



Zacchaeus

*Model
Confessional
Repenter*

Dr. Gordon E. Necemer

Lacchaerus

No part of this book may be reproduced,
copied, adapted, or transferred in any form without
written permission

From Gordon E. Necemer,

10122 - 125th Street,
Surrey, B.C. V3V 3B5

Unless copied or transferred in full.

Copyright January 2016

All rights reserved by Gordon Necemer,
Surrey, British Columbia, Canada.

ISBN: 978-0994858320

Published in Surrey, BC Canada

By



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1	
Forward	9
Chapter 2	
Luke's Authorship	15
Chapter 3	
Setting of the Narrative	21
Chapter 4	
Examining the Characters	26
Zacchaeus' Personal Background	30
Zacchaeus' Work Background	34
Zacchaeus, Appointed Tax Collector	37
Jesus	40
The Pharisees	
Chapter 5	
Zacchaeus: Model of Redemption	43
Chapter 6	
Zacchaeus: Corrupted By Sin	53

Chapter 7	
Zacchaeus: Conscripted by the Holy Spirit	61
Chapter 8	
Zacchaeus: Caressed by Curiosity	69
Chapter 9	
Zacchaeus: Graced with Courage	77
Chapter 10	
Zacchaeus: Congenially Compliant	83
Chapter 11	
Zacchaeus: Compelling Confession	91
Chapter 12	
Zacchaeus: Conversion	105
Chapter 13	
Zacchaeus: Unashamedly Committed	115
Chapter 14	
Charles Finney: The "Second Zacchaeus"	119
Finney: Corrupted by Sin	121
Finney: Conscripted by the Holy Spirit	121
Finney: Caressed by Curiosity	122
Finney: Graced with Courage	122
Finney: Congenially Compliant	123
Finney: Compelling Confession	124
Finney: Conversion	124
Finney: Unashamedly Committed	125
Chapter 15	
Rob McGrath: Modern Zacchaeus	127
Rob McGrath: Introduction	128

Rob: Corrupted by Sin	129
Rob: Conscripted by the Holy Spirit	131
Rob: Caressed by Curiosity	132
Rob: Graced with Courage	132
Rob: Compelling Confession	134
Rob: Conversion	135
Rob: Unashamedly Committed	136
Endnotes	139
Bibliography	151



Chapter 1
Forward



The Bible is an intriguing book. Many, reading it out of general interest, comment the stories, the poems, and the data often pull them in the story to the extent they become identified with the character or characters being described or analyzed.

This readily happens because the stories recorded, from the Judeo-Christian perspective, in contradistinction to other comparative religious writings, contain strong affirmations that Jehovah is actively desirous to participate with creation in developing a society where justice and virtue prevail. This will happen, scripture teaches, as God redirects humanity's heart, mind, and will to honour Him as Supreme God and Lord. Then, and only then, will it be energized to enjoy this positive, progressive and productive existence, with lasting favourable benefits.

This was God's first place, extended objective when He created humanity. From His perspective, because humans were created in His image, He and they were to enjoy regular, unlimited, uninterrupted, and unending, intimate friendship as His shalom blessed civilization.

This, however, ended when Satan, through his cunning, deceptive, and beguiling attack on Adam and Eve, seduced them to disobey God's imperative not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Life amid Eden. Suddenly, as God promised, spiritual death and everlasting separation from God befell human beings. Now, a difficult and burdensome existence, with a probable ruinous end, was all humanity could expect. That is, unless a generous, redemptive intervention by Jehovah occurred.

God, despite humanity's willful, purposed, and determined rebellion, did not abandon creation. His strong, unshakable love, and undiminished passion to have fellowship with it remained. Therefore, immediately after the Fall, He inaugurated a plan – to be realized through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ - whereby humanity would be affectionately restored to fellowship with Him. And it happened as He planned!

Because of this compassionate intervention, as one browses scripture, he or she quickly discovers numerous stories of individuals who proclaim they experienced God's love, grace, and mercy and were restored to an intimate, and gratifying friendship with Him.

Of the hundreds of examples in scripture that could be enumerated as supportive evidence, the author references Abraham, Moses, Job, Esther, King

David, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the thief on the cross, Zacchaeus, and Paul as individuals from whom individuals, today, may learn to trust God as Lord and Redeemer Friend.

- a) From Abraham one learns how to develop a deep, resolute trust with God as he or she follows Him in obedience to His call.
- b) From Moses one learns that a person's age or inabilities are not restrictions for God. He can still use people to bless others as one sincerely and devotionally heeds and obeys His call.
- c) From Job one learns that severe tribulations may be considered a blessing as he or she discovers God's presence and yields to His sovereign plan. As this is realized, that person will be empowered to rely on Him confidently to administer strength, courage, and peace during the overwhelming crisis.
- d) From Esther, one learns that God's providential plan is always timed, and delivers glorious results, regardless how he or she appraises his or her purpose for being born.
- e) And from Paul, one learns God's mercy and grace always discredits sin's control over a person's life, and affords kingdom ministry opportunities the individual who daily submits to His directive call regardless of the vocation in which he or she may be found.

An examination of these individuals – and others who could be listed – demonstrates three important factors. First, each were commonplace humans with like-minded passions, dreams, hopes, and goals as

those alive today. Second, each person lived a regulated, routine life thinking that his or her existence probably had no relevance or significance in God's plan for humanity's good. And third, each individual received a welcomed, positive, and productive spiritual change after God intervened in his or her affairs, and life became dramatically charged with new meaning and direction.

Undoubtedly, it would be of immense value to examine the lives of those mentioned earlier to confirm the aforesaid claims. But because of the time, and the volumes of books that might be needed, the author has decided to examine the narrative of Zacchaeus, the Chief of Publicans - and his encounter with Christ - presented in Luke 19:1-10 to accomplish this goal.

Recent research by the author, for scholarly articles, periodicals and journals about Zacchaeus' encounter with Christ, has produced little helpful commentary on the subject. This could be because Luke's record of this incident is much shorter than his account of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), and the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). Therefore, it may not provide adequate data to "grip" the reader's, serious attention to what he is attempting to communicate. Because of this, many readers quickly skim story line, and therefore fail to discover the deeper message inferred by the data.

Despite this possibility, the narrative about Zacchaeus' "day of change" may be one of the New Testament's most symbolic stories. In it are buried the fundamental and essential elements by which one may appropriate and appreciate the promised, positive, and productive life God offers to the "confessional repentant" who earnestly calls on Him for new life from above.

The purpose of this book is to analyze Zacchaeus' radical life transformation as it is faithfully documented by Dr. Luke, a trustworthy eyewitness to the incident, and deduce from it the progressive steps that brought Zacchaeus a providential conversion as Christ intervened in his life as He interjected faith by which Zacchaeus could believe in Him for everlasting life (Psalm 103:1-5 cf. Psalm 146:5-10).ⁱ

Before this can be done, however, a background to the story needs to be provided.



Chapter 2
Luke's Authorship



Although the author of the third gospel - Luke - is not identified in scripture, it is believed and accepted, based on strong collaborative witnesses,ⁱⁱ that Dr. Luke, who was an Antiochian by race, a physician by trade, and a close friend of Paul and some of the Christ's apostles wrote Luke and Acts.

Luke was a contemporary with Christ, and his disciples. He was born as a Gentile in Antioch. He may have been converted through the ministry of John the Baptist, and became a follower of Christ shortly thereafter. From his writings it is evident “he was a well-educated and well-traveled, beloved and trustworthy Christian missionary who faithfully and accurately documented Christ’s travels and miracles.”ⁱⁱⁱ

After Christ’s ascension (Acts 1:5-9), Luke became active in “ministry” with the newly established

Church, and later co-partnered with the Apostle Paul as his close, cherished companion and “expert in the way of the teachings of *Christ*.”^{iv} When Paul confronted his greatest time of testing, and all his associates abandoned him, Paul commends Luke for his love and companionship stating, “only Luke is with me” (2 Timothy 4:14).

Although Luke was not a Jew by birth, it is believed that during his academic studies, at the School of Tarsus, he read the Septuagint, the Torah, and the Talmud. From these readings he gained an understanding of Jewish historical events, the celebration of the Jewish feasts and festivals, as well as the daily worship customs, such as praying three or four times daily, fasting, and giving of alms to the poor. After his conversion, he developed a close, inseparable alliance with the Twelve, from whom he gained further knowledge about these matters, and Christ’s ministry throughout Judea. Through these, and similar events, Luke became competent, and able to write both Luke and Acts.

Of concern to the author is Annie Pesonen’s charge that Luke willingly presented a view regarding Zacchaeus’ conversion that purposely limits the reader’s ability to ascertain whether Zacchaeus commended himself (Luke 19:8), or sincerely repented for his unjust treatment of the poor and others (Luke 19:9). She writes:

It is plausible that Luke improvised on his favourite themes and theology with the help of his typical stylistic devices, and so ended up multiplying the number of features that we call characteristic Luke. They are Lucan in his own

gospel, while they are peripheral elsewhere and this is due to his own interest rather than that of the sources. It follows that the accumulation of many features in a pericope make it quite likely, if never altogether certain, that the evangelist has shaped the pericope to a degree to meet his desired interpretation as is also shown in Luke's narrative regarding Zacchaeus. In so doing, Luke makes Luke 19:8-9 out of place from what should be intended in other accounts.^v

This charge, if accepted, could discredit and disqualify the credibility of Luke's accounts recorded in Luke and Acts. It, however, carries little weight among academics because Pesonen, and others who make similar charges, provide no additional, collaborative and objective evidence to validate or support this claim.

Contrary to Pesonen's view, the author contends that Luke is a faithful, honest, and trustworthy scholar who has scripted an objective and reliable account of Zacchaeus's encounter with Christ. In stating this, the author finds support from Sir William Ramsay, who provides the following testimony about the reliability and integrity of Luke's authorship.

The question among the scholars now (1913) is with regards to Luke's credibility as a historian. It is generally conceded that he wrote at a comparatively early date, and had authorities of high character even when he, himself, was not an eye witness. The present writer takes the view that Luke's narrative is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness. You may press the words of

Luke in a degree beyond any other historian, and they stand the keenest scrutiny and the hardest treatment, provided that the critic always knows the subject, and does not go beyond the limits of science and justice.^{vi}

It could be probable that Luke purposely does not identify himself as the author of either Luke or Acts because, “he does not want to draw attention to himself. Instead, he desires to focus on Christ’s ministry and the miracles which are central to the gospels which have been accepted as part of the Canon by the Christian Church.”^{vii}



Chapter 3
Setting of the Narrative



From the account provided, the incident takes place in Jericho, in the land of Judea. This city, which is one of the oldest in the region, may have been established and settled in the 7th millennium before Christ, during the Neolithic Period, by Amorites or Canaanites.^{viii} Because of this, it is considered by many to be the longest continuously settled city known to civilization.^{ix}

During its beginnings, Jericho was located at the mound, Tell es Sultan^x in the valley of the Jordan River – also called the Plains of Jericho. (Jer 39:5, 52:8) During its earliest settlement, the city was situated fourteen miles south of the Sea of Galilee in proximity to the Jordan River and seven miles north of the Dead Sea. It lay eight hundred feet below sea level and it is considered to be the lowest city in the world.

The city has been acclaimed for its continuous prosperity because of the abundance of salt deposits,

bitumen, and an inexhaustible accretion of Sulphur in which the Dead Sea was rich, which were valued as essentials in the ancient world. It also gained economic wealth due to the profusion of traders coming from the north, east and south to visit and market their Jerusalem, Galilee, Damascus and Jordan.

Josephus describes Jericho's wealth, at the time Joshua overtook it, in the following terms:

Now there was an immense quantity of silver and gold. And besides those, there was also brass that was heaped together outside the city. When it was taken no one transgressed the decree, nor took it for their own peculiar advantage which Joshua delivered to the priest to be laid up among their treasures.^{xi}

And D. Naveh comments further:

A reexamination of the published data about PPNA Jericho is used to demonstrate that various building operations, especially the monumental buildings, were actively functioning in several spheres, both at the inter-group and intra-group levels. At the inter-group level, the monumental buildings served as a means to establish a hold over an area of favourable wealth. At the intra-group level they functioned in founding and regulating new types of socioeconomic relations. Central themes in the changes occurring at this level include production intensification and the growing prominence of long-term delayed return within socioeconomic systems of Jericho.^{xii}

Because of this massive, natural wealth and the far-reaching trade traffic throughout the region, Jericho enjoyed unlimited prosperity that was wished for by other cities within and beyond Israel. Possessing such wealth compelled the city founders to protect it by building walls around the city that are estimated to be six to eight feet thick, and thirty-five to forty feet high and were heavily fortified to prevent a foreign nation invading it and taking the wealth for spoils.

Providing specific data regarding this ancient city's fortifications, so it and its mammoth stores of wealth could be well preserved, Ernst Sellin and Carl Watzinger comment:

The meticulous work of Kenyon showed that Jericho was heavily fortified, and that it had been burned by fire. The mound or "tell" of Jericho was surrounded by a great earth rampart, or embankment with a stone retaining wall at its base. This retaining wall was four to five meters (12-15 feet) high. On top of that was a mud brick wall two meters (six feet) and about six to eight meters (20-26 feet) high. At the crest of the embankment was a similar mud brick wall whose base was roughly fourteen meters (46 feet) above the ground level outside the retaining wall. This is what loomed high above the Israelites as they marched around the city each day for seven days. Humanly speaking it was impossible for the Israelites to penetrate the impregnable bastion of Jericho.^{xiii}

Four hundred years after Jericho was destroyed by a large earthquake, the great wealth of the city was

remembered by King Herod. Soon after gaining dominant political control over Israel, he ordered that “his lavish winter resort, with a façade three hundred and thirty feet long, be built within the city wall which he would later restore.”^{xiv}

The outstanding wealth and extravagant beauty possessed by this ancient city - even at the dating of Zacchaeus’ encounter with Christ - may have been the reason Rome had numerous Chief Tax Collectors, with their subordinates, at all the gates of the city both day and night.

Despite being a wealthy, well-constructed and strongly fortified city, Jericho was also known for being wicked morally, and indifferent to the needs of the poor and socially marginalized. According to C. H. Spurgeon, Jericho's wickedness is portrayed through the careless and callous treatment of travelers (Luke 15), the marginalization of the poor, the blind, and the ill who were sent to the gates of the city to beg for alms (Luke 18), and the rampant thievery and extortion practiced by many - especially the publicans (Luke 19). Indeed, with such uncomely and beguiling activities being prominent in Jericho, it can be rightly concluded “it was a bad city, a city that had been cursed, and no one would suspect that anyone would come out of Jericho to be saved.”^{xv}

In scripture, Jericho is referenced sixty-four times in fifty-nine verses. Of these, fifty-five are located in the Old Testament, while the remaining four are in the New. Of the many accounts in the Old Testament, two are prominent. These include: first Joshua's overtaking of Jericho by marching around its walls once a day for six days, and seven times on the seventh day with a shout and the blowing of the Shofar (Josh 1-6). And

second, the captivity of Zedekiah and the killing of his three sons “before his eyes” before plucking his eyes and taking him to Babylon (II Kings 25).

Of the four accounts registered in the New Testament, the stories of the Good Samaritan rescuing the injured traveler (Luke 10:30-37), and of Zacchaeus’ encounter with Christ (Luke 19:1-10), are the most well-known.



Chapter 8
Zacchaeus:
Caressed by Curiosity



Everyone who comes to know Christ as Savior and Lord comes through the same means i.e. accepting the one time, all sufficient sacrifice of Christ on the cross, as being the full atonement for sin past, present and future. For redemption to be finalized as a personal reality, the author believes God inaugurates interest in it by “caressing” the seeker with curiosity that eventually pulsates so strongly that the individual willingly receives the “gift of salvation” (Rom 6:23). The following examples are provided for consideration.

First, the woman at Jacob’s Well came to faith because of curiosity that was ignited while she and Christ discussed the issue of acceptable worship (Jn 4:4-26). Second, the Ethiopian Eunuch was stirred to curiosity about Isaiah 53 as he read this passage in ignorance. As his curiosity grew, God used Philip to

enlarge his understanding of the matter so much so that eventually the eunuch would believe the gospel, and be baptized (Acts 8:27-39). Third, the Philippian Jailor, and his household, became curious about the steps to “being saved” when an unexpected, God-sent work crisis arose (Acts 16:26-34). And fourth, Saul, while on the road to Damascus with ill will towards Jewish believers, was converted through a “bright light” experience, sent by the Holy Spirit, motivated him to become curious “about what the Lord would have him to do (Acts 9:4-9). And God, again, deployed the “caress of curiosity” to woo Zacchaeus to the reality of His grace, mercy, love, and pardon.

Curiosity is a powerful, innate driving force within humans that compels them to discover, and become informed about an event, issue or personality regardless of the discomfort, inconvenience or risk that could be, or would be incurred. When one reaches the desired level of knowledge or experience sought, he or she congruently also attains an immeasurable sense of elation that increases impetus for further discovery. Curiosity may be the spark that lights the darkened, depraved, and desolate mind to the path of discovery, so one can know truth that will satisfy the heart and mind’s need to know the truth of a matter.

George Loewenstein adds the following about the prevailing power of curiosity as a catalyst for discovery.

Curiosity, as a reference point, entices one to act and react to circumstances particularly different and sometimes irrational to his or her usual behavior. This happens when a desire for knowledge becomes elevated above his or her

present knowledge about a matter. It is always spurred on by one's insatiable desire to gain knowledge that ordinarily they might feel they are deprived especially when their knowledge of a certain matter is compared to the knowledge of others in the same circle of contact. Even when a small piece of information – somewhat in most circumstances is welcome as foundational to greater knowledge of a matter – the reference point constrains the seeker to gain further adequate information as support to justify one's further actions despite the risk or time involved. Information gained closes the gap and gives stability, because of insight gained, for future actions positive or negative even if this does not create sudden, impulsive reaction and results.^{xvi}

That Zacchaeus is curious, and because of this, reveals a strong imperative and unshakable resolve to see or know Christ, is clearly supported by two factors within the story.

First, he willingly and readily left his prestigious, and profitable tax booth at the city gate - which held first place affection, and value in his life - and came to Jericho to hopefully see a stranger. Such a move, if known by family, friends or colleagues, would have brought scathing scorn to any Jew. But for Zacchaeus, this was of little consequence. Something was stirring within him. He was unshakably convinced that he must make the trip, regardless whether he sees Christ or not!

Second, he visited Jericho, aware there probably would be a large crowd of spectators, hoping beyond hope, that he might be afforded an opportunity to “see

Christ.” And when he arrives, that is the situation. There is a massively large crowd in Central Park, and flowing into the streets nearby. Many, on seeing this, would have immediately left the area and planned to arrive earlier next time. But “curious Zacchaeus” was driven to “see Jesus”, so he painstakingly scurried through the crowd, rushed to a nearby Sycamore tree, climbed it, and then sat on an extended limb. And there he remained until he saw Christ, who, by the Holy Spirit, he just had to see!.

Albert Barnes comments further about the importance of curiosity being the catalyst that prompts individuals to discern there "must be" an encounter Christ to make Him Lord of their life. He writes:

Who was he - *Zacchaeus*? Rather, “what sort of person,” he was, or how he appeared. He had that curiosity which is natural to drive people to see one of whom they have heard much. It would seem, in this case mere “curiosity” led to his conversion, and that of his family. God makes use of every principle - of curiosity, or sympathy, or hope, or fear - to lead people in the way of salvation, and to impress truth on the mind of sinners.^{xvii}

Zacchaeus heard Jesus is approaching Jericho. This is not the first time Jesus visited the city. Probably it is not the first time Zacchaeus has seen Him. Yet, Zacchaeus is compelled by a constraint "he must see Him!" A number of factors may have provoked him to satisfy his curiosity.

He may have recently heard directly, or through reports from Rome, that Matthew - a well-known and

respected subordinate of his - had recently abandoned everything to follow Christ (Matt 9:9). Perhaps, just perhaps, Matthew would be traveling with Christ to Jerusalem. If things "came together" Zacchaeus might meet and talk with him about his radical change of career, and ascertain what prompted him to abandon his lucrative position and follow Christ. And, with this, he also might be able to gain information whether other subordinate tax collectors – especially those who are under his command – might also be considering changing their allegiance from Rome to Christ.

He was fully aware – as were the other residents of Jericho – about the numerous, fantastic miracles Christ had recently performed in Jericho, and beyond its gates such as the healing of blind Bartimaeus (Luke 18:38), and two other blind men (Matt 20:29). And, he also heard about Christ raising a Centurion's dead son in Capernaum, a city about thirty miles north of Jericho. Hearing about individuals regaining their sight might raise a "casual curiosity." But, hearing of one being raised from the dead, and believing there was a possibility of seeing the person who accomplished this, magnified increased Zacchaeus' curiosity to the extent he "chased down" the opportunity of seeing Christ vigorously. Perhaps Jesus had on His agenda the working of another sign or miracle. If this were to happen, Zacchaeus wanted to be "in on the act".

Zacchaeus knew the Chief Priests were intent on arresting Christ because He openly claimed "He was the Christ" (Matt 26:63-65). They had tried this many times before, but without success. It might be, because the Chief Priests have been informed that Jesus is headed to Jerusalem on the "treacherous highway, that they have sent their accomplices to grab Him

(Luke 20:19). News about a kidnapping - especially of the King of Jews - would spawn curiosity in this publican's mind

Zacchaeus also knew that Christ was headed to Jerusalem for Pass Over, and that hundreds of fellow Jews would travel with Him. Because he celebrated most, if not all, of the Jewish celebrations, Zacchaeus possibly wanted to gain information about traveling with Christ so he could arrange for a subordinate tax collector to look after his duties during his absence.

H. A. Ironside suggests that Zacchaeus "had been told that Jesus was the Prophet who was to come and reestablish the kingdom of Israel and bring them back to God."^{xviii} Prophets, in 1st century Palestine, were held in high honour as the oracles of God (Matt 13:56 cf. Mark 6:4) as they preached the gospel, and predicted the future. There had not been a prophetic word for four hundred years promising freedom from oppressive governments. With the arrival of John the Baptist and Christ, everyone expectantly waited for, and expected an encouraging word of freedom from the tyranny of Rome and of renewed blessing on Israel by Yahweh.^{xix}

If Christ were this Prophet announcing this much hoped for message, Zacchaeus - with every other Jew throughout Israel - would want to be present for the hearing of it. So, Zacchaeus - stirred by curiosity - gladly comes to Jericho for what will be an unforgettable sighting of Christ - God's heaven-sent Prophet, Priest and King - that would forever impact and change his life.

Zacchaeus, undoubtedly, was well aware of the disdain others in Jericho held against him. With this, he was also fully cognizant of his unscrupulous and

unwholesome means of extorting taxes from widows, beggars, and the destitute when they did not have sufficient resources by which to live day-to-day.

With these matters clearly before him, and with Jesus, the pure and undefiled Son of God coming to Jericho, Zacchaeus may have become crushed with overwhelming shame for his actions. This stirring may have awakened guilt within him so “he could understand that he was less than heroic; he was depraved in all the ways people can be, and he needed a confrontation with a light so pure, so bright that his character would want to know the source of it.”^{xx}

God used a parallel incident to this when a “certain lawyer who stood up, and tempted Christ, saying “Master what shall I do to inherit eternal life” (Luke 10:25)? And God may also have used this “curiosity” as the major compelling by which Zacchaeus was prompted to come to Jericho.

But of what value is curiosity, if it does not incite the seeker to a conquering response so he or she can discover what the aching heart desperately desires to know? Even as God “caresses the sinner with curiosity”, he also “contours conquering courage” for profitable action.”



Chapter 12
Zacchaeus: Conversion



The hours have passed faster than expected. Jesus and Zacchaeus, in the privacy of "table fellowship," have examined several sensitive, yet critical issues, as they chatted in a nonthreatening and peaceful setting. Zacchaeus, who most would consider as being bullheaded and stubborn to accept profitable instruction, has recognized his detestable and deplorable state alienated from God and isolated from community in Jericho.

As Christ compassionately extended a welcome, caring concern for Zacchaeus' discouraging plight by empathizing with him in his woeful crisis, Zacchaeus was prepared to entertain the profitable counsel He offered.

Jesus knows the "way of the transgressor is hard" (Prov 13:5) because "the way of a fool is right in

his own eyes" (Prov 12:15). Although Christ could have passed the tree in which Zacchaeus was sitting, and continued His way to Jerusalem, He did not. His compassion forbade him to do so because He wanted Zacchaeus to receive the counsel of the LORD that is sent to heal the ungodly, and save them out of their destruction (Ps 107:20) if they call on Him in their despair.

The wooing of the Holy Spirit, that had started some hours earlier, continued prompting Zacchaeus to listen to, and reason out Christ's call for a revolutionary change repentance would bring his way if he would "seek the LORD while he may be found, and call on him while he is near" (Is 55:6)

Zacchaeus does not cry out for mercy as one of his colleagues had done days earlier, (Luke 18:13), he does not confess that he justly deserves the reward of scorn and abuse because of what he has done (Luke 23:40-42), he does not, even though his soul fainted in despair, plead for God to rescue him from his enemies or the onslaught of evil befalling him" (Ps 140:1-4), and he does not entreat Christ to overlook his wrong doings because of the many commendable acts he may have done in the past (Luke 18:18-23).

None of these actions were appealed to by Zacchaeus. As the convicting power of the Holy Spirit overshadows Zacchaeus' mind, he understands what he should do - no, what he must do - if he is to enjoy the blessing of Yahweh, and the commendation of others. Therefore, with Christ, God's gift of everlasting life" (John 3:16) sitting before him, he gladly repents of his sin, confesses with his mouth the Lord Jesus, and believes in his heart that God raised him from the dead, "for with the heart man believeth unto

righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom 10:9).

Immediately, after doing this, he was powerfully delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into "the kingdom of God's dear Son" (Col 1:13), as one of His adopted children (Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5). As John Chryssavgis suggests, Zacchaeus finally "tasted and saw that the Lord is good." Then, as his commitment to Christ grew, he also further discovered that blessed is the man that trusts in Him" (Ps 34:8) as he receives an unending covenant promise of everlasting life from the God of grace. Chryssavgis adds:

So we need to start from the beginning, (from our moment of entry into the life of the church), and to consider this in light of the end (from the perspective of heaven). Repentance is like going through death - it implies a voluntary killing of self, cleaning all the willfulness of self-deceit and coming to Christ to unite with him in a new walk expressed through new actions. It is eating humble pie, to enjoy the dessert of eternal life. ^{xxi}

As Christ visited and chatted with Zacchaeus about eternal issues, he voluntarily and determinately receives God's grace and salvation. Because he has genuinely repented, radically changed his life-style, and publicly confessed righteousness found in God, Jesus openly commends him as "as son of Abraham" because salvation has come to his house (19:9).

But how can one know for certain that Zacchaeus was genuinely "born-again from above" (John 3:3 & 5), and not just vindicated by Christ, and

then "given a reward" for his promise of renunciation and restitution"^{xxii} despite extorting money from others? A number of indications regarding his conversion are provided by Luke in the narrative. These need to be considered as reliable evidence that a decisive, radical, and lasting positive change occurred so that Jesus could announce "salvation has come to his house."

First, Zacchaeus persevered to see and know Christ as the Holy Spirit prompted him that he needed change in his life if he was to be all that God created him to be. Instead immediately rejecting this "call" as an incidental, invasion of guilt regarding his unseemly behaviour as a tax gatherer as he could have - and as the rich young ruler did - he responds positively by coming to Jericho to see and know Christ. Because he determinately started the path of discovery, despite the difficulties he incurred, he delightfully became imbued with the love of Christ that bought him home to redemption. Anna Syncletica fittingly describes his journey:

In the beginning there are a great many battles, and a good deal of suffering for those who are advancing towards God, and afterwards ineffable joy. It is like those who wish to light a fire. At first they are choked with smoke and cry until they obtain what they seek. So, we must also kindle the divine fire in ourselves through tears and hard work.^{xxiii}

Second, Zacchaeus joyfully receives Jesus' offer to attend at his home for "table fellowship," and then, in unadulterated honesty about his past, willingly

confesses his sins and repents of them. He may have casually discussed with other tax collectors his guilt of deceit while collecting taxes and his shame of disconnect from others and then continued his regular day-to-day activities. But this time, something is different. He is not having another one of those "casual conversations." This time something is signaling to him that he is sharing his dilemma with someone who is "beyond human understanding" and who can assuredly help him if he accepts his counsel. And so, with unrestrained confidence in Christ as Savior, Redeemer Friend and Lord, he confesses his sin, renounces his former path of life, and decides to become one of his directed, discerning and devotional disciples. By this act he became a son of Abraham and began living by faith, rather than by sight.

Third, Zacchaeus willing and gladly restores what he has illegitimately taken through years of seditious and ungodly extortion. According to Roman Law, Zacchaeus should not have any anguish about this because every other publican, in the trade, was doing the same. But, he was a Jew and he knew that God-fearing, God-honouring and God-loving Jews "did not steal, did not lie, and did not deceive one another" (Lev 19:11) because if one did he would be obligated to return what he stole, publicly confess his sin and make atonement for the wrong by offering a blood sacrifice (Lev 7:1-15).

Zacchaeus, as a Jew, readily recognizes he has broken the Levitical Law, and that in his present state of abusing his fellowman, he cannot honour God. With this haunting his mind, he willingly decides to restore that which he is obligated. And then, to demonstrate more forcibly to those that have scorned him that his

resolve is genuine and that his conduct is reversed, he restores four fold that which he has taken. Only one who is born-again of the Holy Spirit, and who has made Christ Lord over his life will willingly and openly set aside personal gain for that of his fellow man as a token of deeds of righteousness.

Fourth, Zacchaeus announces that one half of his possessions he will give half of his possessions to the poor. Jews were required, by the rabbis of all ages to faithfully fulfill the demands of mitzvot, by regularly giving an alm or two to help the poor (Matt 6:1-10; Acts 3:1-11). And, with this, they were also - if they had an abundance of wealth - to practice the ma'aser by leaving food the feet of the poor so they would have adequate to eat daily (Deut 15:7-10; Ruth 1-2). But no Jew, in his right mind, would give one half of his possessions to the poor! That is, unless he or she were motivated by the Jehovah's compassion which He demonstrated by "executing justice for the fatherless and widow and loving the stranger, in giving him food and raiment" (Deut 10:17, 18).

Prior to the table chat with Christ, Zacchaeus' priority in life was to get rich - very rich. To fulfill this burning desire, he stole from the poor, and he charged them inflated fees which he knew they could not possibly pay. Giving the poor anything - even the regulated, required alm - was not in his budget.

But now, because "salvation has come to his house," this reprobate, this thief, this abuser of the poor, and this sinner of sinners, is now giving half of his possessions to the poor. This immediate change in Zacchaeus' attitude and action is hard to accept by the crowd and the Pharisees, but nothing is said by anyone standing nearby because no one is sure what

has motivated him to make such a critical change in his behaviour. Perhaps Christ's visit with him was the first "taste of love," and he is driven by this, or as R. C. Lenski suggests, he is driven by gratitude for the grace and mercy he has received from Christ which necessitates he show the same to those who are poor and disenfranchised from love. Lenski comments:

Before the evening meal could be prepared, Jesus, the Twelve, Zacchaeus, and whoever else was present sat in Oriental fashion while Jesus spoke. When He ceased speaking, Zacchaeus stood up. Great things were taking place in his soul, and he acts with grave formality by rising from the rug or the divan on which he had been sitting. Jesus had made his house a church of God, and now Zacchaeus stands as though he were in the presence of God, and makes his response to Jesus. He is making a weighty statement. Hence we have the exclamation "lo." He utters a vow or promise of thanksgiving: "the half of my possessions I give to the poor." This is the man's thankoffering for the pardon, the comfort of conscience and the peace of soul he has just received from Jesus. A priceless gift has been given to him, and he acknowledges the gift.^{xxiv}

Regardless what may be intensely motivating him to give "half his wealth to the poor, his attitude is sincere. Jesus takes note of his "righteous deed," and commends him openly as one of the "lost" who has truly "been found" because of the change in his thinking and behavior.

Fifth, Zacchaeus appears publicly, with Christ, standing at His side as a clear indication that he is a child of God, and "a son of Abraham." With this new standing, he further desires to live as one of Christ's disciples, and willingly surrender all he is, all he possesses, and all he hopes to be for Christ and the Kingdom and the good of humanity.

Earlier - at the start of the narrative - Zacchaeus only wanted to know "about Christ." Now, however, because of the change that has happened, he knows Him "who to know is life everlasting" (John 17:3). Earlier he hid in a sycamore tree, separate and apart from the crowd, but now he stands among it as one of has a rightful place. For Zacchaeus to "see" and "know" Christ he had to come down to receive Him "joyfully," but now Christ has exalted him to a place of honour by presenting him as one of His redeemed. Earlier he was small in stature and "low of character," but now he is adorned with esteem because he follows the Golden Rule - "Therefore whatever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt 7:12).

Like many in the crowd, Zacchaeus may have been shocked by the profound change that occurred in his life during the visit to Jericho. He should not have been shocked, because he heard how Christ changed the water into wine (John 2), how He raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11), how He had fed the five thousand (Mark 6:40-44), and how he had forgiven the women taken in adultery (John 8:1-11). If Christ could enact these astounding works, He could and would cleanse Zacchaeus from all his iniquity, and in exchange give him abundant and eternal life (John 14:1-6).



Chapter 15
Rob McGrath
Modern Day Zacchaeus



Rob McGrath: Introduction

The author has known Rob McGrath for over twenty years. During this period, it has been his pleasure to work with Rob in the ministry of the House of the Good Shepherd, and at the church he pastored some years ago. With these joys, the author also considers it a great delight to have Rob as a close, trustworthy friend with whom he can meet often for fellowship.

Of the thousands of people the author has met in approximately forty-five years of ministry, Rob's testimony of change, brought about through the inner working of the Holy Spirit - over a lengthy time - is parallel to the transformation Zacchaeus experienced. Feeling this, the author conferred with Rob and sought permission to include his testimony as evidence to the

progressional work of salvation the Holy Spirit does when individuals desire to "see" and "know" God, and call out to Him for redemption in their day of distress or trouble.

After hearing my interest in using his "conversion story," Rob kindly granted me permission to use it as part of the book. For this kindness, I say, "thank you, brother, Rob."

Rob presently resides in Vancouver's Lower Mainland. At present he is still the Director of the House of the Good Shepherd, and he often travels to Vietnam on ministry engagements. With this he often shares his testimony of redemptive grace to the "down-and-outs" so he - through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit - may bring the needy to Christ's Kingdom. He is married to Kamlesh, and constantly is seeking opportunity to edify, encourage, entrust and enlist fellow believers to reach out and touch the lost with the glorious gospel of truth. God has blessed His church with Rob and Kamlesh's ministry wherever they go..

Rob: Corrupted by Sin

Rob was born on March 5, 1958 into what he calls a "dysfunctional family" with many problems, storms and issues that was going on in the home. This included regular, harsh physical beatings by his father who was not a good role model, and with whom Rob did not have a good relationship.

Between the age of age of six and seven he was put in a foster home as his parents were incarcerated. Often, while in this foster home, he would wait for his father to come and visit him, but he never showed up.

He states, "I was a very lonely, insecure little boy desperately needed to be loved."

When Rob was ten years old, he became well-acquainted with alcohol as his oldest brother gave him a bottle of whiskey which he drank down. And with this introduction he drank as often as possible, including times when his father provided him drink. By the age of twelve, Rob was in and out of prison because of theft of cigarettes, groceries, other things as well as other criminal activities. At this time he was enraged with anger, on illegal drugs, had a chip on his shoulder, was full of anger, and I was destined to be a career criminal of notoriety.

During this time Rob was arrested frequently by the Ontario Provincial Police. After several arrests for serious crimes committed while associating with the criminal subculture, it looked as if one of Canada's penitentiaries might be the only "home" Rob would ever know. Rob, at this time, was insecure and very angry. With this he had a very low self-esteem which caused him to lash out against everyone he met, and every form of righteousness suggested. He concludes now that he was a "loser" - the least, the last, and the lost - without meaning in life, or a hope to change his miserable, devastating and damning future.

And that is how his life would remain, unless God - through the Holy Spirit - conscripted him so he would become curious about the new birth, and gain courage to repent and be saved!

The years would pass before Rob would be born-again. God would be faithful, and lost, unregenerate, Rob would be found, redeemed and called to gospel ministry regardless how unrighteous he might be.

Rob: Conscripted by the Holy Spirit

As a very young child Rob use to pray once in a while because he saw the Priests do this while he attended Sunday School at a Catholic Church near his home. He knew there was a God - a Higher Power somewhere beyond - but, because of the stress, distress, and unrest in his life, he made no effort to discover who this God might be, or whether He could care about his pitiful, pathetic state. This, for the next ten to fifteen years, would be Rob's state, spiritually.

In 1980, after Rob was arrested and incarcerated in Collins Bay Penitentiary, God started to reconstruct the life that Satan had deconstructed by birthing within him the brevity of life when someone tried to slit his throat while he was having a shower. For him, if he would have died at this time, his life would have been nothing, but a shameful waste, instead of a testimony to what he could have done if he had the opportunity.

After this "hellish" experience, Rob - inspired by the Holy Spirit - "flirted" with the Bible," wore a large cross around his neck as a testimony that he "believed" in God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and attended chapel regularly." Later, still seeking spiritual fulfillment and a reason to live, Rob got involved in cultic Eastern religions, Satanism and astral travel. None of these, however, curbed his "soul search" for meaning and fulfillment in life. Through this emptiness, God was wooing Rob to seek the Lord with all of his heart so he could discover He really is the God of love, grace and mercy he heard about as a child at that Catholic Church.

With this beginning of the Holy Spirit's conviction, Rob was stirred to curiosity to discover if a change for righteousness could be possible

Rob: Caressed by Curiosity

No radical change in Rob's life developed for many years. He was content to enjoy "religion" for the zest of meaning and "righteousness" it afforded him before his fellowmen and the guards. Yet, despite not searching for God and salvation, the Holy Spirit was still working in his life constraining him to become more curious about who God really is, and what he might do for those who know Him as Lord.

In 1987, after another arrest, Rob was taken to Millhaven Penitentiary and placed in solitary confinement for twenty-three hours a day. Having extensive "free time," he started reading Christian testimonial books. One day, in the providence of God, he started reading *Dealing with The Devil* by C. S. Lovett. As he continued faithfully reading the book - because he had been caressed with curiosity about how he could be released from Satan's control - he was awakened by the Holy Spirit - to understand that he was a servant of Satan and a tool of destruction under his control. By this time he states, "I was desperate for a change in my life that I desperately needed and desired."

Rob: Graced with Courage

Rob strongly suggests that he was not an easy man for God to handle. He was a "leader", he was strong willed, he had a criminal past that was second

to none, and he had given up on people and God because no one - including God - had vested any measurable, valued time in his life.

While in prison - over a period 14 years - Rob had a form of godliness, but like others, he did not know God or His saving, transforming and keeping power!

Through reading a few Christian testimonies Rob had become well-acquainted with the heaven-sent spiritual transformation men like Ernie Hollands and other received. But these were stories - uplifting stories of what God could do for men like them. But, Rob was much worse and he needed courage - over curiosity - if he were to experience the same change these had experience.

Having lived a life of tyranny, and having spent fifteen years in Canada's major penitentiaries Rob was tired of his wayward, unfulfilled and unprofitable life. He had read the Bible, he had attended prison chapel services, he daily had worn the cross about his neck as a testimony to his belief in God, but none of this brought release from Satan's control and relief for aching soul.

Unless Rob gained courage to repent nothing could change. After reading Lovett's book, and discovering that he was a "scum bag" in Satan's hands, Rob dropped to his knees and cried out to God, "Have mercy on a guy like me." With this prayer Rob believes he had broken the shackles of Satan that were dragging him to the pit of hell. Now, for the first time, he experienced God's incarnate love, grace and mercy through repentance.

Although life looked bleak and offered no sign of hope, Rob's world was to be turned right side up as he repented and found favour before His God.

Rob: Compelling Confession

What God and Rob talked about during his years of incarceration cannot be disclosed in a short account as this. Rob often discusses how he was the hit man for a drug lord in Ontario and that often he was told to "hit" a person so he wouldn't be of any further trouble. "I caused a number of people pain, but thank God I never killed anyone." And with this Rob often related how he and his brothers would break into people's homes and brutally steal their possessions. On and on this was Rob's life.

So what did Rob and God talk about? God unquestionably assured Rob he understood his past - the beatings, the impoverishment, the lack of love, the abandonment of family and friends, and the years of terrifying imprisonment that were stacked against him.

But God also talked with him - and then later proved it - that He loved Rob with an unending love. If Rob were to repent and confess Christ as Lord, He immediately would intervene and rearrange circumstances for him so he would never be disappointed about his decision to make Christ as Lord, Savior and Redeemer Friend.

God understood that Satan had been Rob's father and that he had beguiled him with vain, empty and futile promises of excitement that led to ruin. God in exchange for this, pledged a covenant of abundant life with hope and everlasting life if Rob could and would trust Him.

Rob confessed his sins. He was accepted by God unreservedly, and his sins - all of them - were cast into the sea of His forgetfulness, never to be remembered against him again. He instantly became a new creation in Christ, and became empowered to persevere in the faith until he is fully sanctified and presented to God as a gift without spot, wrinkle or blemish. God is now proud to call him "a son of Abraham."

Rob: Conversion

Rob, as the Holy Spirit, through the reading of scripture and Christian testimonials opened his blind spiritual eyes, believed and received God's offer of redemption. Shortly thereafter Rob felt freedom in the Holy Spirit from Satan's power. In a few days after becoming born-again Rob had a new, broad smile on his face. With this he had peace in his heart, and he was singing new spiritual songs in the Holy Ghost.

He was so transformed by this "salvation experience" that he did a very strange act. Instead of smoking two cartons of cigs he owned, he traded these with a jailhouse merchant for a King James Bible which he began reading for hours on end. And as a clear indication to his fellow inmates that God had completed a great work of grace in his life, he started sharing his faith with many of them. Much to his shock, many turned to Christ for which he is eternally thankful.

When Rob left Millhaven he, like the apostle Paul, knew that God was his Father. Such being the case, he was also unshakably and unwaveringly confident that "he who had begun a good work in him was well able to complete unto the day of Christ," (Phil

1:6) as he walked in humility before God, gladly obeying His commands.

Today Rob holds fast to this promise. The energy he once used fulfilling the demands of crime has been rechanneled into kingdom energy. As the Lord honours this countless opportunities to serve God honourably are coming his way.

Rob: Unashamedly Committed

Shortly after repenting, Rob was released from jail for good. He had committed his life to Christ, he had confessed him publicly as Savior, Lord, and King of his life, and he had started developing relationships with strong Christians - Ernie and Sheila Hollands - who "instructed him in righteousness" and encouraged him in his new faith walk.

Through their guidance and counsel Rob started attending a full gospel, Holy Spirit blessed church through which he grew further in the Lord. As time passed, Ernie and Sheila introduced him to a host at Hundred Huntley Street. Shortly after meeting this individual, and gaining his confidence as a Christian brother, he was hired for a full-time position at a carpentry shop in Winnipeg.

Despite the many difficulties Rob experienced during his readjustment to life beyond the prison walls, he remained faithful to Christ and His church. Within months other believers were accepting him as a valued brother in the Lord, and were praising him for his spiritual growth. Besides God, Rob had very few associates he could really trust. Therefore, his allegiance was totally focused on Him and His kingdom. Everywhere he went, and with everyone he

met he shared Christ's redemptive grace that he, himself, had discovered only a few months earlier

About two years later, as he was watching a slide show about India at a local church, he met Kamlesh. He says he "was not looking for a wife," yet she came "out of nowhere" as God aligned their paths. In 1983, after Kamlesh accepted Christ as Savior, Rob and her were married. Feeling God's call on their life, within two or three months of marriage, they sold their possessions in Winnipeg and headed to Vancouver to minister with Union Gospel Mission, New Westminster for the next few years. When this ministry ended, the Holy Spirit birthed within Rob's heart an urgency to start the House of the Good Shepherd. Following the counsel of godly, like-minded individuals the work was started. Throughout the years that the ministry operated, thousands of people - in Vancouver, New Westminster, Coquitlam, and nearby - were reached for Christ. Only God, and heaven will reveal the number of people in the Kingdom because of God's great work of redemptive love in Rob's heart.

Yes, Rob was one of the lost. But, Christ came to seek the lost! Rob, now is one of the found - redeemed and sealed unto the day of redemption - and given a God ordained, glorious commission for kingdom work. He understands his call, he knows his call, he lives his call, and he delights in it. Anyone visiting with Brother Rob soon sees and feels the love he has for God, the Kingdom and the lost. It's not a façade. It's real, it's genuine, and it's demonstrated through good, godly and glorious work he constantly does to the praise of God's glory.

Endnotes

Both passages, and others, clearly demonstrate God's progressive, beneficial reshaping and transformation in the lives of those who willingly repent of their sins, confess Him as Savior and Lord, and follow Him in obedience to His Word so they can know what is the good, the perfect and excellent will of God in this life and for eternity (Romans 12:1-8).

ⁱⁱ Josephus, Eusebius - *Church History* III.4: 6; Jerome, Polycarp. Further information at "Gospel of St. Luke," in *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia* (accessed Nov. 1, 2015).
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09420a.htm>.

ⁱⁱⁱ A Culpepper, "The Gospel of Luke," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 12 Vols. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994-2002), 9:6.

^{iv} Feine-Behm-Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, A. J. Mattill, Jr. trans. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1963), 103.

^v Annie Pesonen, "Luke, the Friend of Sinners," (accessed Oct. 28, 2015).
<https://www.helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/10138/21588/lukethef.pdf?sequence=2>.

^{vi} William M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on Trustworthiness of the New Testament* (New York: Doran Publishing, 1920), 80-81.

^{vii} Feine-Behm-Kummel, 103.

^{viii} Charles F. Pfeiffer and Howard F. Vos, *The Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands* (Chicago, MN: Moody Press, 1967), 96.

^{ix} Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2002), 462.

^x Arnold, 169

^{xi} Flavius Josephus, *The Complete Works of Josephus*, Wm. Whiston, trans., (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1981), 105.

^{xii} Danny Naveh, "PPNA Jericho: a Sociopolitical Perspective," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 13 (2003): 83.

^{xiii} Ernst Sellin and Carl Watzinger, *Jericho die Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen*, (Osnabrück: Otto Zeller Verlag, 1973), 58.

^{xiv} Charles F. Pfeiffer and Howard F. Vos, 97.

^{xv} C. H. Spurgeon, "Effectual Calling, Sermon #73," 30 March 1856, in *The New Park Street Pulpit* (accessed November 1, 2015) <http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0073.htm>.

^{xvi} George Loewenstein, "The Psychology of Curiosity: A Review and Reinterpretation," *Psychological Bulletin* Vol. 116, no 1 (1940): 87-88.

^{xvii} Albert Barnes and James Murphy, *Barnes's Notes on the Old and New Testament: Luke & John*, 26 Vols. (London: Blackie & Son, 1884-1885), 17:325.

^{xviii} H. A. Ironside, "Grace: What It Is and What It Does" in *Addresses on the Gospel of Luke* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1978), 569.

^{xix} So important is the hope for a new kingdom with a gracious, compassionate and considerate ruler, the disciples at Christ's ascension implore Him to tell them what would be the sign of His Kingdom. Jesus responds saying, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:7).

^{xx} Gina Ochsner, "Power in the Word: Writing In Faith and On Faith," *Cultural Encounters* 8, no. 1 (2012): 58.

