

Pastor Chris Carr: Words From The Cross | April 27, 2025

INTRO: A persons “last words” are intriguing... at least to me they are. There’s something mysterious about them. Do you ever find yourself curious about the last words spoken before someone passes?

- **George Washington**, the first president of the United States of America said, *“Tis well”*
- The great Renaissance artist & architect, **Leonardo Davinci**, supposedly said upon his deathbed, *“I have offended God and mankind because my work didn’t reach the quality it should have.”*
- The last words of British Politian **Winston Churchill** (‘the Bulldog’) were, *“I’m bored with it all.”*
- Another set of famous last words that a certain group of people will be very familiar with... *“You can’t win, Darth. If you strike me down I shall become more powerful than you can possibly imagine.”* **Obi Wan Kenobi**
- Back to reality... Apple founder and iPhone inventor **Steve Jobs** said, *“Oh wow. Oh wow, oh wow.”*
- German Reformer **Martin Luther** wrote, *“We are beggars, this is true.”* (History doesn’t leave us last spoken words, but rather, a handwritten note found in his coat pocket next to the bed)
- **Billy Graham**, the great Evangelist & Pastor of our time said, *“I love you.”* (in response to his granddaughter)
- And last but not least, one of my personal favourites... *“You must tell people what we have learned here. We must tell them that there is no pit so deep that God is not deeper still. They will listen to us Corrie, because we have been here.”* **Betsie Ten Boom** (said to Corrie Ten Boom)

There’s something mysterious about last words... we tend to view last words as a synopsis of sorts; a revealing a summary of the individuals life and core beliefs. While this can be true at times, it’s not always the case. However, last words remain very interesting to say the least.

- Moreover, there’s something revealing about the way a person carries themselves in their final moments of life. Perhaps it points towards who they really were all along, and what they really believed in? How did they face death (by whatever means it came) and what can we learn about them from this? (ex. Polycarp). How did they respond to suffering, to trials and to pressure?
- **You see, suffering has a way of REVEALING what’s really there, underneath the surface of our life.** Certainly this is true of those who undergo suffering & hardship *at any stage of life*, including ourselves if we’re willing to take an honest assessment.

Today I would like to draw our attention to the **last words of Jesus spoken from the cross**. Between the four Gospel accounts we have a clear picture of what transpired on that fateful day. Matthew, Mark, Luke & John offer us eye-witness testimonies of what took place in the final hours of Jesus’ life, including His SEVEN “final word” statements while He hung on the cross.

What can we learn from these final **words from the cross**? (👉 that’s the message title for today)

Complete List: ***we’ll lump some together for sake of time, and cover some more than others.*

1. *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”* **Luke 23:34 (NIV)**
2. *“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”* **Luke 23:43 (NIV)**
3. *“Woman, here is your son... Here is your mother.”* **John 19:26-27 (NIV)**
4. *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* **Matthew 27:46 (NIV)**
5. *“I thirst!”* **John 19:28 (ESV)**
6. *“It is finished!”* **John 19:30 (NIV)**
7. *“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”* **Luke 23:46 (NIV)**

Listen to how the Gospel writer, Mark, concludes His account of Jesus’ struggle on the Cross.

³⁷ With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. ³⁸ The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died (OR some manuscripts say: "saw that he died with such a cry"), he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

Main Point: Every life (and subsequent death) tells a story, and every story invites a conclusion. When Jesus breathed His last, even the hardened centurion—the very man who hours earlier drove the nails through His arms and feet—looked upon the crucified Christ and declared, 'Surely this man was the Son of God!' This was his conclusion, but the question remains – what will your conclusion be?

Big Question: What will others conclude when they see your life & death?

- **Our aim & prayer should be: May they see Jesus.**
- Trials have a unique way of revealing what's really there. So, what comes out of you in the midst of hardship? What's *beneath the surface* of your life? These Seven statements reveal what was beneath the surface of His life! And we find our life in His life.
 - o So let's dive into these Seven lifegiving "words from the Cross".
 - o **PRAY**

#1-2 "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Lk. 23:34 (Forgiveness)

"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43

Luke records these two powerful statements of Jesus, spoken to the very ones who hurled insults upon Him & Crucified Him; yet these words of forgiveness and grace extend beyond their fixed moment in history towards every sinner in need of forgiveness. That includes us. All of us!

Isaiah wrote: *"...he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."* Isaiah 53:12 (NIV)

- **Intercession simply defined:** prayer or petition on behalf of another person!
- Forgiveness is nothing *new or unexpected* for Jesus. Forgiveness was a MASSIVE emphasis throughout his ministry. Consider for example just a few of His teachings on the subject.
- ⁴³ *"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I tell you, **love your enemies and PRAY FOR those who persecute you,** ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven..."* Matthew 5:43-45 (NIV) Again, forgiveness was not unexpected. Only thing surprising is... He actually did it! Jesus **PRACTICED** what he preached! **We so often fail at this.**
- ****DNA level of Prayer!** ⁹ *This, then, is **how you should pray...*** ¹² *And **forgive us our debts (sins), as we also have forgiven our debtors (those who have sinned against us).*** Matthew 6:9, 12 (NIV)
 - o **Matt. 18:21-35 is another famous example** (i.e. "not 7, but 77 times"). After He told the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, which is a VERY sobering teaching on forgiveness!

Back To The Foot Of The Cross: It's STUNNING to see the heart of God displayed in these statements from the cross. Father, forgive **THEM!** This is certainly a miraculous, monumental display of love and selflessness from God in Flesh. However, we too are called to this same standard of forgiveness!

Jesus "set the bar" when He concluded his teaching on loving our enemies: *"Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect."* Matthew 5:48 (NIV) Jesus' teaching bewildered those who heard it!

- **Objection 1:** *"Yeah, but... This is JESUS... He's in a league of His own! Certainly God wouldn't expect us to extend forgiveness like this... we're only human."* Jesus was in a league of His own; yet He certainly does expect (and explicitly command) us to follow his example, including to offer forgiveness to those who would kill us. Is this impossible??

- **Consider this example from Luke (same author – *might these be connected?*) ...**
 - o In Acts 7, Luke records the story of the first Martyr, Stephen's, & his last words. There're an eerily similar prayer of forgiveness! ⁵⁹ *While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."* ⁶⁰ *Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. Acts 7:59-60*
 - o **Could it be that the words from the cross offer us language to fuel our prayers in trial??**
- **Objection 2:** *"Yeah, but... you don't understand what they did... they don't deserve forgiveness!"*
With respect to not understanding, you are absolutely right. I may not understand what was done, nor how those events have affected you... I am sorry for whatever you faced. But I do know this: bitterness and unforgiveness will destroy you from the inside out.
 - o **Forgiveness is not saying what happened is okay!** But if Jesus modelled forgiveness to those who crucified him, there is no higher bar. **Forgiveness isn't fair** (*we don't deserve it*) and **Forgiveness isn't optional**.
- **Coventry Cathedral, England, November 14, 1940** - Reverend Richard Howard famously wrote "Father Forgive.." on the wall of bombed out Cathedral, choosing forgiveness instead of revenge.ⁱ

Called To Be Unoffendable: ***let's look at the thief on the cross*

The Gospels reveal that BOTH criminals crucified alongside Jesus engaged in blasphemous mockery towards him. We sometimes get the idea that one was a 'bad guy' and the other a 'good guy'... not so. **Both** were hardened men, going as far as to mock a man being crucified right next to them. That's low.

- Yet something must have happened to one of the men to changed their heart, and it happened in the span of time he spent next to Jesus on the cross. Again, every life (& subsequent death) tells a story, and every story invites a conclusion. **What was his conclusion on Jesus?** ⁴¹ *We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.* ⁴² *Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."* Luke 23:41-42 (NIV)
 - o I've thought about this moment recorded in Scripture many times, and I am so thankful the Lord chose to include it for us. It's a profound reminder that we aren't saved by any amount of good deeds we preform, nor by how much we know about God and/or the Bible. What did this man do with his life other than crime? Yet, we are saved BY GRACE.
 - o I always think of the Allister Begg clip where He talks about this man arriving at Heaven and being ask "How did you make it? Who let you in here?". His only response (our only response) can be: *"The Man on the middle cross said I CAN COME!"*
- **What struck me about it this time is the humility of this exchange, both ways!** The humility of the thief to cry out to Jesus for mercy after all he had done & said. And Jesus' response! **WOW!!!**
 - o Only one criminal asked for pardon – and Jesus freely granted it. No holding it over his head... no guilt trip or making him work for it. Only forgiveness & assurance... wow!

#3 "Woman, here is your son." To John He said, ***"Here is your mother."*** Jn 19:26-27 (**Compassion**)

- **This statement reveals the COMPASSION of Jesus in a unique and beautiful way.** John writes, ²⁵ *Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother...* ²⁶ *When **JESUS SAW his mother** there, and **the disciple whom he loved** standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son,"* ²⁷ *and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. Jn 19:25-27*
 - o First, notice that **"Jesus SAW his mother..."** Despite the agony of His own trial, Jesus still SAW OTHERS, including his Mother. How He loved her!

- Think of the pain Mary must have carried at the cross. Consider the words of Simeon to Mary years prior at the temple, as she cradled the infant Jesus in her arms: *“³⁴ This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”* Lk 2:34-35
 - o **This prophetic word finds its specific fulfillment at the foot of the cross.** Consider the sword that pierced a Mother's heart. Imagine the horror as she watched her Son die.
 - o To be the mother of Jesus, the Son of God, the Passover Lamb sent into the world to die for the sins of humanity, was a hard calling. **Notice how Jesus SAW Mary in this moment.**
- Despite every last possession and basic human right being stripped unceremoniously from Him on the cross, he never shrunk back nor disengaged. If anyone had reason to withdraw — to become self-focused on their own suffering — surely it was Him! And yet, even in the agony of the cross, Jesus remained attentive to love and duty. As the firstborn Son, Mary's child, He looked upon His mother with care. Then, with intention and compassion, He entrusted her to John — ensuring she would not be left alone. Even in His final moments... still giving, still honoring, and always loving.
 - o **How easily we disengage/withdraw from 'Love God, Love People' in a trial. Is that you?**

He saw John too: As best we can tell from the Gospel accounts, only one of Jesus' Twelve core disciples made it to the cross... only one. Though at the Last Supper they all boldly declared they would stand with Jesus in his trial no matter what happened... only John, affectionately known as “the Disciple whom Jesus Loved” walked the path with Jesus which led to Calvary. Only John found himself at the foot of the cross, surrounded by several of the Faithful Women, including Jesus' Mother, Mary.

John earlier wrote: *Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.* John 13:1

- Jesus loved John. Jesus loved everyone. Again, it's a HUGE example to follow, but it's our calling!
- **FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH > LOVE GOD, LOVE PEOPLE! Don't let hardship extinguish love.**

#4-5 “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Matthew 27:46 (Divinity, “Fully God”)

“I thirst!” John 19:28 (Humanity, “Fully Man”)

- In these next two statements I would like to focus our attention on the **DIVINITY & HUMANITY** of Jesus. **This is core to the Christian faith: Jesus was God in Flesh. Fully God. Fully Man!**
- Jesus' *humanity* seems obvious given the nature of these two statements. But how about Jesus' Divinity? How can we arrive at such a conclusion given His prayer *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* and statement, *“I thirst!”*? Let's unpack this, starting with the first statement.

Did you know that Jesus is quoting a Psalm here? “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?” Psalm 22:1 (NIV)

- I remember reading this line as a brand-new Christian & being confused. Wasn't Jesus supposed to be sinless and without fault? It seemed to me like Jesus was having a crisis of faith on the cross... as if he was turning on God and accusing him of not being good. But this is not the case!!
 - o Jesus was quoting from Psalm 22, referencing this well-known prayer of David and Messianic prophecy of a suffering one, very similar to Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 53.
- **Reading Ps. 22 in context reveals something spectacular:**

- **Yet** (context: in the midst of suffering) ***you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises.*** Ps 22:3 (NIV) – Jesus was not failing at the end of His race. In fact, **the opposite is true!** His eyes remained FIXED on the Father and completing His mission.
- ***16 Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. 17 All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. 18 They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.*** Psalm 22:16-18 (NIV) – Jesus is the **fulfillment of this stunning Messianic prophecy!**
- I encourage you to read through Psalm 22, meditating on it line by line! Just like Isaiah 53, Zechariah 12 and many other Old Testament passages, Psalm 22 functions as “*breadcrumbs along the path*”, pointing to JESUS, the Messiah!

Jesus was **FORSAKEN**, so we could be **FORGIVEN**!

“My GOD, My GOD, why have you forsaken me?” was His prayer. Not ***“Peter, why have you forsaken me?”*** As painful as the rejection of His closest friends must have been, it was the weight of our punishment resting on His shoulders, the separation from the Father which He felt, that crushed Him.

- Jesus’ life can be summarized as PERFECT UNION with the Father as a result of His sinlessness. But, ***“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, SO THAT in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*** 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)

Jesus then said, ***“I thirst!”***. Practically speaking, this displays Jesus’ Humanity (as well as His Divinity, as seen in yet more fulfilled prophecy). Extreme dehydration would have set in by this time given the excessive blood loss. But beyond the physical effects of dehydration he was experiencing, Jesus was pointing to a pervasive issue known to humanity as a whole – a dryness & thirst deep within the human soul, which is especially evident in the midst of trial.

- Recently I had a hard week, as I am sure the vast majority of us can relate to. I was feeling the weight of it all, and in the back of my mind was the task of preaching in the coming weeks which only weighed me down more. Then one morning during a prayer time, these words of Jesus came to my mind. I sensed the Lord prompt me to repeat them as a prayer, “Lord, I thirst!”
 - Why are we so prone to babbling and heaping up empty words in prayer? Jesus offers us a prayer that bypasses the unnecessary and gets straight to the point; “I thirst!”.
- **Consider these words of Jesus from John 7:37-39, *37 On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” 39 By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.***

Jesus knows what it is to suffer. He said, “I THIRST”. Yet he says to us, “come to me and DRINK!”

#6-7 *“It is finished!”* John 19:30 (Authority)

***“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”* Luke 23:46 (Surrender)**

Authority & Surrender: Jesus displayed BOTH! We tend to think these things are opposites. NOT SO!

What comes to mind when you hear the word AUTHORITY? Jesus said, ***“ALL AUTHORITY HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME...”*** (Matt. 28:18). How about the word KING? POWER? CONTROL? How about THRONE?

Here is an excerpt from our recent Way Of The Cross Night from YA BETA Worship Night & HSYN:

On Palm Sunday the crowds had their eyes fixed on their promised Savior King, the who would set up His throne and establish His rule and deliver them from the hands of their enemies... Jesus had His eyes on something much different. King though He was, he knew where His road led. Not to a throne or lavish palace... not yet, at least. For Jesus, this was a military campaign against evil forces... but not in a way that anyone else understood but Him. Jesus' had a different vision. A heavenly vision. An upside down, radical vision. He saw the Father's will, and SURRENDERED TO IT. Jesus saw... the cross.

- The Apostle Paul later said, *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing..."* If we're honest, this is how we think... We like roads that lead to victory, roads that lead to a throne. But a road that leads to a cross?? NOT A CHANCE! That's death!
- Paul went on to say, *"...but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."*
 - o Jesus see's something we don't... BEFORE HE EVEN ARRIVED IN JERUSALEM, He saw what lay at the end of the road. He saw the cross. And yet, he chose to walk that road.
 - o WHY? For love. For he knew that the only way that He as King could truly save and deliver His people... was to voluntarily lay His life down for them!
- *For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2. Before the throne, He chose the cross.*

And the crowds that once chanted "Hosanna" soon began to yell... "Crucify Him!"

We don't see crosses like we see thrones... BUT GOD DID. It requires an Upside-Down kind of vision, which is at the heart of the Gospel Message. The cross is where our failure and His Final Words meet. From the cross, like a Royal edict proceeding from the lips of Heaven's High King, Jesus declares – IT. IS. FINISHED.

The cross is where our failure and His Final Word meet. We come with our faults and sin, and he meets us with FORGIVENESS and LOVE. We betray Him. He befriends us. All of us like sheep have gone astray and wondered off, but Jesus is the Good Shepherd who leaves the 99 to find the 1 (every time). We fail him, and yet his final words are IT... IS... FINISHED! Not 'you are finished'... IT (your failure) is FINISHED!

Jesus, and Jesus alone has AUTHORITY to say these words!

Conclusion: *And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"* Mark 15:37-39 (NIV)

Main Point: *Every life (and subsequent death) tells a story, and every story invites a conclusion. When Jesus breathed His last, even the hardened centurion—the very man who hours earlier drove the nails through His arms and feet—looked upon the crucified Christ and declared, 'Surely this man was the Son of God!' This was his conclusion! What is ours? I believe this is the question Mark is driving home.*

As I reflected this week upon all that I had studied this week, and these Seven final statements of Jesus from the cross (each one profound & prayer worthy), I was led to worship. My mind kept coming back to this centurion as well as the thief on the cross. The Gospel writers WANT US to notice their conclusions.

Thief on The Cross: *"But this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into YOUR KINGDOM."* Luke 23:41-42 (NIV)

The Centurion: *"Truly this man was the Son of God!"* Mark 15:39 (NIV)

And I couldn't help but think about the Parable of the Lost Sheep... Jesus told of a shepherd that was missing one of his sheep, so he left the 99 in the pasture and set out in search of the 1 lost sheep. Seems a bit excessive, doesn't it? Statistically he has more than enough. Yet this shepherd, driven by compassion and care for his lost sheep, sets out to find it. We get the sense this shepherd was willing to risk life and limb to find it. What if that's Jesus on the cross?

Big Q's: 1) What's your conclusion on Jesus? 2) *What will others conclude when they see your life?*

Weekly Challenge: Prayerfully reflect on the following...

1. Do you need to work through forgiveness and/or bitterness this week?
2. Has a trial or hardship caused your love to grow cold? Have you withdrawn from loving God & people wholeheartedly? Ask God to help you to SEE OTHERS even in your own hardship.
3. Read through Psalm 22, a Psalm that speaks about suffering and points to Jesus on the Cross. Ask God to speak to you through His word about what you are facing.
4. Are there any of Jesus' statements from the Cross that God wants to work into your prayer life?

BONUS ROUND: JESUS GETS THE FINAL WORD! Today we looked at what Jesus said from the cross. Let us never forget the Sacrifice that He made and the love that poured out that day. Yet, remember that this is only HALF the Gospel. Jesus died on the cross. His body was broken for us. He was placed in a grave and laid to rest, yet that's not where he stayed. That's not where the story ends. On the third day, at break of dawn, the Son of Heaven ROSE AGAIN. Oh trample death, where is your sting? The angels roar for Christ our King! AND... maranatha, the King is coming back!

"...¹⁷Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

ⁱ <https://gsgi.info/archive/886-forgiveness-and-reconciliation-provost-howard-the-man-who-made-coventry-the-city-of-peace-forgiveness-and-reconciliation>