



World Christian Fellowship

www.wcflondon.com
wcflondon@gmail.com

Jesus would not come down from the Cross! **Matthew 27:38-44**

Matthew 27:38-44, *Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left. ³⁹And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." ⁴¹Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, ⁴²"He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. ⁴³He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.' " ⁴⁴Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.*

Jesus suffering at the hands of wicked men. We see His suffering due to the evil rage of Satan.

We see His suffering because of the wrath of God against the sin that He will bear. All reaches its high point.

For a long time now in Matthew's gospel, he has been emphasizing the rejection of the King.

Now it reaches its epitome as he presents the crucifixion.

To help us see the wickedness of the scene four different groups that appear in the scene.

Matthew 27:27-44, we see four groups of the wicked around the cross.

1. **The Ignorant Wicked:** Those who joined in the cruelty without truly understanding who Jesus was or the gravity of what they were doing.
2. **The Knowing Wicked:** Those who acted with full awareness and intent. They knew exactly who they were hurting and chose to be cruel anyway.
3. **The Double minded Wicked:** The "flip-floppers." These people may have cheered for Him days earlier but turned against Him the moment the wind changed, proving their hearts were shallow.
4. **The Religious Wicked:** Those who used their positions of faith and law to justify their hatred. They hid their evil behind a mask of "doing God's work."

1. The ignorant Wicked.

Last week we looked at the ignorant wicked who were illustrated to us by the callous soldiers in **V 27-37**.

We saw that the callous soldiers basically were Roman legionnaires stationed in Caesarea, no doubt, with Pilate.

They didn't really have first-hand information about Jesus.

They were not very well apprised of who He was.

They basically are ignorant.

To them Jesus is another criminal and a somewhat deranged one at that. There seems to be no legitimate criminal act that He has done. He seems to be more a maniac who thinks Himself to be a king, but by any definition they know of a king is not a king at all.

They no doubt think Him to be somewhat deficient intellectually and mentally, and through all the tortures that they bring upon Him, He never says a word, which probably confirms their suspicion.

V 27, They have scourged Him.

They stripped Him naked.

They took off His own robe which had been placed over His open wounds, and they put on Him a scarlet robe.

The heavy outer robe worn by a Roman soldier causing excruciating pain to those open wounds, a mock royal robe.

They braided a crown of thorns and put it around His head.

Put a reed in His right-hand representative of a crown and a sceptre.

They bowed their knees before Him and mocked Him saying, "Hail, King of the Jews."

As they rose from the ground they spit in His face. Then they took the reed out of His hand in a mocking gesture of snatching away His pitiful sovereignty and smashed Him in the head with His own sceptre.

John 19:3, says they kept on punching Him.

He is an object of mockery.

This one who claims to be a king what a joke. How ridiculous.

The soldiers, with joy and glee, trained in the art of killing and maiming people, enjoy to the very fullest their leisure expression on Jesus Christ at His expense.

They have then clothed Him again. They brought Him back into Pilate's hall and they start a little game under the watchful supervision of Pilate.

This is the second time He has been punched and spit on.

The Jewish leaders did it in **Matthew 26:67-68**.

They spit on Him because He claimed to be a prophet.

Here they spit on Him because He claimed to be a king.

Little did they know the King that He was and long will they know it in hell in eternity.

Little did they know that indeed He was a King, and indeed He will wear a robe and a blood-spattered robe at that.

Revelation 19:13, *He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.*

Some day He will wear a royal crown. It will be far different from this crown, not a **Stephanos**, not a crown made of some earthly thing but a **Diadema**, a diadem, a royal regal crown.

Revelation 19:12, *His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.*

He will wear many crowns for He will not only have His own, but He will wear the crown that once belonged to every other sovereign in the world for He alone will be King.

Some day He will wield a sceptre, and it will be no reed. It will be a rod of iron with which He will bring instant judgment on the unbelieving world.

Revelation 19:15, *Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

Then it will be no joke. Then it will be no laughing matter.

The tables will be turned.

Psalm 2:4, *He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision.*

But for now, in humiliation, Jesus is the laughingstock.

- His face is swollen beyond recognition from the many slaps and punches that He has taken to the face.
- It is covered with spittle mixed with blood that is running down from the thorns that pierce His brow.
- The blows from the reed which was heavy enough to cause a painful blow to the head are added and more bumps and bruises appear.
- His body is dripping with blood, oozing from His pores.
- A lack of sleep, the anguish of sin has contorted and twisted His face so that He is hardly recognizable as human, let alone as Jesus of Nazareth.
- He is thought to be nothing more than a fool.

Dressed as a mock king, Pilate then, according to John 19, takes Him back out to the Jewish crowd and says, "Isn't this enough? Haven't you had enough?"

Pilate has already stated on several occasions that Jesus is innocent.

“I find no fault in this man.” He really doesn’t want to execute a man he knows to be innocent. His wife has warned him against that, and his own conscience has done the same.

But he is being blackmailed into a corner by the Jews, and he thinks maybe he can satiate their thirst for blood by showing Jesus to be such a foolish looking person that they will understand Him to be little threat to Rome or to Israel.

Pilate brings Jesus out and says, “Behold the man.”

They scream the more for His blood and say, “If you don’t kill, Him we will report you to Caesar.”

Trapped in the fear of loss of his position, he indicates that Jesus is to be crucified.

After they had finished their mockery, they take the robe off Him. They put back on His own garment. And they lead Him away to crucify Him.

V 32, as they leave the city they compelled Simon of Cyrene.

V 33, come to a place called Golgotha, meaning skull place, named for the shape of the hill. They give Him wine to drink and mingled with bitter herbs. This was provided by Jerusalem women. There was an association of woman who provided this for people who were to be crucified as an expression of the fulfilment of Proverbs 31.

He tasted it and wouldn't drink it because He wanted to go to the cross with all His senses acute and alert.

They crucified Him.

They parted His garments by casting lots.

V 36, *"Sitting down they guarded Him there."*

They just sat down and watched Him so that no one would come along and try to relieve His pain, or no one would come along and try to do anything that was not to be done. They were on guard.

The cross would be lying on the ground, the victim would be placed down on the cross and first His feet would be extended, His toes pulled down and then a large nail would be driven through the arch of one foot and then the arch of another foot.

Then His hands would be extended allowing His knees to flex a little bit and there would be great nails driven through His wrists just below the bottom part of His hand, the heel of His hand because there is the place where it would hold. In the middle of the hand it wouldn't hold, it would pull through the fingers.

Once the victim was nailed there, the cross would be picked up and dropped into a hole. When it hit the bottom of the

socket it would rip and tear the flesh and send the nerve impulses to make explosions in the brain in regard to pain.

The victim is now crucified. Slowly He would begin to sag down, increasingly the weight being placed upon the nails running through His wrists, excruciating fiery pain would shoot up the arms and into the mind.

Pressure put on the median nerves would be beyond almost the ability to endure. The Lord then would try to push to relieve the pain and so He would push with His feet and be pushing on the two wounds in His feet.

Hour after hour this wrenching twisting torment of the body back and forth, trying to relieve one and then the other, the hands and the feet, it would become very impossible after a while to do any pushing upward because of the pain and the sagging would put the greatest weight upon the hands.

At this point, another phenomenon occurred as the arms fatigued, great waves of cramps sweep over the muscles nodding them in deep relentless throbbing pain.

With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward. Hanging by His arms, the pectoral muscles are paralyzed, and the inner costal muscles are unable to act.

Air can be drawn into the lungs, but it can't be exhaled. Jesus fights to raise Himself to get even one short breath.

Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps subside. He would grasp short breaths of air, hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He Moves up and down the rough timber.

A deep crushing pain in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with scorum and begins to compress the heart and this leads to death.

What agony?

The callous soldiers, they sit there and watch. They have seen it repeatedly.

Do they know who He is?

No.

There is a sign in **V 37**.

They set over His head an accusation, because it was required that a man who was crucified be crucified for some criminal reason.

There was no legitimate criminal reason to crucify Christ. Pilate, wanting to make his statement of the innocence of Christ and wanting to affirm his despising of the Jews, puts over the head of Jesus, "**This Is Jesus of Nazareth, The King Of**

The Jews.” In all three languages of the times so everyone could read it.

The Jews protested and said, *“We don’t want that up there, we want, “He said He is king of the Jews.””* Pilate said, *“What I have written, I have written.”*

In cynical sarcastic words he mocked the Jews by saying to the whole world, *“There is your king. You despicable people. You deserve such a king.”*

Pilate’s mockery spoke the truth. He was the King. But the soldiers were ignorant of that.

They demonstrate many people in all times and all periods of history who were ignorant of who Jesus Christ is. He may be someone, but they are not too sure who He is. They aren’t too interested in who He is.

John 1:9, *That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.*

Yet they were ignorant.

For all who seek, God will reveal the reality of His saving Son. But they have no interest in that. They are the ignorant wicked.

The world is still full of them. The world is still full of people who reject Jesus Christ out of ignorance. It is a wilful ignorance, it is an unnecessary ignorance, but it is nonetheless that they are ignorant.

2. The knowing wicked.

These are not ignorant, but they know.

Now they don't know everything, but they do know something.

V 38, *“Then were there two robbers crucified with Him, one on the right hand and another on the left.”*

Now of course, this is another way to dishonour Christ, to defame Him, to put Him in the middle of a couple of robbers.

Luke 23:32, *There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death.*

Luke calls them criminals.

Put Him up there and thus dishonour Him and shame Him by His association with them.

Jesus is with the wicked in His death.

There Jesus hangs with these two robbers.

The Greek word is **Lestes**.

There are a couple of words in the Greek language that have to do with stealing.

One is **lestes** and the other is **kleptai**.

Kleptai is a word from which we get klepto, kleptomaniac, someone who is a petty thief who snatches things, who grabs things.

Lestes basically means a bandit or a plundering robber, not a petty thief. These are robbers who kill, who are serious about what they do. They don't sneak in and walk away with something. They come thundering through the door, guns blazing, if you will, the worst of criminals.

Very likely they were **associates of Barabbas** who was intended for that middle cross before the crowd wanted Barabbas and Jesus crucified in his place.

They knew something of the claims of Jesus.

They knew something about it as is evidenced by the future record of what they say.

V 44, *Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.*

They heaped the same insults at Him. The same insults they were hearing from the Jewish leaders who were saying, "If You are the king of Israel, come down.

You say You trust in God, let God deliver You. You said You were the Son of God. So, they knew some of the claims of Jesus.

They were familiar because they were a part of the Jewish society with perhaps the work of Jesus Christ. May have been familiar with Jesus. Maybe on occasion have heard Him in a crowd. We don't know that.

But obviously they knew something about Him. Something more than the Roman soldiers would have known, who had nothing to do with life. Many of their soldiers from Syria, because they wanted them to speak Aramaic in occupied Palestine. They still would have not been as familiar as these men were with Jesus who moved about their country.

- They know but they are also wicked.
- They heap insults at Jesus.
- They revile Jesus.
- They rebuke Jesus just like the soldiers did.
- They do so with more knowledge than the soldiers had.

It isn't only the ignorant pagans who reject Jesus Christ, who have pleasure at His execution. But also, these materialistic bandits, for them life revolves around possessions, materialism, loot. They have no thought about righteousness, truth, justice, honour, and godliness.

- They have no concern for morality.
- They have no concern for Messiahs and kingdoms.
- They are just out for the loot.

There are still people like them. They know about Jesus. They may not know much, but they know a little, but for them life is all revolved around the loot.

Life is all concerned with material things. They have little regard for righteousness and truth. They live for self-indulgence, and they pay a great price for it.

They are hanging on a cross in the hours of their own death, and they are still firing insults to one who claims to be the Son of God. They are blasphemers of another sort who mock Jesus because they have a greater love for the things of the world than they do for the things of God.

But even they are not the severest of rejecters because there's another group.

3. The Double minded Wicked.

These are illustrated by the careless passersby.

The ignorant wicked – the callous soldiers.

The knowing wicked are illustrated by the thieves.

Here we find the careless crowd who represent to us the people who for a while hear about Christ, understand about Christ, and even make some kind of overture to Christ, even invite Christ to be a part of their life to some extent, but eventually turn apostate or turn away from Him.

V 39, *And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads*

This would be a very common situation since people were crucified along a highway and this would be right outside the wall of Jerusalem. It would be a road to the north of the city which would be very travelled and people busily going in and out, back and forth, because it was the day of the Passover, taking care of all the things that needed to be done.

Pilgrims swelled the city. They were inside and outside.

All the things were being prepared for Passover because many of them would eat the Passover that evening. With all this traffic and the population swelled beyond its normal size, it would be a very busy place.

Here were these Jews moving about, the same crowd that had cried "Crucify Him."

The same crowd on Monday had hailed Him with their hosannas, "*Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord. The son of David.*"

Hailing them as their Messiah, the Saviour, the one who would deliver them from Rome's oppression.

This is the same fickle crowd.

- They had a place for Jesus.
- They wanted His miracles.
- They wanted His signs and wonders.
- They listened to His teaching.

The crowd was fascinated by Jesus, to some extent. They knew full well who He claimed to be and they knew there was a demonstration of the veracity of those claims.

But now He is just a victim of a Roman crucifixion. He is rejected by them. As they pass by, they reviled Him.

Actually, they kept on reviling Him. Continual defamation and continual blasphemy.

They did it with the wagging of their heads in a taunting kind of mocking form.

Psalm 22:7-8, *All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, ^s“He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!”*

They fulfil exactly what the psalmist said they would. It isn't that they are trying to fulfil Scripture. They don't even take any consideration towards Scripture.

It is that Scripture knew exactly what they would do because the author is the Holy Spirit. They mock Jesus.

V 40, and saying, *“You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”*

Why did they say that?

Because those were the two things that came out of the trial of Christ before Annas and Caiaphas.

Matthew 26:61, and said, *“This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.’”*

They were trying to come up with a crime. They wanted to kill Jesus. They knew what the verdict was and they just didn't have a crime.

They were trying to come up with a crime and so they brought false witnesses in who were bribed.

They had these false witnesses say, *“He said He was going to destroy the temple.”*

This had been a long time prior to this that He had referred to the destruction of the temple.

In fact, nearly **three years earlier** when He had first come to Jerusalem. At that time when He said that He meant the temple of His body.

John 2:19-21, *Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" ²¹But He was speaking of the temple of His body.*

They are twisting, perverting, and pulling something out of the past to use against Jesus as if He was going to actually destroy their physical temple.

Matthew 26:63-64, *But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" ⁶⁴Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."*

They sort of capture these two things:

- The accusation that Jesus was going to destroy the temple,
- The claim that He was the Son of God.

When the crowd gathered that morning, the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes wanted Jesus crucified.

Pilate thought the crowd might be on Jesus' side. Pilate was ready to offer Jesus to the crowd. But at the moment that he was about to offer Jesus to the crowd Pilate's wife sent a messenger and said, "I got to tell you something."

In the interlude, when Pilate was getting the messenger from his wife, the chief priests, elders, and scribes moved through the crowd and stirred the crowd up against Jesus.

By the time Pilate turned away from his little interlude, the whole crowd was screaming, "Crucify Him. Crucify Him. Crucify Him and release unto us Barabbas."

The things that they sowed in that crowd to call for the crucifixion of Christ was the claim that had been brought up in His trial that He would destroy the temple. Secondly, that He was the Son the God, which they said was blasphemy.

As the same crowd that heard those accusations, walking along the road, and they see Jesus hanging there, they wag their heads back and forth and go on blasphemously reviling and defaming Jesus by mocking Him with words.

V 40, and saying, *“You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”*

They laugh.

They mock.

It isn't enough that He dies. They have to taunt Him in the process. The mindless, stupid, unthinking, fickle crowd that was throwing palm branches at His feet and hailing Him as the Messiah and now is mocking and blaspheming His name on Friday.

They are reminiscent of evil people today. So many people that you know have been to church, they have attended the church, or been raised in the church, they know the message.

- Maybe they had Christian parents.
- Maybe they have had Christian training.
- Maybe they have made a profession of faith at some point along the line.
- Maybe they have been baptized.
- Maybe they have gone to the church.

But that's all in the past. They are not interested in that anymore. They have gone on to other things.

Jesus didn't fulfil their expectation. In fact, when Jesus rode in, they thought He would attack the Romans. He came back into town and attacked the Jews by wiping out the temple buying and selling.

That was not in His favour. They thought He ought to attack Rome, not them.

How could this be the Messiah?

All week long and He has done nothing. He has been here all week and now look at Him. He is hanging on a cross, put there by the Romans. He is a victim. This is not our Messiah.

Even the affirmation of Pilate that He was innocent would have been somewhat convincing to the Jews because if Pilate found Jesus to be guilty of nothing against Rome, then He certainly wouldn't be the Messiah.

Because they assumed the Messiah would come in a military triumph over Rome and all the other nations. It all was coming to pieces. They had forgotten their hallelujahs and hosannas.

Now in their disappointment over Jesus' failure to give them what they wanted when they wanted it, they had turned against Him and were blaspheming His name. So unreliable.

The world is full of people like that even today.

People whose only interest in Jesus is an immediate satisfaction, and an immediate self-indulgence.

If He doesn't deliver what they want when they want it, it is over. I grieve about that.

There is a tremendous amount of responsibility for someone who knows Jesus, knows His claims, knows His power, knows His person, understands the truth and walks away from that.

There is a tremendous amount of responsibility for that.

Find something, they want more than they want Jesus Christ.

At one time in their life, they sing the songs and hail Him, and then another time in their life they blaspheme His name.

The world is full of passersby who taunt Jesus, who once hailed Him. Oh, it was never really salvation.

But they knew the truth about Him and now they reject it. The fickle wicked, in a sense, are traitors.

But they are not the worse group.

4. The religious wicked.

They are illustrated to us by the insincere and hypocritical.

The lowest level of blasphemers, religious hypocrites who parade their pious, who want to appear to represent God and

know the truth and be pure, godly, virtuous, and represent the Word of God.

The truth of it is, they are filled with hate and vilification toward the very Christ of God Himself.

V 41, *Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, ⁴²“He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.*

All those various orders of priests that operated within the temple ministries were mocking Him along with the scribes, who were the authorities on the law, and the elders, who were supposed to be the revered and renowned men of maturity and wisdom in the land. They constitute the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of Israel.

All these leaders who are supposedly the religious elite, are supposed to know everything there is to know about the truth of God and the Word of God and the mind of God and the heart of God. They pretend to love God and revere His Word and hold up His name, they come along.

What did they say?

The crowd talked to Jesus.

The leaders don't talk to Christ.

They hate Him. He is so despised by them they will not talk to Him, but they only talk about Him.

They talk to each other about Him.

V 42, *“He saved others.”*

They mean by that His healing ministry, His deliverance from demons.

“He did it for others. Himself He cannot save.”

They never denied ever in the New Testament, the miracles of Jesus. It was impossible to do that.

There is never an indication that the religious leaders of Israel denied His miracles. They said they were done by Satan. Satan accomplished, but they never denied them. They said He does what He does by the power of Beelzebub, but they never denied them.

Now to see Jesus hanging on the cross unable to come down will affirm in their minds that indeed He did have power, but it was Satan’s power.

They were thinking that when we put Him on the cross, we can be sure He will stay there because God is on our side.

Jesus is hanging there on cross shows that His power is not as great as ours.

His is Satan's, but ours is God. God is with us.

They are mocking His power. If He is the king of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.

If He has such sovereignty, authority and power, let us see it now.

They put in the word now, right now. They were forever and always asking for a sign. The truth of the matter is even if He had come down from the cross, they wouldn't have believed, their hearts were so evil.

But whatever power You have, show it to us, demonstrate it. They don't say that in sincerity.

They are not saying, "Please, come down and show us so we can believe."

- ❖ They are mocking.
- ❖ They are scorning.
- ❖ They are laughing.
- ❖ They are ridiculing.
- ❖ They don't know why He is there.

They think the only thing that anyone would want to do in a situation like that, if he had the power to do it, was get out of it.

The only kind of power they know is used on behalf of self-interest. They don't understand sacrificial dying for someone else. That was foreign to them. So come down, they say, and we will believe. They attack His power.

V 43, *He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'*”

They attack His person.

They say here exactly what **Psalm 22:8** said they would say.

They are not quoting **Psalm 22:8** by any means.

They are saying what the prophet through the Psalms said they would say. Scripture is being held up here, not their knowledge of Scripture but the truthfulness of the prophetic Word.

For He said, *'I am the Son of God.'*”

Now they attack His person.

He had claimed to be the Son of God on many occasions. They throw that in His face. He had recently claimed it in response to Caiaphas' question in **26:63** and so they taunt Him with that the religious wicked.

They have all there is to have of religion and nothing to do with God. Blind leaders, apostates, false teachers, false prophets, hypocrites, wolves in sheep's clothing, doomed to the hottest hell.

Everybody is there somewhere who's an unbeliever.

- ❖ You are either an ignorant unbeliever, or
- ❖ You are a knowledgeable unbeliever, or
- ❖ You are a double minded unbeliever who once knew and even affirmed the truthfulness of it and now you have turned away from it, or
- ❖ You are a religious unbeliever who parades a certain kind of religiosity that has no reality.

But everybody who is an unbeliever is in there somewhere.

Everybody who is unbelieving in any period of time is as guilty as the crowd there.

Zechariah 12:10, *“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.*

Someday Israel will look on Him whom they have pierced and mourn for Him as an only Son.

Do you know that the people who are alive at that time and do that will not be the same people who actually put Christ on the cross, but they are as guilty by their unbelief?

Hebrews 6 says that anyone who rejects Christ is guilty of crucifying the Son of God and putting Him to open shame.

Conclusion:

You either stand with those who believe or you stand with those who crucify.

Maybe you are a part of **the ignorant wicked**, maybe **the knowing wicked**, maybe **the doubleminded wicked**, maybe the **religious wicked**. But all unbelievers are there somewhere.

Christ dying on the cross are His words, *“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”*

We see on the cross of Christ the friend of sinners, who is on the cross not because He could not come down but because He would not come down.

Matthew 27:54, *So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"*

Luke's gospel the centurion glorified God and said, *"Truly this is a righteous man."*

The centurion at the foot of the cross that day who came to embrace Jesus Christ as Saviour. By the sovereign saving grace of God, that soldier and perhaps some of his companions were plucked out of the group of ignorant wicked to embrace the Saviour they had crucified.

That is a God of grace.

Luke 23:39-42, *Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." ⁴⁰But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? ⁴¹And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." ⁴²Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."*

We have **the knowing wicked** worldly, materialistic, self-indulgent thief who in one minute is heaping insults of blasphemy on Jesus Christ and in another moment is crying out for mercy to the only one who can save him.

Right there on the cross Jesus rescues one of those knowing wicked and embraces him to His heart and meets him that very day in paradise.

That is the friend of sinners.

The doubleminded wicked.

Acts 2:14, *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.*

Peter stands up to preach to the whole population gathered there on the day of Pentecost.

He launches into a great sermon about Christ in which he indicts them for the wicked crucifixion of Christ.

Acts 2:23-24, *Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;²⁴ whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.*

Acts 2:36, *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”*

Peter preaches to the double minded people.

Acts 2:37-39, *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”³⁸ Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”*

Acts 2:41, *Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.*

Out of the crowd of Christ rejecters that screamed, “Crucify Him,” out of the crowd that wagged their heads and reviled

Jesus on the cross, God by sovereign grace took three thousand souls.

Acts 2:47, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

More were added every single day.

Is not Jesus the friend of sinners?

Even the sinners that crucify Him?

The religious wicked.

Acts 6:7, Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Right out of those religious leaders that mocked and blasphemed the name of Jesus Christ, God by sovereign grace took some to be His own.

- ✓ He is indeed the friend of sinners.
- ✓ He is eager to forgive.
- ✓ He is ready to forgive.

I don't know where you are today.

He longs to embrace you into His arms, to give you the salvation He so freely offered.

He stayed on the cross not because He couldn't come down,
He stayed on the cross because He wouldn't come down.

The Saviour shed tears for those who shed His very blood.
Such is the compassion of God and the gift of salvation.