



## The Burning Bush—Online article archive

### The Gospel Corner — “A thief condemned and executed yet pardoned and redeemed”



Notes of a sermon preached by Rev. Ivan Foster in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church

*“And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Luke 23:40-43.*

During the six hours of the crucifixion, the Saviour uttered seven sayings. These words, spoken to the repentant thief, is the second of the seven. Here is demonstrated the victorious grace of God. This is one of the great instances in which God demonstrates what He can do for a sinner.

Many misuse this conversion, making it an excuse to wait until later before considering salvation. What should be remembered is the fact that this was the thief’s first meeting with Christ. At his first encounter with Christ the thief repented and trusted Christ. It should also be remembered that his is the only case of its kind recorded in the Bible.

Consider . . . .

#### I. THE CHARACTER OF HIS PRAYER

**He acknowledged the Saviour’s deity.** All that others mocked about Christ, the thief honoured. Christ was the King of the Jews. He saw Him on the throne even when He was on the cross. He saw a crown of glory while the Saviour wore the crown of thorns.

**He requested mercy for his soul.** Nearly all who came to Christ were looking for a blessing upon their bodies. He was concerned about his soul. He recognised the importance of his soul’s salvation.

**He asked in simple faith in God’s grace.** He did not preface his prayer with “If Thou wilt” etc. It was a request based upon a humble dependence and belief in the goodness and mercy of Christ.

#### II. THE ANSWER HE RECEIVED

**The Saviour answered without hesitation.** The word “And” links the prayer with the answer, verse 43. There was no delay, no interval between request and response.

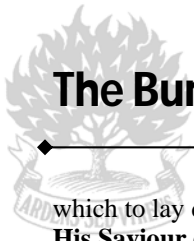
**He was answered without recrimination.** The thief had just been cursing Christ. “Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted 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,” Matthew 27:41-44. There was no mention of this by Christ.

**He was answered without condition.** “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price,” Isaiah 55:1. Here is, as exemplified in the Saviour’s answer to the thief, what this verse in Isaiah means.

**He was answered without limitation.** “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” What an answer! Great as his faith was, this was beyond his expectations, I am sure. As Paul said, Christ “. . . is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,” Ephesians 3:20.

#### III. HOW PEACEFUL WAS THE DEATH OF THIS THIEF

**He died resting on this personal word from Christ.** No dying saint ever had a sweeter or softer pillow upon



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which to lay down his head in the hour of his death.

**His Saviour died before He did and went before.** He saw the Saviour die in perfect peace, without fear and in total yieldedness to His Father's will. What encouragement this would have afforded the thief as death drew near for him. He could calmly follow where His Saviour had calmly gone!

**He found the Saviour waiting for him when he died.** The Saviour was waiting to welcome him when He died in faith and in peace and in comfort. None had a more contented and happy death than he. He must have thought during his last hours on this earth as did Paul: “. . . having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better,” Philippians 1:23.