

Luke 23:41

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

Analysis

And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. The repentant thief's confession demonstrates three essential elements of saving faith. First, admission of personal guilt: "we indeed justly" (hēmeis men dikaiōs, ἡμεῖς μὲν δικαίως)—"we justly/righteously [suffer]."¹ The adverb dikaiōs (δικαίως) means "justly, righteously, deservedly." He acknowledged his punishment was morally right, not unjust persecution.

Second, recognition of sin's consequences: "we receive the due reward of our deeds" (axia gar hōn epraxamen apolambanomen, ἄξια γὰρ ὡν ἐπράξαμεν ἀπολαμβάνομεν)—"for we receive things worthy of what we did." The verb apolambanō (ἀπολαμβάνω) means to receive what is due, implying justice not mercy. He owned his crimes and accepted deserved consequences—no excuses, no victim mentality, no blame-shifting. This is genuine repentance (metanoia, μετάνοια)—change of mind about sin.

Third, recognition of Christ's innocence: "this man hath done nothing amiss" (houtos de ouden atopon epraxen, οὗτος δὲ οὐδέν ἄτοπον ἐπράξεν)—"but this one has done nothing out of place/improper." The word atopon (ἄτοπον) means out of place, improper, wrong. The stark contrast—"we... but this man"—distinguishes the guilty from the innocent. His testimony echoes Pilate ("I find no fault," Luke 23:4), Herod (sent Him back without charges, Luke 23:15), and later the centurion ("Certainly this was a righteous man," Luke 23:47). This confession of Christ's

sinlessness is prerequisite to trusting Him as sin-bearer (2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:22).

Historical Context

Roman crucifixion was reserved for the worst criminals—slaves, violent criminals, insurrectionists. That this thief acknowledged his crucifixion was "just" suggests he had committed serious crimes worthy of Rome's harshest penalty. Josephus and Roman historians describe crucifixion victims as murderers, pirates, rebels, and violent criminals. His admission of guilt was remarkable—most criminals protested innocence or blamed others.

His confession "this man hath done nothing amiss" constituted legal testimony. In Roman law, eyewitness testimony carried weight. This criminal, who had nothing to gain and everything to lose (mocking Jesus might have won him sympathy from the crowd), instead testified to Jesus' innocence while confessing his own guilt. His words added to the mounting evidence that Jesus was innocent: Pilate's wife's warning (Matthew 27:19), Pilate's threefold declaration (Luke 23:4, 14, 22), Herod's finding no fault (Luke 23:15), and later the centurion's confession (Luke 23:47). An innocent man's crucifixion was judicial murder—yet this injustice accomplished eternal salvation.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the thief's confession—owning his guilt without excuse or blame-shifting—model true repentance that contemporary culture often resists?
2. What does his acknowledgment that his punishment was 'just' teach about accepting consequences for sin as part of genuine repentance?

3. How is confession of Christ's sinlessness essential to saving faith, and why can only a sinless substitute bear our sins?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἡμεῖς μὲν δικαίως ἄξια γὰρ ὡν ἔπραξεν
And we indeed justly the due reward for of our deeds
G2532 G2249 G3303 G1346 G514 G1063 G3739 G4238

ἀπολαμβάνομεν· οὗτος δὲ οὐδὲν ἀτοπον ἔπραξεν
we receive this man but nothing amiss deeds
G618 G3778 G1161 G3762 G824 G4238

Additional Cross-References

Ezra 9:13 (Parallel theme): And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this;

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