

GOOD FRIDAY 2023
LUKE 23:32-43
THREE CROSSES!

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Luke chapter 23 as we gather to celebrate what our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ has done for us.

Again, celebrating seems like a strange way to celebrate Good Friday as our Lord was crucified. And as the world looks at what took place they see it as defeat!

But it is not defeat, but it is victory. Yes, make no mistake about it, our Lord suffered great physical pain as He was beaten, scourged, a crown of thorns placed upon His head, even before He went to Calvary to be crucified!

One writer put it like this to show how brutal this form of capital punishment was. He wrote, *“Although the Romans did not invent crucifixion, they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering.”* (Edwards)

Again, think of all that Jesus went through. Just with the scourging, His back was torn open. And then, when they brought Him to be crucified, His clothes were torn off, and that blood that coagulated was now flowing again!

Jesus was thrown to the ground and nailed to the cross of Calvary! And as that nail was driven through His wrists, it more than likely severed the median nerve which would cause excruciating pain in his arms, and it probably made His hands clench up!

That rough wooden cross ripped open His back even more every time He moved!

And as we have seen in our study of the Gospel of John, crucifixion restricted normal breathing. It was hard to exhale, and it hindered how much air you could take in!

In fact, for Jesus to get a good breath He had to push His feet up that were nailed to the cross, causing more and more pain!

Not only that, but “. . . *insects would light upon or burrow into the open wounds or the eyes, ears, and nose of the dying and helpless victim, and birds of prey would tear at these sites. Moreover, it was customary to leave the corpse on the cross to be devoured by predatory animals.*” (Edwards)

How bad was crucifixion?

We get our English word excruciating from the Roman word “*out of the cross.*”

“*Consider how heinous sin must be in the sight of God, when it requires such a sacrifice!*” (Clarke)

But in this was the victory!

Let me show you what I mean.

Among the many tombs in Westminster Abbey is the tomb of James Wolfe, a distinguished British Army officer.

Wolfe died in battle after being shot three times. He neared death just as the battle concluded.

When hearing of the impending victory, he said, “*Now God be praised, I die contented.*”

These words are carved on his tomb: “*Slain in the moment of victory.*”

The words could well be said of Jesus on His cross!

I hope you see how important that is for us to understand. It is because of what Jesus has done for us we see that victory. But if you reject what He has done, you miss out on that victory.

It is not that Jesus was not victorious, He was, but you refuse to accept it, you refuse to see it!

On this Good Friday we are going to look at a message I have called – ***THREE
CROSSES!***

Some of you may be thinking, “*What in the world is he talking about, three crosses? There was only one!*”

Or maybe, “*Are you kidding me, three crosses? The other two who were crucified that day were criminals and deserved to be put to death. Jesus was innocent and thus, we need to focus on Him and what He has done for us!*”

I think it is so important for us to understand who was there with Jesus that day being crucified because it gives to us a complete picture of what we see in this world.

You see, in this world today, whether people accept it or not, there are only two kinds of people.

The first one who rejects God, rejects the gift of eternal life that God has given to them through Jesus Christ, the unsaved. And they are at war with God.

Now some may get mad at me saying that, but that is what God has said in His Word, the Bible. Paul, in Romans 8:7-8 put it like this, “**Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.**”

I think that is pretty clear. If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, your sins have separated you from God and you are at war with Him because you are fighting against the One who died for your sins, you are rejecting Him!

The second one is the believer who has made peace with God through Jesus Christ. Sin separated man from God, Jesus reconciled man to God by paying the debt we owed in full on the cross of Calvary!

That is what Paul said in Romans 5:1-2, “**Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**”

In other words, we are no longer warring with God or fighting against God because we have made peace with Him through Jesus Christ!

Again, two different groups of people but they picture the human race. That is why I have called our study – ***THREE CROSSES!***

You see, the other cross that was up that day was the one that Jesus was crucified on! Three important crosses for us to look at and learn from!

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this evening into three main points. They are,

THE FIRST MAN – LUKE 23:39

THE SECOND MAN – LUKE 23:40-42

THE THIRD MAN – LUKE 23:43

So with that as our introduction to our Good Friday service, let’s read Luke 23:32-43 and then we will dig into these verses.

LUKE 23:32-43

Jesus was crucified between two thieves. Please understand that this was not a random chance occurrence. This was spoken of some 700 years before this took place.

In Isaiah 53:12 we are told, “**... And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.**”

Please understand that all that is taking place here is according to what God has already told us would happen. This is not that Jesus said the wrong thing and He lost control of the situation. Not at all. He is the Lamb of God who has come to take away the sins of the world and this was pre-ordained before the foundations of the world were ever created. God knew what He would have to do to save sinful man!

In fact, there were 33 prophecies fulfilled in all on this one day alone!

Things were not out of control, but they were being fulfilled just as God had spoken!

With that said, let's look at – ***THE FIRST MAN!***

LUKE 23

VERSE 39

Please understand both these condemned criminals that hung on either side of Jesus began to mock Jesus!

We see this in Matthew 27:44, where we are told, “**Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.**”

In other words, just as the crowds were mocking Jesus, so were these men who were being put to death with Jesus!

We can see this again in Matthew 27:39-43 where we are told, **“And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, ‘You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.’ Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, ‘He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’””**

Look at the different groups of people that were there and others who passed by Jesus and how they mocked Him. Not only the Jewish people but the Jewish religious leaders as well mocked Jesus, challenged Him to get off the cross if He really is the Son of God!

And as these two criminals hear the crowds, they join in and mock Jesus as well.

Now let’s think about this for a minute. You are hanging on a cross, being put to death. You have to push yourself up just to breathe. You are having excruciating pain shooting through your body.

And, in spite of all that, you have enough energy to mock someone who is being crucified next to you!

It is interesting how much people can hate Jesus, mock Him, and that just tells me that Jesus is real, He is Almighty God.

You see, why would you mock someone who is not real? You wouldn’t and yet, people do that all the time today, just as these two criminals.

Now, as we will see, one of them recognizes the Sinless One and will turn to Jesus. But this other one, having the same information, rejects Jesus, continues to mock Him!

Why didn't Jesus do something about all this mocking?

Why did He let it continue on?

Because, like today God's love for sinful man is so great that He gives man every opportunity to turn to Him.

That is what Peter tells us in II Peter 3:9, "**The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**"

God wants people to come to Him, but He will not force them to. But look at the longsuffering of God towards sinful man!

Could Jesus have done something about this mocking?

Absolutely He could have but it was not judgment day for sinful man, but it was going to be judgement day for the Son of God as He bore the sins of the world to pay the price to redeem man back to God!

But there is coming a judgment day for each and every person on this planet and that is when death comes to these physical bodies.

Remember what Paul wrote in Hebrews 9:27, "**And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.**"

You have one life to live, and you need to make a decision for Christ because once this earthly tent, this body dies you will stand before Him either in Christ and His righteousness or apart from Christ in your own righteousness, which are like filthy rags!

This life is it and then we face the judgment! There are no second chances beyond the grave! Today is the day of salvation, don't pass it up!

You see, God has given man a free will to do what he wants or to do what God wants. It is a choice on man's part and thus, we see this criminal who is being crucified with Jesus harden his heart towards God and refusing to repent of his sins.

For this man, his mocking was related to delivering him from this mess he was in. In other words, ***"If He truly is who He says He is, if Jesus is really Almighty God, then do something and do it fast to get me out of this mess!"***

That is what he is saying, "... save Yourself and us." Luke 23:39.

As we read that it seems shocking to us that someone who mocks God like this, but please understand, he will not get away with this. In the end judgment will come.

Paul put it like this in Galatians 6:7, "**Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**"

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, "**Do not be deceived and deluded and misled; God will not allow Himself to be sneered at (scorned, disdained, or mocked by mere pretensions or professions, or by His precepts being set aside.) [He inevitably deludes himself who attempts to delude God.] For whatever a man sows, that and that only is what he will reap.**"

For this criminal who continues to mock Jesus, refusing to see his sinful life, which should be obvious since he is being put to death for his criminal activity, this mocking will stop shortly as his life will come to an end.

The tragedy is, because of his rejection of Jesus, he will face an eternity of judgment because of his sins and not receiving the atonement for his sins that Jesus has offered him.

Every person today has the ability to choose right from wrong, good from evil but the problem still remains. No matter how good you are, you fall far short of entering into eternal life with the good work you think you have done in this life.

The only righteousness that God will accept is the righteousness of Christ that is imputed into our lives by faith. Jesus came not to condemn us but to save us because we are already condemned in sin, and we need a solution to that problem and Jesus is that solution!

The problem comes as the world screams louder and louder, the religious leaders teach more and more false doctrine and they are putting forth a cross with its meaning that comes from the imagination of mans own heart and it won't save you!

No longer is it a message of repenting of your sin, of dying to self and coming to Jesus. The idea is that you don't have to change, you can do just as the world is doing, but you are saved. That is not the message of the cross.

But here is the problem. This new cross isn't there to slay the sinner but redirect him into doing things better, be a good person and do whatever you want to do.

This is what this criminal was doing. He just wanted to get off the cross, he did not want any changes in his life. Make no mistake about it, when you come to Christ, He changes your life and what He does is for our good, not to hurt us or ruin our fun.

Are you willing to go to the cross and lay down your life before Him and ask Him to use you as He wills?

There is a cost. It will cost you that old life that was headed for death and destruction and it will bring you to the new life you can have in Christ. You will be translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of Light!

Remember the song – *THE OLD RUGGED CROSS!* This is how it goes,

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
the emblem of suffering and shame;
and I love that old cross where the dearest and best
for a world of lost sinners was slain.

Refrain:

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
and exchange it some day for a crown.

O that old rugged cross, so despised by the world,
has a wondrous attraction for me;
for the dear Lamb of God left his glory above
to bear it to dark Calvary.

In that old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine,
a wondrous beauty I see,
for 'twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died,
to pardon and sanctify me.

To that old rugged cross I will ever be true,
its shame and reproach gladly bear;
then he'll call me some day to my home far away,
where his glory forever I'll share.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
and exchange it some day for a crown.

- The Old Rugged Cross

This criminal did not cherish what was done on Calvary that day. Not what happened to him, but what Jesus did. There was not repentance for this man. Maybe a sorrow, a regret that he got caught and is being put to death, but there was absolutely – *NO REPENTANCE FROM HIM!*

But there was another criminal who was hanging on a cross next to Jesus that did. And that is who we will look at next – ***THE SECOND MAN!***

VERSE 40-42

As we have seen, these two criminals were placed on the cross and both of them were coming against Jesus.

But now one looks into the eyes of Jesus, he sees His innocence and their guilt, and he is broken. He recognized why he was being crucified but he saw the innocence of Jesus!

Now I want you to take note of this. Two sinners before Jesus, each with an equal opportunity to receive the gift of life, both were close to death, both were sinners, and yet only one turned to Jesus.

Why?

Because man has a choice to make and the same is true today. You can either accept Jesus or reject Him, but by your actions there will be consequences.

The one who came to Jesus entered into eternal life with Him.

The one who rejected Jesus entered into eternal life apart from Him. He ended up in Hell and ultimately in the Lake of Fire.

Again, listen to what Paul said in Hebrews chapter 9 and this time we will look at verses 27 and 28. Paul said, “**And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.**” Hebrews 9:27-28.

Yes, judgment is coming for the unsaved, but for the saved, those who have come to Christ, Jesus is coming again to take us home! A huge difference between the saved man and the unsaved man and we will see that as we dig deeper into this man's life.

Now, what happened to this man who came to Jesus?

There are a few points that changed his life!

The first is that this man respected God. What do I mean by that?

Listen to what he said to the other criminal who continued to mock Jesus in Luke 23:40,

“... Do you not even fear God ...”

How important it is to understand that there is a God and He is a righteous God who will judge sin!

In Psalm 11:10 we are told this very thing, **“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever.”**

You have to start somewhere, and this is where you need to begin, knowing the fear of the Lord!

And, like we have seen here in Luke with these two criminals, Proverbs 1:7 shows us the difference.

We are told, **“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.”**

One was wise, the one who feared the Lord. And the other was a fool because he rejected who was before him, Almighty God!

And that is what Proverbs 1:29 goes on to say, **“Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the Lord.”**

Like this criminal, man has a choice to make about God, and one made the right one and the other didn't!

Not only did this criminal fear the Lord but he understood that he was a sinner. How do I know that?

Because of what he said here in Luke 23:40-41, “**. . . seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds. . .**”

Before a person sees their need for Jesus, they must understand that they are sinners, and it is their sin that has separated them from God!

But we don't really see sin as sin today. Let me explain. We are told,

*A LifeWay Research study has found that while the majority, or **two-thirds of Americans admit that they are sinners, only a minority, or 28 percent, said that they depend on Jesus Christ to overcome sin. . . .***

Thirty-four percent said that they are sinners who “work on being less of one,” the study found, while 10 percent insisted that sin does not exist. Another eight percent argued that they are not sinners, while five percent said they are “fine” with being a sinner.

Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research, said that he was struck by how few Americans say they rely on Jesus to overcome sin, which he said is a “core Christian belief.”

“To some Americans, saying you're a sinner is a way of admitting you are not perfect,” McConnell reflected. “To those folks, it doesn't necessarily mean you're evil or should be punished for your sin. That's something the church should pay attention to.”

- <http://bit.ly/3HWxdaK>

In saying that, we should not be surprised that people reject Jesus or see no need for Him to save them from their sin. To them, sin doesn't exist, or it is not that bad or that they see nothing wrong with it, or even believe that you just have to do better than all the bad you have done, and your sins are done away with!

This man understood that he was a sinner, and he needed a Savior!

Here is something else that this man recognized. He knew that Jesus had done nothing wrong, He was innocent. We see that in Luke 23:41, “**. . . but this Man has done nothing wrong.**”

Again, that is important for us to understand because there are many out there, some even claiming to be Christians, who feel that Jesus sinned in His life.

If that were true, and it isn't, then He could not pay the penalty for our sins because He Himself was a sinner.

But we know that is not true, the Scriptures clearly tell us that Jesus had no sin in His life, none at all, not even one!

Let me share a few Scriptures to show you what I mean, that Jesus was sinless, not because I said so, but the Word of God is very clear on this.

First, in Hebrews 4:15 we are told, “**For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.**”

Also, in I Peter 2:18 Peter tells us that Jesus, “**Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth.**”

John tells us in I John 3:5, “**And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.**”

And lastly, Peter tells us in I Peter 1:18-19 as he sums this up for us, **“knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”**

You see, it was not by our good works, the keeping of the Law, our aimless conduct that saves us.

No, it is by the precious blood of Christ that was shed for our sins.

Throughout the church history people have been led to believe that you can buy things from God, that you can buy your way into heaven.

But Peter tells us you can't purchase this gift of life because the shedding of the precious blood of Jesus Christ has already paid for it.

You see, the rich, the poor, the middle class, anyone who comes to Jesus can freely receive the gift of life because it was paid for by the shedding of His blood and not by my efforts, not by the money I have in my possession!

I want you to also notice that Jesus, the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world was a perfect sacrifice.

There was no **“blemish”** or acquired sin in His life.

There was no **“spot”** or inherited sin in His life.

Thus, Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:21, **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**

You see, we could never pay for our own sin because we have many blemishes in our life or we have sin in our life – ***ACQUIRED SIN!***

Not only that, but we also have a big spot in our life or that sin that has been passed down to us through Adam – ***INHERITED SIN!***

If Jesus had a blemish or spot, He could not have been our Redeemer, but He didn't and thus, He paid in full the penalty for our sin.

It is as Isaiah 53:4-6 tells us, **“Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”**

Praise God for His love for us and His sacrifice so that we can live with Him for eternity if we receive Him into our lives!

So look at what we have seen in this man so far. Not only do we see this man . . .

FEAR GOD!

KNEW THAT HE WAS A SINNER!

KNEW THAT JESUS WAS INNOCENT OR NOT A SINNER!

But what we see next is that this man – ***CALLED OUT TO JESUS!***

We see that in Luke 23:42, where we are told, **“Then he said to Jesus . . .”**

We too must call out to Jesus for He alone can save us from our sins. Peter made that point in Acts 4:12, **“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

There is no other way to be saved and that is what Paul calls us to do, cry out to Jesus and we shall be saved.

In Romans 10:9-11, we are told, **“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’”**

All you must do, the free will of man, is confess that Jesus is Lord, believe in His resurrection and what is in your heart will be confessed from your lips!

It is as Denney put it, *“A heart believing unto righteousness, and a mouth making confession unto salvation, are not really two things, but two sides of the same thing.”*

Do you see the simplicity of salvation – it cost Christ His life and He has extended that free gift of eternal life based upon His finished work, if we believe by faith and receive Him into our lives.

Let’s look at this a little closer.

First of all, Paul tells us that we must believe in the Incarnation. That God became flesh and dwelt among us as the Scriptures tell us, **“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”** John 1:14.

In other words, if you deny the deity of Jesus Christ, that He is God then you are not saved!

Secondly, you must believe in the resurrection, that God raised Jesus from the dead and that is the proof that Christ has completed the work necessary for our salvation and that God the Father has accepted the work, He is satisfied that the payment for man’s sin was in full.

If you do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, then you are denying His finished work and you are not saved.

Thus, you must believe not only that Jesus is God Incarnate but also that He rose from the dead on the third day just as the Scriptures tell us. And isn't it interesting that many in the church today are being seduced by doctrines of demons that are denying these very things!

And here is the wonderful news – ***WHOEVER BELIEVES ON HIM WILL NOT BE PUT TO SHAME!***

That gift of life is extended to everyone here, to everyone listening to the radio and watching on the Internet. In fact, it is for everyone in this world to receive but you must admit that you are sinner, believe in Jesus Christ, and receive Him into your life!

That is saving faith, appropriating into your life the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ!

That is what this man was doing as he called out to Jesus!

Think about this man. He has done no good works, he is being put to death for murder and other crimes that he has committed. He was not baptized. He has done no good work!

But notice again what we see here in Luke 23:42, what he believed, that Jesus is God!

How do I know that?

Listen carefully. We are told that this man said to Jesus, “**. . . Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.**”

Wow! Talk about faith. He believed that Jesus is God and he wanted Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom!

That is something that the Jewish religious leaders refused to accept, but here this man admits that Jesus is God.

Not only that but he calls Jesus – *LORD!*

Jesus spoke of His deity often in the Gospel of John. In fact, in John 8:24 Jesus said, **“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am, you will die in your sins.”**

And this man believed in everlasting life that is found in Jesus and we see that again in Luke 23:42, **“... remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”**

Think about that for a minute. This man was going to die shortly. His life was going to end that day and yet, he is talking about living on. How can that be?

Because he saw life beyond that grave, a life in the kingdom of God!

This man recognized that it was his sin that put Jesus there on the cross.

And that is true of all of us. Our sin put Him on the cross but His love for us kept Him up there to pay for our sins.

If you were to look at Rembrandt’s painting of *The Three Crosses*, your attention would be drawn first to the center cross on which Jesus died.

Then as you would look at the crowd gathered around the foot of that cross, you’d be impressed by the various facial expressions and actions of the people involved in the awful crime of crucifying the Son of God.

Finally, your eyes would drift to the edge of the painting and catch sight of another figure, almost hidden in the shadows.

Art critics say this is a representation of Rembrandt himself, for he recognized that by his sins he helped nail Jesus to the cross.

- Source Unknown

Incredible faith here. Look at all he saw as he looked at Jesus. He . . .

FEARED GOD!

HE KNEW THAT HE WAS A SINNER!

HE KNEW THAT JESUS WAS INNOCENT OR NOT A SINNER!

HE CALLED OUT TO JESUS!

HE BELIEVED JESUS IS GOD!

HE BELIEVED IN EVERLASTING LIFE WITH JESUS!

Clarke, in looking at this man, wrote, ***“It is worthy of remark, that this man appears to have been the first who believed in the intercession of Christ.”***

Let me sum this up for you like this. Listen carefully to what Charles R. Erdman had to say regarding this man’s salvation and ultimately our own.

He said,

This story reveals the truth to us that salvation is conditioned upon repentance and faith.

However, it contains other important messages also. It declares that salvation is independent of sacraments.

The thief had never been baptized, nor had he partaken of the Lord’s Supper . . . He did in fact boldly profess his faith in the presence of a hostile crowd and amid the taunts and jeers of rulers and soldiers, yet he was saved without any formal rites.

It is further evident that salvation is independent of good works . . . It is also seen that there is no “sleep of the soul.” The body may sleep, but consciousness exists after death.

Again it is evident that there is no “purgatory.” Out of a life of sin and shame, the penitent robber passed immediately into a state of blessedness.

Again it may be remarked that salvation is not universal. There were two robbers; only one was saved.

[That is each had a choice to make. To either accept Jesus or reject Him. All have the same opportunity].

Last of all it may be noted that the very essence of the joy which lies beyond death consists in personal communion with Christ.

The heart of the promise to the dying thief was this: “Thou shalt be with me.”

This is our blessed assurance, that to depart is “to be with Christ” which is “very far better.”

- William MacDonald, Believer’s Bible Commentary, p. 1456

Amen to that!

And that is what we will look at next, how Jesus responded to this man cry of repentance to Him – ***THE THIRD MAN!***

VERSE 43

Notice what Jesus is saying here. He did not tell this man, “***Now son, you have done a lot of wrong in your life, a lot of evil, even murder. Thus, somewhere down the road, after you have atoned for your sins in Purgatory, you will be with me. Until then, you will have to pay for the sins you have committed in your life.***”

Jesus didn’t say that, why?

Because He paid for what this man could not do, his sins!

How do I know that he didn’t have to atone for his own sins in Purgatory?

Because there is no place called Purgatory in the Scriptures. That is an important point.

Not only that, but we also see that Jesus cried from the cross of Calvary this Greek word – ***TETELESTAI!***

It speaks of being paid in full!

The work of redemption was completed, the price had been paid!

Our debt for our sin was paid in full by Jesus. There is nothing we can do to add to that, it is a completed work.

It is as Paul said in Colossians 2:13-15, **“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”**

All our sins; past, present and future sins have been nailed to the cross of Calvary, they have been paid in full.

How can I be so sure that this man is saved?

Because of what Jesus said to him, **“... ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’”** Luke 23:43.

Not next week, not in a month, not in a year, not even tomorrow! He said that ***TODAY*** this man would be with Him.

Where would this man be with Jesus?

Jesus said in – ***PARADISE!***

Now here is the big question that is debated. What does Jesus mean when he tells this man that today he would be with Jesus in **PARADISE?**

One writer tells us, *“Paradise (paradeisos), a Persian word meaning ‘garden, park,’ was used in the Septuagint for the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:8). It then became a type of the future bliss for God’s people in Isaiah 51:3 . . . In the present passage it represents the state of bliss which Jesus promised to the criminal directly after death.”* (Pate)

But it still doesn’t answer the question of where this place is at.

Some feel it was in Hell that this man went to until Jesus rose from the grave. Jesus spent three days and three nights in the belly of the earth prior to His resurrection and this man was there as well.

Here is the key for me. And I will show you how I came to this conclusion.

Where was this man going to be?

In Paradise!

Who was going to be with this man in Paradise?

Jesus was going to be with this man!

That tells me that Paradise is wherever Jesus is at when He died for our sins!

That means, like I have said, Jesus spent three days and three nights in the belly of the earth and thus, this man was with Jesus there as well and when Jesus rose from the grave, so too did this man rise from a place that is called in Luke 16:19-31, Abraham’s bosom.

Anywhere we are at with Jesus should be and really is paradise. It doesn’t get any better than that. In fact, apart from Jesus, it only will get worse as this other criminal being crucified with Jesus has found out!

Our precious Lord and His love for us is what we celebrate this day, but how many miss out on this.

Let me show you how easy it is to miss something of great value. We are told, Back when the Old West was being settled, pioneers flocked across the country to California and Oregon.

In one particular spot on the Eastern slopes of the Rockies there was a large, dirt covered rock protruding in the middle of the trail.

Wagon wheels were broken on it and men tripped over it.

Finally someone dug up the odd stone and rolled it off trail into a nearby stream. The stream was too wide to jump over, but people used the stone as a step to cross the cold creek.

It was used for years, until finally one settler built his cabin near the stream. He moved the odd stone out of the stream and placed it in his cabin to serve as a doorstep.

As years passed, railroads were built and towns sprang up. The old settler's grandson went East to study geology.

On a visit to his grandfather's cabin, the grandson happened to examine the old lump of stone and discovered within that lump of dirt and rock was the largest pure gold nugget ever discovered on the Eastern slope of the Rockies.

It had been there for three generations, and people never recognized its value.

To some it was a stumbling stone to be removed.

To others it was a stepping-stone, and to others it was just a heavy rock.

But only the grandson saw it for what it really was - a lump of pure gold.

Jesus is the precious rock God has given us to be both the cornerstone and the capstone of our lives.

Will you come to the rock today?

Will you build your life upon Him?

One day, you will discover Jesus will either be a stepping-stone that gives you access to God, or He will be a rock over which you stumble . . . so close and yet so far. The choice is yours.

- David Dykes, The Rejected Stone

Let me close with this for you to think about.

On this day when Jesus was crucified there were . . .

THREE CROSSES!

There were . . .

THREE MEN!

Who were these men?

ONE MAN DIED IN SIN!

ONE MAN DIED TO SIN!

AND ONE MAN DIED FOR SIN!

There is only One man who has died for our sins, and that is – ***JESUS!***

And there are really only two other people in this world –

THOSE THAT DIED IN SIN!

And

THOSE WHO DIED TO SIN!

Which one are you?