

# Salvation by Grace Alone

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[ 0 : 00 ] Turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 23. Luke 23, we're going to start at verse 26, and then we're going to jump from verse 26 to verse 32 and read through 43.

This is the account of the crucifixion, and it is also the account of a vile sinner who truly believed, and that moment received forgiveness from Jesus.

As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. Two other men, both criminals, also led him out.

I'm sorry, we're at verse 32 now. Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they were crucified.

There they crucified him, along with the criminals, one on his right and the other on his left. Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.

[ 1 : 17 ] And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, He saved others.

Let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One. The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself. There was a written notice above him which read, This is the king of the Jews. One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him. Aren't you the Christ?

Save yourself and us. But the other criminal rebuked him. Don't you fear God, he said, since you are under the same sentence?

We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong. Then he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

[ 2 : 24 ] Jesus answered him, I tell you the truth. Today you will be with me in paradise. Let's listen and hear the word of God preached.

There's a man in heaven today that doesn't belong there. At least that's what many people would say.

For there's many people in hell who were far more religious and moral than him. They went to church more often. They prayed more. They tried harder to love their neighbor and to keep the golden rule.

They did far more kind things for others than this man ever did. And nevertheless, the facts are these. Today, they are in hell and he is in heaven.

Who is this man? How did he get there? We'll get to that in a moment. But this man being in heaven is only offensive to those who think that heaven is a reward to be earned by those who deserve it.

[ 3 : 33 ] Rather than a free gift to be received by those who don't deserve it. And every form of false religion, by whatever name it be, has this as its foundation.

That heaven is for those who work hard enough to deserve it. And there's something in the heart of natural man that likes that. Because self-salvation gives them a reason to be proud of themselves.

And to boast. Rather than coming to Christ as an unworthy beggar. And receiving grace purely as a gift from the Lord Jesus.

And so if you ask many why they think they're saved. They always sing with Maria in the sound of music. Well, I must have done something good. That accounts for why I'm going to heaven.

And other people aren't. Well, in our text this morning we have an account of a man's conversion. That cuts the legs right out from under all such ideas.

[ 4 : 41 ] It's Luke 23 that we just heard read. Where we find this man dying on a cross right beside Jesus of Nazareth. And everything about this man and his conversion shouts to us that salvation is all of grace.

And has nothing to do with a man's own works. Now the first thing we're told about this man is that he was a criminal. A criminal.

Outside the Bible this word is used for bandits and thieves and pirates. Kids, you know what pirates do.

They steal. And they'll murder if they need to. Well, that was this man. If he saw something he wanted, he took it.

Even though it belonged to others. And if they tried to stop him, they might have paid with their lives. Criminal. It's the word that characterized him.

[ 5 : 44 ] It defined him. He had lived a life of crime. Matthew and Mark call him a robber. And now at last he's in trouble with the law.

He's caught. He's tried. He's found guilty of such crimes as deserves the worst penalty. The death penalty. A punishment the Romans reserved for the very worst of criminals.

The degrading and torturous death by crucifixion. But this man is not only in trouble with Roman law. He's also in trouble with God's law.

Whether he ever had a Bible and read the eighth commandment, you shall not steal. It was written upon his mind and heart, his conscience. Anytime someone stole from him, he knew it was wrong. He didn't like it at all. But that didn't keep him from stealing from others. He had no regard for God or his law. No respect for God's authority over him to command him what to do and not do.

[ 6 : 48 ] He did as he pleased and he treated God as a nobody. Ignored him as the greatest irrelevance to his life. He loved himself. He lived for himself.

Not for God and neighbor. He was a criminal. Before God. And so he not only has death by crucifixion awaiting him.

But that will then usher him into the presence of the judge of all the earth. To receive from him. What is due him. For the misdeeds that he has done.

What a horrifying prospect this man woke up to that morning. Death by crucifixion. And then everlasting torments of hell. Yawning to receive him.

Well, this is our criminal. Now notice with me his salvation by grace alone. The first thing we need to see is God's gracious providence. God's gracious providence.

[ 7 : 48 ] Control of the events of this man's life. We don't know how long he was on death row. Awaiting his execution. But finally the day arrived.

And it was Friday morning. And as he leaves his prison cell, he knows he's not coming back. This is it. He's heading to the slow and agonizing death of the cross.

And so carrying his cross, he's led through the streets of Jerusalem. And on out. Outside the gates. To Golgotha, the place of the skull.

And there he's nailed to his cross. Hoisted up into the air. And left to suffer and die. A painful, slow death. And he's not alone this day.

We're told there's another criminal being crucified with him. Perhaps a partner in crime. They're being crucified together. Whether or not that's true. More importantly.

[ 8 : 45 ] On a cross right between the two of them. Is another man. And the notice board nailed to his cross says. Jesus of Nazareth.

The king of the Jews. This is none other than the eternal son of God. Who because of God's purpose and plan to save sinners.

Became a man and visited this planet. And went to the cross. And died in the place of sinners that he might save them. What a scene.

The sinless savior. Hanging between these two great sinners. Now to the physical eye of the passerby and the crowd there. It looked like three great sinners.

Here they are. They're all getting what they deserved. The worst punishment of all. Indeed Isaiah says that he was numbered with the transgressors. And yet he's there.

[ 9 : 47 ] As the one who is holy, blameless and pure. What a difference between them. The two criminals are getting what they deserve. Jesus is getting what his people deserved.

As he bore their sins in his body to the tree. And suffered the punishment that would bring peace with God to all who trusted in him.

Think how close our criminal was to eternal damnation. A life of crime has brought him to the moment of execution.

Satan has been leading his captive. And he has him just one step away from eternal torments. That was his goal. And he's right there. Satan's licking his chops.

Another one damned. He hates you. He wants you in hell. Just as he wanted this criminal in hell. But from eternity past, God had other plans.

[10:46] And other purposes for this criminal. He was chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it's no longer by works. If it were grace would no longer be grace.

Romans 11:5 says. And as we begin to see God's gracious plan for him unfolding. It's in this gracious providence. That on this Friday morning, he finds himself dying just a few feet away from the only savior of sinners.

The very one who could save him from eternal torments and give him eternal life. He's right there beside him. And think how much turned on that fact alone. If this thief had been executed a day earlier or a day later, he would have missed Jesus.

And to miss Jesus is to miss heaven. What grace. What a gracious providence that. That they should be executed on the same day.

In the same place. Within talking distance of each other. What a strange way to be brought together. But here they are.

[11:59] Needy sinner. Gracious savior. Rear. Brought together. By God's undeserved providence. Now someone here this morning might be more like this criminal than you realize.

You may be in trouble with the law. May not be in trouble with the law of the land. But you are in trouble with the law of God. As we just read from James chapter 2.

Though you may not have robbed. If you desire things that you don't have. You covet. That too is a sin. And if we've broken one law. We're guilty of all of it.

We're lawbreakers. You're in trouble with the law. And God is a great king. He's given us these righteous laws.

They're good laws. And he expects to be obeyed. And there's a hell to pay for those who don't. And yet you too break this law of God.

[12:58] Like this criminal did. Whenever you want to. Maybe not the same laws. But you do break them. And that's what sin is. Everyone who sins breaks the law.

They ignore God's law. They transgress it. They do what they want instead of what God wants. And that means that some of you. Just like this criminal.

Are just a breath away from everlasting hell. And in that important way. You're just like this criminal. Though you may be a law abiding citizen of the land.

But what a gracious providence. You're still alive today. You're still in the land of the living. And the door to the ark of salvation is still open. And Jesus Christ has drawn near in the preaching of his word.

Here he is. He's come wherever two or three are gathered in his name. He's here by his spirit. And so it's true of you as it was true of that criminal.

[14:01] You the sinner. And Jesus the Savior. Oh hear him. Hear him today. Well what happened that day? Well though this needy sinner is so close to the Savior.

He's not seeking mercy from him. He's rather mocking him. Making fun of him. What a hard heart. That in his dying moments he would use his last breaths.

To ridicule the Son of God. To increase his pain. Now Luke doesn't tell us this fact. But both Matthew and Mark do. They speak of the two robbers who were crucified with Jesus.

One on his right. The other on his left. They tell of those who pass by. Hurling insults at Jesus. They tell about the religious leaders.

And the soldiers also mocking him. And then Matthew adds. In the same way the robbers. Plural. The robbers who were crucified with him.

[15:04] Also heaped insults on him. Mark says the same. Both criminals. The one on the right and the left. Got in on the act. Piling it on.

Hitting Jesus while he's down. So that's the gracious providence. Here they are. Within earshot. Of those blessed words of life from Jesus.

The second thing we need to see. Not only the gracious providence. But the gracious conversion of this man. Something incredibly happened. To one of these two criminals.

As he hung there on his cross beside Jesus. A wonderful change came over him. It's conversion. He became what he was not.

It's a supernatural thing. It's what our confession of faith calls. Effectual calling. That he was effectually called. Out of a state of spiritual death. To grace and salvation.

[16:03] In Jesus Christ. His mind was. Was suddenly enlightened. And he began to understand. The things of God. And who he was.

And what he needed. His heart of stone. Was replaced with a heart of flesh. With new desires. After Christ. And his will was renewed. Even as God.

Was effectually. Effectively. Drawing him. To Christ. Apart from which. He never. Would have. Or could have.

Come to Christ. As Jesus says in John 6.44. No one can come. To me. Unless the father draws him. And that's what was happening here.

Effectually. The father was drawing him. To faith in Jesus Christ. Now that was all of grace. There was nothing that this. This criminal did to prepare himself.

[17:00] To be called. By God. There was nothing he did. That made him a. A likable person. To be called. That qualified him to be called. Nothing at all.

Saul of Tarsus was another one. Who was called. Indeed. Every one of you who are in Christ. Were called. But Saul of Tarsus. Another great sinner. Who hated Christ. Was suddenly called. To Christ. Christ. And in Galatians 1.15. He says. God who set me apart. From birth. And called me. By his grace. The fact that I was called. And brought to Jesus Christ.

Is all of grace. Second Timothy 1.9. God who has saved us. And called us. To a holy life. Not because of anything. We have done. But because of his own purpose.

And grace. Now that's what happened. To this one thief. He was supernaturally called. And brought to Christ. Converted.

[17:54] By grace alone. The grace of God found him dead in sin. A vile heart. Mocking Jesus. Deserving wrath. But the grace of God changed him. And made him a new man in Christ.

Right there. On the cross. And that inner change of heart. Was immediately seen in his outward behavior. His mockery stopped. He condemns himself now.

And defends Jesus. He believes on him. And he prays to him for mercy. Now it's Luke alone. Of the four gospel accounts. Who tells us about this amazing conversion.

He records the two indispensable parts. Of conversion. Of every conversion. If somebody's conversion. You'll always find these two. Parts to conversion. Faith.

And repentance. It's like two sides to the same coin. Two elements of what conversion is. Both the work of God's saving grace. And the heart. Luke says.

[18:54] One of the criminals who hung there. Hurling insults at Christ. But the other criminal. No longer joined in. But instead rebuked him. And that's where we see this robber's repentance.

So let's look first at his repentance. And then we'll look at his faith. Repentance. What is repentance? It's a change of mind. That leads to a change of life. A change of the mind.

Towards sin. Towards self. Toward the savior. Let's look at each of those. It's a change of mind towards sin. Now just minutes earlier. He'd found pleasure in making fun of Jesus.

Along with all the others. He was happy. To be sitting in the seat. Of the scornful. Poking fun at Jesus. But no more.

He's lost his appetite for mocking. He now finds it repulsive to him. And repudiates it. And turns away from it. In disgust. That's a different mind.

[19:57] About sin. And you've seen it right here. On this cross. It happened. And so he stops mocking Jesus. And he rebukes his fellow criminal. For continuing to do so.

Don't you fear God? He shouts over to him. Since you are under the same sentence. By which he meant. A death sentence. We're not coming down alive.

Haven't you thought about that fact? And where we'll be. Just a few hours from now. Meeting our maker. Giving account of our lives.

To the judge of all. It's like our criminal. On his cross. Suddenly woke up. Indeed. The scriptures use that kind of language. To describe what it means.

To be converted. Remember the prodigal son. He came to his senses. It's like he woke up. And suddenly. He saw things. That were always there. That he didn't see. And so our criminal.

[20:57] Wakes up to the reality of God. He's now alive. To spiritual things. The unseen God. Is a reality. Judgment to come. Heaven and hell. He didn't give a thought to that.

But now. He thinks of it. And now. Sin is something serious. Wasn't serious before. He took it so lightly. Sure I sin. Who doesn't sin?

God will forgive. That's. But amazing change of mind. Toward his sin. And wherever the grace. The saving grace of God comes. There's always a change of mind. Towards sin. So that what was once loved.

Is now hated. And what was hated. Is now loved. And all of this. By God's grace alone. For. For the grace of God. Has appeared. To all men. Bringing salvation.

And it teaches us. The grace of God. That saves. Teaches us. To say no. To ungodliness. And to worldly passions. And to live self-controlled. Uprising. Godly lives.

[ 21 : 56 ] In this present age. The grace of God. You see. It changes our attitude. Towards sin. And that's God's grace. That found this man. Loving sin.

And immediately. Changed him. There on his cross. Yes. But it wasn't just his view of sin. That changed. There was a change. In his view of self. He goes from a high view of himself.

To a humble view of himself. You say. How do you know. He had a high view of himself. Because anyone. Who pokes fun at another. Has lifted himself up.

Over that person. Bullies who make fun of others. Are proud. They think they're better. Than the other. And from their high perch. They look down on others.

You see. Mockery is an arrogant sin. It elevates ourselves. Above the one we mock. And this man was so proud. That he saw himself. Above even Jesus.

[ 22 : 51 ] The sinless son of God. And that he would mock him. Oh how high he. Was on his perch. But listen to him now. We're punished justly.

We're getting just what we deserve. Now that's a different tune. Isn't it? What a change of mind.

Toward himself. Humbled now for his sin. Condemning himself.

Putting himself down. And in public. In front of the. The masses who had gathered. To watch.

Confessing his guilt. One of the hardest things.

To find in prison. Is someone who deserves. To be there. Just ask them. Wasn't me. No one's guilty. They all got trapped.

It was. I was framed. Wasn't. They got the wrong guy. It is the nature of sin. To excuse ourselves.

To deny. How sinful and guilty we are. For in. His own eyes.

[ 23 : 48 ] The wicked man. Flatters himself. Too much to detect. Or hate his sin. But this criminal. Now has a new view of self. And he's making no excuses. With nothing good to say.

For himself. He owns his sin and guilt. And converting grace. Always does that. It brings us to Christ. With nothing good to say. For ourselves.

We own our sin. We own our deservingness. Of hell. Everyone I've ever baptized. Has confessed. That they got.

That if they got. What they deserved. They would be in hell. How do you view your sin? How do you view yourself?

This man on the cross. Got a new view of himself. A right view. And it humbled him. But then he also got a new view. Of the Savior. A changed mind.

[ 24 : 44 ] Toward Jesus. In every conversion. One of the new things. That replaces the old things. Is the way we. View Jesus. Listen to how Paul puts it. He. He got a new view of Jesus.

Didn't he? He went from trying to. Kill every follower of his. To preaching him. And Paul says in 2nd Corinthians 5. From now on. From now on. We regard no one.

From a worldly point of view. That's how we view Jesus before. But from now on. We don't view them. From a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ.

In this way. We do so no longer. For if anyone is in Christ. He's a new creature. The old's gone. The new's come. And all of this is from God. That's grace. And so the criminal starts that day.

With a low view of Jesus. He saw no beauty in him. He saw nothing in that man. On the middle cross. That would make him want him. That would make him. Want to. To stop his life of sin.

[ 25 : 39 ] And to follow him. He. Saw no beauty in him. And mocked him. And saw him.

As a religious fanatic. To poke fun at. A joker king. Just to kick around. With everyone else. But all of it's changed now. He's looking at Jesus. In different light.

Spiritual eyes. Have been given him. Eyes opened by grace alone. And he goes from mocking Jesus. To speaking in his defense. What's his view of Jesus now?

We are punished justly. We're getting what our deeds deserve. But this man. He's done nothing wrong. You see. He's. He's. He's saying.

He's righteous. He's holy. He's not a criminal like us. He's praising. What a high view of Jesus Christ he has. And he's standing up for Jesus.

[ 26 : 38 ] When it was the most unpopular time to do so. When the whole crowd was mocking him. He alone is found praising him. What a change.

A new view of Jesus. And that's what the grace of God does in repentance to a sinner. Changes his mind. Toward his sin. Toward himself. Toward this savior.

And this repentance is pure grace. A gift of God. He didn't earn it. He didn't prepare himself for it. Unless you call mocking Jesus preparing yourself for grace.

No. Repentance is a gift of grace. And right along with repentance is the gift of faith. Faith.

Trust. In Christ. Believing on Christ. Christ. And he's given faith as well. Now. Where did that faith come from?

[ 27 : 34 ] Well it came from God. But how did he bring it to this man? We're not told exactly. But if you think about the different insults that were being hurled at Jesus.

While this man is hanging beside Jesus. He heard them. He heard a lot of gospel. Hanging on his cross that day. He saved others.

He's a savior. Huh? Let him save himself. If he is the Christ. The Messiah of God. The chosen one. Oh.

This is the Messiah. The chosen one of God. You hear? He heard that. And then we can hear his faith.

And his cry for mercy. He cries out. Jesus remember me. When you come into your kingdom. John Calvin. Who was not given to exaggeration.

[ 28 : 31 ] Says that since the world was created. There's been no more remarkable example of faith. Than this man. This man now sees Jesus as a king.

With a kingdom. What others are only mocking. He sees as reality. That Jesus is a king. He doesn't believe for a moment.

That death is the end of this man. But that beyond death. He has a coming kingdom. And so he commits himself. And his eternal salvation.

To the mercy and protection of that king. Jesus. Remember me. When you come into your kingdom. That's remarkable faith.

When you think what his eyes saw. As he took a glance over. At the middle cross that day. What did he see? Well there was the emaciated form of a man.

[ 29 : 30 ] Whose face was swollen. From having been beaten. Beyond human recognition. Isaiah 52. Nailed to a cross. In naked shame.

His blood streaked body. Heaving in pain. And dying in apparent weakness. Just like they were. That's what he saw. Oh yes. And the sign. For sure.

It said. Jesus of Nazareth. The king of the Jews. The king. Of the Jews. That was only Pilate's cruel joke. This is a king for you Jews.

He suits you guys. Look at him. Though they wanted him to change what he'd written. What I've written. I've written. He loved getting one up on them. Because they had pushed him.

To the crucifixion of Jesus. And. His. His. His. Throne.

[ 30 : 26 ] It's a cruel cross. His crown. A crown of thorns. Pounded into his head. Mocking his claim. They dressed him like a king. In pure mockery.

And yet. It's precisely then. When he's despised. And rejected of men. Went to all outward appearances. Jesus looked like no king at all. That the criminal. With these new eyes of faith.

Sees him as the king. And the king. Who can change his eternity. And he hangs all of his hopes. For the next life. Upon that king. Jesus remember me.

When you come into your kingdom. He places a value. On Jesus kingdom. Is more desired. Than life itself. And he sees in Jesus.

A king. Who is gracious. And forgiving. Remember. He was there. In earshot. When. Having crucified Jesus. And mocked him. He heard Jesus response.

[ 31 : 21 ] Saying father. Forgive them. For they do not know. What they're doing. I'm sure this criminal. Never heard. That coming from the mouth. Of a man crucified.

But he heard it that day. That there's. There's forgiveness. For these murderers. Could there be forgiveness.

For me. Jesus. Remember me. Nothing good to say. For himself. Hanging all his hopes. For heaven. Upon. This crucified king Jesus.

And it's then. That he heard the sweetest words. That any man. Any dying man. Has ever heard. When Jesus says. Today. You will be. With me. In paradise.

What a scene. Two crosses. Side by side. One. A wicked sinner. Deserving hell. Begging for mercy. And the other. A gracious savior.

[ 32 : 18 ] Promising forgiveness. And heaven. Consider the gracious promise. Thirdly. We've seen the gracious providence. The gracious conversion. Now the gracious promise. The assurance. From Jesus.

He introduces his words. With this statement. I tell you the truth. Kids. Jesus always told the truth. But sometimes. When he told the truth. The truth. Was so amazingly shocking. That people had a hard time.

Believing it was true. And when that was the case. Jesus often introduced. His remarks. By saying. I tell you the truth. You might have a hard time. Believing this.

But I'm telling you now. This is for real. This is true. I tell you the truth. Today. You.

You. Yes. I'm talking to you. Criminal. Con man. Criminal. That you are. Today. You.

[ 33 : 14 ] I know all about your past. Yet today. You. Will be with me. You. With me.

What a combination. You. The sinner. With me. The sinless savior. And king. But you see. That's why he came.

That's why I've come. To seek and to save. What's lost. That's why I'm dying. On this cross. To save my people. From their sins. Dying the death. They deserve. To die under God's condemnation.

So that whoever believes in me. Should not perish. But have everlasting life. You. With me. That is eternal life. To be with Jesus.

Forever and ever. And it all begins today. My friend. Today. You. Will be with me. In paradise. Is today the day you're going to die?

[ 34 : 10 ] Then today you'll be with me in paradise. Not in some purgatory. Where you must work off your sin debt. And suffer so many years of punishment. Before you make your way up to heaven. No. There's no punishment left for believers.

For the punishment that has brought us peace. Was upon him. And by his stripes. We are healed. Amen. When he had purged our stains. He took his seat above. Calvary is the only purgatory.

There ever was. And it's there that Jesus. Purged our sins. He got rid of them. He wiped them out. He took them away. By suffering for them himself.

So there's now no condemnation remaining. For those who are in Christ Jesus. On the cross. It was hell for him. That it might be eternal paradise for us. I tell you the truth man.

This is true. Today. You. Will be with me. In paradise. And if this poor thief on the cross. Should doubt it. There and then. Jesus assures him. This is the truth friend.

[ 35 : 08 ] It is no lie. And sinner friend. If ever you should doubt it. Hear the words of our savior. To this wicked man. Who had lived his whole life in sin.

And at the very end of a wicked life. Was assured. That today. You will be with me in paradise. Well that's the. Amazing providence.

The gracious conversion. The gracious assurance. And promise of Jesus. And I would ask you. Does not everything about this conversion. Shout that salvation is by grace alone.

Everything. About it. If salvation is not by grace alone. This guy's in big trouble. Think about it. If he's got to contribute. Any good works of righteousness.

Of his own. To merit heaven. It's over for him. He's got none to offer. He's wasted his whole life. Sinning right up to the very end. No more talk about good deeds.

[ 36 : 06 ] Weighing. Outweighing bad deeds. He's run out of time. He's got no opportunity. To make amends. For sins of the past. He can't come down from his cross. And do some. Works of penance.

To earn his way. Into God's favor. He can't be baptized. He can't go to church. He can't help the needy. He can't do any of these good works. He's nailed to a cross.

At the end of a wicked life. And going immediately from that cross. To meet his maker. And you know what Jesus didn't say? I'm sorry.

You blew it. It's just too late for you. If you can't do anything for me. I can't do anything for you. No. No. He said today.

If you. Trusting in me. Today you. Will be with me. In paradise. Salvation. Is all of grace. Through faith alone.

[ 37 : 02 ] In Christ alone. There's only one gospel. That saves. And Paul calls it. The gospel of the grace of God. I think it was Spurgeon. Who said. If your gospel. Is not good for all. It's not good for any.

If your gospel. Is not good news. For this dying thief. Then it's not good news. For anybody. How could he say that? Because the only. Saving gospel.

According to Jesus. Is that. Whosoever. Believes on him. Shall not perish. But have everlasting life. Whoever. Believes on him. Do you have a whosoever gospel?

Good news to offer. That one and all. Or does it exclude. The real bad people. Wicked thieves on their crosses. With only a few seconds remaining. Or minutes remaining. In life.

You see. It's only the whosoever gospel. That is the true gospel. The only gospel. That saves. Is the come as you are gospel. Not a clean up your act.

[ 38 : 02 ] First gospel. Because if you tarry. Until you're better. You will never come at all. Because you can't clean up your act. The fact is. That nobody in heaven.

Deserves to be there. Not just this guy. Everybody else who's there. Other than Jesus Christ. Doesn't belong to be there. If you get there by. Meriting it.

But that's the only way. Anyone gets to heaven. It's by acknowledging. You don't deserve it. And accepting Jesus. And eternal life. Is the free gift. That it is. And is that not the glory.

Of the gospel. That we can say. To any man. Woman. Boy or girl. Whoever you are. Whatever you've done. And however long you've done it. If you will acknowledge.

Your sin against God. And your deservingness. Of eternal punishment. And put your trust. In what Jesus has done. For sinners. He will save you now. That's the good news.

[ 38 : 59 ] That's why it's called. The gospel. Of grace. It's the good news. About the grace. Of God. And there's something. Wondrous about the timing. Of this conversion. That even as Jesus.

Is here on the middle cross. Pouring out his life. Unto death. Eternal life. Was flowing to this. Hell deserving sinner.

Hanging on his cross. The first. Fruit. Of Jesus. Atoning work.

And as he's dying. And as he's dying. The father gives him. The first convert. After his atoning work. As the sin debt. Is being paid here.

The sin debt. Is being forgiven. Over here. What a. What a God. What a savior. Is this not a God. To worship.

[ 39 : 55 ] This is a savior. Who does helpless. Sinners good. And isn't it significant. That the first fruit. Of the savior's suffering. While. Even while on his cross.

Should be a conversion. That makes unmistakably. Plain. That the sinner's works. Or lack of them. Has nothing to do. With salvation. That has everything.

To do. With being a gift. Freely given. And not a reward earned. And that is the point. God wants the world. To get right.

It's like he's saying. Look at this first convert. After Jesus died. Is here dying on the cross. Who is he? How did he get into heaven? Look closely. And get the point.

That salvation. Is all of grace. So let every unworthy sinner. Coming along afterwards. Take note of that. Salvation. The way to heaven.

[ 40 : 52 ] Is right here. Christ and him crucified. The gate. The very gate. Of heaven. But why? Why is God making this point.

So clear on Golgotha? Can't we read something. Of the heart of Jesus. In this? You remember Hebrews 12. 2. That it was for the joy.

That was set before him. That he endured the cross. What was the joy? What was pleasing the father? Or doing exactly what he told him to. But it was also bringing many sons and daughters to glory with him.

The joy of saving sinners. It's that joy. And this. Saving this sinner. Was no small part of our savior's joy.

