

### Introduction:

Have you ever looked up the last words uttered by famous people? Consider a few examples:

James Dean, who died in a car wreck, reportedly said, "That guy's got to stop...He'll see us."

President John Adams, who died the same day as Thomas Jefferson said, "Thomas Jefferson still survives."

Thomas Jefferson, dying on July 4<sup>th</sup> said, "This is the fourth?"

George Washington said, "Tis well."

H.G. Wells said, "Go away; I'm alright."

Babe Ruth said, "I'm going over the valley."

Karl Marx said, "Go on, get out! Last words are for fools who haven't said enough."

Of course, despite Marx's repudiation, everyone utters last words. Some of the most important "last words" ever uttered were from Jesus. In this case, they weren't really His last words, but only His last words before He died. According to **Luke 23:46**, Jesus' words before breathing his last were, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" (ESV). Amazingly, in the throes of suffering and death, Jesus had the presence of mind to quote **Psalm 31:5**, originally written by David. But, more than just quoting a psalm, Jesus was applying this psalm to what He was facing. As He hung on the cross dying, in the face of those who mocked Him, He was able to say that He was committing Himself to God. Peter comments on this saying, "When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly" (**I Peter 2:23**, ESV). When we refer back to the psalm Jesus quoted, we can understand how as He hung in agony, breathing His last, He could maintain His faith in God. Examine the psalm in the context of Jesus' death and learn some lessons for us today as we entrust our souls to God no matter what happens.

### Discussion:

- I. Troubles come even for the faithful.
  - A. Despite the fact that David was a man after God's own heart, he went through troubled times. He wrote in **Psalm 31:9-10**, "Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eye is wasted from grief; my soul and my body also. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing..." (ESV). We know of some of David's troubled times. Though God had promised him the kingdom, he first had to endure the oppression of Saul who chased him out of the kingdom. Then once he was king, he had to endure the rebellion of Absalom and even the reproaches of his subjects. Despite David being a faithful servant to God, he endured hardship.
  - B. Consider Jesus quoting this psalm in Luke. Here was the only sinless person to ever walk the face of the earth. He had a relationship with the Father we can probably never fathom, yet look at the hardship He faced—poverty, persecution and finally execution.
  - C. We need to recognize this. Too often we have the idea that when we are faithful, we should never have trouble. It just doesn't work that way. Even David and Jesus faced trouble. We will experience grief and sorrow. We will experience trouble from enemies. We will lose jobs. We will lose loved ones. We will get sick. We will face pain. We will be betrayed by others. This does not mean God doesn't exist or isn't there. It also doesn't mean that God doesn't love us. It just means we are dealing with life. Trouble happens, even to Christians, so don't turn your back on God when they come. Rather, run to Him for help.
- II. God knows our distress.
  - A. According to **Psalm 31:7**, God knows our distress. We may think He has forgotten us or is not paying attention to us. We may think He doesn't realize how bad it is for us. But He does know and He does care. David explained God's care by saying, "...and you have not delivered me into the hand of my enemy..." (**vs. 8**, ESV). We need to remember **I Corinthians 10:13**, which says God will not let us face anything we can't handle. He knows what we are facing and He

- knows our limits. He will not let us face something so bad that we cannot help turning to sin and Satan. He always provides a way of escape from the hand of our enemy.
- B. We must take comfort in this. Our God sees. Our God knows. We are not hidden from Him. He has not forgotten us. He has His reasons for letting us face whatever we are facing, whether it be for testing, discipline, edification, protection. We need to understand that God sees the big picture. He knows how what we are facing is going to turn out for our good in the end and He will make it turn out for good as long as we continue to love Him (**Romans 8:28**). I may not know what you are facing, but God does and He already knows how He is going to use it for your good in the long run. Take comfort in that.
  - C. Think about what it means that Jesus quoted from this psalm while on the cross. Even while separated from the Father by our sins, while suffering anguish physically and spiritually, He knew the Father saw Him, knew His needs and was going to work it out for good. We can have that same comfort and trust.
- III. Even when we think we are cut off from Him, He is there and listens.
- A. I found **Psalm 31:22** to be the most helpful. David said, "I had said in my alarm, 'I am cut off from your sight.' But you heard the voice of my pleas for mercy when I cried to you for help" (ESV). Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever felt cut off from God? Have you ever felt like you were hidden from Him by your troubles? David felt that way. Jesus felt that way. In **Matthew 24:46** He cried out another psalm saying, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (ESV). We are not bad Christians when we have felt this way. However, we need to respond to this feeling the same way these examples did.
  - B. We need to cry out to God, maintaining our faith that despite our feeling of being alone, God is with us. He will hear us. He will respond to our pleas for help and mercy. We need to remember **Hebrews 13:5**. God is always with us and has promised never to leave us. As **Psalm 139:8** says, whether we ascend to heaven or our bed seems to be made in Sheol, we are still in God's presence. He sees us, hears us and is with us.
  - C. I don't know how you feel about your relationship with God right now. But I do know what God has promised. No matter what you are facing, God is with you. Never forget that. You may think you can't make it, but by the grace of God you have made it another day. He is with you. He is supporting you. Trust Him.
- IV. We can trust Him to deliver.
- A. The entire psalm is about David's faith that God will deliver him from the hands of his enemies and from his suffering and sorrow. Thus, God is his refuge (**vs. 1**), his rock and his fortress (**vs. 3**). Instead of running from God when times got bad, David ran to God. He didn't allow suffering to decrease His faith in God, but increase it.
  - B. **Psalm 31:15**, is the most important admission in this psalm, "My times are in your hand" (ESV). David trusted God to deliver in God's time. Just because he prayed yesterday, but he was still suffering today, He didn't think God abandoned him. He knew his God. He believed God knew his problems and cared about his problems. He had faith that God would take care of the problems at the exact moment that would be best. He didn't expect God to work on his timetable.
  - C. Consider Jesus on the cross. How did everyone else view what was going on? They saw Jesus as "smitten by God, and afflicted" (**Isaiah 53:4**, ESV). They viewed Him as abandoned by God, as even the enemy of God. Surely God wouldn't let this happen to His Son and Messiah. But Jesus trusted the Father's plan and the Father's timing. He knew the Father would deliver Him when it was best.
  - D. Again, I don't know what you are facing. I don't know how hard it is. I do know this, if you love God, He is with you. If you trust Him, He will deliver you on His timetable when it is best. Trust Him to deliver you at the right moment, even if it is not the precise moment you want. Take His hand, walk with Him, lean on His support and accept His deliverance when He brings it. Do not abandon Him before He delivers you.

V. Let us die with the same faith with which we lived.

- A. I can't help but notice that Jesus quoted this psalm just before He died. He did not expect deliverance to come by being taken off the cross. He did not expect deliverance to come by having those who mocked Him wiped from the earth in the twinkling of an eye. I think He recognized the deliverance He would receive through death itself.
- B. I guess this point stands out to me this week, having just gone through the death of Marita's father and attending the funeral. I think of all the praying we did for God to deliver him from his cancer. I think of what must have been going through his mind as he felt his body grow weaker and must have known death was approaching. I can't imagine that. Then I think of all those I have known who have faced death. Some, as it approached, acted as if God was letting them down. We often talk about 11<sup>th</sup> hour conversions of those who turn to God as they approach death. But I have also seen 11<sup>th</sup> hour reversions. I have seen folks turn their back on God as they were nearing the finish line just because the finish line was coming quicker than they wanted. They went back into the world and abandoned their faith. How sad. Abandoning their faith didn't save their life, but merely condemned their souls.
- C. On the other hand, I consider the examples of men like Steve Bobbitt, Toby Crozier and others. I see Jesus on the cross saying, "Into your hands I commit my spirit" and I realize, we need to face death with the same faith we faced life. What good will it do us to live by faith if we refuse to die by faith? Steve Bobbitt and Toby Crozier were delivered from their cancer. Neither of them have cancer now and as they rest at Abraham's side (**Luke 16:22**), in the presence of Christ (**Philippians 1:23**) neither believe they have been cheated. Jesus, on the cross, was delivered from His enemies. On that very day, He was in paradise (**Luke 23:43**). Jesus faced not only suffering but even death with the same faith He faced life. We can do the same. Death is not a defeat for us; it is a victory. Death is not oppression for us; it is freedom. Death is not a curse for us; it is a blessing. Let us walk in Jesus' footsteps and commit our spirit to the Father even in the face of death.

**Conclusion:**

Life is full of trouble. But God is always with us. God will deliver us. Whatever you are facing, don't let it turn you from God. Rather, trust God and trust His timing. He will deliver you, even if it comes by delivering us from this life and leading us on to the comfort of the next. Our God is an awesome God, let us entrust our spirit into His hands no matter what we face.