

Staking Salvation on a Thief

The man is surely the most popular thief of all time. He has been the subject of countless sermons. He is the man upon whom millions have staked their salvation. You may ask, "Why would anyone stake their salvation on a thief?" It is really kind of strange, but it is what many have done. The thief is the man in Luke 23:39-43. He died alongside of Jesus.

He said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus replied, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." There is no doubt about this man's eternal destiny. Jesus declared that the man would be with Him in Paradise. Saved! Case closed! But why is this man popular? It is because of what he did NOT DO. It is rather obvious that he did not come down from his cross to be baptized. And that's what folks are staking their salvation on! Jesus commanded baptism when He gave the great commission in Mark 16:16: "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." But it is objected that "The thief was not baptized to be saved; therefore, I don't need to be baptized to be saved. I want to be saved like the thief was saved." Do you think that is the proper use of the story of the thief? If you do, I want you to think about another man—a rich young ruler. He is found in Matthew 19:16-22. This ruler asked, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" After discussing God's commands with him, Jesus told him, "Go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven."

Have you ever heard anyone say, "I want to be saved according to what Jesus told this man"? Why does no one argue that way? I think you know why. However, to argue that you want to be saved according to what Jesus told the ruler makes every bit as much sense as arguing that you want to be saved like the thief. (Roger Bruner)