

77. The evidence of our salvation

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When I was growing up, my family had a dog named "Mary." She was a good dog for a child, but she was not trained. One day I saw a TV series "Rin Tin Tin" in our black and white TV set. I was so captivated by the capabilities of a well-trained dog. Rin Tin Tin showed plenty of good evidence of her training in obedience. If she did whatever she wanted to do, such as chasing a rabbit in the middle of the movie filming or barking at a cat on the window sill when she was supposed to be quiet, Rin Tin Tin could not be the star of the show very long. But she did exactly whatever she was told to do by her master.

I've seen many people who claimed to be Christians, but their behaviors and language they use show me that they are anything but Christians. I am a firm believer of the fact that if you are truly saved by the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, from that moment you are no longer the same as before. Because, as the Word of God tells us, we are new creations in Christ, old things have passed away, all things have become new. In other words, those whose lives have not changed, they cannot and should not say that they are born-again Christians, because they are NOT.

In case you are not convinced of what I just said, we need to hear from Jesus Himself.

A. ZACCHAEUS

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."

According to theologian William Barclay, Jericho was a prosperous city. It had a great palm forest and world-famous balsam groves which perfumed the air for miles around. Its gardens of roses were known far and wide. Men called it 'The City of Palms.' The first century Jewish historian Josephus called it 'a divine region,' or 'the fattest in Palestine.' The Romans carried its dates and balsam to worldwide trade and fame.

I don't think that ancient or modern day tax collectors are the most popular people to hang around with. Nobody loves them unless you are his mother or wife. Tax collectors in Jesus' day were government-sanctioned Mafia thugs in silk suits with arm-twisting and knee-breaking methods against merchants and common people. They falsified the tax bills and skimmed off the extra for themselves. One of the heads of

the Jericho Mafia was Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax-collector and he was loaded with money.

With all the fancy designer suits in his closets, big jewelry around his neck and fingers and the latest model of a BMW twin turbo convertible chariot in his garage, Zacchaeus was lonely and isolated from the people and empty in his heart like many people today.

Perhaps that realization was what drew him to Jesus. Here was a man, Jesus who owned nothing of this world, yet possessed the love and admiration of thousands. And Zacchaeus had even heard that He was a friend of tax-collectors. Maybe he could see in Jesus what he lacked. Because he was short, he had to get on a tree to see Jesus over everybody's head and shoulder.

Like a little child, Zacchaeus was curious and wanted to know. Curiosity and simplicity are two elements of preparation for faith. That is why Jesus taught us that unless we are like a little child, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Even though Zacchaeus was a renegade in the eyes of the Jews, he was a precious lost sinner in the eyes of Jesus. There were other ways to get to Jerusalem, but Jesus chose to go through Jericho to meet with this tax collector whom everyone despised. Zacchaeus had a divine appointment that he didn't know about.

I really like Jesus' style, because He invited Himself for dinner. I think I am gonna use that style, too. Jesus treated Zacchaeus with dignity and friendship and Zacchaeus must have felt ten feet tall as Jesus walked with him to his house.

Listen, giving up wealth for the poor does not make us saved, but Zacchaeus' action speaks in volume about his salvation. In contrast to the rich young ruler who would not serve God because he didn't want to give up his idol which was his wealth, this chief tax collector was willing to give up his wealth to follow Jesus, his new found Messiah.

We cannot and we should not judge other's salvation, but it doesn't take a rocket scientist to see whether a person is saved or not by simply observing that person's behavior after his or her declaration as a Christian.

Can a life change this quickly? Yes. Not every habit in the life of Zacchaeus changed immediately, but the heart was changed and there was some evidences of life-change immediately.

I want y'all to recollect what we've learned previously when Jesus saw the rich young ruler leave sorrowfully, He said, "*For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.*" Then He added in v27 of chapter 18, "*The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.*" Now, Zacchaeus' name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life and heading toward heaven. To the Pharisees, that was impossible for a tax collector to go to heaven.

V10 is the theme of Luke's Gospel:

for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Do you have evidence of your salvation in your life? Are you willingly obedient to the Word of God?

B. FAITHFUL SERVANTS AND UNFAITHFUL ONE

Luke 19:11-27 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."

This particular parable draws such a great picture of Jesus' ascension, the judgment of His believers, and the Great White Throne Judgment of unbelievers in a concise manner.

To understand this parable, we must understand the typology of this parable: The nobleman was Jesus; the ten of his servants are the believers of Jesus Christ; the citizens of the land who hated him were the unbelievers of this world; and the far country is heaven.

Please note what these three out of ten servants said. They all acknowledged that the ten minas belonged to their master. One mina was worth four months wages. Here, ten servants are each given an equal amount of money.

The first servant brought a good report. He did business with his master's mina, and had ten more to show for it. This was an impressive 1000% increase. The second servant brought another good report. He did business with his master's mina and had five more to show for it – a 500% increase. But the third servant did not have a good report. He did not obey the master's command and excused his disobedience by claiming that his master was so powerful that he didn't need the servant's help. He chose to do nothing to earn more. He buried the money.

Please note that this parable is different than the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. In Matthew 25, the first servant received 5 talents, not minas, the second one 2 talents, and the third 1 talent.

The master first wanted to know how faithful his servants had been in his absence. The reward for faithful work is always more work for their master. It is a great compliment to be entrusted with the management of so many cities. How we serve the Lord today will help determine our reward and ministry when He comes to establish His kingdom on earth. Faithfulness now is preparation for the blessed reward later.

Whatever we do for the Lord is all provided by Him. Some may say, "Oh no, I earn my money with my own two hands." Here is a Swedish answer for that: "Shut up!" God gave you life, job, resources, and brain as I've said before. If it wasn't for Him, none of us would exist.

All of us have received gifts from the Lord to serve Him and His church. Some people say, "I don't know what kind of gifts I have. That is why I am not serving in the church." That is nothing more than a lame excuse like the unfaithful servant. You know what they say about excuses? The excuse is like an armpit. Everyone has it and it stinks. Use your God-given gift, otherwise you will miss out on your reward.

Then there are people who completely reject the Master of the universe. Somehow they think that if they ignore God long enough, He would disappear. Fat chance. They are the ones who would disappear to hell after the Great White Throne Judgement by the One whom they despise now.

If you consider yourself a born-again Christian, you need to do what the Lord tells you through the Word of God. You might be like the first and second servant who used God given gifts and resources to bring glory to Him or like the third servant who wasted away your limited time and have nothing to show to the Lord. You see, the disobedient Christians are accountable for what they know and not being obedient.

Our readiness for Jesus' return is determined by our stewardship of the resources that He has given us. Some think that "readiness" for Jesus' return is a rather mystical thing. It really isn't. It is a matter of being about our business for the Lord. In light of this parable, we must ask ourselves: "What have we done with our knowledge? Our time? Our money? Our abilities?"

The sins of omission which mean the sins by doing nothing may ultimately be more dangerous than the sins of commission. However, the real reason for this parable of Jesus is not about servanthood only, but it is more about being ready to meet our Savior Jesus at any given time.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

The truth is that salvation apart from obedience is unknown in the Bible. They go hand in hand. The apostle Peter echoes:

1 Peter 1:2 elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

C. APPLICATIONS

1) Your faithfulness to God's Word now is preparation for your blessed reward in heaven later.

2) All of us have received gifts from the Lord to serve Him and His church. Use your God-given gift, otherwise you will miss out on your reward.

3) The disobedient Christians are accountable for what they know and not being obedient.