



Rockwood Church of Christ

The Proclaimer

September 9, 2012

P.O. Box 416
129 S. Chamberlain Ave.
Rockwood, TN 37854
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Elders:

Dana Carter
Kenneth Carter
Don Chandler

Deacons:

Bobby Bear
Kendall Bear
Larry Brackett
Roger Carter
Steve McCreary
Don Wicks

Minister:

Kirby Hinds

Secretary:

Susan Chandler

Service Times:

Sunday

Bible Study 10 am
Worship Service 10:45 am
Worship Service 6 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:30 pm

Monday

Ladies Class 10 am

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NARROW MINDED

The preacher is sometimes accused of being narrow-minded because he insists upon the Christian living in obedience to Christ. Because all of life is narrow and success is to be found only by passing through the narrow gate and down the straight way.

There is no room for broad-mindedness in the chemical Laboratory. Water is composed of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen. The slightest deviation from that formula is forbidden.

There is no room for broad-mindedness in music. There can be only eight notes in an octave. The skilled director will not permit his first violin to play even so much as one half a note off the written note, chord, or key.

There is no room for broad-mindedness in the mathematics classroom. Neither geometry, calculus, or trigonometry allows any variation from accuracy, even for old time's sake. The solution of the problem is either right or wrong – no tolerance there.

There is no broad-mindedness on the athletic field. The game is played according to the rules with no favors shown for charity's sake.

There is no room for broad-mindedness in the garage. The mechanic says that the piston rings must fit the cylinder walls within one-thousandth part of an inch. Even between friends there cannot be any variation if the motor is to run smoothly.

Now, then, shall we expect that broad-mindedness shall rule in the realm of Christianity and morals? Remember it was Jesus Himself who said, *“Enter ye in at the Strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it”* **(Matthew 7:13-14).**

THE THIEF AND BAPTISM

While dying on the cross, Jesus was derided, reviled, scoffed at, and mocked. Besides the Jewish chief priests, scribes, and elders, the two robbers who were crucified on either side of Jesus also engaged in tongue wagging (**Matthew 27:39, 41, 44; Mark 15:29, 31-32**). Yes, both thieves joined the crowd in hurling insults at the Christ. The Greek grammar indicates it was a repeated verbal assault.

But then, according to Luke's account (**Luke 23:39-43**), a change of heart occurred in one of the thieves. He confessed that he and his companion had sinned and were being justly punished, but he asserted the innocence of Jesus. His request reflected his belief that Christ was a "king," for Jesus would "come into his kingdom." Murder would not prevent it. He expressed confidence that the Lord would be able to bless him in His regime. Jesus responded with grace to the penitent robber, "*Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.*"

No one disputes that the thief received salvation from the Savior. The controversy surrounding this story centers upon the subject of baptism. "If the thief on the cross could be saved without being baptized," say some, "why cannot people today do the same?" "Isn't his story a pattern for salvation today?"

First, where does one get the idea that the thief had not been baptized? Why make that assumption? Don't jump too quickly to that conclusion. It is quite possible that he could have been a disciple of John the Baptist, or of Jesus himself or of one of the Lord's disciples (**Matthew 3:5-6; 10:5; Luke 10:1**). Therefore, the man could have been immersed for the forgiveness of his sins on a previous occasion with John's baptism (**Mark 1:4; John 4:1-2; Acts 19:3-4**). While that cannot be proved, neither can the dogmatic claim, "the thief had never been baptized." We simply do not know.

Second, understand the period of Biblical history in which this man lived and died. Whether or not the thief had been baptized really makes no difference. He lived in a religious era when baptism was not required for forgiveness of sins. During his earthly ministry, Jesus possessed the authority to forgive men's sins personally and directly (**Mark 2:5-10**). After the death of Jesus, however, when his new "will" became an absolute essential to obtaining salvation (**Mark 16:15-16, Acts 2:38, 22:16**). Christ's new "testament," which man is under today, specifies baptism as a condition of pardon, along with faith, repentance, and confession.

How the thief was saved is not a pattern for being saved in the present time. Consult the conversion stories of **Acts** for that pattern. The thief was not subject to the terms of pardon under the gospel of Christ. Concerning your salvation, don't get "hung up" on the thief on the cross.

James Cudd