

## He Spoke a Word of Forgiveness <sup>1</sup>

✦ **One that condemns my unforgiving heart.**

✦ **One that comforts my grateful heart.**

In the name of Jesus, our suffering Savior, dearly redeemed believers:

**Introduction:** November 19, 1863. Contrasted with Edward Everett’s two-hour “Gettysburg Oration.” Compare to Abraham Lincoln’s brief “Gettysburg Address.”

Impossible to calculate all the words preached, spoken, and written about the crucifixion of our Lord. Yet the seven words Jesus spoke from his cross speak louder than them all. Many of us may know them by heart. In this season of Lent, we pause to ponder them. On this Ash Wednesday, we consider the first. Quote Luke 23:34. He spoke a word of forgiveness.

### I. One that condemns my unforgiving heart.

A. Examples of our unforgiving spirit.

1. What we say in our youth compared to what we do.
  - a) Confirmation class (Eighth Commandment)
  - b) Playground example
2. Worship (Lord’s Prayer) What we say as adults compared to what we do.
  - a) “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”
  - b) Day-to-day examples that show our lack of forgiveness.

B. Jesus is perfect in forgiveness.

1. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” How could he be so forgiving?
2. What were they doing?
  - a) Roman soldiers. Despite what they did, Jesus forgave. Could I?
  - b) Passersby. “People stood watching.” Jesus forgave. Could I?
  - c) Rulers, religious dignitaries were sneering. “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God.” Jesus forgave. Could I?
3. Jesus practiced what he preached to the very end. Perfectly! Selflessly!
  - a) “Love your neighbor as yourself.” “Love your enemy.” “Forgive seventy-seven times.”
  - b) On the cross Jesus said, “Father, forgive them.”
4. I can’t love the way he wants. Sometimes I don’t even want to. It is my unforgiving spirit for which Jesus hung on this cross.

### II. One that comforts my grateful heart.

A. Jesus knew all about us, yet he forgives us.

1. Jesus is the Christ.
  - a) Holy. All knowing. Divine foresight. 20/20.
  - b) He knew all this about you and me.
    - (1) Our grudges.
    - (2) Our plots of revenge.
2. But he went to the cross anyway. He spoke words of forgiveness anyway. He spoke them for you. For me.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from 2006 NPH Series: Seven Words He Spoke, Rev. Glenn L. Schwanke.

- B. Jesus lived these words of forgiveness.
1. To send our sins packing (aphiemi).
  2. To plunge them into the depths of the sea.
  3. Best intentions and halfhearted efforts at forgiving others couldn't earn it.
  4. Forgiveness could come no other way than through the Lamb of God who is our perfect substitute.
  5. He loved enemies. Prayed for them.
    - a) Soldiers. How many hammer blows? Seven?  
Yet he prayed, "Father, forgive them." "Take their words and actions . . ."
    - b) Passersby. Religious rulers. How many sneers? Seventy-seven?  
Yet he prayed, "Father, forgive them." "Take their words and actions . . ."
  6. Jesus loves us. Prayed for us!
    - a) How many times will we harbor grudges, grow bitter, plot revenge?
    - b) In our churches? In our synod? Seventy times seven?
    - c) Yet he prayed, "Father, forgive them." "Take their words and actions . . ."
- C. Jesus paid for our forgiveness.
1. Paid in full the price to earn our forgiveness.
  2. Took away our sin-stained record (aphiemi).
    - a) Like the "scape goat" on the great Day of Atonement
    - b) OT concept in our hymns: "My faith would lay her hand...."
    - c) John the Baptist: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"
  3. Carried all our sins to Golgotha (aphiemi).
  4. His blood, suffering, death = price required to back up these words: "Father, forgive them."

**Conclusion:** Soldiers casting "lots" same Greek word as "inheritance" – won for us on Calvary: eternal life with God in heaven. Such free grace empowers our forgiveness and makes every memory of wrong done to us an opportunity to pray for God's grace and mercy on that individual. This frees us from the bitterness that could rot our souls and destroy our relationship with God.

What more is there to say? Nothing, save this: Thank you, dear Jesus, for speaking this word of forgiveness to one as unworthy as I. Your word of forgiveness comforts my grateful heart. Amen.