

# The South Florida Avenue **MESSENGER**

CHURCH OF CHRIST

**A Friendly Church With a Vital Message Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of the Lord Jesus.**

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SUNDAY SERVICES  
Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.  
Worship.....10:30 a.m.  
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY  
Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.  
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

HOME OF  
Florida School of Preaching

MISSION FIELDS  
Dub Hill.....Russia  
Don Iverson.....India  
Marc Veary....Malawi, Africa  
Graham McDonald..Scotland  
J. Paguaga....Honduras, C.A.  
Joey Treat.....Pacific Islands  
Ted Wheeler.....Ghana, W.A.

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Sundays @ 8:30 a.m. Check local listings

# What About the “Thief on the Cross?”

Brian R. Kenyon

When studying the necessity of baptism with some members of particular denominations, a common response is to bring up the “thief on the cross.” They often ask, “What about the thief on the cross? He wasn’t baptized, was he?” The implication is that if the thief on the cross was not baptized, yet was promised by Jesus to be in paradise, then we do not need to be baptized. Does the thief on the cross prove that baptism is not necessary for salvation? Let us consider this incident as it relates to salvation.

## The Setting

The dialogue between Jesus and the thief on the cross occurred while the Savior was being crucified (Lk. 23:39-43). There were two criminals that were crucified with Jesus on that dreadful day (Jn. 19:16-18). At first, both criminals blasphemed (Mt. 27:44; Mk. 15:32). However, one of them had a change of heart. Before considering him, note what Luke says of the other, “Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, ‘If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us’” (Lk. 23:39). “Blaspheme [railed, KJV]” means to speak against (Mk. 3:28-29; Jn. 10:36; Acts 13:45; 1 Cor. 4:13). “If You are the Christ ...?” was said in sarcasm just as others who passed by the cross had said (Mt. 27:39-44). In contrast to this, the other criminal “answering, rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong’” (Lk. 23:40-41). This criminal shows a penitent heart. “Dost thou not fear God?” shows that this criminal recognizes that there is a God. This may possibly even be recognition by this one that Jesus is God (cf. Jn. 1:1-3)! This penitent criminal acknowledges that he and the other criminal are justly receiving their death sentence (cf. Acts 25:11). He also recognizes the innocence of Jesus.

Having rebuked the other criminal, the thief on the cross “said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom’” (Lk. 23:42). “Remember me” here carries the idea of remember me for good! “When You come into Your kingdom” shows that this criminal was aware of Jesus’ claim to establish His kingdom (cf. Mt. 16:18-19). This could indicate that he was a Jew, even a disciple of John, who heard of Jesus’ preaching and teaching (Mk. 1:15), or it could be that he was a Gentile, aware of the accusations hurled at Jesus (Lk. 23:10-11), His (*continued on page 2*)

response (Jn. 18:33-37), the mockery with which they led Him to the cross (Mt. 27:27-31), and the sign placed on Jesus' cross (Jn. 19:19). In either case, this thief knew that death was not the end and wanted to be remembered in the afterlife.

Assuring the penitent thief on the cross, "Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise'" (Lk. 23:43). "Today" means right now, as if to say, "You do not have to wait until the kingdom." "Paradise" is from a word of Persian background that literally meant "park" or "garden" (the only other occurrences of the word are in 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7). Jesus assures this criminal the bliss that will be associated "with Me [Jesus] in Paradise."

## The Solution

Does the thief on the cross prove that baptism is not necessary for salvation? In answering this question, three factors must be considered. First, consider the chronology. This incident happened while Jesus was dying on the cross. Jesus did not require baptism for all until after His resurrection (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16). Jesus lived and died under Old Testament law (Gal. 4:4-5). His New Testament did not go into effect until after His death. The Hebrews writer summarizes: "For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives" (Heb. 9:16-17). Thus, the thief on the cross was not amenable to the command, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).

Second, consider the thief. As mentioned earlier, the possibility exists that he could have been a disciple of John, thus receiving John's baptism (Mt. 3:1-6). It is possible for God's people to become criminals (1 Pet. 4:15). Whether or not he was a disciple of John, however, one truth is clear: he showed repentance, which has always been a condition of forgiveness (cf. Isa. 55:7; Ezk. 18:21; Jonah 3:4-10; Ps. 34:18; Lk. 13:3, 5)!

Third, consider the complete impartiality of Jesus. People will often say concerning this incident, "Jesus can forgive anybody He wants," as if to say that Jesus could arbitrarily forgive the thief because He was the Son of God. Such an idea is untrue and borders on Calvinism! Jesus cannot act independently of the Father's will (Jn. 5:19; 7:16; 8:28; 12:49 cf. Mt. 20:23) or deny His own word (2 Tim. 2:13). For Jesus to arbitrarily forgive the thief would make Him a partial (i.e., "respecter of persons," KJV), but He is not (Acts 10:34)!

## Salvation

The thief on the cross is a tremendous example of the forgiveness of God. Even a criminal like him can be forgiven when God's conditions of forgiveness are met (cf. Saul of Tarsus, 1 Tim. 12-15). However, the thief on the cross is not our pattern of salvation today. He lived and died under Old Testament law. One condition that is common between the thief's salvation and ours is the necessity of repentance (Acts 17:30), which must be based on "godly sorrow" (2 Cor. 7:10). Jesus gave the requirement of baptism after His death as part of New Testament law (Mk. 16:15-16 cf. Acts 10:48). Thus, if a person outside of Christ is truly penitent, he will be baptized when he learns that God requires it (Mt. 28:19-20). Peter's response to those penitent Jews on the Day of Pentecost who asked, "What shall we do?", was, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). A few verses later, Luke writes, "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41). Could these people truly have repented if they did not "gladly receive" God's word to be baptized? May we follow the thief's example of repentance, and then do what Jesus requires. Have we been baptized for the remission of sins? If not, why not today? ❤ Brian

### *Mosaic Law Ended at the Cross*

Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. (Gal. 3:24-25).

### *Patriarchal Law Ended at the Cross*

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both [Jew and Gentile] one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. (Eph. 2:14-16).

**No One Today Lives Under the Same Spiritual Law as the "Thief on the Cross!"**

# SFA FAMILY MATTERS

## Prayer List

**Our Members:** Ron Ford is having a C.T. scan and awaiting results before they return to North Carolina. Sharon Mathis-Washington is having surgery on May 22nd. Please continue to pray for Jim Turner, Ginny Hamby, Margaret Coone and Margaret Norman.

**Relatives:** Sandy West and John Begley.

**Shut In Members:** Virginia Plumlee, Dick & Joyce Burbage, Don Starks, Sharon Edler and Duane Nelson.

**Others:** Joyce Stearsman, Chrissi Fuesner, Connie Hyer and Jack Pinckert.

## Upcoming Events

**Tuesday May 9th:** Elders/Deacons Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

**Saturday May 20th:** Men's Breakfast at the North Lakeland Church of Christ at 8:00 a.m.

**Sunday May 28th:** Graduation party for Lorelly Enamorado in the fellowship hall from 3:30 to 5:30. Come help us celebrate.

**Sunday June 4th:** Fellowship In Service following evening services. Please bring finger foods.

## Thank You

Dear family, we wanted to thank you for your thoughts, prayers and well wishes while we were out last Sunday, due to illness. Continue to pray for us as we do you.

Love, the Cox Family

## Graduation

If you or someone in your immediate family is graduating this year, please submit a picture to the office along with the name of the school and degree (if applicable).

## Visitors

Mary Moore, Jane Jessee, Glenn & Mariana Willcut, Vickie Wainwright, Nathan & Katy Franson and Micah, Charles & Ruth Thornhill, Ada Walling, Calvin & Lorraine Hubbard, Larry & Rise Pfetscher, Bill & Jackie Thornhill, Carroll & Pat Stracener, Robert & Diane Guthrie, Chad & Sabrina Tagtow and family and Bob & Shirley Bauer.



Tune into AM 1330 (station WWAB) with your friends and neighbors every Monday from 5:00-5:30 p.m. for the "Way of Truth" program. This is a joint effort to evangelize involving Terrance Brownlow-Dindy (6th Street) and Hiram Kemp. Let's point our community to the Bible!

## SCHEDULED TO SERVE

### May

Frank Hamby .....	Table .....	Fred Strickland
Chaz Hine .....	Assist .....	Bobby Simpson

**Sunday, May 14, 2017**  
9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class .....	Stacey Paulin
Prayer.....	David Anderson

10:30 A.M.

Announcements.....	Bobby Sheumaker
Song Leader.....	Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer.....	Jimmy Sweeney
Sermon.....	Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer .....	C.J. Grimes

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader.....	Kyle Williams
Opening Prayer.....	Steve Hunley
Sermon.....	Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer .....	Tucker Sweeney

Greeters .....	The Williams
Att. Cards.....	Paul and Sebastian
Open & Close Building.....	Jim Turner

**Wed. May 17, 2017**

Song Leader .....	Steve Hunley
Opening Prayer .....	Phil Fife
Closing Prayer .....	Ken Walker

Please meet in the library. If you cannot serve, please call Chuck Wyatt so he can get a replacement - (863) 602-9005

**Sunday, May 21, 2017**  
9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class .....	Jim Turner
Prayer.....	Kenny French

10:30 A.M.

Announcements.....	Bobby Sheumaker
Song Leader.....	Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer.....	Paul Romine
Sermon.....	Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer .....	John McShane

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader .....	Kyle Williams
Opening Prayer .....	Stacey Paulin
Sermon.....	Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer .....	David Deal

Greeters .....	The Fifes
Att. Cards.....	Willcut boy's
Open & Close Building.....	Jim Turner

**Wed. May 24, 2017**

Song Leader .....	Casey Paulin
Opening Prayer .....	Steve Hunley
Closing Prayer .....	Tucker Sweeney

## ~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

Apr. 16 .....	\$5,435.00
Apr. 23.....	\$5,273.51
Apr. 30.....	\$5,226.35
May 07.....	\$4,888.61
Contribution Average.....	\$5,392.11
2017 Weekly Budget.....	\$4,716.51

# RESPECT Is MORE THAN Just WORDS

A young man from the South met a young lady from the North. When it came time to travel up North to meet her parents, the young man was very careful to abide by the proper etiquette he had been taught. In conversation with her parents he made sure to say, Yes, sir, No, sir, Yes, ma'am, No, Ma'am. However, her parents did not appreciate that kind of language. They thought their daughter's boyfriend was being a smart aleck. Whether or not the young man said it in a "wise guy" way, I do not know. However, one thing is clear: the very expressions, "Yes, sir," "No, sir," do not automatically convey respect. This is not to say that our children should not be taught to say, "Yes, sir," "No, sir," but it is to say that there is more to respect than just the "right" words. Jesus said concerning some scribes and Pharisees, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me" (Mt. 15:8). The scribes and Pharisees were considered by many in the first century to be the prime example of spirituality. After all, they were supposed to be experts in the Law of Moses, yet Jesus said, "do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do" (Mt. 23:3). They were supposed to be the most righteous of all people, yet Jesus said, "that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 5:20). What was their problem? They "honored," or respected, the Lord only with their words. The part of them that really mattered—their heart—(continued below)

**LOVE+OBEDIENCE**



*South Florida Avenue*  
**CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
1807 South Florida Avenue  
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Return Service Requested

The End of Your Search for a Friendly Church . . .

**Pray for One Another,  
Especially Our Youth**



Continue praying for our YES II campaign to Penonome, Panama, July 1-9, 2017. Our young people and their chaperones will be involved with personal evangelism!



## GHANA MISSION TRIP

BRIAN and HIRAM will be on an evangelistic mission trip to Ghana, Africa, with Bob Bauer and team May 29 - June 12. Pray for their safety.



If you or someone from your immediate family is graduating this year, please get a picture to the office along with the name of the school and degree (if applicable). We will have a special bulletin!

(continued from above) was far away from Him. What was the result of this lack of true respect? "And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Mt. 15:9). How sad! The seemingly most spiritual of all people, but in vain! We must truly respect the Lord, "not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God" (Col. 3:22). When we truly respect Him, our words will be right, but even more importantly, our actions will prove it. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Mt. 7:21). How much do we respect the Lord? Do we do His will? ❤ Brian

**By this all will know that you are My  
disciples, if you have love for one  
another.** John 13:35