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The Word Of Salvation

By the late C. D. Cole

We are to consider the second of the sayings of Christ from the cross. It was spoken to a dying man in response to his dying request.

No accident that the Lord of glory was crucified between two thieves. No accidents in a world governed by God. Much less could there have been any accidents on that day of all days, or in connection with that event of all events - a day and event which stands at the very center of World's history. God was presiding over that scene. From all eternity, He had decreed when and where and how and with whom His Son should die. Every detail of that event was fixed; nothing was left to chance or the caprice of men. All that men did to Christ was simply what God's hand and counsel determined before to be done.

When Pilate gave orders that Christ should be crucified between two thieves, all unknown to himself, he was fulfilling the prophetic word. 700 years before this Roman officer gave his command, God had declared through Isaiah that His Son should be numbered with the transgressors.

Why did God order that His Son should be crucified between two thieves? Several answers suggest themselves:

1. To fully demonstrate the depths of shame into which Christ descended. Can you think of a more shameful way to die than to be crucified between two thieves?

2. To give us an example of man's estimate of the sinless one. Sin has ruined man's estimate

of values and this is seen in the way men treated the sinless One. He with whom God was well pleased was regarded by men no better than a thief. To God, Christ was so holy that angels were commanded to worship Him; to men He was so sinful that they put Him to death.

3. To give us a drama of salvation. Here in this sacred scene we see dramatized the gospel and the human response to it. We have here the Saviour's redemption, one sinner repenting and believing, and another sinner reviling and rejecting. And this has gone on through the centuries wherever Christ has been preached. The two attitudes towards the cross are represented in the two thieves.

4. We have here a lesson on the sovereignty of God in salvation. Here are two men alike in everything until sovereign grace begins to work. These men were alike in their sins, both thieves, alike in their sufferings, both being crucified, alike in their need, they needed salvation, alike in their attitude towards Christ, both reviled Him. Yet, one of them died in his sins, died as he had lived, hardened and impenitent and ignorant of Christ; the other repented of his wickedness, saw in Christ a mighty Saviour and Lord and by faith went with Him to paradise. We see the same going on today. Two men sit together in the same pew and listen to the same sermon, one may listen with indifference and without conviction, while another may have his eyes opened to see his need and to see his need is supplied in Christ.

5. Salvation of the thief is a demonstration of salvation by grace.

Here we see a representative sinner. This man was a robber or thief. And this title suits every man. I know that the lost are self-righteous and like pharisees of old reject the counsel of God against themselves. But of any right thing that man can do, I can prove that he is a thief. Suppose a firm in New York has an agent in San Francisco. Every month this firm sends the man a check for his salary and at the end of the year discovers that he has been working for another firm, even a competitive firm. Would not that agent be a thief or a robber? And that is exactly the situation with every sinner. God has created him and endowed him with talents and strength and opportunities to serve Him. But all that God has given has been misappropriated. The sinner has served another master, even Satan. He has dissipated his strength and wasted his time in pleasures of sin. He has robbed God.

Here we see man has to come to the end of himself before he can be saved. In conversion a man must see himself as lost, but this is not enough, he must see he is helpless. What could this thief do to make amends for his past sins? Nothing. He could not walk in paths of righteousness for his feet were nailed to a cross. He could not perform any good works, for there was a nail through either hand. He could not turn over a new leaf and live a better life for he was dying. My sinner friend you are as helpless as was that dying thief. Your hands and feet are not nailed to the cross, but they are paralyzed by sin. They belong to a heart that hates God. They that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Here we see repentance and faith exemplified. Two things are necessary in salvation -- repentance and faith. What are they? Well--here is a man who is repenting and believing. Here are two graces exemplified. You see they are not deeds done by the hands or feet. Not good works. They are attitudes of the mind and heart-soul exercises. The conscience is active before God. He says to his companion: "Dost thou not fear God?" And again, "We receive the just rewards of our deeds". He was taking the place of a sinner. Repentance is to have proper thoughts about myself and this is to think myself as a sinner worthy of death. In repentance, we pass sentence upon ourselves. Then he had faith in Christ. Faith is the sinner having proper thoughts about Christ. This thief depended upon Christ for salvation. He did not depend upon anything in himself. He renounced hope in all else and turned to Christ and appealed to Him in wonderful simplicity: "Lord, remember me".

Here we have a marvelous instance of spiritual illumination. His progress in divine life during those dying hours was perfectly wonderful. His growth in grace and knowledge of His Lord was simply amazing. From the brief record of what he said from the cross, we may discover 7 things which he had learned under the tuition of the Holy Spirit.

1. He expresses his belief in a future existence where sin would be punished by a righteous God. "Dost thou not fear God?" He rebuked his companion and as much as says, "How dare you revile this innocent Man? Remember that shortly you will have to appear before God and suffer far worse than you are now suffering at the hands of a human law."

2. He had a sight of his own sinfulness. Luke 23: 40, 41. He recognized that he was a transgressor.

3. He bore testimony to the sinlessness of Christ. "This man hath done nothing amiss." Never did a man's enemies give such a testimony as Christ's gave him; Pilate, Judas, Pilate's wife.

4. He confessed the God head of Christ. He said, "Lord", marvelous was that confession! Here the saviour was nailed to the cross, the object of hatred and mockery. The thief had heard the scornful challenge of the priest: "If thou be the Son of God come down from the cross", and no response had been given. Christ did not look like a Lord. This thief was not acting on what he saw, he was moved by faith.

5. He believed in the Saviourhood of Jesus. He had heard Christ's prayer for his enemies, and this short sentence became a saving sermon. "Lord, remember me," was equivalent to "Lord, save me".

6. He evidenced his faith in Christ's kingship. "When thou comest into Thy kingdom." Again, we notice this thief was not acting on sight; he was not judging by appearance. Outward circumstances seemed to belie the kingship of Jesus. He was not on a throne but a cross. Instead of wearing a diadem, His brow was encircled with thorns. Instead of being waited upon by a retinue of servants, he was hanging between two thieves. He believed this dying man by his side was a king and some day he would come into His kingdom.

7. He looked forward to the second coming of Christ. "When thou comest." When Christ was here the first time, he hung upon a cross; when he comes the second time, he will sit upon a throne. When he was here the first time, his trial at the hands of men was a farce; when he comes the second time, He will judge the world in righteousness. The dying thief saw all that. In this, he was ahead of the apostles, for they were siezed with a fit of despondency and had fled the awful scene.

How can we account for such spiritual understanding? How can such progress of a babe in Christ be explained? It can be accounted for only by divine influence. The Holy Spirit was his teacher. Flesh and blood had not revealed these things to him but the Father in heaven. What a demonstration that spiritual and divine things are hid from the

wise and prudent and revealed unto babes!

Jesus is a Saviour to all that can see themselves lost and condemned and are willing to repent and trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

“What must I do to be saved”. Acts. 16:30.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and Thou Shalt be Saved”. Acts 16:31.

This is exactly what the thief did and he was saved. “He that believeth on Him is not condemned” John 3:18.



THIS WE BELIEVE

We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God without error as originally written. We believe in the Genesis account of creation and the fall of man. We believe in total depravity. We believe all are lost unless born again. We believe that we are saved by grace through faith and without works on the part of man. We believe that repentance and faith are inseparable graces and that all who do not repent and believe are lost. We believe in the security of the believer. We believe faith without works is dead. We believe all who have repented and believed should confess the Lord and follow Him in baptism and begin to seek to do His will. We believe that Jesus Christ organized a church while here on earth during His personal ministry (before Pentecost), and that He gave that church a commission. Matt. 28:19,20. We believe that there are two church ordinances; baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that the church is local, visible, and that she has the Bible for her one and only and all-sufficient rule of faith and practice. We believe that the way to finance the Lord's work is by tithes and offerings. We believe that all churches should be missionary. We believe in the premillennial second coming of Christ. We believe that Heaven is a real place and that Hell is a real place. We believe in the Trinity of God, and that the Devil is a person, and that there will be two resurrections, one of the just and one of the unjust.



“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1,2).

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**“Therefore If Any Man
Be In Christ, He Is A
New Creature” II Cor. 5:17**