

I find it hard to answer the question, *What is your favorite Bible verse?* How do I choose just one verse to be my favorite? Verses that I cherish can change in importance depending on what is happening in my life.

While this is true, I recently memorized a passage of Scripture from the book of Luke that has been close to becoming my favorite.

And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.”

***And he was saying, “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!”
And He said to him, Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”***

Luke 23:41-43

These verses record a dialog between Jesus and a thief during their crucifixion. The beauty of salvation is seen in these few verses. How can a person know that they will go to Heaven? That question can be answered by looking at the example of the thief.

First, the thief recognized that he was justly suffering for what he had done. He is comparing himself to Jesus, who had “done nothing wrong”. Only when we see ourselves truthfully – deserving death because of our deeds – are we able to do what the thief did next.

Second, he believed Jesus was his only Source of help. I found it interesting that he called Jesus by His name. Did he know Jesus? Had he been among the crowds that followed Him? Had he seen miracles? Whatever his relationship with Jesus had been, it wasn't until he saw himself as he really was that he could see who Jesus truly was – the perfect Messiah; the Savior. His remark about Jesus coming into His kingdom shows a belief that Jesus was the ruler of the Kingdom of God.

Thirdly, this man understood his desperate situation and asked for mercy. He was audacious in asking Jesus to remember him. He had NOTHING to offer Jesus. He did not have a life of good works to recommend him or promises for the future since he would be dying that day. This thief was completely at the mercy of the man beside him. I found the words, *“and he was saying”* interesting. I believe he must have repeated his plea for Jesus to remember him over and over. He was serious! This was no half-hearted request. He had nothing to cling to but Jesus.

And the thrill of it all is Jesus response – ***Today, you shall be with me in Paradise!*** Now I don't know about you, but I believe those words must have made that crucifixion a bit more bearable. That very day he would be in Heaven with Jesus! There was no waiting till his good works were weighed against his bad. No years resting in the grave. No, **“Today”!**

What an underserved, beautiful salvation is offered to those who follow the example of the thief. What a hope! What a Savior!

- Linda McCarthy