

A Last Minute Entrance into Paradise

God's Words

Luke 23:38 Now there was also an inscription above Him, "THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." 39 And one of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" 40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 "And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" 43 And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

Reflection

Ninety-eight and a half years old and felled by a stroke. A week from eternity and no interest in Jesus.

I asked a few questions anyway. "Do you know where you're going?" He paused, then answered, "No." I kept on, "Would you like to know?" A curious smile twisted the left edge of his mouth. "Yeah."

So I told him about the two criminals hanging on crosses next to Jesus. "One of them spat insults at Jesus; he wanted nothing to do with Him. The other wanted to be with Jesus, and when he asked, Jesus (as He always does) said yes."

Our conversation flowed in the wake of the Spirit. "Have you ever asked to be with Jesus?" "No." "Would you like to ask Him?" "Yes." Then the garbled words struggled past his lips: "Want...be...with...Jesus." Joy quietly filled the room. Ninety-eight and a half and a changed heart.

The topic shifted, or so I thought, when suddenly I heard his oddly clear, loud voice: "I want to be with Jesus!" Seven days later, I watched his last minute entrance into Paradise.

Jesus says yes to everyone who asks for intimacy with Him. He longs to be near us. May we all accept the reality that we belong in His embrace.

Prayer

What a heart you have, Lord – you welcome even those who've dismissed you for years; you say yes to every person who wants to spend eternity close to you. Free each of us to receive your embrace eagerly, joyfully, and without hesitation.

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