

## Revisiting the Thief

Jesus experienced the worst death imaginable in Golgotha. But technically, He did not die alone. There were two other men (thieves) also being crucified on this day. One of these thieves stands out in Luke's account (Luke 22:33-43). This thief has become the most famous thief in religion today. Unfortunately, many go to his story to explain why they don't believe baptism is not essential to salvation. This has led us to be very defensive when he is brought up today.

Indeed, we could spend this lesson showing the countless verses that prove their conclusion wrong (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16). But instead of focusing our time doing that, for this lesson, let's focus on Jesus. Let's get out of debate mode and focus on the wonderful lessons we can about Jesus from His interaction with this thief.

### **We need to see the Lord's unselfishness.**

- Leading up to His death on the cross, Jesus shows concern for so many people. These people were tax-collectors, blind men, lepers, religious leaders, and His disciples.
- While dying on the cross, He shows concerns for His mother, enemies, and even a thief (John 19:26-27; Luke 23:34, 42-43). This thief was insulting Jesus earlier while He was hanging on the cross (Matthew 27:44).
- Jesus doesn't seek revenge against the thief. Once the man humbles himself and begs to be part of the Lord's kingdom, Jesus extends to him compassion and forgiveness. The Lord blesses him even while suffering!
- Like Jesus, instead of focusing solely on ourselves when suffering, we must seek to bless and help others (Philippians 2:3-5).

### **We need to see the Lord's grace.**

- The thief was a bad man. The word "thief" that is used is probably a translational issue. The more accurate term is "criminal." This man was probably guilty of revolution (rebellious against the Roman Empire and killing Roman soldiers). During the time of Rome, this crime would undoubtedly get you nailed to a cross! Jesus was still willing to forgive Him.
- Jesus' grace towards this man confirms the core message of the gospel (John 3:16; Luke 19:10; 2 Peter 3:9). Paul taught that if Jesus was willing to save him, He was willing to save anyone (2 Timothy 1:12-15).
- He is truly the Savior of all (1 Timothy 2:6).

### **We need to see the Lord's power to keep His promises.**

- This criminal asked to be remembered when Jesus came again in His kingdom (Luke 23:42). He is asking for a future blessing from Jesus. But Jesus gave Him something even better! Jesus promised to bless Him today (Luke 23:43). The Lord promised that today this man would be with Him in paradise.
- Jesus has promised to save sinners if they come to Him, and He is fully capable of fulfilling that promise (John 3:16; 4:13-14; 11:25-26; 14:1-6). Do we believe this? We have to if we want to be able to receive what He has promised.

### **Conclusion:**

While we don't know much about this thief, we do know that Jesus saved him. Jesus will also save us, but we must be willing to come to Him on His terms. His terms are stated clearly for us in Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38. The thief didn't hear these words. We have. Will we obey them?