

The journey of the Cross – A journey leading to Easter 2017

The Last two weeks we started the journey to Cross with four phrases out of seven that Jesus spoke when he was on the Cross, the first was [a word of grace](#) *Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing: Luke 23:33-34*, the second was [a word of compassion](#) *Women, here is your son, and to the disciple, here is your mother: John 19: 25-27*, the third was [a word of hope](#) *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise’” (Luke 23:42,43).*

, the fourth was [a word of desolation](#), *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” (Matthew 27:45,46).*

This week we will continue our journey to the cross with the last three phrases.

[A word of fulfillment](#)

Jesus once told his disciples and the Pharisees a parable about a beggar named Lazarus who went to heaven and a rich man who ended up in hell. So, severe are the torments of hell that not even one drop of water would be given to relieve the agony. Luke 16:19-31 (NLT)

Perhaps Jesus knew already then that he would be describing his torments on the cross. Though offered something to drink Good Friday morning, he refused.

Matthew 27:34 (NLT)

³⁴ The soldiers gave him wine mixed with bitter gall, but when he had tasted it, he refused to drink it.

He was determined to experience the full measure of physical torment that was needed to pay in full the sinful debts of mankind. But he knew also that Psalm 69 had prophesied that the Suffering Servant would be given vinegar to drink. And so, as death drew near, Jesus asked for the drink--not to diminish his suffering, but to fulfill the Scripture: *“Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty.’ A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips” (John 19:28,29).*

Even on the cross Jesus was taking great care to show that the portrait of the coming Savior, painted over the course of many centuries throughout the Old Testament, was accurate in every detail. He came not to discard the Old Testament but to fulfill it and complete it. In his dying moments, the Son of God demonstrated that God keeps his promises.

A word of victory

Have you ever noticed how time crawls when you're sick or undergoing major stress? What seemed like an hour you found out later was only five minutes. Can you imagine how long Jesus' six hours on the cross must have seemed to him? Every minute was an hour and every hour a day. Worse even than the physical torment was the tension over whether Satan would make him crack. His obedience to the Father had to be perfect, compensating for all our disobedience. Even one little sin and all would be lost. No anger, no bitterness, no vengeance fantasies, no hate.

But he didn't crack. Our Champion stayed strong until the end. With intense relief Jesus knew that his death was now maybe just seconds away. With intense relief, he uttered a confident statement of fact that sent the devil howling. "When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ***'It is finished'***" (John 19:30). His suffering is finished. Satan is finished. Our condemnation is finished. Death is finished. The grave is finished. Hell is finished.

When Satan tempts you to despair, rebuke him with the reminder that he lost. He is a spent force. He is not the king of hell; he in fact will be its most notorious prisoner. Forever. Jesus' victory is your victory. It is now locked in the past, and for all his tricks Satan cannot undo it.

You are safe.

A word of trust

Ever see children play the "falling game"? One kid stands about two feet behind the other. The one in front intentionally leans backward and falls, trusting that the one behind will catch her. That momentary buzz of terror is what makes the game fun--you're pretty sure the other person will catch you, but there is still that little jolt of fear and panic that makes your adrenal glands fire.

Jesus had come to the final moment of decision--would he use his almighty power to burst from the cross, self-heal his battered body, and unleash divine fury on his enemies? It is to our everlasting benefit and relief that he surrendered not only to physical torment but to our last enemy, to the dark pit of death. "Darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ***Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' When he had said this, he breathed his last***" (Luke 23:44-46).

He trusted his Father to catch him as he let go, trusting that the holy plan was a good one, trusting that his work had been sufficient, trusting that the Father's promises of resurrection would come true.

Jesus' word of trust can be yours also. Whether you say it or just think it on your deathbed, the Father will catch you. He will keep all his resurrection promises to you too.