

# CRIES FROM THE CROSS

A Journey into the heart of Jesus.

## 2. A Cry of Assurance

*"Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise"-Lk. 23:43*

The second of Christ's cross utterance was spoken in response to the request of the dying thief. What a day for this thief! In the morning he was justly condemned on the cross; by the late that evening he was justly welcomed into the paradise by Jesus! let's reflect on the story. Few observations here...

1. **The Universality of Sin:** Here we see a representative sinner. This Man's rap sheet shows that he was a career criminal, a "bad to the bone" thief who initially joined with the enemies of Jesus in deriding Him: "they also reviled against Him the same way (Mat. 27:44). His attitude was like that of his partner in crime, hanging just on the other side of Jesus. we don't know who the greater sinner was of the two, but either of them could have been on Jerusalem's most wanted posters. Bad as he was, he represents all of us. You are a thief as I am, and that of the worst type. But honesty requires us to admit that we have all robbed God. God gives us life; he gives us talents; he gives us the ability to earn money he gives us friends and yet we serve ourselves rather than Him. Rather than bringing glory to God, we live for ourselves and unintentionally serves another master, even Satan. He has robbed God. Your condition is as desperate and your is as wicked a that of the thief. See in him a picture of yourself.
2. **Salvation is a free gift of God to those who believe:** As the three men were being nailed to their crosses, he thought that Jesus was just another criminal. Golgotha was where criminals died. It was not a place where one could expect to find a divine man. **What changed his mind?** On the cross, helplessly hanging at the edge of death, when there is no hope at all; he cried out in repentance.
  - a. He heard Jesus pray, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). He could not forget those words. The prayer pierced his conscience and he realized the stupidity and blindness of his own heart. He knew that he also needed forgiveness.
  - b. There he heard the sarcastic words of the crowd: "He saved others; He can't save Himself!" (Mat.27:42). He thought "what do they mean He saved others"?
  - c. Pilate wrote that someone called a "gospel tract" and had it nailed above the cross. "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Lk. 23:38) in three different languages (Greek, Latin, Aramaic).

Now on the cross, he believed that Jesus was the king for he pleaded, "Jesus remember me when you come into your KINGDOM" (Lk.23:42). He can't utter any better or greater word than that, that one-word compiles of everything that requires the attention of the agonizing saviour on the cross. Incredibly God birthed faith in this man's heart. He started fearing God for the first time in his lie and took full responsibility of his sins. And he bore a testimony of Christ's sinlessness. ("the Man has done nothing amiss" Lk.23:41).

### Seven marks of His Remarkable Faith:

1. **His Faith was Unmovable:** He believed at a time when it appeared that Jesus was entirely helpless to save anyone; in fact, He himself appear to need saving!
  2. **His Faith was a Genuine faith** (not by seeing Miracles): this thief believed before darkness settled over the land; he believed before the earthquake and before the veil of the temple was torn in two. He believed without the evidence of the resurrection and the ascension. He believed without seeing Jesus walk on the water, feed the multitudes, or turn water into wine.
  3. **His Faith was a Practical Faith:** A.W. Pink Challenges us to ask, “How can we explain the fact that this dying thief took a suffering, bleeding, crucified man for his God!”. The answer cannot be found by doing a psychological analysis of him, but it is in the undeserved mercy of God.
  4. **His Faith was a Responding Faith:** the holy Spirit was drawing this criminals’ heart toward the Man on the middle cross. and he believed.
  5. **His faith was a Courageous faith:** the crowd was mocking Jesus; the thief challenged the common sense. He turned away from the growing chorus of voices that would have let him astray. This thief cared not about the opinion of others. He was talking against Roman decree without any fear, He believed.
  6. **His faith was a Futuristic Faith:** he is talking about the coming kingdom because he saw *the king on the Cross before he would see the king on the throne*, the glorious and eternal kingdom. He did not ask to be honoured when Christ came into His kingdom; he asked only that he be remembered. He was an outcast from the society, someone his friends and family would be most happy to forget. His request was modest, but what an honour to be remembered by God.
  7. **His Faith was a Proven Faith:** his was tested, at 12 noon darkness spreads over the whole land, he hears his newly found saviour cried, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me” (Mt. 27:46). Perhaps this saviour cannot save after all. How can he save someone when he is abandoned? Look at His **Confessions:** He was a believer but only for few hours, but his confessions are profound and perfect.
    - a. He realized that, Sin is offensive and must be punished, He realized a life after death.
    - b. He took the totally responsibility of his sin. (we are worthy of this)
    - c. He confessed the innocence of the Lord. (for He did no Sin.)
    - d. He confessed the deity of Jesus (he called Him “The LORD”)
    - e. He confessed about a hope of the eternal kingdom.
3. **Assurance of Salvation:** Jesus exceeded the repentant thief’s expectation, “Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise” (Lk.23:43). The word Paradise is a Persian word meaning a beautiful garden (usually ancient kings used to have a garden to have a personal communion with beloved individuals). Now, to this abandoned thief of the world, Received a grand welcome of an intimate friend of the king in His garden (Paradise). The phrase “you will be with Me” describes the personal fellowship they would enjoy together. The greatest blessing for the Christian is that God has called us into the fellowship of His Son (1Cor.1:9). obviously, Jesus died before the thief did, and he was on hand to welcome him into the eternal dwelling place. *Spurgen wrote that “this man who was our Lord’s last companion on earth, was His first companion at the gates of Paradise”.* The thief was with Him in condemnation and hours later was with Him in salvation. If the dying Christ could give the thief a promise of eternal salvation,

think of what the living Christ can do. “Truly I say to you”, this was a promise drawn on the bank of heaven, and it was as trustworthy as the man who gave it.

**The Lessons to learn:** Let us reflect on our lives.

1. **Both the thieves responded, only one was saved.** The other said “If you are the Christ, save yourself and save us” (Lk.23:39). The suffering man was thinking that, “if Jesus was a king, why did He not exercise His kingship and save them”? he had remorse, but not repentance about his sinful condition.
2. **Both the thieves had an equal opportunity.** Both heard the words of Jesus, “father Forgive them.” Both heard the ridicule of the crowd. But these two thieves who were just few feet away from each other for a moment of time, separated infinite distance in their destiny of one another. what separated was not the gravity of their sin, but their response to the invitation of the Christ unto salvation through forgiveness of sins by faith. in fact these two thieves represent the entire human race.
3. **You don’t know which is your last opportunity.** The Lord says, today is the day of salvation. Many says I will be accepted by the Lord like the thief on the cross, I will make use of my last chance. That fact of the matter is you will never know which is your last chance. *Warren Wiersbe says, the thief was not saved at his last opportunity, but it was his first opportunity.*
4. **There is more grace now than then.** The thief’s forgiveness reminds us that there is more grace in God’s heart sin in our past. We, like he, can also receive a welcome in the life beyond if we transfer our trust to the one who holds the keys to the gates of Paradise.

**Conclusion:** Salvation of the thief on the cross taught us timeless valuable truths for sure, such as, the universality of the sinfulness of human beings, worthy of death and hell, the saving grace of God available so close for everyone who believes, and the eternal security of salvation in Christ. It also teaches us that the Lord is longing for the fellowship with the saints whom he saved. The other thief is an example of the self-righteous, unrepentant sinner who was lost. if you are not saved, please do not wait till the last chance, because you don’t know which one or when is your last opportunity. Today is the day of salvation, the grace is available. Repent and be saved for eternity. God bless you.