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*To Brad Snow:
a good friend, a faithful
brother in Christ, and a
wonderful graphic artist*

FOREWORD

If you don't have a dog, I think you should consider getting one. Put some sunglasses on him, as I did with Sam, and use him to reach the lost. Nothing gets people's attention like a cute dog wearing sunglasses—and even more so when he's on a bicycle.

Dogs have become ubiquitous in advertising by businesses both large and small.... Bud Light began using Bull Terrier Spuds Mackenzie in their marketing campaign almost 30 years ago. Beer is far from the only industry to call on dogs to promote their products....

In recent years, dogs have appeared in about a third of all television commercials, and always figure prominently in the ones appearing during the Super Bowl.¹

In July 2021, I received a note from a fourteen-year-old who had given a gift of sixteen dollars to the ministry. I decided to call and thank him.

When his mom answered the phone, she whispered, "He will be *so* excited. May I put you on speakerphone?" I then thanked the young man for his gift, made some small talk, and asked if he would like to say anything before I hung up. He said that he

didn't have anything to say. It was clear that it was a little overwhelming for him. In a sense, I was a stranger, and the conversation was on speakerphone with everyone listening. But then I asked, "Do you like my dog?" Suddenly, he and his siblings blurted out that they loved Sam, that they watched our YouTube channel all the time, and that they had their own dog. The mere mention of Sam instantly made me relatable. He broke the ice.

That's what a dog can do for you when you meet strangers. But whether or not you have a dog, this book will tell you how to use what you *do* have (your undiscovered gifts, tracts, your computer, your pet elephant, etc.) to reach unbelievers.

God bless you for caring about the lost.

Ray Comfort

EVANGELISM FROM THE CROSS

The first thing that we all have to help us reach the lost is the example of Jesus. The seven last sayings spoken by Jesus before He died on the cross should be the first words on our minds every day. They teach us that we are to love our enemies and take care of our loved ones, that God knows the future, and that He doesn't always come running to help us when we think He should. They also remind us that Jesus was a human being and experienced thirst, that He knows our everyday trials, and that He is always in perfect control—even in the face of death.

His crying, "It is finished!" (John 19:30) from the cross means that we are not. We live because of the completed work of the Savior. At any time during those six long and agonizing hours on the cross, He could have given up. But He didn't.

Something else took place during that time that is of great importance. We know that the cross was the means God used to redeem a dying humanity, but did you ever consider that those six hours were also used to reach out to the unsaved? He didn't forget them. Charles Spurgeon addresses this exact point:

My brethren, if there had ever been a time in the life of the Son of man when he might have rigidly confined his prayer to himself, without any one cavilling thereat, surely it was when he was beginning his death throes. We could not marvel, if any man here were fastened to the stake, or fixed to a cross, if his first, and even his last and all his prayers, were for support under so arduous a trial.

But see, the Lord Jesus began his prayer by pleading for others [see Luke 23:34]. See ye not what a great heart is here revealed! What a soul of compassion was in the Crucified! How Godlike, how divine! Was there ever such a one before him, who, even in the very pangs of death, offers as his first prayer an intercession for others? Let this unselfish spirit be in you also, my brethren. Look not every man upon his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Love your neighbours as yourselves, and as Christ has set before you this paragon of unselfishness, seek to follow him, treading in his steps.²

Jesus lived for the lost, and that passion was exemplified as He was dying for them. I say this with the utmost reverence—knowing of whom I speak. Jesus, the Creator in human form, when brought to the weakness and humiliation of the cross, used what He still had to reach the lost. He used His words, knowing how far they would reach.

Let me explain what I mean by looking at what He uttered as the Roman soldiers went about the process of His cruel murder. When He said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34), there was no livestream. This wasn’t being broadcast across the land. At best, His words were probably audible for a radius of only about fifty feet. But God knows how many people down through the ages have come to the foot of the cross after reading these words in the record of Scripture or after hearing them echoed from a pulpit. How many have been deeply affected after considering the love Jesus showed to His enemies? These words don’t easily fade from memory.

I have asked many unsaved people if they know any of the last words Jesus spoke on the cross, and almost without fail, they quote verbatim this saying of His. This is because it is remarkable in the truest sense of the word.

Perhaps in these words, the Light of the world shone the brightest. He had said that Heaven and earth would pass away but that His words would never pass away (see Matthew 24:35). More than two



"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:34)

thousand years after these words were uttered from the cross, they have found a lodging place in the hearts of hundreds of millions. This is because they are undeniable evidence that He practiced what He preached:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matthew 5:43–45)

And that wasn’t the only evangelistic light that shone from His last sayings. Think of how many have been set free from the bondage of man-made religion by understanding the implications of His saying, “It is finished!”

Let’s briefly recount what led up to His seven last sayings. Then we will look at how you and I can, “by all means,” as Paul said (1 Corinthians 9:22), let our own light shine as we take up our cross daily, deny ourselves, and follow Him.

The Passionate Hatred

This world revels in sin. It rolls in the prodigal son’s pig slop:

They were filled (permeated, saturated) with every kind of unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice and mean-spiritedness. They are gossips [spreading rumors], slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors [of new forms] of evil, disobedient and disrespectful to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful [without pity]. Although they know God's righteous decree and His judgment, that those who do such things deserve death, yet they not only do them, but they even [enthusiastically] approve and tolerate others who practice them. (Romans 1:29–32, AMP)

The world's love for sin and its consequential hatred for God was never more evident as when the religious leaders brought Jesus to Pilate to plead for His execution. The vultures could smell His blood and salivated at the thought of the finality of His death.

In an effort to appease the anger of the religious elite, Pilate famously suggested the release of a convicted criminal. He said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" (Matthew 27:17). But the Scriptures tell us that the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas "and destroy Jesus" (v. 20). They had an evil agenda they

were intent on fulfilling, which was nothing less than to extinguish the Light of the world.

They so seethed with evil that they preferred to free the guilty so they could condemn the innocent. That pushed Pilate into a moral dilemma:

Pilate said to them, “What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?”

They all said to him, “Let Him be crucified!”

Then the governor said, “Why, what evil has He done?”

But they cried out all the more, saying, “Let Him be crucified!” (Matthew 27:22,23)

When Pilate asked, “What evil has He done?” they didn’t answer because they couldn’t. Jesus was without sin.

Two thousand years after the fact, the wicked still try to find dirt on the spotless Lamb of God. In answer to the question, “Did Jesus sin?” one dirt-seeking skeptic said:

If we can define some sins [that] we can all agree to be sins, then it could be possible to reach a consensus on whether Jesus sinned, if the gospel events occurred as described. I suggest one sin would be willful destruction of property:

When Jesus is described as sending the demons into a herd of around 2000 pigs who

drowned in the Sea of Galilee as a result (Mark 5:13).

When Jesus is described as cursing the fig tree for not bearing fruit out of season. This also involves the sin of anger.

Jesus sinned when he attacked the money-changers who were carrying out an authorised duty in the temple, necessary so that sacrifices could be offered to God.³

Our skeptical friend forgot to quote a very important verse: “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3). Jesus not only owned the pigs and the fig tree, He also created them. He could therefore do anything He wished with His own property.

And who could condemn Him for clearing hypocrites from the temple? Isn't it religious hypocrisy that offends the world? They should commend rather than condemn His taking up of the whip.

Some say that He lied when He said that not a hair on the head of His disciples would perish (see Luke 21:18). But this obviously had a deeper meaning than its face value. Death would eventually come to all of His disciples. Therefore, Jesus was clearly speaking of the resurrection of the just and the unjust. And if our faith is in Jesus, not one hair of our heads will perish either, though death may take us.

Skeptics even say He stole a donkey. Let's look at the supposed theft:

When He had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. And it came to pass, when He drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, that He sent two of His disciples, saying, “Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here. And if anyone asks you, ‘Why are you loosing it?’ thus you shall say to him, ‘Because the Lord has need of it.’”

So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them. But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, “Why are you loosing the colt?”

And they said, “The Lord has need of him.” (Luke 19:28–34)

The Lord had need of the donkey. Again, here is the title of ownership:

The earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness,
The world and those who dwell therein.
(Psalm 24:1)

The Political Puppet

The Roman governor was weak, and he caved when push came to shove:

When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multi-

tude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it."

And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children." (Matthew 27:24,25)

Wicked men, bereft of the slightest mercy, put the heel to Jesus' neck. Luke gives us a little more detail of the cruel drama:

Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them. But they shouted, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

Then he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go."

But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed. So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will. (Luke 23:20–25)

All this was merely a readying of the canvas. God was about to take the brush of His goodness and give us a vivid display of His great love.

Jesus, like a lamb to the slaughter, followed His cross to the place of His execution: "And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they cru-

cified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left” (Luke 23:33).

The two criminals were separated. One was placed on the right hand of Jesus, and the other was placed on His left. The Scriptures tell us that the time will come when Jesus will separate other criminals who have violated God’s Law. He will set some on His right hand and some on His left:

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. (Matthew 25:31–33)

These two crucified criminals are a graphic picture of the separation of the just from the wicked—those who have turned to Jesus, repented of sin, and put their trust in Him for the salvation of their souls from those who tragically die in their sins.

The thieves were fastened to a cross. All they could do was wait for death to come. Both of these men had bigger rap sheets than just common theft:

The men who under this name [thieves] appear in the history of the crucifixion were robbers rather than thieves belonging to the lawless bands by which Palestine was at that time and afterwards infested (Josephus, *Ant.* 17:10,

8; 20:8, 10). Against these brigands every Roman procurator had to wage continual war (Josephus, *War*, 2, 13, 2). The parable of the Good Samaritan shows how common it was for them to attack and plunder travelers even on the high-road from Jerusalem to Jericho (Lu 10:30). It was necessary to use an armed police to encounter them (Lu 22:52). Often, as in the case of Barabbas, the wild robber life was connected with a fanatic zeal for freedom which turned the marauding attack into a popular insurrection (Mr 15:7). For crimes such as these the Romans had but one sentence. Crucifixion was the penalty at once of the robber and the rebel (Josephus, *War*, 2, 13, 2).⁴

The stage is now set. The curtains are drawn. The real drama is about to begin. There are three crosses on a hill outside of the main gates of Jerusalem. The participants are three men—two guilty criminals and Jesus in their midst.

In the next chapter, we will, with fear and trembling, draw close to this terrible scene and eavesdrop on what was said by these dying men.