The Saviour Saving

Luke 23: 32- 43

All four Gospels give us an account of the Lord Jesus nailed to the Cross between two thieves. We don't know who gave the command for Him to be put to death in this way. Possibly it was the subtle malice of the Jewish leaders. His place in the middle implied that He was the chief criminal.

But it was also part of God's plan – Isaiah 53:12, ***" … He poured out His life and to death and was numbered with the transgressors. For He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors."***

So it was the will of God that the Holy One should be reckoned very un-holy in His death – He was reckoned by nearly all to be the refuse of society

The other two men probably committed robbery with violence and perhaps murder. Remember the Parable of the Good Samaritan. A man was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. He was attacked by robbers who stripped him, wounded him and left him to die. (Lk. 10:30)

They might have been partisans of Barabbas who were now going to die for their crimes. We read in Mk. 15:32, ***"Those crucified with Him also heaped insults on Him."***

The Lord Jesus on the Cross was the focal point of scorn. Mt. 27:43-44. ***"He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if He wants Him, for He said, 'I am the Son of God'. In the same way the robbers who were crucified with Him also heaped insults on Him."***

But then there is a change! Lk. 23:39-43 says, ***"One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him. 'Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us! But the other criminal rebuked him. 'Don't you fear God?' he said, 'since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong. Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.' Jesus answered him, 'I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in Paradise. "***

This man saw the stupidity of a dying man trying to revile a dying man! He also saw that we need to fear death partly because of the fear that we are going to meet the judge of all men who will avenge the sins of the wicked.

So he says something remarkable! ***"We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong. Jesus, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom!"*** What an amazingly reasoned argument by a dying man!

He knew that God would be his judge. He knew his guilt and pronounced sentence on himself. His condemnation was just – a criminal life leads to a criminal death. He had no excuse.

He came to the same conclusion as Judas Iscariot who confessed that he had betrayed an innocent man (Mt. 24:4) or Pontius Pilate who said he could find no fault at all in Him. (Lk. 23:4)

Others had seen the Lord Jesus raise the dead but they didn't believe. This man saw Him as He was being put to death and he believed! The words he spoke condemned the whole company of Jewish priests and rulers. This man was a dying thief but He bore witness to the Son of God with the rare courage of a triumphant conviction – ***"Jesus, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom!"*** What a wonderful prayer at such a moment. He probably had little understanding but he saw nailed above the head of the Lord Jesus – **"This is Jesus – the King of the Jews"**. Somehow he recognised that for the Lord Jesus the Cross was the way to the Crown!

He had heard the words, ***"Father forgive them for they don't know what they are doing."*** (Lk 23:34) These words prompted him to think of his future. He didn't ask to be 'saved'. All he asked was, ***"Jesus, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom!"*** What astonishing faith! What an amazing answer! ***"I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in Paradise."*** (Lk. 23:43)

The Lord Jesus had been silent through the storm of abuse and all the vulgar contempt, but He could not be silent now when this dying man appealed to Him. The Lord Jesus knew he deserved to die. He knew he would soon be forgotten. Those who knew him would disown him and care nothing for him once he was dead. Yet the Lord Jesus was willing to receive the worst of men. He would remember when all others forgot and His reply far exceeded the request! ***"I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in Paradise!"***

So, in all His weakness on the Cross, the Lord Jesus could and did save this man from eternal death. He rose triumphant from the tomb and this man went to heaven. The Lord Jesus never ceased to be a Saviour saving the lost!

There wasn't much difference between the two crucified men before they came to die. They were alike in conduct and career, in character and circumstances. Their condemnation was the same. They were both notorious sinners and they were dying men dying the slow and terrible death of crucifixion. Each was in desperate need of repentance.

- They had the same opportunity to repent.
- One was saved and the other was lost.
- One died in fear without hope.
- The other died in faith having received mercy and peace with God.
- This thief on the Cross was the only man in Scripture to find peace with God at the time of his death.

But notice the Lord Jesus! Even though He was in complete agony as He took upon Himself the sin of the world, the Lord Jesus was still a Saviour. I love this about Him. He was always an evangelist. No one needs to despair. He can always save from eternal death those who turn to Him.

This man who was saved on the Cross was an early believer of an unnumbered multitude of us who have believed. In life or in death we need to remember the words of this man on the Cross, ***"Lord, remember me!"***

This is what we do week by week as we celebrate all that Jesus did for us by sharing bread and wine.

It is what Jesus asked His disciples to do, ***"He took bread and gave thanks broke it and gave it to them saying, 'This is My body given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way after supper He took the cup, saying, 'This Is the new covenant in My blood which is poured out for you."***
(Lk. 22:19-20)

Our hearts should be full of praise and worship day by day as we remember Jesus, the Saviour of the World. We remember all that He has done for us and we rejoice in all He will do for us.