

"Jesus Saves Sinners"

Sin causes people to despise themselves, and some see themselves as so sinful that they're beyond saving. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're exploring how the Lord Jesus saves sinners.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We have an amazing God full of grace and compassion. God described Himself to Moses in Exodus 34:6 to 7, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." Scripture helps us to understand our God. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

When Mary was found to be with child, an angel told Joseph in a dream in Matthew 1:21, "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." When John the Baptist introduced Jesus to his disciples in John 1:29, he declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Our Father in heaven and the Lord Jesus are in the saving business. John 3:17 says, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." Salvation is a gift, please receive it.

Jesus can make a difference in your life, if you'll let Him. Now perhaps you're watching or listening to us today, because you believe your faith in Christ matters. You may be looking for spiritual help; you may be looking for truth; or you may be looking for a loving relationship with God. You want to be right with God and you have the hope of heaven. I don't know all your needs in life, but I know someone who can help you through every struggle and every hurt. Jesus already knows all about you, and He cares. He's seeking you. Jesus can make a difference in your life and you can count on that!

Now we offer this study, Jesus saves sinners, and a little booklet Amazing Grace free! If you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have programs and free materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. You can also see us on YouTube.

Larry Owsley will lead us in song, we'll read from Luke 19:5 to 10 and examine how Jesus saves sinners.

Our reading today comes from Luke chapter 19 verses 5 to 10 and discusses a tax collector in Jericho.

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." And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." 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." 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."

That is a great, great thing for us to believe about ourselves. That He wants to save us too. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that Your son Jesus was one who had a mission and a heart to seek and save those who are lost. Father help us to come to believe in that great mission and to come to Him. And help us Father to reach out to others who need Thee. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus.

As chief tax-collector in Jericho, Zacchaeus supervised those who collected taxes. Now some of these collectors had no honor. He had made a bid for the privilege to be able to do this and he recovered his cost of this privilege by charging large amounts. Rome gave him a quota to collect, and he could keep everything above the quota. Well tax-collectors often became rich at other people's expense. The Jewish people despised Roman tax-collectors, because they often cheated the people. The people considered him a lowly sinner.

Zacchaeus had likely heard of Jesus, heard of his righteous ways, and heard of his miracles. And he wanted to see Jesus! He knew that Jesus cared about tax-collectors. In his eagerness, Zacchaeus did two unusual things for a man of his position: he ran (well in the East, dignified men didn't run), and he climbed up into a tree! Now sycamore fig trees grew tall enough to provide shade. But since Zacchaeus was short, the limbs were low to the ground and He was seeking to see Jesus.

And so it must have surprised Zacchaeus when Jesus spotted him. Luke 19:5 says that, "When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.'" Well, this surprised all the people. Can you imagine what it must have been like when they saw this high official in a tree? Zacchaeus wanted so badly to see Jesus that he didn't care what he looked like to the people. Now tax-gatherers were considered at the low end of the social scale in Judea, in Jerusalem. The Jews who wanted to keep themselves pure would have nothing to do with a tax-gatherer. Spiritually, Zacchaeus may have been the most despised person in Jericho!

But Jesus saw him and knew his heart. He had made some compromising decisions, yes Zacchaeus had, but Zacchaeus wanted to be accepted. And Jesus could make this despised nobody into somebody that He could eat with.

Jesus made Zacchaeus a "somebody" by going to his house and honoring him. The Lord Jesus told us about how He sees people in Luke 18:10 to 13. There it says that, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'"

The Lord Jesus said in verse 14, "I tell you, this man (that is the tax gatherer) went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." Those who think they are righteous may not be righteous in the sight of God, and the humble sinners who think God would never have anything to do with them may be the very ones that God justifies.

There's a big difference between being right with God and not being right with God. When a person believes, repents, confesses Christ, and is baptized into Christ, they change their relationship with God. No matter what their past has been, in Christ they are new creatures, born again. 1 Peter 2:9 to 10 says that those who are saved by the blood of Christ, he says to them, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

When you become a Christian, the Lord doesn't see you the way you used to be; He sees you as you are. I adopted a saying that started with John Newton and made it my own. "I'm not all I ought to be, I'm not all I want to be, I'm not all I'm going to be; but thank God by His mercy and grace I'm not

what I used to be.” The Lord Jesus can save us and make us into new people freed from that old sinful way of life.

Luke 19:6 to 7 describes the situation. “So he hurried and came down and received him (that is Zacchaeus received Jesus) joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, ‘He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.’” And the people grumbled and thought Jesus had compromised by going to Zacchaeus’ house. Pharisees, you see, would not eat with sinners, but Jesus saw the need to help them. This is not the first time Jesus ate with sinners. Jesus explained why in Luke 5:31 to 32, “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.”

Now Jesus was in the saving business. He didn’t devalue Zacchaeus; He knew Zacchaeus had a soul that needed saving. He didn’t focus on what Zacchaeus had been in the past; but He focused on what Zacchaeus could become. And Zacchaeus responded to that! Zacchaeus 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” (Luke 19 verse 8). Now this tax-collector wanted everyone to know that he was going to change and do the right thing.

Zacchaeus didn’t have to give half his goods to the poor; but he did this of his own free will. He also knew the problems of the “over-taxed” people. He didn’t want to mistreat them and offered to do the honorable thing. Zacchaeus actually did more than what he must do to make things right with those who felt defrauded. Numbers 5 and verse 7 says about a wrongdoer, “then he shall confess his sins which he has committed, and he shall make restitution in full for his wrong and add to it one-fifth of it, and give it to him whom he has wronged.” Zacchaeus did more and exacted an extreme requirement of himself. Exodus 22 and verse 1 says, “If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.” You see he, Zacchaeus, desperately wanted to restore his honor. Do you?

Now you may see yourself as a hopeless sinner, but you can change too! You can become a new person in Christ and live for the Lord. You don’t have to continue to be what you used to be. You may feel guilty and shamed and despise yourself, but the Lord Jesus can give you newness of life free from sin. You can have a clean soul and a clean conscience, all made pure by the blood of Christ. Jesus wants you saved and to live righteously, just as He wanted that for Zacchaeus. And Jesus said to him in verses nine and ten, “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.” The Lord is seeking you too, no matter who you are or what your past has been.

Everybody is important to God. He loves and cares for every person. Jesus wants to draw close to everyone who seeks Him. Hebrews 2 and verse 9 says, “But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.” Jesus died for everyone, people that you know and people you don’t know, people who look like you and don’t look like you, and people who speak your language and people who speak a different language. Jesus tasted death for everyone.”

Instead of being like the Pharisee who only knew to disrespect and condemn others, we should be people who encourage others to come to Jesus and change their lives. I’m not interested in learning all the sins that you’ve committed in the past; I am interested in whether you love and are willing to follow the Lord today and in the future. True Christians help each other to walk in the light and to avoid the darkness. When a soul has repented and out of love obeyed the Lord, we should follow the

steps of Jesus and encourage them. The Great Physician heals people with His grace, His mercy, and His love.

When Jesus encountered the woman at the well in John 4, He knew what kind of woman she had been. She had been married five times and was living with a man. He still offered her living water, water that springs up to eternal life. He didn't judge her soul as unworthy of life. He told her the Father is seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and truth. Jesus told this woman that He is the Messiah, the Christ. She got excited, so excited that she went into town and told all the men about Jesus, and they came out to hear Him.

When the sinful prodigal son returned home in Luke 15, the Father ran to embrace and kiss him. The guilty son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." I tell you, sin and guilt makes us feel small and ashamed. "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate." God celebrates repentance and forgiveness; Christ and the angels celebrate with Him in heaven.

Christians struggle with sin but have their hearts set on serving God. They repent of their sins but face constant temptation. Some battles are fought constantly over a lifetime. Peter said in 1 Peter 5:8 to 10, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. (because) Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered (He says to them) for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you." The wonderful grace of Jesus stands with you as you battle the devil.

James 4:7 to 10 reminds us, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you." Resist the devil but draw close to God! Remember your Lord is with you, and the devil will flee from Him. You're not alone.

The Lord hasn't forgotten you. John promises Christians in 1 John 1:7, "If we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." He further promises in verse nine that, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Oh I tell you we can have clean hearts and clean souls.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father we're thankful that in Your grace and love that You have a way for us to be cleansed through the blood of Jesus. Help us Heavenly Father always to love, to confess, to believe, and to serve you. In Jesus name, Amen.

My friend, brothers and sisters, do you stand in the grace of God? If God was interested in Zacchaeus, He's also interested in you and the people that you know. 1 Timothy 2:3 to 5 says, "This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

When you consider the great price Jesus paid to deliver you from sin, how can you ignore or pass up His amazing grace? Come to the Lord in faith, love, and obedience. Turn away from those shameful sins that plague your soul. Don't ignore the Lord; He'll help you to stand strong and faithful. It's when we turn our backs on God and walk in darkness, that we lie and do not practice the truth (1 John 1:6). We must be honest with ourselves and turn from sin back to the Lord. God won't leave us, but sadly some abandon God and lose their hope and promise.

Are you right with the living God? To become a Christian you must deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow the Lord (Luke 9:23). Because you love and trust the Lord's promises, put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Turn from sin and live in righteousness; you see, that's repentance. And repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of life. Confess the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Peter taught this in the first gospel sermon in Acts 2:38, and it's still the way to come to the Lord. Why not do it today?

We hope that our study, Jesus Saves Sinners, and our booklet, Amazing Grace, has caused you to want to be saved by God's grace and to come to Him. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free 1-800-321-8633. There's a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. And SEARCH is on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and like the programs. We offer free Bible Correspondence courses and we never ask for money.

Please go and find a church of Christ near you and attend them and be with them. As always we say to you God bless you. God bless you and we want Him to bless you and be right with Him. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.