

I. Introduction: Do you have hope for life after death?

II. Each of us is like these two criminals. v. 39

- A. Like them we are all guilty. Ro. 3:23 1:32 Lu. 18:9-14 Isa. 53:6
- B. Like them we are under a sentence of death for our crimes. Ro. 6:23 5:12 Heb. 9:27
Mt. 10:28 Mark 9:48
- C. These criminals illustrate the two possible responses to Jesus Christ.
 - 1. On one side of Jesus was the unrepentant criminal. v. 39
 - 2. On the other side of Jesus is the famous thief on the cross.
 - 3. What is the difference between these two men? Mt. 27:44 1 Co. 4:7 Jo. 6:44

III. You must repent and believe in order to be saved by Jesus. v. 40-42

- A. Christianity is the only religion which offers hope to men like these. Rom. 3:20
Phil. 3:7-9 Mt. 7:22-23
- B. Repent. v. 40-41
 - 1. The dying thief fears God. v. 40a
 - 2. The dying thief confesses his guilt. v. 40b-41a
 - 3. The dying thief admits he deserves to be punished. v. 41b
- C. Believe. v. 41c
 - 1. The dying thief confesses Jesus is innocent (righteous). v. 41c
 - 2. The dying thief believes Jesus is the Messiah, the King of Israel. v. 42 Isa. 53:1-3
 - 3. The dying thief believed in the resurrection from the dead. 9:22 Isa. 53:10-12
 - 4. The dying thief believed Jesus is willing and able to save a great sinner like himself.
v. 42a 1 Tim. 1:15f
- D. Nothing else (more or less) is required to enter paradise. Eph. 2:8-9 Acts 16:31 Phil. 3:9
 - 1. God's gift of salvation is not cheap. Isa. 53:4-6 1 Pe. 1:18-19 3:18 2 Co. 5:21
 - 2. God's salvation is complete. Rom. 5:1

IV. Jesus is willing and able to save sinners like you and me. v. 43

- A. Jesus has compassion upon sinners who turn to Him.
- B. Those who turn to Him receive paradise.

V. Concluding applications.

- A. How can you know it is true? 24:1-8,13-15,33-48 1 Co. 15:1-8
- B. Each of you stands before God today like those two thieves.

Discussion questions

1. What do we all have in common with the two criminals?
2. What does the one criminal do to gain entrance into heavenly paradise?
3. Of which doctrinal truths does the "thief" express understanding?
4. How does this passage speak to the question of whether works are necessary for salvation?
5. How does this passage speak to the question of whether water baptism is necessary for salvation?
6. What does this passage reveal about Jesus' attitude towards sinners?
7. How can we know that the "thief" is in heaven today?
8. Are you ready to die? Will you be with Jesus in paradise?
9. What would you say to someone who says that he will be like the thief and wait until he is near death to turn to Jesus?