

## **A Sinner Meets a Seeking Savior, Part 2**

Luke 19:1-10

42-239

We return in our Bibles to Luke chapter 19, to the familiar story, the beloved story really, of the little Jewish tax collector named Zacchaeus, who climbed a tree to see Jesus and to whose home Jesus went and brought salvation. One of the most familiar Sunday school stories, one of the most beloved ones.

It is a story that is far more, however, than just the story. There is in this story so much spiritual truth that we find it almost impossible to get it all out. So we're going to make a run at it and see how well we do today. This is part two of the story of Zacchaeus and there well could be three or four more, but I'll restrain myself so that we can keep moving through this wonderful chapter together.

Let me read for you this ten-verse section at the beginning of Luke 19. And speaking of Jesus, it says, "And He entered and was passing through Jericho and behold, there was a man called by the name of Zacchaeus and he was a chief tax gatherer and he was rich. And he was trying to see who Jesus was and he was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. And he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down for today I must stay at your house.' And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. And when they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, 'He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.' And Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.'"

Verse 10 states the most blessed truth, no truth more wondrous, more beneficial than this one. This is at the very heart of the existence of the universe. God actually created the universe so that in the universe He could create the Earth so that on the Earth He could create the human race so that out of the human race He could seek and save lost sinners, this for His own everlasting joy and glory. This is what it's all about. What's going on on Earth is not incidental in the infinity of this universe; it is the focal point of this entire universe. It is true that the vast and infinite heavens declare the glory of God and the rest of the creation shows His handiwork, and that all together collectively it manifests His mighty power and Godhead.

But the reason for all of it is not just to put God on display but to put God on display to humans, so that He might be glorified by them, that He might rescue a group of sinners who would gather around Him in heaven, along with the holy angels who are His servants sent to minister to that redeemed community where collectively saints and angels would worship Him forever and ever and ever, in ways that He otherwise would not be worshiped. He could never be worshiped for His mercy and His compassion and His sympathy and His forgiveness and His grace and His salvation if He had not

allowed sin so that all of those things could be manifest. So when you ask the question, "Why is the universe here? And why is the Earth here? And why is the human race here?" The answer is so that God might, for His own eternal joy and glory, seek and save lost sinners. This again reminds us that God is by nature a saving God, and I have taught that through the years many times and won't go back over that again. But it is the nature of God to save. In the New Testament, God, our Savior, God, our Savior, God, our Savior is repeated again and again, particularly in Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus. God is our Savior.

In the great text of John chapter 4 and verse 42, we are reminded there that God is our Savior, that Jesus Christ is the Savior. In 1 Timothy 4:10 God is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe. He's not only a Savior spiritually and eternally of those who believe, but He's a Savior physically and temporally even of those who don't believe. That is to say, the fact that sinners don't die and go to hell immediately when they sin is an indication that God by nature is a Savior. God delivers the sinner even temporally and physically from the immediately consequence of sin. God sets aside His holy wrath, His just judgment and His righteous vengeance in order to demonstrate His tolerance and His patience which is a manifestation of His mercy and grace, even on a temporal basis. That is what we call common grace. That's why sinners live lives and enjoy all that God has created in this world, even though they do not worship Him. God is by nature a Savior. You see it even in that sense. You see it more powerfully and most truly in His salvation of those sinners, in that salvation which is spiritual and eternal.

When we talk about the ministry of reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5 where we have been called as ambassadors to preach the gospel of reconciliation, it begins...That great section begins in verse 18, "All these things are from God who has reconciled us." It is a program initiated by God because of who He is. He is a saving God. Perhaps nowhere in the Old Testament, although there are many places to turn to, nowhere in the Old Testament says it more directly than in the 45th chapter of Isaiah, 45th chapter of Isaiah says this, verse 15, "Oh God of Israel, Savior..." Verse 17: "Israel has been saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Verse 21: "Declare and set forth your case. Indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I the Lord? There is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior. There is none except Me."

God, of course, the only true and living God is a Savior. But, even in the gods of men's invention, and even in the gods of demonic invention; there is no such thing as a false god who is by nature redeeming, saving, gracious, merciful, compassionate, kind and forgiving. That doesn't exist in the false deities concocted by men and demons. But God is by nature a saving God. God sent Jesus Christ into this world, as it says in verse 10, to seek and save that which is lost. From before the foundation of the world, God determined who it was that would be saved and then God set the saving enterprise in motion, saving people in the Old Testament, sending His Son into the world to pay the price for their sin both past and present and future in order that their sin might be forgiven through justice being satisfied in the execution of Jesus Christ in the sinner's place, and God has on the basis of that sacrifice saved sinners by grace. He is the seeking God who seeks true worshipers, in John 4, through salvation. And here we find that Jesus is the seeking Savior.

The story of Zacchaeus is just an illustration of that, and it is a wonderful illustration. It is a marvelous illustration. And it's far more than a story. It is a profound theological treatment. The theology in this story is well nigh inexhaustible. Now last time we began to look at this account by considering the sinner, the sinner in the first four verses. The one who is lost, in this case, is a man named

Zacchaeus. He lives in a town called Jericho. Rather formidable place, as I told you last time and the times before when we were considering the two blind men that Jesus healed and saved there on the same trip through the town. But Jericho was a notable place, particularly because it was one of the three regional tax centers in the land of Israel. So here was the man who was the chief tax gatherer, the guy at the top of the pyramid. He was the administrator of taxation under the Roman occupying government and because of that, he was very rich. Rich partly on legitimate basis, because he had a job and Rome compensated him for it, but rich on an illegitimate basis because he extorted and robbed in every way that he could to get whatever money he wanted out of people, not on a legitimate basis but strong-arming it out of them, so he was surrounded by thugs who got the money that he demanded one way or another. He had become by these means very rich. He had also become despised, despicable at the lowest level of hatred and animosity of anybody in the Jewish culture because he had purchased a Roman tax franchise that is aiding and abetting the occupying, idolatrous, pagan enemy and extorted money from his own people. He is a traitor of all traitors. He can't go to the synagogue, he can't interact with people. He can't go into the home of a self-respecting Jew. No self-respecting Jew would ever enter into his house. He can't eat a meal with one of them. They can't eat a meal with him. He is isolated completely so that the only people who surround him is the rest of the riff-raff that would be considered in the category of outcasts and rejects. This is the man. This is the sinner.

Jesus spent so much time with people like this that in Luke 7:34 they called Him, "the friend of tax collectors and sinners." And you remember that in Acts...in rather Luke chapter 5 He says He didn't come to call the righteous, but He came to call sinners to repentance. It was the righteous, self-righteous, who wanted nothing to do with Jesus. They wouldn't listen to His message. It was the lowly, the outcasts, the forsaken that listened to Him, as you remember.

So, on this visit Jesus has already healed and saved two blind beggars, as we saw back in chapter 18. They were outcasts because the theology basically of the day was that if you're blind and you're a beggar, it's because you're sinful and God is judging you. That was their theology. That was an old, old, old theology. It went all the way back to...Well it went all the way back to patriarchal period when that's how the friends of Job judged Job. All the adversity in Job's life they told him comes because God is punishing you for your sin. That theology stayed around all that time, still around today in many places. And so these beggars were assumed to be sinful and under the discipline of God and therefore they were treated as outcasts as well, and only handed a meager coin here and there because the Old Testament demanded that the people of God be sensitive to those who were deprived and destitute.

But below the beggars and below the blind were the tax collectors. They were even worse. So here comes Jesus into a respectable town and saves three people, and three at the bottom of the social ladder, basement people, the scum. And it is a reminder of the purpose of God as indicated by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:26, "Consider your calling, brethren. There were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble. God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised. God has chosen the things that are not, the nobodies, that He might nullify the things that are that no man should boast before God."

The saving enterprise has always majored on outcasts and lowly people. They're the ones, of course, who in their destitution, in their desperation, in their isolation and in their alienation have the least to hold on to and seem the most eager to be delivered from the horrors of their situation. And

this tax collector was one of those. He had money, lots of it. He had power, lots of it. He had people who did whatever he told them to do and they served his purposes. But he had nothing in his heart to satisfy him. And so in his curiosity he wants to see who Jesus is, verse 2, trying to see who Jesus was. He had two problems: big crowd, small man. It's not a good combination. He can't see through them and he can't see over them. So, presses the issue, ran on ahead, verse 4, got ahead of where the crowd was. You remember, there was a mass of humanity moving through Jericho on the road to Jerusalem. It's Passover season, there would have been a steady stream of pilgrims. But this crowd would have been far bigger than any other streaming group of pilgrims coming to the Passover because in the middle of this crowd was Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus of Nazareth had a reputation across the country. Most particularly in Bethany just a few miles away He had raised Lazarus from the dead not too long before this. And so they all would have known that. He wanted to see who Jesus was, so He ran ahead, ahead of the crowd as the crowd is moving through town. He knows the direction they're going to take in order to progress toward the city of Jerusalem eventually. He gets there. Verse 4 says, he climbs into a sycamore tree, also called a fig mulberry tree, big leaves and small fruit on that tree. It's spring so the tree would have been full of foliage at this particular time, probably thought maybe he could get up there and kind of hide and look between the branches and not be seen. Sort of had to eat humble pie; you know, a dignified tax collector maintaining some kind of decorum, some sense of dignity and honor, sitting up in a tree looking through the leaves isn't exactly the way to get it. He's already hated and despised as well. He wouldn't want to put himself in a prominent place for public view anyway. So in this case we might assume that he was sort of tucked in the leaves somewhere up there. Short, wide trunk, low branches made it accessible even to a little man.

Jesus came to the place, as you remember in verse 5, and with that statement we move from the sinner to the Savior, from the lost to the seeker. And the second phase the Savior comes along; this is scene two. Scene one is this little Jewish tax collector sitting in a tree looking through the leaves waiting for Jesus to show up. Scene two, Jesus comes to the place. He reaches the place and it says, "He looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus.'" That's the first shock. He never met Jesus, perfect stranger, and He knew his name, made eye contact with him, called him by name, "Zacchaeus." That's pretty affirming that whatever Zacchaeus was thinking about the uniqueness of Jesus was probably true. "Hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." Now there are just a lot of imperatives in that. He says, "I must," *dei*, divine necessity. "It is necessary," repeatedly used in the book of Luke for things that Jesus must do. Why? Because it's a matter of divine, sovereign purpose, divine timing. "I must stay at your house today." Divine necessity, divine timing, divine location. I suppose in the vernacular we would say as far as God's concerned, Zacchaeus, you are the man and this is your day. What was determined in eternity past, what was determined in the counsel of God before anything was created is about to come to reality. "Hurry and come down for today I must stay at your house." He said that openly. He said that publicly and Jesus knew that that was a serious breach of Jewish expectation. If they thought He was the Messiah, if they thought He was the man of God, if they thought He was the prophet of God, if they thought He was holy and righteous, if they had any inkling along that line, this would shock them, because you didn't go to the house of a man like that and you didn't stay overnight at the house of a man like that. And I told you, that's the implication of the words and the language there. And you didn't eat a meal with a man like that because if you did that, that was tantamount to sharing in his corruption. And so they were stunned to hear that come out of His mouth.

And while they were stunned, as we shall see, and complained and grumbled, it says that Zacchaeus received Him gladly, rejoicing. That tells us that he came for more than curiosity. That tells us that he came for more than some kind of superficial interest. He didn't just come because he had some kind

of a little idea that maybe this was a unique guy and he wanted to have a novel experience. He responds with joy because he's got some things going on his heart that are pretty profound and pretty deep. Now remember, he is alienated, he is isolated. He has no relationships with anybody that matters, with anybody that's good or noble or pure. His only companions are the riff-raff, the worst of the worst, the scum. But remember, deeper than that is the fact that he is an extortioner and a thief and a robber who has abused and harmed and hurt people and stolen from them, and impoverished them, and abused them in every sense possible. And he feels the weight of that and he feels the guilt of that. He can't worship. He can't go to the temple. He can't have a...an atonement offered for him. That's why in Jesus telling the story of the Pharisee and the publican, you remember the publican goes to the temple and says, "God, please apply this atonement to me," because that was not how it was. They were outcasts. And typically of a Pharisee...if a publican went to the temple ground, they would be discovered there as one of the unclean and thrown out the eastern gate. So he was isolated from God. He was isolated from religion. He was isolated from hope. And then he was bearing the full weight of this massive burden of extortion and corruption which is the way he had lived his life in his heart. And to hear that a holy prophet of God with miracle power who may well be in the eyes of some the Messiah of Israel was going to come to his house? It wasn't just that now in spite of the way he was treated by everybody else, the most significant person in all of Israel would come to his house. It wasn't a yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah attitude. Too bad for you, He's coming to my house. It wasn't that. It is just the overwhelming unbelievable joy of an aching heart, of an empty heart having a meeting with someone who represents God. He was eagerly joyous though he must have been stunned. It doesn't say he received Him with fear. It doesn't say, "Whoa, I don't want to go that far, I just wanted to know who You were. I don't want to get that close." He received Jesus with joy.

And again in typical fashion, he stands in direct contrast to the rest of the populace. When they saw it, verse 7, they all began to grumble saying, "He's gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." That may have been sort of orchestrated by some Pharisees in the crowd, or some of their more devout disciples. "Sinner" not meaning...meaning in some personal sense they knew about his life, although that were true, sinner in the sense that he belongs to the category of the despised, the category of the rejected, the category of the outcasts. You don't go to their house. This is more of the cantankerous criticism that came against Jesus Christ from the self-righteous people who thought He worked for Satan because He hung around Satan's people so much.

Please notice verse 7, "When they saw it, they all began to grumble." This is universally the viewpoint. This man belongs in the category of rejected, despised, defiled, corrupted people. No Jew with any sense of purity would ever go to his house, stay and eat; you share his corruption. But Jesus says, "I'm coming to your house." He hurried and came down and received Him gladly. Off they went to the house. End of scene one: Curtain falls.

That's where we left it last week. Curtain rises on scene two in verse 8. "And Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I'll give back four times as much.'" Wow, something dramatic has just happened. Whoa! You've got a man who is a professional thief, extortionist who is now become an instant philanthropist. You've got a man who spent his whole life taking who now wants to give. You've got a man who is defined by selfishness now acting in an absolutely unselfish way. Something dramatic has happened here. And by the way, there is no discussion of the conversation that Jesus had with him. And that's such a wonderful thing. That is so much genius on the part of the Holy Spirit. It... There's no verse between verses 7 and 8 that say...that says when Jesus got to the house, Jesus

preached to him concerning repentance and the kingdom of God, and the need to enter the kingdom by faith. It doesn't say that. It doesn't say anything about Jesus confronting his sin. It doesn't tell us what the conversation was.

But it doesn't need to. We know what the conversation was. Hey, we're already in the third gospel, Matthew, Mark, Luke. We know all those conversations Jesus has had about repentance and about the kingdom and about salvation and about eternal life and about believing on Him. We know all of that. Obviously what Jesus did was recognize the conviction of sin in his heart, the emptiness, the isolation, the lostness. He is one of the lost which He seeks. It is true that he knows he has no eternal life, no relationship with God, no forgiveness of sin, bears a weight of guilt and all of its consequences. Jesus addresses that, talks to him about forgiveness, about repentance, about the kingdom, and he embraces it, by the power of God he embraces it. That's obvious. You say why? Because in verse 9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house." And I'll tell you this, Jesus knows when the salvation comes. We might not always know but Jesus knows. In fact, verse 10, He says, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." And here's an illustration of saving one who is lost. "Today salvation has come to this house." You know, I just love the fact that there's no discussion of the gospel, there's no discussion of the reaction of Zacchaeus. He didn't say, "I believe, Lord, I...I repent," that's not there. Sure he said it, it's not here. Why? Because there's an emphasis being made here. We can assume the gospel. What we can't assume is that it really took root because there are many people who followed Jesus for a little while and then left. So rather than go through the discussion and some verbal response from Zacchaeus, the Lord jumps right to the evidence of the transformation.

Look at verse 8 again with that in view. Zacchaeus stopped. I don't know if that's the best word for that, *statheis*, *statheis* in the Greek. It really means he...he took a stand...he...he set himself with a fixed attitude. It could be used for a formal act. It is really saying this: Zacchaeus, after the conversation is over that we can assume took place, rises, sets himself, and makes this confession. That's the idea. "And said to the Lord..." This is where he takes his formal stand. Obviously the Lord made everything clear. The Lord talked of salvation. He believed by the power of the Spirit of God at work in his heart, not apart from his will but through his will. And so he rises, takes his stand and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord." That's enough right there. He's confessing Jesus as what? As Lord. This is foundational. This isn't something that comes later. This is foundational. If you confess Jesus as Lord, you're saved, Romans 10:9 and 10. It's essential. "Behold, Lord," and behold is an exclamation. I suppose today we would say, "Wow, Lord, whoa, Lord." And this is just a way to exclaim something that speaks of the dramatic transformation that has taken place in this man's life. First thing he says when he takes his stand is, "You're my Lord." Second thing, "Half of my possessions I will give to the poor." Wow that is a change. This is self-denial. This is, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself." That's it. "Take up his cross and follow Me." He has affirmed that Jesus is his Lord and he says immediately, "I'm going to give half of everything that I possess to the poor." Now he possessed a lot. Remember back in verse 3...pardon me, verse 2...he was...he was rich, he was really, really rich. In one day he was so totally transformed that he went from being a thief to being a benefactor; that he went from being selfish to being unselfish; that he went from being a taker to being a giver. It's stunning, stunning. Ah, it's very much different than the rich young ruler back in chapter 18 verse 22. "Jesus said, 'One thing you still lack, sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, you'll have treasure in heaven, come follow Me.' When he heard these things he became very sad, he was extremely rich." There was a man who wasn't about to be parted from his riches. It's impossible, Jesus says, for rich men to give up their riches on their own. Verse 24 of 18: "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" How hard is it? "It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of

God." Wow, that sounds like impossible, not hard. Verse 27: "Things impossible with men are possible with God." It's impossible for a rich man on his own to give up his riches. Here's an illustration in the very next chapter of a rich man who immediately gave up his riches. Why? Because he was sought and saved by a sovereign Lord. True righteousness results in a transformation, a transformation that hits at the very core of your dominant category of sin. Now you can pick a lot of categories. For this guy it was money and extortion. For somebody else, it might be something else. It might be anger, it might be immorality. It might be homosexuality. It might be whatever. But when true salvation comes and real transformation comes, it strikes a death blow at the core category of one's wretchedness.

And so, immediately that transformation showed itself up right in the realm where his sin was most dominantly manifest. He became...He actually became like the noble, wonderful, generous Macedonians. Remember in 2 Corinthians 8, wish to make known to you the grace of God given to the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality; poor people in the middle of suffering and persecution giving generously, giving according to their ability, verse 3, and beyond their ability. Pure religion in this, right? Generosity toward the poor, orphaned, and the widow. The apostle John writes about this in 1 John in about five different places. "Don't say you love God and then withhold what your brother needs." True righteousness results in unselfishness, it results in self-denial. It results in abandonment of all that is tainted.

So he says, "I'm going to give half of it to the poor." Half of his accumulated wealth, huge. And these would be the poor who had paid him taxes and surely from some of them he had extorted more than was just. I'm going to give it all to the poor. It's amazing.

You remember that James wrote, "Faith without works is" what? "dead." You remember that Ephesians 2:10 says that "you were saved unto good works which God has before ordained that you should walk in them." That is a natural consequence of a supernatural transformation. And here you see it. You don't need to know what the conversation was. You don't need to know what he said about believing. All you need to see is this massive miracle of a transformed soul: Half of my possessions I'll give to the poor. And now he's got half left. What about the other half? "If I have defrauded any one of anything, I'll give back four times as much." Wow! Anybody that I've defrauded, I'll give back four times as much. Now how many people would that be? Hundreds? Thousands? Just play that scene out in your mind. This isn't a parable, this is a real man in a real story in a real place and one can only imagine how many weeks people were in line, right? getting back four fold, 400 percent.

Now where did he get that idea? Did that just come out of the air? If you go back to Leviticus, chapter 6 verse 5, or Numbers. In fact, you might look at Numbers. I think it's chapter 5 verse 6 and 7. There is an Old Testament prescription for restitution. Numbers 5, go down to verse 6, The Lord said...spoke to Moses saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, when a man or woman commits any sin of mankind acting unfaithfully against the Lord and that person is guilty" verse 7 "he shall confess his sins which he has committed, he shall make restitution in full for his wrong" to the person he has wronged, obviously, "and add to it one fifth of it and give it to him whom he has wronged." So this was pretty much the Jewish standard. If you read any Jewish literature, 20 percent, one fifth, would have been what was necessary in restitution. You...you stole somebody from something...something from somebody, you defrauded somebody, you gave them back plus 20 percent, which would cover something of the lost interest or accumulation that could have been gained by whatever it was you

stole. That would be typically what Judaism would honor. Judaism at that time would honor the 20 percent. So he could have said that. He could have said, "I'll tell you what, I'll follow the Old Testament prescription in Leviticus and Numbers and I'll give back everything I've taken plus one fifth." And he would have been...Well he would have been right on target.

Or he could have done it another way. He could have based it...and I won't take time to go to that...He could have based it on Exodus 22. In Exodus 22 if you read the first seven verses, you find that in the case of an ordinary robbery which was what he was doing, according to Exodus 22 verses 4 and 7, you paid back double. You paid back double. So he could have said, "You know what? I'll pay back two fold." That would have been more generous than 20 percent. Now you've gone to 200 percent. That's pretty good...or 100 percent, that's pretty good.

Well why did he say fourfold? Because in Exodus 22:1, if you robbed someone with violence and destruction, a fourfold response was required. He went to the max. He said, "I've done this, I've done it violently, I've done it destructively. I will gladly pay back the max." He knew his Old Testament Law. And this is the evidence of transformation. It's not a, "Oh, is that what I'm supposed to do? Oh do I have to do that? How little can I do and get away with it? How little can I obey and still be considered a Christian? How close can I walk to the edge?" It's, "Look, just show me the maximum demonstration of obedience, that's what I want to do." This is the real deal, folks, the real deal. He was determined to do more than was asked, more than the law required. There wasn't any law that said give half of everything you have to the poor. He would have probably given more, but he needed to keep half because he was going to give back 400 percent of what he had defrauded people of to the maximum of Old Testament allowance. This is the kind of obedience that marks the one who has denied himself, taken up his cross and followed Christ and doesn't live on the minimal but lives at the maximum level of obedience. He acted as if every illegitimate, defrauding taxation was destructive, violent, devastating. And he strips himself of everything he has, even his honest gain.

Well what does this tell us? That here is a transformed heart, right? I might ask the question this way. How long does it take for a person who is genuinely saved to get his act together? How about the same day, because you're a new creation? The same day he stands up and says, "I get it, You're Lord and I deny myself and all that I possess and I want to go to the extreme of obedience and that's where I want to live my life." This is transformation that is stunning and staggering, the revelation of a totally transformed heart. What a dramatic, dramatic day.

"And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house.'" Sure, and salvation can even refer to Him, that is to Jesus, because you remember back in Luke 2:30 Simeon took the little baby Jesus in his arms and says, "My eyes have seen Your salvation." Salvation in Christ came to his house and salvation as an act of transformation happened in his soul. The proof: transformation. "House," does that mean his whole household? It doesn't say that. There are times when like in the Philippian jailor's case, he believed, and his household. Probably just means house and Zacchaeus and salvation in a moment turned an essentially greedy man into a gracious, generous man, turned a passion of his life from abuse and gain to kindness and giving. And Jesus says, "Because he, too, is a son of Abraham."

You say, "What in the world does that mean? He was the son of Abraham before Jesus showed up." Well sure, physically. By the way, this is a very important statement. This...This is another shocker for Jesus. What did the Jews always say? "We are the children of Abraham," right? And Jesus says, Abraham wanted...If God wanted to...to raise up children to Abraham, He could raise them up out of

those rocks. You think you're children of Abraham, you are ethnically, you are genetically, you are by heritage, you are by race, progeny. But this man is a son of Abraham who is a true son of Abraham.

What does Paul say in Romans 2:28? A Jew is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but is one inwardly. It is not about circumcision, and religion on the outside, it's about the heart. Here is a true son of Abraham. Abraham is the father of faith and all who put their trust in God as Abraham put his trust in God, then in a sense are children of Abraham. Did you remember what I was reading in 1 Peter about Sarah who obeyed Abraham and it says, all women who obey their husbands are like the daughters of Sarah? It's a similitude, it's a similarity. Abraham was a man of faith, Genesis 15:6, he believed God and God accounted to him for righteousness. Here's another one, here is an ethnic, genetic son of Abraham who is a spiritual son of Abraham as well. He is a true Jew. Paul says in Romans, "Not all Israel is Israel. Not all Israel is Israel." In fact, he says, "I...I have heaviness of heart and great sorrow" for Israelites, "I could almost wish myself accursed" for the Israelites, because the Israelites do not know God. There's a movement going on today, driven by certain preachers on television to say that the Jews don't need to come to Christ, they don't need the gospel of Christ; they can be saved without Christ. That's a lie. You're not saved by just being Jewish or being religious while you're being Jewish. You must come to Christ to be one of the true sons of Abraham. Real Israel is the Israel of faith, Jews who believe. The church is not Israel. The church is not the Israel of God. Galatians 6:16 talks about the Israel of God. That's not the church. The Israel of God are the Israelites who know God through trust in Christ.

In Galatians 3, it would be worth a moment to look at it because this is an important subject, Galatians 3:6. "Abraham believed God," quoting Genesis 15:6, "Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," that's justification by faith, imputing righteousness. "Therefore," verse 7, "be sure that it is those that are of faith who are the sons of Abraham." And verse 9, "Those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer." Verse 29 says it even clearer, if you belong to Christ, you're Abraham's offspring. So among the Jews, the only true Jews, the true Israel of God are those that know Christ. The apostle Paul was a child of Abraham, born of the Abrahamic line, tribe of Benjamin, Philippians 3. It was all dung, he says, it was all rubbish. Only Christ could save him. And even though he was a zealous Pharisee, he called himself the chief sinner, 1 Timothy 1:15. The Jews said, we're the children of Abraham, we're the children of Abraham, John 8. Jesus said, "No, you're of your father" whom? "the devil."

Well Zacchaeus became a true Jew, part of the Israel of God, the Jew who was one inwardly. Not just the son of Abraham by race, but a son of Abraham by faith in that he followed the same pattern of Abraham's faith. He that day was justified. He who was lost was saved, delivered from sin and death and hell. The Lord sought him. the Lord convicted him of sin. The Lord proclaimed to him the truth. The Lord opened his heart to believe and repent and a miracle transformed his life. The transformation was massive, massive.

You say, "Well maybe this was just an anomaly." No, this is not an anomaly, this is the very reason Jesus came, to seek and save that which was lost. And this is one final comment made to Israel. You haven't gotten it all along and you don't get it now. You're still grumbling and you're still complaining because you don't get it. I'm come to seek and save the lost and I can't do anything for the self-righteous. In the Middle Eastern mind, to include this man in the community of salvation was outrageous. But for us, it is the most magnificent expression of the redeeming grace and love of God. Jesus came to seek and save sinners and then to totally transform them.

We're all in the same state that this man was in, spiritually dead, defiled, slaves of sin, full of guilt, living in isolation, alienation, ignorance, darkness. We need a prophet from God to come and tell us the truth. We need a priest of God to come and give us access to God. We need a King to come and guide, protect and provide. We need a Shepherd to come and feed and lead. The entire complex of man's needs points to the Lord Jesus Christ who makes men alive, who cleanses them, who frees them from sin, who gives them light, instruction, who is their prophet, priest, King, and Shepherd. He didn't come to demonstrate a noble ethic. He came to save people from their sin, from eternal hell, to bring them into His everlasting kingdom and heaven, to make them the possessors of everlasting life. And there are some Zacchaeuses sitting in the trees here today and you're curious enough to be here and you're looking through the leaves at Jesus. I pray this is the day when He calls your name, comes to your house and brings His salvation. Open your heart and receive Him gladly. Let's pray.

To see our Lord, the wonderful consistent ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, seeking the ones that everybody else wanted to push away, finding the outcast, the lowly, the ones who are overwhelmed with sin and guilt, always from the start to the finish, that's what He did. Self-righteous always left out. Lord, it drives home the point so dramatically and so consistently that we must, if we're ever to be delivered, if we're ever to be rescued, if we're ever to be found as those that are lost, if we're ever to be saved, we must recognize that we are not righteous. We are dead in trespasses and sin, we are alienated from the life of God. We are blinded by the power of Satan. We cannot subject ourselves to the law of God, we have no capacity to do that. We are in the flesh. We cannot please You. All our best efforts, righteousness included, are filthy rags. We must awaken to the fact that we are nothing but blind, beggars, and tax collectors who deserve nothing, who should be shunned, despised and rejected by an infinitely pure and holy God and yet it is the remarkable reality that by nature You are a seeker and saver of such sinners. And, Lord, I just pray today that You will display that saving power in souls right here right now and may we remember as well that the transformation is instantaneous and that it takes place in a dramatic fashion that intrudes powerfully into the very category in which our sin is most manifest and it disrupts us as that which is most characteristic of us in our unredeemed state. Lord, we need to look at that to validate any claim to salvation. If we say we have come to the knowledge of Christ, if we say we have been saved, if we say we belong to You, it has to show up in the way we live. Faith without works is dead. We have been saved unto good works. It is manifest this dramatic transformation and right at the point of our past corruption, new longings, holy affections, love for the things we once hated and hate for the things we once loved. This is the sovereign, divine work of regeneration. Oh Lord, we pray that we would be faithful to that. It's so easy to slip from that. It's so easy to begin to love the things that when we were saved we hated, so easy to begin to want to accumulate the things we're here to give up when we saw Jesus as all precious and all glorious and all wonderful and all consuming and little by little our first love dies and we begin to be drawn back into the things we once so gladly abandoned. May we not be guilty of having left our first love. May the fire of that initial miraculous transformation always grow brighter and brighter and brighter until we see You face to face. We pray in the Savior's name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2017 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).

