**Spoken From The Cross – Today you will be with Me in Paradise**

*Luke 23:32-43*

*“Then two* ***robbers*** *were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left” (Matthew 27:38)*

**Introduction**

1. Being crucified was shameful in the eyes of Jews – it was a curse – and was shameful in the eyes of the Greeks – *“This punishment was deemed the most disgraceful and ignominious that was practiced among the Romans” (Barnes)*.
	1. It was excruciating – *It has been well said that the person who was crucified “died a thousand deaths.” (Hendriksen – Kistemaker)*
	2. The usual manner of the crucifixion was as follows: After the criminal had carried the cross, attended with every possible gibe and insult, to the place of execution, a hole was dug in the earth to receive the foot of it. The cross was laid on the ground; the person condemned to suffer was stripped and was extended on it, and the soldiers fastened the hands and feet either by nails or thongs. After they had driven the nails deeply in the wood, they elevated the cross with the agonizing sufferer on it, and, in order to fix it more firmly in the earth, they let it fall violently into the hole which they had dug to receive it. This sudden fall gave to the person that was nailed to it a violent and convulsive shock, and greatly increased his sufferings. The crucified person was then suffered to hang, commonly, until pain, exhaustion, thirst, and hunger ended his life. (Barnes)
	3. **However, the gospels do not give this much detail (the details concerning crucifixion are gathered by secular cultural history).**
	4. **Their reason for existing is not to emphasize the physical, but the spiritual. Focusing on the general act, and why it took place, and what it accomplished.**
2. Luke’s account is the only one which records Jesus interaction with the thief who was crucified with Him.
3. Considering this account allows us to appreciate what Jesus did, and the love He has for us, on a deeper level. 🡪
4. The Thief
5. He earned his death **(v. 41)**.
	1. The thieves were not misunderstood or even intentionally misrepresented and accused like Jesus.
	2. Robber – "one who plunders openly and by violence" (Vine)
		1. **Matthew 26:55-56** – Jesus describes those who came to seize Him to take Him to trial. (Violent – inspired Peter to act violently in defense).
		2. **Luke 10:30** – **These men crucified with Jesus continually did what Jesus described in the parable of the Good Samaritan.**
	3. **He was not simply found in the wrong place at the wrong time. He lived a godless, immoral, and selfish life full of covetousness and violence.**
6. Jesus was under the same condemnation **(v. 40)**.
	1. It was not that Jesus was guilty, but that He was wrongly condemned of being guilty.
	2. **The thieves were in a place of punishment, humiliation, and shame. Jesus was at the FOCAL POINT in the middle.**
		1. **Isaiah 53:12** – Jesus did not come to earth to distance Himself, but to draw nearer to His beloved creation.
		2. **Luke 19:10; 1 Timothy 1:15** – He came to save the wretched.
			1. **Matthew 9:9-13** – called Matthew a tax collector to follow Him.
			2. **Jesus is a physician, and physicians are for the sick.**
	3. In pure love, the Great Physician ***“Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22)*** became sin for us (**cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21**).
		1. Jesus did not bear our guilt. He bore our punishment.
		2. **He bore the shame and consequences of our sins for us as an innocent man!**
		3. ***Jesus hung on the cross even for the two thieves hanging on either side of Him.***
7. The Thief’s Repentance
8. Both blasphemed (**cf. Matthew 27:44; Mark 15:32**).
	1. There is no contradiction with this passage and Luke’s account.
	2. **It is entirely possible (and a fact) that the thief could have changed in such a short time.**
		1. **Even the centurion had a change of mind after the events transpired (cf. Mark 15:38-39).**
9. One fell silent, and repented (**v. 39-41**).
	1. Some suggest that this man, being a Jew, had witnessed Jesus during His ministry.
		1. He saw miracles, and heard Jesus’ preaching.
		2. Some claim the possibility of Him even being baptized with John’s baptism, and later falling away. (Possibility – **Matthew 3:5-6** – John baptized – **John 4:1-2** – Jesus baptized more.)
		3. However, this is mere speculation. More likely are the following reasons for his change of heart 🡪
	2. Fear of God – ***“Do you not even fear God” (v. 40)***. – **Hebrews 9:27;10:31** (Judgment after death.)
	3. Jesus’ forgiving spirit – ***“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (v. 34)***.
	4. Jesus’ quiet demeanor – **1 Peter 2:23; Isaiah 53:7** – This has a great effect on those who witness it – **1 Peter 2:12**
10. Indication of repentance **(v. 39-41).**
	1. Acknowledged guilt with sorrow.
	2. Called Jesus Lord – recognized His authority – lordship.
	3. **Showed faith in Jesus’ purpose, and person (v. 42).**
		1. He looked upon Jesus and saw His emaciated face, torn flesh, thorn crowned head, and blood stained skin.
		2. **Yet he did not see a defeated man, but a King being inaugurated (He saw victory, and wished to be a part of it.)**.
			1. **One thief mocked and requested physical deliverance (v. 39)**. (Perhaps to go on living an ungodly life.)
			2. **The other asked not for physical, but spiritual deliverance (v. 42)**.
	4. Willing to become an outcast with Jesus in defending Him (**v. 39 – *“save Yourself and us”;* v. 41**).
		1. Up to this point nobody has defended Jesus.
		2. **The thief made sure Jesus saw he was not in tandem with the other any longer.**
		3. **He stood up for Jesus, and joined Jesus as minority**.
		4. We must do the same (**cf. 2 Corinthians 6:16b-18** – must make sure we are unequivocally opposed to ungodliness.)
11. Jesus’ immense grace and mercy.
12. Able to do more than can be comprehended.
	1. **Ephesians 3:20** – Jesus power is limitless. He can do far more than we can imagine.
		1. Thief asked to be remembered when Jesus came into His kingdom.
		2. Jesus gave him relief soon – ***“Assuredly, I say to you, TODAY you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43)***.
	2. **Matthew 19:23-26** – Salvation for ANY man is impossible without God.
		1. ***Jesus grace reaches down even to the depths of the putrid pit of sin to save even the vilest of men*** (**cf. 1 Timothy 1:12-16** – This was for a pattern – patterns continue!)
		2. Jesus dealing with the thief on the cross speaks volumes of the power of His grace.
13. Jesus died for all – **John 3:16; Titus 2:11**
	1. Our physical minds place different sins on different planes.
	2. God does not see it that way – **Romans 3:21-23** (THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE)

**Conclusion**

1. Jesus interaction with the thief on the cross speaks volumes about His love for mankind.
2. Jesus did not die for a select few, He did not die for righteous men, but for sinners!
3. **Our faith must ascend to God’s willingness, and ability to forgive all men of any sin. We must not doubt His power!**
4. However, in order to receive that forgiveness and blessedness which was bestowed upon the thief we must appeal to Christ.
	1. Christ says we must be baptized **(cf. 1 Peter 3:21; Mark 16:16**).
	2. **If this is obeyed, even what may seem to be the WORST of sins will be washed away with His atoning blood.**