

Seven Sayings from the Cross

The Second saying: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."
Three Crosses, Three Nails, Three Days = Forgiven
Luke 23:32-43

INTRODUCTION: It is impossible for me to think of the second saying from the cross without thinking of the two thieves that hung on either side of our Savior. Yes, there were three crosses. Jesus was held to the cross by three nails, and He arose after three days in the grave. In Luke 23:32-33, we read of the three crosses. We stand now at the foot of these three crosses. On these crosses hang three men; all of them crucified and dying:

1. One dying in sin on the left,
2. One dying to sin on the right,
3. One dying for sin in the middle.

On the hill of Calvary stood three crosses. On these crosses hung three men. Two of the men were thieves; one of the men knew no sin. Two of the men were dying because of their sins; one, the man in the middle, was dying for the sins of men. On these three crosses we see:

1. A dying sinner on the left,
2. A dying saint on the right,
3. A dying Savior in the middle.

Today, we want to discuss, deliberate upon, examine, and analyze these three crosses and the men hanging on them.

I. VERSE 39, THE CROSS OF THE REJECTER

- A. As we stand beneath the rejecters cross, we see that it is a cross of tragedy, of hopelessness, and helplessness. All lost men are in a tragic, hopeless, helpless state (Ephesians 2:12).
 1. The thief on this cross is headed for hell. He is as good as in hell; and in a matter of hours, he will be in hell for eternity.
 2. Why? Because he does not know Christ as his personal Savior (John 3:36; I John 5:12): "He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not life."
 3. What a tragic sight we have at the foot of the rejecters cross.
- B. The thief on the cross of rejection wanted a Christ without a cross. He wanted Jesus to come down and get him down. He really didn't want Jesus; he wanted earthly benefits.

1. He wanted a bloodless Gospel, a Gospel without a substitute.
 - a. Without the shed blood you don't have a Gospel for "without the shedding of blood there is no remission."
 - b. The thief cried: "save thyself and us". "Get down off the cross and take us down".
 2. The cry of the modernist is the cry of the unrepentant sinner. The cry is for a Christ without a blood stained cross. They want:
 - a. An ethical Christ, a good man.
 - b. A social Christ, a do-gooder with social programs.
 - c. Christ the great teacher and man is what they desire.
 - d. The historical Christ is enough for them.
 - e. What they don't want is a blood stained cross and a suffering Savior.
 3. Friends, Christ and His cross with its three nails are eternally nailed together.
 - a. I John 1:7; "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."
 - b. Ephesians 1:7; "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according..."
- C. The unrepentant thief died with the remedy at hand.
1. He had heard Jesus speak the Word of redemption--"Father, forgive them."
 - a. You are hearing today the message of salvation.
 - b. If you die without Christ, you will have died with the remedy at hand.
 2. The unrepentant sinner went to hell because he rejected Christ. He went to hell because of sin. You will too!
 3. H. Boyce Taylor said, "No one goes to hell because of non-election but because of his sin...Election hinders the salvation of no one."
- D. The cross of the unrepentant sinner is a picture of the tragic, hopeless end of the lost sinner.

II. THE CROSS OF THE REDEEMED

- A. We come now to the foot of the believer's cross, the cross of the redeemed, the cross of the repentant sinner.
- B. Note with me the faith of the repentant thief.

1. The repentant thief had faith, for without repentance and faith we cannot be saved. The thief on the right side of Jesus, "exercised a heart faith which rested savingly on Christ" (Pink 50). His was not a head faith, but a faith that is deep within, a faith that believes that Christ died for the sinner, was buried, and arose on the third day. As we shall see his faith affected his heart and tongue (Rom 10:10, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation").
 2. The repentant thief had faith for:
 - a. He acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah, Lord. Greek *kurios*, sovereign, master (verse 42).
 - b. He confessed his fear of God (verse 40).
 - c. He confessed his condemnation was just (verse 41). We deserve hell and to be sent there would be just. "In this flesh dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18).
 - d. He confessed sinlessness of Christ in the face of the Sanhedrin (verse 41).
 - e. In his plea, he confessed his faith in the Christ who was "despised and rejected of men."
 3. Christ "... was rejected by the Jews who saw Him raising the dead. He was not rejected by the thief who saw Him hanging on the cross by three nails.
 4. James Stalker makes this remark: "This great sinner laid on Christ the weight of his soul, the weight of his sins, the weight of his eternity; and Christ accepted the burden."
 - a. He invites you to lay your burden on Him "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. . ." (Matthew 11:28).
 - b. The repentant sinner laid his heavy burden on the bosom of Jesus and rested in eternal relief.
- C. The prayer of the repentant thief.
1. He prayed believing. He was not saved by praying but "by grace through faith." You may have been praying when you were saved, but it was not the prayer that saved you.
 2. He asked for remembrance and had it plus redemption before he asked.
 3. That very day he walked the streets of paradise arrayed in the white robes of righteousness, salvation, and purity (Isaiah 61:10). Because of Christ, he had a robe of white.

- D. The thief went to paradise because of the atoning work of Christ. He did not go because of what he had done or could do. He was nailed to the cross with three nails.
 - 1. I was impossible for him to walk the paths of because his feet were nailed to the cross.
 - 2. He could not do good works with his hands for they were nailed to the cross.
 - 3. He could not turn over a new leaf or start a new life. He was dying nailed to a cross.
 - 4. He could not be baptized; he would have in obedience, but he couldn't. He was nailed to the cross.
- E. The sinner must see himself nailed to the cross, cut off from what he can do or has done, trusting alone in the blood of Christ for salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

III. THE CROSS OF THE REDEEMER

- A. We come now to the foot of the Redeemer's cross. This is the Savior's cross. It is the cross that proclaims salvation by grace through faith.
 - 1. Jesus took our place, our curse on the cross (Galatians 3:13).
 - 2. The blood of the cross secures redemption for the believer and the resurrection our justification (I Peter 1:18-21).
 - 3. The blood of the cross secures forgiveness (verse 34; Ephesians 1:7).
 - 4. Christ died on the cross to bring us to God (I Peter 3:18).
 - 5. The middle cross is the cross of salvation and assurance.
 - a. Jesus says in verse 43: "Verily, I say unto thee.."
 - 1- "Verily" means truly or surely. With certainty, Jesus gave salvation and assurance of paradise to the thief (Titus 1:2).
 - 2- Robert Moyers says of "Verily": "This is a surpassing word. It stands alone. An executed, tortured criminal will that very day be in paradise" (27).
 - b. What great assurance! That morning the thief walked the floor of the dungeon knowing the horror of death was at hand. That evening, he walked the golden streets of glory overflowing with the joy of God. This proves that a man who has walked the paths of sin

can walk the streets of god.

- B. J. C. Ryle says, "No child of Adam ever received such assurance as this." The thief received the promise of the Savior: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." Paradise is a word originating with the Persians meaning, "a garden, or park." The garden of Eden is called paradise. Paradise was the place of the righteous departed and is termed "God's garden of the soul."
 - 1. From the cross the Redeemer made a promise, and He is the "God that a cannot lie."
 - 2. To every believer the promise of eternal life is given (John 3:16, 18, 36; 6:37-39; 11:25-26).
- C. The thief went to be with Christ at death. "Today shalt thou be with me..."
 - 1. II Corinthians 5:8 says: "To be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."
 - 2. That very day the thief went to be with Christ in paradise.
 - a. In the morning, he was in nature, depraved, lost, and condemned to hell.
 - b. At midday, he was in grace his black history erased.
 - c. At midnight, he was in glory with his Redeemer.

CONCLUSION: Christ rejecters go to hell. The redeemed go to heaven.

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