

I. Please turn with me to Luke Chapter 23 and we will be reading verses 32-33 and verses 39-43

- a. In Luke Ch. 23, we read Luke's account of the Crucifixion of the Lord Jesus
  - i. Luke tells us that on Calvary that day two criminals were crucified next to Jesus, "**one on the right hand and the other on the left**"
  - ii. The Lord of Glory had company at His death – He was crucified between two thieves, two robbers, possibly, two murderers
  - iii. He entered this world by being born amongst animals, and now, we see Him leaving this world dying amongst criminals
  - iv. He was born under the humblest of circumstances, and now, He would die under the shamefulst of circumstances
  - v. He would be crucified between two thieves – "**The depths of shame the Son of God experienced to redeem Mankind is indescribable!**"
- b. Now, like His birth, the circumstances and the company surrounding His death was no accident
  - i. It was no accident that the Lord of Glory was crucified between two thieves – there are *no accidents* in a world that is governed by God...
  - ii. Especially on that day, the day of all days, a day which was planned and foreordained by God before the foundations of the world
  - iii. Although the Lord Jesus was nothing like those criminals who hung beside Him, it was no accident that He hung between them...
  - iv. Although the record of Jesus' life describes Him as doing good all the time, as speaking gracious words to others, as being innocent of all accusations brought against Him, as being holy, pure, and righteous, and as being filled with love and compassion
  - v. Yet, it was no accident that He now finds Himself hanging between two criminals – spending His last few moments in the company of thieves
- c. You see, seven hundred years before Calvary, God had declared through the prophet Isaiah that His Son would be “numbered with the transgressors” – Isaiah 53:12
  - i. Isaiah prophesied that the Son of God would be executed with criminals – now, this seemed utterly impossible and inconceivable...
  - ii. Yet it came to pass, when Pilate gave orders for the Lord Jesus to be crucified between two criminals, he was putting into motion a prophecy that was long before given by God
  - iii. Just like the prophet predicted, Messiah was numbered with the transgressors – perfect fulfillment...
  - iv. Not a single word of God can fall to the ground, "**Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven**" – **Psalm 119:89**
  - v. If God says something, regardless of what it is, it will come to pass...

- d. Therefore, Luke tells us that the Lord Jesus was crucified between two thieves
  - i. And as the Lord was hanging on the Cross, Luke tells us that one of the thieves had an encounter with the Savior of the World
  - ii. Against all human rationale and common sense, the thief turned to the Savior and said to Him, "***Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom – Remember me, Lord***"
  - iii. And to his surprise, the Savior responded, "***Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise***"
  - iv. That day, on Calvary, a condemned criminal, a thief, would be the first reward of the Lamb's suffering
  - v. The first trophy of Christ's redeeming blood...
- e. Now, of all the believers found in the New Testament, the thief on the cross is probably the most unique, the most unconventional, and the most interesting
  - i. We are only given a few details about His life...
  - ii. He was a condemned criminal sentenced to death by Roman crucifixion who came to a saving knowledge of Jesus moments before his death
  - iii. We are given no name, no background information, no place of birth, no family line, no physical description, etc.
  - iv. All we are told is about his cross and his Cry for help...
- f. And yet, the story of this thief has been the cause for many conversations, books, and sermons throughout the history of the church – 'A Powerful Story'
  - i. We can learn so many *lessons* from this thief – It was no mistake that the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to record the thieves' story in his Gospel
  - ii. And for the next few weeks, I will be sharing a study which I have entitled "***Lessons from a Thief***"
  - iii. I want to spend some time studying the thief on the cross and exploring lessons we can learn from his life and his conversion...
  - iv. Yes, we are only given a few details about the thief on the cross, but we are able to learn great lessons from those few details we are given
- g. Therefore, this morning, we will begin our study by examining "Three Lessons" learned from the thief on the cross – Let's begin

## II. Lesson #1 – “The Consequences of Sin”

- a. The first lesson we learn from the thief on the cross is the “Consequences of Sin” – Sin has many deadly consequences...
  - i. The thief on the cross had lived a life of lawlessness – he was a criminal, a robber, a malefactor, a rebel, who had lived a godless life
  - ii. Many commentators believe that he was partners with Barabbas, the criminal released by Pilate, and possibly murdered alongside of him
  - iii. The thief had lived a life of sin, filled with immorality, wickedness, and corruption, and now we find him suffering the consequences of his sin

- iv. He is hanging on a Roman cross, sentenced to death, because of the decisions he had made in life...
- b. Therefore, the first lesson we can learn from this thief is that sin will always bring consequences
  - i. Sin is nothing to play around with, it is deadly and dangerous, and it will only bring severe consequences upon the life that practices it...
  - ii. **Galatians 6:7-8** declares, “*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*”
  - iii. Over and over again, the Bible is constantly warning us to stay away from sin and to stay away from the works of the flesh
  - iv. If we don’t, we will suffer ***the Consequences***, let me show you what I mean:
- c. Sin brings shame...
  - i. Because of his crimes, the thief on the cross was now experiencing the shamefullest death imaginable – He was publicly stripped, beaten, and crucified for all Jerusalem to see
  - ii. He had thought that his lifestyle would lead to great riches and glory, but to his disappointment, it only led to great shame and disgrace
  - iii. You see, sin will always bring shame, disgrace, and humiliation to all those who practice it
  - iv. What seems to be so glorious and promising, always ends up in shame and disgrace - ‘*I have personally witnessed the shame sin brings*’
- d. Sin brings misery...
  - i. Because of his crimes, the thief on the cross was now experiencing misery and pain like he had never experienced before (\*suffering\*)
  - ii. He expected to find satisfaction and joy, a life filled with excitement and adventure, but now he was left with only misery and pain
  - iii. You see, sin will always bring misery, pain, disappointment, and regret to all those who practice it
  - iv. Sin promises joy and satisfaction, but only leads to misery and disappointment – “***True Satisfaction is only found in Christ***”
- e. Sin brings bondage...
  - i. Because of his crimes, the thief on the cross was now an official prisoner of the Roman Empire
  - ii. He had once been free, but over time, his crimes led to his arrest, and he eventually found himself a prisoner to the Romans
  - iii. You see, sin will always bring bondage, oppression, and enslavement to all those who practice it – “***It promises freedom, but delivers only bondage***”
  - iv. True freedom is only found in Christ...
- f. Sin brings death...
  - i. Because of his crimes, the thief on the cross was sentenced to death by Roman crucifixion

- ii. A life filled with crime and lawlessness had finally caught up with him, and now, he was being executed by the Roman Empire
- iii. You see, sin will always lead to destruction, ruin, damage, wreckage, and ultimately, death – “***The wages of sin is death***” – **Romans 6:23**
- iv. The severest consequence of sin is death, spiritual death, an eternal separation from the presence of God
- g. Therefore, the first lesson we learn from the thief on the cross is the consequences of sin – “Shame, Misery, Bondage, and Death”
  - i. I’m sure that if the thief was here with us this morning he would tell us, “***Stay away from sin – it is nothing to play around with***”

### **III. Lesson #2 – “The Depths of the Grace of God”**

- a. The second lesson we learn from the thief on the cross is the “*Depths of the Grace of God*” – God’s grace is limitless, measureless, and infinitely great
  - i. In the story of the thief on the cross, we see one of the most clearest examples of the infinite depths of the Grace of God
  - ii. God’s grace is able to reach the lowest criminal, it is able to soften the hardest thug, and it is able to save the vilest thief
  - iii. There is no limits or boundaries to the grace of God – it is infinitely great and grand...
- b. This we see in the conversion of the thief on the cross
  - i. Before his conversion, the thief respected neither the law of God nor the law of man (\*He had absolutely no good works\*)
  - ii. And on top of this, after his conversion, he would never have an opportunity to serve the Lord in a ministry or a Christian service
  - iii. He would never be an active member of a local church, he would never give a bible study, he would never go on a mission’s trip, he would never pay his tithes, simply stated, he would never do anything for the Lord
  - iv. Yet, in spite of all this, the God of all grace rewarded his simple, yet sincere faith by granting him eternal salvation
  - v. The thief on the cross was saved entirely by grace – He did not merit it, He did not deserve it, nor would He ever earn it
  - vi. He simply put his faith and trust in Jesus Christ, and by God’s grace, he was given everlasting life
- c. Who can measure and comprehend the depths of God’s grace?
  - i. Ephesians 2:8-9 declares, “***For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast***”
  - ii. It is only by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone that someone is able to receive salvation
  - iii. Grace begins our salvation, continues our salvation, and ultimately, consummates our salvation

- d. And this amazing grace is available to all mankind through Jesus Christ – even if you are a good for nothing thief on a cross
  - i. Therefore, the second lesson we learn from the thief on the cross is the great depths of the Grace of God
  - ii. No one is beyond the reach of God's grace...

#### IV. Lesson #3 – “The Willingness of the Savior”

- a. The third lesson we learn from the thief on the cross is the “Willingness of the Savior” – the Savior is ready and willing to save the lost...
  - i. As the Lord Jesus hung on the cross, He was insulted, ridiculed, and mocked by the people, the religious leaders, and the soldiers
  - ii. However, the Lord took no notice, the Gospels record for us no response by Jesus to the mockery of the people, He simply stayed silent
  - iii. However, the moment a repentant sinner cried out for mercy, immediately, the Lord Jesus took notice and responded without delay
  - iv. The thief cried out, “***Lord, remember me when you come into your Kingdom,***” and immediately, the Lord responded, “***Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise***”
  - v. With those words, we see that the Savior is eagerly waiting, willing, and ready to save the lost...
  - vi. In **Luke 19:10**, the Lord Jesus declared, “***For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost***”
- b. And not only is Christ ready and willingly to save the lost, but He is also ready and willing to save “You”
  - i. He is willing to save you from any pain you might be experiencing, from any disappointment you might be going through, from any guilt you might be battling with, from any sin you might be struggling with, from any trial you might be confronted with, from any sickness you might be diagnosed with, etc.
  - ii. In the Gospels, we read of a man full of leprosy who approached Jesus and told Him, “***Lord, if you are willing, You can make me clean***”
  - iii. Jesus responded to the leper by saying, “***I am willing; be cleansed***” and immediately the leper was healed
- c. And this morning, the Lord Jesus tells us, “***I am willing...be cleansed...be healed...be freed...be blessed...be victorious...I am willing***”
  - i. He is ready and willing to do above and beyond what we could possibly imagine, ask, or think – “***This Morning Dare to Believe that the Savior is ready and willing to do a miracle in your life***”
  - ii. The thief on the cross asked only for a place in Christ's memory, yet he was granted a place in Christ's kingdom
  - iii. How much more does God want to do for you – His beloved child!
- d. Let's pray – next week we will finish up our study on “***Lessons from a Thief***”