



REDEMPTION STORY #5

It's Not Too Late

The Redemption of the Thief on the Cross

THE STORY

Luke 23:39-43

One of the criminals who were hanged *there* was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" ⁴⁰ But the other responded, and rebuking him, said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?" ⁴¹ And we indeed *are suffering* justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our crimes; but this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!" ⁴³ And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

We've all been there; in trouble and struggling. When you are in the worst possible place in your struggle some "well meaning" individual comes along and decides to ask you why you don't do something about your situation. They may fool themselves into thinking that they are helping, but down deep they enjoy the jabs and pain they put you through. Then there are the others that step up and console you, feel your pain and have kind words. This second group is looking for your best interest and your wellbeing, not their own.

Jesus came to earth from His perfect place in heaven to die to pay the price for my sin and yours. Sometimes people romanticize His death. But make no mistake about it; He suffered like no one else has ever suffered before. Not only had they scourged and beaten him over His last 24+ hours but now they had driven spikes through His hands and feet. He was literally hanging from His outstretched arms creating a stress on His lungs. He was in terrible pain.

Possibly even worse than the physical pain was the torment of knowing that He was carrying the sin of the entire world on His shoulders. He knew that His father was not going to be able to tolerate looking on Him and He spoke to Him in the Matthew 27:46. ⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabaktanei?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Now in the midst of all of this one of the criminals that was hanging next to Him was mocking Him. "Are you not the Christ? Save Yourself and us" (Luke 23:39) I am sure that Jesus felt compassion for this sinner who would no doubt be in hell before long. Yet He didn't respond to his mocking. As soon as the man quit his mocking the criminal from the other side of Jesus spoke up saying, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?" ⁴¹ And we indeed *are suffering* justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our crimes; but this man has done nothing wrong." (Luke 23:40-41). You see these two men, on either side of Jesus were guilty of crimes and were being rightly punished within the laws of that time. They deserved what they were getting, but this man knew that Jesus was innocent of the charges brought against Him.

Then the criminal that had stood up for Jesus did an amazing thing. With his lungs in a terrible state of trauma he spoke these words, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!" (Luke 23:42).

**BEAR
MAN**



There was no long prayer admitting His sins, although he had just done so in verse 41. Just speaking to Jesus, "remember me". He acknowledged who Jesus was and that was all it took.

Shortly before His death, Jesus spoke words of deep assurance to this unnamed criminal hanging beside Him. *"Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise"* (Luke 23:43). This simple statement, spoken to a man at the end of his life as he paid the punishment for his crimes, offers unspeakable hope and comfort to all who come after.

Jesus' short, but powerful, conversation with this hopeless man hanging next to Him over two thousand years ago reveals several core truths for us as you consider our own salvation and share with others.