

Part 1

Three Crosses On Calvary's Hill

Luke 23:39-43

The Cross is the symbol of the Christian faith.... we decorate our churches with it.our church logo has a cross on it. ...some people have a decal of a cross on their car...many wear a cross as jewelry.

The cross is so prominent in daily life that we don't even pay any attention to it.

And in many cases we have forgotten what it represents. Years ago I heard a quartet named "Latter Rain" sing a song about that very fact:

"I had a cross in my pocket as a sign"
"A chain around my neck for all to see"
"But then I caught a glimpse of Calvary's cruel tree"
"And now that cross means so much to me"

"There's an Old Rugged Cross in my soul"
"And it's been there since Jesus made me whole"
"If I had 10 million years to praise Him"
"I'd still fall short of the old rugged Cross"

I believe that we have so "glamorized the Cross" that we fail to realize the pain, agony and cruelty of the Cross where Jesus died.... So the price of Easter has little meaning to us now

Jesus was crucified, not in a cathedral between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves
The cross was a means of torture, humiliation and death.

Today when men are executed in the USA the common method is lethal injection.

In times past they used firing squads, electric chairs and a hangman's noose.

Yet none of these methods of execution come close to being as torturous as the horror of crucifixion. (we will see that in depth shortly)

As we arrive at Calvary, find that there were 3 Crosses on that Hill and 3 men sentenced to death by the Roman Government.

- There Was A Cross Of Rejection
- There Was A Cross Of Reception
- There Was A Cross of Redemption

The actions of the two men that were on either side of the Savior represent the actions and mindset of every person here today.

You have rejected redemption through Jesus or you have received redemption through Jesus.

I want to take some time and examine "The Three Crosses Of Calvary's Hill" I would like to begin with the fact that:

I. On Calvary's Hill, There Was A Cross Of Rejection -v39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

This man "railed on Jesus" this means that he blasphemed Him.

He was hurting and knew that death was imminent.

He was not sorry or repentant of his sins, he was focused on his own issues.

He says something very interesting to Jesus "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us"

Obviously we see doubt in the phrase "If you are the Christ" But he says to Jesus ..."If you are who you say you are, save yourself and us!"

"This man did not understand it but this is exactly what Jesus was doing!"

Jesus proclaimed on many occasions that this is why He came to the Earth:

*When speaking to Zacchaeus He said: **Luke 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.**

*In The Garden He said: **John 12:27 Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.**

*Standing before Pontus Pilate He said: **John 18:37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth...**

Now as Jesus hangs between the Heavens and the Earth fulfilling God's redemptive plan for mankind this wicked degenerate blasphemes and mocks Him!

This man had every opportunity to be saved, but he had a major problem and many today possess that same problem... IMPROPER FOCUS!!

This man was focused on the temporary instead of the eternal.

He is a picture of a man with a "what's in it for me mindset" - "Save thyself & us"

This man was not concerned with anything other than himself, his own problems and his own pain.

This man could have been saved but he rejected Christ!

He is a picture of someone who is dying without hope!

He is described as a “Malefactor” a villain or evildoer. (Described in Matthew as a thief).

He was being crucified because of his evil deeds.

He faced the earthly consequences for his sins. Before the day was over he would face the eternal consequences!

This man didn’t deserve salvation but the opportunity was there.

This man was guilty and deserved to die.

The Roman government wasn’t going to give him a pardon but Jesus would have given him an eternal pardon!

- Illustration: Pardon Rejected - In 1830 George Wilson was convicted of robbing the U.S. Mail and was sentenced to death. President Jackson issued a pardon for Wilson, but he refused it. The matter went to Chief Justice, who concluded that Wilson would have to be executed. He wrote, “A pardon is a slip of paper, the value of which is determined by the acceptance of the person to be pardoned. If it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must be hanged

Jesus came to pay a debt He didn't owe because we owed a debt we couldn't pay.

Jesus was there because of that man’s sins and mine and yours as well.

If you have never been saved you will spend an eternity in a Lake of Fire.

Friend, you don’t have to Jesus died so that you can live FOREVER!!

As we continue to survey the scene that day we find another cross:

II. On Calvary's Hill, There Was A Cross Of Reception - - v40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

This is one of the most beautiful stories in the Bible.

It illustrates the simplicity of salvation.

This man did not have a degree in Theology.

He did not have the opportunity to clean his life up (he couldn’t if he tried).

He didn’t have time to “work his way into Heaven” (and he couldn’t if he did have an opportunity).

He didn’t have to offer a long and detailed “prayer of Salvation”.

There was not a counselor at the foot of the cross telling him to “repeat after me”

He simply trusted in Jesus and CRIED OUT FOR HIM TO SAVE HIM!!

There is more to this conversion than just what we read in these few verses. The Gospel of Matthew records some extra detail of this man’s story. Notice:

(Matthew 27:42-44) – The Chief priests, the scribes and the elders said - He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

Do you see that? “Thieves” is plural.

It seems that in the beginning this man was against Jesus as well.

There is an apparent change in this man, What lead to this change?

In my opinion the answer is found in: - Luke 23:34 *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

I can’t prove it but I fully believe that something about that statement spoke to this sinner and it helped Him see Jesus for Who He Is!

Regardless, something happened and it lead to a conversion in his life.

Listen to what he said to the man who rejected Jesus: - v40 *But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42 and he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom. 43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

This man still paid for his earthly sins, notice he said” we receive the due reward of our deeds” he still suffered ...he still experienced physical death.

But he did so with the “PROMISE” of ETERNAL LIFE!

He began with an earthly perspective but before he died he had an eternal perspective. - V42 *And he said unto Jesus, Lord; remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

His life was changed because of what Jesus was doing right next to him!

Friend, your life can be changed because of Christ’s work of redemption on Calvary’s Hill!

But before you experience this, you must come to Jesus just like this man did and see Jesus for who He is and CRY OUT TO HIM TO SAVE YOU!!

If you will...HE WILL! - On that hill that day there was a Cross of Rejection, a Cross of Reception and most importantly:

III. On Calvary's Hill, There Was A Cross Of Redemption - v44 *And it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 45a and the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. 46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.*

In John 19:30 we read that when Jesus cried, He cried “It Is Finished”What was finished?

GOD’S PLAN OF REDEMPTION!!!

Redemption is Christ’s atonement for human sin.

We were delivered from our sins by the precious blood of Jesus. - **Ephesians 1:7** *says we have redemption through {Jesus} blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

When Jesus cried, "It is finished"... He used a word that meant "paid in full." - “It is finished” - (teleō - tel-eh'-o) to end, complete, concluded, to pay fully.

This speaks of discharging a debt.

This is the same word that would be stamped across bills when they were paid.

Jesus stamped “paid in full” on our sin debt at Calvary.

Friend, that redemption is possible for you today!

Before we close I want us to look at the great price that Jesus paid for our redemption.

Oswald Chambers said - “**All heaven is interested in the cross of Christ... all hell is terribly afraid of it... but men are the only beings who more or less ignore its true meaning.**”

Even before the cross Jesus had already endured more pain than a normal man could bear.

- He was scourged, which was enough to kill most men.
- It is commonly believed that the instrument used for scourging Jesus was the “cat of 9 tails”
- This was a short whip with metal stones and bone tied into leather thongs
- As they beat Him with this instrument of torture His flesh began to tear and blood began to flow.
- They stripped Him of His clothes
- Then they and put a scarlet robe on him.
- They fabricated a “Crown of thorns”
- They jammed this crown onto His head.
- They put a reed in His hand to represent a scepter.
- Then they blasphemously bowed before Him and cried “Hail, King of the Jews” (they will bow again one day and they won’t be mocking the will be begging for mercy!!)
- They spat on Him
- They plucked His beard
- Then grabbed the reed and hit Him on the head with it.
- Then they forced Him to carry his cross to the execution site.
- It is believed that the cross weighed near 150 pounds.
- Some experts believe that Jesus carried His cross the distance of over two football fields. In a weak and tormented state,
- Once at Calvary the cross was put on the ground and Jesus was thrown onto the cross.
- The spikes were approximately 7 inches long and 3/8 of an inch in diameter.
- These spikes were driven into His wrists and through His feet.
- They took that cross and lifted it up and dropped it into the hole
- As the cross fell down into the hole, no doubt His flesh tore.
- The position of the nailed body held His rib cage in a fixed position
- This would have made it extremely difficult to exhale
- It would have been impossible to take a full breath.

- He had suffered from the: scourging, the beatings, the walk with the Cross
- Jesus was extremely weak and dehydrated.
- He was losing significant amounts of blood.
- He suffered for several hours and after all things were complete... *John 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*

He did all of that so that you could be redeemed!

You will never make it to heaven without Jesus Christ... HE IS GOD'S PLAN OF REDEMPTION!

Jesus paid the price for your sins! He came to die so that you can live! But you have a choice to make...

A. Will you be like the man on the Cross of Rejection and turn away the Redeemer?

B. Will you be like the man on the Cross of Reception and trust Jesus to save you from your sins?

Just like these men you are guilty

Just like these men you will die

Just like thee men you have a choice to make

If you find yourself in a devil's hell it will not be because of what you have done.

****Rather, it will be because of what you refused to do.

Notice: John 3:18 *He that believeth on him (**Reception**) is not condemned: but he that believeth not (**Rejection**) is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* —

Redemption can be yours today because of that cruel cross on Calvary's hill.

"Oh the cross, where Jesus died"

"Shed His blood, gave His life for you and I"

"My sins erased, no longer lost"

"My debt was paid, I am saved"

"Oh the cross, where Jesus died"