

The Second Saying: Deliverance

Luke 23:35-43

The story of the thief on the cross is one of the most well-known stories in all of the New Testament. Many great truths may be learned from this encounter between a thief and Jesus Christ, including:

I. The cross of Christ and its message brings either contempt or conversion.

Several people are mentioned in this text: The people (v.35), the rulers (v.35), the soldiers (v.36), and the thieves (v.39). Notice their reactions to the cross of Christ to the words that Jesus spoke to them.

- A. The people despised Him** . . . “the people were looking on him” (KJV ‘beholding’ v. 35) is a strong word which means “to look upon with interest for a purpose.” They thought, “**This** is the Christ?”
- B. The rulers derided Him** . . . “He saved others, let him save himself!” (v.35). The rulers (the Scribes, the Pharisees, and the Priests) all laughed at him with derision, thankful He was crucified.
- C. The soldiers denied Him** . . . “If you really are the King, save yourself” (v.37).
“The greatest danger is religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without regeneration, morality without God, and heaven without hell” William Booth.

II. The grace of God will change the hearts of sinners, not saints.

It is important to note that both thieves joined in the derision of Jesus Christ. Matthew 27:44, “*And they that were crucified with Him reviled Jesus.*” Mark 15:32 says, “The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.” What caused one of them to repent and trust Christ? “By grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves, not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). No sinner, no matter how great, is beyond the reach of God’s saving grace!

- A. Grace makes a man aware of his own sin** . . . “and we (are crucified) justly” (v.41).
- B. Grace makes a man aware of his need of a Savior** . . . “remember me” (v.42).
Our faith and our repentance are divine gifts. “God exalted Jesus to his own right hand as Prince and Savior *that He might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins*” (Acts 5:31).

III. The day of grace may come early or late, but conversion is always of grace.

This thief is saved the last day of his life. His sins are forgiven just prior to death. There are those who are saved by God at a young age and there are those who receive the grace of God shortly before death. It is never too late to receive grace. The thief received in paradise (heaven) the same reward as the disciples. For those who wonder about the fairness of this grace, read what Jesus said (Matt. 20:1-16) and remember that you cannot choose the time when you’re saved. Only God can.

IV. The promise of heaven is given to those who trust Christ.

When Jesus said, “Truly I say to you...,” He meant – You can take My promise to the bank!

- A. Heaven is a specific place called Paradise** . . . “today you will be with Me in paradise.”
- B. Heaven is special place because of a person** . . . “today shalt thou be with Me.”
- C. Heaven is a singular place bought by a price** . . . “today shalt thou be with Me.”

The death of death in the death of Christ. We live because the Eternal One died in our stead.

V. The time you enter heaven is open for interpretation.

The second saying of Christ on the cross, “*Truly I say to you today you shall be with Me in Paradise.*” “Truly I say to you, ‘Today you shall be with Me in Paradise.’” – The Immediate Resurrection at Death. “Truly I say to you today, ‘You shall be with Me in Paradise.’” – The General Resurrection at the End. This second saying of Christ teaches us without faith in Christ, there is no life after death in Paradise.