

The thief on the cross was given an immediate connection by Christ to Paradise. The thief, for whatever his history was, had a heart that pleased God; and that was sufficient. He was not just afraid of death, but he seemed to perceive the True Good as seen in Christ.

This story gives us a critical perspective on Grace, for he (like us, really) had nothing to offer – there was no time or chance for the condemned man to change his way of life. It is easy to think that he might want to say, “If I could just get down from this cross I would change my life – I would show you how much I would do to repay you!” But this is a great example of what grace really means – not that we do not respond, but that our response does not have the power to change things.

The thief could not do anything about his situation – he was totally powerless. Now we are also helpless in the greater sense, but we can (and should) go forth and give our lives as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1).