

LUKE 23:38-43 – The Thief on the Cross – “Lord, Remember Me!”

4/20/19 Sat Morn Prayer – P. Twente, 714 425-9221; ptwente@gmail.com

Luke 23:38-43 And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: **THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.** [39] Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." [40] But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? [41] And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong. [42] Then he said to Jesus, "**Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.**" [43] And Jesus said to him, "**Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.**"

The Old Rugged Cross – George Bernard – Ernie Ford

1 On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame; and I love that old cross where the dearest and best for a world of lost sinners was slain.

Refrain: So I'll cherish the old rugged cross, till my trophies at last I lay down; I will cling to the old rugged cross and exchange it some day for a crown.

2 To the old rugged cross I will ever be true, its shame and reproach gladly bear; then he'll call me some day to my home far away, where his glory forever I'll share. (Refrain)

Context/Biblical Background – The conversion of the thief on the cross, an illustrious instance of Christ's triumphing over principalities and powers even when He seemed to be triumphed over by them. It was providential that Jesus was crucified between the two thieves, for this gave both of them equal access to the Savior. Initially, both railed on Him: (**Mat 27:44**) *Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.* (**Mar 15:32**) *Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.* "Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him. Both thieves could read Pilate's superscription, "**THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS,**" and both could watch Him as He graciously gave His life for the sins of the world.

Jesus' 7 Last Sayings on the Cross in Scripture (1st three prior to the darkness of the 6th hour; last 4 – 9th hour)

(1) **Luk 23:34** Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.

(2) **Luk 23:43** And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

(3) **Joh 19:26-27** When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" [27] Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

(Ninth hour, following three hours of darkness):

(4) **Mar 15:34** And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"

(5) **Joh 19:28** After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!"

(6) **Joh 19:30** So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

(7) **Luk 23:46** And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last.

A criminal on a cross finds salvation. - [42] "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!"

- The one thief imitated the mockery of the religious leaders and asked Jesus to rescue him from the cross, but the other thief had different ideas. Notice his **astounding faith and courage!** This second criminal respected God (**Do you not even fear God?**).
- He knew his own sin (*under the same condemnation . . . we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds*). He knew Jesus, this Man, (*has done nothing wrong*). He called out to Jesus (*he said to Jesus*).
- He called out to Jesus as Lord (*he said to Jesus, Lord . . .*). He believed Jesus was who Jesus said He was (*remember me when You come into Your kingdom*). He believed the promise of everlasting life from Jesus.
- **This man appears to have been the first who believed** in the intercession of Christ.
- **See what he said to our Lord Jesus: Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom, Luke 23:42.** This is the prayer of a *dying sinner* to a *dying Savior*. It was the honor of Christ to be *thus prayed to*, though He was upon the cross reproached and reviled. It was the happiness of the thief *thus to pray*; perhaps he never prayed before, and yet now was heard, and saved at the last gasp. **While there is life there is hope, and while there is hope there is room for prayer.**
- **Observe his faith in this prayer.** In his confession of sin (**Luk 23:41**) he discovered *repentance towards God*. In this petition he discovered *faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*. He owns him to be *Lord*, and to have a *kingdom*, and that he was going to that kingdom, that he should have authority in that kingdom, and that those should be happy whom he favored; and to *believe* and *confess* all this was a *great thing* at this time of day.

- **Observe his humility in this prayer.** All his request is, *Lord, remember me*. All he begs is, *Lord, remember me*, referring himself to Christ in what way to remember him.
- **There is an air of begging and fervency in this prayer.** He does, as it were, breathe out his soul in it: "*Lord, remember me*, and I have enough; I desire no more; into Your hands I commit my case."
- **One thief said, "get me down"! The other said, "Lord, take me up"!**

[43] And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

- Jesus answered the trust of the second criminal, assuring him that his life after death would be **with** Jesus, and be in *Paradise*, not torment.
- **Here is something truly remarkable: a deathbed conversion**, and may fairly be said to be the only Biblical example of a last-minute salvation. There *is* one deathbed conversion in the Bible, so that no one would despair; but **only one**, so that no one would presume.
- Significantly, **this thief who trusted in Jesus at the last moment goes to the same heaven anyone else does**. This may not seem fair, but in the larger picture **it gives glory to the grace of God, not to human merit in salvation**. In heaven, we will all be filled to the full with joy and reward; but the degree of our faithfulness now determines how big our container for joy and reward will be in heaven, though all will be filled to the fullest they can hold.
- **In Paradise:** "Paradise (*paradeisos*), meaning 'garden, park,' was used in the Septuagint for the Garden of Eden (*Genesis 2:8*). Here, it represents the state of bliss which Jesus promised to the criminal directly after death."
- Jesus answered the second criminal **far beyond his expectation**.
- The thief on the cross likely had **some distant time** in mind; Jesus told him *today*.
- The thief on the cross asked **only to be remembered**; Jesus said "*you will be with Me*."
- The thief on the cross looked **only for a kingdom**; Jesus promised him *Paradise*.
- We are **to understand that Jesus Christ died to open the kingdom of heaven to all penitent obedient believers**.
- Christ here lets us know that He was going to paradise himself, to *hades - the invisible world*. His human soul was removing to the place of separate souls; not to the place of the damned, but to paradise, the place of the blessed. By this He assures us that His satisfaction was accepted, and the Father was well pleased in Him, else He had not gone to paradise; that was the beginning of the joy set before Him, with the prospect of which He comforted Himself. **Heb 12:2** ...*who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*
- He **lets all penitent believers know that when they die, they shall go to be with Him there**. He was now, as a priest, purchasing this happiness for them, and is ready, as a king, to confer it upon them when they are prepared and made ready for it. We see here how the happiness of heaven is set forth to us.
- **It is being with Christ there**. That is the happiness of heaven, to see Christ, and sit with Him, and share in His glory,
- **It is immediate upon death: Today You shall be with Me**, tonight, before tomorrow. **Luk 16:22** Lazarus departs, and is immediately comforted; **2Co 5:8** *We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord*. Paul departs, and is immediately with Christ, **Phi 1:23**.

Summary:

- "The Thief on the Cross" – The perfect example of being saved by grace and not by anything we do! The thief simply looked on and talked to the Lord. That was it! He did nothing more. He could do nothing more. He was pinned to the cross! He was helpless! His salvation was personal and secure, guaranteed by the word of Jesus Christ.
- Although it's not recommended to wait this long, deathbed conversions would appear valid and effective!
- It took courage for this thief to defy the influence of his friend and the mockery of the crowd.
- It took faith for him to trust a dying King! When you consider all that he had to overcome, the faith of this thief is astounding.
- The man hoped for some kind of help in the future, but Jesus gave him forgiveness that very day, and he died and went with Jesus to paradise.

"Amazing Grace" – Newton – sung by Judy Collins

1. *Amazing grace! How sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now I'm found; Was blind, but now I see.*
2. *'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed.*
3. *Through many dangers, toils and snares, we have already come; 'Twas grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead us home.*
4. *When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise Than when we'd first begun. (Repeat verse 1)*

Pray for World Leaders, especially their salvation, including: Xi Jinping – China; Narendra Modi- India; Donald Trump – USA; Joko Widodo - Indonesia; Jair Bolsonaro - Brazil; Arif Alvi - Pakistan; Muhammadu Buhari - Nigeria; Hasina Wazed - Bangladesh; Vladimir Putin- Russia; Lopez Obrador – Mexico; Benjamin Netanyahu – Israel; Angela Merkel – Germany; Theresa May – U.K.; Kim Jong-un – North Korea; Moon Jae-in – South Korea.

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