

New Testament; dispensations of forgiveness (John 8:11), of healing (Matthew 9:6), even of resurrection (John 11). Such were done to demonstrate the power of God according to John 20:31 (*And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name*). They do not typify our expectations, but serve to demonstrate authority. Such is the mercy of the Thief.

Jesus made it clear that He had come to forgive sins, and had the power to do so. However, His unique acts of doing such were not meant to serve as patterns, but instead to prove He was able to do so. Remember in Matthew 9:6 when Jesus healed the paralytic? Jesus also forgave his sins; this was because He was demonstrating that He had this power, not because He was demonstrating a pattern. (*"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" --then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house"*).

To be "saved like the thief" requires being on a cross with Jesus and dying at a moment of two covenants. Only two men ever had that hope, and only one man ever accepted it. It is not our hope; Our

hope is in the Gospel, the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16).

The Gospel, we are told, is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (I Corinthians 15:1-4). We are also told that it is the power of our salvation (Romans 1:16). Finally, we are told that we must "obey" the Gospel in order to be saved (II Thessalonians 1:8, Romans 10:16, I Peter 4:17)

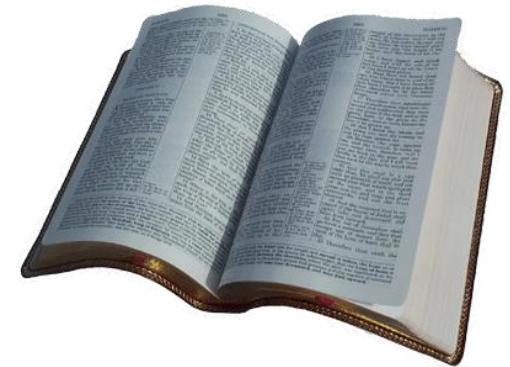
How does one obey the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus? By following it according to the pattern preached by the Apostles after Jesus arose.

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3-4).

This is how we are saved today, the same way people have been saved since the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38)

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What About The Thief On the Cross?



Luke 23:39-43

When reading the record of the death of Christ, one of the most startling and wonderful interactions on the cross was the conversation Jesus had with the second thief. Many believe that this is an example of a pattern of salvation, and have marked this as an example of salvation by *Faith Only* (*Sola Fide* – “Justification is by Faith Alone”). Is this correct? There are three important facts about the Thief on the Cross that must be understood:

1. He died before the Gospel was in effect
2. He had both faith and works
3. He received a Unique Dispensation

First: The thief on the cross died before the Gospel was in effect. While the Gospel was preached before his death (Mark 1), it was not fulfilled and in effect until Jesus arose from the grave (I Corinthians 15:1-4). We understand that it was the death of Jesus on the cross that ended the law of Moses; While on the cross, the Law of Moses was in effect. Colossians 2:14 tells us this: *"having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."* Presuming he was a Jew, the thief was part of that covenant. Therefore, his hope was not as a Christian.

This begs the question: what hope did Jews have who lived before Christ's death? Jesus taught that they could be saved by Christ: "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out." (Luke 13:28). We need to understand that we are taught in places such as Hebrews 11 that Christ justifies by Faith, and universally, Faith is demonstrated in works:

Second: The thief on the cross had both Faith and Works. We know Faith without Works is not Faith: *"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"* (James 2:26).

According to Luke:

- He believed in Jesus on the cross
- He repented of his sins
- He confessed Jesus as Lord before men

All three of these things are called “works” by the Scriptures. Believing is a work according to John 6:29 (*Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent"*). Confession is a work according to Matthew 10:32

("Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven"). Repentance is a work according to Acts 26:20 (*"but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance"*). The thief's words reflected repentance and his confession confirmed faith. *"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only"* (James 2:24).

The thief was not saved by *Faith Only* because it is IMPOSSIBLE to be saved by *Faith Only*. We are told that it is impossible to be saved without faith (Hebrews 11:6), and the Scriptures tell us that faith without works is not faith (James 2:17). Therefore, it is impossible to be saved without works. In fact, the only time that the expression "faith only" is found in the entire Bible is here:

*You see then that a man is justified by works, and **not by faith only**.* (James 2:24)

Third: The thief on the cross received the Grace of God through a “unique dispensation”. There are a number of unique dispensations by God in the