



Outsiders

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Insider or Outsider? Week of October 17, 2021

Intro Discussion Question(s):

- *How have you grown in your study of God's Word this week?*

Read Bible Study Summary:

In the final study of the Outsiders series, we look to the most deliberate of events in all of history, the crucifixion. The Romans deliberately used this execution to inflict the utmost humiliation and pain on the criminal. They deliberately used the torturous scene to instill a message of fear in the onlookers. They were even deliberate in their placement of Jesus on the cross between two criminals to rank him with robbers. But no detail of that day surpassed the deliberation of God to fulfill his promise to offer his one and only son as the atonement for the sins of all humanity. And while the sinless Son of God hung there suffering a slow death, his interaction with a lifelong criminal reveals much to us about the quickness of God's grace to outsiders.

Main Scripture

- *Read Luke 23:32-43*

What are we to learn about outsiders from Jesus' interaction with the thief on the cross?

1. **Salvation Comes Quickly Even to those Slowest to Believe**

- Salvation comes quickly when someone believes in Christ Jesus. Instantaneously, a sinner is saved. The thief on the cross had only been around Jesus for about 12 hours, and each moment was filled with suffering. Each moment of agony must have felt like an eternity. But salvation came to the man quickly when he believed in Christ after hearing Jesus speak and seeing the way he suffered.
- It is such an amazing truth about God's grace that he is willing and able to save no matter how close we are to perishing. A lost person can experience a lifetime of utter chaos due to sin resulting in all the consequences of a life separated from God. Then, in one instant, salvation can come to anyone who believes in Jesus for eternal life. This is exactly what happened to the thief on the cross. The hardened

criminal who stole his way through life recognized that he couldn't steal eternal life. It wasn't even something that could be earned. It was a gift received by faith.

- **Read Romans 10:9-10** - *9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.*
- **Ask Questions:**
 - *Share an example of someone who put their faith in Christ late in life*
 - *Who is someone you know who has lived a long life, but is still without Christ?*
 - *The story of the thief on the cross teaches us that the gospel is such a mighty promise to save (even a lifelong criminal). How does your heart respond to the truth that the worst of criminals, even one on death row, could receive quick grace and mercy if he has faith in Christ?*
 - *Sometimes we forget that both thieves appealed to Jesus that day. Even the first criminal had faith of sorts and asked Jesus to save him (v. 39). What was different about his faith that made it deficient?*

2. Salvation Changes Quickly Even Those Deepest in Sin

- Not only does salvation come quickly for someone who believes, but it also has the power to change (to sanctify) the heart quickly through the Holy Spirit. Very quickly the Spirit can change a mindset, shed light on darkness, bring clarity to confusion, and overcome falsehoods with truth. Even for a hardened criminal, sanctification can begin quickly. We get a glimpse of the thief's heart change. It happened so quickly and it was evidenced by the repentance, faith, and service he showed through what he said while dying on his cross.
 - **He rebuked the other criminal** - The penitent thief pleaded with his companion in crime, seeking to silence his taunts, and reason with him regarding who is hanging next to them.
 - **"Don't you fear God"** - He now recognizes the existence, the power, and the providence of God (v. 40).
 - **"We are getting what our deeds deserve"** - He has a sense of the wickedness of his own conduct; a recognition of his own sin (v. 41).
 - **"This man has done nothing wrong"** - He recognizes the innocence and excellence of Jesus Christ (v. 41).
 - **"Remember me when you come into your kingdom"** - He believes in the power of the Suffering King, and makes his humble and hopeful appeal for Christ to remember him.¹
- **Read Romans 5:1-5** - *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we[b] boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*
- **Ask Question**
 - *What are some of the quickest heart changes that you noticed after you were saved?*
 - *Suppose a friend said to you, "I have wasted my life and I am such a mess. Even if I did believe in Jesus, there is no way he could change me." How would you respond?*

¹Spence and Exell, *Mark & Luke*, The Pulpit Commentary vol. 16 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 258.

3. Salvation *Speaks Loudly Even When Death is Imminent*

- The way in which Jesus suffered, accompanied by his words from the cross, spoke loudly even though his physical life was coming to an end. He hung there unrewarded, unappreciated, brutally mistreated, misunderstood, and falsely condemned to die a death he didn't deserve. Despite all that, he desired that his offenders might be forgiven of their wrong-doing.
- While we are hopeful it would not be the case, it would be natural for us to wonder if our spirits would sour if we were in a similar situation. Jesus is the Leader and Perfecter of our faith. He never desired of us any virtue or grace which he did not himself adorn.² This should encourage us to be faithful to the end. We all will face dire circumstances in life. While all of us will face death eventually, some will have an opportunity to show and share their faith while facing imminent death. Through Christ's example, we can be sure that our faith and hope will speak loudly to those who witness it.
- **Read of Another Example of This in Acts 7:59-60** - *While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.*
- **Ask Question**
 - *Do you ever wonder about how you will face death if you come to learn it is imminent? What thoughts come to your mind?*
 - *We know the words of Jesus and Stephen before they died. If you have the chance to speak final words to a group of people before you die, and some of them you know are outsiders, what would you say?*

Closing

- **Ask Question** - *What is the greatest challenge you are facing right now? Is there some way our group can help you specifically?*
- Pray together over those requests.

²Ibid.