

The Thief Is Not Our Example

by Linville Dunaway, Corinth Christian Church

Luke 23:39-43. "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Can a man be saved like the thief on the cross? If the answer is no, then why not? After he confessed his faith in the Lord, Jesus promised him that he would be with him shortly before his death. Some people feel that they can do as the thief and say, "Lord remember me" and that they will be saved. Well, it worked for the thief, but it won't work for us today. Let us consider scripture to see why this is so.

First consider that the thief lived when Jesus walked the earth in the flesh. The Old Testament was still in effect and the New Testament had not been written. Jesus said in **Matthew 9:5-7**, "For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man

hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house." Jesus was showing the people that he could heal the sick and forgive sins. No one but the Lord could do these things, then or now.

Jesus was God in the flesh and had control over all of his creation. When he commanded an evil spirit to come out, it came out. When he told a cripple to arise and walk, he got up and walked. A person who was told that he was forgiven, was forgiven, because God said so. As the Lord walked the earth in a body of flesh the Old Testament was still the covenant between God and man. This would continue until the death of Jesus. **Hebrews 9:16-17**, "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. ¹⁷For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." A Testament, or will, is in effect at the death of the one who made it, but until then it can be changed.

To be saved like the thief on the cross, a person would have to go back to the time before Jesus died, just like the thief. This man on the cross who was saved lived under the law and died under the law. His worship of God would have included keeping the law, sacrificing animals, and all the ordinances of the Law of Moses. We wouldn't think of offering a lamb to sacrifice for our sins and it would be in error to think that we could be saved like someone who did.

With the death and resurrection of Jesus the New Cove-

nant came into effect. No longer was an animal sacrifice to be made for sins. The Lord gave his life for the sins of the world and all who would be saved, including Gentiles, would have to come to God through Jesus. He taught that a person would have to believe, repent, confess, be baptized, and live according to his commands to be saved. How can a person read the bible and come up with another way of salvation? Instead of debating about how to be saved everyone should accept the plan of salvation as Jesus set it forth in his word.

It was Jesus that went to the cross and gave his life to redeem man from sin. As the scriptures say, he washed us from our sins with his blood. No one has a right to try to change what he said about how to live for him. Pity the poor, foolish person who presumes to be able to explain away the commandments of God. All the councils of men, ministers, and any other groups can't change the word of God. They may say that their way is the right way and teach the unlearned false ways but when they stand before God they will be faced with the truth.

No, the poor thief is not our example. He found mercy under the Old Testament but we can find grace through Jesus. I'm glad that the thief was forgiven, as I am for anyone who comes to Christ and gets forgiveness. If you want an example to follow, choose carefully and pick the greatest example that there is - Jesus, the Christ. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." **1 Peter 2:21**.

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This is a dramatized version of facts taken from the Book of 1Chronicles Chap. 23 and 1Kings Chap. 12 consolidated

ZECHARIAH A YOUNG PROPHET

WHILE PREACHING AGAINST THE IDOLATRY WHICH KING JOASH SANCTIONS, ZECHARIAH IS STRUCK WITH A STONE BY ONE OF THE KING'S CONSPIRATORS AND FALLS, STUNNED, TO THE FOOT OF THE TEMPLE STEPS, AND NOW....

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JOHN LEHTI

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