

Witnessing Even in Death

John 18 – 19

Even as the Father was allowing His Son to be cruelly tortured and murdered, even as the Son was experiencing a deep sense of abandonment by the Father, each was lifting up testimonies to the other.

The Father was testifying to Jesus as His own chosen, only-begotten, dearly-loved Son, all the while events seemed to proclaim the opposite. And the Father brought these testimonies from highly-unexpected sources.

- When the arrest party arrived to seize Jesus, He spoke up and asked, *“Whom do you seek?”* When they answered, *“Jesus the Nazarene,”* Jesus identified Himself with the words, *“I am”*. This would be the usual way of saying, *“I am he”* or *“I am the one you are seeking”*. But when Jesus thus spoke the divine name, *“I am”*, even His enemies reacted to Him in instinctive humility, backing up and prostrating themselves before Him on the ground (John 18:4-8, NASB).
- After a brief interview, Pilate realized that Jesus was an innocent man and looked for a way to release Him. Then when the Jews specifically accused Jesus of claiming to be the Son of God, Pilate was even more afraid (John 18:38; 19:7-8). He seemed to sense that this righteous Man was who He claimed to be.
- The sign Pilate had hung on the cross correctly identified Jesus for who He was: *“Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews”*. Pilate refused to change the sign, even when pressured by the Jewish leaders (John 19:19-22, NASB).
- One of the criminals executed with Jesus knew who He was. He defended Jesus to the other criminal, then asked, *“Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!”* Jesus recognized his genuine faith and responded, *“Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise”* (Luke 23:39-43, NASB).
- While the Son was on the cross, the Father Creator sent darkness over the land from noon through 3:00 p.m. The veil of the temple was torn in two (Luke 23:44-45).
- The Roman centurion, who supervised Jesus’ execution and saw everything that happened, *“became very frightened and said, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’”* (Matthew 27:54, NASB).

Even while engulfed by physical, mental, and spiritual agony, even as He surrendered His life to death, the Son stayed focused on His Father. He was intent on testifying to His Father’s loving control, even as events seemed to shout the triumph of evil.

Jesus' words on the cross show that thoughts of His Father filled His heart, even as He died. Notice particularly John 19:28, 30:

Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I am thirsty."

Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His Spirit" (NASB).

In death as in life, Jesus' first concern was to fulfill His Father's will. Specifically, He was intent on fulfilling scriptural prophecies about His death. Why? Because the fulfillment of prophecy showed that the Father was still in full control of all that was happening, even as Satan seemed to be having his way. All was happening as the Father had announced centuries before.

Scripture testifies to divine control, even in Jesus' dying act. Throughout the gospel account of the arrest and trial of Jesus, He remained passive, allowing Himself to be "handed over" (the meaning of the Greek word) from one party to another:

Judas handed Jesus over to the Jewish authorities (Matthew 26:46, 48).

The Jews handed Him over to Pilate (Matthew 27:2).

Pilate handed Him over to be crucified (Matthew 27:26).

But Jesus had already told His disciples, *"I lay down My life...No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again"* (John 10:17-18, NASB). True to His word, Jesus' final act on the cross was to "hand over" His Spirit to the Father (John 19:30). He died by His own decision, not as a helpless victim, but as Lord of Life, in full control.

In death as in life, the Son glorified the Father, and the Father glorified the Son.

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