

THE
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“ THAT THE SOUL BE WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE, IT IS NOT GOOD.”—PROV. XIX. 2.

THE THREE CROSSES: OR, THE DYING MALEFACTOR.

NEVER was thief so honored, so blessed, or so useful. He was honored, not in bearing the cross of the Saviour, for this is the common privilege of christians, but in being as it were borne upon it; in suffering not like him, or in imitation of him, as we may do, but with him. He felt the same bodily pangs at the same moment. The same fiendish, blood-thirsty crowd gazed upon and gloated over the sufferings of both; the same innumerable throng of celestial spirits hovered near to watch over their dying agonies in breathless suspense for the arrival of the moment when they should be emancipated from those sufferings—when heaven’s portals should open for their triumphal entry and its courts should ring with hosannahs over at once the conqueror and the first trophy of his glorious victory over hell and the grave.

He was blessed in his salvation under the most unexpected and apparently the most hopeless circumstances,—and this blessing was immeasurably enhanced by the consciousness of the comforts afforded to his dying Lord in the midst of his bitterest agonies by this signal manifestation of the power of his grace. Who can estimate the goodness of the Father in giving, and the satisfaction of the Son in receiving this pledge that the wrath he bore was not personal but expiatory, and this foretaste of the infinite satisfaction he should afterwards enjoy in the salvation of myriads of those for whom he was then suffering the most terrible and accumulated woes. Surely it may be said that at that moment he “saw of the travail of his soul and was satisfied.”

But it is especially upon the *usefulness* of which this individual has been made the honored means, that we would comment at present.

It is true that the gospel message is given to all. It is not said, come this one, or that one; but “*Ho every one* that thirsteth come ye to the waters.” And these general invitations might have induced many who had not become hardened in sin to encourage the hope of salvation through grace. So also we have the instances of Paul and others who were converted after having apparently become hardened in sin. And these examples might have induced some who were even great sinners to seek in hope for mercy. But something more was needed to which the attention of eve-