

RESPONDING TO SUFFERING

Luke 23:26-56

INTRODUCTION: There are two kinds of responses to our own personal suffering: 1) We can choose to rail against God and say: "If you are such a great and powerful and loving God, why am I in this awful mess." 2) We can acknowledge that we are sinners and don't deserve any good thing, and cry out for God to show us mercy and help us in our time of need: Hebrews 4:16; Proverbs 19:3. Any good that comes to any of us is not because we deserve it but because our God is merciful to us. These two thieves represent two ways of responding to suffering and relating to Jesus Christ during our times of suffering.

I. THE TWO THIEVES ARE SIMILAR AND DISSIMILAR!

Both thieves are suffering crucifixion because both were guilty of crime: Luke 23:41. Both thieves see the sign over Jesus head: Luke 23:38. Both thieves heard the words of Jesus: Luke 23:34. Both thieves wanted desperately to be saved from death. The first thief was a picture of the spiritually destitute worldly many: Luke 23:39. The repentant thief rebuked him: Luke 23:40. The penitent thief admitted his sin: Luke 23:41 and admitted they were getting what they deserved: Luke 23:40-41; Job 1:21-22. The penitent thief acknowledged Jesus righteousness: Luke 23:41. The penitent thief acknowledged Jesus as a King: Luke 23:42; Philippians 2:5-11. The penitent thief pleads for help: Luke 23:42. Jesus said to the penitent thief that he would be with Jesus in paradise: Luke 23:43.

II. WHAT IS PARADISE?

What is paradise? The word is found in two other places in the New Testament. 2 Corinthians 12:2-4. Paradise is the heavenly abode of God where there are found things prepared by God for those who love him, which are utterly indescribable: 1 Corinthians 2:9. The second place where the word paradise is found is in Revelation 2:7; Revelation 22:1-6.

III. HOW WILL YOU RESPOND TO YOUR SUFFERING?

We have never known life without the curse of God being on all creation, but one day soon we will experience what our Lord meant for us from the beginning. Luke 23:42-43. We need to allow our sufferings to drive us deeper into our relationship with our Lord Jesus. Jesus Christ also suffered on His own cross. But He suffered not for His own sin but for your sin and mine, the righteous for the unrighteous in order to bring us to God! Romans 5:1-11. As we continue to suffer in this life we have a choice: We can complain and so how unfair life is or we can choose to allow our suffering to drive us deeper into our relationship with the only righteous Man that ever lived so that we also might live eternally with our God.