

The Response to the Cross

Luke 23:26-43

How do you respond when someone scares you?

How do you respond when someone yells at you? Or disagrees with you? Says something that offends you.

How do you respond when someone encourages you, shows appreciation, or says thank you?

How do you respond when something shocking happens in front of you?

How do you respond when bible truths are shared? How about the ones that hit home, the ones the Holy Spirit says, "That one has you written all over it?"

How do you respond when bible truths are contrary to what you were taught in life, by parents, school, society in general? Do you reject it? Do you ponder on it? Do you accept it and change your opinion or views?

We all respond, differently don't we?

How do you respond to the beating, death, and resurrection of Jesus? I respond in different ways whenever I think about the gospel. Sometimes I am jumping for joy, other times my heart breaks for what Jesus went through, sometimes I respond very disengaged.

But what matters is how did I respond to the truth of the gospel? Did I agree with God on my sin nature, surrender? Or did I respond by avoiding it? One day maybe I will believe it!

We witnessed that Pilate had determined Jesus to be innocent. It was his desire to release Jesus, but the crowd demanded Barabbas, a vicious criminal be pardoned, and Pilate caved into their demand.

In today's text we see Jesus as he is led away to be put to death. They lead Him through the streets of Jerusalem, along a route known as the "Via Dolorosa,"- the sorrowful way." They are headed for a place called Calvary or Golgotha, the place of skull, the location where crucifixions were carried out.

Just as Jesus wasn't on trial, we can't look at him as a helpless victim who is caught up in events he could not control. He is not just a passive victim overwhelmed by superior forces. In John's account (19:11) Jesus told Pilate "**You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.**"

Remember, Jesus told Peter he could call 12 legions or 72,000 angels to rescue him. What Jesus did, he did willingly. He died as a substitute for you and me.

1 Peter 2:24, who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

Luke tells the story of the crucifixion from the viewpoint of the participants in the drama. As we see the death of Jesus from their perspective, we become aware of the varied responses to the cross.

It was a part of the prisoner's humiliation to carry his cross, or at least part of it, to the place of execution. So as Jesus left Pilate's hall, he was carrying either the cross or at least the crossbeam which

would have weighted 75 to 125 lbs. At some point he was unable to go on, so the soldiers drafted someone to carry the cross for Him.

Discuss the beating and what he physically endured on our behalf.

I. Some Responded in Ignorance. (v. 26)

• **Read verse 26**

- As Jesus stumbles under the load, a man coming in the opposite direction, Simon the Cyrenian was drafted for the job of carrying his cross.
- He had traveled over 800 miles to celebrate the Passover and now he had been rendered ceremonially unclean. Taking the cross, he had been literally covered by the blood of Jesus and therefore unable to participate in the Passover ceremony. This must have seemed to Simon a great catastrophe.
- **Click to next slide, Passion clip of Simon helping with the cross.**
- It would have been tragic to physically be covered by the blood of Jesus and yet to have died without the spiritual benefits that comes through faith.
- We have good reason to believe that Simon was converted because of his encounter with Jesus. Mark identifies him as “the father of Alexander and Rufus” (15:21), two men that Luke assumes that people to whom he is writing will know.
- Apparently, Simon and his two sons became well known in the early church. So perhaps in the very thing that he thought had brought him shame he found his Savior.

II. Some Respond in Sorrow. (vv.27-31)

• **Read verses 27-31**

- The women react in a perfectly normal way as they weep over the tragedy of Jesus impending death. But as Jesus’ remarks make clear the real tragedy is to misjudge who He is.
- The real issue goes beyond what He will suffer to what his death will mean to those who reject him. As painful as his death will be, He knows what awaits him at resurrection. His future is secure, but unless they repent, theirs is not.
- The real issue moves beyond what Jesus will suffer to what His death will mean both to those who believe and to those who reject Him. Jesus wants repentance not sympathy.
- In verse 31 Jesus explains if the Romans treat an innocent man – one they know to be innocent – in such a way, what will they do to the guilty?

III. Some Respond in Shameless Indifference. (v. 34b)

• **“...And they divided His garments and cast lots.”**

- The soldiers who had the responsibility of carrying out the crucifixion were simply wasting time until the execution is complete.
- These men had been hardened by the very coarseness of their lives. They had seen others die. They were not concerned about the meaning of Christ’s death.
- There was the innocent Son of God, hanging on a cross, his blood being shed for the sins of all mankind. And there they are on the ground rolling the dice to see who got what. They divide up his clothes among themselves by casting lots.

Psalm 22:18, They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.

- They seemed interested only in the what they can get out of this experience. They forever stand as examples of those who are too involved with their daily lives to worry about the significance of the cross. They were callously indifferent.
- What did they take home from the cross, a few pieces of clothing and nothing more? No changed hearts, no changed lives: no savior. Even today how much or rather how little do some take home with them from church services?

IV. Some Responded in Open Mockery (vv. 35-40)

- The Rulers Mocked Him (v. 35) They thought that it was weakness that held kept him nailed to the cross. It was just the opposite, it was power, the power of his love. The fact was that He could not save others by saving himself, He could only save others by dying for them, sacrificing himself for their sakes. So, by refusing to save himself, he provided salvation for the world.
- The Soldiers Mocked Him (vv. 36-37)
- Pilate Mocked Him (v. 38) Even Pilate gets into the mockery by have a sign made to place on the cross.
- Even the Thieves Mocked Him. (vv. 32-33, 39) At first both thieves crucified with Jesus also mocked him. (v.39) Matthew and Mark both record that in the beginning both criminals mocked Jesus. But somewhere along the way one had change of heart because in verse 40 we read.

V. At Least One Responded in Faith (vv. 41-43)

- **Read verses 41-43**
- It is a sobering thing to know that you are dying. It was sobering enough that at least one man came to the cross and went away a changed man and he did so because:
- He admitted his guilt, “we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” He admitted the burden of his guilt. He admitted the legality of his sentence, which is evidence of his true repentance. He was no longer blaming others; he was no longer making excuses!
- He confessed Christ As Savior. “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

Warren Weirsbe says, “It took courage for this thief to defy the influence of his friend and the mockery of the crowd, and it took faith for him to trust in a dying king! When you consider all that he had to overcome, the faith of this thief is astounding.”

- The Lord’s response to this man’s faith is very reassuring, verse 43, **“And Jesus said to him, Assuredly, I say to you, you will be with Me in Paradise.”**
- **Click next slide for slide from Passion movie**

William Barclay says, “The word “Paradise” is not just another word for Heaven but indicates a close relationship and a particular honor. The word is Persian in origin, and it means a private, but lavish garden, one enclosed behind a wall, a place where a Persian king would stroll with his closest friends. Such people were even given a title; “companions of the garden.” It was more than immorality that Jesus promised the penitent thief. He promised him the honored place of a companion of the garden in the courts of heaven.”

- Our Lord awarded to the repentant thief more than forgiveness and heaven, but the assurance the he would be a friend in the eternal realm. The thief did not have to wait even one day to

receive what Jesus promised. his faith secured him an immediate place with Jesus. Jesus told the repentant thief, **“Today you will be with Me in Paradise.”**

Conclusion

Christ’s promise to the thief extends to all who believe in him today. When we call on him to save us, when we acknowledge our sins, and seek his deliverance, he responds with a word for today. You too can experience life with Christ in His kingdom today by believing in Him.

Perhaps we are caught up in sin, sin so unspeakable that we fear what others would think if they knew. We may imagine then that we are beyond the reaches of God’s love. If so, we are wrong. The thief’s salvation assures us that it is never too late to turn to Christ.

How will you respond?

Maybe you are like the thief and will one day be with Jesus in heaven. Are you living like it? Just like a fish lives as a fish, a bird does what a bird does, a follower of Jesus lives like and for Jesus.