

Luke 23:39-43

1. **For by grace are you saved thru faith.** Those 3 essentials core every salvation story.
2. It is by His grace, thru saving faith, that one can say, **I am saved.**
3. As J hung cross all 3 magnified in conversion of a thief to show glory of gospel.
 - a. As 3 hrs of darkness descended on Calvary making it “**dark Friday,**”...
 - b. So 3 essentials of the gospel descended on a thief turning it into “**Good Friday.**”
 - c. When light of the gospel descends on the darkness of any human heart, **Dark Friday can become Good Friday.**
 - d. I was ready to preach on baptism today? Not having. Let’s look at glory of gospel.

I. BY GRACE--NO ONE HAD BEEN MORE HATEFUL (vv. 39-40).**A. Criminal (v. 39)**

1. Luke called him a criminal. Lit., **evildoer.** Same description used by Pres. Bush.
2. And this man was of their ilk. Mt/Mk called **robber.** Josephus—**revolutionaries**
3. It is likely that he was a compatriot of Barabbas (who was released instead of Jesus).
 - i. He was an outlaw whose hands were no doubt stained w/innocent blood.
 - ii. He promoted violence and murder to overthrow God-ordained authority.
 - iii. He was a terrorist in every sense of the word—a 1st century Osama bin Laden.

B. Promise

1. Only person in Bible personally promised go to heaven at the hour of his death.¹
2. **Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.**
3. From a terrorist to a slave trader like John Newton to you and me, it’s by grace.

II. THRU FAITH--NO ONE WAS MORE HELPLESS (vv. 41-42).**A. Dead In Few Hours**

1. He could do no penance to make up for the sins of his past.
2. He could make no promises to do good deeds in the future.
3. He could not join a church, get baptized, give his money or his service.
 - i. Those things are fruits saving faith, and had lived life would’ve been changed.
 - ii. But the fruits of saving faith are not the essence of saving faith.

B. Elements of Faith

1. All he could do is what anyone can do whose eyes are opened to helplessness.
2. He expressed saving faith. All of the elements are right here. I call it the ABCs.
 - i. **Admitted his sinful condition - we are receiving due reward of our deeds (v. 41).**
 - a. An extraordinary confession for a hardened terrorist. Seems easy, but not.
 - b. Crucifixion victims filled with wrath and malice would normally rail at their tormentors in the crowd below. As they were mocked and ridiculed thru the cruel death that suffocated them, the only way to take revenge was to curse, swear, and pour out venomous hatred on their abusers.

¹Only one person in the Bible receives a direct promise of heaven—a thief. Philip Yancey, *Christian Reader*, Vol. 33, no. 4. in *BI Deluxe*.

- c. But this man became broken, repentant, contrite.
- d. **A broken and a contrite heart— . . . O God, You will not despise (Psa. 51:17).**
- ii. **Believed** in Jesus Christ (v. 42).
 - a. As heard the reaction of Jesus, **Father, forgive them**, v. 34, knew no criminal.
 - b. As read gospel tract above J' head (**This is king of Jews**) came to believe.
 - c. You're going to **come in your kingdom** as Lord, Judge.
 - d. Who has a kingdom? A Lord does. Who rules kingdom? A judge does.
 - e. This man understood that Jesus was the the Lord, Jesus Christ.
- iii. **Called** for saving mercy - **Jesus, remembr me**. Cried for pity when J. as Judge.
 - a. **Read again his words. "We are punished justly, getting what we deserve But this man has done nothing wrong." The core of the gospel in one sentence. The essence of eternity through the mouth of a crook: I am wrong; Jesus is right. I have failed; Jesus has not. I deserve to die; Jesus deserves to live...What he knew [about Christ] was precious indeed. He knew than an innocent man was dying an unjust death with no complaint on his lips. And if Jesus can do that, he just might be who he says he is. So the thief asks for help: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." The heavy head of Christ lifts and turns, and the eyes of these two meet. What Jesus sees is a naked man. I don't mean in terms of clothes. I mean in terms of charades. He has no cover. No way to hide. His title? Scum of the earth. His achievement? Death by crucifixion. His reputation? Criminal. His character? Depraved until the last moment. Until the final hour. Until the last encounter. Until now.—**
- 3. **Until By grace—no 1 had been more hateful. Until Thru faith—no 1 was more helpless.**
- 4. **Whenever there is grace and saving faith there is always salvation. So**

III. YOU ARE SAVED--NO ONE BECAME MORE HOPEFUL (READ V. 43).

A. Today

1. In the construction of J' promise the word **today** is brought forward in sentence.
2. That is where the emphasis should lie. That is what is new.
 - i. It was not new that there was a Paradise where righteous went until the res.
 - ii. It was not new that an innocent man like Jesus would go there.
 - iii. It was not new that a sinner might beg for mercy in the end.
 - iv. What was new was **Today, you (sinner) shall be with me (Savior) in Paradise.**
2. **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**
3. **Quote John 11:24-25. I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. For Today [the very day of your death], you [sinner] shall be with me [Savior] in Paradise.**

B. Conclusion: For by grace, thru faith, are you saved. Hallelujah!

²Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, electronic ed.