

God, Man, and the Gospel #2

By Don Green

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Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

As many of you if not most of you know, we have been on Sunday morning studying through Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5 through 7 and we are going to continue that study actually on Tuesday at our Tuesday night study at 7 o'clock and I invite you to come and be with us on Tuesday at 7 o'clock as we continue that series. For this morning, sometimes this happens, the weight of thought upon my mind was such that I felt the need to do something a little bit different this morning and take the opportunity this morning to finish the study that we began on this past Tuesday, I know that gets kind of confusing but it's all very clear in my own mind, just a two-part series that we've titled "God, Man, and the Gospel." There comes a time from time to time as you're going through the routine of exposition, that certain things just come to your mind and you say this is very very important to be said, and more importantly, to be heard by you. You need to hear what we have to say today and while I had planned to teach these things on Tuesday, I knew that there would be a larger audience for them this morning on Sunday. It's just the nature of things that more people come on Sunday than on Tuesday and as I was realizing the content of what I'm going to speak on today, I wanted to maximize its exposure to you. It's helpful to believers, it's helpful for those of you who are not here as Christians today, it's helpful for us to understand the nature of the Gospel and that's what we're going to do today and so I always beg God, as it were, for you to lend your ears to what's being said. It's of particular import here today and I heighten the importance of it by changing the normal calendar of things in order for you all to hear what we have to say here today. This has relevance to adults, it has relevance to young people, those of you that sit in the young people corner over to my right. I always think of you and pray for you. And even for you younger children, those of you that are 10, 11, 4, 6 and 8, all of that, there are things in here for you to hear as well, that this is accessible to everyone and this is important to everyone.

God, man and the Gospel. I invite you to turn to 1 Corinthians 15. This is not our text this morning but it does introduce the Gospel for us and sets a context for what we have to say. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. The Gospel is a statement about what God has done in Christ and then it calls you to respond, but the Gospel is a statement about what Christ has done with his life, with his death and with his resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 the Apostle Paul says, "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain." This Gospel

which saves us from God's eternal judgment, which delivers us from the present wrath of God that abides upon sinners who have not turned to Christ, this Gospel which delivers us is a Gospel which Paul delivered, which he spoke, which he made known as an apostle of Christ. And in verses 3 and 4, Paul says, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received," here's his definition of the Gospel, "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." The Gospel is a declaration that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God has come into the world and he came for a purpose, he came for a specific mission assigned to him by the Father, that he would live a perfectly righteous life, go to the cross of Calvary and offer up that life as a sacrifice pleasing to God, that by receiving and bearing in his body the wrath of God as he suffered on the cross, he would bear the eternal punishment that was due to sinners, and we know by the resurrection that God accepted that sacrifice and said, "That is sufficient for sinners to be reconciled to Me." And the call in response to the Gospel goes out for men to repent, to believe in Christ in order to be saved, and we're looking at salvation from two different perspectives.

On this past Tuesday, there are probably a handful of CDs out there if you weren't here on Tuesday, to grab one on your way out. Last time we looked at salvation from God's perspective, how does it happen from God's perspective, and we spoke about the fact that there is a general call of the Gospel. When we preach the Gospel, it goes out and all manner of people hear it and God invites all sinners to come to Christ but not all of them do. That's because there is also an effective call in the Gospel where God by name secretly works in the heart of an individual spiritually dead sinner through the preaching of the Gospel so that that sinner will respond in saving faith. It takes an act of God in a hidden work by a miraculous power to work in a heart to open up the gates, as it were, so that the sinner would respond freely to the Gospel that is offered to him. God must work in a heart in order to change its disposition so that it will believe because the mind of the flesh, Romans 8 tells us, is hostile to God and is unable to please him.

So the Gospel has this humbling effect on us. It tells us that we are unable to save ourselves. It tells us that you and I standing in our own merit before God are guilty, not righteous and have never done good and never could on our own. So it humbles the pride of man. It crushes us and yet as it crushes us, it steps into the gap and says, "But Christ, but God has sent Christ and Christ is a Savior of all who will believe in Him and He has already done the work that is necessary for you to be saved when He was crucified, buried, and when He rose again. Now the call is come to Christ and be saved and you can be saved from your sins." That's salvation from God's perspective and we illustrated this from the life of Zaccheus in Luke 19. That is our text for this morning. All of this other by way of introduction. We illustrated these things from Luke 19:1-10 and I invite you to turn there. I'm going to read that passage now and then we'll just try to draw some illustrations and applications from it. But salvation from God's perspective requires an inner work by him in the heart of a sinner in order for that sinner to be saved. In Luke 19, verses 1 through 10,

1 [Jesus] entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was

rich. 3 Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. 4 So 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. 5 When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." 6 And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. 7 When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." 8 Zaccheus 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." 9 And Jesus said to him [look at this], "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

So we see in that final verse there the mission of Christ, the Gospel mission upon which he came to seek and to save through his powerful death and resurrection that which was lost.

Now, looking at this from God's perspective, looking at salvation from God's perspective, I want you to notice something that we pointed out on Tuesday. This is so very important and fits in with our notion, what we've explained about the nature of the general call of God to salvation. Don't miss this, beloved: that many people on that day saw Jesus, heard him speak, and most of them went away grumbling. Christ proclaimed himself, Christ made himself known, and yet most of the people there went away grumbling. They were not saved and converted under the word of Jesus that day. Zaccheus, a single individual, was different. He repented from sin and he was saved on that day. And as you read the story and as you let the fullness of New Testament revelation inform your understanding, you see what was going on here.

Jesus, notice, called Zaccheus by name and said, "Zaccheus, I must be with you today." As we said on Tuesday, it was a statement of a divine necessity, a divine imperative. Jesus said, "Zaccheus, you and I have a divine appointment today. I must be at your house." But called him out singularly by name. He didn't call everyone in that way, although everyone was hearing him teach. He singled out Zaccheus on that day and said, "Zaccheus, I must come to your house. I must be with you today," giving us a sense, an illustration, as it were, of the effective call. Calling Zaccheus out of the crowd, calling him by name, calling him individually.

For those of us that are in Christ, let me remind you of things that I've said multiple times, that I said on Tuesday. I really encourage you to grab the CDs. I hope they are gone before I get out there to see them because I want you all to hear these things. When God saved you whether you recognized it at the time or not, as you study Scripture, you should come to realize something, that this was not an act of your power responding to a bland call of God that went out to all of the world. The call goes out to all of the world but it wasn't left to you to determine whether you would be saved or not. What Scripture teaches is that God chose you by name before the foundation of the world. God elected

you to salvation and determined before time began that you would ultimately be with him in heaven. Scripture teaches us that by name Jesus Christ died for us on the cross; that he particularly died for you by name. The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 2:20, I never get tired of referring you to this verse, "Christ loved me and gave Himself up for me." First person singular. And then in the course of your lifetime, the Holy Spirit did a work in your heart by name, came to you individually, came to you with power, and applied with power the word of the Gospel to your heart so that you were drawn to Christ and you responded willingly and lovingly and embraced Christ with all of your heart. What you need to see, beloved, is that Father, Son and Holy Spirit working in perfect concert, perfect harmony, working to accomplish your salvation with certainty so that there was never a possibility that you would ever be lost. Oh, you needed to be saved, that's for sure, you were really and truly under the wrath of God in your unconverted state, but God had a plan that he was working out to make sure that you would be saved.

You see, it's truths like that that really draw a person to love Christ. When you are taught and when people flatter you to say it's all about your choice and whether you want to follow and you say, "Well, I chose Christ," and you end up twisting your arm out of its socket in order to pat yourself on the back, that's not biblical salvation. That's not the truth of the Gospel. We don't share the glory that we somehow participated in this. No, God gets the glory because it was God's plan, it was God's choice, it was God the Son's sacrifice, it was the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart and therefore throughout all of the ages of eternity we will bow down and give him glory and praise for the wondrous love that he showed to us in our sin. Christian, that's what your salvation is like. That's how it came to pass from God's perspective. Salvation is rooted in God's will, God's wisdom and God's power and especially, beloved, don't forget it – don't forget it because you need to hear it – it was rooted in God's love for you. It was rooted in the fact that God had good in mind for you that he was determined to carry out through all of eternity despite your undeserving nature. Well, that should just melt your heart and just turn you to a love for the God of your salvation, the Christ who paid the price for your redemption, shouldn't it? Salvation from God's perspective.

Having said that, I want to look at salvation now from man's perspective. That's the real point of today's message. We've looked at salvation from God's perspective, we talked about that on Tuesday, I just summarized it for you briefly here this morning, but now I want to look at salvation from man's perspective as we consider this topic of God, man and the Gospel. Let's look at it from man's perspective using Zaccheus as our illustration and the way that you should think about salvation and how it works out from the perspective of man.

Zaccheus in Luke 19 had no clue about the hidden work of God that was going on in his heart. It was silent. He was unaware of it. If we can just use a little bit of sanctified imagination, just for a moment at the start of Zaccheus' day, he had no idea. This doesn't even require imagination. This is a fair reading of the text. Zaccheus had no idea when he woke up that morning that he was going to have a private audience with Christ before sundown, before the day was over, I should say. He woke up and somehow it came to his attention that Christ was going to be passing through and so he sought out, he went to go

see Christ but he had no idea, he was completely unaware that there was a divine appointment for him that day. He was completely unaware of the work of God in his heart as the day began. All he knew as we enter into the story is this: all he knew was that he wanted to see Jesus.

So what did he do? Beloved, this isn't difficult. This is not difficult. He went to see Jesus. He put himself in a position so that his life would intersect with Christ's. That is so important for you to understand and especially for those of you whose hearts are cold to the Gospel, who are living in sin, and yet God has somehow in his mercy brought you here today. It is so important for you to understand Zaccheus did not sit back and wait for Jesus to come to him. Zaccheus went out and put himself in a position where he knew Jesus was going to pass by so that he would have opportunity to see him.

Look at verse 3, and at times he was even hindered. Oh, oh, beloved, don't miss this. Verse 3, "Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature." Oh, there's so much that I need to say right here, right now about this. Notice that Zaccheus' first efforts at seeing Christ did not come to fruition and we're talking about physical sight here. The procession was about to come by and Zaccheus was trying to see him but he couldn't. There were things that were blocking his view, people that were taller than he was, and as he repeatedly, as the text says in the original language, as he again and again tried to see Christ and poking his way through hindered and unable to get a clear view of him, well, what did Zaccheus do? He didn't give up. He didn't say, "Well, I must not be one of the elect. You know, I've tried to find Christ and I couldn't and so I'll just go back home." You see, that is what so many people try to do to justify their unbelief, to justify their refusal to come to Christ. "Well, I tried this once. You know, I read some books for a while or I read Scripture. It didn't work out for me and therefore I'm going on to something else." No. The life of Zaccheus stands as a testimony against the soul of a person like that. Zaccheus was hindered in his initial attempts to find Christ but he didn't give up. He just went and positioned himself differently so that he could see Jesus. He didn't rest, he did not give rest to his soul until his goal of seeing Christ was fulfilled. Salvation from man's perspective.

Look at verse 4, "So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for [Jesus] was about to pass through that way." Beloved, let's talk about salvation from man's perspective by which I mean, let's talk about the sinners responsibility in response to the Gospel. Let's put it this way: God's sovereignty in salvation does not mean that man is passive when the Gospel is preached. It does not mean that you just sit back and say, "Well, salvation is all of God and so I'll just sit here and wait and see what happens, and if I don't get zapped, then it's not my fault, it's God's fault because, after all, preacher, you said salvation belongs to God and that's what Scripture says too." No. No. No. No. No. No. If there's anyone in this room or anyone listening over the live stream or anyone hearing this over subsequent media, cast that wicked thought out of your mind because Scripture teaches that man has a responsibility to hear and to heed the Gospel and Zaccheus shows us that even though there are hindrances along the way, you continue to seek until you find.

What is your first responsibility in the Gospel? What is the sinner's responsibility in the Gospel? First of all, you must seek Christ. You must look for him. You must seek after him. God's sovereignty in salvation does not mean that sinners get a pass and have no opportunity to look. Jesus said, let me give you a couple of scriptures for you. Jesus said in Luke 13:24, "Strive to enter through the narrow door." Strive. Make the effort. You have an eternal soul for which you are responsible. You must strive to enter through the narrow gate.

For those of you who came really wanting the Sermon on the Mount, let me offer a peace offering to you. Turn to Matthew 7:13. Jesus at the conclusion of his Gospel commands his hearers to, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." Because the Gospel is like this, because it is a narrow way that many miss, because many go through the broad gate that leads to destruction, Jesus commands his hearers to enter through the narrow gate, which implies the fact that you're going to hear, you're going to consider what message, what are the promises of reconciliation to God that are offered to you. If you are offered that God loves everybody and everybody will be saved in the end, you know immediately that you're hearing a broad gate that can only lead to destruction. You say, "That must not be the truth. Where is the narrow gate? I've got to learn, I've got to find things out."

I have a responsibility here because of this, beloved – let's back up. Jesus Christ is the ultimate authority in the universe and he has authority over all men everywhere, saved and unsaved. So when Jesus gives a command to all the world, all of the world is responsible to respond and Jesus says, "Enter through the narrow gate." He says, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate," in Luke 13. And in John 7:37, you don't need to turn there, John 7:37, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me." Responsibility. In Matthew 11, Jesus says, "Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Come. A command. Enter. It's a command. Strive. It's a command. You have a responsibility to seek for Christ.

Let's drill down just a little bit deeper into this thought. Men, and if you know that you're not a Christian, you, you should not speculate about the secret will of God, "Am I one of the elect or not?" God hasn't revealed that. What he has revealed is his command that you are to strive to enter through the narrow gate. God has shown you what your responsibility is, it's to seek after Christ and to strive after that until you find it. God has not published the roster of the elect, instead he has said, "Come to Christ. Seek after Him and recognize that there may be some striving that is involved with it." Remember, if you know that you're on the outside looking in to salvation and that you're not saved yet and you say, "Do you know what? I've sat, I've gone to churches and I've read books and I'm so discouraged and I don't know where to turn." Fair enough. I get that. But the command still comes to you, "Strive to enter in," and let Zaccheus be a human example that gives you hope. Zaccheus was trying to find Jesus and couldn't but he didn't give up until his longing was met.

Here's the thing, beloved, and here for our worship center to be this full, I can only give thanks to God that so many are here to hear me say this. It's a blessing from God to me more than you know. Men are responsible, you are responsible to seek Christ and to find him and here's the thing, beloved: indifference or a refusal to seek after Christ is absolutely inexcusable. There is no excuse for a man who is indifferent when the Gospel is presented to him. There is no excuse for that whatsoever. There is no excuse to say, "Well, do you know what? I don't like to read. I don't really care about these things." That's inexcusable. The Anglican Bishop from the 19th century, J. C. Ryle said this and I quote, listen with careful ears, beloved, "Laziness towards Christianity is a great sin. What will be said of the man who neglects his soul and makes no effort to enter the narrow door? There can only be one reply, he is omitting an explicit duty. Christ says to him, 'Strive,' and, behold, he sits still." No excuse. A command from the Lord of the universe says, "Strive for the good of your soul to find the narrow gate." And you respond and say, "Eh, it's not that important to me." Do you realize that the book of Hebrews says that there will be a greater judgment on those who neglect the Gospel?

Look, let's talk about it this way: you may think it's a trifling matter the things that we're talking about here today, God doesn't view it that way. God doesn't view it that way at all. God says that the great imperishable eternal Gospel of Christ is of infinite value and calls you to infinite blessing promised and guaranteed by his infinite love. And to walk away from that, to walk away from that and say, "This doesn't matter to me. I'm not interested," is to bring a sense of condemnation down on your own soul. There is no excuse for that. None whatsoever.

So what is a sinner to do, then? If we know – watch this, there is an important difficult tension in this – if we know that it requires a secret work of God for a sinner to truly come to Christ, if we know that and we know that there is nevertheless this sense of responsibility but that we don't have the power to save ourselves, to exercise faith by ourselves, then what do we do? How do we tap into this salvation of which Scripture speaks? Beloved, once again, this man named Zaccheus is going to have some very simple and basic instruction for your soul.

Look back at Luke 19. I love the sweet simplicity of this. I love the fact that you don't have to read complex, abstract, difficult to understand theological articles in a theological journal in order to understand the Gospel and how you might fulfill your duty here. Scripture speaks to all of us that are just common folk. Scripture comes and says even one like you can hear this, you that are 7 or 8 or 9 or 10 years old, you can hear this and understand. What do you do? What did Zaccheus do? Verse 4, "he ran on ahead, climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through this way." Watch this, beloved: what did Zaccheus do when he wanted to find Jesus? He positioned himself so that he would find Jesus. For Zaccheus, it was a geographic positioning. He got in a position where he knew the way Jesus was going, he got up in a tree where all of the distractions would be taken away and he would be able to fulfill his desire to physically see Jesus. Isn't it amazing how simple that is?

And what do we do today? Today Jesus isn't here on the earth. Where do you find Christ today? Beloved, watch this, it's not difficult. This is not complicated. Christ is made known in his word. God uses his word in order to lead sinners to Christ. Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. It's by the word of God that he makes himself known. So if you would find Christ, read your Bible. If you would find Christ, put yourself under the preaching of God's word. You say, "But I don't understand it all. I don't understand what I'm reading." That doesn't matter. Just remember Zaccheus trying to look and not being able to find. Beloved, the guidepost, the guiding light for you is that God makes Christ known in his word and that is where you find Christ, and if you would fulfill the duty that you have to seek after Christ, you would take your Bible and open it and read it. You would be with the people of God when they gather together and hear the word of God taught. That is where Christ makes himself known. This is not difficult. This is not beyond your ability to position yourself so that you could find Christ. Read the Bible. Listen to trustworthy preachers. And do this, and do this in honor of the fact that God has to do a secret work in the heart of anyone in order for them to believe: ask God to do that work in your heart. "God, as I come to your word, open my eyes. I'm blind. Help me to see. Open my ears, I'm deaf. O God, help me to hear. God, I'm lame, help me to walk. God, I'm dead, make me alive." Position yourself. God has made it plain where he does his work. Position yourself. Put yourself there because you are responsible to seek the welfare of your soul and if you don't seek the welfare of your soul, it will not be God's fault that you're not saved. God will judge you for your indifference to the Gospel of Christ. That's it. So you position yourself so that you would be under the power of the word of God which is where God does his powerful work of salvation. It's through his word.

Now, once you get there, so to speak, what does conversion look like from man's perspective? What does conversion look like? We said you've got a responsibility but what does the conversion of your soul look like from man's perspective? We've said that from God's perspective he has to open the heart, he has to do a powerful work to make a person receptive even to the Gospel, but from your perspective, what does conversion look like? Zaccheus, once again, lays it out for us. The longer I go in ministry, the more thankful I am for this passage. First of all, what does conversion look like? You must repent from sin. You must repent from sin. Throughout the Gospel of Luke, Jesus stressed the importance of repentance.

Look at Luke 5 and in many circles repentance is the forgotten call of the Gospel. Luke 5:31, "Jesus answered and said to them, 'It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'"

Look at Luke 13. Woven throughout the Gospel are these emphases from the lips of Christ, mind you. There's so much I want to say but I'm not going to go on that many tangents today. From the lips of Christ he emphasizes the importance of repentance. Look at verse 1, Luke 13:1, "Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other

Galileans because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Verse 4, "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?" Beloved, look at the text with me. I want you to see the word of God with your own eyes. Jesus says in verse 5, "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Conversion from man's perspective somehow involves repentance.

Look at Luke 24 at the very end of the Gospel, Luke 24:46. Actually go to verse 45 because I love the way Scripture interprets Scripture for us here. Okay, let's go back to verse 44. I know. Verse 44, "Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.'" Notice how he points them to the word of God in what he is saying, and as he is about to explain the Gospel, the word of God is the cornerstone, it is the foundation of everything that he is saying. Then remember what we said about the effective call of God as we look at verse 45, "Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." Jesus by an exercise of divine power somehow opened their minds so that they would see and understand that which they were dead and dull to. He did an effective work in their heart to open it so that they could understand without which they were still in darkness.

Verse 46, "He said to them," here's the Gospel, here is a summary of what we opened with from 1 Corinthians 15. "He said to them," now looking at Luke 24:46. I know I'm confusing references here. "He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day.'" The Gospel. Christ suffered for sin on the cross, he was dead, he was buried, he was raised on the third day. That is the sinner's hope. And what is the call in response to that Gospel proclamation? Verse 47, "that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem." Notice the authority. Notice the comprehensive exhaustive nature of it. To all the nations, this one singular exclusive message of salvation will be preached: Christ died, Christ was buried, Christ was raised again for sinners and you must repent and believe in Christ in order to have the forgiveness of your sins. The point for where we are at in this message is that Jesus in the Gospel of Luke is shown repeatedly making an emphasis on repentance as the duty of man.

Now, with that in mind, go back to Luke 19. We've kind of circled around the airfield and we'll come back in for another landing on Luke 19. Because repentance is so frequently the theme of what Jesus is defining in the Gospel of Luke and that provides a broader context for us to understand what is on his mind as he approaches Zaccheus, notice in verse 5, Luke 19, "Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, 'Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.'" And Zaccheus, "hurried and came down and received Him gladly. They began to grumble, 'He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.'" Somewhere in there Scripture doesn't tell us, it doesn't record for us the conversation that Zaccheus had with Jesus, but we know from the tenor of the Gospel of Luke that Jesus would have spoken to him about repentance because that's what he was saying at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the Gospel of Luke, "Repent. Repent. Repent or you will perish."

So Zaccheus comes knowing that he's not a believer, knowing that he wants to see Christ, what did Jesus say? Somewhere in the conversation, beloved, bank it, the topic of repentance came up. You say, "How do you know that?" From Luke 19. "Stick to the text, preacher." Glad to. Very glad to. Verse 8, "Zaccheus 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.'" Zaccheus here manifesting the fruit of true repentance. Zaccheus as we said on Tuesday, a man who had acquired his great wealth at the expense of his countrymen, probably cheated and lied and abused his authority in order to do so, and now he stands with this great wealth before Christ and Christ having called him and having preached repentance to him, what does he do? He shows the fruit of the repentance in his heart by what he's willing to do with what he had given his life to up to that point. In the law of Moses, those who had defrauded people were required to pay it back plus a 20% penalty, Leviticus 6, Numbers 5. You can look at that later if you want. Repayment plus a 20% penalty. That's what the law required. Look at what Zaccheus says he would do. "Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I'll give him back four times as much." Twenty times what the law required, mathematically speaking. Zaccheus went way beyond what the law required. His heart was overflowing. It had turned away from his prior life and he wanted to divest himself of any of the profit of his prior life and he wanted to separate himself – watch this – he wanted to separate himself as far as he possibly could from his sinful past. "Lord, what I used to give my life to, I'm throwing it all to the wind just so I can have You."

Understand, beloved, and don't let anyone twist this passage to tell you anything different: Zaccheus is not giving away his money because he's trying to earn his salvation, as if he's trying to accumulate merit that would require God to reward him and honor him. Far to the contrary, this was a great act of sacrificial love that manifested his repentant heart. He is showing the fruit of a change in his heart that had already taken place. What's he saying except this, with Christ in his immediate presence he's saying, "Lord, I prefer You to my fortune and those aren't empty words that I say, I'll give half of it to the poor and the people I have defrauded, I'll pay them back four times as much. I just want You, Christ."

It's precious and, you know, beloved, when we talk about the singular nature of the work of God in a heart, the effective call, the Gospel goes out to a lot of people but far fewer respond, theologically from God's perspective it's because of God's effective work in their hearts, but understand this and examine your own heart in light of this: true repentance is rare. It is uncommon. You know, the churches are filled with people who name the name of Lord, Lord, the people who out of that section, those who manifest a willingness to forsake life, to forsake the world in order to follow after Christ, who will humble themselves under the Gospel, who will give their lives to Christ and show it by the way they live, beloved, I say without fear of contradiction that the group like that is a smaller subsection of the ones who name him as Lord. That's true, isn't it? And that would give you all cause to just take a step back and say, "Does my life show something of that kind of repentance where as Christ said, 'Forsake the world. Leave your families

behind and come to Me. If a man wants to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow after Me." That's what Zaccheus did. Bless his memory. Thank God for recording it. I hope one day in heaven I'll have a chance in a little side conversation maybe 30 eons into the infinite eons to say, "Zaccheus, good to see you, man. I knew I'd see you here."

He preferred Christ to his fortune. Repentance prefers Christ to all else. True repentance does not cling to certain cherished sins and say, "I'll give Christ 90% but I'm going to keep this 10% to myself." Repentance is a complete abandonment of self, a complete forsaking of sin in order to come to Christ. What does it mean to repent? Our brother Martyn Lloyd Jones says this and I quote, he says, "Repentance means that you realize that you are a guilty, vile sinner in the presence of God; that you deserve the wrath of God and that you are hell bound. You begin to realize this thing called sin is in you and you turn your back on it in every shape and form. You renounce the world whatever the cost, the world and its mind and outlook as well as its practice, and you deny yourself and take up the cross and go after Christ. Your nearest and dearest and the whole world may say you have religious mania, you may have to suffer financially, but it makes no difference. That is repentance."

So from man's perspective, we seek after Christ, from man's perspective, we consciously repent from sin in true salvation. It's not a game. It's not superficial. This is a total turning of the heart. This is going from death to life. This is going from old man to new man. This is nothing less than a new creation, a total forsaking of ourselves in order to have Christ. Beloved, I have to ask you this plainly: do you love Christ, have you embraced Christ like that? To so forsake the world that you would embrace Christ exclusively, unconditionally, without qualification, without hesitation, without any reservation that I might go back? Forsaking it all, locking the door behind you, walking through that narrow gate and entering into paradise, as it were, to embrace Christ? Have you received Christ like that? That's true salvation from man's perspective.

There's one other aspect that I want to emphasize to you. We've said that from man's perspective you must seek Christ, you must repent from sin, finally, this is sweet, oh, it's so sweet. This is better than the sweetest nectar from the honeycomb. This is of more value than the purest gold, what we're about to see. This is the great tune for your heart if you would be saved. Thirdly, you must trust in Christ. You must trust in Christ. Jesus affirms the reality of Zaccheus' salvation.

After Zaccheus had made that statement of repentance in verse 8, you don't have to take my word for it that his salvation was genuine because Christ said it for himself in verses 9 and 10, "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.'" Jesus uses this phrase "son of Abraham" to describe true salvation. Let me just make an incidental point here. You could use "son of Abraham" to refer to a physical descendant of Abraham but that's obviously not what Jesus is saying here. That would be ridiculous to say, "Oh, look at this, he has given away all his money. He's a physical descendant of Abraham." That's not the point of this at all. Jesus is using this term like

Paul did in Galatians 3:7 when he said in Galatians 3:7, you don't have to turn there, just listen, Galatians 3:7, "it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham." Jesus is saying that, "Zaccheus has exercised faith in Me and it has brought him to true salvation."

So when we say you must trust in Christ, what does it mean to trust Christ? Do you know what? This is a moment right now where we are standing with one foot on earth and one foot in heaven. We are straddling eternity. The gap between heaven and hell, the gap between earth and eternity, we are straddling that gap with everything that we're saying right now. What does it mean to trust in Christ because we're saved by grace through faith, we receive Christ through faith, we receive Christ through trusting him, what does that mean? This is the trillion dollar question for your soul. Well, let me answer that. What a privilege to be given to a man to explain the way of God in salvation. Thank you, Lord. Saving faith includes a knowledge, a comprehension, an understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What is the Gospel? Let's say it again. I'll say it with a little more precision maybe. Jesus Christ suffered for sin on the cross and he rose from the dead with power. He lives forever to intercede for those who trust him. Jesus Christ is the perfect and the only Savior who alone can forgive your sins. Everything else is a false way of salvation that will lead to your destruction. That's the Gospel. You need to know that. You need to understand the facts of the Gospel and not rely on your visions or someone else's visions or silly books about how Jesus spoke to them today. No, go back to the word of God. These are the facts of the Gospel.

Now, stay with me here, and you are staying with me. I'm very grateful for that. Knowing those facts, you are convinced that the Gospel is true; that that is right; that that is reality; that that is accurate; that that is truth as God sees it. And you are persuaded of that. "That Gospel is true. That's the only way of salvation. I believe that. I know that that's right." Then you do this because the Gospel calls for you to respond: then you personally trust Christ and his righteousness alone for your salvation from sin. Do you know what? A little five-year-old boy could do this and understand this. An eight-year-old girl could understand this. Christ died for sinners, Christ rose again, I have to give myself to Christ in order to be saved.

What does this trust mean? What does it mean to receive Christ? Listen to me very carefully, alright? It means that you irrevocably submit to him and you put your soul in his hands. That kind of faith unites you to Christ so that his saving power becomes eternally operative in your life. You say, "I believe this Gospel of which You speak. I believe in Christ. I believe Him to be the eternal Son of God. I believe Him to have lived a perfectly righteous life and that He shed his blood for sinners like me. And in response to that, knowing that I'm a sinner, wanting to leave the world behind, believing His promise to save those who come to Him, I give my soul to Him. I submit to Him. I hand myself over to Him completely in love without reservation and say, 'Save me and take me and make me one of Your own.'" You trust in Christ like that and there is this inner sense in which you are conscious that the course of life is changing. "I'm handing everything over to Christ. I'm giving everything over to Him. Not as an act of merit that He must reward but that this is the way the word of God is appointed for me to receive Him. I receive Him and I rest in Him. I trust not in my works, I trust not in anything future, I

trust not even in the resolutions of my own heart. I trust in Christ and in Christ alone to save me."

That's the human perspective on salvation illustrated for us by Zaccheus. Friends, have you turned to Christ like what we've talked about? Do you believe the Gospel? Have you repented from sin? Have you trusted Christ and received him in the manner we're talking about here today? This is so much more than walking up and sitting on a bench at the end of a service, isn't it? This is a total revolution of heart, a redirection of life, away from self and sin and toward a glorious Savior. That's the human perspective on salvation.

Let me add one final point here, gathering together as the people of God here on the Lord's day, let's look at salvation from the Christian's perspective for just a moment. Salvation from the Christian's perspective. How do we think about the Gospel now? How do we think about our responsibility to share the good news with others? Well, we think about it like this: we realize that God's hidden work in salvation does not make – say it again – does not make prayer or evangelism irrelevant. We understand that God who appointed the ends, the goals of salvation, also appointed the means by which this would happen, the way in which it would take place.

Look over at Romans 10. We'll just touch here for a moment and then we'll be done. This is one of those moments in a pulpit where you wish it could go on forever and ever but that's just not the way it works. The Apostle Paul was a great exponent of the truths that we've spoken here and yet you see in his heart, and this question came up even in recent days, how do we pray as Christians for those who are lost? Paul said in Romans 10:1, he said, "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation." Paul knowing all of these truths of which we have spoken doesn't stop, he doesn't turn back, he doesn't become indifferent, he says, "Well, it's all up to God." Out of a burning love for his people who are still in darkness, Paul knowing that salvation is beyond his power to produce in their heart, turns to God and says, "O God, would You please save them too? God, You saved me, save them. Extend Your mercy further, God. You can't be done when salvation brings so much glory to Your name. You can't be done yet. Have mercy on my children. Have mercy on my friends. Have mercy on my coworkers. And God, since only You can do the work that unlocks the key to their heart in the effective call of the Gospel, God, do that work. God, work in their heart. Open their hearts. Open their minds like Christ did in Luke 24. Open their minds so that they can see because, God, I can't bear the thought of my own flesh and blood perishing miserably in hell while I enjoy the fruits of heaven forever and ever. So God, have mercy on them." These truths make you passionate about the souls of the lost, beloved, so you pray for them. And because God is a God of all power, because the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much, because we trust our Father to hear us when we pray, because he keeps our tears in a bottle, he knows when we're sorrowful, he knows our broken hearts over those who aren't with us, we have every reason to go to him and say, "God, have mercy on them too," and expect God to receive us favorably, trusting him to do his will.

But for those of you that have loved ones, those of you especially that are parents, those of you that whether you're young or old, let me encourage you with this thought and it

seems that the people you care about get more and more stubborn the longer time goes, yeah, it works that way, people's hearts get hard, don't they? But just settle it in your mind never to give up as you appeal to God for their salvation, to never stop trusting him and to have it in your mind, forgive the picturesque nature of this, of what I'm about to say because something needs to impress this home on your heart but, "God, if they're going to go to hell, they're going to go there bathed in my prayers. I am going to bathe them in my prayers as long as I have breath, Father. And if they won't repent, Father, I can't save them on my own but, Father, at least they'll go there against the whole current of my prayers on their behalf." That's how a Christian thinks about it. That's how you as parents should think about your unsaved children. "I can't force anything with them but I can sure pray for them and I have an audience with the one person in the universe who has the power to do something about it and I'll exercise that audience as long as I can." That's how we think about salvation from a Christian perspective, we realize that evangelism is necessary, the preaching of the word of God is necessary. Why do we do this Sunday after Sunday? Because God uses his word. Because God uses preaching.

Look at Romans 10:14 and I realize we're out of time. Paul restates the promise of Scripture in verse 13, "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." Then he goes through a series of rhetorical questions. "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent?" You see, we all have a corporate responsibility in this, don't we? We're all in this together. So many things I want to say about that. "Just as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!'" Paul says, "Of course we preach the Gospel. How are they going to believe if no one tells them about Christ? And how are they going to hear unless there is a preacher, someone like you in their life speaking to them? And how is there going to be preaching unless they are somehow sent out to preach the Gospel?" Paul says, "Don't fall into these futile speculations. Don't say, 'Well, it's God's work and therefore there is nothing for me to do.'" No. No. No. No. No. Out with all of that hyper-Calvinistic nonsense. We preach the Gospel. We preach it to all men. We invite everyone to come to Christ and in the process we trust God to bring some and to use our feeble efforts to accomplish an internal work that was beyond our power to do because God honors his word.

So we proclaim Christ to those who have not yet received him, we rejoice when some are saved, as God gives us opportunity, we take them through the waters of baptism, later on as we're going to do in just a moment, we receive some of these blessed ones into membership in a local church, all in a grateful response to the work of God in salvation. So we recognize our responsibility, we pray to that end, but because we understand that salvation is God's idea, it's God's power, it's God's wisdom on display, when it is all said and done, we deny any credit. We take no glory to ourselves. We say at the end of it all, "To Him be the glory both now until the day of eternity. Amen."

Father, be gracious to bless Your word. Be gracious to the souls that are with us who have not yet turned to Christ. May they rise to action in response to what they've heard and seek You. And may You grant that they would find You. Thank You, Father, for the

precious, precious, precious Gospel of our precious, precious, precious Lord Jesus. And Lord, in body, soul and spirit, we give ourselves to You. In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

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