

DISTINGUISHING GRACE

“And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” (Lu 23: 39-42)

There was no difference between these two thieves. Neither respected the law of God, neither respected the law of man, neither respected Christ, neither were religious and neither were seeking God. Both were dying, both needed forgiveness and both were railing on Christ.

Yet, while God left one in his sin, God granted the other life, faith and repentance. The repentant thief had no merit of any kind. He was simply a depraved criminal in the process of being executed for his crimes. But scripture says, *“it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”* (Rom 9: 16) The difference is that God chose one of these sinners before the foundation of the world. The difference is that Christ was dying for him. The difference was the invincible, irresistible grace of the Holy Spirit working within him. (Jn 6: 44) The difference was the distinguishing grace of God.

Is there someone reading this who finds themselves believing on Christ like this thief on the cross? If so, it is God who made the difference. It is God to whom you must give all the glory, *“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”* (1 Cor 4: 7)