



Rockwood Church of Christ

The Proclaimer

January 7, 2018

FOUR THIEVES OF THE CRUCIFIXION

In the following article, Gary Puryear, talks about the thieves that were crucified with Jesus. We know that only two different men were crucified at the same time as Jesus was, but Gary discusses four different angles for us to consider.

THE THIEF WHO REGRETTED (John 12:6). Oh the advantages Judas had! He had been selected by Jesus to be an apostle, was entrusted by his peers with the position of treasurer, and observed many of the Lord's miracles (**Matthew 11:5**). It was this Judas who betrayed the Lord for money. His betrayal turned to regret (**Matthew 27:3**), but rather than look forward to forgiveness, he only looked back and hanged himself. True repentance means more than feeling sorry for a wrong. It is the desire to change and do better (**II Corinthians 7:10**).

THE THIEF WHO WAS REPLACED. It was customary to release a prisoner at the Passover. Thus Pilate offered the crowd either Jesus or Barabbas. They requested the notorious murderer and robber be released rather than Jesus (**Matthew 27:15-16**). Barabbas had someone else (Jesus) take his punishment for him. Barabbas could say that Jesus died in his place. Of course, we can say it, too! (**II Corinthians 5:20-21**).

THE THIEF WHO REBELLED. At first both thieves crucified with Jesus spoke against Him (**Matthew 27:41-44**), but only one kept doing it (**Luke 23:39**). This thief remained impenitent because he forgot God, ignored death at hand, and justly deserved what he was receiving (**Luke 23:40-41**). This man died in a state of rebellion in spite of the rebuke and repentance of the other thief and a Savior close at hand.

THE THEIF WHO REPENTED. This thief had a change of heart (**Luke 23:40-43**). In his agony he looked to the Savior and admitted his sinfulness and Jesus' innocence (**Luke 23:41-42**). His repentance did not bring escape from death but did bring relief and fellowship with Jesus in the next life (**Luke 23:43**). He did what the Lord asked him to do, and in that sense he is an example to us.

All of us are represented by one of these thieves. Have you let Jesus down? Have you allowed Jesus to take your place? Are you rebellious? Have you repented? Which are you?

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A PETITE BUT POTENT WORD

Some writers consider “no” to be the hardest word to say. Of course, whether or not this is true depends on the context. For example, most parents don’t have a problem dropping this word if their children get out of line. You can picture it, can’t you? A tiny hand is reaching for a hot stove, “No!” you yell, “It’s hot!” If I had a penny for every time I’ve said “no” to my children, I would probably have like \$50. So, there are occasions when saying “no” is not all that difficult.

Nevertheless, we struggle saying this word in other contexts, especially if saying it means losing out on something or sacrificing something we deem important. The Bible tells of those who failed to say “no” when they should have. For instance, Adam and Eve didn’t say “no” in the Garden of Eden (**Genesis 3:1-7**), and we are still feeling the consequences of their failure today. The Bible is also replete with those who said “no,” despite the circumstances, because it was the right thing to say. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego said “no” when commanded to worship a 90 foot golden image (**Daniel 3**). These men were so committed to the first and second commandments that they were willing to sacrifice their lives by refusing to worship something other than God. Would you have said “no”? Or would you have said “yes” to escape confrontation and preserve your life?

Aren’t you glad that Jesus said “no” when tempted by Satan in the desert (**Matthew 4:1-11**)? If He had said “yes,” He would have relinquished His role as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. Speaking of His sacrifice, aren’t you relieved that Jesus said “no” to those who tempted Him either to sidestep the cross or to come down from the cross? Maybe there are some things that you need to say “no” to once and for all. When you’re tempted to say “yes” when you should say “no,” think of Jesus who said “no” on numerous occasions so that He could be your Savior.

Jacob Evans