

ABC's of SALVATION

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

ZACCHEUS SAVED

“FOR the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

This well-known and oft-quoted verse is introduced by the word *for* which shows that the verse is a conclusion of something which precedes. In the preceding nine verses the story is told how salvation came to a tax gatherer named Zaccheus—a story which is so complete that immediately following it, the Lord Jesus Christ announced, in the words of the text, His great mission to this world. Let us notice some of the reasons why the Lord Jesus Christ chose this incident as the background for His great pronouncement.

I. Zaccheus Lived in Jericho

Jericho was known as *“the city of the curse.”* In Joshua 6:26 it is written, **“Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city of Jericho: that he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.”**

Some five hundred years later, in I Kings 16:34 it is written, **“In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho. He laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which He spake by Joshua the son of Nun.”**

Recent archaeological surveys show that there was no habitation of the site of the city destroyed by Joshua until about the year 900 B.C., thus confirming the two accounts. In recent excavations, the masonry of a gate was found in which there was a jar containing the remains of a child, while two other such jars were found in the walls.

In I John 5:19 it is written, **“The whole world lieth in wickedness** [the evil one].” All mankind out of Christ walks **“according to the prince of the power of the air” and under the wrath of God** (Ephesians 2:2). Truly, this old world is the place of the curse. The child of God is commanded to set not his affections on the things of earth (Colossians 3:2).

Thus we see that the city in which Zaccheus lived was a miniature of the place where the sinner lives.

II. Zaccheus Was Personally Bad

Zaccheus was “**chief among the publicans.**” The publicans bought from the Roman government the privilege of collecting the taxes from their fellowmen. They were usually wealthy in order to buy this privilege. This in turn caused them to become extortioners. Christ classed them along with the heathen (Matthew 18:17). Extortion is classed as one of the vile sins in First Corinthians 6:10 and one of the causes for which Christ pronounced the woes upon the Pharisees in Matthew 23:25. Thus we see that Zaccheus not only lived in the place of the curse, but by practice, he was a sinner—at least in the eyes of his countrymen.

III. Zaccheus? Handicap

This man had a threefold handicap.

- *In the first place*, he had spent money to get his position and no doubt was making money and lived affluently. It would be no easy matter to give up this source of lucrative income and follow Jesus.
- *In the second place*, it was difficult for him to get even a glimpse of Jesus, as he was so small in stature and the crowd was so great. He had a physical handicap.
- *In the third place*, no doubt he had quite a “pull” with the political powers of his day, and these in turn had a control over him.

It is an interesting fact that three enemies keep men from Christ—the world, the flesh and the devil. The sinner lives in a world system which lies in the lap of the wicked one (I John 5:19); the flesh is in him and it is enmity against God (Romans 8:7); he is controlled by the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2).

IV. Zaccheus Exercised His Will

He had a will to see Jesus, for it is written, “**He sought to see Jesus.**” The word translated sought is *zeteo* and implies *a search for something hidden*. His soul was unsatisfied—he had a will to see Jesus; he supplemented this will by climbing a sycamore tree.

Great controversies arose in the sixteenth century regarding man’s freewill and God’s sovereignty. These are associated with the names of James Arminius of Leyden and John Calvin of Geneva, and are still known among theologians as Arminianism and Calvinism. Someone has well said, “Both have elements of truth on their side, and are mostly right in what they affirm and wrong in what they deny.” Elsewhere in this book we have called your attention to the fact that Mr. Spurgeon was once asked to harmonize these two doctrines. His reply was, “I did not know they had fallen out.” That was a good answer. Just as the humanity and deity of Christ are seen in His miracles so also is the freewill of man and the sovereignty of God seen in the salvation of the lost.

The Scriptures teach that God is not willing that any should perish, that Christ came to seek and to save the lost, and that some men would not come unto Him and have life (II Peter 3:9; Luke 19:10; John 5:40).

Every man has a will which is the door to his heart—the key is on the inside.

Zaccheus had a will to see Jesus—he exercised that will by climbing the tree.

V. Christ's Sovereignty

“When Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house” (Luke 19:5).

This may be a matter of conjecture, but I cannot imagine just one lone man up a tree looking at the passing multitude. I venture that every tree along that highway had someone in it, all trying for vantage points of vision. It was a great day in Jericho! If this be true, then why did Christ just call one man from a tree? In the healing of the impotent man at Bethesda's pool, it is stated that there was **“a great multitude of impotent folk”** (John 5:3), yet, so far as we know, Christ healed only one man. Why did He not heal all the impotent folk that day? Why pick out one man? Here we see divine sovereignty in action in both cases.

Zaccheus did not know it then, but no doubt he later learned that he had been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:3). This rendezvous had been planned in eternity past. This doctrine is not presented to us as a theme for discussion, but a divine fact for thanksgiving.

One thing is true—a willing soul and a sovereign Saviour soon get together. The mystery of it all will be cleared in that day when we shall know as we are now known (I Corinthians 13:12).

Zaccheus had a willing mind—the sovereign Saviour called him.

VI. Belief and Repentance

“He made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.” This is in complete harmony with that great gospel text found in John 1:12, **“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”**

The word translated repentance means *to have a change of mind*. This change of mind in Zaccheus is seen by the fact that he was willing to restore fourfold to any man if he had taken anything by false accusation.

Sir Robert Anderson in *The Gospel and Its Ministry* illustrates repentance by a highwayman who stands beside the highway with knife in upraised hand ready to strike down the victim. The victim sees the highwayman and proffers him his watch. The hand that opens to receive the watch drops the dagger. Zaccheus both received Christ and repented.

VII. Salvation

“Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house . . .” (Luke 19:9).

On two previous occasions in this book, we have called the reader's attention to the fact that "Salvation is the great inclusive word of the gospel, gathering into itself all the redemptive acts and processes."

Zaccheus, like many a believer today, probably did not grasp all the meaning of this great word as spoken by the One who invited him down from the tree. But as time went on and this tax gatherer entered more fully into its significance, how his worldly riches must have paled into insignificance as he considered his riches in Christ! Thus we see why Christ prefaced the words, **"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"** with the story of Zaccheus' salvation.

SALVATION to our God!
Salvation to the Lamb!
The shedding of His precious blood
Our only claim.
Our God salvation gives,
And through the Lamb it flows;
Once slain for us—for us He lives.
Our sole repose.

The Lamb once slain is seen
On God's eternal throne:
And His redeemed are white and clean,
Through Him alone.
Salvation's joyful sound
Bursts from the blood-bought throng,
And holy angels all around
Take up the song.

Our hearts are turned for this,
Their songs our tongues employ;
The Lamb, the spring of all our bliss,
And God our joy.
"Salvation to our God!
Thanksgiving, power and might!
And to the Lamb who shed His blood,
Our life and light!

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