

## Three Words – Father, Forgive Them By Kent Heaton

The panorama was a horrifying spectacle of death, misery and inhumanity of man measured out in slow torturous tones to three men considered criminals. A great multitude of people gathered on the hill crying and mourning with shrill cries of despair. Men in regal robes of Jewish hierarchy circled around the crowds sneering at the condemned. The Roman soldiers, fond of mocking those they executed, shouted insults and curses towards the helpless. One of those on the cross reviled the man in the middle as accursed and worthless.

All the earthly possessions of the condemned were auctioned off with lots being cast for the privileged one who would possess a simple garment. The crowd mingled by the picture of horror as they cast dispersions upon the man in the middle wagging their heads at him. The darkness that overspread the land paled in comparison to the darkness of hearts that drove the maddening crowd to a frenzied pitch of hatred. Eyes filled with disgust as faces contorted to express the contempt of the man on the cross.

Hands were raised against the man pointing fingers of accusation. Feelings of revulsion filled the air from those who gathered at Calvary that day. A few days earlier the man on the cross was hailed as a conquering hero but now as a vanquished foe (Matthew 21). He had been dragged from Gethsemane and remanded to the Roman and Jewish legal jurisprudence ending with a sentence of death. He had been spat on, slapped, ridiculed, mocked and scourged with the Roman whip. Made to carry his own cross he fell beneath the load and walked ahead of Simon whom they compelled to carry the cross (Mark 15:21).

At Golgotha, "which is translated, Place of a Skull" (Mark 15:22) the man was thrown to the ground and secured to the cross with nails. Lifted up he was crucified in the most humiliating and contemptible manner. Treated as filth the man writhed in intense pain and agony as his body responded to the murderous acts of slow death forced upon his body. The pain seared through his body in ribbons with incredible fury of torture. The act of taking a breath brought on the most agonizing misery. Tears stained the blood soaked dirty face of the man.

Barely audible, he spoke with whispers of seven sayings. In the midst of noise echoing throughout the hillside and gardens a soft voice came floating from the parched lips of Jesus of Nazareth. "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:33). The earth should have stood silent with those words but it did not. All of those gathered should have gasped when the words were said but they did not. The mountains should have shook and the herald of the archangel should have sounded forth from every corner of the earth but only the broken words of a dying man could be heard. He would breathe his last and die.

Jesus could hear the screams of those who reviled him. He could see the hatred in their eyes. The fear that filled the air was felt in the heart of God's Son. The smell of death was pronounced upon the deeds done that day. But Jesus said, "Father, forgive them." Three words: an address to his Father; a request for mercy; a blessing upon those who hated him. Three words: an appeal to the Creator; a plea for pardon; a petition for the creation. Three words: our hope; our need; our condition.

Can you stand at the cross and hear those words? Three words resonate after two-thousand years. The need is still here. The answer is still here. The hope remains.

### Comparing Ourselves

"For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2Cor. 10:12).

The Indians asked their Chief in autumn if the winter was going to be cold or not. Not really knowing an answer, the chief replied that the winter was going to be cold and that the members of the village were to collect wood to be prepared. Being a good and wise leader, he then went to the nearest phone booth and called the National Weather Service and asked, "Is this winter to be cold?" The man on the phone responded, "This winter is going to be quite cold indeed." So the Chief went back to speed up his people to collect even more wood to be prepared. A week later he called the National Weather Service again, "Is it going to be a very cold winter?" "Yes," the man replied, "it's going to be a very cold winter." So the Chief went back to his people and ordered them to go and find every scrap of wood they could find. Two weeks later he called the National Weather Service again: "Are you absolutely sure that the winter is going to be very cold?" "Absolutely," the man replies, "the Indians are collecting wood like crazy!" (From Alan Smith)

If one's conduct in matters of faith and practice is based solely on comparing himself to others, he has no true standard of authority.

### Learn to Love

It was the coldest winter ever. Many animals died because of the cold. The porcupines, realizing the situation, decided to group together. This way they covered and protected themselves; but the quills of each one wounded their closest companions even though they gave off heat to each other. After a while, they decided to distance themselves one from the other and they began to die, alone and frozen. So they had to make a choice: either accept the quills of their companions or disappear from the Earth. Wisely, they decided to go back to being together. This way they learned to live with the little wounds that were caused by the close relationship with their companions, but the most important part of it was the heat that came from the others. This way they were able to survive. Moral of the story: The best relationship is not the one that brings together perfect people, but the best is when each individual learns to live with the imperfections of others and can admire the other person's good qualities. Learn to love even the prickly ones.

### A Moments Wisdom

On getting along with a wife: Be to her virtues very kind; Be to her faults a little blind.  
Truly great friends are hard to find, difficult to leave, and impossible to forget.  
Dear Lord, Fill my mouth with worthwhile stuff, And shut it when I've said enough.  
A Bible falling apart belongs to someone who isn't.

A Bible in the hand is worth two in the bookcase.

A brook would lose its song if God removed the rocks.

Need a lifeguard? Ours walks on water!

Make your eternal reservations now: Smoking or Nonsmoking?

A hypocrite is a person who's not himself on Sunday.

A pint of example is worth a barrel full of advice.

A relationship is give and take, and though God may only give, you shouldn't only take.

Adversity introduces you to yourself.

All's well that ends in heaven.

Are you a man with a plan, or a saint with a complaint?

Is it modest apparel to entertain company in your underwear? Then why do you consider it modest on vacation?

Do we change our lives to suit God or try to change God to suit our lives?

There is no odor so bad as that which comes from goodness tainted.