

Assurance

I. Slide1 **Announce:**

- A. Slide2-4 Larry: Bulgaria. Children's Ministry Volunteers. YAM's Event.
- B. Slide5,6 CMCS: Preview Night. This Fri 5-8pm. **Video.**
- C. Slide7 Israel/Jordan, March 2020, Info Mtg today 1:30pm upstairs rm.133.
- D. *Prayer:* Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine. Air of salvation purchase of God. Born of his spirit, washed in his blood. Like Paul Lord, we don't want to *boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

II. Slide8/9a **ASSURANCE (Lk.23:43) A Word of Assurance** Lk.23:39-43

- A. Lk.23:39-43 *One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" 40 But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." 43 And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."*
 - 1. **Assuredly**(amen), I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise. Lk.23:43NKJV
- B. 2 thieves with sin **in** them. Christ w/sin **on** Him. [The Sinner. The Saint. The Savior]
 - 1. We have on the **center** cross, The Cross of **Redemption**.
To **one side**, The Cross of **Reception**. To **the other side**, The Cross of **Rejection**.
 - 2. Slide9b 1 died **In** sin. 1 died **To** sin. 1 died **For** sin. (CM Logo 3-crosses)
- C. These **2 thieves** were **alike** in many ways:
 - 1. **Both** were led to be crucified with Jesus. **Both** were notoriously wicked. **Both** were equally near Christ. **Both** saw the same things. **Both** heard the same things (*Father forgive them...*). **Both** were suffering acutely. **Both** knew they'd be dead by 6pm (Passover). **Both** urgently needed forgiveness. **Both** wanted to be saved from death.

2. We shouldn't call them **good** thief/**bad** thief...*for* they were both **bad**.
Better would be **saved** thief/**unsaved** thief...that would become their *only*
distinction this day.

a) These 2 represent the whole human race. *All* races, nations, & cultures are **divided**
by...*the cross*.

3. Slide9c One saved that none would **despair**. Only 1 that none would **presume**.

D. Slide9d Outline: Paradise Lost (*The Cross of Rejection*). Paradise Gained (*The Cross of Reception*). Paradise Today (*The Cross of Redemption*).

III. Slide10a **PARADISE LOST** (Lk.23:39) *1st thief. The Cross of Rejection*

A. *One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!*

B. Usually we think of only *the other thief* asking about salvation, *but* the unrepentant thief did here also.

1. Slide10b But this man wanted a Christ...*but w/o a Cross*.

2. He wanted Him to **come down** off the cross & save himself & save them
(*i.e. Get me out of this mess*)

3. Slide10c He wanted saving from his **physical** death, *but* had no cares about his **spiritual** death. [He wasn't trying to save his **soul**, *but* only to save his **skin**]

4. There is an *infinite qualitative difference* between *Save me*, and *Save me!*

C. Much has been said about the prayer of *the penitent thief* on the cross next to Jesus. *But dare we forget the one who didn't pray?*

1. He, too, could have requested mercy. He, too could have asked Jesus to remember him in the new kingdom. *But he didn't*. He offered no prayer of repentance. *And Jesus didn't demand one*.

2. Jesus gave both criminals the same choice. One said *remember me*. The other jeered saying, *save us from physical death*.

a) There are times when God sends **thunder** to **stir** us. There are times when God sends **blessings** to **lure** us. *But then* there are times when God sends **nothing but silence** as He honors us with *the freedom to choose where we spend eternity*. :(

- D. Though *a few yards* away from each other, soon to be *an eternity apart*, literally.
- E. Thief #1 speaks. He's a *pragmatist* (one who *does whatever works*). The problem with this is...*it doesn't work*. A pragmatist is one who only takes a **short range of view of things** and doesn't take *tomorrow* into consideration. He wanted *Christ w/o a cross*.
1. Note, Jesus doesn't even respond to thief #1. And His silence is *deafening*.

IV. Slide11a **PARADISE GAINED (Lk.23:40,41)** *2nd thief. The Cross of Reception*

- A. *But the other rebuked him, saying, Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.*
- B. Here is Jn.12:32,33 getting kicked off. *And I, when I am **lifted up** from the earth, will **draw** all people to myself. He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.*
1. Here is the 1st man **drawn** to **Jesus** when He was lifted up.
 2. A magnet causes *another metal* to have 1 of 2 forces...*Attraction or Repulsion*.
 3. Like a giant magnet being raised up...that 1st metal **shaving felt the draw**, & **let go**...*of self, the world, sin, flesh*, & **stopped refusing** the magnetic pull.
 - a) This man found himself **in the morning** in *a state of **Condemnation***.
At noon in *the state of **Graces***. **And before dinner**, in *the state of **Glory***.
- C. Slide11b *By grace you are saved* – Grace **planned** his salvation, grace **provided** his salvation, & grace **overcame** the hardness of his heart. (he had once reviled him also)
1. I love this man's testimony. My favorite in all of Scripture.
 2. It's even *better than* Paul's. *What do I mean?*
 3. I realize, every individual salvation is *of Grace*. And everyone's salvation is *special, unique & beautiful*. So why do I say it's *better than* Saul's/Paul's?
 4. Saul had exemplary character to **begin** with *of the law he was blameless, a Pharisee of the Pharisees*.
 - a) And **after** his conversion...well, you know what he accomplished for the kingdom.
 5. Slide11c **But this thief** had *no moral life before* his conversion, & *no life of active service after* it.

- a) **Slide12a** Aren't these the 2 lies that unbelievers hold on to? *I'm a pretty good moral person. And, Look at my works.*
- b) **Slide12b** A.W.Pink said it best, **He could not walk** in the paths of righteousness for there was a nail through either **foot**. **He could not perform any good works** for there was a nail through either **hand**. **He could not turn over a new leaf & live a better life** for he was **dying**.
6. **Grace, grace, grace**. The only thing God found in **you & I** was *abundant room* for **His mercy & grace**.
7. **Slide12c** Remember, *There is more **grace** in God's heart than sin in our past.*
- D. I've never been surprised by God's **judgment**, **but** I'm still stunned by his **grace**. God's **judgment** has never been a problem for me. In fact, it always seemed right.
1. Lightning bolts on **Sodom**. Fire on **Gomorrah**...good job, God. **Egyptians** swallowed in the Red Sea...they had it coming.
 2. **Discipline** is easy for me to swallow. It's logical to soak up. **But God's grace?** It's *anything but*.
- E. **Slide13a Thief#2** somehow got incredible insight into salvation. 4 stepping-stones to salvation:
1. **He Recognized** – the fear of God.
 2. **He Admitted** – his own sinful nature.
 3. **He Confessed** – Christ's sinless nature.
 4. **He asked** – for the salvation Jesus offers.
- F. He also becomes the *1st an only person* of Scripture that address Him as **Jesus**.
(in all translations other than KJV, NKJV)
- G. **Slide13b** So **what** made him turn to Christ? *Maybe* he saw *the world's 1st gospel tract* tacked to the top of Jesus cross? *This is the King of the Jews!* Maybe, those words of **forgiveness**.
- H. Picture him now walking together *with Him (Jesus)* through the pearl-gates. **Who is this favored companion of the Redeemer?** A patriarch, an apostle, a king, **nope**... *a former thief!*
- I. We are all **thieves** in some way or another:

1. We too have **stolen** much. Maybe someone's **items**, or maybe someone's **reputation**. Maybe by *aiding & abetting* immoral **thoughts/images**, thus stealing someone's **dignity**. In raising our voice, we stole someone's **peace**. Maybe we've stolen someone's **worth** or **self-respect**.

a) Lord, remember me *a common thief*.

J. Thief #2 starts, don't you fear God? Where does his theology come from? Here we have a true *death-bed conversion*.

K. Some can say *we preach Christ*, but then stop there. They preach maybe an **ethical** Christ, a **social** Christ, a **loving** Christ, a **warm fuzzy** Christ, but Paul said, *we preach Slide13c Christ crucified*. [Not a Christ w/o a cross. Not a bloodless gospel]

1. What does **the cross** mean to you?

2. Gal.2:20 ***I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.***

V. Slide14a **PARADISE TODAY** (Lk.23:42,43) *Jesus. The Cross of Redemption*

A. *And he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. 43 And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.*

1. This is the last kind word spoken to Jesus before He dies. Not spoken by a **friend**, or his **mom**, but by *a common thief*.

B. Slide14b **The Center Cross** is the **dividing line** between **Paradise** & **Perdition**.

1. The cross is "I", crossed out. It is a **minus**, turned into a **plus +**

2. The cross was a place where God drew his **line in the sand**. On one side **salvation**, the other **damnation**.

3. Slide14c The cross's crossbeam acts like a **scale**, **weighing out love & justice**, where all humanity has been **weighed and found wanting**.

a) Here 2 thieves are teetering **between life & death**, **between heaven & hell**.

b) **But here**, the 1 thief is now **lifted off those weighted scales**.

C. Slide15a Here we truly see what Paul would later pen, *Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.*

1. Slide15b The thief asked just to be **remembered**. Jesus responds w/**you will be w/me**. The thief asked **when you come into your kingdom**. Jesus responds w/**no, Today!** The thief asked for **remembrance in the millennial kingdom**.

Jesus responds w/**no, in Paradise!**

a) *Ken Gire*, Here his eyes met the Savior's, for a moment all time stands still. In Jesus' eyes no hatred, no scorn, no judgment. He sees only one thing...**forgiveness**.

b) The thief closed his eyes on earth and awoke in paradise. The **soul** of the believer journeys home *while* the **body** of the believer awaits the resurrection.

D. Slide15c Paradise: what is this paradise? The word is found in only 2 other places in the NT

1. 2 Cor.12:2-4 *I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven - whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. 3 And I know that this man was caught up into paradise - whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows - 4 and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter.* [Thus **paradise** is the heavenly abode of God]

a) 2nd place is Rev.2:7 *To him who conquers, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.* And if we look at *the end of the book* (Rev.22:1) we find that the tree of life is **in the heavenly city of God**.

E. Wow...to be *with Him*.

1. See, are #1 calling **isn't** to **serve** (though I believe we should serve). **No**, we are called to **have fellowship with Him**.

a) 1 Cor.1:9 *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

F. Paul longed to be **with Jesus**.

1. He didn't say, **absent from the body and free from all pain and care**.

2. He didn't say, **absent from the body and translated to glory**.

3. Slide15d He said, **absent from the body and to be present with the Lord**.

G. Slide15e So Jesus answers the questions: How can I know? *Assuredly*. By what authority? *I say unto you*. When? *Today*. With whom? *You will be with Me*. And Where? *in Paradise*.

1. Jesus gets only *1 thing* to say to the penitent thief, & He chooses... *You will be with Me today!* What could be a better promise than that? :O
2. **Jesus** is the only *comfort* when you are about to leave this world behind.
3. As the old spiritual sang... *Oh when I come to die. Oh when I come to die. Oh when I come to die. Give me Jesus. You may have the world. Give me Jesus.*