

May 22, 2018

## Dial Daily Bread: A Giant Leap of Faith

Dear Friends of "Dial Daily Bread,"

If there is anyone out there in the world who feels unworthy of God's goodness, let him think of the thief on the cross (the eventually believing one).

His body is inert; all he has left are the functions of his eyes, his ears, his voice; so he can't "do" any good works to merit God's goodness. If he is saved at last, it must be totally "by grace." The same with us.

He sins even while he is crucified on his cross, for we read that he "reviled" the sinless Savior, the Son of God (Mark 15:32). He joined the unbelieving scribes and Pharisees and the rabble in ridiculing "the Son of God," challenging Jesus to prove that He is the Son of God by coming down from the cross. He joined his fellow thief in this bitterness, and "reviled Him with the same thing" ("cast the same in His teeth," *King James Version*, a vivid expression of his contempt; Matt. 27:44). "Let Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe," they mock; and our thief is joining in heaping this bitter ridicule on Jesus (Mark 15:32). If anybody on earth proves himself unworthy of salvation, it must be this man!

Jesus utters no word to rebuke him (or them).

But then something happens: our thief does what Jesus didn't do--he rebukes his fellow thief, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?" (Luke 23:40).

Then our thief confesses his unworthiness: "And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds" (Luke 23:41). Note: he takes a giant leap forward, by faith. He does the same thing that Paul later did by faith when he said, "I am crucified *with Christ*" (Gal. 2:20, KJV; emphasis added). He climbs up by faith to share the place of those who at last "overcome ... even as [Christ] also overcame" to "set down with [Him] in His throne" (Rev. 3:21, KJV). Some of us have spent a lifetime learning how self can be "crucified with Christ," and here this man has gotten there in a few minutes! (That should encourage us to believe that when the loud cry of Revelation 18 goes out to lighten the earth with glory, people will respond quickly and overcome.)

Our thief confesses the sinlessness of Jesus: "this Man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41).

He prays to be saved from hell: "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (vs. 42). Then he hears words that many a worldly billionaire would give anything to hear: "You will be with Me in Paradise" (vs. 43).

Take heart, burdened soul; there is no higher place than that of this thief, or greater reward. Let's join him where he is.

--Robert J. Wieland

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