

• A man who very much wanted to see Jesus

God likes to lay hold of unlikely people and bring them to salvation

He is an unlikely convert because of...

1. What has happened in his past

2. What is happening in his present life

3. What will have to happen in his future if he comes to know Jesus Christ

Salvation came to Zacchaeus

1. There was a desire in his heart for salvation

2. He discovered that the Saviour receives anyone who wants salvation

Jesus was passing through Jericho, about twenty-seven kilometres from Jerusalem. He did not intend to stay there long^{□1}. He was still heading for Jerusalem. But there was a man in Jericho, named Zacchaeus, who very much wanted to see Jesus. Zacchaeus was rich; he had got his wealth by a cruel and corrupt method. He was a tax collector working for the Roman government who occupied the land of Israel^{□2}.

□1 19:1

□2 19:2

God likes to lay hold of unlikely people and bring them to salvation. This is the story of a most unlikely convert!

1. **He is an unlikely convert because of what has happened in his past.** These tax collectors had abandoned obedience to the Mosaic law and to faith in the promises of a Saviour. They worked for the pagan enemies of Israel. They had to be very oppressive and severe men in order to get money out of people. Zacchaeus was not the kind of person who was likely to come to faith in Jesus.

2. **He is an unlikely convert because of what is happening in his present life.** It does not seem very likely that he will have any chance of seeing Jesus. He was small in height^{□1} and so would not find it easy to get through the crowds – and no one was likely to give him any help. Tax collectors were not popular people in ancient Israel.

□1 19:3

3. **He is an unlikely convert because of what will have to happen in his future if he comes to know Jesus Christ.** If he ever becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ his life will have to change radically. His corrupt ways will have to end. He will have to make some repayments to the many people he has swindled and oppressed. Very likely he will have to give up his work altogether. He would have too much to lose if he ever came to know Jesus. But the unlikely convert in fact comes to experience salvation!

Let us see how this salvation came to Zacchaeus.

1. **There was a desire in his heart for salvation.** How long it had been there we do not know, but there was a secret desire in Zacchaeus's life to meet with Jesus Christ. He was trying to see Jesus^{□1}. When he found that he could not get to see Him, he did what was necessary to achieve what he wanted. He ran ahead of the crowds to a part of the road where he knew Jesus would come by. He climbed into a sycamore tree because he knew that Jesus would have to pass by that point sooner or later. He was making great efforts to get to see the Lord Jesus Christ. It seems that despite his wicked past God had been working in his heart, and he was wanting to know for himself what he had heard about Jesus Christ.

□1 19:3

2. **He discovered that the Saviour receives anyone who wants salvation.** Zacchaeus evidently wanted to know more about Jesus, but I do not think he thought it very likely that salvation would actually come to him that day. But as soon as Zacchaeus took one step of faith towards Jesus, Jesus openly expressed that He received Zacchaeus into His kingdom. Jesus came by. God evidently revealed to Him that Zacchaeus was there, and that he was a man wanting salvation. Jesus

looked up into the tree and said, ‘Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today!’¹. What a surprise! The unlikely convert was wanted by Jesus. Jesus actually knew his name! Zacchaeus never dreamed that Jesus could know about him or want him. Salvation is always surprising. When we know what we are really like and then discover that the Saviour knows about us and wants us, it is always amazing!

19:5

3. *Zacchaeus was ready to respond to Jesus’ invitation*

3. **Zacchaeus was ready to respond to Jesus’ invitation**¹. Salvation is by faith in Jesus. He believes that Jesus means what He said. Salvation comes to him immediately by simple faith in Jesus.

19:6

4. *Zacchaeus’s salvation comes by God’s amazing grace*

4. **Zacchaeus’s salvation comes by God’s amazing grace**. Zacchaeus finds that the people do not like salvation coming to him¹. I am not surprised. Zacchaeus was notorious for his wicked ways. How could Jesus show friendship to such a wicked person? Actually, people do not like the grace of God. All of us are hard and severe. Even people who are naturally ‘nice’ are still moralistic and critical inwardly. No one by nature really likes grace. We all tend to dislike people like Zacchaeus intensely, especially if we have had to pay up because of their hard-hearted and oppressive ways. It is not surprising that the people intensely dislike this graciousness of Jesus towards Zacchaeus. But that is what Jesus is like. He is more gracious than we ever dream that He would be! Jesus does not even speak of repentance or the need for Zacchaeus to change his wicked ways. He simply welcomes Zacchaeus, even before he has made any changes in his life.

19:7

5. *Zacchaeus’s faith was followed by a changed life*

5. **Zacchaeus’s faith was followed by a changed life**. His faith in Jesus led him to an amendment of the way he had been living. He was willing to do what he could to put right his oppression of needy people¹. This crooked person who was so disloyal to Israel was now a son of Abraham because he had come to the same kind of faith that Abraham had². This is what Jesus came into this world for: to seek and save the lost³.

19:8

19:9

19:10

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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