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**Transcriber's Note:**

The original printed edition of this book included a short introduction dated 15 August 1923 by "John Fredericton", the Anglican Bishop of Fredericton. We have not been able to determine the life dates of the bishop, and as a result cannot confirm that the introduction is in the Canadian public domain. We have therefore omitted the introduction from this digital edition.

**FOR US.**

**Meditations on the Seven Words  
from the Cross.**

**BY**

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**TO  
MY WIFE,**

**Whose simple piety and love have  
helped me to understand  
the Greatness of the  
Love Divine.**

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### **PREFACE.**

The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us that "there is no new thing under the sun," and probably he is correct; but it is significant that the words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ take on new meaning as the centuries roll by.

At the same time it must be recognized that a preacher to-day cannot hope to have new and startling ideas to impart upon these great words from the Cross, since men of all schools of thought have already dealt with them. Of necessity, therefore, there must be much that will be "common ground." In any case, originality, when considering such a theme, is not greatly to be desired, but, as Dr. W. A. Brown points out in one of his volumes, "the value of a book consists largely in the personal equation—the extent to which the old question has made fresh appeal to some new experience." That is all the author would venture to claim for these studies.

That, when delivered, they did make a fresh appeal to his hearers, is a fact; and it is with the hope that, in some humble way, these messages may bring other hearts nearer to Him Who is Saviour, Lord, and God, that they are sent forth to a wider circle who gather round the central Cross on Calvary's Hill. When prepared there was no thought in the author's mind of their being published, and simple outlines only were used when first delivered to his own congregation at week-day services during Lent. Then, later, his friend and neighbour, Canon Armstrong, asked that they be delivered on Good Friday in Trinity Church in this city, and on that occasion they were taken down verbatim by a stenographer, and are now sent forth with very little alteration. This fact accounts for what they may lack in literary finish, but the author has felt that to rewrite them might be to destroy the freedom of the spoken utterance, and, after all, the message is a more important thing than the literary finish. Furthermore, it is impossible to give detailed references, but at the end of the volume a list of works will be found, to the authors of which the present writer is indebted for inspiration, illustrations, and quotations; and to all of these he would record his grateful thanks. If he has failed to acknowledge any other, it is an oversight which he trusts will be forgiven.

In conclusion, the Author would take this opportunity of expressing his very deep appreciation to his Bishop, Dr. Richardson, for having so graciously written the Introduction, and for his words of encouragement.

Also he has to thank his friend, Revd. Prof. C. V. Pilcher, M.A., D.D. (Oxon.) of Toronto, for helpful criticisms, and his old college chum, the Revd. George F. Saywell, M.A. (Cantab. and Toronto), of London, England, for reading the proofs.

A. L. F.

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# FOR US.

## THE FIRST WORD.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

We are met together at this time to bow in lowly adoration before the Cross of Christ, and to meditate upon the seven last words of our dying Lord. Our service must, of necessity, be simple and quiet. We want not to hear the word of man. Rather do we want to hear the Lord Himself speaking to our hearts, and if we are to hear His word, we must enter into the spirit of the moment.

To-day we look out upon a sin-stricken world, but was it not thus stricken on that day when Christ, the Son of God, was crucified on the Cross of Calvary? The Saviour was "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He "bare the sin of many"; He died for the whole world, and He "made intercession for the transgressors."

As we look upon the crowd gathered round the Cross we see that it is composed of two groups—there are those who are the friends of Jesus, and there are those who are His foes. So it is to-day. In the great, seething masses of humanity, restless and careless as they pass by the Cross of Christ, some are His friends, and some are His foes. Let us ask ourselves at once—to which group do we belong? Do we "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame"? As we gaze upon that tree, standing there on the hill, and as we behold the suffering Saviour, does the sight cause us to kneel before Him in adoration? Do we listen with reverence to those great words—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?"

Let us pause for a moment and consider what has taken place. Jesus is led captive from the Garden of Gethsemane to the hall of the High Priest; from thence He is taken to Pilate, the Roman Governor, who declares that he finds no fault in Him at all, and passes Him on to Herod the Tetrarch, that He may be judged by this man who rules over Galilee, because Jesus is a Galilean; but Herod, too, can find no fault in Him, and returns Him to Pilate. Finally, the cry of the mob prevails, and Pilate pronounces judgment—He must die.

See, there, the Roman soldiers bringing Him to the Hill of the Skull. He cannot carry His Cross, but Simon, a Cyrenian, bears it after Him. The Cross is placed upon the ground. The Victim is laid thereon, and the nails are driven through His hands and feet. That Cross of Sacrifice is erected and given the central position, while the crowds, mocking and jeering, hurl their taunts at the crucified One, and cry—"He saved others, Himself He cannot save."

The first vision we get is of the awful cruelty and horribleness of sin. Here the Sacrifice is made, the Just dies for the unjust that He might bring us to God. That Sacrifice must be applied to the hearts of men and women to-day that their lives, in turn, may be purified and sanctified.

The second vision we get is from the words themselves:—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Surely here we have a realization of the great love of Christ. After the work had been completed, and a lull came in the jeers, then those words were spoken—marvellous words. Seneca, the profane writer, speaks of the awful curses that were wont to fall from the lips of crucified men, and Cicero tells us of the tongues of victims who were to be crucified being cut out that those who carried out the execution should not hear the accusations that might fall from the lips of the dying. How different it all is with Christ! The Cross is the witness to the intensity of God's love for man. It is indeed a visualization of the meaning of those great words in St. John's Gospel:—"God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God is waiting to be gracious, and to forgive us all our "sins, negligences, and ignorances" if only we will come to Him with repentance and true faith. Nay, more; while we turn our backs upon Him, His Hand is stretched out towards us, because He is the Father of Him Who died for the sins of the whole world. God is ready and willing to forgive all who



come unto Him by Christ—not because of our weeping, fasting, or prayers, but because the Saviour died upon the Cross. We cannot purchase forgiveness. It is a gift—God's gift—and it is for us to accept it from those pierced Hands of love.

Brethren, this has been the inspiration of the followers of Christ all down the ages. When the first martyr, St. Stephen, was about to yield up the ghost, he lifted his eyes to Heaven, and his face was as the face of an angel while he prayed to his Father, his God, to have mercy, and to forgive those who did the wrong. Yes, and a young man who watched by the clothes of those who stoned Stephen was so impressed that, in the end, he yielded his allegiance to Stephen's Lord, and became the great Apostle to the Gentiles.

Again. Mary Morrill, that wonderful missionary, went out from the United States of America to lift up the Christ of God in that great land of mystery we call China. All went well until the Boxer Rising in 1900, when she was taken captive and beheaded by the Boxers. Thus her life ended in an apparently fruitless effort. Ah! no. Amongst the cadets in that Chinese army who witnessed the scene was one named Feng, who was so thrilled by her fortitude and spirit of loving forgiveness that he could never forget it. The sacrificial love which stood revealed in that Christian witness moved in his heart, and the Spirit of God gave him no rest until, finally, he knelt before the Saviour of the world seeking pardon and deliverance, and, yielding himself to the crucified Christ, crowned Him Lord and King. Feng is one of the outstanding men in China to-day, and a General in the Army.

Two lessons are clearly taught in this first word from the Cross. First, The Forgiving Love of God.

Through sin, man's communion with God has been destroyed, and it is God alone Who can restore man to his proper relationship with Himself through forgiveness. Thus does man become a child of the Father.

You remember how, during the days of His earthly Ministry, the Master addressed the sick of the palsy, borne of four, in the words, "thy sins be forgiven thee"; and, again, to the woman taken in shame He said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee"; and now, the very first word He speaks from the Cross is Forgiveness. What a revelation! "He died that we might be forgiven."

In this word we see how Jesus Christ, the Son of God, meets man's first need, for until the sinner is forgiven he cannot be raised up from the death of sin. The love of God, which lies at the root of this forgiveness, longs to see man freed from the burden and penalty of sin, and made strong to serve Him with happy heart and ready will that the Kingdom of righteousness and peace may come to all men.

Let us, then, accept this forgiveness so freely offered to us in the Gospel, and let us never forget that:—

"All our iniquities on Him were laid,  
All our indebtedness by Him was paid;  
All who believe on Him, the Lord hath said,  
Have everlasting life."

The second lesson that we learn from this Word is, in our turn, to forgive.

It is an encouragement to us to know that when we are called upon to endure seeming defeat and ill-treatment, as Christians we have nothing to fear; for

"Christ leads us through no darker rooms  
Than He went through before."

It is absolutely true that, in the darkest experiences of life, God has provided for us a way out. Let us not, therefore, use harsh judgment regarding those who do us wrong, for all such harsh judgments are bad for our spiritual lives. They burn up, yea, they crucify in us the Spirit of Him Who hung upon the Cross, and they do harm to others who, because of them, fail to see in us that spirit of forgiveness that is the very essence of the Christian faith. If you will but consider for a little you will find that, generally speaking, wrong-doing is the result of ignorance; and ignorance, in its turn, is due to man's pride and self-will. He will not humble himself, he will not learn from Him Who is "meek and lowly in heart."

Christ our Saviour, Christ our King, "was despised and rejected of men," "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." "He made Himself of no reputation ... when He was reviled, He reviled not again"; when He was despised and crucified He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

You remember how the Apostle Peter came to Jesus and asked Him the question, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times"? and the Master made reply, "Until seventy times seven."

We all know how hard it is for us to forgive, but have we considered why we find it so difficult? It is because of our self-will, and no rule, no order, can save us from that. One thing, and one alone, conquers self, and that is love.

If you study St. Paul's great chapter, the 13th of 1st Corinthians, you will see how clearly he brings out this point; and if you read Professor Henry Drummond's little book, "The Greatest Thing in the World," you will find how beautifully he puts forward this great theme, that love must conquer the world; and the reason why love must conquer the world is that "love is of God" and "God is love."

A few years ago great companies of the flower of our Canadian manhood assembled in this Church to dedicate themselves to God, and King and country. Let us, following their noble endeavour, dedicate ourselves to Him Who is King of Kings and Prince of Peace.

Let us so translate this first word of Christ on the Cross into action that the world may know, not simply that there is a fight to be fought, but that the Crucified lives, and loves still.

"No pained reproaches gave He to them that shed His blood,  
But prayer, and tenderest pity, large as the Love of God.  
O depth of sweet compassion! O Love Divine and true;  
Save Thou the souls that slight Thee and know not what they do."

## **THE SECOND WORD.**

"And Jesus said unto him. Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

This second Word, spoken by the Saviour as He hung in agony upon the tree, is a word of promise.

The two malefactors who were crucified, one on the right hand, and the other on the left, had railed on Jesus. Then one of them, moved, doubtless, by some inner call of conscience, ceased his railing, and cried instead, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." And Jesus said unto him, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

The attitude of Jesus must have impressed this dying man as being utterly different from that of himself and others, and it may be that, through the scoffing, he had discovered the explanation. In the hour of his extremity his conscience had awakened, and he turned to the Saviour for succour. He is one to whom Browning's words would apply:

"Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows,  
But not quite so sunk that moments  
Sure, though seldom, are denied us,  
When the spirit's true endowments  
Stand out plainly from its false ones,  
And apprise it if pursuing,  
Or the right way, or the wrong way,  
To its triumph, or undoing."

It is at such a time that the soul cries from the depths of its being, "Lord, remember me."

There is an interesting old legend told in connection with this thief. The story runs that when the Holy Family was in flight, going down to Egypt, they were stopped by two robbers. The first robber desired to take everything from them that was worth taking; but the second, drawing near to the woman, and beholding the face of the Holy Child Jesus, stayed the hand of his fellow, and thus the Family escaped in safety. It is recorded that this second robber, ere the Family had left them, looking upon the Child, pleaded that if, some day, he were in difficulties the Child would save him. It is only a legend, but there is a touch of truth, perhaps, hidden in it.

The Jewish belief was that, when a righteous man died and came to the gates of Paradise, the gates opened wide, not only to receive the righteous man, but all whom he would. Here, perhaps, we have the background of the thief's hope when he made his prayer to God our Saviour for a place in the Messianic Kingdom.

As we consider this second Word we see that there is, first, a Confession; then a Prayer; and then the Answer to the prayer.

The robber made his confession; for, turning to his fellow robber, he said: "Dost thou not fear God?" We are told in Holy Writ that "fear is the beginning of wisdom." The first sign of penitence is revealed here in the thief's thought, not for himself, but for his brother's safety. "Dost thou not fear God?" Woe to the soul that remains cold, and unresponsive to the moving of the Spirit of God through conscience. This was the crucial moment for these two men. The first thief was awakened to his own and his brother's condition. It is not recorded of the one appealed to that he made any response, but the speaker did, and so, having expressed his confession in that indirect way, that he was unworthy and that he feared God, he is led on to say, "we indeed" suffer "justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds."

Notice there is no glossing over the hard facts of the evil committed and for which they are being punished. After all, there is no punishment so great as the gnawing agonies of a guilty conscience. Here, in the Presence of the Son of God, the thief's sins rise up before him, and condemn. Indifference gives place to remorse, and remorse to repentance and confession. This malefactor knew instinctively that if the Redeemer could forgive those who crucified Him, He might have mercy upon him. So, in this hour, while struggling with death, he turns to Jesus, and breathes out his prayer, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom."

That is the first indication of the new life in the soul. It must express itself in humble prayer. "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." There was the consciousness of need for himself, and, furthermore, in this prayer we see that he had faith, for he says, "when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom."

Brethren! When we pray, do we pray as did this dying thief? The darkness of Calvary was, for that man, lighted by a great hope. Hope that, even at this last hour, he might be granted a place in the Kingdom of Righteousness.

From what we know of the Saviour we may judge that such a prayer must have been of great comfort to Christ Himself. Amid all the insults and agonies of His crucifixion, in this dread hour, a soul is reaching out to Him for help. "Oh," you say, "it is only a malefactor repenting at the eleventh hour." Yes, a malefactor, but a penitent malefactor.

The thought occurs to us—how could this poor, wretched criminal be with Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, in His Kingdom? We think of the life he had lived, how diametrically opposed it must have been to Christ's life in thought, intent, and action. And yet, if we but consider, we will see that, relatively, there is little difference between the case of the thief and that of the rest of us. Christ is the All-Holy One; we are sinful souls. If He can save the souls of men to-day, He could save that soul on Calvary.

It was with this thought in mind that the poet wrote:—

"Oh, how can I, whose native sphere  
Is dark, whose mind is dim,  
Before the Ineffable appear,  
And in my naked spirit hear  
The Uncreated Beam?"

—and you know what the answer is:

"There is a way for man to rise

To that sublime abode;  
An Offering and a Sacrifice—  
\* \* \* \* \*  
An Advocate with God."

And Christ's answer? "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

We are told that the word Paradise is derived from a Persian word, meaning a garden about a palace. The Jews were wont to think of Paradise as the Garden around the Temple of God.

Further, we know that Christ must have made it very clear to them, as He has made it clear to us, that He is the Door into the realms of light. And so, there, as He was being crucified, He became the Door of Entrance into Life and Light for this wanderer. The same may be your experience—and mine.

"Upon the Cross the robber prayed;  
The Son of God swift answer made:  
'Yea, thou shalt rest, I truly say,  
With Me, in Paradise to-day.'  
Hear, in Thy love, my contrite cry:  
That malefactor, Lord, am I;  
If Thou should'st mark deeds done amiss,  
My sin would prove more vile than his.  
One only truth can cheer my soul;  
Thou, Lord, didst die to make me whole:  
The sacred stream from Calvary's Hill  
Can cleanse e'en this foul heart from ill.  
Now, from the rood exalted high,  
Thou reignest King above the sky:  
What time I tread the path of woe,  
Think on Thy servant here below.  
Each morn I fain would hear Thee, Lord,  
Speak to my heart this royal word;  
'What though on earth thy flesh may be,  
Thy soul shall sup to-day with Me.'  
When comes at length mine hour of death,  
Thy Voice shall soothe my latest breath;  
This, all my heart's desire suffice—  
'To-day, with Me, in Paradise.'"  
—(Icelandic Passion Hymns.)

This second Word from the Cross is, indeed, a Word of Promise, because Christ gives, in His answer to that cry, more than was either desired or deserved. Let us, then, take to heart some thoughts from this second Word.

The first thing that strikes us is the place of conversion. "Did ever the new birth take place in so strange a cradle?" The hour of death is a bad time to repent and turn to God, and yet the Spirit of God is ever present to pardon and to deliver. No human conditions can arise where the love of God may not seek and save the most sinful and degraded. God is ready to meet the soul's deepest need, whenever and wherever that soul turns to Him.

The story of Francis Thompson, the brilliant author of that haunting poem, "The Hound of Heaven," illustrates the point. Thompson was the son of an English medical practitioner. After years of fruitless study, he descended to the lowest stratum of society, and became an outcast and beggar, selling matches and laces in the streets of old London. One day he appeared in his rags and dirt at the office of a great city editor, who, in spite of his unkempt appearance, saw in Thompson a man, a genius, and, above all, a soul for whom Christ died on Calvary.

So unaccustomed was this ill-clad prodigal to be treated, not only with consideration, but with love, that for a time he could not believe it to be real. When, at last, it dawned upon his dull consciousness that love was seeking him out, he yielded to its claims, and became a new man in Christ Jesus. Old things had passed away, behold! all things had become new! Francis Thompson, the despised prodigal, was found of Him Who opened the door of Paradise to the dying thief, and from henceforth Love, redeeming Love, was his theme.

"When men shall say to thee, Lo, Christ is here!  
When men shall say to thee, Lo, Christ is there!  
Believe them; yea, and this—then art thou seer  
When all thy crying clear  
Is but: Lo, here! Lo, there!  
Ah! me, Lo, everywhere."

Secondly. The thief's prayer and its answer suggest to us this great fact—that no soul is ever "past redemption," for Divine Love can reach out and save to the utmost.

At the same time, let us beware—the hour of death is a bad time for repentance; and yet, I would ask of you who are alive to realize, in the dark days when it may be your privilege, as it will be your duty, to watch beside the dying, the wonderful opportunity that is yours at that time. There is a power and influence which you may exert then, that may stand for all Eternity. Some word of yours may help the sin-laden soul to stretch out the hand of faith to the Christ Who died. For, Brethren, let us always remember what has been pointed out so often, that it is not knowledge that is the vital thing, but faith in Jesus Christ. We must love, if we are to know the Divine. The important thing is not WHAT I believe, but IN WHOM I believe. As Oxenham has so well said:—

"Not what, but Whom, I do believe,  
That, in my darkest hour of need,  
Hath comfort that no mortal creed  
To mortal man may give!  
Not what, but Whom!  
For Christ is more than all the creeds,  
And His full life of gentle deeds  
Shall all the creeds outlive.  
Not what I do believe, but Whom!"

The thief cried, "Lord, remember me." The answer came across that space between the two crosses, "To-day, shalt thou be with Me."

And so it is with us. The thief only asked as his one lowly prayer, to be remembered, but Christ had watched him, and knew his heart, and had led him on. He met him with far more than he dreamed of, according to His own great heart of love.

"A Cross—and one who hangs thereon, in sight  
Of heaven and earth....  
In his first agony and horror he had joined  
With them that spake against the Lord, the Lamb  
Who gave Himself, that day, for us. But, when he  
Met the look of those calm eyes—he paused that instant;  
Pale and trembling, stricken to the heart,  
And faint at sight of Him....

At length the pale, glad lips have breathed  
The trembling prayer—'O Lord, remember me.'

Oh, strange and solemn joy  
Which broke upon the fading face of him  
Who there received the promise:—'Thou shalt be  
In Paradise this day, this day, with Me.'

Thus it was  
That day on Calvary. Oh, solemn joy  
Upon the faint and fading Face of Him  
Who dies a Victor there, so strong to save:  
And on the pardoned face, what mourning love,  
What awe and thankfulness!

'And He shall stand, at last,  
Upon Mount Zion, with the shining host

For whom He dies to-day. Thus MUST I look  
Upon the joy before Him—else His woe  
Would slay my soul this day.

For I am come to Him—  
To Him, at last; and He has given me REST,  
According to His Word. Yea, hanging here,  
In sight of heaven and earth, a man cast out,  
And dying this slow death of pain and shame—  
I rest—I rest—in Him."  
—(B.M.)

## THE THIRD WORD.

"He saith unto His Mother, 'Woman, behold thy Son.' Then saith He to the disciple, 'Behold, thy Mother.'"

In the first Word Christ's thoughts turned towards the multitude; to those who represented to Him, as they represent to us, a world sunk in sin.

In the second Word His thoughts turned towards the dying thief who, repenting of his evil deeds, looked to the Christ for succour.

In this third Word the Saviour turned to the little group of friends who stood near the Cross. They stood there helpless, it is true, but sympathetic and full of love. There were there, first, the three Marys; Mary, the holy Mother of Jesus; Mary, the wife of Cleophas; and, Mary Magdalene; and with them stood John, the beloved disciple, the only one of the little band who would come near.

Thomas it was who, at an earlier day had said, "Come, let us also go that we may die with Him"; but Thomas was not there. And Peter, the bold and blustering, who cried, "Though all may deny Thee, yet will I never deny Thee," he also failed Him; but the women kept their tryst. Why? Because their love for Him was deep and strong. And, Brethren, when we think of love, let us remember that all true love has its roots in the love of God.

When Jesus was asked, "Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" He answered in two words, love God, and love your neighbour. Yes! and while Christ hung upon the Cross enduring agony indescribable, called upon to give up His life, and all that life held dear; even then, His thoughts were not towards Himself but towards others. Therein is revealed to us the very heart of God.

Christ's disposition was love, love through and through; and true love is an abiding thing, not affected by surroundings. Love that is real, love that is manifest in our human relationships, at its very best, is but a reflection of the Divine.

"Love ever stands with open hands,  
And while it lives, it gives:  
For this is love's prerogative;  
To give, and give, and give."

There are three thoughts arising out of this third Word from the Cross that we might well consider.

The first is that here Christ shews us that when God calls us to some high and holy task, He does not mean us to fail in the ordinary duties and relationships of human life. His supreme work on earth was the salvation of mankind, and He has now reached the crisis in that great work, but He does not forget His Mother, the dearest of earthly friends. He cares for her, He comforts her. Surely we have here an exhortation to family love. Human love, which is a reflection of the

heavenly, is shewn to begin at home.

"Woman, behold thy son."

"Son, behold thy Mother."

In one of his books, Charles Dickens portrays a woman who is so interested in African boys and girls that she forgets her responsibilities to the children in her own home. But that is an almost unheard of thing in a Christian family. We shall not soon fall into that error in these days. Yet there is a real danger to-day of our neglecting the value of the family. Truly it is ordained of God. Family life and love are sacred things; upon the family is built the nation, and upon the nation is built the peace and well-being of mankind. And it is of the eternal law of God that the family be held sacred, and that the duties to the family shall never taken second place, and shall always be dominated by love.

Secondly. There is a thought here that love centres in the individual first. Out of all the multitudes that accompanied with Jesus and were wont to come and hear Him preach, He chose seventy men to be His disciples, and sent them forth as His ambassadors. Out of that seventy He chose twelve to be nearer in their relationship with Him, that He might so teach them that they, in their turn, might carry on the work that He should leave. And, finally, out of those twelve men, He chose one, John, who alone remained faithful. Oh, Brethren! I believe that, more and more, the Church has to lay emphasis on the individual.

What is wanted is the transformation of society, so that sin and shame may be done away with, and weakness and defeat give place to strength and victory.

It is this very thing that Christ set out to do. Between man and God, through sin, a great gulf is fixed, to bridge which the Redeemer laid down His life upon the Cross. It is essential, therefore, that we make every effort to cast out all that vitiates society. We must diligently seek to change the environment and material conditions of men wherever these are detrimental to their well-being. We must participate in elaborate schemes for the amelioration of conditions which are immoral, or unsanitary; but when all these factors have been attended to, the vital issue remains.

A regenerated Society necessitates a regenerated individuality. In other words, each individual must be brought into personal relationship with Jesus Christ. A Christian society is simply a society where Christian individuals predominate. It was through the individual that Christ started to lay the foundation of the Kingdom of Heaven amongst men, and it is through the individual that the masses can be reached to-day.

It is time for all who profess and call themselves Christians to get rid of the idea that the Kingdom can come by leaving the work to the Church officially, and expecting that, through the organized services and the sacraments, the world can be won for Christ. We must have the services and the sacraments, official representatives, and organizations; but we need individual effort as well. Every Christian is called upon to be a soldier of Christ, and has promised to fight manfully against the world, the flesh, and the devil; but there are too many slackers who crawl into their dug-outs, well underground, and leave the fighting to be done by a few official artillery men—i.e., the clergy.

If Christ is God—then, in the name of all that is holy, I challenge you this day to awaken out of this sleep of apathy. Cast aside the works of darkness, and gird you for the fray. The forces of evil that crucified our Lord are at our gates; yea, they are in our very midst.

Let us arise and strike for God and His Church, for King, and for country. Yea! for our own salvation, that this world may be ransomed and Christ's Kingdom of love and peace prevail.

Thirdly. We learn from this third Word that God blesses those who are ready to receive His blessing. There are no favourites with God. God is no respecter of persons; He loves all. Christ died for all, but some are prepared for greater things than others. John, alone, stood by the Cross, and so he was honoured above the others, and entrusted with the care of the Lord's Mother.

What about our devotion to Jesus Christ? In that marvellous 53rd chapter of Isaiah, do we not find a true expression of our hearts?

"He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

"Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

But do we stop there, or are we willing to turn to Him now, in this solemn hour? He will not force Himself upon us. His desire is to honour us, but we must be "in the way."

He cries to us as to the ancient people, "Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live." "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near."

St. John was near the Lord, and heard His voice, and so was honoured by Him. He, like that other servant of old, "being in the way, the Lord led" him.

Are we "in the way"? Are we ready and willing to hear what the Saviour would say to us? He needs our help to-day just as He needed the help of St. John. If we neglect His call to service, to that extent do we make null and void the love and the sacrifice of Calvary.

Christ's mission was to save, to strengthen, and to invigorate poor, weak humanity; and these are the tasks committed to us as members of the Church of Christ to-day.

It is for you, it is for me, to lend our aid that this sacrifice of Christ may not be in vain. Sometimes a whisper comes that He asks too much. Oh, Beloved, some day you will stand face to face with the Christ Who bled and died on Calvary. Will you say to Him then that He asked too much of you?

"Now, Lord, I give myself to Thee,  
I would be wholly Thine;  
As Thou hast given Thyself to me,  
And Thou art wholly mine.  
Oh, take me, seal me for Thine own;  
Thine altogether,  
Thine alone!"

## **THE FOURTH WORD.**

"And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani'; that is to say, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me'?"

To most of us this fourth Word from the Cross presents a mystery which we cannot hope to fathom this side of Eternity. As we visualize the scene we note the careless crowds, the Roman soldiers on duty, the Jewish leaders, the crucified Saviour; then darkness for the space of three hours. When the darkness was passing, at the ninth hour, the silence, as the silence of death, is broken by the cry—"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani."

Until now Christ has been suffering in body. He has been tortured by the cruel nails, He has been dying the death by crucifixion. We have seen Him there, suffering on the Cross; but now we see Him suffering in spirit rather than in the



flesh. He has been mocked, He has been insulted, yea, He has been blasphemed; and He has endured all these things without a murmur.

As the time for His departure draws near He loses His Mother, He loses His friends. Now we see Him suffering the desolation of the soul's deepest affliction, the alienation of His Father, because He bears our sins in His own body on the tree. The Divine Face is hidden from Him, and therein comes the utter desolation. It reminds us of those agonizing cries in Gethsemane, and on both occasions Christ spoke with God, and gained the victory in the end. His cry is what Bishop Ridgeway calls, "the impassioned utterance of the agony which filled His soul." Because He is the Saviour of mankind, man's sin hides the Face of His Father from Him. Herein we see the final cruelty of the Cross; for the awful loneliness and desolation of the soul comes when a man is rejected by God. It is the moment of supreme agony.

"Alone the task was wrought;  
Alone the battle fought."

We have spoken of His sufferings in the Crucifixion, but do we realize the desolation of the Saviour hanging there upon that Cross of wood?

His sufferings appear in two forms:—

First, the mortal pain. Crucifixion was invented by the Romans as the most awful form of death. It was reserved for criminal slaves, and was designed to create in the minds of all slaves such abject fear that they might be cowed into obedience. Such, then, was the death-place of Jesus, the Son of God—a blood-stained Cross of shame.

There, hanging upon the Cross, Incarnate Deity is subject to the jeers of the rabble, the mocking of the soldiers, and the sarcasm of the priests.

To a man with a brute-like nature the agony of crucifixion would be terrible indeed, but how much more so to a finely set nature, intensely sensitive, such as the Redeemer's? In being thus "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross," we catch a sight of the mortal anguish He endured. Not one of His friends was able to defend Him, and now He is apparently forsaken by God Himself. In the days of His earthly life He went about doing good, yet now He is treated as the chief malefactor, and in the agony of His suffering He cries, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani."

What is the explanation of His agonized question? Surely this, that God could not look upon sin.

The Saviour was pressing the grapes of pain, and drinking "the wrath of God." In His body He was bearing our sin, for only so, could He win our redemption, and bring us back to God. The Father's changeless love did not forsake, in His sorest need, the Son Who thus did His work. Christ still held fast, saying, "My God, My God." Inspired by the Divine passion of love and pity, He was taking away what Emerson calls the "accursed mountain" of sorrow, and thus our sins, which He made His sorrows, came like a thick cloud between Him and Heaven, and so

"Desperate tides of the whole great world's anguish  
Forced through the channels of a single heart."

Oh, can we think lightly, or carelessly, of a Salvation purchased at so great a cost?

The second point is His spiritual desolation.

The crowds had, as it were, faded from Him; the twelve had failed Him; one, alone, remained to sympathize.

The Saviour's hopes had been set for the establishment of the Kingdom of Righteousness upon earth. His aspirations, His ideals, had been towards the everlasting truth of God.

He knew right well wherein lay the path of duty. To this end had He come, and yet, as the end drew near, the agony overwhelmed Him. The Lamb of God was being made the scapegoat for our sin. Alone He drank the cup of woe that He

might lead all mankind into the fellowship of life, and light, and liberty. The purpose of His coming was to bring the world back to God; and yet He was rejected, He was crucified, He endured bodily weakness and torture. Surely, at least, the Divine Hand would be ready to save, ready to comfort and help!

Oh, the cruelty of sin! Yes, none knew that better than the Saviour. Oh, the base ingratitude of man! Yes, the Saviour understood that.

But God—could God forget? Ah! He trod the winepress alone. That is the point of desolation of all real suffering—it is individual. The Cross of Christ is a solitary Cross, but He had to suffer the pain and anguish of it all.

Because man is body as well as spirit, physical pain causes depression; and since the body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit of God, that Temple is injured as the result of sin (our own, or another's), which brings sorrow of soul, for a time—but we must not allow it to destroy us, for—

"No lesson can we learn with tears unshed,  
No blessing can we win with pain unknown;  
The meaning of our life is hidden deep  
In love alone."

Yet, the final desolation is when the soul feels abandoned by God. Let us remember, even then, that Christ has gone through all that for us; He has borne for us the hiding of His Father's Face; His heart is with us still. He teaches us what is, indeed, despair—to have so left God that He leaves us. And He tells us of a God Who is still our God, though our souls feel orphaned. In our Saviour's cry we gather hope and comfort in times of suffering and loneliness.

It cannot be that, with our limited knowledge we shall understand the inner significance of those things that cause us to be cast down through pain and grief. What we do know is that, out of these experiences, God draws us nearer to Himself in love, and perfects His will in us. Thus are the waste places in life fertilized by our tears, and bring forth fruit for Him Who made the supreme Sacrifice that we might never know what it means to have the Father's Face turned away from us.

Further. We must ever remember that Christ did not simply accept His fate, with all the suffering and desolation involved—He willed it. It was as a King that He went forward to Calvary, that He might make "there (by His one oblation of Himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world." Thus was

"Earth's most auspicious hour  
One darksome, sad, and wild.  
When crucifixion was the birth,  
Redemption was the child."

We learn, therefore, from this fourth Word, that truth may be, like the Saviour, despised and rejected of men, because sin hardens men's hearts as it hardened the hearts of the Jews. The cause may appear hopeless in the eyes of the world, but, have hope in God; and in the end it will triumph.

The great thing, for you and for me, is to realize how terrible are the consequences of sin. Let us shrink from "little" sins, and "big" sins, for each and all alienate us from God, and spoil our fellowship with Him.

Again. We must see to it that we keep in the Presence of God through faith. In our desolation and loneliness, let us follow the Cross of Christ, and let us cry to God, so that sin and suffering may not have dominion over us, or hide our heavenly Father from us.

"Lord, should fear and anguish roll  
Darkly o'er my sinful soul;  
Thou, Who once wast thus bereft,  
That Thine own might ne'er be left:

Teach me, by that bitter cry,  
In the gloom to know Thee nigh."

## THE FIFTH WORD.

"Jesus said, I thirst."

In this, the briefest of the sayings from the Cross, we have our Lord's expression of bodily need. He was "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," and He suffered all the human agonies of crucifixion.

"I thirst." Have we ever thought of all that lies behind this Word? The human body can stand hunger better than thirst, because hunger defeats its own objective. Hunger is terribly painful, but there comes a point where it fades away, because, where there is no strength, there is no craving for food. But with thirst it is different. Thirst remains when hunger is a thing forgotten; and thirst was specially horrible in crucifixion.

Writers on the subject tell us that this was because of the unnatural position in which the body was placed, resulting in the most excruciating torture due to the extreme tension of the human frame. Then, the nails passed through those parts of the body where the muscles and nerves were most sensitive. Finally, the wounds being exposed to the air and the heat, inflammation set in, and the circulation of the blood was hindered from free passage to and from the heart, causing intense headache. It is recorded that the agonizing cries of the crucified were so heart-rending that even brutal men went out of ear-shot.

Jesus said, "I thirst." The darkness has lifted, and the Redeemer has come into the light of God once more; the great spiritual conflict is past, but not the bodily torture. Parched with the burning fever of His wounds, He felt the thirst of the dying. This reveals the awful sufferings of the Saviour. He suffered because of man's sin, in body and in spirit. It reveals also that the physical, as well as the spiritual, must be reckoned with.

We hear much talk these days, do we not, about the reality of the spiritual? Men rise up around us and declare that there is no such thing as the real in the physical. But, Brethren, let us clearly understand that, as followers of Jesus Christ, we are subject to physical as well as spiritual ills. The Christian is oppressed by the weakness and need of the flesh. He has to endure the ordinary trials and vexations of life. He, like the Saviour, will oftentimes be weary. Pain is ever with us, and it is the Christian's consolation that He Who endured the agonies of crucifixion for our redemption is with us by His might. During His earthly ministry He had compassion towards the sick and the suffering. We read that they brought to Him the blind, the halt, and the maimed. The lepers cried to Him, and we know that He healed them.

In the hour of trial, He, the Crucified, was sustained; and in the hour of our trial, He will sustain us, and give us grace to bear up patiently, for He is indeed the great Burden-Bearer. Let us never forget that, as it was with the Saviour, so it is with us—there must be something enriching in each bitter pain and sorrow. He does not cause us to pass through the fires of suffering for naught; therefore, like good soldiers, we must meet our troubles with brave acceptance.

In "the days of His flesh," men could not understand God suffering, His being baffled, and His will thwarted. All was unintelligible to them. They read in these things—disaster; whereas, now we know that He was working out His own wise and beneficent purposes through it all. So, in your life and mine, we must look away from ourselves to God, and in faith believe that He will carry us through life, and what is after this life; yes! and that we shall yet understand that "He doeth all things well."

Therefore, there comes to us the call of ancient days—"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee."

"The Cross, it takes my guilt away,  
It holds the fainting spirit up,  
It cheers with hope the gloomy day,

And sweetens every bitter cup."

Secondly. Jesus said, "I thirst."

We have seen what the immediate cause was, but what lay at the back of it all? Was it not because of another thirst? Are we not right in supposing that Jesus thirsted on the Cross to shew us that thus does God thirst for our recovery from sin?

He thirsted there for your soul, and mine. He thirsts to-day to take us out of our darkened, sin-cramped lives into a larger place where we shall have true freedom and power. This cry of the dying Saviour is the Voice of the Infinite, Divine Love thirsting for the soul of man. To make us His own He bore this awful thirst; and all His other sufferings. Surely that makes it a very personal matter for you and me. He asks us to give Him to drink. Shall we "let be" as if we cared not? Shall we refuse the refreshment He pleads?

You remember Christ said in an earlier period in His ministry—"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work"; and He tells us, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness."

That is what He did; and through suffering, hunger, and thirst, He gained for us the victory of Easter. How about you and me? How is it with our souls? Do we thirst for God, yea, for the living God? All men, everywhere, hunger and thirst for something. Some seek wealth, and what wealth brings—ease and honour, power and pleasure. But, are these things sufficient to meet the need? Do we not find that all these things fade away with the getting? Ease becomes weariness; honour becomes nauseating; wealth, which is power, becomes a burden; pleasure becomes vapid. In a word, these have to do with that which is material, and therefore they can never satisfy the deep thirst of the soul.

The spirit dominates the material, and that means that the spirit of man is stronger than all else, and so:—

"Like a tide on a crescent sea-beach, when the moon is new and thin;  
Into our hearts high yearnings come, swelling and surging in—  
Come from the mystic ocean, whose rim no foot hath trod:  
Some of us call it Longing; and others call it God."

That is what St. Augustine meant when he said, "Our souls are restless till they rest in Thee." Hence it was that the Saviour Christ could say, "Whoso drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whoso drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

To change the metaphor. To-day we are as ships launched upon the sea of life. Whither have we set our course? There are rocks and shoals, there are storms and calms to be contended with. We may, by the exercise of our own free will, steer our vessel by various courses, but not that way shall we gain the Port of Heaven—not that way shall we be enabled to fill our water casks with that Living Water which alone can slake our thirst. We may steer to the islands of phantasy, and drink of godless pleasure, of sinful indulgence; but we shall discover that the fires of thirst only burn the fiercer.

It is only as we come to the end of our perversity and self-deception, of our playing with fancy, and hiding from reality, that we shall find satisfaction. The thirst of our souls is inescapable. Now, if we have been heated in the chase after the things that exhaust us—if we feel our feet paralyzed, and our strength vanished—then, Oh, Beloved, turn to the Living Waters which God has provided, and drink of the water brook of His mercy and love. None but Christ can satisfy the thirst of the soul; but He can, and He does.

It is for you to thirst for the Living God, and to shew your thirst by seeking to draw near to Him Who is 'the Way to the Father.' As you contemplate your own unworthiness in His Presence, you realize your need. Yet—here is the strangeness and marvel of it all—when one comes, yielding allegiance of heart and mind and will to Jesus Christ as Saviour and King, there is granted such a draught of the Living Water that new life pulsates through the soul. Thus,

weakness is transformed into strength, and life becomes simpler, but infinitely greater, because the soul is thrilled by a great and noble emotion, even to follow the Pilot across the sea. Thus shall your thirst after the Living God be satisfied—abundantly satisfied.

There is nothing that the world can give to be compared to this new life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let us, then, honestly and sincerely, submit our wills to His that He may give us this Living Water. Thus shall we know that it is Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith that is alone the Fountain of the waters of life.

"Now, the frail vessel Thou hast made,  
No hand but Thine shall fill—  
The waters of the earth have failed,  
And I am thirsty still.

I thirst for springs of heavenly life,  
And here, all day, they rise—  
I seek the treasure of Thy love,  
And close at hand it lies."

One word more:—

When travellers are crossing the great deserts of Africa by caravan they are continually faced with the awful danger of perishing for want of water, and a practice sometimes adopted is this: when the water supply has run low and, through some miscalculation, sand storms, or other causes, the travellers have got out of their bearings, the caravan is brought to a halt, and one camel is chosen, and set at liberty. As is well known, the camel has a wonderful instinct which enables it to sense where water is from very far off, and, by means of that unerring instinct, the free camel sets out for water. It travels swiftly over the desert, and when it becomes only a speck on the sky-line, one of the men mounts his camel and speeds after the liberated animal. When he, in turn, becomes a mere speck on the skyline another traveller on his beast follows in his wake, and so on until the whole company is speeding across the desert after the liberated camel. When the first traveller finds that water is discovered, he waves his hand aloft to the man behind, and the signal is passed on until all learn the joyful news. Thus do the travellers find the life-saving water.

This, too, is the law of Life Everlasting. If you know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour; if you have drunk of that Life-giving Stream, then it is for you to give the signal to the dying and the perishing around you, that they may know where the Water is to be found.

Jesus said, "I thirst." You hear Him say these words, and you know why He thirsted! It was because He was bringing the water of Everlasting Life to men, and He has told us that whosoever drinketh of that Water shall never thirst.

You know where and how the Water may be found. It is your part and duty to pass on the message.

"I heard the Voice of Jesus say,  
'Behold, I freely give  
The living water, thirsty one,  
Stoop down, and drink, and live':  
I came to Jesus, and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in Him."

## **THE SIXTH WORD.**

"It is finished."

What mean these words? Man's judgment would be that Christ's Mission was a complete failure. He came to establish the Kingdom of God amongst men and in return He met with opposition on every side. He was hindered, and watched, and misrepresented by His foes. The friends whom He had chosen from amongst the multitude forsook Him and fled. He was taken captive and made to face a trial, with its mocking, its scourging, and its shame. Finally, crucifixion. What then is finished? The revelation of God to man in Jesus Christ is finished, and the full price for our redemption paid.

As a Boy in the Temple, when His Mother came and spoke to Him about remaining behind, He replied: "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

As a Man He had said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." Now, the cup His Father gave Him to drink is drained; all His Father's will is done; man's sin is atoned for, and, as He is about to bow His sacred Head and commend His Spirit to His Father, He cries: "It is finished."

It is a shout of triumph. He has completed the task that was set before Him. The world still lies in darkness, but it is redeemed. The Good Shepherd has laid down His life for the wandering sheep. The foundation upon which the Kingdom of God is to be built is verily and indeed finished. For this came He down from Heaven. God has been manifested to the world. It was God Who gave the Saviour, that mankind, seeing Him, might know God. There is no division of wills between the Son and the Father; they are in perfect harmony. It was the Father's will that Christ should work out the redemption of man, and should also reveal to man the awfulness of his sin, and the greatness of the love of God.

These, then, are the two special lessons we learn from this Word. First, the awfulness of sin.

Sin was the direct cause of Christ's work. He must bear "our sins in His own Body on the tree," and so the Apostle says, "we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ." Sin, which is missing the mark, or transgressing the law of God; sin, which is the fault of the spirit of man, reveals itself in man's badness, in his evil choice, in his self-will, in his indifference—and sin brings its own terrible reward; for, are we not told, "the wages of sin is death"? We have abundant opportunity of seeing how true these words are in the world of men.

Why is it that the "wages of sin is death"? Because the law of God is love, and a life of sin works against God and this His Law. Sin is opposition to holy love, and hence sin destroys man's fellowship with the Divine, and in so doing, destroys the whole creation.

Christ finished His work, whereby man is forgiven. He finished the work of opening the way to God, that man might have a new start in life under God's control and influence.

That does not mean that all will be easy. The soul does not become perfect in a night. Temptations will roll in upon the unwary voyager across life's ocean. It may be (although it need not be) that sin will sometimes gain the advantage, and all appear to be lost. Yea! bitter disappointment may come at the realisation of spiritual defeat; then the soul cries out in despair when the darkness overshadows all. At such times there steals upon the conscience the terrible dread lest all has been a mistake. An evil haunting voice sneers, "Where is now thy God?" and, stricken with wondering doubt, the sinner understands not, in face of the awful power of sin, how Christ's work is finished.

But that is not all. There is added this other painful revelation, that love has grown cold. The glad confidence and assurance of victory have given place to the doubt and darkness of defeat. At such times we do well to hold, simply and courageously, to the great and abiding fact that the Saviour's work is finished, and to remember Matthew Arnold's words:—

"We cannot kindle when we will  
The fire that in the heart resides;  
The Spirit bloweth, and is still,  
In mystery our soul abides;  
But tasks, in hours of insight will'd  
Can be, through hours of gloom, fulfilled."

Having such a vision, we shall find that under God's influence and control the work of Christ will be perfected in us, and He shall yet see in us of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied.

And the second lesson is: the greatness of God's love. It is when we study the Cross of Christ that we find out how great is God's love for mankind. Amid the tears of bitterness and woe which arise out of sin, we discover in Calvary the tenderness of Infinite Love.

"Inscribed upon the Cross we see,  
In shining letters, God is love.  
He bears our sins upon the tree,  
He brings us mercy from above."

That Cross of wood gives us a glimpse of the heart of God, and manifests to us the greatness wherewith He has loved us.

Have you ever thought what it must have cost the Father to give His Beloved Son to suffer such a death? Surely, as we gaze upon the Cross, the purifying flame of love must sweep over our souls, burning the dross and uncleanness of sin out of our lives. Surely, as we behold that Sacrifice, and the grace of God revealed therein, we will let Him come in, and dominate and control our lives; then we shall find that the unfailing resources of the Divine become ours.

You see, therefore, why Christ could say, "It is finished."

Have you grasped this truth for yourself? If it be true that Christ's work is finished, "full, perfect, and sufficient" for the sins of the whole world, then what does it mean to you? Does it mean that in simple faith you have accepted His finished work, and are trusting wholly to Him? If so, then how are you manifesting that trust? Are you striving by wholehearted obedience to His will to shew forth, day by day, your love for Him Who has done so much for you? Or are you, like many another, robbing yourself of the joy and blessing of it all because you are only yielding to Him a half allegiance? If so, then can you wonder that the joy and blessing of it all do not come to you? "All for All" is what the Saviour offers, and His "all" far transcends the utmost that you can bring to Him.

In Old England, years ago, a preacher of the Gospel went out one summer evening to the village green, where he was wont to hold a service, and preached Christ and Him crucified. The crowd gathered round him to listen to his words, and at the close of the brief service a young man approached the preacher, and asked him in a seemingly casual way, "What must I do to be saved?" The preacher, keen to seize the opportunity of the moment, replied in a matter-of-fact tone, "Too late, too late." The young man was piqued at being spoken to thus, and asked for an explanation. The preacher went on to shew that the man was hundreds of years too late; the great and crucial thing was done in God, and by God.

Ah, yes! Christ's work is finished. It was completed on Calvary, and we cannot do anything to save ourselves. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." You cannot work for a gift; all you can do is to come, trembling and ashamed of your sins, and accept the Gift He has offered.

When the poet Cowper was facing the problem of life in the light of Eternity, and was in such hopeless despair that he contemplated suicide, he was brought to the place of peace and salvation through grasping this fundamental truth. Yes, this is the great and abiding fact of Christianity, that Christ's work is finished, and it is for us to accept that Gift so freely offered in the Gospel.

"Upon a Life I did not live;  
Upon a death I did not die:  
Another's life; Another's death—  
I stake my whole Eternity."

There is no other message that meets the need of sinful humanity. It matters not how we may think of ourselves, we must all begin on that basis. I do not suggest that all are the same, since some are, relatively, unstained and untried in the battle with sin. We have all, more or less, been lured by the dizzy world, and yielded to the wooing of the flesh, which

means that, "of ourselves we are not able to save ourselves." Thus it comes about that, one and all, we must kneel before the Cross; there we understand the chasm that divides us from the holiness of God, and there we make our humble confession of our sin, and, through faith, receive the forgiveness we crave, and enter into that peace which passeth all understanding.

Let me press the matter. Are you conscious of your need? If so, then will you look to the Cross for relief? The Saviour finished His work there for you that, through His atoning death, your sin might be taken away and remembered no more against you for ever. Won't you come to Him now? Confess all to Him. Trust all to Him, and say, in the words of the hymn we know so well:—

"Nothing in my hand I bring;  
Simply to Thy Cross I cling.  
Naked, come to Thee for dress;  
Helpless, look to Thee for grace.  
Foul, I to the Fountain fly,  
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

## THE SEVENTH WORD.

"Father, into Thy hands, I commend My Spirit."

We now come to the last Word from the Cross. The grim tragedy is over. Christ's love has held Him on the Cross; sin has done its work; now, quietly and simply He commends His Spirit to God.

One of the outstanding features in the life of Jesus Christ is His attitude towards God. All through life He had looked to God with the calm confidence of a child. "Abba, Father"—that was ever His cry, and that is not the broad word for "Father," but rather the simple word of the child in the home—"Daddy, Daddy."

This is the final test of His life, the act of self-committal to God. He dies by His own free will, and hands over His Spirit to His Father. The physical dissolution is about to take place, but His heart is set upon God, for there is nothing between Him and His Father. What a lesson comes to us here! Love's sacrifice perfected, sealed with His own life's blood. Oh, the depth of the riches and knowledge of God, to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Truly, the Atonement of Jesus Christ upon Calvary is the grandest and most distinctive thing known to man.

The following story is told of a soldier in a hospital. One arm was gone. Someone visiting there, looking upon the man, said to him: "Ah, this war has taken it out of you, my friend"; but the soldier made answer: "No, I gave it." The world will tell us that sin took Christ's life, and it is true in one sense, but it is true because He *gave* it, and hence, even in the darkness of Calvary, Christ is Master of the situation.

Sin had to be faced, and sin had to be condemned by Christ; so He conquered sin, and died the death. He rendered perfect obedience to the will of His Father. Unmurmuringly, He accepted and fulfilled the conditions required to redeem man from sin. He knew what was involved in that task, and never quarrelled with His circumstances. His was the ideal attitude—that of calm confidence and perfect submission.

Think of it! For thirty years He lived in obscurity! For three years He laboured in His active public Ministry, proclaiming the message of the Eternal Truth; then a mock trial, judgment, crucifixion.

Ah! "He was young,  
Who for our sake in silence hung  
Upon the Cross with passion wrung."



Yes. But He had accepted the conditions and completed the work, confident that, in spite of apparent failure, all was safe in the hands of His Father.

Beloved! the same should be the attitude of every soul. We must face our sin, and by the power of Christ, we must condemn it, and rise above it. Let us have no illusion regarding the reality of this thing. Sin is all that is opposed to God, and, as we have tried to show, leads only to death. Christ accepted the wages paid by sin; Christ paid the whole penalty, and, in so doing, He reveals the utter love and forgiveness of God. Thus, we are able to make Christ's Sacrifice on Calvary our own. Through Him we come to God as children to the Father; His Father is our Father, for He has "opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers." His hand is ready to hold ours as we pass into the dark valley, and through the chill waters we call "death." He tells us of a Father waiting on the other shore to welcome us. Death shall but set us free, that we may go to Christ's Father and to our Father, Whom we have learned to trust as we have followed the Saviour.

If we want to know how God loves us, let us look on the Cross of Calvary, and see Christ crucified. The secret of power for all comes through a realization of the love of God for man as seen in the crucified Christ; and so we sing:—

"Oh, Cross that liftest up my head,  
I dare not ask to fly from thee.  
I lay in dust, life's glory dead,  
And from the ground there blossoms red,  
Life, that shall endless be."

Calvary has changed the whole outlook for humanity. In commanding tones, it calls us to faith and hope, because it reveals the power of love.

What made St. Paul the great and strong man that he was, so that he could endure being stoned, cast into prison, shipwrecked, and suffer perils by land and sea, hunger, fasting, and nakedness?

What so energized St. Columba that he left his own native land of Ireland, and, braving the perilous voyage in an open boat, crossed the sea, and faced life amongst the Picts in the wild highlands and islands of Scotland?

What made Livingstone, with only a cane in his hand, go forward into the trials and privations of the unexplored jungles of Africa? It was the Cross of Christ that swayed the lives of these men, and they lived by the power of the crucified Son of God.

A Japanese student was asked why he had become a Christian, and this is the answer that son of the Flowery East made:—"I am a Christian because the religion of Jesus is a religion of power. I studied earnestly the doctrines of Buddha and Confucius, but the more I studied the less peace I had. I had no power to carry out the teaching. In Christ I find truly the power to save from sin." "Power belongeth unto God," for "God is Love."

Love so dominated the soul of Christ that He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. And love begets love. In the light of the Resurrection, the Cross ceases from being the symbol of degradation and becomes the symbol of Victory, and hence St. Paul cried: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In the Presence of the crucified Saviour, we awake to the consciousness of the guilt of sin. First, we stand aghast at the horror of Calvary; then, shudderingly, we realise that it was our sins that caused the shameful tragedy. Finally, the full significance of it all dawns upon our dull senses. There, upon that rough beam of wood, hangs the Sacrifice that takes our sins away—your sins and mine. As we gaze upon that Vision of Incarnate Love, it must surely awaken in our hearts and minds and wills a desire to love and serve. Thus, we are led into obedient captivity; yea, into captivity to Him Who is our Saviour, Lord, and God.

But have we caught this glimpse of the love of God in the Cross of Christ? Have we, by faith, entered into its meaning? Have we so yielded ourselves to Him, body, soul and spirit, which is our reasonable service, that we have experienced its power in our own lives?

It is futile to talk of the sacrifice of Christ for our salvation unless it means something to us individually and personally. Unless the coming of Jesus Christ into our hearts is the means of causing us to triumph over sin; unless, by the power of the crucified Christ we are able to go forth into the world of men, and let our light so shine that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in Heaven, we have missed the whole point of the Evangel.

It was out of love for perishing humanity that Christ laid Himself down to die on Calvary that we, through Him, might have life age-abiding. "Behold," therefore, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" through the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son. Can we then refuse to yield to such love? Dare we turn our backs upon so great a Sacrifice?

Sin has blinded our eyes and twisted our judgment, but, once more, as we look upon the Crucified One, and behold His Agony and suffering "for us men, and for our salvation," shall we not, now and for ever, yield ourselves to Him and pray—Oh, let us pray from the heart as did the saint of old, who cried:—

"Give me a sight, O Saviour,  
Of Thy wondrous love to me;  
The love that brought Thee down to earth  
To die on Calvary.  
Oh, make me understand it,  
Help me to take it in;  
What it meant to Thee, the Holy One,  
To bear away my sin.

Was it the nails, O Saviour,  
That bound Thee to the tree?  
Nay, 'twas Thine everlasting love,  
Thy love for me, for me.  
Oh, wonder of all wonders!  
That through Thy death for me,  
My open sins—my secret sins,  
Can all forgiven be.

Then melt my heart, O Saviour,  
Bend me, yea, break me down,  
Until I own Thee Conqueror,  
And Lord and Sov'reign crown.  
Oh, make me understand it;  
Help me to take it in—  
What it meant to Thee, the Holy One,  
To bear away my sin."

(K. A. M. K.)

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[End of *For Us* by Archibald Lang Fleming]