

05.29.11 / Luke 23:39-47

Passage Insight

In this passage, God has given us a beautiful visual representation of the nature of God and humanity. At the center of all things, like a crossroads, is a sacrificial God, ready and willing to die for those He loves so that they may be with Him in Paradise forever. On either side of this central crossroads are two paths. One path is a path of mockery and of selfishness, where the human heart is most concerned with saving itself for its own means and for its own purposes. The other path is one where the human heart recognizes two things: 1) that it deserves to be punished for its rebellion and wrongdoing, and 2) that Jesus is WILLING and ABLE to forgive the rebellion and to make that bring that heart from death to life.

We each find ourselves on one of those two paths. There is no other road to take. Before we are saved, we are squarely on the path of self-salvation, the path of selfishness and mockery. In Luke 10:21-22, we see Jesus speaking:

In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

Jesus praises the Father for hiding His truth from those who are "wise and understanding." This means that the Father intentionally keeps His truth from those who claim to have it all figured out apart from Him. In other words, to trust our own knowledge and wisdom is to reject the knowledge and wisdom of God, to walk the path of the unrepentant criminal. Without someone to save us from this, THERE IS NO WAY OUT BECAUSE THE PROBLEM CAN'T ALSO BE THE SOLUTION. The good news in this is that because the Lord loves us so much, He doesn't leave us in this state, and He does the work for us. HE provides the wisdom we need. HE provides the understanding we seek. When we trust HIS knowledge, HIS wisdom, HIS understanding, we will see the Father. Jesus rejoices that the Father does things in this way, that He reveals His wonders and greatness to those who in the eyes of the world are the least deserving. The beauty in this is that there is nothing "deserved" in the gospel of grace. The more we think ourselves worthy of it, the more we are thwarted in our attempts to gain it. The more we see our need for it, the more we will taste it, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).

If we are on the other path, if we are saved by Christ, then we can rest in the truth that we will be with Jesus in Paradise forever. We can also rest in the fact that although we have done everything to deserve eternal enslavement to sin, HE has done everything to purchase us from the enemy's camp and bring us into His own. We see this in the second criminal's approach to Jesus. His posture is one of humility. He recognizes his guilt and Jesus' innocence. As we see our own guilt more clearly, and as we see Jesus' innocence more clearly, we will stand amazed at what He has done for us. For every weight of every sin of ours has already been borne by Jesus. The innocent paid for the guilty. This recognition moves us from a place of entitlement and selfishness to a place of humble gratitude and elation over what has been done for us. This should result in a lack of posturing and in a heart that simply says, "Lord, as long as you remember me, I'll be OK. Wherever you go, that's where I want to be. Plain and simple." And this is what we see in the second criminal's response.

And so we will find ourselves on one side or the other of the cross. We will reject Jesus, and therefore reject God, or we will recognize our guilt and Jesus' innocence, and we will confess Him as Lord and believe that He was resurrected from the dead to destroy OUR sin, not His. Pray that the Lord would give you eyes to recognize your guilt and Jesus'

innocence. Pray that the Lord would do so for those in your life. Pray for the boldness to speak these truths to those around you. Pray that the Lord would show you where you cling to your sin. Pray that you would trust completely the renewing work of the Holy Spirit in you, that you would be able to put off the old self and to increasingly put on the new self as seen in Ephesians 4.

Application and Prayer

The Weight of Sin

- 1) Jesus bore the weight of our sin. Imagine the weight of just one of your sins, how it has burdened you, how it has impacted others. What does that weight feel like?
- 2) Now consider that Jesus has borne the weight of ALL sins for ALL time. How does this reality change the way you think about who Jesus is?
- 3) How does it lead you to think differently about sinning right now?
- 4) PRAY
 - a. That you would not grieve the Holy Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:30)
 - b. That your desires would be God's desires

Recognizing Our Guilt / Jesus' Innocence

- 1) If you were driving, and someone ran into you, you would expect the person to repair your car. If you were driving and hit someone else's vehicle, you would expect that YOU would be responsible for the repairs to their car and to yours, because YOU WERE THE ONE AT FAULT. We were at fault against God, but despite being the one sinned against and the one who had no fault, His actions are those of a guilty man – punishment / paying the price to make things right. How does focusing on Jesus' innocence affect you?
- 2) When we see Jesus as innocent, it should awaken us to our own guilt, yet Romans tells us that if we are in Christ, there is no longer any condemnation. Where do you dwell on your guilt and live as if you are still condemned?
- 3) Jesus has freed you if you believe in Christ, and dwelling on guilt usually has some selfish motivation. Can you see what it is for you if you struggle with this?
- 4) PRAY
 - a. That you would see Christ as innocent and blameless
 - b. That you would not be burdened by guilt, as there is no condemnation for you if you are saved

The Resurrection / Jesus' Authority

- 1) Christ's story didn't stop at crucifixion. He was raised to life, having conquered sin and death. He is INNOCENT and ALL-POWERFUL. How does a focus on this combination affect your heart?
- 2) Matthew 28 speaks of Jesus' authority over all things and our call to obey Him. 1 Peter 1 speaks of our call to be obedient children whose souls are purified by obedience to Christ. Where do you see Jesus as a teammate rather than the One with all authority who makes you pure?
- 3) What sort of repentance is needed?
- 4) PRAY
 - a. For right understanding of Jesus' authority and power
 - b. For the capacity to obey Him (by the power of God's Holy Spirit – 1 Peter 1

Sources

- Prayer
- Thom Asta