



"Remember me . . ."
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"REMEMBER ME . . ."
Luke 23:32-43

His friend, a fellow-thief across the way, stared out from his cross and cursed. By contrast, Jesus amid them both gazed upwards towards heaven and prayed. To this thief looking on, a stranger to God's throne, Jesus' prayer appeared out of place in Golgotha's ungodliness. Yet, rather than aggravate his cynicism, the prayer stirred him: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

It was a simple prayer, and its simplicity was what made it so compelling, and without doubt the most sublime moment in an otherwise grotesque experience. The thief's thoughts were plain: "this man" had been scourged, reviled and mocked, and nails had been hammered into his hands and feet, yet without seeking rescue from his plight, he forgave those responsible for his suffering!

Loving one's enemies is never easy, especially when nailed in innocence to a tree. This thief, however, was neither innocent nor inclined to love his enemies. Anyone capable of such a prayer, the thief must have reasoned, must have a secret worth knowing. After all, this Jesus had authority. There was an unusual quality to his character that could not be dismissed, a purity that fascinated the worldling.

Thus, the thief pled to his counterpart across the way: "this man hath done nothing amiss." It was the position to which only divine grace can bring a repenting sinner, the public recognition of the deity of Christ.

Within moments, the thief had been transformed from an antagonist to a fervent disciple of Christ. Without Jesus having said anything to him, the man no longer desired to revile the Saviour but was himself believing in him. In fact, he was not content with a silent affirmation of Jesus' claims, but overcame his weakened condition to make his belief known. Like Peter, his heart and soul united in a joyous acclamation: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt.16:16).

In one of the most moving passages of Scripture, to which all close by were witnesses, the dying thief appealed to the One he now knew to be the mysterious Messiah. No longer did he feel isolated in a grim situation, anticipating the darkness of an endless night. Now he possessed the only ingredient redemption recognizes, faith and hope coupled to Christ.

Much nearer "midnight" than the "eleventh" hour, there must have been anxious moments. Would Jesus hear his whisper? It may have been too late; perhaps Jesus was already dead. There was no time to be lost! Satan was near, heaven and hell loomed large over the scene. A mere gasp from eternity, he turned to Jesus, pleading through swollen lips, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42).

With both their lives ebbing away, Jesus' reply was as startling as it was unexpected: "Today, shalt thou be with me in paradise". Not in some vague distant future, but within a few moments! And he would not merely be remembered, but warmly welcomed and embraced.

"Today!" Assurance of salvation is a blessed gift from God to his covenant people, but for the thief who expected nothing but a mere glance it proved to be a doxology to his soul.

Is this assurance yours? Do you know this doxology in your soul? It comes through a humble, sin-confessing, condemnation-owning, Christ-exalting, plea for mercy.

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