

Hope for Dying Thieves
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John 19:16-20

So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Nothing physically unique in Jesus' crucifixion: prophesied 500 years before 1st.

- What was unique: purpose and achievement of Jesus' crucifixion.
Galatians 3:13

- In Jesus' death/atonement, dying men can receive eternal life.

Two guilty thieves crucified, see/hear Jesus, revile Him and both want desperately to be saved from death. John 19:17-18, Matthew 27:44; Mark 15:32b, Luke 23:33, 39-41a

- One had a physical objective: save his earthly life.
 - No fear of God/judgment, no sense of sinfulness, no desire for forgiveness or for reconciliation with God.
 - Jesus was a means to escape the mess he's in, not a king to follow.
 - (sickness, \$\$ problem, bad marriage).
- The other one had a spiritual objective: forgiveness/pardon, not comfort/physical life.
 - He rebukes friend for doing what he had just done. Luke 23:41b-42
 - Irony: "can't save self!" but saving thief by not saving Self.

By grace he perceived truths he never understood or believed before.

- Recognized his sinful condition and deserved man's/God's punishment.
 - Necessary for true repentance and salvation
- Confesses Jesus is righteous and affirmed Jesus Christ as Messiah
 - Saw so much though eyes opened for so short a time!

God's irresistible grace drew this thief and then saved him. Luke 23:43,

"Who is this that enters the pearly gate at the same moment as the King of Glory? Who is this favored companion of the Redeemer? Is it some honored martyr? Is it a faithful Apostle? Is it a Patriarch like Abraham? Or a prince like David? It is none of these. Behold and be amazed at Sovereign Grace!"

C.H. Spurgeon

- In natural it's ludicrous to commit eternal destiny into hands of One apparently unable to preserve His own life.
 - Jesus saving thief while enduring Father's wrath for his sin!
 - In Jesus' death/atonement, this dying thief received eternal life.

Thief is supreme example it is never too late for ANYONE to be saved by grace.

1 Timothy 1:12

- If lost, dangerous to presume have time to repent at end like thief
 - Robbing yourself NOW of clear conscience, peace/joy, sweet fellowship with your Creator and Savior...Jesus Christ.
 - Which thief are you?....this was recorded so YOU believe!
- If Christian: never stop praying for/sharing Gospel with the lost...even if in a coma!
 - Jesus is going after lost sheep moments before thief and His death.

In Jesus' words dying Christian thieves like us find assurance/ joy.

- Still refer as thief but now saved thief. Christians saved sinners as well.

Assurance Christian saved by grace/faith/Jesus alone (Jesus can't lie) not by progress or performance in Christian life. John 11:25-26, Luke 12:43, 2

Corinthians 5:8,

- If salvation by good works thief couldn't have been saved.
 - Nothing offer God before (thief)/after (died) his conversion.
 - Works salvation= No assurance: never know if "done enough".
- Heaven is real and Christians enter immediately at death...no transitional place.

Jesus' words to thief can produce joy in Christian....when enter heaven Jesus will not just remember you but fellowship with you.

- Jesus is not just means to blessing; He is our greatest blessing/treasure.
 - Thru Jesus' death/atonement, dying thieves can receive eternal life and can daily live with assurance and joy.