

Statements to the Cross

Matthew 27; Mark 15;
 Luke 23; John 19

“He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him” (Matthew 27:42).

Who can forget what Jesus said *from* the cross, and who can appreciate what people said *to* the cross? When we listen to ourselves, we are embarrassed, disappointed, and exasperated by what we hear.

What was said to Jesus when He was on the cross?

Challenge. People said, “If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matthew 27:39, 40). Jesus’ tormentors said, “. . . come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!” (Mark 15:32). Believing is not at all what they would have done. If Jesus had come down from the cross, they would have put Him back on it! People with demands cannot and will not believe. Stubborn sinners cannot believe. No one could deny that Lazarus had been resurrected by Jesus’ power (John 11). However, this resurrection precipitated Christ’s death. When we do not want to believe, even miracles cannot help us!

Magic. One of the men being crucified with Christ

said, "Are you not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" (Luke 23:39). "Amaze us with a trick," he was saying. Jesus is not a magician. There is a sense in which no one is as unsensational as God! Men crave excitement. Even those at the cross could not just watch, listen, and learn. They tried to make something happen. Everything they said and did failed. People today promote excitement. They want "holy goose bumps." They hear with their eyes and think with their feelings. The impenitent thief was guilty of many crimes, even blasphemy (Luke 23:39). He called over to the Lord and mockingly asked Him for salvation. How could a dying man be so brazen?

Man is his own worst enemy. What if Jesus had saved Himself? Then man would have been doomed. Jesus stayed on the cross and sacrificed Himself to save us.

Change. One thief was impenitent, but the other said, "Remember me" (Luke 23:42). The cross either makes men better or worse. The selfish life of one thief ended in his selfish death. The other thief repented. He pushed through the circumstances and focused upon Jesus, asking for mercy. This thief was one man on earth who had some understanding of what was happening. He realized that he had lived a wicked life, and he saw the need to change. The gospel message must be "bad news" before it can be "good news."

Gawkers. Others said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him" (Matthew 27:47–49; see Mark 15:36). Gawkers are dangerous. After Jesus cried aloud to God, bystanders did what bystanders do—they mixed up everything! Hearing a cry from the depths of Jesus' heart, superstitious men confused Elijah with God. Bystanders (thrill-seekers) see everything and observe nothing. They see all that happens and understand little. All that by-

standers offered Jesus was vinegar! What a travesty!

Gamblers. The soldiers said of Jesus' tunic, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it" (John 19:24). Jesus was dying for our sins while men were gambling for His clothes. Only a hardened man could gamble at the cross.

All of us are selling our lives for something. A man can gain the whole world and lose his soul (Matthew 16:24–26). Men gambled while the Son of God was dying to save them! Men were more interested in the worth of a robe than the life of a man. Things were more important than people. Are we any different? Are we any better? We know the price of everything and the value of nothing. Jesus went back to heaven; the robe soon disappeared. Spiritual values last; temporal things pass away.

Conclusion time. A centurion, observing what had happened, said, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39). This was just another workday for this war-hardened soldier, but perhaps he took pride in his job and did it well. He watched every movement; he heard every word. Jesus was different; this cross was different. Unknowingly, this honest man immortalized himself. What the world, the crowds, and the enemies totally missed, this man saw! He drew the only conclusion that one can honestly draw. Either Jesus is the Son of God, or He is not! The centurion made his decision; we must make ours!

We all find ourselves at the cross. What a motley group we see there: enemies, the curious, the ignorant, spectators, the scared disciples, and the loved ones! Jesus was the only one who was fully living out God's will.

*The cross . . .
there is no other way!*