

THE SEVEN LAST WORDS

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The Seven Last Words by S. Baring Gould

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S. BARING GOULD

**THE SEVEN
LAST WORDS**

THE SEVEN LAST WORDS.

The Seven Last Words.

A COURSE OF SERMONS.

BY

S. BARING GOULD, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF "VILLAGE PREACHING FOR A YEAR, FIRST AND SECOND SERIES,"
"LENT SERMONS ON THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING," "THE VILLAGE
PULPIT," "THE PREACHERS' POCKET," "SILVER STORE,"
"SERMONS TO CHILDREN," ETC., ETC.

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Contents.

I.

The First Word.

S. LUKE XXIII. 34.

PAGE

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." 1

II.

The Second Word.

S. LUKE XXIII. 43.

"Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." 15

III.

The Third Word.

S. JOHN XIX. 26, 27.

"He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son!
then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother!" 23

vi.

IV.

PAGE

The Fourth Word.

S. MATTHEW XXVII. 46.

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice,
saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God,
My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" 42

V.

The Fifth Word.

S. JOHN XIX. 28.

"I thirst." 55

VI.

The Sixth Word.

S. JOHN XIX. 30.

"It is finished." 70

VII.

The Seventh Word.

S. LUKE XXIII. 46.

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." 83

The Seven Last Words.

I.

The First Word.

S. LUKE XXIII. 34.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Lo! now is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, "He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." (Isaiah liii. 12.)

The Blessed Lord had been laid on the Cross, and nails driven through His hands and feet. An old Greek writer gives us a glimpse of the scene in a description of another crucifixion. "Quick," cries the executioner, "stretch forth thy right hand: do thou Hephæstus bind it, affix the nail, and drive it home with heavy hammer blows. Now then, forth with the other hand, that it also may be made fast."*

* Lucian. Dialog. de Prometh. 2.

It was not unusual for the Romans to gag the mouths and cover the faces of the crucified. * This last indignity was, providentially, not inflicted on the Saviour. I say providentially, for thus it was that the Lord was able to utter the Seven precious last Words from His Cross.

The cross was raised and planted in the rock, on the hill over against that up which Isaac had gone so long before, bearing the wood of the sacrifice, and where on the summit he had been laid bound on the crossed sticks. Now those words of the patriarch are fulfilled, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering."

Two thousand five hundred and sixty-eight years have elapsed since Noah offered the first sacrifice on the renewed earth, on the summit of Ararat, and the new Covenant was made with man. Now another sacrifice lies on another altar, and another and final and fuller Covenant is entered into. The old time of enmity and alienation is at an end, and

* Tacit. Ann. IV. 70. Sabinus trahatur damnatus, quantum obducta veste et adstrictis faucibus niti poterat clamitans.

the new Testament of peace and reconciliation is sealed with the blood of the Son.

Now that the Cross is raised, and the form of the suffering Jesus is made a spectacle to men and angels, all those who took part in His trial and condemnation gather personally or by representatives about it.

The thieves condemned with Him, the transgressors with whom He is numbered, are crucified one on either side. His cross was not only in the midst, but higher than theirs, for it was customary to give criminals crosses more or less exalted according to their importance. A Roman satyrst speaks of an envious man as turning pale at the cross with jealousy, because another is given a cross taller than his own on which to hang. * The Roman soldiers are there beneath the cross, parting His garments, casting lots on His coat, and now and then looking up at Jesus, and casting at Him a brutal jeer. "If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself." The thieves also, in base and useless sycophancy, join

* Ennius Lucilius. cf. also Suetonius, Galba, 9.