

THINKING OF OTHERS FROM THE CROSS

Luke 23:34

(Not entirely original with me)

Introduction: He had been falsely accused, beaten, whipped, spit upon, mocked, forced to carry a cross some distance and now has had nails driven through His hands and feet anchoring Him to the cross He had carried. Yet in all this He never said a word of rebuke, nor of defense or anger expressed in any way. He had remained unresistant to He had endured and now nailed to a cross, Jesus thought only of others in ways that no ordinary person would do. He thought about their welfare.

I. JESUS PRAYED FOR OTHERS AS HE HUNG ON THE CROSS

1. Prayer was a habit of Jesus and He had prayed often and regularly during His ministry, sometimes getting up early in the morning to go off by Himself and pray.
2. As Jesus hung on the cross, He prayed to His Heavenly Father.
 - Jesus had taught His disciples while in prayer to say "Our Father..."
 - It might seem that God, Jesus' Heavenly Father might not be treating Jesus as His Son, but as a criminal since He was on a cross designated for criminals.
 - Here is an example for the Christian, no matter how difficult and hurtful the situation may be, God is always there and crying out as Jesus did, "My Father" will show one's dependence and trust in God, the Heavenly Father.
3. As Jesus prayed to His Heavenly Father, He asked for something very odd and unique.
 - Jesus prayed "*...Father forgive them...*"
 - It was not "...I forgive them..." but for His Heavenly Father, who was also offended and hurt to forgive those who had brought this upon His Son.
 - Jesus pleaded for others, revealing His great compassion for others.
4. Jesus' prayer was for those who had put Him on the cross.
 - Where did Jesus learn this attitude?
 - It was His nature, He didn't learn it from anybody, Jesus cared for everyone, and still does.

II. JESUS INTERCEDED FOR THOSE WHO HAD PUT HIM ON THE CROSS

1. Jesus was most gracious in His prayer for the Father to "*...forgive them...*"
 - Those He prayed for did not deserve His prayer.
 - They were those who conspired to put Him to death.
 - Jesus prayed for those who had laughed at Him, scoffed at Him, guilty of the worst things.
 - Today Jesus stands as the High Priest in Heaven, still pleading for the guilty.
 - "*...If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father...*"
 - Nobody had asked Jesus to pray for them, to plead their cause before God, the Father, yet He did and still does.
 - Will Jesus refuse any who come to Him if He is already pleading for them?

2. In His prayer to His Heavenly Father, Jesus defended those who had put Him on the cross.
 - "...*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do...*"
 - Jesus had taught and preached among them for three years and still many never understood who He was or what He had come to do. The just didn't know.
 - Jesus knows everyone inside and out and knows the exact condition of everyone's heart, He knows people better than they know themselves. He understands.
 - Through ignorance the people Jesus was praying for had put Him on the cross and He asked His Heavenly Father to consider that fact.

3. Jesus was earnest and sincere in asking His Heavenly Father to forgive those who had put Him on the cross.
 - Jesus wasn't begging God for His own life, He was begging, pleading for His enemies and said that "they didn't know what they were doing..."
 - Even with some their ignorance was willful, they just didn't want to know who Jesus was He still pleaded for their forgiveness.
 - What does this tell you about the Lord Jesus Christ? How different is He from US? Much.

4. Jesus never backed off, never changed His mind, but was persistent in His prayer for His Heavenly Father to forgive those who had put Him on the cross.
 - Their sin and violence had put Jesus on the cross.
 - Let us not forget that OUR sin was also included in those who actually put Jesus on the cross, we also share the blame.

5. Jesus' prayer was one of wisdom in asking for what those who had put Him on the cross needed most.
 - Those who had put Jesus on the cross needed "forgiveness."
 - Jesus did not ask the Father to enlighten them or show them what they had done, but to "forgive them..."
 - What sinners need most is not wisdom but FORGIVENESS.
 - Which had you rather be given, knowledge of what you have done is sin, wisdom to recognize what you have done is sinful or to be forgiven and restored to God's grace?

6. Jesus' prayer was not only for those who had conspired to put Him on the cross and those who had actually nailed Him to the cross, but it was for every one, including US.
 - Peter preached one sermon and over 3,000 people who guilty in conspiring to have Jesus crucified were saved and baptized in the name of Jesus.
 - Included were many priests who were very instrumental in having Jesus crucified.
 - Gentiles as well as Jesus became believers in Jesus AFTER His crucifixion and resurrection.
 - Jesus' prayer, "...*Father forgive them...*" was certainly not in vain.
 - What about YOU? Christian, YOU were included in those Jesus prayed for while on the cross.

III. JESUS ON THE CROSS IS THE EXAMPLE THE CHURCH IS TO BE FOLLOWING TODAY

1. As Jesus Christ was, so is His Church to be today.
 - Jesus came to minister, not to be ministered unto.
 - Jesus came to save others, not to be honored.

- Thus the Church is not here to gather wealth or honor or recognition but is here to be unselfish and seek out the lost.
 - The Church's prayer life is to be like that of the Lord Jesus, constant and on behalf of others, not itself.
 - What does YOUR/OUR Church exist for? What did Jesus Christ exist for? What did Jesus lay aside for the sake of OUR salvation?
 - Is not the Church's mission to rescue souls from hell and lead them to God, to hope, to heaven?
2. Jesus' prayer was aimed at the spiritual needs of those who had put Him on the cross.
 - The Church will do well to remember that the greatest battle is not with flesh and blood but with spiritual wickedness and evilness.
 - The Church is to strain after the forgiveness of sinners, teach sinners what sin is and what the blood of Jesus Christ is and can do, what hell is and what heaven is, that those who are saved, cleansed from sin, and in doing so, is doing what it is supposed to do.
 - The first business of every Christian is to let nothing turn him/her aside from bringing mercy to those who are dying in their sins, to tell sinners that Christ alone can help them.
 3. Jesus' prayer was unselfish and spiritual, reaching out to every person.
 - Jesus prayed for ALL the wicked, not just those who had crucified Him, He prayed for the ignorant, He prayed for those who had persecuted Him.
 - The Church's mission is not to just the respectable few or to the elite and elected, not to those who will be kind, generous and affectionate but to the prostitute, the thief, the druggie, the street people, the most depraved, the most undeserving, for if no one else cares for these, who will? The Church must!
 - If there be any whom the Church should seek first to bring to Jesus, it should be those who are the farthest off and most opposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 4. As Jesus was, so must the Church be earnest and hopeful.
 - Surely no Church ever had a more hopeful atmosphere than that of today, look at the world and its condition. Where is help coming from? Who is going to tell the world about Jesus?
 - It is the Church's business to seek after the most fallen and ignorant and to seek them earnestly and persistently.
 - The business of the Church is the same Jesus had and still has: The salvation of souls.

CONCLUSION:

1. Remember Jesus' condition when He prayed "*...Father, forgive them....*"
2. Remember who Jesus prayed for.
3. Remember the commission Jesus gave His Church.
4. Remember the Church's example.
5. Remember the Church's ONLY business.