

The Seven Sayings of the Saviour on the Cross

THE WORD OF AFFECTION

Jn. 19:25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. **26** When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

Even in the most horrific circumstances, the glory of the Lord Jesus outshone everything which took place at Calvary, as John eloquently described at the beginning of his Gospel, **Jn. 1:5** And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. ... To the minutest detail God was unfolding His purpose for our salvation through His Son in absolute magnificence. Beyond what the Jews did, or what the Roman soldiers did, or what Herod and Pontius Pilate did, our God was directing the occasion in fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies. ... When you look at the cross you see real events corroborating the authentic record of the Saviour's glorious victory.

Jn. 19:25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother ... We cannot begin to understand Mary's heartache and emotions as she watched her eldest Child die. No words could describe her grief. There is no mention of her other children being there. Her husband Joseph had most probably died. ... Instead, she was accompanied by three other women and one man. ... There was none of them behaving unruly, no fainting or frantic wailing. The broken-hearted mother suffered honourably in silence as she stood at the foot of the cross upon which her Son was being crucified, abandoned and condemned by His people, **Jn. 1:11** He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

Over thirty years earlier, as she held Him, - her firstborn, - in her arms, the temple priest Simeon spoke peculiar words to her, **Lk. 2:34** Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; **35** (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also) ... I'm sure she pondered those words often. What did the old priest mean? ... a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also. ... As she stood at the cross, the prophecy of Simeon was being fulfilled for her soul was as if it was being *pierced* ... being 'sliced through' ...and she couldn't lift a hand to help her Son Who was *also* being 'pierced through', to an even greater degree. She couldn't take Him down from the cross. She could only stand with the tears rolling down her face, mourning the dear Son God had blessed her with.

Mary would likely have been standing the closest to Jesus. ... She saw the blood flowing down His face from the wounds inflicted by the crown of thorns cutting into His head. She would have seen the veins in His arms and His legs protruding, because of His agony. She would have seen the sweat as the pain in His body bore its heavy price. As the hours seemed endless, the blood would

have congealed on His body. ...How she, as any mother would, have loved to have taken her child home and washed and cleaned and soothed His pain.

I don't mean to be irreverent but I'm sure – however else she saw Jesus that day – she still would have looked upon Him as her 'Boy'. That was her Jesus she had held in her arms as a Baby in the Bethlehem stable. ... That was her Jesus she and Joseph brought down to Egypt to escape King Herod's massacre of the infants. ... That was her Jesus for Whom she and Joseph returned to the temple and Who they found speaking so expertly to the Pharisees when He was only twelve years of age. ... That was her Son Jesus Who she watched growing up and becoming a carpenter, in His earthly father's footsteps. ... That was *her* Jesus on the cross.

His disciples had deserted Him ... *but His mother was there*. And alongside His mother was His mother's sister, Salome, - she was the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John (Mt. 27:56). There was another Mary, the wife of Cleophas, who was the mother of the disciple known as James, the son of Alphaeus (Mt 10:3). And these three women were with a fourth, Mary Magdalene. ... The only man there was John the disciple, the son of Salome. ... Afterwards, as Salome walked home with her son John, Mary had to walk away and leave her Son, dying on the cross.

None of the Gospel writers recorded Mary said anything. She grieved in silence. She would have loved to have removed that thorny crown from His head and reach up to pour in oil to soothe His pain ... She could have shouted at the mocking crowd, "Why did you do this? What wrong did my Son ever do to you!" ... No! She did not make a scene, but she mourned in silence. ... In those days women were employed to lament and wail, ... but Mary grieved quietly as the sword pierced her soul ... there *stood* by the cross of Jesus his mother.

And the only man standing at the cross was John. The previous evening, after Jesus had led the eleven disciples from the Upper Room in Jerusalem down to the valley of Kidron and across into the Garden of Gethsemane, He asked them to watch with Him and pray. It had been a long and full day, when it seemed a heavy cloud was hovering over them. Jesus had warned them what was going to happen. One by one each of them promised to stand with Him no matter what, **Mt. 26:35** Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples. Good intentions ... but they all deserted Him when the enemy walked into the Garden and took Him away! ... Using the words of Zech. 13:7 Jesus had warned, **Mt. 26:31** All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. ... and that was what happened for they left Him to the Roman soldiers and the officers of the High Priest.

And yet, here now at the foot of the cross, - standing beside the mother of Jesus, - was one of those disciples who had deserted Him in the garden. He had returned for he had realised his error. ... John the disciple was at the cross. I'm sure as he saw Jesus, he was full of shame for forsaking Him. But by God's grace he had returned ... and he was there. He was the first of the disciples to return to Jesus. ... All kinds of thoughts and memories would have flashed before him ... like the time when the Saviour met him on the seashore and called him to become a fisher of men. He would have remembered the power of Jesus when He changed the water into wine, and the loaves and the fish into food for the multitude. He would have remembered the lame being made to walk, the blind being made to see, the dumb speak, the demons cast out. He would have recalled the teaching he enjoyed hearing from the Saviour's lips.

I'm sure many of us can look back to a time when we could have 'put ourselves in John's sandals'. In the Garden of Gethsemane John fled rather than stand for his Lord. It grieves us when we remember those occasions we disappointed Him. Where were we when we were called to defend His honour? Why didn't we speak for Him when we had the opportunity? We mightn't like to be described as such ... but there have been those times when we *slid back* from where we had been with the Lord.

We didn't lose our salvation ... but neither were we enjoying it the way it was intended. We knew we weren't where we ought to have been. We were like the prodigal 'in the far country', - he did not lose his sonship ... but he had left its privileges! ... If you are truly saved, you cannot lose your salvation, but you can lose the *joy* of your salvation, and become miserable ... until you repent and recognise again Jesus as your Lord. ... And here at the cross, John had returned.

At the cross was where he had to be to hear the Saviour's words, **Jn. 19:26** When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! ²⁷ Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! ... From then on, John was Mary's adopted son. ... He went on to write the Gospel, three epistles, and the Book of Revelation. He would have heard many stories about Jesus from Mary ... and how fitting it was this same John was the disciple who again met the risen glorified Lord on the island of Patmos.

John took Mary home, as was the last request from his Master. And there is a beautiful little thought. ... Look how John records it, **19:27** Then saith he [*Jesus*] to the disciple [*John*], Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto *his own home*. ... Mary had other sons and daughters who would have been good to her, but Jesus committed His mother into John's care. ... And this was the Friday afternoon. Before sunset the Saviour's body was taken down from the

cross and carried to and laid in a tomb in the garden. It lay there that evening and night, and the whole of the next day and night, and then the following morning Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and discovered it empty. She ran to find Peter, and she also found John, and they both came to the sepulchre and found it as Mary Magdalene had described it, *empty*. Afterwards, *Jn. 20:10* Then the disciples went away again unto *their own home*. ... When John went back to his own home, who was there? ... In his home was Mary the mother of Jesus and what joy he had telling her the good news her Son had risen from the dead.

Incidentally, where *was* James, and Joses [*Joseph*], Simon, Judas [*Jude*], and Jesus' sisters (Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3)? ... We are not told, but they weren't at the cross. Instead of them being there with their mother, Jesus gave the privilege to John. ... It is a lesson how sometimes we miss out on opportunities to serve the Lord because we are not where we ought to be ... so He uses another.

Consider too, how in the midst of all the crowds ... with everything He had on His mind, Jesus still had time for those who loved Him, for those who were standing at the foot of the cross. Those who identified with Him, He identified with. ... "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord, or to defend His cause ... Then will He own my worthless name before His Father's face". Despite the eternal dimensions of what was taking place at Calvary, Jesus uttered those words of affection to His mother, *Jn. 19:26* Woman, behold thy son! ... The Lord called and equipped her to fulfil that privilege, to be the Saviour's mother. ... When she was told she would give birth to Jesus, the angel said, *Lk. 1:30* Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. ... When God applies His favour/grace, He gives you His strength, and it is yours forever because nothing can take it from you.

As Mary stood at the cross looking at her Son, she was being held and comforted in the arms of God. Even in such circumstances, she was blessed among women by virtue of the honour God had bestowed upon her when she became the mother of Jesus. ... With the tears flowing down her face, God was her refuge and strength, and she was confident the Lord was working His will out perfectly.

She was a beautiful woman, blessed by God, and treasured by her Son. She was His mother in every earthly sense of the word but even she had to believe in God and trust in His grace. At the beginning, when she heard the news from the angel she was to become the mother of a very special Child, she expressed her sincere humility, *Lk. 1:46* My soul doth magnify the Lord, ⁴⁷ And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. ... Faith is a gift from God to believe in Him, and to continue believing in Him, even when she did not understand. That is how He kept Mary, and how He keeps us, to His glory.

CONCLUSION The crowds were soaked in their hatred of Jesus. Many had never met Him before that day but how bitterly they mocked and derided Him! They had no sorrow, no compassion. ... They did not rile upon the other two men who *did* deserve to die. They didn't lambast and insult them. Instead, all their contempt was reserved for Jesus.... But that is the difference between those who are saved by God's grace and those who are not for we love Him because He first loved us, and we have nothing to boast in for our salvation is all because of His grace and His choosing.

The cross

²⁵ Now there stood by the cross of Jesus

The companions

his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶
... and the disciple standing by, whom he loved

The commitment

²⁶ When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

The charge

²⁷ Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!

The compliance

And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.