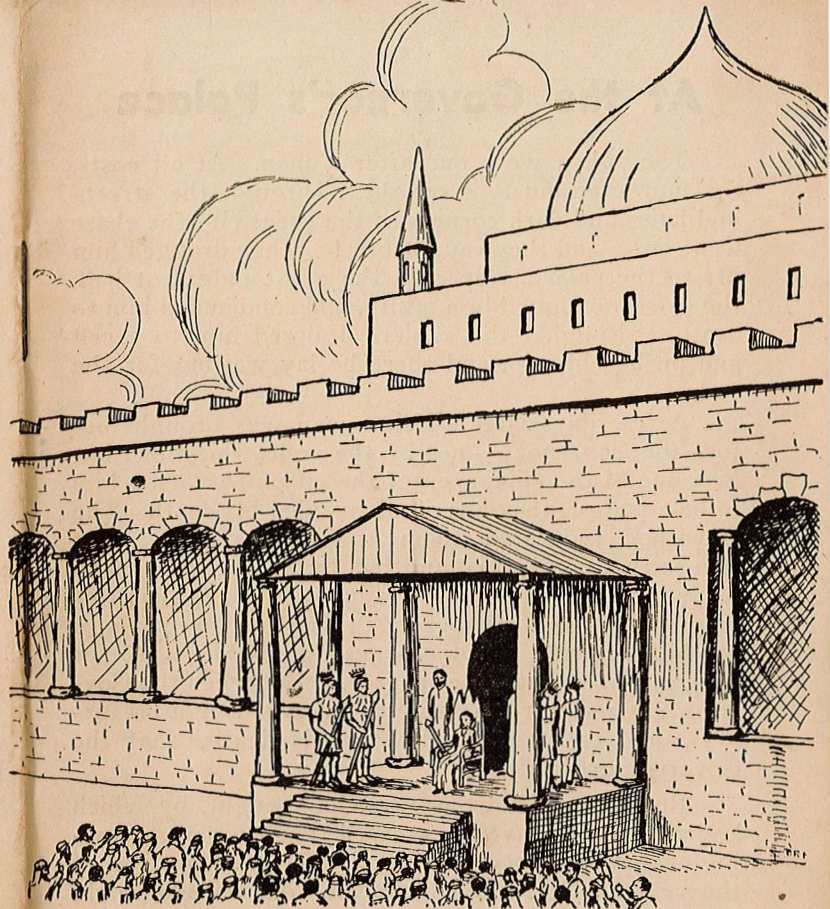


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At the Governor's Palace

At the Governor's Palace

The police were out after a man. At all costs, the murderer must be caught. Through the streets and lanes and dark corners of the great city the chase went on — and they caught him! They dragged him off to the palace, where, in the great judgment hall, the Governor found him guilty, and condemned him to death. Roughly the gaolers dragged him to a cell and pushed him in, and there he lay waiting for the end.

A few days later another man was brought before the Governor — not by the police this time, but by some of the chief men of the city. Declaring him to be a traitor, they angrily demanded his death. The Governor requested them to state exactly what crimes the man had committed, but, as he listened to what they had to say, he gradually realized that this man had done nothing wrong; there was no reason to put him to death. The charges against him were not true, and he ought to be set free. But when the Governor suggested releasing him, everybody got so furious, and called so loudly for his death, that the Governor grew afraid.

But he still had one way, he thought, by which he might safely save the accused. The time was drawing near when everybody met for the great festival of the year; gifts would be given, old friends would

meet, and there would be much feasting and happiness. And it was the custom to let one man out of gaol at this season, as a token of good will in honour of the occasion. So the Governor sat in his great golden throne in the porch of the Palace, and all those angry men stood before him. He brought out the man who had done no wrong, for them all to see. It may be that the murderer also stood by, guarded by soldiers, and I have shown him on the Governor's right in the picture.

The Governor reminded the people that according to custom they had the right to name one prisoner for release. They must choose one or the other; but he said again that one was a good man, who had done no wrong; clearly he was the right one to choose for release.

But before I tell you what the crowd said, I must get **you** into my story; for there is one man in it who is like you. Would you be very shocked with me if I told you that that man is the murderer? "But," you say, "that is not true. I have never murdered anybody." No, I don't suppose you have; but you have **sinned** — you have done wrong. Has not God said, "Lie not one to another"? Has He not said, "Children, obey your parents"? Have you always kept these commandments? Has He not said, "Keep yourself pure"? Have you always done that — in deed, and word, and thought? If not, you have sinned against God, and (like the murderer) you deserve to die. I

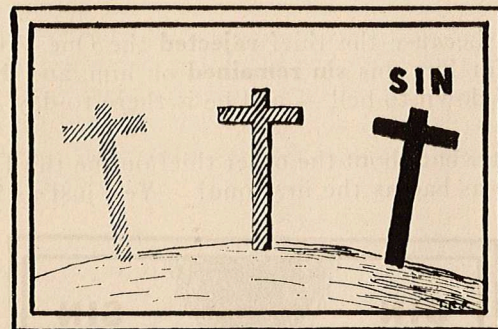
will tell you how you can know it is true. Think a minute. Will you not have to die some day?

So the Governor, Pilate, wanted the crowd to agree to crucify the murderer, Barabbas, and set free the One Who had done no wrong — the One Whose name was Jesus. But there was a great secret which none of those people knew. Pilate, and Barabbas, and the crowd never could have dreamed it. It was this: Jesus had gone there purposely to be Barabbas's Substitute — that is, to take Barabbas's place. He knew what the crowd would say to Pilate. They roared, "Release Barabbas." Pilate asked, "What then shall I do with Jesus?" With howls of fury, the crowd yelled, "Crucify Him." And Jesus knew what Pilate would do, too. Pilate was so frightened of the crowd that he gave his consent to this awful demand.

So the soldiers released the murderer, Barabbas, and Jesus was hurried away to be nailed to the cross prepared for Barabbas. I can imagine Barabbas going down to the gate of the city and looking up at the central cross on the hill Calvary, and saying to himself, "I ought to have been on that cross." And that was true. Then how did he escape it? By being good? No. By praying? No. By going to Church? No. By turning over a new leaf? No. Then how? Only because Someone loved him enough to go to that cross in his place and be his Substitute. ★

★ Substitute: One who takes the place of another.

Nailed to another cross, near Jesus, was a thief — a sinner. Sin — and we all have sinned and done wrong — sin is like a sort of dreadful stain that blackens our souls, ruins our characters, spoils us al-



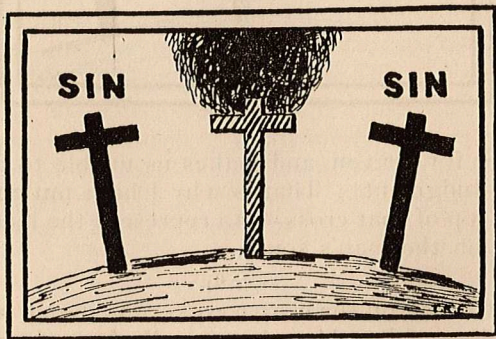
together for heaven, and makes us unable to face the Day of Judgment. That is why I have put the word SIN on top of that cross — to represent the load of sin resting on the man's soul.

But Jesus, on the centre cross, was dying, not only in the place of Barabbas, but for **all of us who are like Barabbas** — not to save us from Pilate's judgment, but to save us from our sin, and from God's judgment on it. Then was He not dying for that thief too?

Yes, indeed He was. But here was the terrible thing. That thief did not believe in Jesus, never thought of Jesus dying for him, but instead wanted Jesus **not** to die, but come off His cross and save the thief too. But if Jesus had not stayed on the cross and died for us, He could not have really saved anybody.

So, because the thief **rejected** the One Who was dying for him, his **sin remained** on him, and dragged his soul down to hell — and he is there to-day.

But what about the other thief on the third cross? Was he as bad as the first one? Yes, just as bad. I



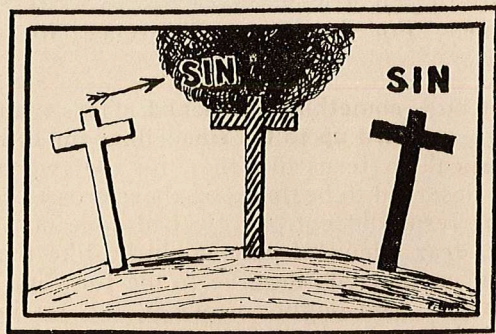
must write SIN on the top of his cross too. And if, instead of him, I had put a picture of myself there, or

a picture of you, I would have had to write **SIN** just the same. For there is no difference; for all have sinned.

But now, **something happened**. This man on the third cross **owned up to his sin**, telling the other thief not to speak to Jesus like that, for the two of them, he said, deserved to be dying on those crosses for their sins, but Jesus did not, for He had done no sin. (I wonder, dear friend, if you would be like that thief, and own up that you deserve to die for your sin and go to hell. You ought to own it, for, terrible as it seems, it is true.)

But the thief did something else too. As he hung there on his cross, dying for his sin, he had only to turn his head to one side to see Jesus dying for him and for everybody, dying with the whole great burden of the world's sin and guilt resting upon Him; for the Lord laid upon Jesus the iniquity of us all. That is why, in the last picture, I have shown that great black load pressing down on the centre cross.

It is not easy to guess exactly what was in the thief's mind just then; but we know that he **believed** on Jesus, and it was as if he understood what Jesus was doing, and in that moment **counted his own sin as part of the world's sin for which Jesus was dying**. Now we must show the scene like this:—



Could God see any sin on him now? No, it was laid on his Substitute, on Jesus Who died under the curse of God, in the thief's place (though it was not forever, for three days later He rose again). And a little later, with no sin on his soul to drag him down to hell, the man who had been a thief died and went to God, and he is in heaven now.

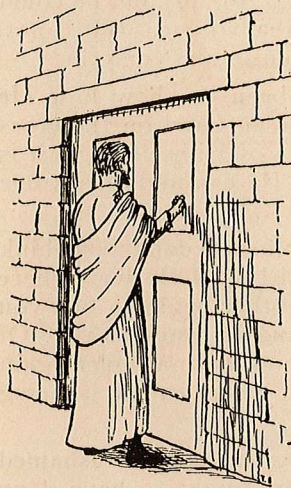
One thief **rejected** Christ, and went to hell.

One thief **accepted** Christ as his own Saviour, and went to heaven. Did he deserve to go to heaven? No. Then how did he get there? Because Jesus loved him enough to die in his place, and he, knowing that he was guilty before God, and feeling the burden of his

sin, looked to Jesus, trusted Him, and accepted Him as his Saviour.

And now, one last picture.

Here is Someone knocking at a door, wanting to be let in. Can you guess the name of the house? Let me explain.



There may be someone reading this story who is thinking, "I wish **my** sin could be taken away as that thief's was." But think. Where does sin **start**? If a boy tells a lie, does that lie start at the lips? No, it starts down in the heart first. Jesus has died so as to be able to take all sin away; but if He is to take **your** sin away, you will have to let Him into your heart that He may do so. And He says, "Behold, I stand

at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him."

Suppose you opened your heart to Him! Would He come in? Well, He promised to. And yet, how

could He? Could He live in a dirty house — a sinful heart? There was a boy once who wanted Jesus to come in, so he got a broom (called "good resolutions") and set to work to sweep the house very vigorously. He determined not to tell any more lies, not to steal or swear any more, not to disobey his mother. And yet, do you think he could clean out **all** the dirt that way? Ah, no; and he could not undo the sins that were already done. But if not, how could Jesus keep His promise and come in?

Ah, the whole story has been to show how **He cleans it out Himself** — for He suffered on the cross to **put away sin** by the sacrifice of Himself. So it is true that if we open the door He can and does come in to be our Saviour.

And if He came into **your** heart, don't you think you would be a new boy or girl — if He were there instead of Sin? Would not Mother begin to find you obedient and truthful and loving in a new way? Of course she would. It is like being born all over again when He comes in. Indeed, Jesus called it being "born again."

If you have a strong feeling that you are ashamed of your sinfulness and that you ought to have done with your sin and be the boy or girl God wants you to be, then that feeling is Jesus knocking at the door. I once explained this to a boy, and he said, "Oh, I see what has been wrong with me all this time" (he was

referring to his sins); "Jesus has been knocking, but I wouldn't let Him in." Doesn't that explain all **your** sin too? Actually, that has been your **greatest** sin— shutting Him out and going your own way—and it is the sin that explains all the other sins. You may not have understood before that you were doing it: but can you see it now? Then do not go on in that dreadful sin, but yield your whole self up to Him. Go to Him (by prayer) and tell Him you will shut Him out no longer, but will trust Him to come in now and be your Saviour. Then you can say that, since you have made Him your own Saviour, **your** sin, like the sin of the thief, is in with the sin He died for, and you are therefore forgiven and accepted by God; and that He has certainly come into your heart to be your Saviour because you have at last opened that fast-closed door, and you have His promise, "I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, **I WILL** come in to Him."

