

Hope

“Today you will be with me in paradise.”

Foundation

Bible passage : Luke 23.43

The few words of Jesus to the thief on the cross show clearly the amazing grace of God. The dying thief had no hope and he knew it. He understood that he had done wrong and was being punished justly for it (v41). As he hung dying there seemed to be nothing he could do to put right any of the wrongs he had done, or to amend his ways and live a life pleasing to God. He faced an agonising death and the certainty that if there is a judgement to come then he was without hope.

Despite his predicament there are signs of his spiritual awareness. First, he was prepared to recognise his sin and admit it. Secondly when he rebuked his fellow thief it seems that he himself did fear God (v40). But the most important things this man realised were about Jesus. He knew that Jesus had done nothing wrong (v41) whereas others had sent Him to be crucified (even though some of them also knew Jesus was innocent). He recognised that though Jesus was dying on a cross, He was actually a king (v42) who through death would enter His kingdom (v43). Again this contrasted with most others. One of the accusations against Jesus was that he claimed to be King of the Jews

“In (Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1.7)

and was therefore opposing Caesar. Indeed, the title “King of the Jews” was put on a sign above His head in three different languages. The thief knew he could do nothing to save himself except one thing, which is what he did. He cried out to Jesus (v42). The apostles would later tell people, “All who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved”.

**Father,
forgive
them, for
they know**

**not what they do. Truly, I say to
you, today you will be with me
in paradise. Woman, behold,
your son! - Behold, your mother!**

**My God, my
God, why
have you
forsaken me?
I thirst.
It is finished.
Father, into
your hands
I commit
my spirit!**

What is remarkable about this incident is that a man who had no reason to hope because of himself and whose faith was so weak and opportunity to do good was non-existent, received the clearest promise to anyone in the Bible “Today you will be with me in paradise.” He is therefore an example to all people. The basis of our hope for the future has nothing to do with our own works, but everything to do with our Saviour. We are called to recognise our sin and repent, to see that Jesus, though He died on a cross, can save us, and so call on call out to Him for help.



The thief had no hope until he turned to Jesus and then he received an amazing promise and a sure hope as he died.