

The power of the Cross
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Introduction: What causes a man to change?

- A. We are strongly prone to self-deception and self-justification!
 - 1. Our desire for predictability and ease can close our minds to reality!
 - 2. Because change often involves pain, we put it off. In this we can destroy the conscience so that the day of change never comes!
 - 3. How many here believe that Jesus was raised from the dead? Are we fervently serving the Lord? If not, why not? **(2 Pt 3:4-5; Lk 12:18-20)**
- B. Please reach out in your mind and visit the cross of Christ anew.
 - 1. What causes a man to change? The suffering and death of Christ can be a catalyst in opening hearts.
 - 2. If we could only see ourselves as God does, then we would empty ourselves and let God fill our lives and build us up! **(Mt 5:3; Lk 9:23-24)**

I. What caused the thief on the Cross to change?

- A. How does a man respond to intense suffering? Often pain can show us what we are really made of!
 - 1. Throughout the various trials, mocking's, beatings and even the cross itself, Jesus is thinking about how to help others.
 - 2. Even as He is being led to the cross, He warns others about the future destruction of Jerusalem. **(Lk 23:27-31)**
- B. Both thieves started the day as angry scoffers and blasphemers. Their execution was rushed so they could serve as "props" to make Jesus appear guilty.
 - 1. This was actually foretold in prophecy! **(Isa 53:9)**
 - 2. Jesus never once struck back. In this He showed utter confidence in God. **(Isa 53:7; 1 Pt 2:21-23)**
 - 3. Did the thieves curse and swear? They understood what Jesus was suffering and could see a strength that soke to their hearts. **(Mt 27:44)**
- C. The intense hatred of the religious leaders was seen. **(Lk 23:35; Mt 27:39-44)**
 - 1. If someone with no background of these events had walked upon this scene what would he think?
 - 2. What were the leaders saying? These were "Taunts that offer a tribute."
- D. We see the crucified Jesus.
 - 1. How did Jesus respond to these injustices? "Father, forgive them". **(Lk 23:34)**
 - 2. The greatest influence one can have is to do right while suffering.

II. Consider the mind of Christ at the cross in prophecy (Psalms 22)

- A. Those who claim to be atheist and agnostics rarely have taken time to see the evidence found in the scriptures. Consider the fulfilled prophecy of Jesus in Psalms 22.
- B. Jesus combines what He currently sees with His eyes with that which He remembers in the scriptures and in His life!

1. He *looks out* at the scene of the cross and appears forsaken. (Psa 22:1-2)
 - a. Jesus was crying out to God in His pain. (Mt 27:46)
 - b. He cried out both in light and darkness. (Mt 27:45)
2. Jesus *remembers* that God is always true! (Psa 22:3-5)
 - a. He remembers that God is "enthroned in the praises of Israel."
 - b. From the scriptures He knew of God's sure promises! (Ps 34:3-5)
3. He *looks out* and saw His broken body and scoffers despising Him. (Psa 22:6-8)
 - a. His bloody and bruised body had *the appearance of a worm*.
 - b. The *very words of His enemies* were prophesied! (Mt 27:41-44)
4. Jesus *remembers* how God had always loved Him. (Psa 22:9-11)
 - a. God provided for Him from conception! He does so to us as well.
 - b. God will always help when there is "none to help."
5. Jesus *saw* that His body was wounded and dying. (Psa 22:12-18)
 - a. Jesus described in detail the physical effects of a death upon the cross.
 - b. Psalms describes even how they gambled for His clothing. (Mt 27:35-36)
 - c. This was written 1000 years before the event and 700 years before crucifixion was invented in history! THINK!
6. Jesus *knew from scripture* that God would deliver Him. (Psa 22:19-21)
 - a. In spite of everything He could see, He knew that God would respond!
 - b. This is how we also must prepare for future suffering!
7. "You have answered Me." (Psa 22:21)

III. The power of the example of the cross

- A. *One* thief responded to this example. (Lk 23:42)
 1. He saw the greatness of his own sin and *makes no excuses*. It is sad to see the rationalization of those who claim to serve God.
 2. Did the *other thief* change too? (Lk 23:39)
 3. Only *one thief yielded his will* to stand for the Lord! (Lk 23:40-41)
 4. It is *not difficult to know* when one's heart has turned to the Lord! (Heb 1:9)
- B. A Roman centurion *also responded* to this example. (Mt 27:50-54)
 1. He needed more instruction and would later have that opportunity.
 2. Why did this centurion see that *the Jewish leaders could not*?
- C. Are *we moved* by the cross of Christ?
 1. This message must prick our hearts and *create a great change*. (Acts 2:37-38)
 2. We must constantly *remember who we are*. (Gal 6:14)
 3. Some begin the battle and then *become enemies of the cross*. (Phil 3:18)
 4. We become enemies when we let our appetites rule our lives.
 5. We become enemies when we fear men more than we do God. (Gal 6:12; 1:10)

Conclusion: How do we remember this great event?