

The Thief on the Cross
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Introduction: What causes a man to change?

- A. The enormity of conversion must not be understated. **(1 Tim 1:12-14)**
 - 1. How could the one who was “still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” shortly become a Christian? **(Acts 9:1)**
 - 2. The gospel has a power that the world and some in the church do not see.
- B. The change the gospel brings often comes in unexpected places.
 - 1. Those who should have been the first to receive the gospel often reject it because of pride. **(John 1:11-12)**
 - 2. Even though the gospel was to be preached to the “Jew first” it was received in a greater way by the Gentiles. **(Rom 10:20-21)**
 - 3. Do you consider yourself to have good Bible knowledge? Were you “raised in the church” and have a confidence in your stand for the Lord?
 - 4. Please be sure you have a tender heart before the Lord and have been converted to Him. Religious status and pride is one of Satan’s greatest weapons. **(Mt 5:3)**
- C. Let us examine the change of one man in the last hours of the life of Christ.
 - 1. I want us to look at the cross through one man who was there.
 - 2. What have you seen in the cross?

I. Why was the thief on the cross that day?

- A. They had committed crimes worthy of death. **(Lk 23:32-33; Mt 27:38)**
 - 1. There was no defense made by the one thief whose heart was opened. **(Lk 23:41)**
 - 2. Why were they crucified at this time? It had nothing to do with these men!
- B. Jesus had experienced a night of unlawful trials at the hands of the Jewish leaders and Pilate.
 - 1. They lacked a specific established charge against Jesus.
 - 2. Neither the arrest or trial should occur after sunset. Jesus has 6 trials during this time.
 - 3. No case involving a capital offense could involve a single day.
 - 4. They changed the charge when they came to Pilate. **(Lk 23:2)**
 - 5. Pilate declared Jesus innocent and then had him crucified. **(Lk 23:4)**
- C. These thieves were crucified on that day to serve as props!
 - 1. Those who knew the character of the thieves would agree with their execution.
 - 2. Jesus’ presence between these two men might allow the shallow to conclude “guilt by association!”
 - 3. The thieves likely knew their execution was rushed to make Jesus appear guilty!
 - 4. This is likely why they cursed Him. **(Mt 27:44)**

II. What did the thieves witness that day?

- A. They saw the Friends of Jesus. **(Lk 23:27-31)**
 - 1. Jesus had friends who were not ashamed to stand with Him.
 - a. Men of character have an influence.
 - b. Did the thieves have any friends?

- 2. Jesus' concern was for these friends, and not Himself!
- B. They saw the Intense hatred of the religious leaders. **(Lk 23:35; Mt 27:39-44)**
 - 1. If someone, knowing nothing, had walked upon this scene, what would he think?
 - a. What were the leaders saying? "Taunts that offer a tribute."
 - b. These are the judges, the religious leaders glorying in a man's suffering. Even vile criminals are allowed to die without this kind of surrounding.
 - 2. Many in this audience will have a chance to rethink this. **(Acts 2:36-37)**
- C. They saw the crucified Jesus.
 - 1. How did He react to His enemies? **(Lk 23:34)**
 - 2. The greatest influence one can have is to do right while suffering. **(1 Pt 2:21-25)**
 - 3. Contrast Jesus' reaction to the thieves. This example opened one heart that day.
 - 4. What do we do when we are wronged? Ex. Preacher spit upon.

III. The Progression of genuine change

- A. You realize the greatness of your own sin.
 - 1. One thief offered no more excuses. **(Luke 23:40-41)**
 - 2. Too many people refuse to see and are self-deceived. Ex. My past concept.
 - 3. If we could only see the cross! **(Galatians 3:1)**
 - 4. One has said, you can tell what a person thinks about their past sins when they talk about them. Do they show shame, or glory?
- B. You take a stand for Jesus. **(Lk 23:39-40)**
 - 1. A hatred of sin demands this. **(Heb1:9)**
 - 2. A love for Jesus demands this.
 - a. Strong love moves us to naturally protect and follow the one we love.
 - b. If you started saying hateful things about my parents I will not be quiet.
- C. You cast yourself on the Lord's mercy. **(Lk 23:42)**
 - 1. One thief asked for help "just in case." He wanted a selfish escape. **(Lk 23:39)**
 - 2. The other thief just wanted to be with Jesus.
 - 3. What a change! But remember there were 2 thieves.

III. Wrong Lessons From the Thief

- A. Do not trust in death bed regret. **(Prov 1:24-30)**
 - 1. Sermon title on sign: "The Most Popular Thief in Town".
 - 2. Rejection of the gospel will harden your heart. **(1 Tim 4:2)**
 - 4. You may die! Ex. Door to door... 3005.
- B. Do not conclude that baptism is not necessary to salvation.
 - 1. Why not go to verses that mention Baptism and Salvation in the same verse? **(Acts 2:38; 22:16)**
 - 2. Jesus had power on earth to forgive sins. Mark 2:10
 - 3. Jesus lived and died under the Old Law. Ex. Income Tax 1913. **(Heb10:9-10)**
 - 4. Who would you want to be like, the Pharisees or the thief? **(Lk 7:29-30)**
 - 5. How could the thief be baptized into the death of Christ before Christ died? **(Rom 6:3-4; 10:9-10)**

Conclusion: Is your glory in the Cross? **(Gal 6:14)**