

Date: 4th April 2010

Speaker: Gareth Edwards

Reading: Luke ch 23 v 32-33, 39-43

“We preach Christ and Him crucified”

Salvation is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ. The only way to be saved, forgiven and have a place in heaven.

Romans 10:13 says, “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”.

Whosoever: Anyone and everyone. No one is excluded from this offer. Every single person can be saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

A man saved at the very end of his life by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. We know him as the dying thief.

1 - Consequences of sin

The man hanging on a cross was suffering for crimes he had committed. He was minutes away from eternity.

“Appointed once for men to die then after this the judgment” (Heb 9:27)

We are not told too much about this man apart from the fact He was a malefactor, a thief, an evil doer. It did not matter what upbringing he had or what people thought or what career he had. What mattered was if he was ready for eternity.

Are you ready/prepared for eternity? God says, “Prepare to meet thy God” (Amos 4:12)

Is this low down your agenda or priority list? Will you move it up the list? This life is short, delicate and fragile. Any moment we can be in eternity and about to meet God.

The reality of this man’s sin came to him. The punishment of his sin was the death penalty. Any act of disobedience against God is sin. We are all in the same category of this thief as sinners.

“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)

He realised in the sight of God he was a guilty sinner and deserved his punishment and that his sin would keep him out of heaven for eternity.

God is a holy God and cannot have sin in His presence. The man may have realised that his suffering on the cross was nothing compared to a lost eternity in hell. He realised just in time the serious consequences of his sin.

Until we come to the point where we realise our sins will effect our place in eternity we will not call to God.

2 - Call of Salvation

The man realised his helpless situation and great need to be rescued from his sin. Surely there could be no hope for a man like that. He needed a Saviour to be able to deal with his sin.

Why was the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross that day?

The man knew the Lord Jesus Christ was there for other reasons and did not deserve to be there. Pilate had said, “I find no fault in this man” (John 19:6). God tells us that “He did no sin” (1 Peter 2:22) and “knew no sin” (2 Cor 5:21).

This world's verdict was that He was guilty. He was not dying for His sins but for our sins. Christ died, was buried, rose again and is alive forever more (1 Cor 15:3,4). He was a substitute for us. His sufferings went beyond those of the thief. "Christ suffered for our sins" (1 Peter 3:18). For three hours God poured out His wrath and punished His son so we can call in faith for Salvation.

Why was He willing to suffer so much? He is "The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20). What amazing love!

In times of danger and trouble in life we need to call on the Lord. Our problem is sin and we need to call on a person who can deal with this - The Lord Jesus Christ.

"Lord remember me"

It was a cry of deliverance and faith. He believed with all his heart the Lord would and could save him.

Peter cried "Lord save me" - He was perishing and immediately the Lord saved him. The same thing happened to the dying thief. It is the same for us when we make that call of salvation we will be saved.

3 - Comfort of the Saviour

The Saviour replied to the thief saying "Today shall thou be with me in paradise"

The man was a criminal and hell deserving sinner who called to the Lord. You may think he is too bad to be in heaven but the Lord said today you will be with me. There is not a single soul outside this pardon. The hymn-writer puts it: "The vilest offender who truly believes".

He received a place in heaven. He was saved, delivered and rescued from the gates of hell. He left it too late to start over or make amends for his life.

The same love, grace and mercy is available today by coming to the Lord Jesus Christ. We can experience this. We have a great hope if we have made that call of Salvation. To die is to be "Absent from the body present with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8). That man is still in heaven tonight 2000 years on. He can say "I'm only a sinner saved by grace through faith". It is the same for every person in heaven. Jesus died for us.

There needs to be a time in life when we realise we are guilty sinners in the sight of a holy God and realise Christ died for us at Calvary and need to call out in Salvation to Him, "Lord remember me", "Lord save me".