

Luke 23:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

Analysis

But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? The repentant thief's first recorded words constitute a theological rebuke. "Answering" (apokritheis, ἀποκριθεὶς) and "rebuked" (epetimēsen, ἐπετίμησεν, the same verb used when Jesus rebuked demons and storms) indicates authoritative correction. Despite his own agony, he defended Christ's honor—mark of genuine conversion.

The question "Dost not thou fear God?" (oude phobē sy ton Theon, οὐδὲ φοβῇ σὺ τὸν θεόν) introduces true theology. The "fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). This criminal demonstrated that saving faith begins with proper understanding of God—His holiness, authority, and coming judgment. The phrase "seeing thou art in the same condemnation" (hoti en tō autō krimati ei, ὅτι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ κρίματι εἶ) grounds the rebuke in logic: impending judgment should silence mockery and prompt repentance.

This rebuke reveals transformation. Hours earlier, Matthew 27:44 records "the thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth"—both criminals initially mocked Jesus. But one experienced conversion even while dying. His rebuke demonstrates that genuine repentance produces immediate fruit—defending Christ, confessing sin (v. 41), and seeking salvation (v. 42). Though he had no time for good works, church membership, baptism, or discipleship training, his faith alone secured paradise (v. 43). This is salvation by grace through faith, not works (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Historical Context

The thief's transformation likely occurred as he observed Jesus' responses to torture, heard His prayer for His executioners (v. 34), witnessed the supernatural darkness (v. 44), and recognized Jesus' innocence versus his own guilt. Ancient crucifixion allowed victims to speak and observe each other—the cross was designed for maximum suffering and public display, not quick death.

His question "Dost not thou fear God?" reflects Jewish theology emphasizing the fear of God as foundational to righteousness. Deuteronomy 6:13, Proverbs 1:7, Ecclesiastes 12:13, and Malachi 3:5 establish this principle. That a dying criminal grasped this truth while religious leaders missed it demonstrates that God reveals Himself to the humble but resists the proud (James 4:6). His conversion illustrates Jesus' teaching: "Many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (Matthew 19:30).

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does the repentant thief's immediate defense of Christ despite personal agony teach about the fruit that genuine conversion produces?
2. How does the thief's conversion from mockery to faith demonstrate that salvation is God's work, possible even at life's final moments?
3. Why is 'fear of God'—understanding His holiness and our accountability—essential to saving faith, and how does modern Christianity often neglect this truth?

Interlinear Text

ἀποκριθεὶς	δὲ	ὁ	ἕτερος	ἐπετίμα	αὐτῷ	λέγων,	Οὐδὲ		
answering	But	G3588	the other	rebuked	him	saying	not		
G611	G1161		G2087	G2008	G846	G3004	G3761		
φοβῆ	σὺ	τὸν	θεόν	ὅτι	ἐν	τῷ	αὐτῷ	κρίματι	εἶ
Dost	thou	G3588	God	seeing	in	G3588	him	condemnation	thou art
G5399	G4771		G2316	G3754	G1722		G846	G2917	G1488

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 15:4 (Parallel theme): Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

Psalms 36:1 (References God): The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.

Jeremiah 5:3 (Parallel theme): O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.

Ephesians 5:11 (Parallel theme): And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

Luke 12:5 (Parallel theme): But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

2 Chronicles 28:22 (Parallel theme): And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz.