

The Two Malefactors Crucified With Jesus

Luke 23:27-49

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V.32 *And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.*

V.33 *And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.*

V.39 *And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.*

There is no indication that this man ever changed his mind and trusted Jesus. Some observations and applications concerning his situation are that:

1. You can reject Christ on the day of your death. One would think that even if a person did not think much about God during his lifetime that he would do so when he knew that he was about to die. This is not necessarily the case. Satan has blinded the minds of those who do not believe (II Cor. 4:3, 4).
2. You can choose to reject Him even when there is logically no other hope. This may be part of the reason that God hates pride to the degree that He does (Prov. 6:16-19). This was the sin of Satan (Isa. 14:12-15; Eze. 28:13-19). Pride keeps people from trusting in Him (e.g. Acts 9:22); The Jews saw proof that Jesus was the Messiah, but still rejected Him. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the religious leaders sought, not only to kill Jesus, but Lazarus also (John 11:47,48, 53; 12:10). We have the same problem today of rejecting obvious truth in exchange for the error which we desire to accept (see Rom. 1:18-32).
3. You can be near the Savior and still be lost. Judas Iscariot is another example. Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world (I John 2:2; John 3:16). A person is lost because he chooses not to receive the payment that has already been made for his sins. The religious people of Matthew 7:21-23, thought that they were OK. They had; 1. Prophesied in Jesus' name. 2. Cast out demons. 3. Done many wonderful works in Jesus' name. Jesus' assessment was that they were lost, He had *never* known them. (Note that it does *not* say that He knew them once and that they lost their salvation). They had not done the will of His father in heaven; believed in Jesus (John 6:40,29; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9).
4. You can wish to be saved and even ask Jesus to save you but still be lost. Wishing or asking to be saved is not the gospel. How many times do we hear a supposed evangelist present a message like that? There are no verses that tell us to ask to be saved, ask Jesus into our hearts, or to give up or commit something to Him for salvation. That is the message that Satan loves because it is a counterfeit close enough to the truth that people will believe it. It is not the truth and will not save. Being close to the truth is not enough. The Bible tells us repeatedly to *believe* in Jesus to receive eternal life. We are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8,9; John 3:16-18; I John 5:10-13). The word "gospel" in the Bible means good news. The word "evangelist" comes from the Greek word for gospel, "*euangelion*." In II Tim. 4:5, Paul tells Timothy to do the work of an evangelist. That means to be a "gospelist" or a "good news-ist." If someone calls themselves an evangelist and teaches "another gospel which is not another," he is in error and has God's curse upon him (Gal. 1:6-9). He certainly is not a Biblical evangelist.

V.40 *But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?*

V.41 *And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.*

V.42 *And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*

V.43 *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

Observations and applications concerning the saved malefactor are:

1. He recognized and feared God (V.40).
2. He realized that he was a sinner and had a need (v.41).
3. He acknowledged Jesus as sinless (V.41).
4. He realized that Jesus was God and able to save. His statement was hardly one to be made to an average dying man who had no power over death (V.42).
5. He believed in the resurrection, entrusted his eternal security to Jesus and not to his good works, which would have been merely academic at that point (V.42).
6. He received God's word of his eternal security (V.43). We have His written word.

Observations concerning what the saved malefactor did *not* do:

1. He did not confess his sins. He did realize the fact that he was a sinner and this was probably a motivation to believe in Jesus. Believers are told to confess their sins for forgiveness and cleansing, *not* in order to be eternally saved (I John 1:8, 9).
2. He did not turn from his sins, commit his life, promise to serve, do good works, etc. When the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas what he must do to be saved, their reply was not, "Have you heard the Four Spiritual Laws?" The divinely inspired answer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." Though it can be helpful to use easily memorized steps to explain the Good News of salvation, we must make sure that these points are Biblical. Belief in Jesus is the *only* requirement for eternal life. Requiring someone to "put Jesus on the throne of your life" is works for salvation and an untrue message.
3. He was not water baptized (nor could he be). Baptism is a command for believers. Some churches make it a requirement for eternal life. Scripture has to be twisted and ignored to claim a basis for the doctrine. We are "saved by grace through faith and not of [ourselves]" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

Jesus went to the cross to pay for the sins of the world, but He did not forget about the lost soul next to Him. He did not have misplaced priorities. Humanly speaking, He probably did not "feel" like witnessing at that particular time. We are to "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season..." (II Tim. 4:2). Let us not get wrapped up in the task and forget the goal. Some Christians and Christian organizations start out honoring God by loving and winning souls, then later get lost in the machinery of the movement and forget their mission (John 15:8).

Sometimes we do not see the forest for the trees. We get so busy with good things, even with the ministry, that we forget that we are here to glorify God by bearing much fruit. We miss opportunities because they come disguised as work. We need to evaluate our priorities in light of eternity.

One of the malefactors was saved and one was not. We can assume from this that there *is* such a thing as a "deathbed" conversion, and also that we cannot count on being saved at the "eleventh hour." People who wait for the "right" time are not guaranteed another opportunity. Now is the time of salvation (II Cor. 6:2).

From Scofield's Notes:
A comparison of the narratives gives the following
order of events in the crucifixion day:

- (1) Early in the morning Jesus is brought before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. He is condemned and mocked (Mat 26.57-68 Mk 14.55-65 Lu 22.63-71 Jno 18.19-24).
- (2) The Sanhedrin lead Jesus to Pilate (Mat 27.1,2 11-14 Mk 15.1-5 Lu 23.1-5 Jno 18.28-38).
- (3) Pilate sends Jesus to Herod (Lu 23.6-12 Jno 19.4).
- (4) Jesus is again brought before Pilate, who releases Barabbas and delivers Jesus to be crucified (Mat 27.15-26 Mk 15.6-15 Lu 23.13-25 Jno 18.39,40 19.4-16).
- (5) Jesus is crowned with thorns and mocked (Mat 27.26-30 Mar 15.15-20 Jno 19.1-3).
- (6) Suicide of Judas (Mat 27.3-10).
- (7) Led forth to be crucified, the cross is laid upon Simon: Jesus' discourses to the women (Mat 27.31,32 Mk 15.20-23 Lu 23.26-33 Jno 19.16,17).

- 1) (the arrival at Golgotha (Mat 27.33 Mar 15.22 Lu 23.33 Jno 19.17).
 - 2) the offer of the stupefying drink refused (Mat 27.34 Mar 15.23).
 - (3) Jesus is crucified between two thieves (Mat 27.35-38 Mar 15.24-28 Lu 23.33-38 Jno 19.18-24).
 - (4) He utters the first cry from the cross, "Father, forgive," etc. (Lu 23.34).
 - (5) The soldiers part His garments (Mat 27.35 Mar 15.24 Lu 23.34 Jno 19.23).
 - (6) The Jews mock Jesus (Mat 27.39-44 Mar 15.29-32 Lu 23.35-38).
 - (7) The thieves rail on Him, but one repents and believes (Mat 27.44 Mar 15.32 Lu 23.39-43).
 - (8) The second cry from the cross, "Today shalt thou be with me," etc. (Lu 23.43).
 - (9) The third cry, "Woman, behold thy son" (John 19.26,27).
 - (10)The darkness (Mat 27.45 Mar 15.33 Lu 23.44).
 - (11)The fourth cry, "My God," etc. (Mat 27.46,47 Mar 15.34-36).
 - (12)The fifth cry, "I thirst" (John 19.28).
 - (13)The sixth cry, "It is finished" (John 19.30).
 - (14)The seventh cry, "Father, into thy hands," etc. (Lu 23.46).
 - (15)Our Lord dismisses his spirit (Mat 27.50 Mar 15.37 Lu 23.46 Jno 19.30).
- Note on V.33, Calvary, Gk. Kranios, means "skull," probably because of the shape of the hill. Latin, Calvaria, Hebrew, Golgoleth, also mean "skull."