

## **Jesus prayed for us on the cross**

The last words that Jesus said on the cross are very important to us. We must learn from it and live it every day.

from a sermon of Rev. Coen Vrey

We are often curious about what someone's last words were before they died. Sometimes you can really get to know them from their last words. In the Gospels, we have the privilege of reading Jesus Christ's last seven words or sayings before his death. The first of these is a prayer: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34).

If you really want to understand the power of Jesus' prayer, you must reflect on all the events that led to this point. Jesus is severely abused by his enemies. He is deprived of many things — his freedom, his clothes, his dignity, but his answer to mockery and false accusations is a prayer to his Father for sinners. They could not take away his Father and his love for sinners. Jesus is still God's beloved Son and between them was the close bond of father and son. He calls to his Father not to beg for relief from his own suffering, but to call on God to forgive his enemies.

## **Jesus does what He teaches**

The first thing we learn from this prayer of Jesus, is that He himself does exactly what He teaches. In Matthew 5:44 He says: "*But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,*" and this is exactly what He does. Even in the humiliation of the cross He did the will of God by loving his enemies. In this we are also commanded to follow the example of Jesus. We must love our enemies and pray for them.

## **Jesus' prayer is for everyone**

The "*they*" in the prayer means everyone who has been born again through the Holy Spirit. The only condition is faith. When Paul accuses and brands himself as a blasphemer, persecutor and oppressor, he finally exclaims: "*Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief*" (1 Timothy 1:13). Based on Christ's blood and the Spirit's work in him, Paul knows he is also one of the "*they*" for whom Jesus prayed on the cross. Everyone who is enlightened by the grace of God and recognizes the horribleness of his sin as rebellion against God is part of this "*they*". We must pray to God to help us acknowledge our own sins so that we may also be saved.

## **Jesus' prayer is for everything**

The Prayer of our Lord Jesus is expansive: He does not mention anyone by name, and He doesn't only mention certain sins. In love He includes all the transgressions, all the accusations and the mockery, and all the rejection of God's grace in His prayer. Not one sin is singled out. Our sins are included in this prayer, so that no one should ever say in doubt that their sin is too great to be forgiven. But remember, the only sin that is not included is the sin against the Holy Spirit.

### **Look to the cross for forgiveness**

The certainty of our forgiveness is not built on our own shaky prayers, but on the powerful prayer of our Saviour on the cross. Even before your birth, even when we were still enemies and unknowingly rejecting Christ, He had already prayed for us. His prayer was already being answered: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" To this day the Father answers Jesus' prayer on the cross. As believers we have to understand the power of this prayer. Jesus died for our sins on the cross. He prayed for us. We must live a life of gratitude, live every day with the understanding that even on the cross, even in his darkest hour, Jesus was praying for you.