

Shocked?

When you consider what happened to Him, are you shocked by the horrible death of Jesus Christ?

You are not alone. As part of the story of the cross, the Gospel of Luke records that the people who saw it happen were also shocked by what they saw.¹

Why did Christ die? He died then rose from the dead so that you could join Him in heaven. He loves you that much. How can you join Him there?

Perhaps you have heard that sinful people can't get to heaven, but the story of the cross tells you something very different. Jesus Christ was nailed to a cross between two thieves who were screaming at him.² But while he was on the cross, one of the thieves began to awaken to reality. He began to think about his life and death and he began to fear God. He began to wonder how a sinner could ever face the Holy God. Perhaps you are wondering the same thing.

The Biblical story of Christ and the thief in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 23, has very good news for you. You can get to heaven, even if you have been a lifelong sinner. Christ's conversation with that thief tells you how to get there.

FIRST, the thief admitted that he was a sinner. He took full responsibility for his own evil deeds.³ He didn't blame someone else. He recognized the truth of Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

SECOND, the thief admitted that there was a penalty for his evil deeds. He knew that he deserved punishment for his sin.⁴ He admitted the truth of Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death." Shortly, his physical life would end, but he saw that his sin would separate him from eternal life with God.

As you read this, you probably recognize that we all have the same problem that the thief on the cross had. We are sinners, and we are facing punishment. Our sins separate us from eternal life in heaven with the Holy God.

So, where is the good news in this story? Is there good news in sin and death? Yes! While that thief was hanging on his cross, he came to life's most wonderful conclusion: Jesus is the only Hope!

The thief couldn't pay for his own sin because the cost was too great. He couldn't be baptized. He couldn't do good works. He couldn't give money or be blessed by some religious leader. He couldn't do all the things that people tell you that you have to do to get to heaven. He knew that Jesus was the only Hope.

Through the haze of his pain, he recognized that Jesus was innocent; Christ was not suffering for His own sins. Jesus substituted Himself to pay for the sins of that thief and for your sins. The thief awakened to the reality that Jesus Christ is King. He cried out with a simple prayer from his heart, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom!"⁵ Knowing that Jesus is the only Hope, that man placed his trust in Jesus Christ alone. You can place your trust in Christ at this very moment, and He will hear you just as He heard that thief.

But could that man really be confident that he was going to heaven? After all, he couldn't get off the cross to do good works or be baptized. Could he still be confident in these desperate circumstances? His answer came from Jesus Christ, "Verily I say unto thee, today thou shalt be with me in paradise."⁶ He received a promise from the Son of God that assured him that he would be in heaven the moment after his death.

God has promised you that He will also save you if you will trust Him as that thief did. How can you know that? The Lord has given you His promise in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Would you believe God's promise and trust Him right now? Through the work of God alone, you can turn from your sins to the Savior.

Would you draw life's most wonderful conclusion at this very moment? *Jesus is the only Hope!*

If you would like a free booklet about this wonderful story, please contact:

Rev. Gordon Dickson
Calvary Baptist Church
2000 Broad Ave.
Findlay, Ohio, 45840
(419) 422-6842
www.cbfindlay.org

¹ The Gospel of Luke 23:48

² The Gospel of Matthew 27:44

³ The Gospel of Luke 23:41

⁴ The Gospel of Luke 23:40-41

⁶ The Gospel of Luke 23:42

⁵ The Gospel of Luke 23:43