

saved by Him, then you will perish in the way of eternal death. But hear now yet the gospel, dear friend, and be persuaded of it thinking only now of Jesus' last breath on the cross, how powerful it was, how purposeful, and notice yet, how very precious.

Oh, the gospel message is that through Jesus' last breath and His death for sinners, now all the wages of sin have been paid, and whosoever believes on Jesus shall not perish but have everlasting life. The second Jesus breathed His last breath, Matthew tells us also in Matthew 27:51ff, "*And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain [torn in two] from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent [were split]; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose*"... This clearly was all from God in heaven proclaiming so the worth of Jesus' last breath! Jesus died as triumphant Saviour and in and through His death on sinners' behalf, we may find life and that more abundantly. Jesus breathed His last as the Victor over sin, Satan, death, and hell and all on behalf of sinners, as the Saviour of sinners.

In other words, Jesus' death on the cross is so powerful, purposeful, and precious since He died to give us life, and through Him, believing in Him in true faith, we have everlasting life that even our physical death cannot remove but simply brings so much the more into focus! To live apart from this God and Saviour means death, even eternal death, but to live trusting Jesus and Him crucified means life, even eternal everlasting life in body and soul for now and forevermore. Be sure to trust in Jesus, won't you, and live that others might be attracted and drawn to Him too? Isn't that what every believer prays and works to be about? Jesus' last breath, thinking of it, isn't there every reason to testify, "Hallelujah, what a Savior!"? Will you too spend your breath praising Jesus with the Father and the Holy Spirit now and even forevermore? Amen.

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June 4, 2006

Publication No.261

BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST

Radio Ministry of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of North America

Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



JESUS' LAST BREATH

Dear friends, consider with me the event of Jesus' last breath on the cross. If you have ever witnessed someone dying, you will know the last breath of a person is something very moving and indescribable. Because it is something so final, it is something also so impressive. Many times we are not given to witness that last breath of a person, not even of our closest loved ones. Sometimes people can be sad when they miss not being there when their loved one actually breathed their last and died. The fact is our last breath is not in our hands and not in our control. But come with me now to witness the last breath of Jesus the Saviour. The Bible tells us how Jesus was crucified in the open on a hill in a place where all could see Him. Jesus' crucifixion and death was a very public event. The four gospels also each emphasize this, how that Jesus breathed His last and died. Our text is from Mark 15:37 where God's Word states, "*And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost [or you could translate, 'and breathed His last']*." Notice with me how powerful was Jesus' last breath, how purposeful, and how precious.

Jesus' last breath was powerful for clearly Jesus gave Himself over to death rather than death overcoming Him. Jesus didn't succumb to death but He surrendered Himself over to death. Death didn't take hold of Jesus, but Jesus delivered Himself over to death. He breathed His last voluntarily, we can say. No one else has ever done that, but Jesus did it.

How do we know this for sure? Well, consider how and when Jesus died. Notice the text says how that just before breathing His last, Jesus cried with a loud voice. When people are on their deathbed about to breathe their last, normally if you are there and want to catch something such a person might yet say, you have to listen very closely to their words, for they speak then in a very soft whisper, sometimes with only their lips moving, and no sound at all coming out. But Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. The verb used in Matthew's account for "cried out", can also be translated "shouted out!" It is the same verb used in Matthew 14:26&27 where the disciples, while they are in a boat, experience Jesus coming to them walking on the water, and not knowing it was Him, they cried out for fear in the midst of a fierce storm on the sea, "It is a ghost!" You can imagine they didn't say that quietly. But then Jesus also responds saying, and again using this same word about crying out with a loud voice, "*Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid*." Can you just imagine Jesus saying this with

great volume above the noise of the fierce storm on the sea and so that the disciples could hear His voice? Even as Jesus breathed His last, the Bible tells us He cried out with this loud voice. One commentator expresses this loud cry of Jesus even as He was about to die was “a loud and piercing exclamation”!

And then think next of what was this loud cry with a great, literally mega, voice or sound that Jesus gave? It was the last two sayings of Jesus on the cross which with the fourth word very closely followed upon each other. In John 19:30, we read, “*When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar [or sour wine] He said, ‘It is finished’: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost*”, literally handed over his breath. With what a loud and triumphant voice, Jesus cried out, “It is finished! All that salvation work that was given Me to do from the Father for the salvation of sinners, I have completed, and perfectly so.....and so Jesus goes on with a loud voice to His last word from the cross which we read about in Luke 23:46. There God’s Word states, “*And when Jesus had cried [out] with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit’: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.*” That is, He then “breathed His last”.

These two last saying of Jesus so demonstrate and prove Jesus, having accomplished what He had to do, voluntarily now gave Himself over to death. Jesus’ last breath is something so powerful if you think of how He spoke with such a loud voice just before and what He then also said. But think too yet of how much earlier Jesus died before the other two who were crucified with Him. In order to speed up their deaths, the two robbers on each side of Jesus had their legs broken so that they suffocated on the cross, but Jesus’ legs were not broken for He had already died. In Mark 15:44 we are told how Pilate “marveled” [he was amazed] that Jesus was already dead, and Pilate checked with the centurion in charge to make sure it was so. As one Study Bible note about this states, “crucified men often lived two or three days before dying, and the early death of Jesus was therefore extraordinary.”

Jesus’ last breath was something powerful, so impressive and magnificent you might say, proving and declaring beyond all doubt Jesus gave Himself triumphantly over to death. In John 10:17&18 we hear Jesus say in line with this also these magnificent words: “*I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it [up] again. This command have I received of My Father.*” Can we ever think enough of Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, giving Himself over to death, even the death of the cross? How powerfully He did so! Does it move you and melt your heart the way Jesus so powerfully gave Himself up, when He breathed His last?

What makes it all so meaningful, of course, is that Jesus not only powerfully breathed His last, but purposefully. The Bible teaches us that Jesus came to this earth on a mission, sent of the Father to seek and to save

sinners. And the only way sinners can be saved, including you and me, is through Jesus the Saviour, in the sinner’s place, living the perfect righteous life we are called to live and cannot live on account of our fall into sin, and through Jesus paying all the punishment for sin that we deserve, left to ourselves. On the cross Jesus hung there as the perfect sinless Saviour, and He suffered all His life, but especially on that cruel cross in body and soul, all the just and eternal punishment for sin that we deserve. In other words, Jesus breathing His last was most purposeful in that He would pay the full wages of sin in the place of sinners. Jesus would be the Saviour of sinners for us from the womb to the tomb, and so consciously, lovingly, trustingly, wholeheartedly also breathed His last and expired, that is, died. He allowed Himself to be put to death in the flesh that total payment for sin before God in the place of sinners might be gained and obtained.

Think of it how, of Himself Jesus didn’t have to die at all, and had no reason to die at all. He was in Himself sinless, perfectly so, therefore death was not necessary for Him. But as the Sin-bearer and Saviour of sinners with our iniquities laid upon Him, Jesus had to die, and even wanted to die, and He majestically and mercifully gave Himself over to die. Jesus is the Good Shepherd Who said before in John 10:15, “*and I lay down My life for the sheep.*”

Who are His sheep? Jesus answers that too in John 10:27. “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*” Are you one Who hears His voice and Who follows Him and His leading as given in His holy Word? God’s people are those who know and confess, “without Jesus as Saviour from my sins and sinfulness I am without hope before God and all eternity.” His people are those who look to Jesus and call out to Him to be their Saviour from sin, being sorry for sin and entrusting themselves wholly to Him. Is this what describes you too? God’s people who hear Christ’s voice and look to Him for salvation are also known in that they follow after the Lord and seek ever, and more and more, to walk and live in His ways, and to flee from all sin and evil. Is that what you are about, honestly, before God and men and especially in your family too? The salvation of God through Christ is not sought after by perfect people, so called, but penitent people. It is for those who hunger and thirst for God’s righteousness and love and favour and who know life is so empty and vain and hopeless apart from God and His righteousness first of all and most of all. Are you joined to Christ by a living faith, finding in Him alone, outside of yourself, your salvation for body and soul in life and death?

How Jesus’ last breath should make us think about our last breath. It will come, we do not know when or where, nor how even, but are you ready for it now? Are you ready for your very last breath which can come suddenly and even totally unexpectedly, and then death and judgment? Outside of faith in Christ in this life, no one can die in hope and peace. If you breathe your last not as a true believer in Jesus, not really joined to Him, and not