

# **The Seven Sayings of the Saviour on the Cross**

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***“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost” Luke 23:46.***

*“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit, and having said thus, he gave up the ghost” (Luke 23:46).* These words set before us *the last act* of the Saviour ere he expired. It was an act of contentment, of faith, of confidence and of love. The person to whom he committed the precious treasure of his spirit was his own Father. *Father* is an encouraging and assuring title: well may a son commit any concern, however dear, into the hands of a father, especially such a Son into the hands of such a Father. That which was committed into the hands of the Father was his “spirit” which was on the point of being separated from the body.

Scripture reveals man as a tripartite being: “spirit and soul and body” (1 Thess. 5:23). There is a difference between the soul and the spirit, though it is not easy to predicate wherein they are dissimilar. The spirit appears to be *the highest part* of our complex being. It is that which particularly distinguishes man from the beasts, and that which links him to God. The spirit is that which *God* formeth within us (Zech. 12:1); therefore is he called “The God of the spirits of all flesh” (Num. 16:22). At death the spirit returns to God who gave it (Eccl. 12:7).

The act by which the Saviour placed his spirit into the hands of the Father was an act of faith — “I commend.” It was a blessed act designed as a precedent for all his people. The last point observable is *the manner* in which Christ performed this act: he uttered those words “with a loud voice.” He spoke that all might hear, and that his enemies who judged him destitute and forsaken of God might know it was not so any longer; but instead, that he was dear to his Father still, and could put his spirit confidently into his hands.

“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” This was the last utterance of the Saviour ere he expired. While he hung upon the cross, seven times his lips moved in speech. Seven is the number of *completeness or perfection*. At Calvary then, as everywhere, the perfections of the Blessed One were displayed. Seven is also the number of *rest in a finished work*: in six days God made heaven and earth and in the seventh he rested, contemplating with satisfaction that which he had pronounced “very good.” So here with Christ: a work had been given him to do, and that work was now done. Just as the sixth day brought the work of creation and reconstruction to a completion, so the sixth utterance of the Saviour was “It is finished.” And just as the seventh day was the day of rest and satisfaction, so the seventh utterance of the Saviour brings him to the place of rest — the Father’s hands.

Seven times the dying Saviour spoke. Three of his utterances concerned men: to one he gave the promise that he should be with him that day in Paradise; to another he confided his mother; to the mass of spectators he made mention of his thirst. Three of his utterances were addressed to God: to the Father he prayed for his murderers; to God he uttered his mournful plaint; and now into the hands of the Father he commends his spirit. In the hearing of God and men, angels and devil, he had cried in triumph, “It is finished.”

“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” It is noteworthy that this closing cry of the Saviour had been uttered by the spirit of prophecy long centuries before the Incarnation. In the thirty-first psalm we hear David’s Son and Lord saying, anticipatively: “In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness. Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me. For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name’s sake lead me, and guide me. Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength. *Into thy hand I commend my spirit* thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth” (verses 1-5)!

*In connection with each one of our Saviour’s cross-utterances a prophecy was fulfilled.* Firstly, he cried, “Father, forgive them, for

they know not what they do,” and this fulfilled Isaiah 53:12 — “made intercession for the transgressors.” Secondly, he promised the thief, “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise,” and this was a fulfilment of the prophecy of the angel to Joseph — “thou shalt call his name Jesus, for *he shall save* his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Thirdly, to his mother he said, “Woman, behold thy Son,” and this fulfilled the prophecy of Simeon — “A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also” (Luke 2:35). Fourthly, he had asked, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” and these were the identical words of Psalm 22:1. Fifthly, he exclaimed, “I thirst,” and this was in fulfilment of Psalm 69:21 — “In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” Sixthly, he shouted in triumph “It is finished,” and these are almost the very words with which that wonderful twenty-second Psalm concludes — “He hath *done*,” or, as Hebrew might well be rendered, “*He hath finished*,” the context showing what he *had* done, namely, the work of atonement. Finally, he prayed, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” and, as we have shown beforehand, he was but quoting as it had been written of him beforehand in Psalm 31. O the *wonders* of the cross! We shall never reach the end of them.

***“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”***

**1. Here we see the Saviour back again in communion with the Father.**

This is exceedingly precious. For a while that communion was broken — broken outwardly — as the light of God’s holy countenance was hidden from the Sin-Bearer, but now the darkness had passed and was ended for ever. Up to the cross there had been perfect and unbroken communion between the Father and the Son. It is exquisitely lovely to mark how the awful “Cup” itself had been accepted from the Father’s hand:

“The cup *which my Father* hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11). On the cross, at the beginning, the Lord Jesus is still found in communion with the Father, for had he not cried, “*Father, forgive them!*” His *first* cross-utterance then, was “*Father forgive*” and now his last word is, “Father into thy hands

I commend my spirit.” But *between* those utterances he had hung there for six hours: three spent in sufferings at the hands of man and Satan; three spent in suffering at the hand of God, as the sword of divine justice was “awakened” to smite Jehovah’s Fellow. During those last three hours, God had withdrawn from the Saviour, evoking that terrible cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” But now all is done. The cup is drained: the storm of wrath has spent itself: the darkness is past, and the Saviour is seen once more in communion with the Father — never more to be broken.

“*Father.*” How often this word was upon the Saviour’s lips! His first recorded utterance was, “Wist ye not that I must be about *my Father’s* business?” In what was probably his first formal discourse — the “sermon on the mount” — he speaks of the “Father” seventeen times. While in his final discourse to the disciples, the “paschal discourse” found in John 14-16, the word “Father” is found no less than forty-five times! In the next chapter, John 17, which contains what is known as Christ’s great high-priestly prayer, he speaks to and of the Father six times more. And now the last time he speaks ere he lays down his life, he says again. “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

And how blessed it is that *his* Father is *our* Father! Ours because his. How wonderful this is! How unspeakably precious that I can look up to the great and living God and say, “Father,” *my* Father! What comfort is contained in this title! What assurance is conveyed! God is my Father, then he *loves* me, loves me *as* he loves Christ himself! (John 17:23). God is my Father and loves me, then he careth for me. God is my Father and *careth* for me, then he *will* “supply *all* my need” (Phil. 4:19). God is my Father, then he will see to it that no harm shall betide me, yea, that all things shall be made to work together for my *good*. O that his children entered more deeply and practically into the blessedness of this relationship, then would they joyfully exclaim with the apostle, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed *upon us*, that *we* should be called *the children of God*” (1 John 3:1)!

**“*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.*”**

**2. Here we see a designed contrast.**

For more than twelve hours Christ had been in the hands *of men*. Of this had he spoken to his disciples when he forewarned them that “the Son of man shall be betrayed *into the hands of men*: and they shall kill him” (Matthew 17:22, 23). Of this had he made mention amid the awful solemnities of Gethsemane: “Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed *into the hands of sinners*” (Matthew 26:45). To this the angels made reference on the resurrection morning, saying to the women, “He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered *into the hands of sinful men*, and be crucified, and the third day rise again” (Luke 24:6, 7). This received its fulfilment when the Lord Jesus delivered himself up to those who came to arrest him in the Garden. As we saw in an earlier chapter (booklet), Christ could have easily avoided arrest. All he had to do was to leave the officers of the priests prostrate on the ground, and walk quietly away. But he did not do so. The appointed hour had struck. The time when he should submit himself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter had arrived. And he delivered himself into “the hands of sinners.” How they treated him is well known; they took full advantage of their opportunity. They gave full vent to the hatred of the carnal heart for God. With “wicked hands” (Acts 2:23) they crucified him. But now all is over. Man has done his worst. The cross has been endured; the appointed work is finished.

Voluntarily had the Saviour delivered himself into the hands of sinners, and now, voluntarily he delivers his spirit *into the hands of the Father*. What a blessed contrast! Never again will he be in the “hands of men.” Never again will he be at the mercy of the wicked. Never again will he suffer shame. Into the hands of the Father he commits himself, and the Father will now look after his interests. We need not dwell at length on the blessed sequel. Three days later the Father raised him from the dead. Forty days after that the Father exalted him high above all principalities and powers and every name that is named, and set him at his own right hand in the heavens. And there he now sits on the Father’s throne (Revelation 3:21), waiting till his enemies be made his footstool.

For one day, ere long, the tables shall be turned. The Father will send back the one whom the world cast out: send him back in power and glory: send him back to rule and reign over the whole earth with a rod of iron. Then shall the situation be reversed. When he was here before man dared to arraign him, but then shall he sit and judge them. Once he was in *their* hands, then they shall be in *his*. Once they cried “Away with *him*,” then shall he say, “Depart from *me*.” And in the meantime, he is in the Father’s hands, seated on his throne, awaiting his pleasure!

***“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”***

### **3. Here we see Christ’s perfect yieldedness to God.**

How blessedly he evidenced this all the way through! When his mother sought him in Jerusalem as a boy of twelve, he said, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” When an hungered in the wilderness after a forty-days fast and the devil urged him to make bread out of stones, he lived by every word of God. When the mighty works which he had performed and the message he had delivered failed to move his auditors, he submitted to the one who had sent him, saying, “I thank thee, *O Father*, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matthew 11:25). When the sisters of Lazarus sent to the Saviour to acquaint him with the sickness of their brother, instead of hurriedly going to Bethany, he abode two days still in the place where he was, saying, “This sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God.” It was not natural affection which moved him to action, but the glory of God! His meat was to do the will of the one who sent him. In all things he submitted himself to the Father. See him in the morning, “rising up a great while before day” (Mark 1:35), in order that he might be in the presence of the Father. See him anticipating every great crisis and preparing himself for it by pouring out his heart in supplication. See him spending the very last hour before his arrest on his face before God. How fitly might he say, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; *for I am meek and lowly in heart.*” And as he had lived, so

he died — yielding himself into the hands of the Father. This was the *last* act of the dying Saviour. And how exquisitely beautiful. How thoroughly in keeping with the whole of his life! It manifested his perfect confidence in the Father. It revealed the blessed intimacy there was between them. It exhibited his absolute dependency upon God.

Truly, in all things he has left us an example. The Saviour committed his spirit into the hands of his Father in death, because it had been in the Father's hands all through his life! Is this true of you, my reader? Have you as *a sinner committed* your spirit into the hands of God? If so, it is in safekeeping. Can you say with the apostle, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep *that which I have committed unto him* against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12)? And have you as a *Christian* fully yielded yourself to God? Have you heeded that word, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, *that ye present your bodies* a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your *reasonable service*" (Rom. 12:1)? Are you living for the glory of him who loved you and gave himself for you? Are you walking in daily dependence upon him, knowing that *without him* you can do *nothing* (John 15:5), but learning that you *can do all things* through Christ that strengtheneth you (Phil. 4:13)! If your whole life is yielded up to God, and death should overtake you before the Saviour returns to receive his people unto himself, it will then be easy and *natural* for you to say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Balaam said, "Let me die the death of the righteous" (Num. 23:10). Ah, but to die the death of the righteous, you must live the life of the righteous, and that consists in absolute submission to and dependency upon God.

***"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."***

#### **4. Here we see the absolute uniqueness of the Saviour.**

The Lord Jesus died as none other ever did. His life was not taken from him; he laid it down of himself. This was his claim: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, *but I lay it*



*down of myself* I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:17, 18). The various proofs that Christ’s life was *not* taken from him have been set before the reader in the Introduction (first booklet). The most convincing evidence of all was seen in the committal of his spirit into the hands of the Father. The Lord Jesus himself said, “Father, into thy hands *I commend* my spirit,” but the Holy Spirit, in describing the actual laying down of his life, has employed three different expressions which bring out very forcibly the fact that we are now considering, and the various words used by the Spirit are most appropriate to the respective gospels in which they are found.

In Matthew 27:50 we read, “Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up his spirit.” But this translation fails to bring out the proper force of the original: the meaning of the Greek is he “dismissed his spirit.” This expression is most appropriate in Matthew, which is the kingly gospel, presenting our Lord as “The Son of David; the King of the Jews.” Such a term is beautifully suited in the royal gospel, for the Lord’s act connotes one of *authority*, as of a king dismissing a servant. The word used in Mark — which presents our Lord as the perfect servant — is the same as in our text — taken from Luke, the gospel of Christ’s perfect manhood — and signifies, he “breathed out his spirit.” It was his passive endurance of death. In John, which is the gospel of Christ’s divine glory, another word is employed by the Holy Spirit: “He bowed his head, and gave up the ghost” (John 19:30), or delivered up would perhaps be more exact. Here the Saviour does not “commend” his spirit to the Father as in the gospel of his humanity but, in keeping with his divine glory, *as one who has full power over* it, he “delivers up” his spirit!

Two things were necessary in order to the making of propitiation: first, a complete satisfaction must be offered to God’s outraged holiness and offended justice and this, in the case of our substitute, could only be by him suffering the outpoured wrath of God. And this had been borne. Now there remained only the second thing, and that was for the Saviour to taste of death. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). With the sinner it is death first, and then the judgment; with

the Saviour the order was, of course, reversed. He endured the judgment of God against our sins and then died.

The end was now reached. Perfect master of himself, unconquered by death, he cries with a loud voice of unexhausted strength, and delivers up his spirit into the hands of his Father, and in this his uniqueness was manifested. None else ever did this or died thus. His birth was unique. His life was unique. His death also was unique. In “laying down” his life, his death was differentiated from all other deaths. He died by an act of his own volition! Who but a divine person could have done this? In a mere man it would have been suicide: but in him it was a proof of his perfection and uniqueness. He died like the Prince of Life!

***“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”***

### **5. Here we see the place of eternal security.**

Again and again the Saviour spoke of a people which had been “given” to him (John 6:37 etc.), and at the hour of his arrest he said, “Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none” (John 18:9). Then is it not lovely to see that in the hour of death the blessed Saviour commends them now into the safe-keeping of the Father! On the cross Christ hung as the representative of his people, and therefore we view his last act as a *representative* one. When the Lord Jesus commended *his* spirit into the hands of his Father, he also presented *our* spirits along with his, to the Father’s acceptance. Jesus Christ neither lived nor died for himself, but for believers: what he did in this last act referred to them as much as to himself. We must look then on Christ as here gathering all the souls of the elect together, and making a solemn tender of them, with his own spirit, to God.

The Father’s hand is the place of eternal security. Into that hand the Saviour committed his people, and there they are forever safe. Said Christ, referring to the elect, “My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all: *and none is able to pluck out of my Father’s hand*” (John 10:29). Here then is the ground of the believer’s confidence. Here is the basis of our assurance. Just as nothing could harm Noah when Jehovah’s hand had secured the door of the ark, so nothing can touch the spirit of the saint which

is grasped by the hand of omnipotence. None can pluck us thence. Weak we are in ourselves, but “kept by the power of God” is the sure declaration of holy writ: “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet. 1:5). Formal professors who seem to run well for a while may grow weary and abandon the race. Those who are moved by the fleshly excitement of a “revival meeting” endure only for a time, for they have “no root in themselves.” They who rely upon the power of their own wills and resolutions, who turn over a new leaf and promise to do better, often fail, and their last state is worse than the first. Many who have been persuaded by well meaning but ignorant advisers to “join the church” and “live the Christian life” frequently apostatize from the truth. But every spirit that has been *born again* is eternally safe in the Father’s hand.

**“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”**

#### **6. Here we see the blessedness of communion with God.**

What we have reference to particularly is the fact that communion with God may be enjoyed independently of place or circumstances. The Saviour was on the cross, surrounded by a taunting crowd, his body suffering intense agony, nevertheless, he was in fellowship with the Father! This is one of the sweetest truths brought out by our text. It is our privilege to enjoy communion with God at all times, irrespective of outward circumstances or conditions. Communion with God is *by faith*, and faith is not affected by the things of sight. No matter how unpleasant your outward lot may be, my reader, it is your unspeakable privilege to enjoy communion with God. Just as the three Hebrews enjoyed fellowship with the Lord in the midst of the fiery furnace, as Daniel did in the lion’s den, as Paul and Silas did in the Philippian jail, as the Saviour did *on the cross*, so may you wherever you are! Christ’s head rested on a crown of thorns, but beneath were the Father’s hands!

Does not our text teach very pointedly the blessed truth and fact of communion with the Father *in the hour of death*! Then why dread it, fellow Christian? If David under the Old Testament dispensation could say, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of

the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for *thou art with me*" (Psalm 23:4), why should believers *now* fear, after that Christ has extracted the sting out of death! Death may be "King of terrors" to the unsaved, but to the Christian, death is simply the door which admits into the presence of the Well-beloved. The motions of our souls in death, as in life, turn instinctively to God. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" will be *our* cry, if we are conscious. While we tabernacle here we have no rest but in the bosom of God; and when we go hence, our expectation and earnest desires are to be *with him*. We have cast many a longing look heavenwards, but when the soul of the saved nears the parting of the ways, then it throws itself into the arms of love, just as a river after many turnings and windings pours itself into the ocean. Nothing but God can satisfy our spirits in this world, and none but he can satisfy us as we go hence.

But reader, *only believers* are warranted and encouraged thus to commend their spirits into the hands of God at the dying hour; how sad is the state of *all dying unbelievers*. Their spirits, too, will fall into the hands of God, but this will be their misery and not their privilege. *These* will find "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). Yes, because instead of falling in the arms of love, they will fall into the hands of justice.

***"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."***

### **7. Here we see the heart's true haven.**

If the closing utterance of the Saviour expresses the prayer of dying Christians it shows what great value they place on their spirits. The spirit within is the precious treasure, and our main solicitude and chief care is to see it secured in safe hands. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." These words then may be taken to express the believer's care for his soul, that it may be safe, what ever becomes of the body. God's saint who has come nigh to death exercises few thoughts about his body, where it shall be laid, or how it shall be disposed of; he trusts that into the hands of his friends. But as his care all along has been his soul, so he thinks of it now, and with his last breath commits it to the custody

of God. It is not, “Lord Jesus receive my body, take care of my dust;” but “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” — Lord, secure the jewel when the casket is broken.

And now a brief word of appeal in conclusion. My friend, you are in a world that is full of trouble. You are unable to take care of yourself in life, much less will you be able to do so in death. Life has many trials and temptations. Your soul is menaced from every side. On every hand are dangers and pitfalls. The world, the flesh and the devil are combined against you; they are too much for your strength. Here then is the beacon of light amid the darkness. Here is the harbour of shelter from all storms. Here is the blessed canopy which protects from all the fiery darts of the evil one. Thank God there *is* a refuge from the gales of life and from the terrors of death — the Father’s hand — the *heart’s true haven*.

The seventh of seven booklets.

