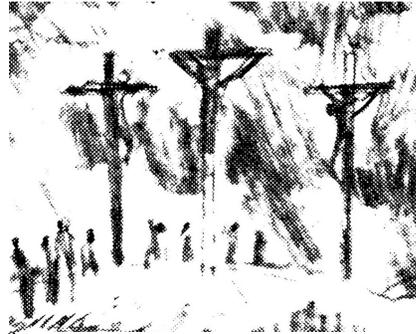


Lessons from the Repentant Malefactor

Luke 23:39-43



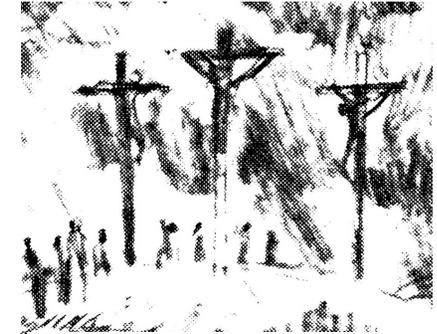
In this brief yet highly significant passage, a number of vital truths are revealed, especially as relating to salvation:

- ✠ **1) God specializes in saving wretched sinners.** This man was an evildoer (Luke 23:39), guilty of a crime punishable by death. He knew he deserved his fate. He admitted “we receive the due reward of our deeds” (Luke 23:41).
- ✠ **2) Wicked unbelievers can repent and have a genuine change of heart.** Earlier, this man had joined the other dying criminal in reviling and mocking the Lord Jesus (Matt. 27:44), but he wonderfully changed!
- ✠ **3) Deathbed or near death conversions are possible (yet rare).** One dying thief was saved that no one would despair; only one was saved that no one would presume.
- ✠ **4) A person may have full assurance of salvation.** Based on the clear promise of Christ, this man could know for sure that he would be with Christ in paradise (Luke 23:43).
- ✠ **5) Eternal life is not gained by performing good works or by observing sacraments or ordinances.** This man had neither the opportunity nor the time to accumulate good works or righteous deeds, and certainly there was no way he could be baptized in water.
- ✠ **6) A sinner can do nothing but look to a merciful God and receive His grace.** This man’s only hope was in the One next to him.
- ✠ **7) Faith in Christ is essential.** This man’s faith was astounding. He knew that Jesus was soon to be dead, and yet he believed that He was King and would later come in His Kingdom (Luke 23:42)! We too must believe in the One risen from the dead (Rom. 10:9).
- ✠ **8) At death, a believer goes to be with the Lord in a place of bliss** (Luke 23:43; Phil. 1:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:8). This rules out such non-Biblical concepts as soul sleep or purgatory.

~George Zeller: www.middletownbiblechurch.org

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