

**SBC – April 2, 2023**  
**The Story of Three Crosses**

The whole of humanity is symbolized in 3 Roman Crosses that stood on the hill of Golgotha 2000 years ago.

**Slide # 1**



**Slide # 2**

**Luke 23:33 (NKJV)**

**33** And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, **one on the right hand and the other on the left.**

Christ was crucified in the middle of two sinners. These 3 people represent the whole of humanity. One died **IN** sin, one died **TO** sin, and one died **FOR** sin.

The two thieves who were crucified represent the whole of lost mankind. Both were conceived by a father and born to a mother. Both were marked by sin as we all are.

**Isaiah 53:6 (NKJV)**

**6** All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

**Romans 3:23 (NKJV)**

**23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Both thieves were guilty sinners and both stood under the same sentence of death. Neither could atone for their guilt and both were helpless to save themselves.

Both initially shared the same opinion about Jesus and mocked Him!

**Slide # 3**

**Matthew 27:39–40 (NKJV)**

**39** And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads  
**40** and saying, “You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

**Matthew 27:44 (NKJV)**

**44** Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.

Both crucified thieves had the same experience, saw the same thing, heard the same thing, experienced the same agony. Both were the same distance from Jesus. Both could hear Jesus and talk to Jesus.

Both heard what the crowd said and what Jesus said. Both saw the large placard over the cross announcing this is the KING OF THE JEWS which is recorded in all 4 gospels.

#### Slide # 4

<i>Ουτος εστιν Ιησους ο βασιλευς των Ιουδαιων.</i>									
THIS	IS	JESUS	THE	KING	OF THE	JEWS			
[Matthew 27:37]									
<i>Ο βασιλευς των Ιουδαιων.</i>									
THE	KING	OF THE	JEWS						
[Mark 15:26]									
<i>Ουτος εστιν ο βασιλευς των Ιουδαιων.</i>									
THIS	IS	THE	KING	OF THE	JEWS				
[Luke 23:38]									
<i>Ιησους ο Ναζωραιος ο βασιλευς των Ιουδαιων.</i>									
JESUS	THE	NAZARENE	THE	KING	OF THE	JEWS			
[John 19:19]									

Both heard the crowds saying, “**He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’**” (Mt. 27:43). Both heard Jesus say, “**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.**” (Lk. 23:34).

Both thieves were equally distant from gates of heaven; and both were equally close to the gates of hell. Both were crucified with Christ and Christ was crucified for both of them. Both had opportunity to decide what they would do with Jesus – either to believe in Him or not. Both were at an eternal crossroads with Jesus!

One of the thieves remained unrepentant and mockingly spoke to Jesus...

### **Slide # 5**

#### **Luke 23:39 (NKJV)**

**39** Then one of the criminals who were hanged **blasphemed Him**, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.”

But something happened in the heart of the other thief who had just moments before also been blaspheming Jesus. He had a change of mind about Jesus – admitting his own sin but seeing Jesus as innocent.

### **Slide # 6**

#### **Luke 23:40–41 (NKJV)**

**40** But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?

**41** And **we indeed justly**, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but **this Man has done nothing wrong**.”

In so doing this repentant thief acknowledged his guilt and that indeed he was deserving of the death penalty.

And then he looked to Jesus to be His Savior.

### **Slide # 7**

#### **Luke 23:42 (NKJV)**

**42** Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, **remember me** when **You come into Your kingdom**.”

What a great statement of faith. He was no longer concerned about what this life had to offer, but was now focused on eternity. He was no longer concerned about an earthly pardon, but rather a kingdom one.

He now looked to Jesus for everything that mattered. He had a complete change of mind where before He was blaspheming Jesus, now He wanted to be with Jesus.

And he went from seeing Jesus as just a man to now seeing Him as Savior Who could bring him into the kingdom. He went from seeing Jesus as just another helpless man on a cross to now seeing Him as Lord over the kingdom Who is in charge of entrance into it.

This repentant thief acknowledged his sin; looked to Jesus to save him; and believed on Jesus Lordship as the One Who is in charge of the kingdom. He now saw it as Christ's kingdom, which it is.

This is the stuff of saving faith.

### **Slide # 8**

#### **The Knowledge of the Truth**

1. Sin: Repentance
2. Who Jesus is: God-Man
3. What Jesus did: As Savior Died for our sins/ As Lord over all Rose again
4. Receive by Faith ALONE

And what was Jesus response to the faith of the repentant thief?

### **Slide # 9**

#### **Luke 23:43 (NKJV)**

**43** And Jesus said to him, “**Assuredly**, I say to you, **today** you will be **with Me** in **Paradise**.”

Instantly, this repentant thief was forgiven and promised fellowship with Jesus in the afterlife which Jesus called “Paradise”. And Jesus said they would both be there this very day!

We can only imagine the inner JOY this man must have felt in midst of all his agony. Jesus promised him “Paradise” and affirmed it with “Assuredly” or “Truly”. Can you imagine the experience of him being with Jesus in Paradise just a few minutes later.

What a day! This man went from being a blasphemer to being a believer, from being on his way to hell to being on his way to Paradise, in a very short space of time.

There is no clearer illustration in all the Word of God that salvation is by GRACE alone through FAITH alone in Christ alone, than this of the converted thief on the cross.

He could do nothing other than look to Jesus in faith and when he did – instantly he was forgiven. That is sheer grace! He could go nowhere, he could do nothing, he couldn't get baptized, he couldn't go to church. All he could do was look in faith to Jesus and when he did he was immediately saved.

This is such a powerful story, because in sharing the gospel with the Gentiles Peter said, "God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34). God is totally consistent in terms of how He saves people. Throughout all ages anyone who has ever been saved is saved on the basis of FAITH ALONE! There is no inconsistency with God.

The repentant thief on the cross is the only record of a true "deathbed conversion" in all the Bible. As has often been stated: "***We have one account of a deathbed repentance in order that no one need despair; but we have only one, in order that no one may presume.***"

Thus the men on these three crosses represent the whole of humanity that have ever lived. In the middle, we have the sinless God-Man who voluntarily became the Lamb of God (the God provided sacrifice) Who takes away the sin of the world.

In the other two we have the whole of sinful mankind. One hardened his heart and the kingdom was closed to him. The other opened his heart to Jesus, the kingdom opened to him. One went from the threshold of heaven to hell. The other went from the threshold of hell to Paradise.

And the difference is found in what they did with Jesus. One rejected Him, the other put His faith in Him.

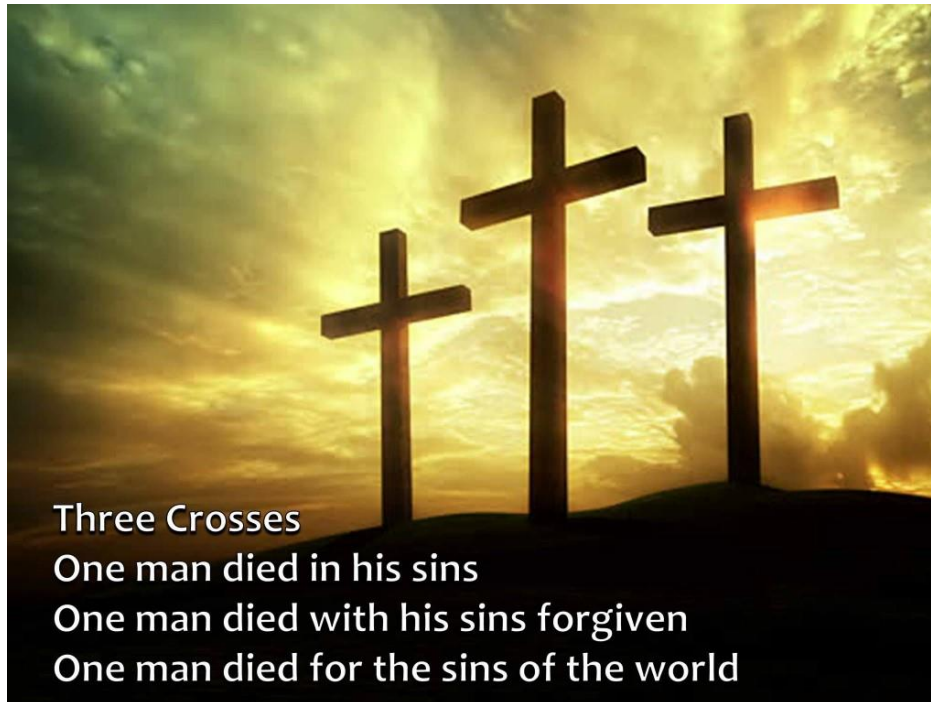
### **Slide # 10**

**John 3:18 (KJV)**

18 He that **believeth on him is not condemned**: but he that believeth not is condemned already, **because he hath not believed** in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

The story of the three crosses...

**Slide # 11**



The only part of the story that remains to be told is where you stand in relation to the man in the middle. The Bible says, "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

Will you die **to** sin or will you die **in** sin? It all depends on how you respond to the God-Man Who died for your sin!

The cross forever stands as a symbol that Christ is Savior of all who will believe on Him as Lord and Savior!

How about you? Which side of the cross are you on? Are you on the side that refuses to look to Jesus in faith, or on the side that in faith calls on Jesus as Lord and Savior? What is your decision? Eternity is in the balance. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved! (Acts 16:30-31).