

"Father, into Thy Hands I
Commend My Spirit!"

3/27/64
Bendleton
Good Fri

While all the words of dying persons are full of interest, there is special importance attached to the last. This is the last word of Jesus. This last word especially teaches how to die. It will teach us far more; it contains not only the art of dying, but also the art of living.

Not all the words from the cross were prayers. One was addressed to the penitent thief, another to His mother and to his favorite disciples, and a third to the soldiers who were crucifying Him; but prayer was distinctly the language of His dying hours. It was not by chance that His very last was a prayer; for the currents within Him were all flowing Godwards.

While prayer is appropriate for all times and seasons, there are occasions when it is singularly appropriate. On a death-bed it is more in its place than anywhere else. Then we are parting with all that is earthly, with relatives, friends, with business and property, with the comforts of home and the face of the earth. How natural to lay ~~the~~ hold of that alone we can keep hold of; and this

is what prayer does, for it lays hold of God.

If then we would desire our last words to be words of prayer, we should commence to pray at once. If the face of God is to shine on our death bed, we must now acquaint ourselves with Him and be at peace with Him. If, as we look upon the dying Christ or on the dying saints, we say, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like His," then we must begin now to live the life of the righteous and to practice its gracious habits.

The last words of the dying Savior was a quotation from the Scripture. It is worth noting from which portion of the O.T. Jesus selected the words on which He stayed up His soul in this supreme moment. The quotation is from the thirty-first Psalm. This book, the book of Psalms is undoubtedly the most precious of all the books of the O.T. It is a record of humanity's profoundest sorrows and sublimest ecstasies. It is the most perfect expression which has ever been given to experience. To know and to love it is one of the best signs of spirituality.

It was about His Spirit that the dying Savior prayed. "Into Thy hands I commend my Spirit!" What is Spirit? It is the finest, highest, sacredest part of our being. In modern and ordinary language we call it "the soul"; when we speak of man as composed of body and soul; but in the language of Scripture it is distinguished even from soul as the most lofty and exquisite part of the inner man. It is to the rest of our nature what the flower is to the plant. It is that within us which is specially allied to God and to eternity. It is also, that which sin seeks to corrupt and our spiritual enemies seek to destroy. Jesus knew that He was launching into eternity, and taking His Spirit away from those hostile hands which were eager to seize it, and placed it in the hands of the Eternal. With what tenderness they must have received the Spirit of Jesus.

This is the art of dying, but it is also the art of living. The spirit of every one of us is threatened with them also in life. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit." So does the world. Temptation assails it, sin defiled it. No better prayer pray

er, therefore, could be offered by a living man,
than this prayer of a dying Savior.
this last word of the expiring Savior revealed
His view of death. The momentous question which
the dying man can ask, or which the living can
ask in the prospect of death, is, "If a man die,
shall he live again? Does a man all die, and does
he die forever? There is a terrible doubt in the
human mind that it may be so. It is to Christ we
must go. He has the "words of eternal life." He
spoke on this subject without hesitation or ob-
scurity. His dying word proved that He believed
for Himself what He taught to others. He has, by
His teaching, "brought life and immortality to
light." He is Himself the guarantee of the doctrine
for He is our ~~apostle~~ all life. Because we are united
to Him we know we can never perish. Nothing,
not even death, "can separate us from His love."
Because I live, He said, "ye shall live also."

It may be said that in a very literal sense we
have in the study of this sentence been learning
the art of dying. These words have been the dying
^{words} men. When John Huss was being led to execution,
there was stuck on his head a paper cap, scrawled

with pictures of devils, to whom the wretched pious
priests by whom he was surrounded, consigned his soul
but again he cried, "Father into thy hands I commend
my spirit." These were also the last words of Polycarp,
Jerome, of Luther, of Melancthon, and many
others. Who could wish his spirit to be carried
away to God in a more glorious vehicle. But whether
or not we may use this prayer of death, let us
make use of it in life. "Father, into thy hands
I commend my spirit." He has the words of our
apostle on this subject without hesitation or
doubt. His dying word proved that he believed
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