



Final Words

*The Priceless Gift of Jesus' Last Words
From The Cross*

Lenten Reflections by Russ Cotnoir, Jr.

Illustration by William Heimer

Easter Devotional Series
by Russ Cotnoir, Jr.



REPHIDIM
Project

Lenten Reflection #1

Introduction

It has been said that you can tell a great deal about a person's character in life by his character in death. Final words are like final summaries. Bad. Good. Or indifferent.

The seven final sayings of Jesus from the cross have always intrigued me. The thrust of them are more penetrating to our hearts than the spikes that pierced His hands and feet. Taken in totality, His words give all of us a final glimpse of who He really was, and is. They are the embodiment of what He came to do. And a clear exhortation as to how we are to live.

Final words. Final acts. We will all come to this crossroads one day. Unless Jesus returns first, we will all stare death in the eye. What words, what gestures will close the book on your life? As the flame of Jesus' life flickered in the icy wind of death's call, His last words radiate the brilliance of the glorious revelation that: "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mk. 15:39).

Jesus' final words. Priceless sentiments. Personal gifts. "Each one," as someone well observed, "a window through which the cross can be better understood. Each one opens a treasury of promises."

Would you join me for the next 8 days as we reflect and meditate upon each of the seven final sayings of Jesus from the cross through this series of short devotionals distilled from both the Holy Spirit's leading and the insights of others as they have been led. For God so loved the world ... for God so loved YOU, that He gave...

Lenten Reflection #2

A Prayer of Forgiveness

What does an innocent person say when they have been crucified to a cross? What does a man say when he's led to the gas chamber and he has committed no crime. What runs through the mind of someone falsely accused as they pull the hood over his head, and strap his hands and feet to the electric chair? What words flow from his lips when asked by the executioner, "Do you have any last words?" Most would cry for help. You & I would plead for life. But not Jesus. As the mallet of man's hate hit the nails of obscured justice, the voice of the Son of God issued A FINAL PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS (Lk. 23:34). "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."

So much opposition has risen from this first utterance from the cross. Some try to erase it entirely. Others try to tone it down. How could God forgive such an act as the crucifixion of His only Son? God doesn't bless reprobates with forgiveness, does He? He doesn't pardon murderers, does He? Jesus couldn't have meant what we think He meant, could He?

He did. "Father forgive them..." He meant just what He said. "Blot out their sins completely!" That was His final plea. It was His last prayer. It is an astounding concept that Christ's final prayer was not for world peace, hunger relief, an end to violence in the streets, or a miracle to save His own life, but His dying request was a petition for His enemies! That's a far cry from the human imprecations of certain biblical figures in the OT like Nehemiah for example: "Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity. Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before You..." (Neh. 4:4-5)

I can relate to that. Can't you? We can identify with those words can't we?

When Jesus preached on the mountain early in His ministry and said, "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you..." (Matt. 5:44) He wasn't just blowing smoke. He wasn't issuing a challenge that He Himself was unwilling to perform. He lived exactly what he preached and died fulfilling His own words. He died fulfilling the words of Scripture. - Isa. 53:12 "He... interceded for the transgressors."

What kind of low-life mocks a man who is dying? What kind of person accosts the wrongly accused? Who in their right mind laughs at a man on his death bed? Sinners. People extremely far from God. The very people for whom Christ lived, prayed, and died. People like us. Sinners who didn't know the full extent of what they were doing to God's Son. So, He prayed for them. Even as He prays for us.

It's not that these people were unaware of their crime or sin, they knew they were in the wrong. I think what Jesus meant by His words, "...for they do not know what they are doing" refers to the fact that they didn't grasp the enormity of their crime. They didn't realize that they were crucifying the eternal Son of God. They were spiritually blind. In the dark. Because had they known, they would not have done it. - 1 Cor. 2:8 (NIV) "None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

But spiritual ignorance in no way excuses the guilt, not theirs nor ours. We don't realize, do we, exactly what we do to Christ when we deny Him by our words... how we mock Him by our actions... the way we abandon Him in our faithlessness... the extent to which we abuse Him by our selfish behavior. We don't really know ... do we? But Christ still prays, "Father, forgive them ...

There was no malice in His voice. No revenge in His heart. No vendetta on His mind. No retaliation at His hands. Only grace at His disposal. Amazing, astounding, available grace.

Christ was giving His crucifiers another chance. If they acknowledged their sin and received what He offered He would forgive them - even then. He gives us the same chance. In fact, He's offering it to you right now! - 1 Jn. 1:9; 2:1-2 (NIV) "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

Will you take it? Will you GIVE it?

Don't miss that either. It's a principle that every person who claims to be a follower of Christ is bound by. **A LOVING AND FORGIVING GOD FOSTERS A LOVING AND FORGIVING PEOPLE.** When we really grasp that the Savior we claim to follow breathed His last breath with a prayer of forgiveness on His lips for His **ENEMIES**, our petty personal wounds seem quite childish in comparison don't they?

Is there someone you need to forgive today? Take a moment, right now. Clear your conscience. Cleanse your heart. Become like Jesus and pray His words of forgiveness, "Dear Father, forgive them ... in Jesus' name. Amen.

Lenten Reflection #3

A Promise of Hope

Jesus' final prayer of forgiveness, believe it or not was backed up by action. Even in His death He practiced what He preached. Immediately on the heels of a final prayer of forgiveness we find Jesus bestowing A FINAL PROMISE OF HOPE (Lk. 23:39-43).

Trivia Question: Who became the 1st Christian to walk through heaven's door after the death of Christ?

I don't know for sure, but I have an idea. It wasn't a religious scholar. It wasn't a seasoned saint. It wasn't a pastor, deacon or formal member of any church. As near as I can determine it was a thief. A criminal. A foul-mouthed, hard-nosed man of violence turned believer! - Lk. 23:39-43 - One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" But the other responded, and rebuking him, said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our crimes; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!" And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

In the 1st three hours that Jesus hung on the cross, the scripture records that He broke His silence 3 times. And each time His words had someone else as their focus. There is nothing trivial about that.

There He hung, between 2 thieves, the object of insulting jeers. They taunted. They mocked. They rubbed it in His face. And He had only uttered one thing - a prayer of forgiveness.

But something happened. One of the men changed. And that, my friends, is what Christianity is all about.

Have you ever thought about why Jesus went through the agony and the shame of the cross? What caused Him to endure the verbal and physical abuse patiently? Because He knew that people can change when touched by the power of a Spirit-controlled life. This thief changed. In an instant he recognized Jesus as His only hope of salvation and he acted on it.

All this guy had was a prayer. But a prayer was all he needed. It was enough. “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” He didn’t know theology. He didn’t know about pre-, post-, or amillennialism. He had no clue about the differences between supra-, infra-, and sublapsarianism, or the what’s or when’s of the kingdom. All he knew was that Jesus was His only hope. He must have had incredible faith to be putting his life in the hands of One who was dying right along with him.

Simple, authentic faith. That’s all it takes. This man came with no wealth, no honor, no prestige, no education. He came without beauty, without friends, without merit. He didn’t wear the right clothes, or hang around with the right crowd. He didn’t even go to the “right” church. He wasn’t baptized, he wasn’t confirmed, he didn’t speak in tongues, and he wasn’t miraculously healed. He NEVER took communion. All he came with was an admission of guilt and a prayer for mercy. And that’s all it took.

“Remember me Jesus.” “Consider it done. You can count on this: today you will be with Me in paradise.”

It’s almost beyond comprehension, but it happened. And it still does. Salvation is available to EVERY ONE who asks. Right here. Right now.

Lenten Reflection #3: A Promise of Hope

Jesus is able to do “exceeding, abundantly beyond all that we ask or think...” (Eph. 3:20). Even on the cross. That’s the point of it all. He is able. We aren’t.

Luke is the only gospel writer who recorded this particular statement. I’m thankful he did. It gives us hope. It gives me hope. It reveals yet another facet of grace. It forces me to come to terms with the fact that I don’t deserve heaven any more than that thief did. It makes me realize that we’re all signing on someone else’s line of credit - Jesus’.

Lenten Reflection #4

A Portrait of Care

Last words. Expressions of grace. A final prayer of forgiveness. A final promise of hope. And 3rdly, A FINAL PORTRAIT OF CARE (John 19:23-27).

“When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, ‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.’ This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, ‘They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.’ So the soldiers did these things, but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.”

As a child brought up in the Roman Catholic Church, religious art made a lasting impression on me. One of the most striking pieces of art that I have ever beheld is The Pieta (by Michelangelo). In one of the churches that I attended there was a life-size reproduction and I was always mesmerized by it. It held such powerful emotion. The portrayal of Mary mourning the cruel death of her adult Son was striking. I couldn’t imagine then what that must have been like - I can’t imagine now. The imagery is breathtaking.

There is another scene, however that I have never seen depicted by a painter or a sculptor. It is the scene which we find here in

John's gospel. I don't know if any artist could adequately capture the emotion of the moment.

(Not even the well-known children's story *Love You Forever* by Robert Munsch captures the sentiment completely for the man in his story is not the one dying. The mother is.)

Out of all the events which took place at the cross, this has to be the most tender and beautiful. It is one of the greatest portraits of compassion and care ever created - a dying man caring for His grieving mother. A masterpiece of grace.

The moment is unique. The look in Jesus' eyes as He said His final good-bye to His earthly mother must have been riveting. In the midst of His anguish, Jesus' eyes gaze into His mother's. I believe in those eyes He saw the reflection of His own pain. He saw, as Simeon prophesied many years before at His dedication in the Temple, that a sword was piercing her soul (Luke 2:35).

G. Campbell Morgan wrote, "He in the midst of unfathomable things, in the midst of those hours when all the Divine compassions were toiling to redeem men, and exhibit the everlasting mercy, His heart thought about His Mother, and He provided for her for the rest of her earthly pilgrimage."

It is that kind of compassion upon which we can rely as Peter urges us in his first letter, "Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about what happens to you" (1 Peter 5:7 NLT). In His final words of concern for His mother we realize that He is a Savior who sees our weaknesses, knows our sorrows, and provides for our needs.

- Psalm 55:22 "Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken."

Lenten Reflection #5

The Payment for Sin

Jesus' final words. A prayer of forgiveness, a promise of hope, a portrait of care, but the ultimate act of providence was yet to be seen, and about to be heard. As Jesus spoke His fourth statement from the cross He reveals to us **THE FINAL PAYMENT FOR SIN** (Matthew 27:45-47).

“Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’ And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, ‘This man is calling for Elijah.’”

All hell was about to break loose between Him and His Father. And Jesus felt the weight. Mark tells us that Jesus was crucified at the 3rd hour - 9am (Mk. 15:25). At the 6th hour - 12 noon - darkness fell upon the earth until the 9th hour - 3pm (Matt. 27:45). For 3 hours, Jesus hung silently. Then, in the final hour of His death, Jesus broke the dark, deafening silence with some of the most staggering words ever recorded: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Even as His life hung in the balance, He brought the Word of God to life. He quoted Psalm 22:1 because He experienced it. He fulfilled it. It was written for Him centuries before He was born. It was written to describe the depths to which He sank as the sin of the world was literally dumped on His shoulders. It was written to graphically illustrate what happens to a human being when they are about to die without a right relationship

with God the Father through Jesus the Son. Separation. Spiritual death. Jesus faced it square on. Eyes wide open. He did it so that none of us would have to! And He cried out in a loud voice words of an excruciating pain none of us have yet to experience. A gut-wrenching cry of loneliness. Deeper than you or I have ever felt.

This is the only time in Scripture where Jesus did not address God as His Father. Identified fully with our human nature, as sin clung to His flesh, He could not claim that God was His Father. The reason?

- 2 Corinthians 5:21 "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf..."

The Bible says He was wounded for our transgressions (Isa. 53:5), He died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3), He became a curse for us (Gal. 3:13), He gave His life a ransom for many (Mk. 10:45), He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross (1 Pet. 2:24), He died once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that he might bring us to God..." (1 Pet. 3:18). That's why He came. "He appeared," John writes, "in order to take away sins..." (1 Jn. 3:5).

He had to die so that we might live. He offered Himself once, for all. There is no other sacrifice. There was no other way.

- Hebrews 9:22b, 26b "Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins ... but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

But there is also something else here that is extremely important for us to grasp.

As a matter of instruction, a rabbi would simply recite the first line of a particular Psalm, expecting His disciples to know the rest. I believe Jesus quoted the first line of Psalm 22 not as a

word of desperation, but more pointedly as a word of hope! He used a common rabbinical teaching mechanism to invoke the truth of the entire psalm as a fulfillment in Him. Read Psalm 22.

The parallels are astounding. The rejection of the Messiah by the people (v.6), the insults they hurled at Him on the cross (vv.7-8 - compare with Matt.27:38-43), the pain of the crucifixion (vv.14-15), the piercing of His hands and feet at a time when crucifixion was completely unheard of (v.16), the dividing up of His clothing by lot (v.18) are some of the most striking parallels which this messianic Psalm prophetically unveils.

By quoting Psalm 22, our Lord makes clear to those who heard, and to all who would later hear, that this was His mission and that He was supremely confident of the Father's ultimate deliverance of Him through the resurrection of His body before it had even seen decay (Ps.16; cf. Act 2:24-31). Psalm 22 begins in words of agony, but ends on a note of praise and triumph! A hymn of victory!

Days, after His resurrection, He underscored all of this when He said to His amazed followers, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

And it will be.

So let it be written. So let it be done.

Lenten Reflection #6

A Portrayal of Humanity

So far in our journey through Jesus' final words from the cross we have encountered four statements of grace. As the blood poured from His wounds, healing words flowed from His lips: a final prayer of forgiveness, a final promise of hope, a final portrait of care, and the final payment for sin. The 5th statement no less gracious. In the agony of that last hour, in the aftermath of becoming sin, Jesus gives us A FINAL PORTRAYAL OF HUMANITY (John 19:28-29):

“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, in order that the Scripture would be fulfilled, said, “I am thirsty.” A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth.”

“I’m thirsty.” How often do you say that? How frequently do you hear it from your children? It is a definitively human statement. Jesus felt every facet of human nature. He was tired. He was sleepy. He was angry. One writer observed, “Just as divinity is becoming unapproachable, just when His holiness is becoming untouchable, just as His perfection becomes inimitable, the phone rings and a voice whispers, ‘He was human. Don’t forget. He had flesh.’” (Max Lucado)

A glimpse of humanity in the midst of divinity. An expression of grace to remind us again that He knows our frame. He understands our lot. But the statement shows us something else. That even though He was human, His life was governed by a specific plan.

It was the end. The trial had occurred. The nails were placed. The Scriptures of His crucifixion were fulfilled. All except one. Ps. 69:21 says of Him, “They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”

The gall was offered at the beginning of the crucifixion (Matthew 27:34) to deaden the pain. It was a sedative. Jesus refused it and instead took on the full brunt of His suffering. He had bypassed nothing. As He declared His thirst, the soldiers offered Him sour wine, or vinegar and as John tells us (v.28) the Scriptures were fulfilled.

When the vinegar was put to His mouth, the plan was complete. Every last detail was accounted for. All the “i’s” were dotted, every “t” was crossed and Jesus was about to claim victory. Even from the cross.

Lenten Reflection #7

A Pronouncement of Grace

THE FINAL PRONOUNCEMENT OF GRACE (John 19:30).
“Therefore, when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.”

“TETELESTAI!” It wasn’t a whisper. It was a shout. Matthew records that He cried out with a loud voice! It wasn’t the agony of defeat, but the thrill of victory. DONE! PAID IN FULL! That’s what the Greek word means - TRANSACTION COMPLETED. Slavery subdued. Death defanged. If you ever wondered about the difference between religion and Christianity - here it is: “IT IS FINISHED!” The work’s been done. We can’t add anything to it. We can’t take anything from it. We simply need to admit it. Believe it. Trust in it. Receive it.

Christ accomplished everything the Father had given Him to do. His work of redemption was complete. The blood was poured. The ransom was paid. The debt canceled, the wages of sin were dealt out, and divine justice was satisfied.

Matthew wrote: “And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split” (Matthew 27:51).

As He declared victory, the veil of the Temple which separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple was literally torn in two, from top to bottom. That veil was 60' tall, 30' wide and according to the Jewish historian Josephus 4 inches thick. Horses tied to either side could not pull it apart! The message was clear. What man could not do, God did. God Himself was opening the way for us into His presence.

Earlier, when He cleansed the temple, Jesus was asked for a sign of His authority. His reply was, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body" (John 2:19-21).

"In other words," as someone has said, "when He died, the temple and its entire system - the priesthood, the sacrifices, the glory - died with Him because He Himself was the Passover Lamb, high priest and Shekinah glory. Thus, when the temple curtain was split ... the barrier between God and humanity came down for everyone." For ALL who place their trust in Christ, the way to God has been made clear.

- Hebrews 10:19-22 "Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let's approach God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

It's over. There is nothing else you can add to Christ's work of salvation. Don't try. Trust me on this one. You don't have what it takes. IT IS FINISHED!!!

Lenten Reflection #8

A Proclamation of Trust

And so, having accomplished it all, Jesus uttered His 7th and final statement from the cross leaving us with HIS FINAL PROCLAMATION OF TRUST (Luke 23:46).

“And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” Having said this, He breathed His last.”

“Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit.” John adds that He bowed His head and gave up His spirit (John 19:30b). He gently laid His head in the pillow of His Father’s hands and quoted Psalm 31:5 which I have read was commonly used as a bedtime prayer by Jewish Children. Every night, in houses all across Palestine, little children would pray these comforting words. Maybe Jesus was taught those words as a child. And thirty years later, before he breathed his last breath, they were His final words. What a beautiful picture of trust.

The soldiers stripped Him of His clothing, the cross stripped Him of His dignity, our sin stripped Him of His purity, but no man, no force, nothing in the universe could strip Him of His life. HE WILLINGLY GAVE IT UP. He voluntarily let it go. For you and for me. He wasn’t tricked. He wasn’t trapped. He wasn’t taken by surprise. He wasn’t ambushed or overcome. He was submissive to what had always been planned. “For this reason the Father loves Me,” He said, “Because I lay down My life that I may take it up again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative” (John 10:17-18a).

Neither Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John wrote that He simply died, or that “He was killed.” Every one of them, in the original

language, records that He GAVE UP His spirit, He YIELDED up His spirit, He BREATHED OUT His spirit, or HE BREATHED HIS LAST. Jesus bowed His head to the Father's will as if to say, "As You wish..." Something we can be thankful that He always did. He was "...obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8).

Jesus once taught, "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter into it at all" (Luke 18:17). With the simplicity and confidence of childlike trust, Jesus was as submissive in death as He was obedient in life, because He knew He was in good hands.

In whose hands have you placed your soul?

Lenten Reflection #9

A Final Word of Hope

JOURNEY'S END: A FINAL WORD OF HOPE

As I said in the initial segment of these devotionals, you can tell a great deal about a person's character in life by his character in death. "If you want to know someone's heart," observed Max Lucado, "observe that person's final journey." [Lucado, *Angels Were Silent*, p.22]

Take, for example, the final words uttered by a wonderful woman of God I had the privilege of knowing as a young pastor early in my ministry. As I entered her hospital room, Pearl looked at me... and with a twinkle in her eye let me in on something that only she knew. As I took her hand in mine and bent toward her I noticed the tiniest of grins come upon the corners of her lips. Struggling for breath she said to me, "Oh, pastor I'm going home to be with Jesus today. He's ready for me and I want to go..."

CHARLES DICKENS in 1870, whose literary works are world renowned wrote in his will, "I commit my soul to the mercy of God, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." JOHN BACON 1799 - the eminent English sculptor purportedly said, "What I was as an artist seemed to be of some importance while I lived; but what I really was as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only thing of importance to me now."

You see, those whose hearts were filled with Christ in life were focused on Him in death. Truly, a person's final words are a remarkable snapshot of what he or she was in life. The atheist Hobbes purportedly cried out, "I am taking a fearful leap in the dark!" While the powerful preacher D.L. Moody bellowed,

"This is glorious! Earth receding, Heaven opening. God calling me!"

Ever thought about what your final words might be?

Jesus died speaking words that He lived. A prayer of forgiveness, a promise of hope, a portrait of care, payment for sin, a portrayal of humanity, a pronouncement of grace, and a proclamation of trust. And the words He spoke at His death have become the very words that gain us eternal life... will you say them? Will you mean them?

"Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit, my heart, my soul, my mind, my strength, by receiving your Son."

That is what I will leave you with on this Good Friday. An invitation. An invitation to give your life to Christ, because He gave His life for you.

I invite you to pray with me these poignant, personal words of hope: Grant, O Lord, that in your wounds I may find my safety, in your stripes my cure, in your pain my peace, in your Cross my victory, in your Resurrection my triumph, and a crown of righteousness in the glories of your eternal kingdom. [Jeremy Taylor, The Westminster Collection of Christian Prayers]

Psalm 31

In You, O Lord, I have taken refuge;
Let me never be ashamed;
In Your righteousness deliver me.
Incline Your ear to me, rescue me quickly;
Be to me a rock of strength,
A stronghold to save me.
For You are my rock and my fortress;
For Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me.
You will pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me,
For You are my strength.
Into Your hand I commit my spirit;
You have ransomed me, O Lord, God of truth.

I hate those who regard vain idols,
But I trust in the Lord.
I will rejoice and be glad in Your lovingkindness,
Because You have seen my affliction;
You have known the troubles of my soul,
And You have not given me over into the hand of the enemy;
You have set my feet in a large place.

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress;
My eye is wasted away from grief, my soul and my body also.
For my life is spent with sorrow
And my years with sighing;
My strength has failed because of my iniquity,
And my body has wasted away.
Because of all my adversaries, I have become a reproach,
Especially to my neighbors,
And an object of dread to my acquaintances;
Those who see me in the street flee from me.
I am forgotten as a dead man, out of mind;
I am like a broken vessel.
For I have heard the slander of many,
Terror is on every side;
While they took counsel together against me,
They schemed to take away my life.

But as for me, I trust in You, O Lord,
I say, "You are my God."
My times are in Your hand;
Deliver me from the hand of my enemies and from those who
persecute me.
Make Your face to shine upon Your servant;
Save me in Your lovingkindness.
Let me not be put to shame, O Lord, for I call upon You;
Let the wicked be put to shame, let them be silent in Sheol.
Let the lying lips be mute,
Which speak arrogantly against the righteous
With pride and contempt.

How great is Your goodness,
Which You have stored up for those who fear You,
Which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You,
Before the sons of men!
You hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the
conspiracies of man;
You keep them secretly in a shelter from the strife of tongues.

Blessed be the Lord,
For He has made marvelous His lovingkindness to me in a besieged city.
As for me, I said in my alarm,
"I am cut off from before Your eyes";
Nevertheless, You heard the voice of my supplications
When I cried to You.

O love the Lord, all you His godly ones!
The Lord preserves the faithful
And fully recompenses the proud doer.
Be strong and let your heart take courage,
All you who hope in the Lord.

Amen.



Cover illustration by William Hofmann

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