

WHICH THIEF?

“And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.”

—Mark 15:27

“And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

—Luke 23:39-43

“OH, OF COURSE, I intend to be saved sometime; but there is no use being in a hurry about it. There is always a chance, even at the eleventh hour. Remember the dying thief!” carelessly said a young man at the close of a meeting, when spoken to about his soul.

“*Which thief?*” pointedly asked his questioner.

“Why, I had forgotten there were two. I mean the saved one,” was the reply, as an anxious expression came over his face.

“Yes, one was saved, and is in heaven now. The other, who had an equal opportunity for salvation, is wailing in hell. What warrant¹ have you that you will not spend eternity as he will, rather than as the other?”

It was a word fitly spoken, an arrow that pierced the joints of his harness; and the young man was led to see the folly of further procrastination, and that night was saved for eternity, through God’s grace in calling upon the Lord Jesus Christ to save him.

Thousands, like him, forget there were “two thieves.” They remember the mercy of God that saved the one (Ti 3:5), while forgetting the judgment of God meted out to the other (Heb 9:27). Carelessly they wander on, hoping to be saved at last; but, alas, how many are cut off in sin and damned forever, to whom the gospel² was often presented, but who, presuming on the patience of God, rejected it until “there was no remedy” (2Ch 36:16)

Which thief, reader, we affectionately ask, would you be like? We recollect speaking once to a very refined and elegant lady on a steam ship, who asked indignantly, “You do not mean to say I have got to go to heaven like the dying thief, do you?” “No madam,” we replied, “you do not have to. But if you reject Christ, you will have to go to hell with the other.”

And so we would remind the reader: The saved thief believed on the Son of God, and is with Christ now. The lost thief scorned a Savior, and is in the depths of woe. You must be with one or the other for eternity.

“Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee” (Job 36:18). ❧

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Heb 2:14-15)

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phi 2:5-11)

¹ **warrant** – reason; basis of authority.

² **gospel** – good news of salvation by grace through faith in the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ at the cross of Calvary for the sins of His people (2Co 5:21)—by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” (Mat 5:17-18)

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.” (1Co 15:3)

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. (1Pe 3:18)

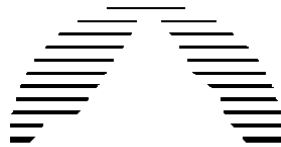
“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2Co 5:21)

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Act 4:12)

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