

- I. Please turn with me to Luke Chapter 23 and we will be reading from verses 32-33 and verses 39-43
 - a. In chapter 23 of his Gospel, Luke gives us his account of Jesus' crucifixion
 - i. Luke tells us that on Calvary that day two thieves were crucified next to Jesus, "***One on the right hand and the other on the left***"
 - ii. 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
 - iii. The thief turned to Jesus and said, "***Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom,***" and Jesus responded, "***Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise***"
 - b. Now, although we are given only a few details about the thief on the cross, we are able to learn great lessons from those few details we are given...
 - i. And last week, we started a study entitled "***Lessons from a Thief***" and began by looking at "***three lessons***" learned from the thief on the cross
 - ii. Let's briefly take a look at them by way of review:
 - c. Lesson #1 – "The Consequences of Sin"
 - i. The first lesson we learn from the thief on the cross is that sin has many deadly consequences – "***Sin will always have Consequences***"
 - ii. The thief had lived a life of sin, corruption, and wickedness, and now we find him suffering the consequences of his sin
 - iii. On the cross, he is suffering shame, misery, bondage, and death – sin promises life, but ultimately, only delivers death
 - iv. Life is only found in the Author of Life – Jesus Christ – "***I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly***"
 - d. Lesson #2 – "The Great Depths of the Grace of God"
 - i. The second lesson we learn from the thief on the cross is the great depths of the Grace of God – "***God's grace is infinitely great***"
 - ii. Before his conversion, the thief had no good works, and after his conversion, he would never have an opportunity for good works
 - iii. Yet, in spite of this, the God of all grace rewarded his simple, sincere faith by granting him eternal salvation
 - iv. The thief on the cross was saved entirely on the basis of God's grace – And this amazing grace is available to all mankind through Jesus Christ
 - e. Lesson #3 – "The Willingness of the Savior"
 - i. 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***"
 - ii. As Jesus hung on the cross, he was mocked, insulted, and ridiculed by the people, the religious leaders, and the roman soldiers
 - iii. Yet, He paid no attention, He gave no response, but the moment a repentant sinner cried out for mercy, He responded without delay...

- iv. Thus, we are able to see that the Savior is ready, willing, and able to save the lost – *“He came to save sinners,” He declares, “I am willing”*
- f. This morning we are going to continue our study and look at “three more lessons” learned from the thief on the cross

II. Lesson #4 – “The Work of the Holy Spirit”

- a. The fourth lesson we learn from the thief on the cross is the “Marvelous Work of the Holy Spirit” – The Holy Spirit can do the work that nobody else can do
 - i. Think about this for a moment, the thief on the cross never had an opportunity to hear a pastor, evangelist, or missionary share the Gospel
 - ii. He never read a gospel tract, never watched a Christian television show, never attended a crusade, nor ever took a step into a church
 - iii. Yet, miraculously, on that cross, he accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior – the thief got saved!
- b. And the question that we have to ask ourselves this morning is this, “How was that Possible?”
 - i. How was it possible that the thief on the cross accepted a suffering, bleeding, bruised, condemned, crucified Man as His Savior and God?
 - ii. How was it possible that the thief on the cross understood what the High Priest, and scribes, and Pharisees, and Sadducees, didn’t understand? *How was it possible?*
 - iii. Well, we can answer all these questions by simply saying, *“The Work of the Holy Spirit – that’s how it was possible”*
 - iv. It was through the work of the Holy Spirit that the thief on the cross was brought into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ
- c. Every genuine conversion is the direct product of the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit – “Ultimately, He is the reason why people get saved”
 - i. Yes, we assist Him – we share the gospel, we teach the Word, we invite people to church, we pray for the lost, we pass out tracts, etc.
 - ii. However, at the end of the day, it is only the work of the Holy Spirit that can bring someone into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ
 - iii. He can do the work that nobody else can do – only He can *illuminate* the mind, *prepare* the heart, and *regenerate* the spirit
 - iv. Now, I briefly want to share with you *“two works”* the Holy Spirit accomplished in the life of the thief on the cross:
- d. First, “He brought a conviction of sin”
 - i. I find it interesting that Mathew tells us that before his conversion, the thief on the cross joined the people in mocking Jesus
 - ii. **Mathew 27:44** declares, *“Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing”*
 - iii. However, as the thief was hanging next to Jesus on the cross, something began to take place within his heart...

- iv. The thief began to sense the conviction of the Holy Spirit – he began to recognize that he was a sinner deserving of death – not Jesus
- v. And with a broken, contrite heart, he rebuked his fellow criminal and declared, “*Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong*” (Vs. 40-41)
- vi. The Holy Spirit brought a conviction of sin into the life of the thief, and that conviction led to his confession – “*I deserve this – I am a sinner*”
- vii. In **John 16:8**, the Lord Jesus told His disciples that when the Holy Spirit came He would “*convict the world of sin*”
- viii. One of the works of the Holy Spirit is to show people that they have a need for a Savior – “*He is the one who brings conviction of sin*”
- ix. Therefore, we must allow Him to do His work ...
- e. Secondly, “He brought a recognition of the Savior”
 - i. Against all human reason and rationale, the thief on the cross was able to recognize the true identity of the Man hanging next to Him
 - ii. He was able to recognize that the Man hanging next to Him was the true Savior and the true King of all the earth
 - iii. Although the outward circumstances seemed to contradict this – instead of sitting on a throne, He hung on a cross, instead of wearing a crown of precious stones, He wore a crown of thorns, instead of being in the midst of a glorious palace, He was in the midst of two criminals...
 - iv. Yet, in spite of all this, the thief on the cross was able to recognize that the Man hanging next to him was the Savior and the King
 - v. How you might ask? How did he receive such spiritual illumination? Simply, through the work of the Holy Spirit...
 - vi. The Holy Spirit was his teacher and revealed to him what no one else would have been able to reveal to him – the true identity of Jesus Christ
 - vii. Some things we can only learn from the Holy Spirit – “*...no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God*” Cf. **1 Cor. 2:11b**
- f. Therefore, the fourth lesson we learn from the thief on the cross is the marvelous work of the Holy Spirit – “He can do the work all by Himself”

III. Lesson #5 – “The Destiny of the Redeemed”

- a. The fifth lesson we learn from the thief on the cross is the “Destiny of the Redeemed” – the eternal destination of the redeemed...
 - i. Jesus declared to the thief, “*Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise*”
 - ii. That afternoon, the Lord Jesus assured the thief on the cross that his eternal destination would be with Him in Paradise- “**Promise of Heaven**”
 - iii. And like the thief on the cross, all those who have placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ will spend eternity in Heaven with Him...

- iv. As a believer, we have no need to fear the after life because the Bible has assured us that we will be with Jesus in Heaven
- v. In **2 Corinthians 5:8**, the apostle Paul declares, “*We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord*”
- vi. Now, I briefly want to share “*five things*” concerning Heaven:
- b. First, it is a place of “Reality”
 - i. In other words, Heaven is not a myth, or a fable, or a fantasy land created to comfort mankind
 - ii. However, it’s a real place, it exists, and one day, it will be the home of all those who have placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ
 - iii. Therefore, we should live everyday with the reality of heaven in the forefront of our minds – “*I am only a stranger passing through earth – heaven is my true home*”
- c. Second, it is a place of “Rest”
 - i. The Bible describes Heaven as a place with no tears, no death, no sorrow, no crying, and no pain
 - ii. A place where every believer will enter into a perfect rest and peace – free from trials, suffering, difficulties, struggles, sicknesses, hardships, sin, temptation, and any other obstacle we face here on earth
 - iii. Therefore, take courage Christian, the pain will soon be over and you will enter into an eternal rest...
- d. Third, it is a place of “Reward”
 - i. One day, in Heaven, we will stand in front of the judgment seat of Christ and receive crown rewards from the Lord Jesus
 - ii. Everything done here on earth for the Kingdom of God has not gone unnoticed, but has been registered and recorded in Heaven
 - iii. And one day, we will receive the rewards of our labor, therefore, keep investing in the Kingdom of God because its going to be all worth it
- e. Fourth, it is a place of “Reunion”
 - i. One day, we are going to attend the biggest family reunion in the history of mankind – the reunion of the family of God...
 - ii. For the first time, all the members of God’s family throughout the ages will be gathered together and reunited in His presence
 - iii. I can’t wait to see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Hosea, Peter, John, Paul, the Thief, Stephen, Barnabas, C.H. Spurgeon, A.W. Tozer, Alan Redpath, Leonard Ravenhille, my Great-Grandpa, my Grandpa Cordova, and most importantly, my beloved Mother...
- f. Fifth, it is a place of “Rejoicing”
 - i. Heaven is going to be filled with rejoicing, praise, and worship – a continuous joy in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ

- ii. I can just imagine the joy of all the orphans who for the very first time will know they have a Father
- iii. I can just imagine the joy of all the martyrs who laid down their lives for the sake of the Gospel and testimony of Jesus Christ
- iv. I can just imagine the joy of all the ex-drug addicts, ex-alcoholics, and ex-prostitutes, who were transformed and kept by the grace of God
- v. I can just imagine the joy of Adam Najjar who after a life of trial, pain, and struggle, will spend eternity with Jesus Christ
- vi. Truly, Heaven will be a place of rejoicing – *“I can hear the shouts!”*
- g. Therefore, the fifth lesson we learn from the thief on the cross is the destiny of the redeemed – “Heaven: A place of reality, rest, reward, reunion, and rejoicing”

IV. **Lesson #6 – “The Response of Men”**

- a. The sixth and final lesson we learn from the thief on the cross is the “Response of Men” – we actually learn this from both thieves...
 - i. You see, the Bible teaches us that as Jesus hanged on the cross one thief *received* Him, however, one thief *rejected* Him
 - ii. One thief cried out for mercy to Jesus, however, one thief cried out curses against Jesus
 - iii. And this will always be the response of men towards Jesus Christ – they will either bow down before Him or stand up against Him
 - iv. Either you are for Him and receive Him as your Savior, or, you are against Him, and one day, you will receive Him as your Judge
 - v. But, you cannot be neutral about Jesus Christ, He demands that you make a choice, a decision; a response needs to be made...
- b. And this morning, learn a lesson from a thief and open your heart to Jesus...

V. **Therefore, we conclude our study on “Lessons from a Thief”**

- a. Although we are given a few details about the thief on the cross, we are able to learn so many lessons from his life and testimony...
 - i. The thief teaches us that sin has deadly consequences, that the grace of God is available to all mankind, that the Savior is ready and willing to save the lost, that the Holy Spirit can do the work that no one else can do, that the redeemed will spend eternity in heaven, and that the response of mankind will always be acceptance or rejection towards Jesus Christ
- b. May we never forget these lessons from a thief – let’s pray