

The Call of Grace

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: Luke 19:1-10

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I usually read one or two or three passage of Scripture verses and use as my text for a topic. But today I am going to read 10 verses because I want you to hear this story. I would like you to follow along with me as I read in the Scripture. We are going to be reading from Luke 19 verses one through 10. That is Luke the 19th chapter verses one through 10. And I am going to speak to you on this subject: “The Call of Grace Answered by Faith,” or just “The Call of Grace.”

Now let’s begin Luke 19 verse one. “And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, for the multitude of people that were around at that particular place and because he was little of stature. So he ran before and climbed up into a sycamore tree for the Lord was to pass that way.” He knew the Lord would have to pass this particular point so he climbed up in a sycamore tree so he could see the Lord.

“And when Jesus came to the place where Zacchaeus was sitting in the tree he looked up and he said, ‘Zacchaeus, make haste and come down. For today I must abide at your house.’ And he made haste and came down and received him joyfully. And when the people saw that Jesus was gone to be the guest in the home of this sinner they murmured. They complained. They said, ‘Why is this man, this holy man, gone to be the guest of a man that is a sinner?’

“And Zacchaeus stood and said, ‘Behold, Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore unto him four fold.’ And Jesus said, ‘This day is salvation come to this house for he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.’”

Now I believe there is more here than the little ditty that the children sing and Sunday school teachers teacher, “Zacchaeus was a wee little man and a wee little man was he. And he climbed up in a sycamore tree, the Savior he wanted to see.”

So much Scripture is not written, 10 verses in the book of Luke chapter 19, is not devoted just to the historical account of one man’s conversion. I just don’t believe that the Lord is devoting all of this Scripture just to give us an account of this man’s conversion. He is saying something to us about our conversion. He is saying something to us about every

man's redemption. He is saying something to us about the call of grace. I believe the call of grace, which is extended effectually to every believer is presented and pictured right herein this Scripture.

Now let's see if I can make good on that. First of all this call of Zacchaeus was a gracious call. It was a gracious call.

Now I suppose that if you were considering a candidate for salvation in this city of Jericho Zacchaeus probably would be the last one you would pick. First of all, he was from a bad city. He was from Jericho. He was from a bad city. You just would not have selected Zacchaeus to be the one that the Lord would save. You wouldn't have picked Saul of Tarsus. This man hated Christ. He hated the gospel. This man, Saul of Tarsus, committed people to prison for believing on Christ. He stood by and gave consent to the death of people who believed on...

Would you have chosen the harlot? If you had been in Simon's home that day when Christ was having dinner there and all of these fine, moral, religious representatives were sitting around and a harlot came in and bathed his feet with tears and anointed his feet and wept at his feet. Would she be the one that you chose to be a candidate for salvation? Well, no we wouldn't. No she wouldn't.

If you had gone down to the land of the Gadarenes, all of those people there, the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, where would you have found God's sheep? Would he have been the man out in the tombs, the man out in the cemetery that they said was crazy, that they couldn't bind him or couldn't chain him, he would break the chains and cut himself with stones?

Our Lord chooses the foolish things, the base things, the things that are despised, the things that are naught, nothing, to bring to naught the things that are. And here Zacchaeus, if you had been selecting a candidate for salvation he wouldn't have been the one. He was in a bad business. He was a cheat. He was a tax collector. And in those days taxes were not regulated like they are now. The tax collector could collect just about what he pleased; what the people owed the government and then could pick up some on the side for himself. He was in a bad business. He was the chief of the publicans.

And another thing he was very rich and he was made rich by the misery of other people. And did not our Lord say, "How hardly shall they that are rich enter the kingdom of God." Why he said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," because with riches comes greed and the love of money and selfishness and self indulgence. That is what comes with riches, a lack of concern for the suffering of other people. You just wouldn't have picked this man.

And I'll tell you this. When the Lord Jesus Christ called you and called me it was a gracious call. We were full of bad sinning, too. We were from a bad heritage. We were from the Garden of Eden. Our father was Adam. He was the one that rebelled against

God's law. And we are not only from a bad beginning and a bad heritage, but we were in a bad business. We were in the sin business. Our thoughts were sin, our imagination.

God said he looked down from heaven and saw that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart are evil continually, not good, none righteous, the poison of snakes under their lips. Their feet are swift to run in mischief, their hands to shed blood. They do not seek God or know God. They are all unprofitable. And we are rich in flesh and poor in Spirit.

All of us have to say with Mephibosheth as he fell at the feet of David who had extended to him the mercy of the king, "Who am I that you should show such mercy to a dead dog?"

I like what the hymn writer wrote. "I am amazed that God could ever love me so full of sin, so covered over with shame. Make me to walk with him who is above me, cleansed by the power of his redeeming name. I am amazed that God would ever save me. Not but the cross could take away my sin. Through faith in Christ eternal life he gave me and now he abides forevermore within."

Zacchaeus, my soul, what a gracious call. Of all people, of all people in this bad city to call this fellow to sing like this fellow, to save this fellow, what a gracious call.

Notice the second thing. It was a personal call, too. It was not only gracious, but it was personal. Now think of the crowd, the multitude of people that were there. In fact, that is the reason Zacchaeus climbed up in the tree in the first place is because there were so many people and he was so short that there was no way he could see the Lord without getting up in a tree. There were hundreds, thousands, probably, of people in that tremendous group and yet there is no mistake about who the Lord called, is it? No mistaking it. He stopped under that tree and he looked up and he said, "Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus."

He called Zacchaeus just like he called Matthew, sitting at the receipt of customs and our Lord came by and he said, "Matthew, you follow me." Just like he called Saul of Tarsus out yonder on the road to Damascus, "Saul, Saul..." Just like he called Abraham down there in his father's house, "Abraham, get thee out of thy father's house unto a land I will show thee."

God calls his people personally. Now don't you forget that. People do not come to Christ. Men and women do not come to Christ as families. People do not come to Christ in groups. People do not come to Christ as nations, but as individuals. Whom he foreknew he predestinated. Whom he predestinated he called. He calls his own sheep by name. He said, "I know my sheep." And the Good Shepherd calls them by name and they follow him.

One of the shortest sermons our Lord ever preached is a sermon of three words. And this is all he said on this subject at this particular time. He said to his disciples one time,

“Remember Lot’s wife.” And that was it. Remember what about her? Well, do you remember what happened to her? Well, remember this. She was the wife of a godly man and yet she didn’t know the Lord. She was the wife of a man who was called out of a city, a most perverse, wicked city, the only man God saved out of that city and yet she perished. Remember, she was with Lot when he went there. She was with Lot while he was there. She was with Lot when he left there. She heard the same warnings. She heard the same message. She heard the same exhortation, but she perished. And yet she was his wife.

Now you cannot hide in a group. And you cannot slip into the kingdom of God in a family. And you cannot move into the grace of God as a nation. What think ye of Christ?

And when our Lord passed under that tree and looked up, he called this man by name. He said, “Zacchaeus, you come down.”

Has God dealt that way with you? Has God dealt in mercy with you? We must witness to others. We want to. We want others to come to know Christ. But I can’t tell what I don’t know. I can’t tell what I haven’t experienced any more than I can come back from where I haven’t been. And I have got to experience conviction in my own heart and repentance in my own heart and faith in my own life. I have got to come to know the Lord myself. Oh that I may win Christ and be found in him, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection. “The Lord,” David said, “is my shepherd.” The Lord is my salvation, my rock. He is my refuge. And that is what it must be, a personal pronoun. He is my Lord and my God Thomas said. Not our Lord and our God, my Lord and my God. That is an issue that must be settled personally.

Now notice next of all, thirdly. This call of Christ, this call that he extended to Zacchaeus was an imminent call, a hastening call. He looked up and said, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down.”

Now when a sinner is called by an ordinary minister...I know when God is dealing with a man and when I am dealing with him. There is a difference. I know when men are confronted by Christ and when they are confronted by me and my logic and reasoning and arguments and witnessing. I know when they are dealing with God or when they are dealing with me.

First of all, when they are dealing with me they usually say, “Well, tomorrow I will give this some consideration.” And tears may come for the moment and later on they are wiped away. And concern may appear for the moment, but after a while it is forgotten. And a little reformation may take place, but it soon grows weary, you know, and they grow indifferent and they fade away. Those are folks that are dealing with me.

But I will tell you this. When a sinner is confronted by Christ, when a sinner is confronted by the Lord of glory, when Christ himself speaks to a man’s heart, not the preacher, but Christ himself and his Holy Spirit and he says, “You make haste. Now is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation,” that man weeps tears that continue. He

has concern that continues. He has conviction that continues. He has a repentance that goes on repenting. He has a faith that keeps on believing. Like Jacob he says, "I won't let you go till you bless me."

Tomorrow is not on the believer's calendar. That is the way Satan tells time, tomorrow. Tomorrow is the fool's pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Tomorrow is a delusion. Tomorrow is a dream. Tomorrow doesn't exist. Boast not thyself of tomorrow. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near. Jesus Christ is passing by and he stopped under that tree and he said, "Zacchaeus, you make haste. Not next week or next month. You make haste and you come down."

And, my friend, I am saying this to you. If God ever deals with you...now when the preacher deals with you or the denomination or the soul winner you can argue and quarrel and debate and put it off and all of these other things, but when Christ comes the power of his Word, the sword of his Spirit pricks your heart. You can't kick against the pricks. You have got to give in.

All right, fourthly. This call of Zacchaeus was a humbling call. Our Lord said, "Zacchaeus, come down. Come down." You never hear the call, "Come up," until you hear the words "Come down."

Our Lord always strips a sinner before he clothes him, always. Judgment always precedes grace. Our Lord Jesus Christ always slays the sinner before he resurrects him. The Lord said, "Come down, Zacchaeus. You are too high and mighty. You are too important. You have got to come down."

This is what has got to happen, my friend. You have got to be brought down, brought low. You have got to be like Saul of Tarsus, smitten by the Spirit of God and laid in the dust in darkness crying, "Have mercy on me a sinner." You are too good to be saved, too high, too important, too much filled with yourself. God has to empty you before he will fill you. He empties you of your pride and your self importance before he fills you with his presence and humility.

"Come down," the Lord said. And I came down till there were very few beneath me. "Come on down further," the Lord said. And I came down until I was on the level with all men. "Come on down further," the Lord said. And I came down till I was less than the least. I was beneath every creature. "Come on down further," the Lord said. And I came down to the place where I felt there is no hope for me. I despair even of mercy. And that is when he spoke peace to my soul.

Now you who know what I am talking about have experienced that. I am nothing, have nothing, know nothing. Blessed are the poor in Spirit, theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness, they shall be filled. When you want Christ more than you want anything else you will have him. When you want mercy more than you want anything else, you will have it. When you want redemption more than you want anything else, that is when you will get it, but not until. Our Lord will not

play second fiddle in anybody's orchestra. Our Lord will not be next to your pleasures or next to your possessions or next to your family or next to anything else. He will be number one. And everything else will be laid at his feet. That is right. Come on down, Zacchaeus. There is no place for God's people up there in the high seats, in the upper most seats. You come on down, Zacchaeus. You come on down to the ground, down to the dust of repentance.

All right notice the next thing. It was an affectionate call. "Zacchaeus, you come down for I must abide at your house."

Do you see something here? I am going to your house. The Lord didn't say, "Zacchaeus, now you can come to my house. Now, Zacchaeus, you are worthy to associate with me. Now you are worthy to come to the house of the Lord."

No. He said, "I am going to your house. I am going to fellowship with you. I am going to abide in your house. I am going to move in and dwell with you." What mercy. What grace. What condescension. No wonder these people were amazed.

It says when the people heard this and saw this they murmured. They complained. They said, "What is this holy man doing going to that fellow's house? He is the chief publican. He is the fellow that has gotten rich on everybody else's misery. We have been to his house. What a terrible place it is. We have been called on the carpet down there at his house. We have been mistreated and ill treated and abused by this man. What is this holy man doing going to a house like Zacchaeus' house?"

Well, I'll tell you this. When Christ comes in it is a different house. He will change that house. Where there was hate he will bring in love. Where there was pride he will bring in humility. Where there was self importance, he will bring in that self abasement. Where there was self righteousness he will bring in submission. That's right. Where there was hate he will bring in joy. Our Lord will change that house. It will be a different house when he gets there. For where he dwells he reigns. So we don't go to church to meet God. When God dwells in our hearts that is when a man is saved.

Now the world goes to church to meet God. And the religious professor goes to ...he keeps his religion down there, you know, like he keeps his golf clubs over at the country club in the locker, that's where he keeps his religion. He keeps it down at the church. He has all of his supplies to play church down at the church. All of his supplies to play religion down at the church. His smile is down there. His honesty is down there. His love is down there. His kindness is down there. His mercy and forgiveness is down there. It is all in the locker down at the church. And every Sunday morning or at Easter or Christmas or whenever he is pleased to go or a funeral or some way, he is just Mr. Nicey-nicey and Mr. Piety and Mr. Righteous. He treats his family like a dog, but he is nice at church. He treats his neighbor like a dog, but he is nice at church. He runs his business like a crook, but he tithes down at the church. He curses God all week. He uses the Lord's name in vain, but he keeps the Sunday school down at the church, you see. He's got everything in his locker down there. And that is where God lives, see?

So he goes home into his business and then...he hates people, but he loves people down at the church. And he won't speak to a man on the street, but he will send a missionary from down at the church. He is a crook. He is a hypocrite.

Our Lord said, "Zacchaeus, I'm coming to your house. And if I don't come to your house you needn't come to mine." Now that is the way that it is. "If I don't come to your house, if I don't abide in your house you are wasting your time to come to my house."

And I wish I could tell the whole world that this Sunday. If God doesn't dwell in you, Christ doesn't dwell in you... He that loveth not knoweth not God. If you don't forgive God won't forgive you. If you don't show mercy, forget mercy and get ready to perish. That's so. That is what Scripture said. I know that is not what your preacher says, but that is what God says. And I know that is not what you believe, but that is what God says.

"Zacchaeus, I'm going to your house and if I don't go to your house, don't you come to mine."

That's right. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. Paul said, "I travail until Christ dwelleth in you for Christ in you is the hope of glory."

Brother, I will tell you. This was an affectionate call. And this was a necessary call. He said, "Zacchaeus I must...I must abide at your house." Do you know why? Because he also is a son of Abraham.

Well, now there were sons of Abraham all over that place that day, sons of Abraham by nature. But this man Zacchaeus was a son of Abraham by faith. He was one of God's sheep. He was one of God's elect. He was one that the Father gave to the Son. He said, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring." That is why he must needs go through Samaria because one of his sheep were down there...was down there. That is why he looked up in that tree and said, "Zacchaeus, come down," because that is one of his sheep.

He said to Paul...Paul was getting ready to leave a town. He had been there preaching and he raised all kind of trouble and they were getting ready to throw him in jail or kill him and he was going to pack up and leave. And God came to him and said, "Saul, Paul, don't leave. "Acts 18:9-11, "Don't leave. You stay right here. They are not going to hurt you. They are not going to kill you. I have got some people in this town and you stay right here. I've got some people here."

And Paul stayed there for a year and a half. And God saved many people. God told him, "I have got some people." And the Lord has some people. Maybe there are some listening to me. Do you know how you can tell God's people? You read the book of 1Thessalonians chapter one verses four and five. Paul said, "I know your election of God because our gospel came not to you in word only, but in power, in the Holy Ghost, in

much assurance.” That is right. And you became followers of God. That is how you can tell one of God’s own.

He says, “My sheep hear my voice and they follow me.” That’s how you can tell. “They hear my voice.” They have got a brand on the ear and a brand on the foot. They are Christ’s sheep. They hear his voice and they follow him. They follow him.

All right notice in the seventh place. This call, gracious, merciful, personal, imminent, hastening...it was an affectionate call. It was a necessary call. He also is a son of Abraham. I have come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Not many lost people in this world. Most of them are all right. But last of all it was an effectual call. It says, “And he made haste and came down.” The Lord called him. He heard the voice of his Lord. He heard the voice of his Christ and he responded. That’s right. He responded. My sheep hear my voice and they follow me and I give them eternal life. And they won’t hear the voice of a stranger. They will hear my voice.

Back in olden days the shepherds used to bring their sheep into town. From the mountains at night they would bring them into town and there was what they called a common sheep fold and all the shepherds would put their sheep in this one sheep fold. There would be six or eight herds in there, six or eight folds of sheep. It was a sheepfold for all of them. And then they would go to the inn and sleep. The next morning the shepherd would come down and the porter would open the door and let him in. This is John 10. And his sheep would hear his voice and they would follow him out.

Now the other fellow’s sheep wouldn’t follow him because a stranger they won’t follow. They know the voice of the shepherd and they follow their shepherd. And each shepherd would come down and get his own sheep. And Christ said, “I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep and am known of mine. I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold, this immediate fold. Them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice and they shall be one fold. And one shepherd. My sheep.”

And Zacchaeus was one of his sheep and he heard the gospel. He heard Christ. And he responded. He followed. And watch this. He received him joyfully.

I will tell you, my friends, salvation, when it comes in the heart...I know folks don’t understand this. Why are Christians happy? Well, hypocrites aren’t. They are miserable. They are trying to do what they can’t do in their own strength. But when you enter into his rest, when you enter into his peace, when you know salvation is not something that you have to perform yourself, but something Christ did for you, it gives you joy and rest and you cease from your labors and you rest in Christ and you build on that foundation that cannot be swept away, that cannot be torn down. You have an everlasting hope. You receive him joyfully. And the joy is always there. Oh you have days of despondency and depression and burden.

Somebody said one time, “A Christian is the happiest most miserable fellow on earth. He is the richest most...and the poorest fellow on earth. He is the happiest and the saddest fellow on earth. He is happy with the Lord and sad about his sins. He is rich in grace and poor in this world’s goods. But he is happy.”

Zacchaeus received him joyfully. And let me tell you something. Zacchaeus became a changed man. When our Lord...when he came down from that tree he said, “Lord, half my goods I give to feed the poor.”

Now I don’t hear the Lord telling him to do that. Did you see in any place in that Scripture I read where Christ said, “Now, Zacchaeus, you come down and give half your goods to the poor?” He didn’t do it. He didn’t do it.

He told that rich young ruler that because that rich young ruler was trying to work his way to heaven. He said, “Good master, what shall I do that I might inherit life?”

Christ said, “Sell what you have and give it to the poor.”

He didn’t tell Zacchaeus that. Zacchaeus came down and out of his own heart, a changed heart, a new heart, a broken heart, a contrite heart, he voluntarily said, “Lord, half my goods I give to feed the poor.”

We don’t give because we have to, but because we love. We don’t have a set of rules to follow and pray because we have to, because God demands it, but because we love him. That is what motivated Paul, the love of Christ.

Now these messages—How can a Sinner Approach God and the Call of Grace—are on the same tape, two messages on one tape cassette. If you would like to have it write to me. The address is given to you at this time. God bless you everyone.