

Saying: No.2

Scripture: Luke 23 vs 39 to 43

39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

40 But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God" he said, "since you are under the same sentence?"

41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong"

42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom"

43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise"

We are going to consider here the second saying out of the seven that Jesus said from the cross. I would like us to try and transport ourselves to the scene at the cross and view what happened. Let us listen to the conversation going on between the two criminals, and following this eve's drop on what one of these criminals said to Jesus.

It will be good if we listen to the verses from Luke again so that we get a clear picture of the scene in our minds.

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Let's look here at the.

1. The Abuse

One of the men being crucified hurled insults at Him. The picture we receive here is of a man throwing abusive insults and remarks at Jesus. When we I was in the school and other children called one another names, they would say 'Bricks and stones will break my bones but names will never hurt me' but this was not true. Insults hurt whether said by children or adults.

The man who threw these insults at Jesus was not concerned about any one else, his concern centred on himself. *"If you are the Christ, save yourself and us"* He was not concerned about the hurt inflicted on the people he stole from or even killed, his concern was self-centred, because it was self-motivated, as long as his own skin was saved that was all that mattered. Jesus had to listen to this torrent of abuse from this criminal.

The abuse directed at Jesus was not something new, the Scribes and Pharisees had constantly attacked and criticised Him. The next thing we notice is.

2. The Apologist.

The second criminal then comes into the picture and begins to direct his remarks at the other convict because of the abusive remarks he had made towards Jesus, which were completely unjustified. In defending Jesus he says *"Don't you fear God" he said, "since you are under the same sentence?" We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong"*.

By some means this man became aware of the fact that Jesus was an innocent man. He states that Jesus had done nothing wrong. The Priests, the Soldiers and the People in general pronounced Him as guilty and worthy of death. There is a saying, which says 'It takes a thief to know a thief' this man knew Jesus was not a criminal.

His comments made to the other convict confirmed his own guilt; he never said that Jesus was guilty of anything. Apologists defend the truth. It is amazing that a man who had been convicted of wrong doing, who never lived by the truth, could openly defend the Man who is known as the Way the Truth and the Life when so many others had abandoned Him. The next thing we notice is.

3. The Admission.

We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve.

He acknowledges that he and the other criminal were getting what they deserved, which was in accordance with the law operating at that time. He did not hid the fact that he was a sinner, he never tried to justify what he had done by saying, well I was out of work, or I was poor, or I was brought up in poor area. He openly acknowledged that he had done wrong'.

The first step to recovery from sin and its effects is to acknowledge it. There are many people who have life controlling problems, but live in denial. I don't have a gambling problem, I don't have a drinking problem, I am not addicted to drugs, and I don't have a problem with lust.

Living in denial is to live in a cul-de-sac and there is only one way out of a cul-de-sac, turn around. Acknowledge your problem and do a U-turn.

Let's recap.

The stages this criminal had gone through show to us that he **Reprieved** the other criminal for wrongly insulting Jesus, he **Recognised** that Jesus was an innocent man, and finally makes a **Request** for admittance into the Kingdom of God. So we have.

4. The Appeal.

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" This man recognises that Jesus is a King and that He has a Kingdom.

This man is known as the 'Penitent thief'. What he said and what he believed are very important. In making this appeal to Jesus he was asking for the Lord to look favourably upon him. When the Lord shows favour it means He is exercising and extending His grace to someone.

It says in the Book of Genesis that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord; this man was asking for the same when he said remember me. Although he had sinned, he was appealing to the Lord to look favourably upon him. If you do what this man did, you can ask the Lord to show you favour, the first step is acknowledge that you are a sinner, and then ask the Lord to remember you.

5. The Assurance. *"I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise"*. This was the assurance this man wanted to hear. He did not want the Lord to ignore or even turn down his appeal. He asked for something, and he got it.

William Burkitt's Notes on this verse says that from it "We learn both the efficacy and freedom of divine grace".

In the words of Jesus, we see the Power of God's unmerited favour, and also the freedom of it. This man was the 'First Fruit of the Cross'

When we look at what happened on this occasion, we can say that the Grace of God is Amazing, it is Adorable, it is Astounding. Before this man drew his last breath he had been given the assurance from Jesus about where he was going. We take from what Jesus said that.

Forgiveness was immediate.

Salvation was immediate.

Regeneration was immediate.

Paradise is a place full of valuable assets and makes one happy and comfortable.

Yes, it was a last minute conversion, better to be converted in the last minute of your life than not to be converted at all, but better still to be converted the moment you have the opportunity.

Griffiths Thomas in his commentary on Luke sounds this warning to those who procrastinate about receiving Christ as saviour he says. "A soul confronted earlier with Christ's claims must not use the dying thief to justify the postponement of a decision". Accept Jesus today.

Today Jesus said to this man you will be. You will be too if you accept Jesus into your life.