

SEVEN WORDS OF GRACE (KJV translation)

1. *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.* (Luke 23:34)
2. *Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.* (Luke 23:43)
3. *Woman, behold thy Son. Behold, thy mother.* (John 19:26, 27)
4. *My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?* (Matth. 27:46 Mark 15:34)
5. *I thirst.* (John 19:28)
6. *It is finished.* (John 19:30)
7. *Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit.* (Luke 23:46)

1. *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.* (Luke 23:34)

These words were spoken by Jesus when the soldiers nailed Him to the cross. The soldiers were doing bad things, crucifying an innocent man; but I would suppose they thought they were doing a good thing obeying the orders given to them.

Why do you do the wrong thing? Is it that sometimes you think you are doing the right thing? It happens with raising children, running a business, driving to a new destination, and making decisions in daily life. You can't see the big picture, your judgment is blurred. It's like having very poor vision and attempting to pour a glass of water from the pitcher, only you miss the glass. It doesn't matter the reason, it was still a mistake. The soldiers and you do wrong.

Sometimes you wonder immediately what you're doing is right or wrong. You're not fully convinced either way—such as should I give a donation to organization XYZ? But you do anyway. Perhaps some of the soldiers already at the beginning wondered if they really should be crucifying this man, but proceeded as ordered. Whether it's the soldiers or you, it's still wrong.

Sometimes you deliberately do the wrong thing—driven by emotion, defiance, or pride. Again your vision has been blinded by Satan's lies. If you could see the biggest picture, what such action really means or leads to, it may be different. Adam and Eve couldn't see the big picture when they ate from the forbidden tree. But it was not an excuse. God held them guilty—as He did the soldiers, and you and me.

What a blessing that the Savior goes to the Father in our behalf. *Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.* A word of grace! Grace—his unmerited, undeserved favor.

2. *Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.* (Luke 23:43)

The two criminals hung there beside Jesus. Matthew tells us that both of them mocked Jesus, "Save yourself and us." Luke tells us that one of them had a change of heart. He reproved the other and asked Jesus to remember him in His kingdom. Jesus said, *Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.* What a turn of events! He would go to heaven! One might think that here is a fellow who really doesn't belong in heaven; but because he got a last minute reprieve, he slipped in. One is be tempted to say, He's a misfit in heaven.

Will you be a misfit in heaven? Personal pride wants to answer, Me a misfit? No way! I belong there because . . ." But the reality is you and I are all misfits in Christ's Kingdom. How many reasons can you tell me why you don't belong there? I have a feeling the list is long. Yet, in His grace, Jesus says to the thief and to you also, *Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.*

Paradise (a Persian word), a beautiful "park" where one may walk and see all the attractive and interesting items on display. "Paradise" is related to the word "parade." You will be privileged to see it!

3. *Woman, behold thy Son. Behold, thy mother.* (John 19:26, 27)

Do you suppose Jesus' mother Mary was one of His biggest fans? I would think so. She is here at the cross to see her dying son and God's dying Son, unable to figure it all out. Why? Jesus loved and was concerned about His "limited," helpless, and needy mother, even as He hung on the cross in agony, knowing death was awaiting. He was not "too busy" for His mother. Have you ever said that to a child, or to your spouse, or to your neighbor, "I'm too busy right now"? And sometimes it's exactly the truth, you are just too busy and can't help. Jesus was not "too busy" for His mother, nor is He too busy for you. One time when Jesus was told His mother and brothers were looking to talk to Him, Jesus said, pointing at the multitudes, "Hese are my mother, and my brothers and my sister." By grace you are an object of His special care. Do not be afraid to bring your troubles, sorrows, and and sins to Him. "Cast all your cares upon Him for He cares for you (I Peter 5:9).

4. My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? (Matth. 27:46 Mark 15:34)

In the depth of His suffering, likely during the three hours of darkness, Jesus cried out in desolation for His Father. He was physically suffering crucifixion and spiritually suffering punishment abandonment for the sins of the world. “Why have You forsaken Me?” Were these words spoken in exasperation? “But Father, I didn’t even do it! You are dumping it all on Me!” True--none of it was Jesus’ fault, yet He got the rod. Didn’t He know what was going on? Certainly, He was, and is, God. But in His State of Humiliation He laid aside the full use of His Godness, His divinity. In His humiliation, He got tired, hungry, and thirsty. In His humiliation, He said, No, not the angels nor the Son know the Last Day—only the Father.”

Jesus was taken aback at the depth of suffering He bore. According to His human nature, He was “amazed” at the mass of sin He bore, and the full extent of His Father’s anger for it. He was at this times truly alone. That is hell—to be completely away from every blessing of God. Do you remember the line from the hymn “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted”? “*But the deepest stroke that pierced Him was the stroke that justice gave.*”

We think of God’s grace as being a pleasant thing. But these bitter words also express His grace. Jesus took that suffering for you—misfit that you are. In Him you have the Father’s love, in spite of what you are.

5. I thirst. (John 19:28)

As His deepest suffering ended, Jesus was indeed thirsty. Have you ever been in great agony, lying on the floor in the bathroom? Or outside, hurt? The body reacts to excruciating pain with sweat. Jesus must have been “sweating bullets,” if you will. Psalm 22 tells us that Jesus’ mouth was dried up like a potsherd, little chunks of broken and dry pottery. Psalm 22 also tells us that His tongue was clinging to his “jaws.” Have you ever taken medication with the side effect of dry mouth? Even speaking is tough. The discomfort! Once again, Jesus spoke words of grace. Jesus tasted the depths of thirst before God—to be totally lacking—dried up before God—for you. And that same Jesus is the one who says to you, as He said to the Samaritan woman who had come to draw water at the well of Sychar, *Who drinks of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst again, but shall become a well of water springing up to everlasting life!* Water for life in Jesus. The soul needs the spiritual water of life. Jesus thirsted on the cross, physically thirsted. He also thirsted for your forgiveness and brought about your salvation. Such a Savior of grace!

6. It is finished. (John 19:30)

As His life was drawing to a close, Jesus knew His entire mission was reaching closure. *It is finished!* The end was at hand, relief ahead, mission accomplished. You know the feeling. When the last calf is born, when the last calf is branded, when the last dishes are done, when the last payment is made on the mortgage or bill, or the last shovel of gravel! Jesus had accomplished the entire mission. Now His earthly life was also about to end. Was there disgust in His voice or His heart? No. In Hebrews we read, *For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, scorning its shame.* Talk about grace! Talk about a gift, a completely unmerited gift! He finished it all for you. There is *nothing* left for you to do—in fact nothing you could do, could have helped in the first place. What words of grace! I have heard more than one person wistfully say, “I hope I’ve done enough to get to heaven. I think I’ve been that good.” If a person honestly thought about that, it would lead to despair. But in Jesus, It Is Finished!

7. Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit. (Luke 23:46)

At death, Jesus entrusted Himself to His Father. The two have always been at one, never at each other’s throat. When Jesus was baptized at age 30, God the Father spoke from heaven, “This is My beloved Son whom I love. Hear Him.” Jesus’ body was about to rest in the grave for three days. His soul was about to go to heaven—the load of sin He had been carrying was gone! The doors of heaven were now open wide. These words are also important for you. In Jesus, the doors of heaven are also open for you. When you die, your body will be committed to the ground. Your soul will go to be with your Father. And at the great day of Resurrection, your body will be awakened from the grave, and you will be taken body and soul by the Father’s hands into His eternal Kingdom! Such words of grace! Wonderful words of grace on Good Friday.

So be it! Amen!

Pastor Kanzenbach---