

## Lesson #9 - Be the Thief on the Left”

One of the most powerful pictures of God's grace and mercy is found in the story of the two thieves crucified alongside Jesus (Luke 23:39–43).

One thief mocked Jesus, demanding that He prove He was the Messiah by saving Himself and taking them down from the cross. Like many in that day, he expected the Messiah to be a conquering king who would overthrow Rome and establish an earthly kingdom. His view of the Savior was based on what he wanted Jesus to do for him rather than who Jesus truly was.

The other thief saw something different. He rebuked the first thief, declaring that Jesus was innocent while acknowledging his own guilt. He openly confessed that he deserved his punishment and then turned to Jesus in faith:

"Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." — Luke 23:42 (NKJV)

Jesus responded: "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."  
— Luke 23:43 (NKJV)

This thief never got off the cross. He never performed a good work, gave to the poor, attended a Bible study, read the Torah, or spent years serving God. He simply did the two things necessary for salvation: he acknowledged who Jesus was and confessed his own sinfulness.

As Book of Romans teaches:

"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."  
— Romans 10:9 (NKJV)

Within hours, all three men were dead. Jesus would rise again. The repentant thief entered Paradise in the presence of God, while the other thief died in unbelief.

The lesson is profound: salvation is not earned by good works; it is received by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The thief on the cross had nothing to offer God except a repentant heart and faith in the Savior—and that was enough.

Unlike the “Thief on the Left”, for most of us, salvation begins when Jesus enters our lives that is only the beginning of the journey. From that moment forward, God begins transforming us through the Holy Spirit, shaping us into the image of Christ.

Many of the Bible's greatest figures came from lives marked by sin, failure, and poor choices. Yet God redeemed their stories and used them powerfully for His glory.

God is not looking for perfect people—He is looking for willing hearts. He takes broken lives and turns them into testimonies of His grace.

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." — Romans 8:28 (NKJV)

### **Abraham — Fear and Deception**

Abraham twice told others that Sarah was his sister rather than his wife because he feared for his life. His deception put Sarah and others in difficult situations. Yet God remained faithful to His covenant promises and continued to use Abraham as the father of faith. **Genesis 12:11–13; Genesis 20:1–13**

### **Moses — Murderer Turned Deliverer**

Moses killed an Egyptian and fled in fear. God later called him to lead Israel out of slavery, showing that failure does not cancel God's purpose. **Exodus 2:12–15; Exodus 3:10**

### **David — Adulterer Restored**

David committed adultery and arranged a murder of Bathsheba's husband Uriah. After sincere repentance, God forgave him and continued to use him in a mighty way, he referred to him as a man after His own heart. **2 Samuel 11; Psalm 51**

### **Jonah — Rebel Redirected**

Jonah ran from God's calling, but God pursued him. After repentance, Jonah obeyed and helped bring an entire city to repentance.

**Jonah 1:3; Jonah 3:1–5**

### **Samson — Compromised but Redeemed**

Samson's sinful choices led to his downfall. Yet in his final prayer, he returned to God and fulfilled his purpose. **Judges 16:17–30**

### **Jacob — Deceiver Changed**

Jacob gained his blessing through deception. God transformed his character and renamed him Israel, making him the father of a nation. **Genesis 27; Genesis 32:28**

### **Rahab — Faith Overcomes the Past**

Rahab was a prostitute who believed in God and protected the spies. Her faith saved her, and she became part of Jesus' lineage. **Joshua 2:1–14; Matthew 1:5**

### **Peter — Denier Restored**

Peter denied Jesus three times but repented. Jesus restored him and used him to help build the early church. **Luke 22:61–62; John 21:15–17**

### **Paul — Persecutor Transformed**

Paul persecuted Christians before encountering Christ. God radically changed his life and used him to spread the Gospel throughout the world.

**Acts 9:1–6; 1 Timothy 1:13–16**

## **The Woman Caught in Adultery — Forgiven and Freed**

Jesus showed mercy to a woman caught in adultery and called her to leave her life of sin, demonstrating both grace and truth. **John 8:3–11**

## **Todd Dawes - Forgiven and redeemed 80's wild Child**

**Your Name - Fill in the Blank\_\_\_\_\_!!!!!!!**

## **There will be rewards in Heaven**

The Bible teaches that while salvation is a free gift received by grace through faith, God also rewards the faithfulness, obedience, perseverance, and service of His children. Believers will one day stand before Christ and receive rewards for what they have done for His kingdom. Scripture describes several "crowns" that symbolize these eternal rewards, including the **Imperishable Crown** for disciplined living (1 Corinthians 9:25), the **Crown of Righteousness** for those who love Christ's appearing (2 Timothy 4:8), the **Crown of Life** for those who endure trials faithfully (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10), the **Crown of Glory** for faithful shepherds and servants (1 Peter 5:4), and the **Crown of Rejoicing** for those who lead others to Christ (1 Thessalonians 2:19).

Yet the most beautiful picture is found in heaven itself. After receiving their crowns, the redeemed cast them at the feet of Jesus, recognizing that every victory, every good work, and every reward came from Him alone.

**"The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 'You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power.'" Revelation 4:10–11 (NKJV)**

**“Reminds me of the story of the man who got a medal for being humble. The next day he wore it to work and they took it back!!!!”**

The lesson is simple: **we are not saved by good works, but we are rewarded for faithfulness. And ultimately, every crown we receive becomes another opportunity to worship the One who made it all possible**

When we accept God's free gift of salvation by acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah, placing our faith in Him, and confessing our sins, we receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit begins transforming us, giving us wisdom, conviction, and discernment as we grow in our relationship with God (Romans 10:9–10; Acts 2:38; John 14:26).

This moment is not the end of the journey—it is the beginning. As we study God's Word, serve others, and walk in obedience, God strengthens our faith and shapes us into the image of Christ. this allows us to do difficult things, providing us with courage and strength and peace that her passes all understanding

Many people gladly accept Jesus as Savior because they want forgiveness and eternal life, but they struggle to accept Jesus as Lord. A Savior rescues us, but a Lord has authority over our

lives. Jesus not only saves us from sin; He calls us to follow Him, obey Him, and allow Him to direct our lives (Luke 9:23; John 14:15).

Scripture teaches that faith is a lifelong walk of perseverance. Jesus said, "He who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13 NKJV). The good news is that God does not leave us on our own. He is both the Author and the Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). The God who saves us is also the God who sustains us and faithfully carries us to the finish line.

Salvation begins with grace through faith, but it produces a transformed life that increasingly reflects the Lordship of Jesus Christ

We often hear stories about deathbed confessions and people who turn to Jesus in their final moments. We debate whether terrible criminals who come to faith just before execution can truly be saved. The thief on the cross reminds us that God's grace is greater than any sin and that salvation is available even in a person's last breath.

At the same time, Jesus gave a sobering warning: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven..." (Matthew 7:21 NKJV)

And later He says: "I never knew you; depart from Me..." (Matthew 7:23 NKJV)

Salvation is more than simply speaking the right words; it is a genuine surrender of the heart to Jesus Christ.

Throughout my journey with pancreatic cancer, I have learned to live with gratitude and thankfulness. While I would never have chosen this diagnosis, God has used it to bring clarity, perspective, and a deeper relationship with Him than I have ever experienced before. What initially appeared to be a dark cloud has become an opportunity to experience God's peace, His presence, and His faithfulness in ways I might never have known otherwise.

When I get to heaven, one of the people I would love to meet is the repentant **“Thief on the Left”**. He earned no crowns, performed no miracles, preached no sermons, and had no opportunity to serve others. He had absolutely nothing to offer Jesus for his salvation like many of us think we do. He arrived in heaven with “Coattails on fire”!! He was simply grateful to have a seat at the King's table. He is a perfect example of God's grace and mercy and love for us

Yet he heard the most beautiful words a person could ever hear: "Today you will be with Me in Paradise." — Luke 23:43 (NKJV)

Like all of us, he was saved entirely by grace. Whatever rewards awaited him,

The lesson of this study is not to wait until the last minute, but to live every day like the **“Thief on the Left”**—acknowledging who Jesus is, confessing our sins, and placing our trust completely in Him. Avoid train to earn our summation, but through following Christ and serving others showing God gratitude for what we don't deserve nor can we are earn!