

The Salvation of Zacchaeus; the Parable of the Pounds

Luke 19:1-27

Luke 19:1-10: Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. 2 Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. 3 And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. 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." 6 So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. 7 But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner." 8 Then 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." 9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; 10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Background Notes

Was Zacchaeus the shortest man in the Bible? What about Nehemiah (knee-high-miah)? What about Bildad the Shuhite (shoe-height) in the Book of Job? What about the man who slept on his watch? [laughter] Seriously speaking, Zacchaeus is probably most remembered as the short man who climbed up a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus.

On the outskirts of the modern city of Jericho, tour buses always stop beside a large sycamore tree. Some guides have actually told tourists that this is the very tree Zacchaeus climbed to see Jesus! Well, obviously it isn't the same tree, but it's a good place to stop and read the story of Zacchaeus from Luke 19.

The story of Zacchaeus is a wonderful Bible story, not just because of the lively Sunday school lessons, but because Zacchaeus is such a refreshing contrast to the other people in the Gospel of Luke who refused to come to the Lord. In Luke 18, for example, the rich young ruler would not follow Jesus because of his wealth. Zacchaeus was wealthy, too, but unlike the rich young ruler, Zacchaeus was willing to give away his money. He didn't try to buy salvation with money, but gave it away as a result of his salvation.

Also, in Luke 18 the Lord said, "Assuredly I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." The self-righteous Pharisees were not willing to humble themselves, become like little children and accept the Lord by faith. In contrast, Zacchaeus was willing to humble himself. He was even willing to run and climb up into a tree, as a little child might do, in order to catch a glimpse of Jesus.

So there are a lot of lessons about salvation that we can learn from the account of Zacchaeus.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord gives free and life-changing salvation.

We know that Zacchaeus was not saved before this event, and we know that Zacchaeus was saved after this event. We know this because of what the Lord says in verses 9 and 10. *“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.”* In other words, Zacchaeus was lost until that day – and that was the day that Zacchaeus was saved.

When the Lord said that Zacchaeus was the son of Abraham, He did not just mean that Zacchaeus was Jewish and a natural son of Abraham. He meant that Zacchaeus was now also a spiritual son of Abraham – that he was now saved, and was now walking by faith as Abraham did. We read in Genesis 15:6 that Abraham believed in the Lord, and God *“reckoned it to him as righteousness.”*

It's important to realize here that the good works of giving to the poor and paying back fourfold were not the **means** of Zacchaeus' salvation. These good works were the **result** of Zacchaeus' salvation! Salvation is not by good works or giving money to the poor or to a church. Salvation is through putting out faith in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross as a ransom for our sins. But true salvation will result in good works.

What a change in the life of Zacchaeus! Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector (v2) and he was rich. Jewish tax collectors of that day were not only considered traitors for collecting taxes for Rome, but they were well known for lining their own pockets by overcharging the people. But salvation brought a radical change to the life and lifestyle of Zacchaeus. This should also be true of our lives when we come to the Lord by faith and are saved. The Lord gives free and life-changing salvation.

2. The Lord rewards faithful and successful service.

Verses 11-27: Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. 12 Therefore He said: “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. 13 So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Do business till I come.’ 14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’ 15 “And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16 Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ 17 And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’ 18 And the second

came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' **19** Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'
20 "Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. **21** For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' **22** And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. **23** Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' **24** "And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.' **25** (But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.') **26** 'For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. **27** But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me.'"

The first thing that we notice about the Parable of the Pounds (or "Minas"), is that it is quite similar to the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25. However, there are some significant differences. In the Parable of the Talents, different amounts of money were given, but the successful servants were given the same reward: *"Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."* In the Parable of the Minas, on the other hand, the same amount of money is given to each servant, but the successful servants are given differing amounts of reward, depending on their success.

So the emphasis in the Parable of the Talents is on faithfulness with whatever talents and spiritual gifts you have been given. But more than faithfulness is emphasized here in the Parable of the Minas. There is reward for being successful with the one mina that every servant was given. A mina was about three months' wages, by the way.

What are we given, like every other servant of the Lord - on an equal basis? Well, we all have one life to live. Are we going to use it to the fullest for the glory of God? And we all have 24 hours in a day. No servant gets more or less than 24 hours per day. How successful are we servants going to be with the one life that we have and the 24 hours per day that we have?

The unfaithful servant in the Parable of the Talents is clearly an unbeliever, because Matthew 25:30 says, *"And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* The unsuccessful servant here in the Parable of the Minas could likewise represent an unbelieving "professing" servant, as in the Parable of the Talents, or he could represent a true believer who has been unfaithful. If we waste our life as far as serving the Lord goes, we will suffer loss of reward in the earthly Kingdom of our Lord, as well as loss of reward in Heaven. Notice how the unsuccessful servant was judged. Verse 22: *"Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow."* This unfaithful servant was judged on the basis of his own bad theology.

The rewards of ten cities and five cities may be more literal than we might think, because we will literally reign with Christ in His earthly Kingdom when He returns. And the more successful we are for the Lord and His Kingdom now, the greater

will be our reward in that Kingdom. The citizens who hated the noblemen (v14) are the enemies who are killed (v27). In this parable, the enemies specifically represent the unbelieving nation of Israel that rejected their Messiah (v14), and continue to reject the claims of Christ even to this present day. The enemies of verse 27 could further include all unbelievers who reject the claims of Christ. We know that when the Lord returns, there is not only reward for His faithful servants, but there is judgment for the unbelievers. The Lord rewards faithful and successful servants.

Practical Application

Let's be entrepreneurs for Christ!

Suppose you were given a thousand dollars and told you had ten years in which to invest it wisely. What would you do? Would you start a business? What kind of business? Would you invest it in an going company or a startup company? I hope that we would be creative and entrepreneurial and active!

That's the way we are to think as servants of Christ in ministry. Have we thought of the most efficient and effective ways to evangelize the world around us? Are we creative in our Sunday school classes and other ministries, so we can touch the lives of more people? Are we using the internet and other technological advances to reach out across cultural and other barriers? Let's be entrepreneurs for Christ!