

JESUS, THE MASTER SOUL-WINNER

(Part Twelve – Christ’s Dealing with the Penitent Thief)

TEXT: Luke 23:34-43

INTRODUCTION: The Gospel account of the repentant thief on the cross is not just a classic story on “deathbed repentance.” It highlights in a marvelously clear way what are the “bare essentials” of salvation. This man didn’t have long to live! Jesus put him on the “fast track” to Heaven, but He didn’t cut any corners. The conditions of repentance, faith, and confession with the mouth are all present. Let us be sure to insist upon these in our personal witnessing.

We must not forget that there were **two** thieves hanging next to Jesus on Golgotha. One with his dying breath prayed to Christ and was gloriously saved. The other perished in his sin and rejection.

“One thief was saved that no sinner might **despair**, but only one, that no sinner might **presume**.” (J.C. Ryle)

OUTLINE: What are the “non-negotiables” of salvation found in this story?

I. The Centrality of FAITH

A. Faith in the Person of Christ

1. As perfect Man (“*this man hath done nothing amiss*”)
2. As Savior (“*Jesus, remember me...*”)
3. As King (“*your kingdom*”)

B. Faith apart from works (hands and feet nailed)

C. Faith born of fear (“*Dost not thou fear God*”)

II. The Crisis of CONVERSION

A. The cause of the thief’s change (v. 34)

B. The evidence of his change (vv. 40, 41)

III. The Certainty of CONFESSION

A. A confession of **sin**

B. A confession of **faith**

1. In Christ as “Lord”
2. In Christ as King

C. A confession in the **dark**

IV. The Certification by JESUS CHRIST

("Today shalt thou be with me in paradise")

A. Assurance of full reconciliation (*"with me"*)

B. Guarantee of immediate bliss (*"Today...in paradise"*)

CONCLUSION: This poor condemned sinner was the first soul that Jesus brought to Paradise from the world He had just redeemed! Jesus hastened to Paradise a few hours ahead of this man to get it ready for him (John 14:2 *"I go to prepare a place for you."*). Though Christ refused to save Himself, in the very act of dying He saved another. Eternal salvation was clearly the one thing this man desperately needed. "When I come to die, give me Jesus... You can have all this world, give me Jesus."