

Expository Thoughts On Luke - Luke 23:39-43

by J.C. Ryle

Transcript

THE DYING THIEF

The verses we have now read deserve to be printed in letters of gold. They have probably been the salvation of myriads of souls. Multitudes will thank God to all eternity that the Bible contains this story of the penitent thief.

We see, firstly, in the history before us, the sovereignty of God in saving sinners. We are told that two malefactors were crucified together with our Lord, one on His right hand and the other on His left. Both were equally near to Christ. Both saw and heard all that happened, during the six hours that He hung on the cross. Both were dying men, and suffering acute pain. Both were alike wicked sinners, and needed forgiveness. Yet one died in his sins, as he had lived, hardened, impenitent, and unbelieving. The other repented, believed, cried to Jesus for mercy, and was saved.

A fact like this should teach us humility. We cannot account for it. We can only say, "Even so, Father, for so it seems good in your sight." (Matt. 11:26.) How it is that under precisely the same circumstances one man is converted and another remains dead in sins--why the very same sermon is heard by one man with complete indifference and sends another home to pray and seek Christ--why the same Gospel is hidden to one and revealed to another, all these are questions which we cannot possibly answer. We only know that it is so, and that it is useless to deny it.

Our own duty is clear and plain. We are to make a diligent use of all the means which God has appointed for the good of souls. There is no necessity that any one should be lost. There is no such a thing as decreed damnation in the Bible. The offers of the Gospel are wide, free and general. "In all our doings," says the 17th Article, "that will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared to us in the word of God." God\

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