "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" [Luke 23 v 46]

These were the last words the holy women heard from The Lord Jesus before His resurrection. Grief-stricken they moved away, unaware that the spectacle they beheld was the defeat of Satan - The *death of death* in the *death* of The Lord Jesus on the Cross.

Brian T Williams' Conversion

But I conclude this survey with Statement number 6 "It is finished!", and I want to illustrate it with the true story of my medical school friend Brian Williams, who later became Professor of Public Health Medicine in the University of Sheffield. Brian was a Welshman. We both stayed

at the same Westminster Hospital Medical School Hostel in Brabazon House, 5 Moreton Street, London SW1. He and another friend George Prall used to sit up with me in the night into the early hours of the morning discussing and arguing about spiritual things. He was a “free thinker”, just as George was. One day I invited both of them to hear Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones at Westminster Chapel in Buckingham Gate, 15 minutes’ walk from our hostel. They came, but Brian refused to come to church again for several months. Then one Saturday night Brian said to me: “Felix I want to come to church with you tomorrow evening”. We took ourselves there and, as usual with his Sunday evening sermons, ‘The Doctor’ preached on The Cross of The Lord Jesus Christ. The message was really powerful. The last hymn was Philip Doddridge’s “O happy day that fixed my choice on You, my Saviour and my God!” [525]

As we walked down to Brabazon House I was afraid to open my mouth and ask Brian what he thought of the sermon. He too did not say a word for the 15 minutes we walked down. But just as we entered the hostel, Brian said to me in that beautiful Welsh voice of his: “Felix, The Doctor said, everything required to be done for me to be saved has been done, is *that* true?”

I said “Yes, Brian, just as verse 3 of the last hymn we sang said”

’Tis done! The great transaction’s done

I am my Lord’s and He is mine,

He drew me and I followed on,

charmed to confess the voice divine.

“Please come up into my room”, he said. I went up. Brian knelt down and gave himself to The Lord Jesus Christ. Not long afterwards, George Prall, an Australian, was also saved.

O “It is finished!” indeed. GOD Almighty has chosen that, because of Golgotha, HE would remember my sins no more. HE said so: “For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” [Jeremiah 31 v 34]. This *Divine Voluntary Amnesia* is nothing short of astonishing. My past sins, my present sins, my future sins, God Almighty has chosen not to remember anymore because His Son Lord Jesus Christ has paid the price in full, and given me His complete righteousness. God looks at me as if I have never sinned in my life. Justified! Just as if I’d never sinned; that is how He looks at me dressed in spotless robes He replaced my rags with. “Lord Jesus, Thou hast done all this for me, henceforward I shall live only for Thee” was the Chorus I learnt long ago. As we travel our earthly pilgrimage with its trials, and tribulations, and pain, The Triune GOD will be with us until Glory. What hath GOD wrought!

*** *Substance of Talk given by Dr Felix I D Konotey-Ahulu on Thursday 14th January 2016 at A R Congregational Church, with Kathleen Charles (Mrs) leading the Women’s meeting.*