

He Offers Salvation: Believe
May 20, 2012
Allen Power

Luke 23:32-49

Let's talk about FORGIVENESS.

- Opening Questions:
- What makes forgiveness difficult?
- What are some situations that others have faced that you would find difficult to forgive?
- Before you can ever learn to forgive someone, what must you experience in your life?

There's only one way we can have the power to FORGIVE others. It's because of the FORGIVENESS Jesus extended to all mankind as he hung dying on a cross!

Luke 23:32-43

32 Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. 33 When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals — one on his right, the other on his left. 34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." [a] And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

35 The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One."

36 The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar 37 and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

38 There was a written notice above him, which read: this is the king of the jews.

39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

40 But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? 41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. [b]"

43 Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

- All the gospel accounts tell us Jesus was crucified with two criminals, one on His right and one on His left.
- Matthew and Mark call them robbers...and the word used indicates armed robbers, perhaps murderers.
- This was to fulfill Old Testament prophecy. Isaiah 53:12 said the Messiah would be "numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12; Luke 22:37)
- It's painfully ironic (but not an accident) that during Jesus' ministry He was accused of associating with sinners, now He's dying WITH sinners...as He dies FOR SINNERS!
- Verse 34 shares something not found in the other Gospel accounts.
- Jesus prays: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."
- "Forgive THEM"...who was He referring to? Romans and Jews who were killing Him.

- Can you IMAGINE in the midst of UNBELIVABLE pain and suffering, Jesus is asking God to FORGIVE the people causing the suffering!
- Question: What principle that Jesus had taught was He living out?

Luke 6:27-28

27 "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

- Question: How did God answer Jesus' prayer: Father forgive them?

The Life Application Study Bible says:

"Jesus asked God to forgive the people who were putting him to death -- and God answer that prayer by opening up the way of salvation even to Jesus' murderers. (It goes on to say) Because we are all sinners, we all played a part in putting Jesus to death. The gospel - the Good News - is that God is gracious. He will forgive us and give us new life through His Son."

- By praying this prayer, again, Jesus fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 53:12 which also said: "...yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."
- Jesus wasn't only tortured and killed. Before He died He was MOCKED and HUMILIATED.
- The Roman soldiers threw dice to see who got His clothes...His last possessions on earth. This fulfilled another prophecy from Psalm 22:18: "...they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."
- The people watching SNEERED. "He saved others...let him save himself."
- The Roman soldiers offered him cheap, sour wine as if drinking a 'toast' to a king.
- Then there was the sign Pilate insisted they nail above His head. It was typical to post what the criminal was guilty of. Pilate could find Him guilty of nothing so he posted what the Jewish leaders accused him of: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.
- More humiliation...then there were the TWO THIEVES hanging on either side of Him.
- Verse 39: "One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"
- Question: What was thief #1 looking for? On the outside chance that Jesus was who He claimed to be; the thief was looking to "save his own hide"!
- Then there was thief #2: Verse 40 "But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence?"
- Question: In verse 40, what does THIS thief acknowledge as he "rebuked" the first thief? Fearing God -- The second thief ACKNOWLEDGED that God is God and is to be feared.
- Look at verse 41, Question: What TWO things did the second thief ACKNOWLEDGE?
- He (and the other thief) was a sinner who deserved punishment AND Jesus was SINLESS...the sinless Son of God!
- In verse 42, what does the second thief ask for? Salvation!
- Also in verse 42, what does the second thief ACKNOWLEDGE about Jesus?

John Piper:

...the thief goes a step further and acknowledges that indeed, Jesus is a king. "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." Even though he is suffering now, Jesus has the mark of a king. For those who have eyes to see, he has a power here on the cross—a power of love that makes him king over all his tormentors. He is not only good, he is powerful, and one day he will vindicate his great name, and every knee will bow and confess that Jesus is Lord—to the glory of God, the Father.

<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/today-you-will-be-with-me-in-paradise>

- Question: What do you think the second thief OBSERVED that made him turn to Christ? Jesus' prayer "FORGIVE THEM"; Jesus was SINLESS (v.41); Jesus demeanor:

The Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:23:

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed."

- As we've said before in class, people generally have TWO MISTAKEN NOTIONS about SALVATION and going to HEAVEN:
 1. I'll get to Heaven, because surely I'm (GOOD ENOUGH) or the "flip side"
 2. I couldn't get into Heaven because surely I'm (NOT GOOD ENOUGH)
- The thief on the cross ADDRESSES BOTH of those mistaken notions.
- Did he think he was "good enough"? What tells you that?

Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us:

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

- Did the second thief think he was "too bad" for salvation? What tells you that?

Warren Wiersbe writes:

It took courage for this thief to defy the influence of his friend and the mockery of the crowd, and it took faith for him to trust a dying King! When you consider all that he had to overcome, the faith of this thief is astounding.

The man was saved wholly by grace; it was the gift of God (Eph. 2:8–9). He did not deserve it, and he could not earn it. His salvation was personal and secure, guaranteed by the word of Jesus Christ. The man hoped for some kind of help in the future, but Jesus gave him forgiveness that very day, and he died and went with Jesus to paradise (2 Cor. 12:1–4).

- Let's talk a minute about verse 43 Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

- “Paradise” is a persian word meaning “walled garden”. It was a high honor for a king to invite someone to walk in HIS private garden. You didn’t just get to MEET the king or SEE the king. You got to BE WITH the king in HIS PRIVATE PLACE. Of course, it means “Heaven.”
- “TODAY you will be with me in paradise.” (Emphasis mine)
- We said a minute ago, some people think they EARN salvation; or need to know a lot about the Bible to be a Christian.
- Question: What does that word TODAY say about a “good works salvation” and how SIMPLE the Gospel really is? The thief had no time for good works or learning about scripture...all he could count on was GRACE.

It’s NEVER too late to turn to Christ. “As long as there is breath, there is hope.”

Luke 23:44-49

44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, 45 for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.

- A supernatural DARKNESS in the middle of the day. God orchestrates nature to symbolize the Father turning away from The Son.
- Verse 45 says “the curtain of the temple was torn in two”...top to bottom.
- This is important. In the temple were three spaces of significance:
 1. The courtyard - anyone could go there
 2. The Holy Place - only priests could go there
 3. The Most Holy Place - only the High Priest could go there ONCE A YEAR (Day of Atonement) -- that’s where the Ark of the Covenant, and God’s presence with it rested.
- The curtain was heavy and closed the Most Holy Place from view
- The curtain was TORN to show that Christ’s death REMOVED ANY BARRIER between God and man. Jesus became our NEW HIGH PRIEST. We became PRIESTS as BELIEVERS. We can APPROACH GOD DIRECTLY through Jesus.

Hebrews 9:12 (ESV)

12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

No more animal sacrifices or human priests. DIRECT ACCESS to the Father through the Son!

46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”[c] (Literally a bedtime prayer Jewish mothers taught their children)

When he had said this, he breathed his last. (In crucifixion it normally took days for the victim to die...Jesus DIED BY CHOICE)

47 The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." (Matthew and Mark tell us he also said "Truly, this was the Son of God.")

48 When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. 49 But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

- So, What's The Takeaway? This week let me start by REALLY ASKING YOU. What do you want to TAKE AWAY from this passage?

Here's my Takeaway:

- How do you sum up this passage in three words? FORGIVENESS; MERCY; SALVATION. If you've never trusted Christ as both SAVIOR from SIN and LORD of your life. Everything you need to know is right here.
- None of us is GOOD ENOUGH and none of us CAN EARN or LEARN our way to Heaven.
- We all must do what that second, nameless thief did: Acknowledge our SINFULNESS
- Recognize Jesus as God's Son...the King of Kings
- And ASK for His MERCY and for ETERNAL LIFE IN PARADISE WITH HIM
- So simple even a CHILD can understand it. Yet, so hard for some to EMBRACE.