

“Into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit”
Luke 23:44-46

What do you say when you are suffering? What comes out of your mouth when you are hurting? Those are not theoretical questions. In the middle of Covid-19, we know what comes out of our mouths when we suffer. We don't have to guess at what we might do and say when we have troubles. We know.

I used to think that I endured suffering pretty well. Then (a number of years ago) I got the flu a couple of times one year and after getting me set up and checking on me, Raye Jeanne graciously (but clearly) informed me, “You're not a very good patient...” My children echoed her sentiment and I was convicted. In a very small affliction I was whining and complaining. How are you doing in your suffering? Are you preoccupied with what you are enduring? Or are you thinking about what the Lord might be doing in your life and teaching you in this? Or even more, are you — like our Savior — thinking about how you can serve and help others?

For six hours one Friday, Jesus Christ endured the greatest suffering that any person has ever endured. His physical suffering was immense, though others may have endured more physically. But no one has received the spiritual suffering Jesus did as the sin-bearer who took the wrath of God for all the sin of all who would ever believe in Christ. His suffering was past our comprehension or imagination.

Yet all the while He was suffering, Jesus was ministering to those who were at the cross by His prayers and short teaching statements. In seven distinct moments while on the cross, Jesus made statements that inform us what kind of Savior He is, and also how to live. The seven words He spoke while suffering revealed His final perspective and final declaration of what His work on the cross was accomplishing.

On Good Friday for the past six years, we have been considering each of these seven statements in turn:

- ✓ “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing”
- ✓ “Today you will be with me in paradise”
- ✓ “Woman, behold your Son...(to the disciple) Behold your mother”
- ✓ “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”
- ✓ “I am thirsty”
- ✓ “It is finished”

The first three words concern His personal relationships — a prayer for His executioners, a promise to the thief (His fellow-sufferer on that day), and a provision for His mother.

The next three words concern His work of salvation — the cry concerning His moral suffering (“My God...”), the groan concerning His physical suffering (“I am thirsty”), and the triumphant declaration of victory (“it is finished”). The final word concerns His fellowship with and trust of the Father in all things. Tonight we come to that final statement: “Father, into Your hands I commit my Spirit” (Lk. 23:46). In this short and final declaration, Jesus offers (at least) **two messages**:

1. “Father:” A Word of Fellowship

Throughout the gospels, Jesus only called God “**Father**.” In fact, that familiarity infuriated the Pharisees — they repeatedly objected, “how dare Jesus presume to refer to God as ‘Father?’” (Jn. 5:17-18; 8:38ff; 10:30-31). They wanted to kill Him for His familiarity with God. And then on the cross, as the sin-bearer, Jesus referred to His Father not as “Father,” but as **God**. Something had changed. Indeed it had. While His position in the Trinity was not diminished by one particle, He cried out as the One who was carrying the debt of our sin — my sin and your sin. He was not enduring a heavy load of sin. He was enduring the infinite weight and penalty of sin. What we could never atone for with an eternity of wrath poured out against us, He endured from God in that moment. So He cried out, as we would, to God.

One question about that cry is, “will He be permanently changed and will His relationship with God be permanently changed?” Will God again accept Him not just as the sin-bearer, but as the Son? For three hours, that question was unanswered and it frankly seemed hopeless. From **the sixth to ninth hour** (noon until 3 p.m., v. 44) there was **darkness** not just in the proximity of the cross, but throughout **the whole land** of Israel (and perhaps beyond). The darkness was pervasive.

The imagery of darkness has parallels to God’s wrath that is coming in the Day of the Lord (Joel 2:10; **Amos 5:18, 20; 8:9**). The darkness on that day indicates something drastic has happened. This is no normal day. It was not a sudden storm or a natural eclipse of the sun that would block the sun’s light for a few minutes. It was a divine blackout that demonstrated the fullness of God’s wrath against sin. The heavens were revealing and shouting the wrath of God against sin. For three hours, in the brightest part of the day, it looked like the darkest part of night. God is angry against sin. Will He relent?

★ This single word, **Father**, tells us what God the Father thinks of Christ and His Work. It has been accepted. He was and still is and always will be the Son. When Jesus says, **Father**, the transaction is complete; the relationship and fellowship is restored. As one writer has said, “The cup [of wrath] is drained: the storm of wrath has spent itself: the darkness is past, and the Saviour is seen once more in communion with the Father — never more to be broken.” [Pink, *Seven Sayings...*; my emphasis.]

Is it significant that the Father accepts the Son? Yes! It is significant because it maintains the identity of the Trinity. God is still God. And it also serves as the basis for our adoption as God's sons. If Christ is not accepted as the Son, then we will not be accepted as sons. If Christ is not loved and embraced by the Father, then we will not be loved and embraced. But if Christ is accepted, then we also will be accepted. This was Jesus' prayer right before He went to the cross (**Jn. 17:20-22**). If Christ is not united to the Father, then we will not be united to the Father either. Whatever the Son has with the Father, if we are in Him, we will be adopted into that same kind of relationship. And His acceptance with the Father means we will be accepted. That is why Jesus' words to Mary in the Garden after the resurrection are so profound (**Jn. 20:17**). The Father is still His Father, and now He is also our Father. The Son has fellowship with the Father, and we also have fellowship with the Father.

2. "Into Your Hands:" A Word of Trust

These words are a quotation of **Ps. 31:5**. The verse is both a lament and a thanksgiving from David. David had been the object of lies and traps (Ps. 31:4, 18, 20); he was scorned by enemies and friends (v. 11). So he sought refuge in God (Ps. 31:5, 13). He entrusted himself to God.

As Jesus bore the wrath of God against sin and now was about to give Himself up in death, like David, He was entrusting Himself to God the Father to do what was right with Him. In fact, Jesus demonstrates His trust of God with two phrases — ***into Your hands*** and ***I commit My spirit***. He willingly places Himself in the powerful hands of God to protect Him, and He deposits and entrusts His spirit (his life) to the Father.

It is also worth comparing what Jesus says to what David says:

- ✓ Notice what Jesus kept from Psalm 31 — ***I commend My spirit***. This is significant because it points to the trust the Son has in the Father and the act of redemption that Christ accomplished. It also suggests that this is all a voluntary act. His death is His gift for sinners and His choice. That gift of His life is reinforced in the next phrase — ***He breathed His last***. He willingly stopped breathing; by an act of will, He gave up His life. John is even more clear (Jn. 19:30) — ***He bowed His head and gave up His spirit***. He joyfully sacrificed His life, controlling even the exact moment of His death.



His life is not taken from Him by force, but He willingly gives up His life by grace.

- ✓ Notice what Jesus added to Psalm 31 — ***Father***; David could not call God His Father in the same way that Jesus did, so David calls Him ***YHWH*** and David calls Him the ***God of truth***. Jesus supremely can address God as ***Father***, and now, at the end of His act of redemption, that fellowship and union is still intact.

- ✓ Notice what Jesus omitted from Psalm 31 — **You have ransomed Me, O Lord.** He omits this, because as the sinless Son of God, He had no need for personal salvation and redemption. He was not dying because He deserved death; He was dying in the place of us who deserved only death so that He might give us life.

One more observation about this quotation: in the beginning of His ministry, Jesus fought back the temptations of Satan with Scripture (Mt. 4). And the last words of His life are Scripture. From start to finish, His life and ministry was about the Word of God and from start to finish, the Word of God sustained Him. Scripture was powerful and adequate for the Son of God; brothers and sisters, that means it is also powerful and adequate for us in our trials and temptations.

★ Was it wise for Jesus to entrust Himself to the Father? Did the Father protect and keep the Son? Three days later the Son was raised from the dead. Forty days after that the Son ascended to Heaven where He was seated at the right hand of the Father, far above all earthly powers and above every name that is named. He is there as King of kings for the rest of eternity. Did the Father accept Him? Yes, friend. The Father accepted the Son. The Father is trustworthy.

Jesus trusted the Father. We can trust His Father, who is also *our* Father (Jn. 20:17)!

“The cross reveals the love of God as nothing else in the universe could! We must passionately weave this truth into the fibers of our consciousness for our soul’s health. We must never fall into the delusion of thinking that the suffering was not as great for him because of the ontological fact that he was God. He did it as a man, among men, in total (and exemplary) dependence upon the Father. His pain was alleviated by nothing. If anything, it was heightened by his soul’s health....the realness of the cross says to us that we are loved.” [Kent Hughes]

We are loved, and we can trust the One who loves us.

As we are still daily contained and constrained by Covid-19 and as we still suffer daily, the final words of Jesus from the cross are hope-giving and confidence-building for us. God is our Father even as He is Christ’s Father and God is trustworthy for us even as He was for the Son.

Listen to what one writer said of this passage over 70 years ago:

My friend, you are in a world that is full of trouble. You are unable to take care of yourself in life, much less will you be able to do so in death. Life has many trials and temptations. Your soul is menaced from every side. On every hand are dangers and pitfalls. The world, the flesh, and the devil are combined against you; they are too much for your strength. Here then is the beacon of light amidst the darkness. Here is the harbour of shelter from all storms. Here is the blessed canopy which protects from all the fiery darts of the evil one. Thank God there is a refuge from the gales of life and from the terrors of death — the Father's hand — the heart's true haven. [Pink, *Seven Sayings...*]

When Jesus said, ***into Your hands I commit My spirit***, He was safe.

Because Jesus said, ***into Your hands I commit My spirit***, we are safe. Trust Him.