

BLOOD CRIES OUT



Three men were hanging on crosses outside the city of Jerusalem on this hill. Two of them were being executed for crimes committed that were considered worthy of death under the Roman system of justice. And the other one was being executed for no crime at all, for reasons that only the victim himself fully understood.

As they hang there in pain, gasping for breath, waiting for death to come... they begin to enter into a strange conversation. And for the two criminals, at least it's as if everybody down below fades away and it's just the three of them there with only hours left in their lives.

One of the criminals displays a hardness and an unbrokenness that was with him apparently all his life and surely had been with him during the times that he perhaps was putting people to death.

“Are you not the Christ? Then save yourself and us”.

Not that he expects anything to happen, but the fact that he can mock Jesus in this way indicates that this man has no sense at all of his own guilt. Therefore also has no conception at all of who it is who's hanging on that cross next to him.

He bends his face over and looks and sees that bloody, bruised, beaten form hanging there and sees...not goodness, not mercy, not holiness, not blessedness, but simply a fool.

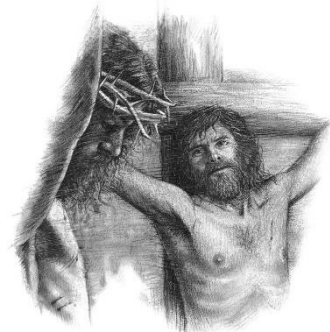
Jesus remains silent.

The other criminal gathers up his strength, and between gasps for air, begins to rebuke his fellow criminal.

But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power.”

And Jesus says.

“Truly, I say to you today, you will be with me in Paradise”.



With only hours left to live, this man finally arrives at the turning point of his life when he gives up in a way that many of us have not yet given up trying to justify himself.

“I was a product of my heredity”.

“I come from a long line of criminals”.

“I grew up in the suburbs and I didn't know what was going on”.

“I grew up in the ghetto and I had no chances”.

“I was rejected by my mother when I was one”.

He simply admits that he is guilty. *“I'm receiving the due reward of my deeds”.*

Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power.

And Jesus said, *“you won't have to wait that long, you'll be with me in Paradise today”.*

Now the difference between these two criminals is the difference between death and life.

And these two men represent each one of us. One of them is a man who has left a long trail of wrongs... crying out to heaven against him, wrongs which he refuses to admit even to his dying hour.

The other, takes the whole bloody guilty mess and throws it on the mercy of the Lamb of God. And the Blood of the Lamb cries to heaven for his pardon.

Now, when the Hebrews talked about guilt they were not talking about some neurotic symptom, some hang up, which your maladjusted father slipped into your life, causing you to wash your hands every two hours down to this moment. When they talked about guilt, they were talking about actual wrongs committed against man and God. Wrongs which like radioactive waste continue to corrupt the nation and pollute the atmosphere until it is made right or until it is dissipated.

Cain said to Abel his brother, “Let us go out to the field.” And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?” And the Lord said, “What have you done?”



The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. done?

Genesis 4:8-10

Cain's guilt is not just some guilty feeling Cain feels inside himself, but that guilt is objective.

It has made a stain on the land.

It sends up a stench into the air.

It causes a cry and a moan to rise up in the spirit realm.

A cry that gets louder and louder and will not be silenced until that wrong is made right.

The voice of your brother's blood cries to me from the ground.

And just as the voice of Abel's blood cries against Cain, so the guilt of a people cries against the nation and pollutes that nation, or that city.

Any kind of guilt, the guilt for murder, adultery, religious hypocrisy, injustice, idolatry. It continues to accumulate and build until it gets so heavy that the entire nation sinks under the weight of it.

And this is exactly what has happened to nation after nation down through human history. They poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan.



And the land was polluted with blood.

Lift up your eyes to the bare heights, and see!

Where have you not been lain with?

By the waysides you have sat awaiting lovers....

You have polluted the land with your vile harlotry.

Jeremiah 3:2 a & c

Now, just as guilt builds up and condemns a nation until that nation is destroyed by it, so guilt, objective guilt, accumulates in the individual life and defiles it.

And that's exactly what our Lord teaches us.

For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you.

Mark 7:21-23

And so the wrong done, sends up a cry, even though we hide it, and cover it, and try to muffle it.



It remains active until somehow that wrong is made right.

There can be no health in us, until that guilt is removed, until the wrong is righted, until the stain is washed away, and this is precisely why Jesus came. And this is exactly why he died on the cross.

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

John 1:29

Jesus didn't just come and die so that you might have a better feeling inside. He came and died, so that the source, the cause of the pollution that is on your life might be removed, so that you might be actually clean, and pure, and right because the sin is removed and the guilt is washed away.

But the violence within us that defiles our life can only be washed away, only, if we at least acknowledge the fact that we have been wrong. The Blood of the Lamb shed for our sins and for the sins of the whole world can do us no good, can wash away no sin that we refuse to acknowledge. If we don't admit that something's wrong, then it remains in there, and continues to pollute our lives.

And a very curious thing has been going on inside the confines of the professing Christian Church for awhile. Everywhere there are people coming to Jesus ... desiring blessing, and healing, and gifts of the Spirit, and all kinds of wonderful things ... who still refuse to acknowledge any kind of genuine wrongness on their own part.

"I haven't done any wrong".

"I haven't hurt anybody".

"I'm a good husband. I don't beat my wife".

"I'm alright".

At the same time, we are loaded to overflowing with neurotic guilt.

We have to forever check to make sure that faucets are turned off before we leave the house. We run back five times before we leave to make sure the door is locked.

But the genuine actual wrong that we have committed against man and God, that sends up a cry to heaven against us the thoughts, the deeds, the words that have defiled our lives. As long as they remain hidden from the sight of our fellow men... cause us no shameand then brazenly we walk into the presence of the Lord and ask him to prosper us, heal us, fill us with peace, cause us to have joy. Never realizing that our most desperate need is the need to be forgiven, to have the wrong made right.

So the blood of Abel continues to cry out against us and the stench of our own hypocrisy and self-righteousness sends up all kinds of defilement in the air, in the atmosphere and the mercy of God, which would come to us ... is blocked because we refuse to admit our wrong.

God help us to see what we really are. And what we really are before him.

And to cry out to see that what we really need is not power, or prosperity, but forgiveness.



Create in me a clean heart O God

In me, not just this guy over here, and that one over there, they're so mixed up and evil...**but me.**

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,

O God of my salvation,

Psalm 51: 10a & 14

Save me!

And, oh how I need to be saved from myself.

The Blood of the Lamb can only wash away that which we acknowledge as a stain. If we don't admit it, it remains there. And if I've been following Jesus for 50 years, what can I say about myself? This is what the apostle Paul said about himself...

For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh.

Romans 7:18

No matter how long we've been following the Lord and presumably doing his will... What can we say as we approach the throne in prayer or as we drink from the fountain of living waters? How can we do this, but by throwing ourselves on the mercy of God? His mercy, his goodness, his forgiveness is what I need.

Everybody who has ever begun to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, has had to come to the place where he or she admits that. The turning point is when I quit trying to justify myself and begin to cry out for forgiveness. Continue to cry out for forgiveness all my life... *"Lord, help me, forgive me, cleanse me, wash me. Lord, I'm receiving the due reward of my deeds hanging here on this cross"*.

“Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power”.



And Jesus says. ***“... today, you will be with me in Paradise”.***

Or when Peter says ***“depart from me, for I am a sinful man. Oh Lord”,***

Jesus says- ***Don’t be afraid From now on you’ll be catching men.***

Or when Zaccheus say- ***Half my goods I give to the poor and if I’ve defrauded anybody, I’m going to restore it fourfold.***

Jesus says- ***“Today salvation has come to this house”.***

Or the prostitute who comes in and without a word washes Jesus feet with her tears and dries them with her hair.

Jesus says- ***“your sins are forgiven”.***

Two voices cry out to heaven concerning us from the time Cain slew Abel until the last moment of this creation

Abel's blood

Blood of the Lamb

Abel's blood.

The voice of Abels’ blood crying out for something wrong to be made right, and that voice is joined by every wrong that has ever been committed by any man or woman down to this moment, including you and me.

And that cry is a cry against us.

Blood of the Lamb

The other voice is the voice of the Blood of the Lamb shed on Calvary to take away the sin of the world. And that blood, innocent and pure cries out and voluntarily shed for our part, for our forgiveness.

And the cry of his blood is for us.

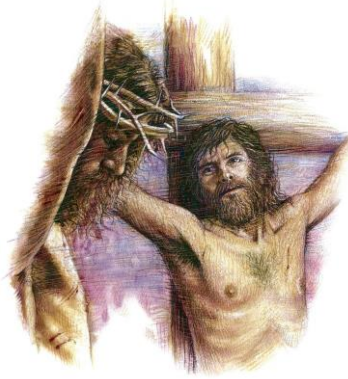
Which voice will be listened to for each of us, depends on us.

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

*But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God,
since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?
And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds;
but this man has done nothing wrong.”*

“Jesus, Remember Me when you come in your kingly power”

“And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”



God help us to learn the lesson that this man learned so late in his life.

Let's pray.

We're asking Heavenly Father that this day, your wonderful and gracious spirit will teach us the meaning of repentance and give us an idea of how we look to you. Help us to see the way we appear in your sight, Oh God.

And as we do, help us to get our eyes off our brother's sin and to learn to repent, truly repent for our own and find your mercy.

We ask it in Jesus name.

Message and Prayer: Richard E. Bieber 1978

*Featured Art: Pieces by courtesy of Chris Cook...Jeremiah Weeping Prophet, Cain and Abel 1&2, Stop, and Forgiveness
Pieces via Good Salt license... Penitent Criminal 1&2 (Darrel Tank), Man on the Cross (Lars Justinen)*

Prayer: Lord, Lord may we never stop hearing your blood crying out to us...drawing us close to you, covering our bloodguiltiness with your forgiveness. Oh Lord, you hear the voice of our brother's blood crying out to you. We are ashamed, we have failed you. There is injustice in our land, in our churches and in our hearts. Forgive us, forgive us, for the blood on our hands, for the blows we have dealt, for the wounds we have created, for the shame we have brought to your name. May we continue to seek, find, and abide in your precious forgiveness. And yes, yes remember us in your kingly power. Amen.

Maranatha Mirror

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WHO WAS SLAIN
HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN