

**Conversion to Jesus Christ:
(5) Salvation by Sovereign Grace**

Last Lord's Day we considered the account recorded in Luke 18 of our Lord's dealings with *a young rich man*. This man had all the privileges and advantages of the best within Israel. He was young, very religious, earnest and devout, and was a leader among Jews, though he was a young man. And he was rich. All who knew him thought that if anyone would or could have salvation, it would be this man. He had not lived a scandalous life, as other young men. He had remained faithful to the beliefs and practices of his people, the people of God, even as he ordered his life by the law of God. And with the riches he had, it was assumed that he could do much good for the poor and for the needy persons in the community. Surely, if a man could receive favor from God, it would be this man! But this was not the case. He was a man who rejected Jesus Christ. Our Lord was faithful in His dealings with this young man, showing him that his riches stood between him and entrance into the kingdom of God. The Lord told him, "***You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me***" (Luke 18:22). The young man would not do this. Therefore due to his love for his riches, he forfeited salvation from sin, he missed out on eternal life. He would not abandon all in order to know and follow the Lord Jesus, through whom he would have inherited the promised kingdom.

Upon the young man's response to Him, the Lord said before His disciples:

"How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Our Lord was declaring the impossibility of this man, and by extension, any and every man, to enter the kingdom of heaven. The disciples understood the importance of His words, for they asked in response, "***Who then can be saved?***" If this man, who was devout, obedient to the law of God (He had said, "all these commandments I have kept from my youth."), could not be saved, then who can be? And so, our Lord taught His disciples through His dealings with this young man that it is impossible for a man to save himself. If he or any man is to be saved, it must be due wholly to a work of God's grace in him and for him, or he will remain in his sins, die in his sins, and then be sent to a Christless eternity.

And so thankfully, our Lord Jesus did not leave His disciples hopeless, but rather He set their hope solely upon the mercy and grace of God, that if a man is to be saved, it is because God has purposed to act on His behalf. In response to the disciples' rhetorical question, "Who then can be saved?", our Lord declared, "***The things which are impossible with men are possible with God***" (18:27). It is fitting, therefore, yes, even expected, that our Lord would validate His claim by bringing a rich man to salvation by His sovereign grace. He would cause a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God, something impossible for man, something only possible with God. And so we have in this next chapter, Luke 19, the account of Zacchaeus, a rich man, coming to Christ and receiving his salvation by grace alone. We read in Luke 19:1f these words,

*Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, **and he was rich.***

If in Luke 18 we have our Lord engaging the man who was *most* likely to be blessed of God, according to human standards, here we have our Lord dealing with a man in the community *least* likely to be blessed of God. Here was a man, who by everybody's assessment, deserved the wrath of God. But in order for God to give hope to great sinners, while bringing to Himself great glory through His grace, in fact, sole glory for bestowing salvation, the Lord Jesus came to save this man from his sin and enable him to participate fully in the eternal blessing of the people of God.

Let us read the full account in **Luke 19:1-10**:

¹Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. ²Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. ³And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. ⁵And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” ⁶So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. ⁷But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, “He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.”

⁸Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”

⁹And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; ¹⁰for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Let us consider this story and the lessons about the Lord and His grace, and lessons about ourselves and our dependence on His grace, with respect to our conversion to Jesus Christ.

We read that Jesus passed through Jericho that day (18:35). He and His disciples were on their final journey to Jerusalem, where our Lord would be arrested, be crucified, and rise the third day. Upon their entrance into Jericho, they met a blind man, whose name was Bartimaeus. Let us read this account:

³⁵Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. ³⁶And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. ³⁷So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. ³⁸And he cried out, saying, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

³⁹Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁰So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, ⁴¹saying, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

He said, “Lord, that I may receive my sight.”

⁴²Then Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.” ⁴³And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

And so, our Lord Jesus met Bartimaeus upon entering the town. He met Zacchaeus somewhere in town. Let us first reflect upon this man, Zacchaeus, as he was when this morning had begun, prior to Jesus meeting him. And then we will consider Zacchaeus the man as Jesus met him. And then lastly, we will consider the work of God’s grace in this man and his response to God’s grace.

I. The description of Zacchaeus (19:2).

Zacchaeus is described for us as having two qualities. He was “a chief tax collector”, and “he was rich.” This would appear to observers to be an ill-advised choice of man for our Lord to dine with on his way through town. But “God has His remnant among all sorts. Christ came to save even the *chief of sinners*, and therefore even the *chief of publicans*”, wrote Matthew Henry.¹

A. He was “a chief tax collector”

In contrast to Bartimaeus, who was powerless, this man had power. People feared him, for he could levy a tax at will. The power to tax is one of the greatest powers that men can wield over others. And the power was used and abused by the Jewish tax collectors of that day. A man in this position was regarded as greedy, unjust, and disloyal to his people and his God. He was seen to be one who was void of the qualities

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of mercy and compassion. In order to line his own pockets, he aligned himself with Rome to exact burdensome taxes on Rome's behalf and on his own behalf.

B. He was "rich."

In contrast to Bartimaeus, who was poor, Zacchaeus was rich. But in another way Zacchaeus was different from Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus, due to his humble, blind condition, felt he could cry out, and not cease to cry out. Yes, the people might weary of his loud cries, but there would have been a measure of pity for Bartimaeus. But Zacchaeus! How could he cry out for mercy when he had shown no mercy? His sin had silenced him. He had no right, no authority, and no claim on Jesus to stop Him for him. But he would do what he could. He would climb a tree to watch him pass by. This was the most He could do.

Now again, it is significant that Zacchaeus is described as a rich man. A few days earlier Jesus had told His disciples that it was "impossible" for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven (cf. Luke 18:24ff). The response was, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus replied, "What is impossible with man is possible with God." *Here we see unfold before us, what is humanly impossible, a rich man entering the kingdom of God.* It was a work of *God's grace, even His sovereign grace.* Salvation is only possible when God takes the initiative to come to a person through His Son Jesus Christ, and do a work of grace in the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. That is what happened here. Zacchaeus was undeserving, having no basis for expecting any kind regard by Jesus. This is the kind of person that God delights in showing forth His mercy and grace. If you are such a sinner, here is a reason for hopefulness for your case before God.

II. Our Lord's encounter with this rich man (19:3-5)

A. Zacchaeus had the desire to see the Lord Jesus.

We first read that Zacchaeus had a desire to see Jesus. Luke 19:3f reads, "And he sought to see who Jesus was." He came to look onto Christ, and he would do whatever was necessary to achieve his desire. But it was no doubt beyond his comprehension, even beyond his wildest dream, that Jesus would come to look upon him. Can you imagine the surprise, the wonder of it, when Jesus stopped to look up at him! But this kind of thing often happens in the Lord's dealings with souls. One may come to hear the words of Jesus out of curiosity, or perhaps only out of courtesy, but the Word of God arrests him. The Word of the Lord awakens the soul to things that he never pondered or never desired. When the Lord does a work of saving grace in the soul, new things are heard, and new desires are kindled. There arises in the soul an interest, even an attraction, a desire, to hear and to learn, and to hear more and to learn more of the Savior. When these desires begin to rise in the soul, he knows God must be at work, for he never before had such interest, such desire for the things of God.

Now we can only speculate why or to what degree this tax man had a desire to Jesus, but I think we can speculate, with some confidence. At one time Zacchaeus had been indifferent to spiritual matters. He had made money his god. He had given up everything for the acquisition and accumulation of wealth and power. He was willing to say goodbye to his integrity, his nation, and his religion. He would give up all for his god. He had loved money and devoted himself fully to its accumulation. Jesus had said on one occasion,

No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (Luke 16:13)

Zacchaeus had made his choice; he would serve money.

But something changed in this man. The love of money was deposed as the god of his heart. Here we see him not only "curious" or "interested", but even eager to see Jesus. Perhaps it was initially mere curiosity, but maybe it was more. It could be that he had become disillusioned with his life. His attainment of his life's goal had not brought him happiness after all. He was powerful, he was rich, but he was unhappy, perhaps to the point that he would give it all away, if that would result in restoring relationship with those

whom he had cheated, and with God, Whom he had forsaken. For underlying his speech that is recorded is an *awareness* and *remorse* of foul deeds, works of injustice that had been perpetrated upon others about him. But perhaps Zacchaeus had heard of the testimony of others about this Jesus, that He was the Savior, and that He receives sinners; and that even tax collectors had been brought into his company. “*Was not Levi (Matthew), a fellow publican, tax collector, one of His Twelve? Perhaps there is hope for me?*”

We might be even more ‘creative’ in our speculation. Perhaps Zacchaeus was a friend of his fellow tax collector, Levi, who had become a disciple, even Matthew, an apostle of Jesus of Nazareth. When our Lord found Levi, he was sitting at his table on the roadside collecting taxes, both for Rome and for himself. Let us read of this event and of its outcome.

²⁷After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” ²⁸So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.

²⁹Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. ³⁰And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, “Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

³¹Jesus answered and said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ³²I have not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” (Matt. 5:27-32)

I wonder if Zacchaeus was at this banquet? I would think that at least word had been circulated among the Jewish tax collectors about this great change in Levi, who was now Matthew, an apostle of the Lord Jesus. And so now Zacchaeus desires to see Jesus for himself.

But more important than Zacchaeus’ desire to Jesus, we read that...

B. The Lord Jesus had a desire to see Zacchaeus (19:5).

Thankfully, not only did Zacchaeus have a desire to see Jesus, but Jesus had a desire to see Zacchaeus. We read in **verse 5**, “*And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.’*”

There was destiny being fulfilled in *this event* at *this moment in time*, even the eternal decree of God was coming to pass that this day salvation would come to this man’s house. Jesus said to him, “Come down out of that tree for today *I must* stay at your house today.” It was no accident that Jesus came that way on that day. It was no accident that Zacchaeus was short. That tree did not grow in that spot by chance. God’s decree had ordered this event before creation. God’s providence had brought all to pass. God had decreed from eternity that this was the day that the Lord had made for Zacchaeus. God would see to it that he would rejoice and be glad in it. On that day, on that spot, God had ordained that He would find Zacchaeus, a lost soul, a true son of Abraham.

Can you imagine what occurred, the power of this moment? As the crowd was moving through, Zacchaeus is viewing the scene, then suddenly, Jesus stops, and then everyone stops. Zacchaeus is looking intently at Jesus, then Jesus looks up intently at him, and calls him by name, “*Zacchaeus, come down out of that tree immediately, I must spend the day with you.*”

- a. This call of Jesus was *ordained of God*.
- b. This call to Zacchaeus was *personal*; he was called by name.
- c. This call was *effectual*, for we read, “he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.”

Christian, when you were saved it was no less than an event like this that was played out. Your call was *ordained of God*. God called you *individually* and *personally*. Just as Jesus singled Zacchaeus out of a crowd, there was a day when the Word of God came to you uniquely and personally. While others sat about you and heard merely the words of men, you heard it as it was in truth, “you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe” (1 Thess. 2:13).

And that Word was *effectual*. Your repentance, your faith and practice, your presence here today, Christian, testifies to God's power in His effectual calling of you.

Paul wrote of the event that had transformed his life:

¹⁵But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, ¹⁶to reveal His Son *in me*, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, ¹⁷nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. (Gal. 1:15-17)

God had not merely revealed Christ to Paul, but He revealed His Son in Paul. He became a new man, a transformed man, from that moment onward he was a man on a mission to serve Christ and make Him known.

Conversion is a work of God's sovereign grace. Paul had described his conversion as an example of how great sinners God is able to save by His grace. No one could ever think, "I am too far gone, too great a sinner for God to have regard for me." But Paul wrote,

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. ¹⁶However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, *as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.* ¹⁷Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Tim. 1:15-17)

III. The response of this man (19:6-10)

⁶So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. ⁷But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."

⁸Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."

Before considering the response of Zacchaeus...

1. First look at the response of the crowd (19:7). *"But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, 'He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.'" There are always reactions to God's work of saving sinners. They thought that there were better, nobler, more respected, more righteous people in Jericho with whom the Lord could dine. "But Zacchaeus they think to be a sinner above all men that dwelt in Jericho, such a sinner as was not fit to be conversed with."²*

It is a common thing for sinful people to be opposed to grace, especially when it is perceived to be sovereign grace. **Charles Spurgeon** put it this way:

There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God's Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that Sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children ought more earnestly to contend than the doctrine of their Master over all creation—the Kingship of God over all the works of His own hands—the Throne of God and His right to sit upon that Throne. On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldings, no truth of which they have made such a football, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the Sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except on His throne. They will allow Him to be in His workshop to fashion worlds and make stars. They will allow Him to be in His almonry to dispense His alms and bestow His bounties. They will allow Him to sustain the earth and bear up the

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 5 (Fleming H. Revell), p. 783.

pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean; but when God ascends His throne, His creatures then gnash their teeth, and we proclaim an enthroned God, and His right to do as He wills with His own, to dispose of His creatures as He thinks well, without consulting them in the matter; then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on His throne is not the God they love. But it is God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon His throne whom we trust.³

Spurgeon gave another sermon entitled, “Sovereign Grace Hated by the Modern Religionist.” Even so-called religious people will react and not receive pardoned sinners into the fold. He speaks of many professing Christians who will fight against you if you preach sovereign grace. Here are a few of his words:

If anything is hated bitterly, it is the out-and-out gospel of the grace of God, especially if that hateful word “sovereignty” is mentioned with it. Dare to say, “He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion” (Romans 9:15), and furious critics will revile you without stint.

The modern religionist not only hates the doctrine of sovereign grace, but he raves and rages at the mention of it. He would sooner hear you blaspheme than preach election by the Father, atonement by the Son, or regeneration by the Spirit. If you want to see a man worked up till the Satanic is clearly uppermost, let some of the new divines (pastors) hear you preach a free grace sermon. A gospel which is after men will be welcomed by men; but it needs divine operation upon the heart and mind to make a man willing to receive into his in most soul this distasteful gospel of the grace of God. My dear brethren, do not try to make it tasteful to carnal minds.

Hide not the offense of the cross, lest you make it of none effect. The angles and corners of the gospel are its strength to pare them off is to deprive it of power. Toning down is not the increase of strength, but the death of it. Learn, then, that if you take Christ out of Christianity, Christianity is dead. If you remove grace out of the gospel, the gospel is gone. If the people do not like the doctrine of grace, give them all the more of it.

I preach the doctrines of grace because I believe them to be true; because I see them in the Scriptures; because my experience endears them to me; and because I see the holy result of them in believers.

The doctrine which I preach to you is that of the Puritans: it is the doctrine of Calvin, the doctrine of Augustine, the doctrine of Paul, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The Author and Finisher of our faith himself taught the most blessed truth which well agreed with our text- “For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8).

Here is one more in which Spurgeon wrote of the little regard that many in churches give to God’s sovereign grace as the sole cause of their salvation:

There are others in this world to whom Christ is something, but not much. They are anxious to save themselves, but since they must confess some imperfections they use the merits of Christ as a sort of makeweight for their slight deficiencies. Their robe is almost long enough, and by adding a little fringe of the Redeemer’s grace it becomes all they can wish. To say prayers, to go to church, to take the sacrament to observe Good Friday, these are the main reliances of many a religionist, and then if the coach sticks a little in a deeper rut than usual they call in the help of the Lord Jesus, and hope that he will put his shoulder to the wheel. They commonly say, “Well, we must do our best, then Christ will be our Savior, and God is very merciful.” They allow the blessed and all-sufficient work and sacrifice of the Savior to fill up their failures; and imagine that they are extremely humble in allowing so much as that. Jesus is to them a stopgap, and nothing more. I know not whether the condition of such people is one whit more desirable than that of those to whom Jesus is nothing at all, for this is a vile contempt and despising of Christ indeed, to think that he came to help you to save yourselves, to dream that he is a part

³ In Arthur Pink, *The Attributes of God*, in the opening words of the chapter, “The Sovereignty of God.”

Savior, and will divide the world; and honor of salvation with the sinner. Those who yoke the sinner and the Savior together as each doing a part rob Christ of all his glory; and this is robbery indeed, to pilfer from the bleeding Lamb of God the due reward of his agonies. “He trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with him.” In the work of salvation Jesus stands alone. Salvation is of the Lord. It Christ is not all to you he is nothing to you. He will never go into partnership as a part Savior of men. If he be something he must be everything, and if he be not everything he is nothing to you. (*Christ Is All* by C. H. Spurgeon)

Our Lord Jesus manifested His grace toward Zacchaeus, when He stopped, looked up at him and said, “*Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.*” This was undeserved, unwarranted grace that the Lord bestowed. It was due to the free, sovereign grace of God that He chose to bestow upon this man, who was a known greedy man, dishonest man, and irreligious man. But God is in the business of showing forth His glory in saving such ones like this. If the truth were known, most of us who know Christ could probably identify with this little guy rather than most of the “good” citizens of Jericho. The apostle Paul, in attempting to humble some who were all too proud Christians in the church at Corinth, put them in mind as to who they were when God in His sovereign grace had revealed Jesus Christ to them in the gospel. He wrote:

²⁶For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. ²⁷But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹that no flesh should glory in His presence. ³⁰But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— ³¹that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.” (1 Cor. 1:26-31)

2. Zacchaeus’ response to the grace of the Lord Jesus (19:6-8)

What happens when the sovereign grace of God that brings salvation enters the heart of a man? We can see it manifested in Zacchaeus’ response and reaction.

a. There is a response of joy (19:6).

We read, “*So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.*” His response was immediate and enthusiastic. He was filled with joy.

In my understanding of the ways of God, the degree or measure of true, spiritual, joy that we may experience as Christians is based on two things.

(1) A true awareness of what you as a sinner deserve.

(2) A true awareness of what you as a believer have received freely by God’s grace. Unless these two truths are present, I do not believe true or full spiritual joy can be present. The one who enjoys greatest joy will be the one who knows greatly the reality of both of these things. Zacchaeus was full of joy.

b. Zacchaeus had a new outlook on life and the things of life (19:8). Money was deposed as his god. King Jesus was set up in its place. Now, having met Jesus, money had taken a subordinate place to other things. What moved him to do this? The grace of God was working for him, but also *in* him.

c. There was a new quality of liberality about him. “*Here and now I give half my goods to the poor.*” The Lord had been gracious to him; he will be gracious to others. He was now concerned about the

poor. He was concerned for those whom he had wronged. This was something new for Zacchaeus. And no wonder, for he was now a new man!

d. There was the presence of true repentance. *“Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.’”* Why did he do this in this fashion?

(1) He had a desire to clear his name. He was making a public announcement. “Get in line people, I’m handing out money, if I have wronged you.” It is one thing to make that kind of commitment in private before the Lord alone; it is quite another to announce it before a crowd where people will hold you accountable.

(2) He had a desire to make restitution. The Law of Moses prescribed what a thief was to do. It did not require a man to give away half his goods. A thief need not pay back fourfold. A thief, according to Leviticus 6:1-5, was to restore the amount he had stolen, plus one third. However, in 2 Samuel 12:6, we read that a rustler of cattle or sheep was to restore fourfold what he had taken. Zacchaeus did not diminish his sins, he magnified them. He was going to do whatever it took to clear his name and make restitution. He wasn’t selective of who or what he had done, He would make all right. “If I have cheated anybody out of anything...”

(3) He was publicly declaring his repentance and faith before others. “I want everybody to know. I am no longer the same person as I was. The Lord has shown me great grace. He has given me that which I do not deserve. I am turning from my self-indulgent, self-seeking life. I am a new man.” We do the same of course. We may do so publicly in a meeting, but the normal way to declare one’s repentance from sin and faith in God and His Son the Lord Jesus is through baptism.

(4) There was a desire to free Jesus of any disgrace. (19:7, 8). I think that this was probably his major motivation. When the Lord graciously told Zacchaeus that he would dine with him in his house that day, the crowds began to deride Jesus. They knew what kind of man this chief tax collector was, and now they were associating the person and character with this man. The people murmured against Jesus for identifying Himself with Zacchaeus. But Zacchaeus will not have the name of Jesus degraded on his account. He will quit his sin. He will clear his name. He is loath to bring discredit upon the Lord Jesus. And so he would change his ways lest Jesus’ name be blasphemed. He had a concern for the glory of God and His Son.

D. The response of Jesus (19:9, 10).

“And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.’”

Zacchaeus was already a joy-filled person because this Jesus would spend the day having fellowship with him in his own house. But can we imagine the response of Zacchaeus to what the Lord Jesus says to him next? Essentially three pronouncements are made:

1. The pronouncement that salvation belonged to Zacchaeus (19:9a)

Verse 9a reads, “And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house...” Consider what was being granted to this repentant sinner: the promise of forgiveness of sins; reconciliation with God, full fellowship, fullness of life eternally.

2. The pronouncement that Zacchaeus belonged to Abraham (19:9b)

Jesus said, “because he also is a son of Abraham.” Jesus assured Zacchaeus an inheritance of true spiritual wealth. Zacchaeus would be far richer than he ever imagined! Inheriting a new heaven and earth! Dwelling in a place of unlimited abundance, comfort, and security with God Himself and all of God’s people.

This was our Lord declaring that Zacchaeus was numbered among God’s elect, those He determined would inherit salvation. Abraham was the father of the nation, the people of the Kingdom of God. This fatherhood of Abraham was ultimately not due to physical descent from Abraham, but the true Jew, the true Israelite, was one who had the same kind of faith as Abraham. Here we see the spiritual nature of the “Israel of God.” All those who believe the gospel are children of Abraham who will inherit God’s promises to Abraham and to his children. Paul had wrote,

⁵Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?— ⁶just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” ⁷Therefore know that *only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham*. ⁸And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” ⁹So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. (Gal. 3:5-9)

3. The pronouncement that Zacchaeus belonged to Jesus (19:10)

Our Lord justifying His dealings with Zacchaeus said, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

The analogy of a sheepfold is given. Zacchaeus is as a lost sheep who belonged to Jesus and was found by Jesus. Jesus had been sent to seek him and find him and bring him back into the fold of God.

No response of Zacchaeus is given. I can only imagine him bowing his head in silent awe and worship, overwhelmed and the goodness and kindness that His Savior had shown to Him.

Perhaps **J. Vernon McGee** gave one of the most clever sermon titles I have ever heard to this story of Zacchaeus; he entitled the sermon, “The Fruit of the Sycamore Tree.” Zacchaeus was ripe for the plucking. God’s grace had worked upon him and in him and he was ready for plucking on this day. Our God, too, harvested us, in this manner. It was all of grace.

There are others about us who have not yet been harvested, but they are even now ripening on the tree. We should be seeking such, perhaps finding them among those who seem to be farthest from the Lord. He delights in saving such kinds of persons. For He is a great Savior Who has come to save great sinners. We should do as He did, show kindness to them. Invite them to eat with us. If our Lord was seeking sheep, so should we. He is a Shepherd looking for His lost sheep. He is not looking for goats, but sheep. And He will find them and bring them all, one-by-one, into His fold. May God be praised!

Before we conclude, let us consider the manner in which God through Jesus Christ brought salvation to this man and not the rich man of the previous chapter. Why did the rich young man not embrace Christ, but this wretched tax collector did do so? Of course the only answer is that an internal work of God’s grace had been at work in Zacchaeus, a work that had not be evident in the life of the young rich man. Zacchaeus had come to see His need for Jesus Christ and therefore quickly responded to our Lord’ overtures. But the rich man saw no such need for Jesus Christ that he would give himself wholly and fully to the Savior. This is wholly a work of grace. If we can discern from the Scriptures what kind of attitudes and understandings that are requisite for true conversion, we may, by the grace of God, put ones in the course they should follow in which they can reasonably expect to receive the grace of God in salvation.

This is how the old Puritans, both in old and New England, sought to deal with true and false conversion in their churches. Virtually everyone was a member of a church and attended weekly. But the Puritan pastors knew that there were many unconverted people within their churches. They wrote and taught in great detail how God normally brings salvation to sinners, so that their people could reasonably and biblically conclude that they were in a state of saving grace or that they could be awakened to the fact that

they were without Christ and in need of being saved by Him. In our study of true and false conversion, this is where we will direct our study next. Salvation is wholly due to the sovereign grace of God, but how does God normally apply the benefit of Christ's life and death in order to bring sinners to true conversion? May our Lord help us and direct us in our study and in the examination of our own souls.