

Some Last Words Part 5

Luke 23:39-43

As we again consider some of the last words that Jesus spoke as He hung there on the cross, we read in John chapter 19 verse 28,

²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" (John 19:28)

One of the better known studies about the seven utterances that the Lord Jesus spoke while on the cross was given by a preacher and writer of about a century ago, Reverend Arthur W. Pink. The Lord gave him such excellent Spiritual insight.

And as we continue to consider these words of the Lord Jesus, I hope to include some of that dear saint's thoughts and explanations.

Those words of the Lord Jesus again . . .

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May we begin by considering why the Holy Spirit chose to preface the words, "I thirst" with the phrase, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled".

Here with these words, God is again inviting us to know and to trust that He truly is eternally "sovereign" and He is eternally "providential" in all His handling of the matters of mankind . . . that while yes, "free will" and the "secondary causes" of men are always at work in most every situation, He, our God, and He alone is sovereign over all.

And by giving us these words, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled", God is declaring to us clearly that everything that is taking place here with Christ on the cross is part of "His divine plan", an indelible step by step plan that cannot be changed or set aside, but put into place by the counsels of His Trinity long before the world began.

And because He knows that there is a weakness within the souls of men to easily "forget" who He is and all that He has done for us, with simply said words like these, He graciously keeps reminding us about it, over and over again.

But unfortunately for us, even as we earnestly read through these truths, our minds are often dull and they fail to grasp all their meanings and their intents, especially the words of the Old Testament prophets.

I confess that even though it is my deepest desire to read God's precious word daily and to hide it away in my heart, even in my sincerest of efforts I still grasp only a small portion of what I have read, with many of the mysterious truths getting lost within the wanderings of my mind. And sometimes even forgetting what I have read only moments after I've read it.

Thankfully, God knows our frame and He graciously condescends to the weakness within our soul and provides reminders for us.

Here, with these simple words, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled", God is prompting our minds to go back and to dig deeply into the scriptures and to find out who Jesus truly is, to find that He truly is the long-promised Messiah, the one spoken about so many times throughout the Old Testament.

Recall those precious words in Luke chapter 24 that describe how as He was walking on the road to Emmaus with Cleopas and another man, the Lord Jesus,
²⁷ beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. (Luke 24:27)

Oh dear friends, we need to know and understand that all these things that were taking place with the Lord Jesus were not just incidental to that day and time. But instead, that those things were all a part of an ever-developing larger Divine Plan of God that was providing eternal redemption for the souls of men and women throughout all of time, for you and for me.

Yes! Yes! The prophets had been telling the people of that day that this man, the Lord Jesus would be coming to them, a Man like no other, a Man who by His birth, His Life, His death and His resurrection could wipe away every sin that they, that we, could accumulate within our wretched souls.

It was so very plain then and it is still so very plain now if we will simply open the eyes of our hearts and hear His truths.

Listen to some of those words, these penned by the Psalmist David in Psalm 22. And please understand that these words were written over a thousand years

before these events of the cross were taking place. And here Jesus is experiencing these exact words as He suffered and died there on that cross. Listen, in Psalm 22 Jesus said,

¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws. (Psalm 22:15)

And then in Psalm 69, He said,

²¹ They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. (Psalm 69:21)

I confess that I don't easily perceive when I am reading prophecy, especially when it is intertwined within some current personal involvement or dilemma of the prophet who is giving the prophecy.

Here in the Psalms, David is caught up in his own personal struggles, but at the same time, he is prophesying about Jesus. Did David even realize that he was giving forth prophecy about Jesus? We can't know for sure. But he was!

And God wants us to read these words now and "know for sure"! And folks, a little at a time, as our hearts become receptive to the unction of God's Spirit, His pointing back, as He is doing here, will bring it all into perspective.

Our Lord's pointing us back to these prophecies declares to us in bold and undeniable terms that Jesus is eternal. Yes, He was a man, but not just a man. He was and will always be the eternal God over all creation.

May I pause here and quote some of the words of Arthur Pink from his book "The Seven Sayings of Jesus from the Cross"! In there, Arthur Pink said of Jesus that . . .

Both the deity and the humanity of the Savior were each given in the Messianic predictions. Prophecy represented the coming One, the Lord Jesus, sometimes as divine, and sometimes as human. As the Divine One, In Isaiah 4, that Jesus would be the Branch "of the Lord". In Isaiah 11, He is "the stump of Jesse. In Isaiah 9, the Jesus would be the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, and the "Prince of Peace". In Micah 5, He was The One who was to come forth out of Bethlehem and be Ruler in Israel, the One whose goings forth had been from the days of eternity. In Malachi 3, the Messiah, Jesus, was none less than Jehovah Himself who was to come suddenly to the temple.

As a man, In Genesis 3, the Messiah , Jesus, would be the woman's "seed". In Deuteronomy 18, He is said to be a prophet like unto Moses. In 2 Samuel 7, the Messiah, Jesus, is a descendant of David. In Isaiah 42, He was Jehovah's "servant". In Isaiah 53, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, was "the man of sorrows".

And it is in the New Testament that we then see these two different sets of prophecy come together.

The one born at Bethlehem was the divine Word, the Lord Jesus. And His incarnation does not mean that God manifested Himself as a man. The Word, the Messiah, actually became flesh. He became what He was not before, though He never ceased to be all He was previously. He who was in the form of God and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, "made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men".

The Babe born there in Bethlehem was Immanuel—God with us. He was more than a manifestation of God. He was God Himself manifest in the flesh. He was both Son of God and Son of Man. Not two separate personalities, but one Person possessing two natures—the divine and the human.

Oh dear friends, when I read words like these written by Reverend Pink, I'm so reminded of those words of Jesus when He said to Cleopas that He was spoken about so often in the Old Testament.

We really, really must understand that this Jesus who was hanging there on that cross was all of these! He was truly all of these! He was the Messiah, God Himself in the flesh, the Great "I AM", the same One who spoke from the burning bush to Moses. That was our God, the Lord Jesus, the One who declared, "Before Abraham ever was, I AM".

Jesus was and He is, "the bread of life", "the way, the truth and the life, and no one can come to the Father except by Him".

My dear friends, we really, really must understand what is being said in these few words that are being spoken here. All of these words, these claims, these prophecies are declaring to us that the Lord Jesus is the eternal God in the flesh.

And all of the plans that were unfolding before us there on that cross were all part of God's Divine Plan that He made within the Trinity before this world ever began, the plan for your and my salvation.

And these words, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled", are inviting us to look back and to see and to discover for ourselves the eternal nature of the Lord Jesus, that from the beginning, this Jesus who was hanging there suffering on that cross truly was and truly is "God in the flesh".

And now, for us, for you and for me, knowing all this to be true, we should respond simply but resolutely with an Amen! Amen! And Praise the Lord!

... Look with me again at this precious verse! Following on to those words are more very simple words, "I thirst". Again, these are such simple words, but they are words that tell us something about Jesus that are very, very important to both His "Being" and to the salvation of our souls! "I thirst".

May I stop and ask you . . . as you've read words such as these, does your mind have the tendency, as does mine, to sometimes simply pass right on by them, accepting them only for the surface meaning that they give, that as Jesus hung there, parched by the sun for three hours before the darkness came, that He became very thirsty. Because isn't that something that would happen with all of us? We would thirst.

But dear friends, we must never be so "undiscerning" as we read God's word.

The simple fact that this is recorded as one of the seven last utterances of the Lord Jesus declares to us that they are words of precious meaning, words deserving of a deeper understanding.

And also, we need to continually remind ourselves that each word in these scriptures is "Spirit breathed". And being Spirit breathed" they are filled with Spiritual meanings that go beyond our natural understanding. That is why each time that we approach these scriptures, we need always to seek the presence of the Holy Spirit to help and to guide our understanding.

Those familiar words that I quote for us so often from 1 Corinthians 2 instruct us that . . .

⁷ . . . we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, ⁸ which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

¹⁰ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:7-10)

And then also those other familiar words from 2 Timothy 3 that assure us that . . .

¹⁶ All Scripture (every word) is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

So then, knowing that these words, "I thirst" were not just incidental to Jesus' suffering, but were instead given to us for a very special meaningful purpose, what is the Holy Spirit telling us about the Lord Jesus with these simple words, "I thirst"? "I thirst"?

First of all, they tell us exactly what we have just said, that Jesus was in every way human, a simple man, a man with most all of the frailties of every other man. He hungered and He thirsted. Yes, He was God, just as our "Confession of the Faith" expresses, He was very God of very God. But He was also human, very man of very man, both Son of God and Son of Man.

And no, try as we may, the mind of man has never been able to fully comprehend such a marvelous concept, being too lofty for our intellect to grasp. And Jesus Himself also warned us in Matthew 1:27 that, "No man knows the son, but the Father (does)".

And that is so very, very true. There is so much about the person of Jesus that we can't even begin to fathom with our human understanding. But He does invite us to consider more. And here, on the cross we see both His deity and His humanity, both in perfect union within one person.

But may we clearly understand that the Lord Jesus was not just a "divine man", as other prominent religions have made Him out to be, the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons.

And neither is He a humanized God. Jesus was and ever is the God-man. Forever God, and now forever man.

That is a very, very important distinction to understand. And that is part of the purpose for our understanding of each of His words spoken as He suffered there on the cross. So then, may I say it another way . . . As Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us, He also, never, for a moment, ceased to be God!

And though He did for a while strip Himself of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, He never once laid aside His divine attributes. He simply took to Himself that which He was not before—perfect humanity.

A question . . . why is it of the utmost importance that we understand and embrace the reality that Jesus is both God and Man, Son of God and Son of Man?

Simply put, unless Jesus was both Son of God and Son of Man, He would not have been able to accomplish the purpose for which He came to be among us. “He came to seek and to save those who are lost.” And to do that, He would absolutely need to be both Son of God and Son of Man.

Please bear with me in the words that I am saying. They can be difficult to convey and I confess that I barely understand them myself. But I do know that they are faithful words of truth.

Jesus absolutely needed to be Son of God because it is God and God alone who is worthy to pay the true penalty for sin. If you and I, being human, were to bear the true penalty for our sins, we would have to spend the rest of eternity in hell. Sin is that awful, that vile to God. Man is not worthy to pay his own debt for sin. That is why he must spend forever and ever in the burning fires of hell.

That means that we need someone else to pay our penalty for us, a substitute who is worthy. And that someone else must be Jesus.

Jesus is God Almighty, righteous and Holy, without spot, stain, wrinkle or blemish. And because of that, He and He alone is sufficient to pay the full and due penalty for the debt of sin, our sin.

But then also, He must be Son of Man, because it is only in His humanity that He can actually shed His Blood and die and be that sacrifice of atonement that is necessary for the full payment for our sins.

God is God and He is Spirit. And as a Spirit, He cannot shed His blood. And we are told clearly in Hebrews 9 that “without the shedding of blood there can be no remission for sin”.

And for that reason, if you and I are ever to be saved, Jesus must die. And He must shed His own blood so that you and I might have life.

It is as simple as that! Jesus needed to be Son of Man, to shed His blood that we might have life. And in His suffering cry, “I thirst”, His humanity is being clearly witnessed to us.

I hope to continue with more about this next week as we study the words, “It is finished”. But for now, may I close by asking each of us to consider, are we certain that we have personally received the gift of salvation that His shed blood has provided? Have you personally bowed your knee in surrender to the Lord Jesus?

In the Book of John chapter 1, we are told that two things must take place within our souls before our salvation can actually take place. We are told there in verse 12 that we must “believe on Him”, the Lord Jesus, believe that He is, that He is God who was born into flesh, believe that He suffered and died there on that cross to take away our sins personally, believe that on the third day He was resurrected and is now at the right hand of God the Father. “We must believe!”

And In the Book of Romans chapter 10, we're told that along with believing in Him, we must confess Him with our mouths. And if we do that, then we are saved from our sins, eternally saved!

So may I say this again, for all that Jesus did there on that cross to save our souls, our part is to “receive” Him and to confess Him as our Savior and Lord. It is then that His sacrifice for us becomes effectual, saving us from our sins.

All that remains is the question, have you, have I “believed” and have we “received” the Lord Jesus and all He has done within our own heart and soul?

I am convinced by God's Holy Spirit who abides within me that Yes, I have! But what about you? If you have any doubts within your soul, would you please pray along with me as I pray this closing prayer?

Dear Lord Jesus, . . . Yes, I do believe, but help my unbelief! Help me to surrender my heart and my soul to you completely, and please save me from all my sins! I pray this in your name Lord Jesus . . . Amen!

Amen!