

The Word of Salvation

Lu 23:35-43

Lu 23:35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided *him*, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. 36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, 37 And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. 38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, **THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.** 39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. 40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Introduction:

1. At nine o'clock that morning they nailed this man cursing, fighting, screaming to his cross. That afternoon Roman soldiers broke his legs and hurled him into eternity. He went straight to paradise. He was not baptized, confirmed, or enrolled in any church. He confessed to no priest although there were plenty standing by. He did no penance. He had no claim to moral character. He did not ask the virgin Mary to pray for him, even though she was present. He called on none of the saints. He was a lost soul on his way to an certain hell when suddenly, He flung his soul at Jesus' feet. He heard the gospel from Christ's enemies ("He saved others...") and he turned in wondrous faith to Jesus. And he was saved,

instantly, then and there, on the same grounds and in the same way anyone is saved. And he received immediate assurance of his salvation, too.

2. Salvation is an amazing experience because a miracle takes place. A spiritually dead sinner is raised to eternal life
3. For each believer the miracle of the new birth is the same, but the circumstances surrounding the miracle are different
4. Think of the salvation of the woman at the well, the salvation of Paul
5. One of the most amazing conversions is seen in the account of the thief on the cross
6. Let us consider the amazing aspects of this conversion

I. THE AMAZING SITUATION

A. *Prophecy Was Fulfilled - Isa 53:12*

12 Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

1. Jesus hanging between two thieves fulfilled this prophecy
2. While wicked hands were at work crucifying the Lord, the powerful hands of God were at work fulfilling divine prophecy
3. Jesus was numbered with the transgressors because wicked man had decided that Jesus was also a transgressor
4. Jesus came to die for sinners and during his life he was called a friend of tax collectors and sinners and now he was dying for sinners and he was dying with sinners

B. *God's Gracious Providence*

1. Jesus crucified between two thieves was part of God's gracious

providence.

2. It was no accident that Jesus was crucified between these two thieves
3. The thieves heard Jesus continually pray, “Father forgive them....”
4. Because they were on either side of Jesus they could see the sign above his head - “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews”
5. The thieves listened as the crowd mocked and ridiculed Jesus. “You saved others, save yourself.” This was good news to one of the thieves, if Jesus could save others then he could save them.
6. No one is ever saved by accident, for meeting Jesus Christ is a divine appointment.
7. God still works providentially to create situations that draw people to Christ

The Amazing Situation....

II. THE AMAZING SUPPLICATION - “LORD REMEMBER ME..”

A. The Condition of the Thief - vs 33

33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

1. He was a malefactor
 - a) *He was an evil doer*
 - b) *He was tried, declared guilty, and sentenced to death by crucifixion*
 - c) *He was in the grip of death - there was no mercy, no leniency, no pardon - he would die on the cross*
 - d) *He was a guilty criminal and was getting what he deserved*
2. He was hanging on a cross

B. The Confession of the Thief - vs 39-41a

1. One thief railed on Christ
39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

2. The other thief realized that he was getting what he deserved
40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds...
 - a) *He knew that he was a sinner*
 - b) *He admitted his guilty*
 - c) *He knew that he deserved to die for his crimes*
 - d) *He confessed his guilt before the Lord*
 - e) *He had no hope within himself*
 - f) *He didn't try to blame others - society, culture*

3. Something happened to this thief
 - a) *He heard Jesus pray, "Father, forgive them..." and this prayer pierced his conscience and helped him realized that he needed this forgiveness*
 - b) *He saw the sign above Jesus head - "This is the king of the Jews." He came to believe that Jesus was a king. He pleaded - "Remember me when you come into your KINGdom"*

4. Everyone who is saved comes to the Lord with this attitude
 - a) *I am guilty of offending a holy, pure God*
 - b) *I deserved to be sent to hell because of my sins*
 - c) *I can do nothing to help myself*

c. The Petition of the Thief - vs 42

42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

1. This is one of the most amazing prayers in the Bible but it is not long

or complicated

- a) *He admitted that he was justly condemned and guilty*
 - b) *Sinners can't be saved until they admit that they are guilty and deserve to be condemned*
 - c) *The thief had already confessed that Jesus was innocent*
 - d) *The thief knew that there was life after death and that he was accountable to God*
 - e) *He begged Christ for mercy*
2. He recognized the Lord's Sovereignty - "Lord"
- a) *He was submitting himself to the lordship and authority of Christ*
 - b) *He knew that Jesus was his only hope*
 - c) *No one is saved till he trusts Christ as "Lord"*
3. It took courage to pray this prayer
- a) *No one else there at Golgotha was concerned about salvation*
 - b) *Priests and religious leaders were mocking Christ - crowds were opposing Him and the soldiers were laughing at him*
 - c) *Yet this thief dared to believe on Jesus*
 - d) *He went against the crowds, the religious leaders and the soldiers*
 - e) *Many have the courage to sin along with their friends but they lack the courage to repent in spite of their friends*
 - f) *"Lord, remember me..." is also in the imperfect - he kept saying it*
4. The confidence that this prayer demanded
- a) *Just think how little this thief really understood about Jesus and the way of salvation*
 - b) *He just knew that he needed a Savior*
 - c) *Some use the excuse that they don't trust Christ as Savior because they don't understand all about it*
 - d) *He is a witness against those who have heard sermons, SS lessons, radio broadcasts but have rejected Christ*

- e) *The thief trusted Christ when He did not look much like a Savior*
 - (1) He was rejected, abused, weak, hanging on a cross
 - (2) Who would trust someone in that condition to save him?
 - (3) Would you trust a drowning lifeguard?
- f) *The faith of this thief was great*
- g) *Today I ask you to trust a risen and glorified Savior. A Savior who is sitting on the throne of the universe.*

The Amazing Supplication....

III. THE AMAZING SALVATION

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

A. Salvation Wholly by Grace

1. This salvation was entirely by grace
2. The thief could do nothing to save himself
 - a) *He couldn't keep the ten commandments*
 - b) *He couldn't obey the Sermon on the Mount*
 - c) *He couldn't take the Lord's supper or be baptized*
3. The thief deserved to be on the cross suffering for his crimes, he did not deserve to be saved
4. It takes honesty and humility to confess that you can't save yourself
5. The thief on the cross went to paradise without good works or ceremonies or church attendance
6. The dogma of purgatory is here refuted because this vile sinner was instantly transformed into a saint and made fit for paradise
7. Soul-sleep is here refuted since the thief would be with Jesus in paradise immediately after death

B. Salvation that is Certain

1. This was no “hope so” or “guess so” salvation - it was certain
2. “Today you **will** be with me in paradise.”
 - a) *Ac 2:21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*
 - b) *1Jo 5:12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*
3. Don’t gamble on eternity - you can know for sure that you are saved
 - a) *2Ti 1:12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*
 - b) *1Jo 5:13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

C. A Personal Salvation - “Verily, I say unto you...”

1. The Lord saves us personally
Ga 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.
2. “I say to you...”

D. A Present Salvation - “Today...”

1. Jesus did not say, “Sometime in the future”
2. Salvation is not a process that takes time to complete
3. Salvation is not received on the installment plan
4. No one gets saved tomorrow, everyone is saved today

E. A Salvation Centered in Christ

1. Salvation isn't centered in a preacher or a church or a tradition
2. Salvation isn't centered in the law
3. The religious leaders could not promise the thief a place in paradise
4. The Roman soldiers couldn't give the thief a place in paradise
5. Ac 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

F. A Glorious Salvation

1. Someone said, "I'm going to be like the dying thief and trust Christ as Savior at the last minute."
2. The problem is that no one know when the "last minute" will be
3. The dying thief is not an example of someone who waited till his last opportunity to be saved. He is an example of someone who was saved at the first opportunity

Conclusion:

1. The thief turned to the right person - not Pharisees, not a priest
2. The thief possessed the right attitude - he acknowledged that he was a poor sinner who needed help
3. Everyone who comes to Christ must come the same way the thief did
 - a. He admitted his sin
 - b. He admitted the sinless deity of Christ
 - c. He trusted Christ as "Lord"