

Luke 23:32-43 - A Case Study in Conversion - (part 1)

Intro - We have come to the 3rd *CrossWord* in the *Sacred 7* sayings of our Savior from the cross. The 1st was *Relinquish* - where Jesus prays for His enemies and was giving the forgiving over to the Father. The 2nd was *Responsibility* - where the Son fulfills His duty for Mary His mother by giving her care over to His best friend John (her other sons couldn't supply what she needed). The 3rd word Jesus uttered from the cross was in response to a request from a robber. Christ was a friend of sinners in life, and He hung between two robbers in death. Our Lord was "*numbered with the transgressors*" (Is. 53:12d). This interaction between the Savior and two sinners is a case study in conversion. There are two equally evil men...both sinners are in close proximity to the only Savior of sinners...one dies damned...other dies redeemed. One gets grace & eternal life. The other gets what he deserves - eternal death. *Others Oriented Gospel Conversion*

OTHERS ORIENTED

- The setting of these saying in well worth noting
 - Already noted that Jesus was spiritually strong when He was physically weak
 - Jesus was at His "best" when He felt His worse.
 - The *Sacred 7* were said under duress
 - At His lowest physical ebb, He didn't focus on Himself. He was others oriented
- The first three *CrossWords* concern other people.
 - 1st - prays of enemies. 2nd - family responsibility 3rd - a sinners eternity
 - Jesus died as He lived...loving others.
 - When tired.... He had compassion on the crowds. He taught & fed them
 - When hungry & thirsty - He gave the woman at the well living water
 - In the dark night of His soul...He washed His disciples' feet
 - Matthew 20:28
- Be Selfless not selfish. Phil. 2:3-5
 - Jesus focused on others even when He was exhausted and in great pain
 - My problem is too much focus on my big 3 (me, myself, & I)
 - "*I wanna talk about me, I wanna talk about I....*"
 - A Christ-like attitude is, "*she/he is more important than me*"
 - The order of His utterances from the cross shows that Jesus was others oriented. He put His enemies, His family & a thief's eternity ahead of His personal misery.

GOSPEL CONVERSION

The salvation of the thief on the cross is a case study in the conversion of a sinner. The essential elements of conversion are all there (though often overlooked). Radical transformation wrought by grace...the fear of God...repentance...confession...faith, asking for & receiving salvation. The conversion of this thief is a *Basic Conversion...a Unique Conversion...True Gospel Conversion* A. Begg parody - "*I'm surprised you're a part of the family of God*" (shouldn't be surprised)

1. A BASIC CONVERSION It has all the essential elements of any conversion
 - a. The Fear of God Luke 23:39-40a
 - i. The beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1:7) & the beginning of conversion
 - ii. The unconverted have no fear of God before their eyes – Rom. 3:18
 - iii. He probably contemplated his own mortality & responsibility – Heb. 9:27
 - b. Repentance toward God
 - i. Matt. & Mark record both thieves as cursing Christ – Matt. 27:42-44
 - ii. One thief changed his mind and his mouth. He repented
 1. One thief kept cursing the other thief started repenting
 - iii. Repentance is a basic in the gospel message and in gospel conversion
 - c. Confession
 - i. The repentant thief acknowledged his sin, guilt, and punishment
 1. Luke 23:41
 - ii. To *confess* is to same the same thing about our sin as God says about our sin. To confess is to call it what it is...not conceal it or redefine it. 1 John 1:9
 - d. Faith in Christ Faith = believing truth about Him & trusting in Him.
 - i. The thief acknowledged Christ's sinlessness Luke 23:41c
 1. Recent survey - 40% of Gen Z don't believe Jesus was sinless
 2. If Jesus was a sinner, then He can't be the Savior
 - ii. The thief acknowledged Jesus as King Luke 23:42
 1. He had faith to see a King on the cross
 2. Mocking words and written notice over His head – Luke 23:37-38
 3. Rom. 10:17
 - iii. The thief asked the right person and used the right Name - Luke 23:42
 1. Acts 4:12 no other name....but the Name of Jesus
 2. If you ask the right Person will receive conversion
 3. Rom. 10:13 "whoever will call on the name of the Lord..."
 - e. Hope for the future
 - i. The thief had an anticipation of Christ's coming "when you come..."
 - ii. Anticipation of the Kingdom "...come into Your Kingdom..."
 - iii. The thief had an anticipation for the resurrection...before Jesus died!
 1. Rom. 10:9 resurrection is essential for conversion
 - iv. The damned thief wanted his best life now - Luke 23:39
 - v. The redeemed thief asked for his best life later
 1. Faith asks, it doesn't demand. Faith humbly asks & surely receives
2. A UNIQUE CONVERSION Deathbed Conversion
 - a. Some might take this thief's deathbed conversion as reason for procrastination
 - b. Scripture says, "*Today is the day...*" 2 Cor. 6:2 Tomorrow is not promised
 - c. St. Augustine's prayer before conversion - "Lord save me, just not yet"
 - d. About deathbed conversions someone has said, "*There is one example in scripture so we will not lose hope, but only one so we will not presume*"
 - e. As long as there is life there is hope ...but don't wait until tomorrow
 - i. I have known of those just as defiant in death as they were in life
 - f. "*There is a Fountain filled with blood....the dying thief rejoiced to see...*"