



– Luke 23:43

“Assuredly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

The Setting

- After the Lord's forgiveness of those crucifying Him
 - "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Lk. 23:34)
- Two criminals revile Him
 - "Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing." (Matt. 27:44)
 - "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him." (Matt. 27:42)



The Setting

- Luke 23:25-43
- “And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.”³⁶ The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, ³⁷ and saying, “If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.”³⁸ And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

The Setting

- “39 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.” 40 But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” 42 Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” 43 And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

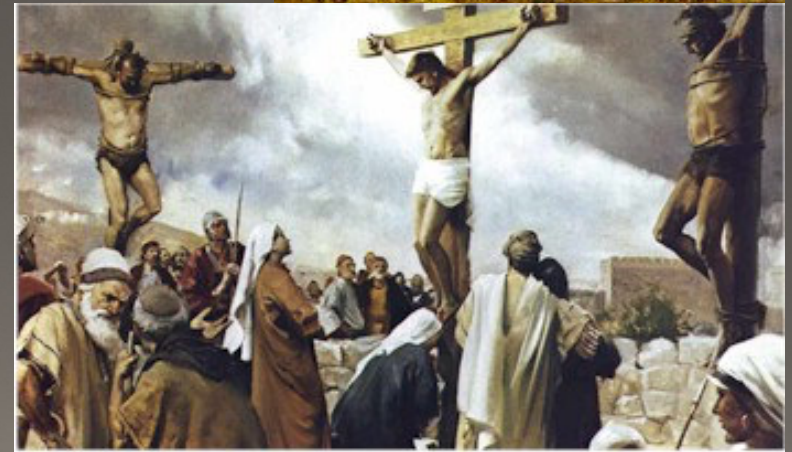
The Setting

- It was no accident that the Lord Christ was crucified between two thieves
 - God was presiding over this scene
 - Nothing was left to chance
- "And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors." (Is. 53:12)



Why between two thieves?

- To demonstrate the unfathomable depths of shame in which He descended
 - Consider His surroundings at birth and resurrection
 - Beast of the field
 - The refuse of humanity – criminals condemned to death
- So the three crosses might represent man's salvation
 - Sinners reviling and rejection
 - Sinners repenting
 - Savior's redeeming and forgiving



Why between two thieves?

- For all humanity to see the striking contrast between the two thieves
 - Both near the Lord Christ
 - Both heard the same things
 - Both were wicked
 - Both were suffering/dying
 - Both urgently needed forgiveness
- One repented and saved



Considerations

- The thief himself
- His utterances
- His request of the Savior
- Our Lord's response

1. A Representative Sinner

- Both thieves reviled the Savior
- Consider their depravity
 - At the brink of death they were still mocking Him
- This demonstrates the native enmity between man and God
- “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” (Jer. 17:9)
- They represent all of us
- “For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...” (Rom. 3:22-23)
- It is not until we realize our sickness that we seek out a Physician

2. The Meaning of Repentance and Faith

- Repentance = change of mind
 - Sorrow for sin
 - Forsaking of sin
- The discovery of our lost condition
 - Judging ourselves
 - Taking ownership of our lost estate
- “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation.” (Lk. 23:40)
 - NOT, “*Do you fear punishment?*”
 - He acknowledges his guilt and the justice of his condemnation

2. The Meaning of Repentance and Faith

- The Lord Christ came to save sinners...but what kind?
 - Self-confessed sinners
 - Sinners who take the place of sinners before God
 - Conscious that they are lost
- His repentance was accompanied by faith
- Where did he get this faith?
 - They never met before
 - **"THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."** (Lk. 23:38)
 - God made sure this was not changed by Pilate
 - Faith rests on the Word of God
 - Saving faith is more than a correct opinion or train of thought

2. The Meaning of Repentance and Faith

- Consider the parts of the right-hand thief which were NOT bound
 - “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” (Rom. 10:10)
- Humble faith
 - “*Lord, honor me...*”
 - “*Lord, exalt me...*”
 - “Lord, remember me...” – just think of me
 - The one whom the Lord remembers He...pardons, saves, blesses
- Courageous faith
 - Rebukes the other thief publically
 - Condemns the Jews – “This Man has done nothing wrong.” (Lk. 23:41)

3. A case of Spiritual Illumination

- He believes in the future life where retribution would be carried out by a righteous God.
 - “Do you not even fear God...” (Lk. 23:40)
- He had sight of his own sinfulness
 - “...seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds.” (Lk. 23:40-41)
- He was among those God arranged to witness to Christ’s sinlessness
 - Thief – “...this Man has done nothing wrong.”
 - Judas – “I have betrayed innocent blood.”
 - Pilate – “I find no fault in Him.”
 - Pilate’s wife – “Have nothing to do with this just Man.”

3. A case of Spiritual Illumination

- He confessed His Godhead
 - “Lord, remember me...”
- He believed that Christ was the Savior
 - Even of the chief of sinners
 - “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” (1 Tim. 1:15)
- He believed in Christ’s kingship
- He looked forward to the Second Coming
 - “...when you come into your kingdom.”



4. The Saviorhood of the Lord Christ

- What was Christ's response?
- Could have been:
 - You deserve your fate.
 - You are a wicked robber and deserve to die.
 - You are too late.
 - You should have sought Me sooner.
- Christ responded to no one while He was on the Cross except this righteous thief
- A sinner can never come to Christ in an unacceptable time



5. The Destination of the Saved

- Divine grace exceeds human expectations
 - The thief asked to be remembered
 - Christ assures him that he will join Him
- “Today”
 - No indication of any intermediate place - Purgatory

6. The longing of the Savior for Communion

- Communion is the climax of grace and sum of Christian privilege
- “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1 Cor. 1:9)
- Christ did not come to secure servants, but to enter into fellowship with humanity
- What do we want from heaven?
 - Place free of sorrow and suffering
 - Meet with loved ones
 - Heaven without Christ is not Heaven.
- “Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.” (Ps. 73:25)

Summary

- A Representative Sinner
- The Meaning of Repentance and Faith
 - Taking ownership of my own sins
 - Humble and courageous faith
- A case of Spiritual Illumination
 - Believed in the afterlife
 - He saw his own sins
 - Witnessed to Christ as God and King
- The Saviorhood of the Lord Christ
- The destination of the saved
- The longing of the Savior for communion with humanity