

Subject: *Christ Is the Savior of Sinners*

Scripture: *Luke 23:32-43*

1. THE SCENE

All this took place at Calvary, the place of a skull.

- A. It was a scene of *crucifixion* – three people were crucified that day on this hill
- B. It was a scene of *commotion* – the Roman soldiers nailed him to the cross, divided His clothes, and gambled for one of the garments; the Jewish leaders sneered and the soldiers mocked and insulted Him.
- C. It was a scene of *conversion* – one of the soldiers was saved. Only Luke tells us about the thief who was saved in the final minutes of his life. Christ saved him and took him to heaven when he was on the verge of dying and going to Hell. This is one of the most amazing conversions in all the Bible.

2. THE SAVIOR

Christ is nailed to a cross. His cross is in the middle between the two thieves.

- A. He was suffering and dying
- B. He was praying and interceding
- C. He was humble and silent
- D. He was merciful and ready to save

3. THE SINNERS

Isaiah 53:12 *He hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many*

- A. They were condemned criminals – The word “malefactors” means evildoers. The same word was used of Barabbas. These men were like thugs or gang members. They probably stole for a living and were being executed for their crimes.
- B. At first they joined in mocking and reviling Christ

Mark 15:32 *Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.*

- C. One thief had a change of heart and repented

He rebuked the other thief: “Don’t you fear God seeing you are in the same condemnation?” He admitted his own guilt. Four words describe the problem of all sinners: “in the same condemnation.” The other thief didn’t fear God even though he was dying and faced judgment. This lost man is a picture of all lost people.

Romans 3:18 *There is no fear of God before their eyes.*

They can't see their own spiritual condition. They can't understand the holiness of God. They won't submit to God's authority. There is no respect for God and no dread of His judgment. They fear other things (what may happen to their health or their money or what people think of them or say about them), but they don't fear what they ought to fear.

Luke 12:4-5 ⁴ *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.* ⁵ *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.*

Hebrews 10:31 *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

D. One thief had true faith and humility

His words reveal his heart: "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He believed that Christ was Lord and that He was a king. He asked Christ to remember him (it was a plea for mercy). This was a confession of faith and a plea for help. He believed that his soul would live on after death. His only hope was grace and mercy.

Amazing Grace: Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.

What led to this man's conversion? Several factors were at work. He feared the judgment of God. He heard Christ's prayer: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (vs. 34). He heard the crowd saying, "He saved others" (vs. 35). He may have seen the sign that said Christ was King of the Jews. He may have had parents who prayed for him and taught him God's Word. One thing is for sure, the Holy Spirit was at work and changed his heart.

4. THE SALVATION

Christ gave this man assurance that he would be with him in paradise that very day. Paradise is another name for heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-4). Christ saved this man and took him to heaven instantly. How wonderful! Some people might read this and think that's the way I want to die, just like that thief. It really doesn't matter how I live so long as I get saved before I die. But there's no guarantee you will have an opportunity to do what he did. There's no guarantee that your heart will be soft and your spiritual eyes will be opened. There's no guarantee that you will be inclined to repent of your sins and turn to Christ for mercy. Remember there were two thieves that died that day and only one of them was saved.

5. THE SEPARATION

These two thieves may have committed crimes together, but we know they died on the same hill where Christ died. One thief died and went to paradise. The other died and went to hell. These men would never see each other or talk to each other again. When I ride through my old neighborhood where I grew up, I think about some of the guys I used to ride bikes, play football and basketball with, and as far as I know some of them have never committed their lives to Christ. To think that some of the people we have known in this world we will never see again in eternity. There will be an eternal separation. But it doesn't have to be that way.