

SEVEN FINAL WORDS
Cries from the Cross of Christ
Part 2: A Cry of Salvation (Lk. 23:34-43)

INTRO: Every “conversion” is an amazing miracle of grace and forgiveness as the spiritual dead are raised to walk in newness of life. BTW “conversion therapy” (mostly used with LGBTQ) for counselors is illegal for miners in Canada and at least 20 states! As earlier said, some salvations are circumstantially unique (Nicodemus, Paul, etc.). My story . . . Cry one by Jesus from the cross was for our greatest need, forgiveness. Cry two naturally follows—forgiveness brings salvation, even when facing imminent death like thief on cross. He came to save (Lk. 1:76-77; Mk. 10:45; Lk. 19:10; 1 Tim. 2:5-6). Read Lk. 23:34-43 (only Luke records-gospel for lost humanity). . . Jesus turns to a repentant believer (with no possibility of “proving” the genuineness of his faith) and promises him the assurance of eternal life (amazing).

I. THE SETTING (vv. 34-39)

- A. Unbearable Suffering: Already subjected to walking with cross, scourging, mocking, nailing. Now on cross for 2-3 hours.
- B. Providential Moment: Were those two men there by accident? No way. Fulfilled prophecy (Mk. 15:27-28; Isa. 53:12). All in God’s plan to illustrate God’s grace and truth.

II. PORTRAIT OF TWO THIEVES (vv. 40-41)

- A. Who were they? Different words used: thieves, robbers, bandits. Word means member of criminal class, revolutionaries (terrorists) overthrowing Roman occupation. All we have – no name, hometown.
- B. How they were *alike*? Both sentenced-to-death criminals, severely beaten, stripped, crucified. Both insulted and reviled Jesus (Matt. 27:44). But, in reality . . .
- C. How they were *very different*? In how they viewed the man in the middle.
 - 1. One reviled, rejected, and refused to repent. He wanted escape, not forgiveness.
 - 2. Other reached out, repented, and received forgiveness and salvation. He sought forgiveness not escape. He had a change of heart. Both heard same request for the Father to forgive. One rejected, one accepted. Together these two perfectly illustrate humanity, where most reject Christ’s offer and a few receive it (Matt. 7:13-14; Lk. 13:23). Darrell Bock . . .

III. HIS REQUEST (v. 42)

This is more of a confession than request. What did he know?

- A. He knew he was a guilty sinner (v. 41a “suffering justly”). We are getting what we deserve. Acknowledging our sinfulness is first step in belief.
- B. He recognized the uniqueness of Jesus (v. 41b “this man has done nothing wrong.”)
- C. He realized his eternal destiny was connected to Christ (v. 42 “Jesus, remember me when you come in Your Kingdom”). You are a King with a kingdom. Superscription in 3 languages (1st tract). With his faith-filled words, he crowned Jesus King of his life. One of the most examples of saving faith in the Bible. We are getting what we don’t deserve.
- D. He even provided a witness (v.40).

IV. JESUS’ RESPONSE (v. 42 “Today . . . with me in Paradise”)

- A. Jesus made a Promise (“Truly”):
 - 1. Not based on the man’s knowledge of Jesus, works, baptisms, etc.
 - 2. Based only His Word (Jn. 3:16; 5:24; 6:37,10:27-28).
- B. Jesus Accepted His faith. Promised *immediate* salvation (“Today”). Promised *personal* salvation (“you”). The man’s faith was simple and unproven, but accepted. It still is (Rom. 10:9-10; Eph. 2:8-9). Christ’s first redemptive trophy was a career criminal.

LESSONS FROM CRY TWO:

- 1. *No one is ever too far gone to become a Christian.* Even on a death bed. It is never too late or too old.
- 2. *God always accepts simple faith.* Even the worst can be saved. What a day – from guilt to grace to glory!
- 3. *Assurance of salvation resides in Jesus’ words on promise not in our works.* (John 3:16).

CONC: That day Three men died: One died *in* sin; one *to* sin; one *for* sin! You say, “But I’m not a criminal.” You sure? Maybe the only difference between us and this thief is he got caught! All sinners in need of His grace of forgiveness and salvation! Amen?