

Three Wooden Crosses

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Date: 21 April 2019

Preacher: Rev. George Macaskill

[0 : 00] Amen. Let's turn in our Bibles to the passage of Scripture which we read in the Gospel of Luke chapter 23.

And as God would help me, I'd like to concentrate on verse 33. But we'll read from verse 32. Luke chapter 23 at verse 32.

Two others who were criminals were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place that is called the skull, there they crucified him and the criminals.

One on his right and one on his left. In an office in New York, on one of the walls, there is a charcoal sketch of a heap, a pile of human skulls.

Different sizes, different shapes. And underneath the sketch, there is a one word caption. The artist apparently meant to convey a certain message through that charcoal sketch.

[1 : 42] The one word caption is the word equality. And the artist meant to convey by his illustration of different sizes and shapes of skulls.

That all men are equal because all men die. How different from what the Bible teaches.

All men die because of sin. That's why we die. I've entitled this sermon, Three Men on a Cross.

And they're all dying the same way. And they're all dying because of sin. And yet, there is all the difference in the world between these three men.

All dying the same way. Through sin. And yet, they're all so different. Because one died in sin.

[3 : 02] One died to sin. And the one in the middle died for sin.

Let's look at each of them. First of all, the one who died in sin. What was his life like?

Well, he was born in sin. He was like you and me. He did not fall into sin.

He was born in sin. You and I do not fall into sin. Adam fell into sin. Adam was created holy.

And he fell into sin. But you and I don't fall into sin. You and I are born sinful. We are born in sin.

[4 : 06] Just by being born into this world. We have inherently an inbuilt bias and prejudice against God.

We don't like God interfering in our lives. We think life, we should be in control of our own lives.

And do what we want. We don't like interference. We don't like being told what to do with our lives.

But our lives belong to God.

God gave us life. And we have this inbuilt prejudice against God towards ourselves.

And by nature, we can't see it. By nature, we don't see that. We can be told it, but we don't like it.

[5 : 06] We don't like it. Born in sin. But he was not only born in sin. Like you and me. He lived in sin.

And he lived in sin because he was born in sin. It just comes naturally. You don't have to do anything special to be a sinner.

Just do your own thing. Just do what you want. Do what you feel comfortable with. We're born in sin. Therefore, we naturally live in sin.

It started just like that with him. And for him, it led him to a life of crime and violence.

Some versions call them criminals. Others call them malefactors. The original word means killed to steal.

[6 : 18] A life of theft. And he wouldn't stop killing somebody just to steal. He became so depraved.

So corrupt. That society. Sinful society itself. Civilized society said. Better rid of such people.

And the Romans, as you know. Invented. Crucifixion. For such. Born in sin.

Lived in sin. Died in sin. He died in sin. Because he lived in sin.

It's a natural progress. Born in sin. Live in sin. Die in sin. It just happens.

[7 : 20] It just takes place. What is it. To die. In sin. What have you to do.

To die in sin. You don't have to do anything. To die in sin.
Is to die. Without forgiveness. Of sin. To die in sin. Is to die.
Without repenting. Of sin. To die in sin. Is to die.
Without a change of heart. Regarding sin. It's to die. Without your life being changed.
[8 : 19] Is to die. Without your heart being changed. Is to die. Without your mind. Being changed.
With regard to sin.

You see. As we've said already. Naturally. We oppose. The teaching. Oh you're a sinner. I don't know how many times.
People have said to me. Even though. Don't you dare call me. A sinner. We don't like it. However true it is. We don't like it. We don't want it.
But that's the procedure. That's what happens. Born in sin. Live in sin. Die in sin.
But two crosses away. There's another man. Being crucified.
[9 : 18] He did not die. In sin. Wonderful news that. Great news. He didn't die. In sin. He died. To sin.

Bible tells us. In Romans 6. How shall we. Who. Have died. To sin. Live. Any. Longer.
In it. It's a biblical term. To die. To sin. What about him? How was he born? Was he born? Was he born?
The same way as the other person? Exactly. The same way. He. Too. Was born. In. Sin.
Exactly. The same. As the other thief. Two crosses away. No. Difference. By birth. Whatsoever. Our bible.

[10 : 18] Tells us. We. Are. All. Saints. And sinners. Get this. Saints. And sinners. Are all.
By nature. Children. Children. Of wrath. The wrath. Of God. Is upon us. By nature. And that's what's so worrying.
About going up to somebody. And saying. Hey God loves you. Oh. My bible says. We're under the wrath. And curse. Of God. Until. Until. Until. Until. We repent.
Until. Until. We repent. Until. We repent. Until. We repent. Until. We repent. This man. Under. The wrath. Of God. A child. Of wrath. Even. As.
Others. There is no difference. Between saints. And sinners. By birth. Saints. Are not born special.
[11 : 15] Saints. Are not born. Different. Saints. Saints. Are still. Sinners. And a lot of people. Don't get that. They think.

Once you're converted. Never. Will you sin again. Oh. How wrong. How wrong. Can you be. You saw.

You say. What's the difference. The difference. Is this. Saints. Repent. Of their sin. Saints. Are sorry. For their sin. I used to think.

A Christian. Was someone. Who repented. Of their sins. I'm changing. My mind. I think. Now.
A Christian. Is a person. Who is. Repenting. Of their sin. Repentance. Is not something. You do.

[12 : 10] Once. At the beginning. Of your Christian. Life. Repentance. Repent. We. Repent. Continually. Do you know why? Because.

We're continually. Sinning. The difference. Between. A saint. And a sinner. Is a sinner. Is fighting. Against. Sin.

A sinner. Without grace. Without repentance. Just carries on. I'm only human. Is that what we say? A Christian.

Is upset. About it. A Christian. Is disturbed. By his sin. A Christian. Tries to fight. Against it. He calls in God. He confesses. His sin. Listen.

If you don't know this before. Hear it now. When you realize. You've sinned. Whatever you do.
[13 : 08] Whatever you do. Don't cover it up. Don't pretend. It didn't happen. The moment you realize. You've sinned. Please. Please. Please.

Expose it to God. Tell it to God. And he will forgive. If you only believe. This man.
Left God. Out of his life. This man. Like the other thief. Had his own agenda. He too was violent. He too was a criminal. He too killed to steal. He too. Did his own thing. Just did what he was comfortable with.

Born in sin. And he too. Lived in sin. Sin led him into a life of.

[14 : 14] Debauchery. Violence. Until. Like the other thief. Two crosses away. Society said. Better rid of that kind.

He was that bad. He was that bad. Even the Roman Empire. The Roman society said. Better rid of that kind.

He was that bad. They both were. Sin controlled him. Right up to the last.

Last hours. Of his life. You know that. You've got to have worked it out. If you've read it. Matthew. 27.

Verse. 44. Tells us. 27. Verse 44. 44. And the robbers.

[15:14] Who were crucified. With him. Also. Reviled him. In the same way. Do you know.

That morning. That morning. That we're reading of. This thief. That's now in glory. He cursed Christ. he reviled Christ that morning the morning he went to glory he cursed Christ there's hope for you something happened it can happen quickly born in sin lived in sin but died to sin what do we mean what do we mean died to sin well let's try and work it all out I'll put it this way four stages first he saw what was the change that came over him we've mentioned that already it is the difference between a saint and a sinner is a change of heart a change of mind a change of lifestyle regarding sin he saw sin in its true light what does he say to the other thief in verse 40 do you not fear

God do you not fear God he doesn't say do you not fear death you're about to die shortly are you not afraid of death that's not what he says neither does he say are you not afraid of hell he says do you not fear God who decides what's right or wrong the church no the minister definitely not who decides what's right or wrong God our maker he decides what's right or wrong and this thief saw it do you not fear God it's his standards that have to be kept it's God who decides what's right or wrong fear

God and then you'll fear sin do you not fear God he saw sin in its true light second stage he saw himself in his true light well what does he say there isn't it amazing what he said we indeed justly now isn't that something a rat with pain and he says to the other thief two crosses away we deserve what we're getting do you think crucifixions a bit OTT a bit over the top a bit not balanced according to sin the thief who's in heaven didn't think so he said we indeed justly we deserve what we're getting he saw himself in his true light you know you've probably done it too you've probably seen it also met somebody who said oh that was that was that was awful what that person did and what this people are doing but when it comes to themselves oh well

[19:47] I was under pressure you remember you don't know the corner I was in they can see they can technically decide what's right and what's wrong but when it comes to themselves they are not sinners they don't deserve the way they're being treated this man did he saw sin in its true light and he was able to apply it to himself I am a sinner I deserve what I'm receiving God is not unjust God is not over the top hell is what we deserve we're getting what we deserve God is giving us our due portion he saw sin in its true light he saw himself in his true light thirdly he saw

Christ in his true light we deserve what we're getting he says now I like to think that this this one was on the right hand side of Christ we don't know and it's not important don't make a theology of it but the sheep are on the right the goats are on the left so I'd like to think that this thief that was penitent he was on the right of Christ but he says to the thief two crosses away we deserve what we're getting but this man beside me on the next cross he has done nothing wrong he's done nothing wrong not only that but he says to him he thinks this man sorry he knows this man on the next cross has a kingdom eh man that's something what's a man who has a kingdom doing on a cross where are his people where's his kingship you can't have a kingdom unless you're a king and he says to this man on the next cross he's a king he's a king he's got a kingdom and he's never done anything wrong oh what he thought of Christ can I ask you what do you think of Christ that's the one question that's the question we're going to be asked on the great day of judgment that one question you've done all this you've done all that you've sinned here you've sinned there now did you ever hear about

Jesus now tell me what did you think of him what do you think of him why do you think he died why did he give his life up the one who died to sin saw Christ in his true light he saw sin in his true light he saw himself in his true light he saw Christ in his true light but he saw something else which the other thief didn't see he saw the gospel in its true light and he said remember me when you come into your kingdom remember me he saw the gospel you know sad to say you can reason with some people they acknowledge they're sinners they acknowledge

Christ is the savior they acknowledge Christ died as a substitute but they don't seem to be able to go that extra step and say well if I ask for forgiveness I too will be forgiven and I too will be on the way to heaven they don't seem to be able to take that last step but this man on this cross he can do

that Lord remember me now tell me tell me is that a long prayer is that a difficult prayer could the way of salvation become easier eh remember me I'm a sinner through and through but remember me he saw the gospel

Christ died for sinners not for good people for sinners and I am one of them are you one of them Christ died for sinners are you one of them this man didn't despair I'm astonished at the people that acknowledge the sinners acknowledge Christ came into the world for sinners but they can't put the two and two together they can't put themselves into it and just say Lord remember me bring me into your kingdom and what a glorious response today today you will be with me in paradise what glorious words one died in sin the second died to sin but oh it's the one in the middle that's so important the one who died for sin

[26 : 37] Jesus Christ what about him how is he born without sin the only one ever born without sin Adam wasn't born without sin he was created from the dust without sin but Christ was like you and me born born of a mother without sin he existed before he was conceived in the womb born holy born innocent unstained harmless separate separate from sinners distinct real human true

God distinct from sinners born without sin lived without sin oh how they tried to prove otherwise they couldn't even trump up false witnesses they organized two false witnesses but even then they couldn't get their act together trying to prove he did something wrong they had to change the charge against them at that mock trial they had to change it midway through have you ever heard of that a trial where they changed the charge halfway through proceedings they're not getting anywhere with the first and they couldn't get anywhere with the second but still carried on he lived without sin and forty days and forty nights tempted by satan in a waste howling wilderness starving with cold and hunger but even then even then they couldn't satan couldn't get him tried to trip him up went to him when he's hungry went to him when he's hungry and said change these stones into bread what a temptation that was you see he was not to do that but the temptation is always to sin to do what you are forbidden born without sin lived without sin died without sin no guile was found in his mouth racked in pain being given vinegar to drink when he's thirsty what does he do prays he prays for the soldiers father forgive them they don't know what they're doing lived without sin born without sin lived without sin died without sin holy harmless undefiled separate from sinners that's why his sacrifice could pay for an innumerable number of sinners he died for sin meaning his death actually atoned for sin as the substitute one man one black man appeared to the Kirk session wanting to come to the Lord's table but his English was broken and he wasn't getting on very well explaining his experience until finally he just said when he asked him how do you think you're saved and he said he die me no die that's it he die me no die Christ's my substitute he died in my place wonderful and as we said already we said this morning the evidence he rose rose from the dead that's how we know he paid for sin he rose from the dead every time you touch a coin and you see the date ask yourself where did that date come from what made the kings of the earth see before

Christ came history how was history dated it was dated by the years of kings rule in the third year of Darius the king in the 14th year of king Xerxes that's the way history was dated but a time came in history when date for history is dated from the year of our lord the roman emperor I mentioned it this morning changed it bc before christ ad after the death of christ sorry in the year of our lord latin for in the year of our lord I used to be well we'll leave it just now time's up oh yes sorry the resurrection the resurrection of christ verifies that everything christ said was real true meaningful what's the result as we close there's three men on a cross who do you see in the middle who do you see in the middle cross christ secured sinners through his death and resurrection he secured their salvation you can be safer in christ than adam was you are safer in christ than he was but you must see christ as he is and you must relate to him you must call upon his name you must say lord remember me i'm not worth it i don't deserve it i'm a sinner through and through but remember me remember me may god the holy spirit make his word his truth effectual to every one of us here let's bow our heads in prayer our father in heaven we pray that you would take the things of christ and make them ours here tonight may we not delay it may we not put it off may we put our trust alone in jesus hear us in mercy answer us in peace as we pray only and all in the name of our lord jesus christ amen we'll conclude our service of worship by singing from the psalter again psalm 34 psalm 34 on page 247 psalm 34 at verse 5 we'll sing verses 5 to 10 psalm 34 at verse 5 they looked to him and lightened were not shamed were their faces this poor man cried god heard and saved them from all his distresses down to verse 10 the lions young may hungry be and they may lack their food but

they that truly seek the lord shall not lack any good psalm 34 verses 5 to 10 they looked to him and light and were not shamed were their faces this poor man cried god heard and saved him from all his distresses the angel of the lord and comes and encompasses all those abide that they give they and glory

[37 : 02] Tis and see that God is good to trust in him is blessed.

Fear God has ensnared, the dim fear shall be with what oppressed.

The lions young may hungry be and they may lack their food.

But they that truly seek the Lord shall not like any good.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

[38 : 21] Now and forevermore. Amen.