

Zaccheus Sought To See Jesus

Introduction. The story of Zaccheus is one of pure triumph. He gives us an extraordinary example in how to receive the Savior. After the Lord beckoned to Zaccheus, Luke 19:6 says, "And he made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully." Zaccheus showed no hesitancy in his obedience to Christ. His spirit was very much different than Felix who wished to wait until a more convenient time (Acts 24:25). Those who will receive Christ completely will obey Christ immediately.

Zaccheus was a man who merely wanted to catch a glimpse of the Lord but Jesus invited Himself to stay with Zaccheus so He could teach him. It was very apparent that Christ not only crossed the threshold of this man's house, but had also penetrated the recesses of his heart.

Although Zaccheus did indeed obey Christ, he had several hindrances to overcome. Perhaps the most encouraging facet of this story is the commonness of his hindrances. Just about all of us at one time or the other have had to overcome these obstructions. Let us examine what Zaccheus had to overcome and gain knowledge that may encourage some poor, lost soul here today to repent and give their lives to Christ.

I. *The Pressure Of Our Position*

- A. Zaccheus was a publican or tax-gatherer, holding a higher office in the Roman tax system than did Levi (5:27-30). This was a very odious occupation as far as the Jews were concerned. Tax-gatherers were independent contractors who collected customs for the Roman government. The way in which a publican earned a living was extorting more money from the people than he had contracted to pay the Roman government. The Jews knew this and despised them for their actions.
 1. Zaccheus, as chief publican, was responsible for all the taxes of Jericho and had other collectors under him.
 2. Josephus, the Jewish historian, states this position enabled one to become extremely wealthy, and his location in the major customs center of Jericho was ideal.
- B. However, the change which was wrought in Zaccheus' heart in vs. 8 shows he was willing to repent and forsake his evil ways. Our work has the ability to greatly influence us for good or evil and it takes a lot of wisdom, resolve and devotion to withstand sin in various occupations. We ought to take heed lest we fall and teach our children and grandchildren to exercise great care in evaluating their future careers.
- C. Although Zaccheus was engaged in a business which invited greed and oppression, he knew to do what pleased God. Zaccheus was willing to repent from the wickedness of his high and wealthy position and allow his life to be changed by the gospel (2 Corinthians 5:17).

II. ***The Pressure Of Our Possessions***

- A. Zaccheus had a good estate, as one might expect of a chief tax-gatherer. He had been laying up treasures for himself on earth rather than in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). Wealth will lead to pride, and we will place our hopes and trust in monetary gain and financial independence, rather than in the promises and care of God Almighty (Hebrews 13:5-6).
- B. The rich young ruler in Luke 18:18-25 and Zaccheus are thrown into immediate contrast, and the possibility of saving even a very rich man is illustrated. The rich young ruler would not forsake his riches. His great estate had great influence on his eternal destiny. If he were as destitute as Peter, James and John, he would have gladly left it all to serve the Lord. If we will not cut ourselves loose from the world, we cannot be a servant of Jesus and enter heaven (James 4:4).
- C. People today let money keep them from Jesus (1 Timothy 6:10; Luke 12:15). There is an attitude of "Get all you can and can all you get." It is very interesting to note that you will hear many people confess to sins committed but I have yet to hear someone yet to hear someone confess that they are tempted by covetousness.
- D. There is a story that is told of a tribe in South America who selects a man to be king for seven years. During his tenure, he is given all the riches and luxuries of the tribe but at the end of seven years he is killed and they get a new king. The odd part about this story is that they have no trouble finding someone else to be king. People will sometimes do anything for position and riches, even forsake their soul and heaven.
- E. Zaccheus was a rich man who sought to see Jesus in spite of his riches. However, in finding Christ and learning of His teaching, he was able to relinquish half of his possessions because he saw the sinfulness of his ways and the value of leaning on the ever-lasting arms of Jesus. In giving away half of his possessions, he was denying himself and showing compassionate with those in need (Matthew 16:24; 1 John 3:17)

III. ***The Pressure Of Our Peers***

- A. We see from the account that Zaccheus was a man who was small in stature. Anyone who has sense knows short people and crowds do not mix. But Zaccheus anticipated the route of Jesus and climbed a sycamore tree to see Him.
- B. Some today would ask the question, "Why risk ridicule?" We let the crowd or the world decide our views and responses. This is what we normally refer to as peer pressure and it is a strong influence!
- C. Do you let crowd determine your belief concerning religious matters

(John 12:42-43)? Some Christians do because of worldliness. Being different makes one stick out and they do not have the moral backbone to let people see a loyal Christian life.

- D. Zaccheus wanted to see Jesus regardless of the crowd. The Lord was not worried about the crowd's murmuring in vs. 7. It is said that 95% of visitors attend because they respect the Christian lives they see manifested around them. We cannot afford to let the crowd determine our spirituality because when you do, you lose people who need the Lord.

IV. *The Pressure Of Our Past*

- A. There is no doubt Zaccheus had cheated people. The tax collection system was ripe for fraud. But Zaccheus, in keeping with repentance, promised restitution to those whom he had defrauded. He teaches us a wonderful lesson because he demonstrates that repentance is not only turning from our past sins, but settling matters with those whom we have wronged.
- B. Luke stresses the use of possessions as a major indicator of one's spiritual condition (cf. 14:33; 18:22). Restoring stolen funds "fourfold" was far more than what the Old Testament specified for restitution (Leviticus 5:16; Numbers 5:7). His offer was unusually generous and was the sort of "fruit in keeping with repentance" earlier sought by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:8).
 - 1. The word "give" means that Zaccheus was not making a vague promise to do this at some future date, which might be forgotten or broken when Jesus was gone.
 - 2. He made a public pledge which all would hear and witness his immediate fulfillment. With this pledge, he proved that he was a faithful steward by his decisive action.
- C. It is indeed sorrowful that people do not want to give up their past. Because of their sins in the past, they feel as if they are not good enough to obey (Hebrews 8:12). But consider all those who have sinned before God but received forgiveness:
 - 1. David committed adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11:1-27).
 - 2. Peter denied his own Lord (Matthew 26:69-75).
 - 3. A lady was caught in adultery and brought before the Lord (John 8:1-11).
 - 4. Paul persecuted the church and killed Christians (Acts 22:4-5).
- D. Each of these men and women showed a remarkable willingness to repent and leave their former lifestyle. The world will think about what you were and will try to discourage you from obeying the gospel because of your past sins.
- E. All of us are nothing more than ex-sinners who have been washed,

sanctified and justified by the gospel (1 Corinthians 6:11). All of us have given up the sins of this world for the glory in heaven. There is an old Persian proverb which says, "There is no such thing as a saint without a past or a sinner with a future."

Conclusion. Publicans were regarded as having forfeited their birth-right as sons of Abraham, but Jesus pointed out that this Jew had now become truly a son of Abraham by his noble repentance. Verse 10 could well be considered the "key verse" of Luke, for it expresses the heart of Jesus' ministry as presented by Luke -- both His work of salvation and His quest for the lost. This whole incident is the epitome of the mission described in Luke 4:16-21.

This is the story of a sinner who persevered and found Jesus. As I look out over the audience, it strikes me that there could be a broken heart in one of these pews who is weighed down and straining against the burden of sin. Maybe you have the challenge of riches, position, peers or your past which will be difficult to overcome. Please do not let them keep you from overcoming and finding Jesus (Revelation 2:7).

Someone once observed that when David fought Goliath, he did not look at the size of the giant in front of Him but the one in back of him. We ask you now to place that same trust in God by obeying the gospel and relinquishing your life of sin. Seek God and He will be found by you. Trust God and He will not deceive you. Cast your soul upon God and He will be as good as His word (John 6:37).