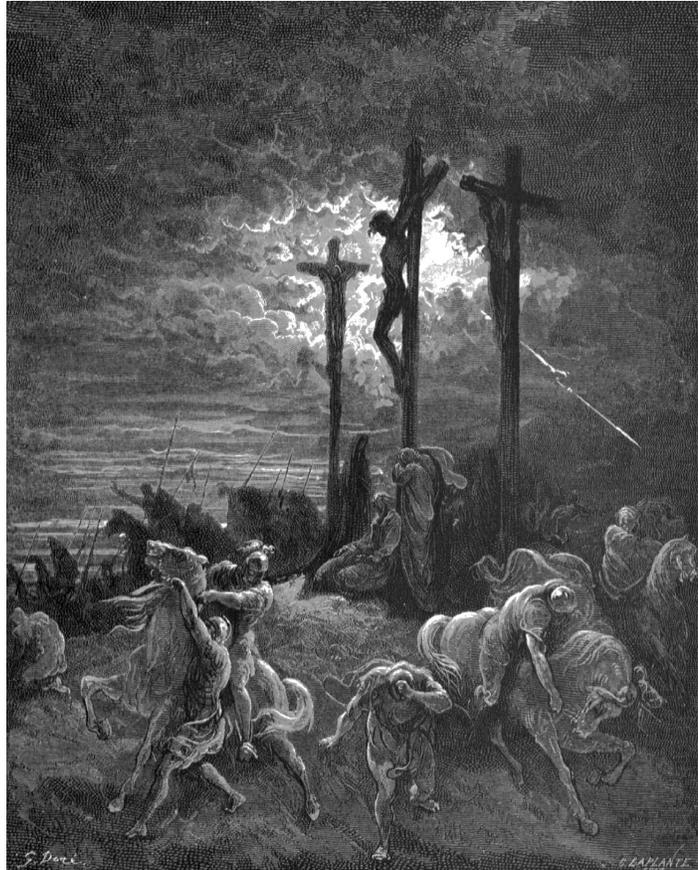


But Jesus Was Saying ... (7)

For the seventh and final time in this series, visit again Jesus on the cross and the words He spoke, and reflect once again on the mind of our Lord. Also, once again, let us examine our own hearts and minds to discern our own attitudes and actions. Jesus—“God is salvation”—the One prophesied whose name was proclaimed Immanuel, “with us is God” (**Isaiah 7:14**), gave Himself for you and me. Not only did He give Himself willingly to die in my place, but He also did it with a most amazing attitude, with a most excellent example, and most worthy words. He *“emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death*



on a cross” (Philippians 2:7-8). This is the attitude we must have (**Philippians 2:5**). We must turn our eyes from all else and fix *“our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:2-3).* This is the example we must follow. *“For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps” (1Peter 2:21).* We are often reminded of His attitude and example at the cross, but how often do we reflect on the powerful messages of His words in His hours of suffering? Jesus’ mind is reflected in His words. In situations not so harsh, our words might tend to be different, “But Jesus was saying ...”

“Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.” (Luke 23:46).

The Right

This last statement of Jesus from the cross which we have recorded for us is more than just mumblings of someone dying. There are important lessons here—Jesus still teaches. One lesson that is often overlooked, is that this statement declares the right and the willingness of the Son of God to do as He wills. That is, He made the choice to be where He is and He made the choice to give Himself freely. Notice the phrasing, *“I commit.”* He does not say My spirit is taken from Me, but instead, His indication is, *“I do it.”* Jesus had previously taught that He laid down His life with

purpose: *“No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again” (John 10:18)*. No one—no man, no group of men, no government, no court—could take His life. Instead, He gave it. He did not have to choose to die. He had the right to destroy those who were against Him (**Luke 9:54-56**). He had the right to have legions of angel warriors at His call (**Matthew 26:53; Psalm 91:12; Matthew 4:6; Luke 4:11**). He had the right to let us all perish, yet, *“while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:6-10)*.

How many of us would have the heart of Jesus? How many of us would exercise our rights by choosing to give ourselves willingly into the hands of torturers and killers for the sake of these very same souls? I fear that far too often, we are not even willing to suffer a little embarrassment for the sake of one soul.

The Recognition

In exercising His right by choosing to give Himself, He also declared the recognition of His place in that choice. He had humbled Himself, coming to this earth, born of a woman, subject to the Law, open to temptations and sufferings. As He breathes His last, He continues to recognize the Father. Once again, that in which Jesus engages is in the quoting of a portion of a Psalm. Remember, Jesus' words aren't random; Jesus continues to teach. Every Jew within earshot, and perhaps some gentiles, too, would have recognized what we call **Psalm 31**. We would do well to think of the topic of this Psalm of David. This Psalm is a lesson in the authority, the power, and the willingness of God to protect and deliver. Notice some of the phrases indicating the power of the LORD: *“I have taken refuge ... In Your righteousness deliver me ... rescue me quickly ... You are my rock and my fortress ... You will pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me.”* Then notice the phrases indicating the trust placed in Him: *“You have ransomed me ... I trust in the LORD ... I will rejoice and be glad ... You have seen my affliction ... You have not given me over into the hand of the enemy.”* This is the context in which Jesus speaks.

How many of us would have the heart of Jesus? Placed in this kind of torture, how many of us would even think of Scripture, much less quote it? If we could quote Scripture in that moment, would we use our last breath to call others' attention to the glory and power of the LORD? Would we truly be of the mind of trust and say, *“I will rejoice and be glad”*?

The Release

In recognizing the Father, Jesus released Himself into His hands—I “commit.” This word, commit, emphasizes the idea of, in this case, placing my life before God. In other words, “My spirit is not mine, it is your's Father.” This is the attitude Jesus showed throughout His life. Even as a young, growing, boy, He had engaged in the things which pleased the Father (**Luke 2:52**). During His ministry, He emphatically stated His purpose: *“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work” (John 4:34)*. Continuing in the garden, before His arrest, He willingly

released Himself into the hands of the Father. *“Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done”* (**Luke 22:42**). Now, with His last breath, He maintains that same attitude.

How many of us would have the heart of Jesus? In the face of death, will we release ourselves into the hands of the LORD? Have we lived our lives giving ourselves into His hands, completely submitting to His will? Too many times, I fear, we are committed to doing God’s will as long as we can do it our way.

The Rejoicing

I hope that each of us can develop this heart of Jesus. When we truly have *“this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,”* the closing words of **Psalm 31** genuinely can be our words, too. *“O love the LORD, all you His godly ones! The LORD preserves the faithful And fully recompenses the proud doer. Be strong and let your heart take courage, All you who hope in the LORD.”*

—S. Scott Richardson Sr.