

# B.A.S.I.C.

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*Brothers And Sisters In Christ*

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## Who Gains from the Cross?

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### **The Thief ( Luke 23:39-43 )**

It is understandable that the unbelieving world looks upon the crucifixion of Jesus as disturbing and does not understand the real meaning behind it. To them Jesus lost when He died. But when Jesus died on the cross, He did not lose, He won! He conquered Satan by paying the punishment for our sins and satisfying God's justice.

The two men crucified on either side of the Savior belonged there. They deserved the crosses on which they hung. One of them put it this way: "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve." He and his partner were sinners who in the eyes of God and of human law had lost their way.

When the thief's partner joined in the crowd's cruel mockery of Jesus, he rebuked him saying, "This Man has done nothing wrong." Looking at Jesus' silent suffering, listening to what the crowds of people were saying about Him and listening to Jesus' remarkable prayer asking forgiveness for those who were killing Him, the thief had reached a conclusion. This Jesus was not a sinner who had lost His way.

Yet Jesus belonged on that cross. We hear it in Isaiah's words "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The holy Son of God was guilty of every single sin ever thought, said or acted on, so guilty that His Father turned His back on Him.

That criminal not only saw that Jesus was innocent but with

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eyes of faith, he also saw that Jesus was his only way to heaven. With eyes of faith the thief now looked at Jesus and prayed, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

What did Jesus say? "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

By God's grace we know the way to heaven. We've heard our Savior's words: "I am the way. . . . no one comes to the Father except through Me." He is the Way, the only Way to the Father's house above. With His death and resurrection as payment for all our sin, He asks nothing from us because He gave everything He had for us.

May the God of all grace keep our faith focused on the cross of Jesus and realize that as the believing thief gained life so do we.

**(Pastor Mark Bernthal)**

### **MOTHER and SON (John 19:25-27)**

The world doesn't quite know what to do with the cross. It acknowledges Jesus' birth at Christmas in an offhand way. It celebrates Easter, although with no real appreciation for the glory of the Resurrection. Yet, for the most part, the world completely ignores the cross. After all, there is nothing pleasant or attractive about it. It is the gruesome instrument of Jesus' death. The world can't understand why Christians cherish it so. Who gains?

The two people who from a human viewpoint stood to personally lose and lose the most, rather than gain, are Jesus and His mother Mary. She knew the Savior better than anyone and shared a special bond of love no one else experienced. She gave birth to Him and raised Him. He was the perfect Son who never disobeyed or showed a lack of respect.

It's painful to even think of how Mary's heart must have broken at the sight of Jesus on the cross, bruised, bloody and dying. Perhaps she recalled Simeon's words to her in the temple when Jesus was only an infant.

Yet she, and all of us, truly gained from the cross, for by His death

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Jesus took away the sin which separated us from God and prevented us from being part of His family. Our earthly families are wonderful blessings, but being a member of God's family by faith in Jesus is the greatest, most loving, most permanent bond of all. Because Jesus was willing to be forsaken by His Father, we can call God our Father in heaven.

The world doesn't know what to do with the cross, but we do. We come to it with our sin in order to receive the peace of forgiveness Jesus won for us. We come to have our guilt lifted off our hearts, in order that we might then freely forgive our spouse, brothers and sisters, fellow believers, and even our enemies as God has forgiven us. When that forgiveness is eagerly sought, freely given, and gratefully received, marriages are blessed, families flourish, and congregations thrive. All gain....all because of the cross.

**(Pastor Mike Eichstadt)**

### **PETER & JUDAS (Mat. 26:69-27:5)**

There are two ways to look at the question "Who gains from the cross?" in the cases of Peter and Judas. First, consider that question before the crucifixion. Here Judas is clearly guilty. He believes he has 30 pieces of silver to gain. Here Peter appears innocent. He pulls out a sword to fight for Jesus. Neither Peter nor Judas is at the cross because, at the moment they are really quite similar. Neither of them think there is anything to be gained there. Peter denied and Judas betrayed the Savior. And so they both went out. Peter to weep. Judas to hang himself in a hopeless attempt to somehow deal with what he had done.

Both had relied on themselves. Peter relying on his own strength and will, ignoring Christ's warnings. Judas, going ahead with his plan to betray the Savior and ending up sorrowful when he was condemned, because he too had not been listening. Then Judas tried to take it all back. To redeem Jesus' life for 30 pieces of silver. But all sales are final. It was too late. And Judas in unbelief went out and killed himself. Then, even while Christ was groaning and dying for Ju-

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das' sin, it was all over for him. Too late for salvation. Judas went down to damnation.

But Jesus prayed for Peter, turned Peter, strengthened Peter. And so after the cross, considering the question "who gains" brings a very different picture. Through unbelief, Judas gained only death. But Peter gained everything. He treasured nothing more than the redeeming, precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish or spot. He found his Living Hope in Christ's resurrection from the dead. And relied on these entirely so that He became a bold confessor who instead of swearing "I do not know the man" would say "We cannot help but speak the things we have seen and heard!"

**(Pastor David Ude)**

### **JOSEPH OR ARIMATHEA & NICODEMUS ( John 19:38-42 )**

Many people drink coffee or tea each day. Whether we drink it more on the weak side or bold side, sipping our coffee or tea can remind us of our daily walk with Jesus. As Christians, are we as bold as Peter that we are willing to lay down our life for our Savior? But yet, like Peter, when it comes to the time to confess our faith and loyalty to Jesus are we nothing but weak?

Joseph and Nicodemus, early on, both showed weakness when it came to their relationship with Jesus. Joseph "was a disciple of Jesus, *but secretly* because he feared the Jews." And Nicodemus "had visited Jesus *at night*," because he was a leader of the Sanhedrin. Like these men, we find denying our Savior a lot easier than denying ourselves.

"Who Gains from the Cross?" Jesus said, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?" The eternal love of Christ Jesus our Lord was displayed in His sacrificial death on the cross. Joseph and Nicodemus responded to that sacrifice we are told when they "asked Pilate for the body of Jesus." This was a bold move that only a love for the Savior could supply. You and I truly profit, truly GAIN, from our Savior's cross, who was never weak in His purpose for us. Jesus boldly went the way of the cross so

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that we would GAIN the priceless gift and treasure of the resurrection to eternal life!

So the next time you smell or drink that cup of coffee or tea think about the boldness, not weakness, of your Savior's love for you. May it embolden you to share that same loving Gospel of Christ crucified to everyone!

**(Pastor Neal Radichel)**

### **BARABBAS ( Matthew 27:15-23 )**

What can we say? The murderer, the rebellious, the sinner gets to go free. The righteous Son of God is condemned. Here we have the perfect parable, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

Does Barabbas really get off scot free just because Christ is condemned in his place? Yes absolutely. He is released without consequence or punishment. In Barabbas of course we are speaking of an earthly judgment and an earthly freedom, but he is the parable, the earthly story that has a heavenly meaning.

The Bible makes it clear that what is true for Barabbas from an earthly stand point is true for us spiritually. Just as Barabbas walked away a totally free man the minute Christ took his place, so do we walk away completely free because Jesus takes our place.

And yet although Barabbas walks away free and clear the crowd does not. The crowd and many today don't want the free gift of Christ's forgiveness because it means admitting how badly we have failed. It means admitting that we are sinners. And so the Jews revel in the blood of Jesus, not in the forgiveness it offers to them, but in the condemnation that they bring upon themselves.

We are left with the choice, we can lift ourselves up in our hearts, sneer at Christ and the free gift He offers and receive only condemnation we so justly deserve or we can consider ourselves on the level with Barabbas, a sinner, confess our sins and rejoice in our freedom as we see Jesus condemned in our place.

**(Pastor Matt Ude)**

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## **SOLDIERS ( John 19:23-24 )**

According to Roman custom four soldiers were stationed at the foot of the cross of the condemned criminal. It was also the Roman custom to give the condemned criminal's clothes as a perk to the soldiers who were assigned to that detail. It appears that each of the 4 soldiers received one piece of clothes. But when it came to the tunic they did not tear it into 4 pieces since it "was without seam, woven from the top in one piece." For this large piece of clothing they cast lots. This was in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy: "they divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots."

The Centurion and these soldiers witnessed what happened and what was said about Jesus. They were right there in front of Jesus, beneath the cross, and heard and saw everything that happened. They may have been concerned at first about mundane things like clothes and carrying out their duty, but as they heard the jeering mob, and saw the supernatural darkness, felt the earth quaking under their feet, they were touched and moved by the Spirit to confess Christ. They saw Jesus' agony over the sins of all people, yes also theirs, and heard Jesus crying out that He was forsaken of the Father. They read the superscription on the cross: "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews."

They also heard the loving voice of Jesus asking for forgiveness for them and His enemies. They saw how Jesus died, that He did not lose His life, but that He surrendered it on His own free will. And they heard His final cry of victory, "It is finished!"

During those crucial hours of watching they pondered over all those words they heard and what they saw and God led them to confess in simple faith: "Truly this was the Son of God!" In Luke we read the Centurion also said, "Certainly this was a righteous Man!"

He and hopefully the other 4 came to the conclusion that Jesus was not guilty of the serious charges against Him, but that He actually was what He had declared Himself to be, the Son of God, perfect and holy! The Centurion and the others publicly proclaimed what the

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angels at Bethlehem and the Father at Jesus' baptism and again at the Transfiguration declared, this is God's Son!

How blessed we are to have a Savior willing to make Himself nothing for us, who let His enemies take everything He had away from Him, even His clothes, so that we might be dressed in a robe of holiness through faith in His blood.

**(Pastor Mark Bernthal)**

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