



Weekly Devotional

February 16, 2009

## *Christ's Second Saying From The Cross*

*“And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise”  
(Luke 23:43).*

In Wise County, Texas, there is a small town named “Paradise.” Although the majority of the population (around 450) that claims Paradise as its home lives outside of the city limits, during the 1800’s this town was the largest city in Wise County, with a bank, a cotton gin, and two hotels. During the 1900’s, however, the population decreased due to urbanization in larger cities. Major industries in the area are excavation, construction, and oil and water well drilling.

Like the surrounding areas, the land around Paradise is flat with rolling hills, decorated with native oak, pecan, mesquite, and cottonwood trees. The Trinity River, one of Texas’ major rivers, is located about 4 miles from the city. Many middle-aged and retired folk find Paradise to be a refreshing place to live. Some areas of soil are somewhat sandy, making watermelon plants and peach trees well suited for it.

We would never discourage those who live in Paradise, Texas. But at its best, the town is not and will never be Paradise. The real Paradise, as set forth in the New Testament, is Heaven. The Apostle Paul spoke interchangeably of Heaven and Paradise (see 2 Cor. 12:2, 4). While Jesus was on the cross, the real Paradise was on His mind. In conjunction with this, a poor sinner was on His mind, a sinner He would take to Paradise.

*This saying was a response to faith and hope!* In faith, the helpless thief asked to be remembered by the Savior; in hope, he anticipated Christ’s future kingdom. His plea was not only answered personally (“Jesus said unto him”), but it was answered immediately (“To day”). While the Lord does as He pleases and sometimes waits to answer, it is possible that He will answer our prayers much more quickly than we expect.

*This saying was a revelation of grace and truth!* Jesus said to him, “To day shalt thou be with Me.” These wonderful words represent both distinguishing grace (“thou”) and determining grace (“be with Me”). The beginning phrase (“Verily I say unto thee”), and the word, “shalt,” display the truth of this statement. The One Who was “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14) even manifested this fullness on the cross.

*This saying was a report on heaven and eternity!* “Paradise” was a reference to the heavenly home of the redeemed. Very soon, Jesus was going back to His “Father’s house” (John 14:2), and the thief was given assurance that he would be there with Jesus. The same Lord Who presently brought the sinful man into His grace would soon bring him into His eternal glory. Thank God, there is a better place for the souls of redeemed sinners.