

## OSS Regeneration, Calling and Repentance 2

Three weeks ago, we began a study of Lk 19:1-10, the story of Zacchaeus. This brief story illustrates three profound theological truths regarding what happens near and about the moment of our salvation, and they are; regeneration, calling (which we will get to in a minute), repentance and the corollary of repentance; restitution.

We started our discussion with verse 10, *For the Son of Man<sup>[a]</sup> came to seek and save those who are lost.*

We noted the phrase *Son of man* refers to Christ's humanity and is the title Christ used most when talking of himself. It refers to him as a man and was the Messianic title used by Daniel in Dan 7 describing Christ as the all glorious one who will one day rule over the Messianic Kingdom.

We then noted Jesus came to *save those who are lost*. This is God's purpose. It is why Jesus came. His business is to seek out the lost and save them.

*Vs 1a, Jesus entered Jericho.*

Jesus is nearing the end of his Perea ministry. He enters Jericho because he must go through town to get to the road to Jerusalem where He will complete his earthy ministry. In Christ's time the city was an active trading center at the intersection of routes both north-south, and east-west, with lots of diverse peoples and professions.

*Vs 1b, and made his way through town.*

No doubt a crowd is following him. A few weeks earlier he had raised Lazarus from the dead at Bethany, so most likely the news of this event had reached Jericho. So to, as Jesus had approached the city, Luke records he had healed a blind beggar (Lk 18:35-43). Certainly, this miracle was now known throughout the town. It is also Passover, so there are many moving through town on their way to Jerusalem.

*Vs 2, There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich.*

We are now introduced to Zacchaeus. We are not told where he grew up or where he came from. We do not know if he is old or young, married, or with children. All we are told is his profession and his means; *he was the chief tax collector and he had become very rich*. We noted the scheme of taxation in Israel at the time: that people were first taxed by the Romans, then they had to pay the temple tax, and lastly, they were indirectly taxed by paying exorbitant exchange rates when they went to Jerusalem to sacrifice.

Zacchaeus was the *chief tax collector*. This means he had paid a fee for the Roman tax franchise in Jericho (the other two being Capernaum and Caesarea); hence he was in charge of Roman taxation throughout this region. Backed by the authority of Rome, he had many underlings, who would collect taxes at rates far higher than Rome demanded, hence it was organized theft. At the apex of this mafia like organization was Zacchaeus, who took a percentage of what his other tax collectors charged, so he was enormously wealthy.

But this wealth came with a high social cost. Jewish tax collectors who worked for Rome were hated. They were viewed as traitors. They had literally sold out to a foreign pagan power occupying their country and now he was extorting his own people. Note in verse 7, he is called a *sinner*. This is the category his fellow countrymen placed him. He was a social outcast, polluted, despised, defiled, and he would defile you if you were close to him. He was expelled from the synagogue and inhabited the same social position as a leper, but worse as at least a leper did not choose to be one. Therefore, Zacchaeus was socially isolated as the only folks he could associate with were ones that occupied the same position as he did; fellow outcasts; and fellow sinners such as prostitutes, criminals, beggars, and the diseased and rejected (note physical ailments were often viewed as God's punishment for being unrighteous -see Jn 9:1-2). But he was also isolated from God as any guilt, any remorse, or any regret, he had to keep to himself for he was forbidden to bring any sacrifice to the local synagogue. So, if Zacchaeus had any conscience, he bore the full weight of his extortion, his thievery, his abuse, his betrayal, and his corruption.

Tax collectors were also disdained by the Romans, for although Rome needed taxmen, Romans also viewed them as having betrayed their own people. How ironic then, that Zacchaeus's name means clean, innocent, pure and righteous. Everything that he was not, by virtue of the profession he had fallen into. So here is Zacchaeus, rich, powerful, connected, yet despised, hated, and a man of illicit fortune, and then Jesus comes to town (as a side it is interesting to note that as Jesus entered Jericho, he healed a blind beggar, one who was also thought to be a sinner and under God's judgment. But a tax collector was thought to be even lower than a blind beggar-see Lk 18:35-43).

*Vs 3a He tried to get a look at Jesus.*

What did Zacchaeus know of Jesus? We are never told. He wants to *get a look at Jesus*. Was it just curiosity? Was it to get noticed? Did he want to see what kind of man he was? Did he want to tax him? Did he have some burning spiritual question on his heart? We are not told. We do know Jesus had recently raised Lazarus from the dead in Bethany not long before this and certainly this news had reached Jericho. Whatever the reason, something has changed in Zacchaeus' heart. He has a desire to see the Lord.

This ignition of spiritual interest is known theologically as Regeneration. It is the process whereby God begins to give spiritual life to a spiritually dead individual and awakens spiritual longings and interest that will bring them to a decision point. As John 16:8-11 notes, this initial spark creates a God consciousness that leads to a conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgement and through the mystery of God's will and election, enables us to repent and believe. This is what happened to Zacchaeus. A rich man. A wildly successful man with many material things, but now the spark of regeneration has started to burn in his soul, and he wants to see Jesus.

*Vs 3b, but he was too short to see over the crowd.*

Verse 3b reveals another attribute of Zacchaeus; he was short of stature. Another reason he may have felt ostracized. So, Zacchaeus has two problems: he is short and there is a large crowd obstructing his view.

Vs 4, *So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.*

We see in verse 4, Zacchaeus runs ahead and climbs a sycamore-fig tree as he knew the road would take Jesus by it. We now come to verse 5.

Vs 5a, *When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said.*

Now Jesus walks by. There are his disciples with him and, no doubt, several of his followers and friends, and a large contingent of townspeople who wish to be healed or touched. Jesus looks and calls Zacchaeus by name. Did Jesus know him from a previous encounter? The text does not say. But most postulate Zachaeus was a stranger. Jesus may have heard of him, but did not know him. Yet Jesus did know him. In the foreknowledge of God as Jesus knew Nathaniel, he knew Zachaeus. This scripture introduces the second theological topic we noted which is the calling of God.

(the following is taken from The Summer Institute in Christian Scholarship, Dr. Davey Naugle, The Biblical Doctrine of Calling and Vocation, Dallas Baptist University).

Calling is used four ways in scripture,

- a. In the simplest sense, it means to talk to or discuss.
- b. To make and name: Gen 1 called the light day and the darkness night. In this use, to call, is more than labeling. It means to constitute. God called Israel (Is 43:1). It is to create and name at the same time.
- c. God calling to himself people who will follow Him. Used in the sense of salvation and discipleship (often referred to as "primary calling")
  1. Called to faith, Rm 8:28-30, 1 Cor 1:9.
  2. Called to the Kingdom of God, 1 Thess 2:11-12.
  3. Called to eternal life, 1 Tim 6:12, Heb 9:15.
  4. Called to righteous and holy living, 1 Cor 1:2, 1 P 1:15.
- d. God calling you to a specific task, purpose, or station in life (which comes out of your primary calling) "through which we serve God, the human family, and the Church of Jesus Christ by means of particular interests and gifts that God has bestowed upon His people in order to meet significant needs and to accomplish His special purposes in the world"
  1. Callings in which believers receive their primary call (1 Cor. 7: 20- 24). Est 4:14, 1 Cor 1:1.
  2. The attitudes and actions of those called in all work and service (Eph. 6: 5-9; Col. 3: 22-4: 1).

In verse 5, calling is used to draw Zacchaeus to faith.

Vs 5b, *“Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.”*

Then Jesus says, *“Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.”* The command is in the imperative tense. Note Jesus not only knew who he would save this day (Zacchaeus), he knew where and when it would happen. As 2 Cor 6:2 states, *I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.*

The phrase, *I must*, means it is a divine necessity. In other words, it is God’s divine desire, will, and purpose, to meet Zachaeus at this place and at this time, come to his house and save him. Think of God’s divine necessity to save you! As Eph 1:3-4 notes, *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup>For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.*

The phrase *I must be a guest in your house* means Jesus would stay the night. Zacchaeus could never imagine this. He was defiled, an outcast, a sinner. It probably was the first time a respected, clean, righteous, noble, person invited Zacchaeus to enjoy his company. This is like Lk 15 with the father throwing his arms around the dirty and sordid prodigal son. Here Jesus wants to come to the home of a sinner, eat a meal, and stay the night. We see Zachaeus’s response in verse 6.

Vs 6, *Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy.*

Note when God regenerates a dead soul, He gives it new spiritual life, and He fans into flame a desire and hunger for spiritual things; then through the divine mystery of election, God extends an invitation to faith, and we respond. This is the story of Zacchaeus. He is given new life and responds to God’s call. He climbs down amid this large crowd. He is smiling, excited, joyful, and he *took Jesus* to his house.

Vs 7, *But the people were displeased. “He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” they grumbled.*

Note the contrast with the reaction of the people in verse 7. As they see this interaction, they grumble and are displeased. This is a predictable reaction as no self-respecting Jew would expose himself to such filth and pollution. Zacchaeus was an untouchable; he was defiled, unclean, wretched, and despised. No Jew would go to his house. Zacchaeus was a sinner and belonged to this class of people. But more than this he was a *notorious* sinner. His sin was known throughout the region. This reaction tells you about the sentiment of the people and why the idea of grace was so hard to get across. Matthew received similar treatment when Jesus came to his house (see Mt 9:10-11, *Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. <sup>11</sup>But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with such scum?”*). But Jesus seeks the sinner, he seeks the lost, and on this day, Jesus had a divine appointment with a seeking sinner.

Vs 8, *Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, “I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!”*

Now we see a dramatic change in Zacchaeus. Where a few moments ago he was a professional extortionist and thief, he has now suddenly become a philanthropist. What is fascinating is Luke makes no mention of Zacchaeus’s conversion. There is no mention of the four spiritual laws, or that Jesus sat

him down and explained the gospel to him and then asked him to pray a prayer of confession. Yet conversion has occurred as vs 9 notes: *salvation has come to this house today*. As Jesus called his name, and then declared he must come to his house and eat, then spend the night, Zacchaeus came to faith. He was suddenly and dramatically released from his past. Here the God of the universe met him face to face, forgave him, and invited himself to stay in his house. This is what God does with us. He meets us, calls our name, forgives us, then invites himself to come and dwell with us—but not in our house—rather in our hearts.

The phrase *stood before the Lord*, comes from the Greek word “statheis” which means to stand with a fixed attitude. The idea is that after conversion (which is not mentioned) Zacchaeus rises, takes a stand and with a fixed heart declares, “*I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!*” Note in this verse Zacchaeus does two things.

First, he says *Lord*. This is so important for it is the first evidence Zacchaeus has come to faith. Rm 10:9-10, *If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.*

Second, he states *I will give half my wealth to the poor, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!* This is amazing. Zacchaeus was really, really, rich and has now gone from being an extortionist and thief to a benefactor. He has gone from being selfish to unselfish. He has gone from being a taker to one who is a giver. He has gone from making things wrong to making things right. This transformation illustrates the theological principle called Repentance and its corollary, Restitution. Repentance is the work of God whereby He enables a complete change of direction towards Himself. It has intellectual, emotional, and volitional components: intellectual in that one has a change of view and sees sin for what it is. One sees himself as guilty, defiled, and helpless. Emotional as there is a change of feeling with remorse and sorrow at having transgressed: and volitional as there is a change of purpose: a turning away from sin and a desire to seek and please God. Additionally, in Zacchaeus’s case, it also involved Restitution, the idea of trying to make things right with those whom you injured with your sin.

Note also that Zacchaeus’s transformation hit the dominant category of his sin. Where he once was miserly, greedy, and sold out for money, he is now generous and lavish with his funds. What a contrast to the rich young ruler of Lk 18 who could not be parted from his riches, but here is a rich man, who through the transforming power of Christ, now wants to give his money away.

Now it is worth noting as to why Zacchaeus decided to pay back 400%. In Nm 5:6, Moses told the Israelites, *The Lord said to Moses, <sup>6</sup>“Say to the Israelites: ‘Any man or woman who wrongs another in any way<sup>[b]</sup> and so is unfaithful to the Lord is guilty <sup>7</sup>and must confess the sin they have committed. They must make full restitution for the wrong they have done, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the person they have wronged.* In other words, if you have wronged someone you must make full restitution and add 20%. So, Zacchaeus could have gone this route.

Or he could have made restitution based on Ex 22:1-7. Verse 3-4 notes, *Anyone who steals must certainly make restitution, but if they have nothing, they must be sold to pay for their theft. <sup>4</sup> If the stolen animal is found alive in their possession, whether ox, donkey, or sheep, they must pay back double.* Verse 7 notes, *If anyone gives a neighbor silver or goods for safekeeping and they are stolen from the neighbor's house, the thief, if caught, must pay back double.*

But Zacchaeus chose to make restitution based on Ex 22:1, *Whoever steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.* In other words, if you stole a sheep and resold it, or killed it, you must make a fourfold restitution. This theft is different than the other two, as this theft was intentional and in contrast to using the animal for yourself, you were proffering it to others. This is the sin of which Zacchaeus was guilty. He stole and used his stolen money to make more money. So, he chose to pay back what the law required. This payback was not done in reluctance. He chose to make things right.

The transformation of Zacchaeus raises an interesting question. How long does it take for a new believer to renounce a life of sin and start living righteously? In the case of Zacchaeus, it was immediate. Let me say something, when Jesus Christ calls your name and saves you, you are a new creature in Christ. Your old self is dead. God saved you for a new life. And yes, I understand the pull of the old nature, but true transformation results in a rejection of previous sin. It does not mean you might not fall into it again, but it does mean there is a sorrow, a regret, and a terrible feeling of disappointment, that you have wronged your Lord. And with this, a desire to be rid of it and to restrain from it in the future. So now verse 9.

Vs 9, *Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham.*

Jesus now gives two shocking statements. The first is *Salvation has come to this home today.* Think of the shock to the crowd. Salvation? How could a man like Zacchaeus be saved. He is the most unrighteous, the most undeserving, the most unworthy person in this whole city to be saved. Yet here is Jesus declaring Salvation has come to this home today (*Home* here is used as a reference to Zacchaeus). Remember that Zacchaeus made his declaration in public. And now Jesus, before the crowd, declares Zacchaeus to be saved.

The second shocker is the later part of the verse which states, *for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham.* What does Jesus mean! For the crowd understood they were sons of Abraham. They could trace their lineage to him. But Jesus says, yes you are physical children of Abraham; you are children of Abraham by ethnicity, by race, by genealogy, but as Rms 2:28-29 states, *a person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. <sup>29</sup> No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God.* Jesus is telling the crowd a true son of Abraham is one who comes to God by faith. As Paul says in Rm 9:6 *For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.* He expands on this in Gal 3:6-14, *So also Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>7</sup> Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. <sup>8</sup> Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>9</sup> So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham,*

*the man of faith.* <sup>10</sup> *For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."*<sup>[e]</sup> <sup>11</sup> *Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because "the righteous will live by faith."*<sup>[f]</sup> <sup>12</sup> *The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, it says, "The person who does these things will live by them."*<sup>[g]</sup> <sup>13</sup> *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole."<sup>[h]</sup> <sup>14</sup> *He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.**

Zacchaeus became a true Jew this day. Not just a Jew by physical relations, but by faith, for he followed the same pattern that saved Abraham. And this is why the crowd is so shocked. They are grumbling and complaining because their self-righteousness blinds them to the message of grace that Zacchaeus represents. They did not get it then and they still do not get it today. Jesus cannot help the self-righteous. He cannot help you if you think you can help yourself into God's kingdom.

Salvation comes to the one who sees himself as hopeless, who sees himself as defiled, an outcast, unworthy, lost, spiritually destitute, and as a sinner. This is the one Jesus seeks out. We are all in this boat. It is just that so many are blinded by their self-righteousness as to their true condition. Perhaps you are a Zacchaeus today. You want to catch a glimpse of him and so have climbed your own sycamore-fig tree to watch him pass by. I want to tell you today can be the day of your salvation. Jesus can save you; He can redeem you; he can free you from sin, give you a new life, a new purpose, and a new beginning.

Pray with me.