

# The Climb to Calvary - Part I

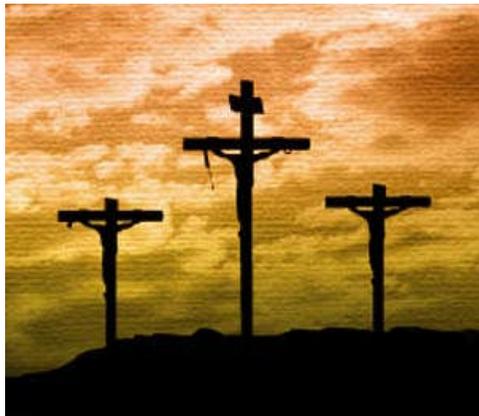
Posted by [Jim Daly](#) on Apr 18, 2011 12:42:09 PM

In observance of Holy Week, I have decided to use this space to offer a devotional series that I have prepared and which I have entitled:

## THE CLIMB TO CALVARY

*Meditations on The Seven Last Words of Christ*

\*\*



### MONDAY: The First Words

**“Then said Jesus, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’ And they parted his raiment, and cast lots” ([Luke 23:34](#)).**

In some ways, at least from a worldly perspective, these first recorded words spoken by Jesus on the cross are the most startling of all seven of His final statements captured in the Gospels. Here was Christ, the son of God and man, being taunted, ridiculed and brutally killed by the power brokers of the day.

And yet how did He respond to it all?

Not with bitterness or anger, but with grace and forgiveness.

Simply put, He forgave His executioners!

Some of you might remember Amy Biehl. Back in 1993 she was attending Stanford University but studying abroad in Cape Town, South Africa. She was a strong anti-apartheid activist. On August 25<sup>th</sup> of that year she was stoned and stabbed to death, a victim of random racial violence. She was white; her killers were black.

Her parents attended her killers' murder trial and publicly forgave the men.

Few of us will ever be faced with a situation as tragic as the Biehls', the principle of forgiveness still applies to all of us. Are you often stung by the sting of personal or unfair attacks? Have you been taken advantage of or mistreated? Been a victim of gossip and rumor? Have you ever been mocked or criticized for your faith or for believing in the literal word of God?

Although it might seem significant at the time, most of what we take offense to is petty. Instead of looking outward, we're looking inward. Nevertheless, whatever the offense, take it to the Lord in prayer. If He could forgive His killers, can you not forgive a person who embarrassed or falsely accused you?

Perhaps it is time today to forgive someone and let go of a long-held grudge.

Maybe it's time to reconsider and internalize these powerful first words that Jesus spoke from the cross on Calvary.

[Part II: The Second Words](#)

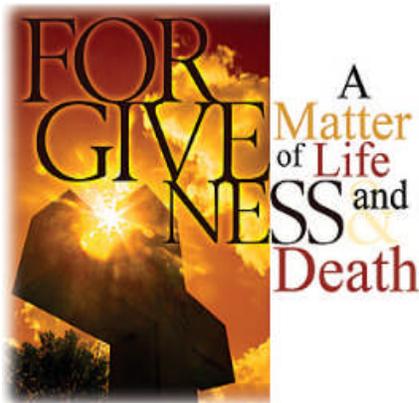
[Part III: The Third Words](#)

[Part IV: The Fourth Words](#)

[Part V: The Fifth Words](#)

[Part VI: The Sixth Words](#)

[Part VII: The Seventh Words](#)



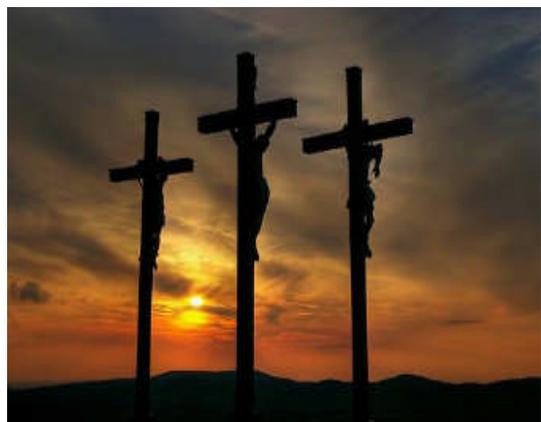
## The Climb to Calvary - Part II

Posted by [Jim Daly](#) on Apr 19, 2011 10:45:34 AM

### THE CLIMB TO CALVARY

*Meditations on The Seven Last Words of Christ*

\*\*



Tuesday: The Second Words

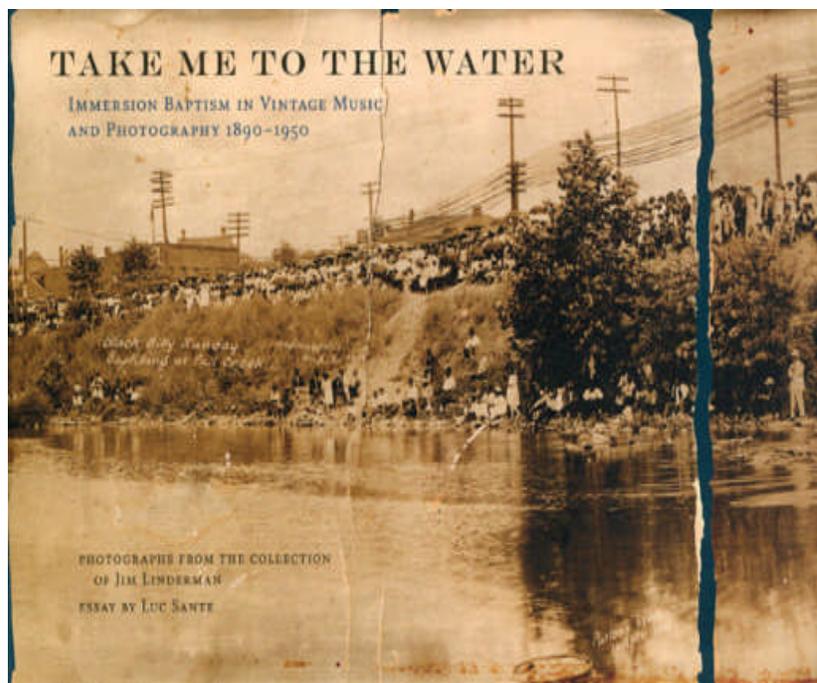
**“And Jesus said unto him, ‘I say unto thee, Today thou shalt be with me in paradise.’” (Luke 23:43).**

A lot has been written about bad things happening to good people. But it is equally jarring for many in our world to reconcile, accept and embrace the truth of our faith that tells us in the end, good things can happen to “bad” people.

As you know, there were two thieves hanging beside Jesus on Calvary, one to His right and the other to His

left. The first sneered at Him, but the other did not. That second thief accepted Jesus as the Christ and asked the Lord to forgive him.

If Christ’s first words are startling, these second words are among the most difficult for many people to accept or at least embrace warmly. In fact, it makes some very uneasy. That’s because they run contrary to the popularly held theory that our salvation is based upon behavior rather than belief. To think that a person might live a wicked life and yet still enjoy all the benefits of eternal life - all thanks to a death-bed conversion? It just doesn’t add up. But in God’s economy, none of us is worthy of our salvation purchased through Jesus’ death on the cross, and even death-bed conversions qualify the guilty for admission to heaven.



Cynically speaking, death-bed conversions make for great stories, but are sometimes difficult, if not impossible, to confirm or verify. For one-hundred years a rumor has persisted that Charles Darwin became a Christian at the end of his life. He is reported to have declared, “How I wish I had not expressed my theory of evolution as I have done.” A friend of his wrote that he told her he would like to gather a group and “speak to them of Christ Jesus and His salvation, being in a state where he was eagerly savoring the heavenly anticipation of bliss.” In more recent years, some have suggested the late eccentric pop star, Michael Jackson, converted prior to his untimely death.

True? I don’t know.

What I do know is that God is a turn-around God and that Christianity is a turn-around religion. He

...that He is willing to embrace the repentant heart. Does it make any sense that He would use Saul, one of the most zealous persecutors of the early Christians, to serve as the main architect of the early Church? It does if you realize that ours is a paradoxical faith. He humbles the mighty and lifts up the lowly. His power is made perfect in our weakness. He often does the exact opposite of what the world might expect.

The story of the repentant thief assures us that Christ makes Himself available right to the very end. Of course, none of us knows when the end will come. Therefore, if you're not certain of your salvation, I would urge you to ponder His promise and assurance of eternal life today. Don't wait until tomorrow! We're not promised that tomorrow will come. Turn your troubles and doubt over to Him. Stop trying to go it alone. Accept Him as your Lord and Savior. Believe that He is who He says He is. Begin to experience the "abundant life" (John 10:10) right now and know that heaven will someday be yours:

"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24).

[Part I: The First Words](#)

[Part III: The Third Words](#)

[Part IV: The Fourth Words](#)

[Part V: The Fifth Words](#)

[Part VI: The Sixth Words](#)

[Part VII: The Seventh Words](#)

# The Climb to Calvary - Part III

Posted by [Jim Daly](#) on Apr 20, 2011 6:49:52 AM

## THE CLIMB TO CALVARY

*Meditations on The Seven Last Words of Christ*

\*\*

### WEDNESDAY: The Third Words



**“When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, ‘Woman, behold thy son!’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.” (John 19:26-27).**

We now learn that Jesus’ mother is witnessing her own son’s six-hour execution. Could there

be anything more barbaric for a person to see than that? Sadly and inexplicably, it’s true that parents are sometimes forced to watch their beloved children die and depart for heaven – but not through death on a cross.

Only thirty-three years earlier, on a cold winter’s night, the scene and setting was so different. In the darkness the angels sang and the star of Bethlehem hung high for all to see and stare in wonder. Here was the baby Jesus, the King of Kings, nestled softly and tenderly in His mother’s arms. All was calm. All was bright. Peace on earth; goodwill toward men.



But now, standing on a dark and windswept Calvary, that was all just a long-ago memory for Mary. She is swallowed up, if not consumed, by her sorrows. She is now forced by circumstance to watch her son, and the hope of the world, die a slow and agonizing death.

Yet as painful as it clearly was for Mary, Jesus, ever compassionate, shows very practical concern for His mother. He rises above His own pain. As the oldest male in the family, Jesus knows that Mary would have expected Him to care for her. (We can only assume from his absence that Joseph is dead, and therefore Mary’s welfare is Christ’s responsibility.)



In these few words Jesus affirms the importance of loving, caring and taking responsibility for one’s family. At a time when He would be rightfully consumed by His grief and pain, He is putting the focus on His mother and His family, not on Himself.

Are you going through a season of personal pain and anguish? Are you finding yourself consumed by your own problems and concerns? If Jesus, while nailed to the cross and dying a slow death can think of others besides Himself, can each of us His followers extract ourselves from our own little story and

consider the needs of others?

From these few words on the cross on Calvary, Christ teaches us the importance of loving

From these few words on the cross on Calvary, Christ teaches us the importance of seeing ourselves in the service and care of other people. Is there someone depending on you or in need of your help? Do you think you're too busy - or are you willing to assist them, but only after you've solved all your own problems?

On this Wednesday of Holy Week, I would urge you to reconsider the selfless care and devotion that Jesus exhibited on the cross, and then follow His example.

[Part I: The First Words](#)

[Part II: The Seconds Words](#)

[Part IV: The Fourth Words](#)

[Part V: The Fifth Words](#)

[Part VI: The Sixth Words](#)

[Part VII: The Seventh Words](#)

# The Climb to Calvary - Part IV

Posted by [Jim Daly](#) on Apr 21, 2011 6:02:23 AM

## THE CLIMB TO CALVARY

### *Meditations on The Seven Last Words of Christ*

\*\*

#### THURSDAY AM: The Fourth Words



**“And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is, being interpreted, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’” (Mark 15:34).**

Jesus’ Passion on Calvary is now drawing to its sad and seemingly tragic end. The skies have been dark, despite the fact the crucifixion occurred during the day in Jerusalem. In the midst of this cataclysmic phenomena, Christ has forgiven His killers (Luke 23:34), converted a sinner (Luke 23:43), and arranged for His mother’s future care (John 19:26-27).

His attention now turns inward, and how can it not? By all human account, Jesus is losing the fight of His life. But that’s not even the half of it. That’s because while His physical pain is overwhelming, the mental and emotional suffering is far worse. For the very first time, Jesus has experienced a break in His relationship with His father.

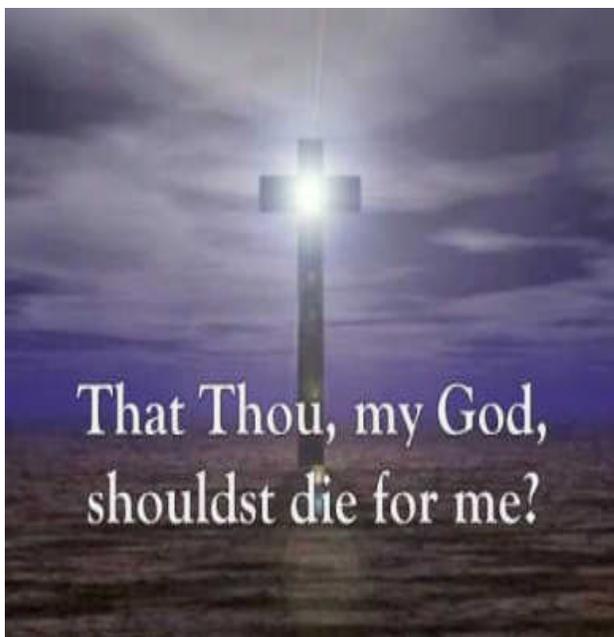
When Christ cried out from the cross, many assumed He was calling on the prophet Elisha. In fact, He was quoting Psalm 22:1:

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from saving me,  
so far from my cries of anguish?*

For most people, abandonment is something that happens to someone else. If and when it does impact us, the consequences are devastating.

Following my own mother’s death, my stepfather literally packed up and left our family. I remember the sight of him jumping into a cab just an hour after the funeral. I was just a little boy. Still reeling from the untimely death of my mother, my stepfather just took off and abandoned me and my siblings.

As painful as that experience may be, it cannot adequately compare to what the Lord encountered when enduring separation from His Heavenly Father. Still, that loss of my parents gives me a small hint of the heartache, and more importantly, a renewed appreciation of the price paid for me (and you!) on Calvary.



Jesus shed His blood, and confronted and battled the unfathomable burden of abandonment. Nearly 300 years ago, the hymn writer Charles Wesley pondered the significance of this reality:

*And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Savior’s blood?  
Died He for me, who caused His pain—  
For me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be,*

*That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?  
Amazing love! How can it be,  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

Have you ever felt alone and abandoned? If so, cling to the cross and the comfort that comes with knowing Jesus understands the pain you've endured, and He's right there with you to help you walk through it.

- [The First Words: Part I](#)
- [The Second Words: Part II](#)
- [The Third Words: Part III](#)
- [The Fifth Words: Part V](#)
- [The Sixth Words: Part VI](#)
- [The Seventh Words: VII](#)

## The Climb to Calvary - Part V

Posted by [Jim Daly](#) on Apr 21, 2011 10:51:59 AM

### THE CLIMB TO CALVARY

*Meditations on The Seven Last Words of Christ*

\*\*



#### The Fifth Words

**"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, 'I thirst'" (John 19:28).**

Of all seven cries from the cross, Jesus' fifth statement is the shortest. Christ has now turned from the emotional and mental pain of abandonment (Mark 15:34) to the physical

pain of His torture. But in doing so, He is accomplishing far more than trying to quench a physical thirst.

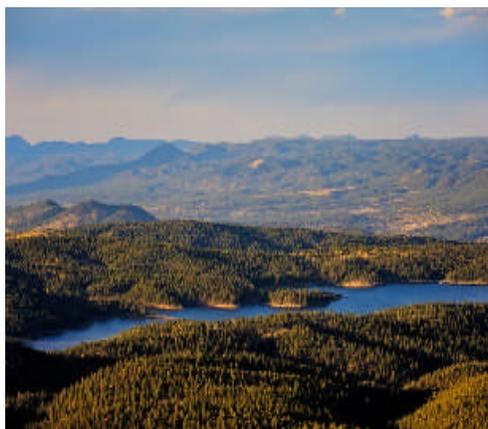
We know from John's words that Jesus held the Scripture in high regard. He was literally dying, yet He remained focused on His responsibility of fulfilling Psalm 69:21: "They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst."

I find that to be remarkable. Does that speak to you? Do you know the Scriptures well enough to draw on their reserve in even the most trying of times?

But His quoting of Psalm 69 represents something even deeper, I think, and it pertains to His uniqueness and His desire to be in relationship with us.

Christianity is the only major religion in the world whose "boss" suffered and died at the hands of mankind's wickedness. In all other faiths, followers work to try and attain salvation through good behavior, in essence, working to pay the price in order to obtain the ultimate reward. In other religions, "god" is many layers removed. Yet in Christianity, God took on human form and became man, suffered, and paid our debt - so that we might receive that ultimate reward.

In requesting a drink, I think Jesus is revealing His true humanity to us. His actions show us that He is experiencing very real and practical needs – just like we do every day.



He's also showing us, I think, that suffering always has its purpose. It may not be entirely revealed to us at the time, but His plan is perfect. Is everything that happens to us by chance or is it lovingly filtered through the gracious hand of God? When we read this particular account from the Gospel of John, we're reminded the events of Calvary didn't occur by chance. Instead, God the Father has orchestrated every detail of this tragedy to accomplish His grand plan for the world. This is why these words have been recorded. He wants us to watch. He wants us to pay attention.

So let us ponder this fifth statement and see it as a profound expression of Jesus' humanity and love for His people. And in climbing to Christ's cross on Calvary, it is my prayer that we might thirst for Him to the degree He thirsts for us.

[Part I: The First Words](#)

[Part II: The Second Words](#)

[Part III: The Third Words](#)

[Part IV: The Fourth Words](#)

[Part VI: The Sixth Words](#)

[Part VII: The Seventh Words](#)

# The Climb to Calvary - Part VI

Posted by [Jim Daly](#) on Apr 21, 2011 11:08:49 AM

## THE CLIMB TO CALVARY

### *Meditations on The Seven Last Words of Christ*

\*\*



#### The Sixth Words

**“When He had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.”(John 19:30).**

Dr. Earnest Campbell, the former senior pastor of Riverside Church in New York City, once observed that “popular Christianity passes from the poinsettias of Christmas to the lilies of Easter, conveniently bypassing the thorns of Good Friday.”

Sadly, I think he is right and I understand why. The scene at Calvary is unspeakably sad; we’re instinctively inclined to look away and look ahead

to happier days, like Easter. After all, who is naturally drawn to blood, thorns and nails? But without Good Friday, there is no Easter Sunday. And to fully appreciate the wonder of the Resurrection, we must stop and ponder the pain and significance of that fateful Friday.

We now come to the end of this story, which is, of course, really a beginning. In just three words, “It is finished,” Jesus rests His case and ministry and, in doing so, declares His mission accomplished in Christ.

Charles Spurgeon, that prince of preachers, once suggested that in those three words we learn five things:

1. That all the types, promises and prophecies of the Old Testament were now fully accomplished in Him.
2. That not only were all types and prophecies and promises thus finished in Him, but all the typical sacrifices of the old Jewish Law were now abolished as well as explained.
3. That His perfect obedience was finished. It was necessary, in order that man might be saved, that the Law of God should be kept.
4. That the satisfaction which He rendered to the justice of God was finished. The debt was now discharged. The atonement and propitiation were made once and for all and forever.
5. That He had totally destroyed the power of Satan, of sin and of death. He had done battle for our soul’s redemption against all our foes. He met Sin and nailed it to the tree.



And this is why, of course, that Christians call the very worst day in the history of the world, “Good” – not because of what was done to Jesus, but because of what Jesus did for us.

- [Part I: The First Words](#)
- [Part II: The Second Words](#)
- [Part III: The Third Words](#)
- [Part IV: The Fourth Words](#)
- [Part V: The Fifth Words](#)
- [Part VI: The Seventh Words](#)

## The Climb to Calvary - Part VII

Posted by [Jim Daly](#) on Apr 21, 2011 11:34:09 AM

### THE CLIMB TO CALVARY

#### *Meditations on The Seven Last Words of Christ*

\*\*



#### The Seventh Words

**“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, ‘Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit’” (Luke 23:46).**

At the time of the crucifixion, it was typical for Jewish parents to teach and recite with their child a single prayer (Psalm 31:5) at bedtime. (This is much like many parents do with their children today, as in “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray my soul to keep...”) This final statement on the cross from Jesus was that very same Psalm and prayer parents were saying with their children – with only the word

“Father” added to it. This fact prompted the theologian William Barclay to observe, “Jesus died with a prayer on His lips.”

We know from the Scriptures that at the moment of Jesus’ death, many supernatural things occurred: the veil in the temple tore in two (Luke 23:45), the earth quaked, rocks shattered and split and some “holy” people even rose from the dead and appeared to many people in the city of Jerusalem (Matthew 27:51-53).

Incredible! What a moment! It sounds like the elements of an implausible scene from a high cost Hollywood production. But unlike the fabricated and fictional theater, it actually happened just as it is written.

So, what can we learn from this last and final statement of Jesus from the cross?

Biblical scholars tell us these words were uttered as a ram’s horn, a shofar, was being blown. This was done to signal the beginning of Passover and also mark the time to commence slaughtering lambs for the feast. It also fulfilled the Scripture, reflecting the very moment that John the Baptist had prophesied when he referred to Jesus as the lamb being led to slaughter: “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

**“Into thy hands  
I commend  
my spirit...”**



Although Jesus’ words were directed to His father, the public and loud nature of the communication tells us they were meant for those witnessing the event, as well as you and me. In fact, Jesus didn’t need to speak audibly in order to be heard by His father. But He is clearly sending a message to those within earshot. Here was Jesus, hanging and dying before His executioners. And in the final act of His life, He is telling the power brokers that despite their best efforts, He has won the final

victory. They haven’t defeated Him. They may have killed His body, but not His soul. His relationship with His father has now been restored.

The boldness of this final act should embolden us. Are we willing to speak openly about our faith? Are we willing to lean on the promise and power of the Scriptures and live boldly for Him? In whom do we find our rest? In whom do we place our trust? In this climb to the cross at Calvary, we have been reminded that His sacrifice was personal and painful – and offered willingly for you and for me.

This is the end of the greatest story ever told, about the greatest man who ever lived. Or is it? Of course not! What happened on Good Friday was a tragedy, but a tragedy with a twist. It was, in fact, a joyful catastrophe. That's because in those famous words from the pulpit:

"It's Friday – but Sunday's coming!"

[Part I: The First Words](#)

[Part II: The Second Words](#)

[Part III: The Third Words](#)

[Part IV: The Fourth Words](#)

[Part V: The Fifth Words](#)

[Part VI: The Sixth Words](#)