

Numbered with the Transgressors

Luke 23:32-43

Introduction

- It occurs to me that the three people lead to their deaths in this passage
 - **represent every person on the planet!**

32 And there were also two other, malefactors,

- Greek = evildoers
- Other versions = criminals
- Other passages = thieves

led with him [Jesus] to be put to death.

33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary,

- Calvary is left as the Latin name (Calvary) kept by the KJV translators
- Luke actually uses the Greek for “the Skull”

there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

- All of them to be executed by the most horrific punishment devised by man
- So Jesus and both the malefactors are crucified
- With Jesus in the middle of them both.
- **Not just a malefactor but the WORST of them**
- Mark reminds us this fulfills the prophecy from Is. 53:12

*And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.
And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.*

Mark 15: 27-28

- Then we continue to hear Jesus forgives folk with the famous words ...

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

- The soldiers divided His clothes.
- The people watched like ghoulish spectators to see a man suffering unimaginable torture.
- The rulers of the temple and the Sanhedrin mocked Him while in the height of pain...

He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

- The thirsty soldiers mocked Him with vinegar to quench His thirst and taunting ...

If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

- Finally, they mock Christ but it TOTALLY backfires on them - although they were ignorant

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

1Cor. 1:27

**... a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew,
This Is The King Of The Jews. [EXPLAIN]**

But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good,

Now let's look at the passage at hand:

1. The Reprobate Malefactor

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

- We can observe a few main features in this verse:

A. The reprobate continues the taunts of the crowd and mocks Christ

- Railed = insulted or blasphemed
- He was in extreme pain
 - Agony of crucifixion
 - Literally at death's door!
- Yet it did NOT stop him from holding his tongue.
- Even to a fellow sufferer!

Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his folly will not depart from him.
Prov. 27:22

- So in a hardened soul, trials and tribulations will not change a wicked heart
- Our Pastor David has been sharing with us about the hardness of Pharaoh.
 - The perfect example of a reprobate soul
- In fact, troubles often irritate corruptions in the lost, that enlightened folk would mortify!

2. There are NO "atheists in a foxhole"!

- Clearly I use this expression "tongue in cheek".
- Its like making a vain dare or tempting Jesus **IF you are the Christ**
- He is NOT convicted in the power and authority of Christ Jesus.
- But he is going to have a "bob each way" JUST IN CASE!
- Virtually tempts or dares Jesus by saying ...
 - **If you don't save me, you can't be God !**
- So what does he actually say?
- Save Himself and them!
- He openly and defiantly mocks and disdains Christ BUT ...
- He expects (in hope) that Jesus will still save Him !!!
- Is this not the perfect example of the post-modern man?
- How often do we hear the question,
- "If there is a God, why does he allow bad things to happen?"

I have to point out something critically important at this stage:

- If Christ actually DID what the thief on the cross asked,
- i.e. *Saved Himself from the cross*
- What would that mean for you and I ?

- **We would still be dead in our sins,**
- **because the Lord wouldn't have paid the punishment I deserved !**

- Notice how the "Lord gives that which is good" even though we may not like it.

- I make a final point about the reprobate criminal ...

- Does Christ reply to him?
- Christ's ignoring him, speaks volumes in contrast with Jesus' reply to the penitent criminal.

But I want to look at that later.

For now, have a listen to what the other malefactor says ...

2. The Penitent Malefactor

- Luke mentioned only one of the criminals hanging with Jesus railed him or insulted Jesus.

- Interestingly, Matthew and Mark state initially BOTH thieves got stuck into Jesus ...

Matthew: *The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. [27:44]*

Mark: *And they that were crucified with him reviled him. [15:32]*

- But only the one is recorded here in Luke, so that we may glean its messages.

40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God,

- I am so excited to see the response of this bloke
- Just about to fall from the precipice of this life
- Into the very depths of Hell's fiery abyss !!!

- **We see a SINGULAR and EXTRAORDINARY act of grace by the Holy Spirit**

- He, who was earlier reviling Jesus, is now acknowledging Him as God !
- What else can turn a physically dying and spiritually dead man's heart to Christ??

- Remember, he was LOOKING at the worst state of Jesus:
 - broken in body
 - ◆ Bleeding from floggings
 - ◆ Thorns pierced on his scalp and bleeding
 - ◆ The nails through his hands and feet
 - Broken in strength
 - ◆ Exhausted from the flailings and buffetings
 - ◆ Exhausted from the cross carried from Jerusalem
 - Naked except for a minor garb
 - Immobilised on the crucifix

- To behold Him at His worst, and yet know Him as the eternal creator!
- Only the work of the Holy Spirit can create a NEW heart in men !
- You will note the penitent's reaction...
- He got stuck into the reprobate rebuked him !

A. Do you NOT fear God?

- He was clearly stating how things stand in relation to a sovereign and righteous God
- **This criminal now FEARED GOD !**

*And I say unto you my friends, **Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.***

[Luke 12:4,5]

- There's clearly a time and place when the Godly folk need to speak up,
 - as a warning to the godless
 - As a witness to God's honour
- He is flabbergasted also (like I mentioned earlier) that a dying man
- would treat another dying man with such loathesome contempt!

seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

B. He owns his depravity

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds:

- Acknowledges he is RIGHTLY punished under Roman law as a criminal
- True humility leads us to accept our deserved punishment for sin!!

but this man hath done nothing amiss.

- In contrast, sinful man to whom God's special grace extends knows **Christ suffered wrongly**
 - Jesus was tried in 2 courts
 - Treated maliciously
 - Abused and mocked like the worst offender EVER !
- The penitent criminal was convicted by Jesus' conduct in suffering:
 - *This man did nothing wrong !*

C. Prayer to a Saviour

- He now prays the prayer of a dying man to a dying Saviour:

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

- Remember, he was looking at Jesus at His physical worst humiliation!
- Yet still prayed in faith and hope!
- **Loved ones, while there is life, ... there is ALWAYS hope**
- **And while there is hope, ... there is time for prayer!**

- I must give this solemn warning, though:
- On your death beds is a great place for confession
 - but its better while you have breath abundant!
- True death bed convictions are EXTREMELY RARE
- The other problem with leaving “things to the last minute”
 - You could die in an instant and NOT have time !!!
- So this is the exception not the rule!!!
- In his unworthiness, this penitent criminal doesn’t asked to be saved from death
 - Such as the reprobate malefactor
- He doesn’t even ask to be taken into Christ’s kingdom.
- **He merely asks that Jesus remember him when he sits on the mercy seat in Heaven.**
- Literally a “call to mind” about the penitent thief.

And now we come to the greatest person of the three executed ...

3. The One and Only Saviour

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

A. To Whom it was Said

- The penitent thief alone
- **NOT a word was spoken to the reprobate thief**
- Consider how great a blessing this is
- Even in the immense suffering and agony of our Lord
- He still had time and energy to offer encouragement and comfort to His own
- Even great sinners, if they are TRULY penitent,
 - Christ will not only offer pardon from their sins
 - But provide a place for them in Paradise of God

*And for this cause he is the **mediator of the new testament**, that by means of death, for the **redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament**, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*

[Hebrews 9:15]

B. What was Said

- **Paradise** is derived from a Persian term
- It implies to the Oriental folk the sum total of all blessedness
- Used again in Revelation, where those in Heaven will be rewarded

*To him that overcometh will I give to **eat of the tree of life**, which is in the **midst of the paradise of God**.*

[Rev. 2:7]

- This is an allusion to the PERFECT and BLESSED communion we had with God in the Garden of Eden
- **Can you imagine the peace and consolation the unexpected thief would have got from these tender words of mercy from the Lord Jesus Christ?? !!!**
- To eat from the Tree of Life meant his sins were forgiven by Christ Himself

- BTW that's why Adam & Eve were kicked OUT of the Garden of Eden
- If they ate the fruit, while they were unjustified sinners, they would be ETERNALLY separated from God. **[EXPLAIN]**

- Not only were his sins forgiven and he would be in Paradise,
- but he would be with the Lord Jesus Christ HIMSELF in paradise !!!

- **What was Jesus prayer?**

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.

[John 17:24]

- As beautiful and wonderful as these glorious points are
- There is one more thing more that blazes across my heart from this passage ...
- Jesus said (paraphrase) **You shall be with me, in Paradise, TODAY !!!**
- That is TONIGHT - instantly
 - Not tomorrow
 - Not after sitting in a godless-concept of Limbo
 - Not in a Roman Purgatory awaiting for indulgences or Hail Mary's from the living
- **BUT TODAY !!!**
- **As soon as you now die !!!**
- His deliverance is immediate upon death !
- **And this is our promise too, for the elect in Christ!**

Conclusion

- Loved ones, there is one final point I want to tease out of this sobering passage:
- And that can be summed up by a verse in the book of Isaiah

**Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth:
for I am God, and there is none else.**

Isaiah 45:22

- They were officially dead men walking, on the journey to Calvary
- They were spiritually dead men hanging off their crosses
- They would be bodily dead men very soon

- When the criminals were on the cross next to Jesus,
- The ONLY thing they could do was LOOK !!!

- They could not do any righteous deeds or good works
- They could not make themselves “better” before seeking Christ
- They could not attend church or offer up tithes

- Again, the ONLY thing they could do was LOOK -
 - Hebrew word Habat = Consider, look intimately, closely
 - **You can't repent (turn from sin towards God) if you don't look !**

- Look to Jesus Christ alone ... now and every day ... **because only He can save.**
- That offer we as saints are to share to the entire world **the ends of the earth.**
- **For HE is God - and there is none else**

For any of us who haven't looked, I lovingly invite you ... beg you

O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

- Remember, you may not have a chance later.
- We never know when our Lord will call us to account
 - At late or early hour
 - Or if He should come back today !

- DL Moody gave his congregation time to think about their salvation over the coming week
- He was crushed that many didn't have had the chance.
[EXPLAIN the great fire of Chicago]

Please chat with me ANYTIME about your eternal soul and I will gladly share and pray with you.

**Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth:
for I am God, and there is none else.**

God be with you all