

## Last Words: Sayings from the Cross and from Beyond the Grave (The Word of Salvation) Luke 23:32-43

### INTRODUCTION

Please turn in your Bible to **Luke 23:32-43**.

**It is Friday in Jerusalem.** The smell of death is in the air. Outside the city wall, in a place reserved for public executions, three crosses stand on a skull-shaped hill known as Golgotha. **Golgotha may have been a regular place of execution.** It was prominent, public, and outside the city along a main road. Executions held there served as examples to the people and as deterrents to criminals. A crowd has gathered this day. Not that crucifixion was unusual. But this day is different. An unusual Man is being crucified. **He wasn't an ordinary criminal**—not a thief or a murderer or a pickpocket. **In fact, there were those who thought he wasn't guilty at all.** But no matter, there He was on the middle cross. On either side, two men were crucified with Him.

Last time, we focused on the first Cross Word: **The Word of Forgiveness.** When man had done his worst, Jesus prayed, not for justice, but for mercy.

*The first word is the word of forgiveness...next, please note...*

### **II. The second word: the word of \_\_\_\_\_ (Luke 23:43)**

The scene centers around the men that hang on their crosses.

**A. The \_\_\_\_\_ men & the \_\_\_\_\_  
Savior**

Who were these 'criminals'? The translators use different words to describe them: "**Thieves, robbers, malefactors, bandits.**" Luke's word means "*members of the criminal class, professional criminals, members of the underworld.*" These men were thugs, cutthroat killers, men who killed for fun and profit, assassins.

I think it's not far-fetched to believe that these two guys were not first-time offenders who had made a couple of mistakes in their lives and gotten caught. They were criminals, thugs, and hoodlums. **Beyond that, we know little else about them.** We do not know their names or their hometowns or the specific crime they committed. We assume that they had been partners in crime, but that is not certain. Some suggest they were brothers, but there is no way to be sure. We would not know them at all except for this: they are supporting players in the greatest drama of all time, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

**As bad as this guy was, he represents each of us.** We don't like to think this way, but honesty requires us to admit that we've all robbed God and that we live in rebellion. He was self-centered, just like we are. His condition is a portrait of our state before God. You and I steal from God the very thing that is most precious to Him – our lives.

*But it doesn't stop here...please note...*

**B. The \_\_\_\_\_ men & the \_\_\_\_\_  
Savior**

*Please don't miss...*

C. A \_\_\_\_\_ man & the \_\_\_\_\_  
Savior

How was this possible? There's perhaps no clearer illustration that salvation is not a work of man, but the sovereign work of God. God--not circumstance--moved on the thief's heart to convince him of the truth about Jesus Christ. Some think salvation happens because the preacher spoke well, or as a direct result of prayer. But while salvation may indirectly result from those factors, it is the direct result of God's intervening grace.

This condemned man experienced (eternal) change because he:

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_ God.
- (2) \_\_\_\_\_ his guilt.
- (3) \_\_\_\_\_ Christ.
- (4) \_\_\_\_\_ salvation (change).

Divine grace always exceeds human expectations.

## **CONCLUSION**

We've taken a look at the men hanging on their crosses...let's consider their crosses and by that, I mean what their crosses represent.

- The cross of \_\_\_\_\_ (Luke 23:39)

*Not only do we find a cross of rebellion, but also...*

- The cross of \_\_\_\_\_ (Luke 23:40-42)

**Grace is not clemency. Salvation is not pardon without payment for the crime against God.** God is a righteous God, and someone has to pay the penalty for our sins.

*And that leads us to the third cross...*

- The cross of \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Have you come to the place in your spiritual life that you know that if you died today you would go to heaven? Let's suppose that if you died today and stood before the Lord God and He said, "*Why should I let you into My heaven?*" What would you say? What do you think you would say?
  
- When it comes to salvation...do you live with a sense of gratitude or entitlement? Does your life display to those watching the wonderful grace of our Lord? Are we living as trophies of grace or trophies?