

The Faith of a Thief

By Paul R. Blake

Introduction:

- A. Some say: "I want to be saved like the thief on the cross."
 - 1. We don't hear honest men say they want to prosper like Al Capone.
 - 2. Nor do we hear good men say they want to be famous like Hussein.
 - 3. Why do we hear good people wanting to be saved like a thief?
- B. It would be better to hear people say:
 - 1. "I want to be saved like devout Cornelius."
 - 2. "I would like to be saved in the same way as prayerful Lydia."
- C. Could it be that people are looking for a short-cut to salvation, and they think they've found one in the way the thief was forgiven?

I. WHAT ABOUT THE THIEF ON THE CROSS?

- A. Luke 23:32-43
- B. Condition of the thief
 - 1. Acknowledged that he was a criminal deserving capital punishment according to the law; admits his guilt and that justice is being served as he rebukes the other thief - 40-41
 - a. He is confessing that he is a sinner
 - 2. He expresses faith in God: "Do you not even fear God?"
 - a. Luke 23:39 - said Jesus had done nothing amiss.
 - b. Confessing Jesus is innocent
 - 3. Luke 23:42 - Makes his request: "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom."
 - a. Confesses Jesus as Lord and King
 - b. He understood that Jesus' kingdom was not an earthly one
 - c. His faith was greater than that of the apostles - Acts 1:6
- C. Jesus' response to the thief's request was a little different than what he asked
 - 1. "Today you will be with me in paradise" - 43
 - 2. Christ did not wait for the coming of his kingdom to bless him.
 - 3. Notice he said, "Today," not "sometime in the future when I set up my kingdom, I'll give you a part."
 - 4. He didn't say "someday in my kingdom you'll receive remission of sins"
 - 5. He was telling the thief:
 - a. That they would both die today
 - b. That they would both live on after death
 - c. And that at death his destiny was sealed. In other words, there will be no blessing to those who die un-forgiven.
- D. Just what did Jesus grant the thief?
 - 1. Forgiveness of sin - there is no entrance into Divine realms of reward with un-forgiven sin, and an abode in Paradise
 - 3. Before you think that Christ is requiring something more of you than he did the thief, remember that all those forgiven before the gospel was preached did not receive the spiritual blessings in Christ in this world: fellowship, prayer, etc.

II. "BUT THE THIEF WAS NOT BAPTIZED!"

- A. Some religiously minded persons want to be saved by means not given in the word of God
 - 1. Would you like to be saved like Zaccheus? - Luke 19:1-10
 - a. Could see Jesus because of the press (not media). Ran and climbed up a Sycamore tree.
 - b. Jesus did not tell him to be baptized. Jesus didn't tell him to do anything except lets go home.
 - c. Zaccheus volunteered to give half his possessions to the poor
 - d. "What must I do to be saved?" Go climb a tree and give half of your stuff to street people.
 - e. You don't hear many folks today saying, "I don't want to be baptized; I just want to climb a tree."
 - 2. Would you like to be saved like Enoch? Just live so righteously that God reaches down and takes you right off of the earth
- B. The thief could not have been baptized for the remission of sins. If he was baptized at all, it would have been with the baptism of repentance. Unlikely for a thief
 - 1. Mark 1:4-5; John 4:1-2
- C. He did not need to be baptized in order for the Lord to forgive him.
 - 1. It is enough to know that only the Lord had the power to forgive sins
 - 2. Luke 5:20-24; John 8:11

III. BUT WHAT HAS THAT TO DO WITH US?

- A. The thief lived and died under the Law of Moses. The Gospel was not valid until three things took place:
 - 1. The propitiatory blood of Jesus was shed - Matt. 26:28
 - 2. The validating resurrection had occurred - 1Cor. 15:17
 - 3. The authorized moment had arrived - Luke 24:45-49
- B. You want to be saved like the thief on the cross? Duplicate the conditions
 - 1. Go back in time and live under the Law of Moses - Col. 2:14
 - 2. Be sentenced to death on a cross
 - 3. Confess your faith to Jesus while he is dying next to you. It will never happen again - Heb. 9:28
- C. We are under a new covenant - Heb. 8:13
 - 1. The power of salvation is now only in the gospel - Rom. 1:16
 - 2. The thief was forgiven by the word of Christ. We too, are saved by the word of Christ. The very same authority that saved the thief, saves us. But we are given some commandments and conditions in the gospel of the Christian dispensation which were not given in the Old Law.
- D. Do you have the faith of a thief?
 - 1. He knew he was a sinner and only Jesus could save him
 - 2. He knew Jesus was the innocent Lord and King
 - 3. He knew he would live on after death and that Jesus had the power to give him a home in Paradise or perdition
 - 4. What do you believe, and what are you willing to confess and do?