

APPLICATION

Zacchæus, . . . the chief among the publicans, and he was rich, v. 2. He was a social outcast, from whom nothing good was looked for, and from whom every evil was expected. In the Talmud we read that "neither professional gamblers and betterers, nor shepherds, tax-gathers and publicans, should be allowed to give testimony before the court, as they were not regarded as trustworthy in matters of property." Then, he was "rich." "It was very little to the credit of Zacchæus that he had made money in the way he told of (so far as he made it in that way). It is the poorest thing said of him."

He sought to see Jesus . . . and could not for the press, v. 3. One of the memorable features of the incident is the triumph of Zacchæus over hindrances. His short stature stood in the way of his even getting a glimpse of Jesus. His profession as a publican would not only have cost him the respect of his neighbors, but most likely his own self-respect also, and a man with no self-respect is the most heavily-handicapped of all. His wealth, as we have seen in the case of the rich young ruler, would hold him back. And what would his associates say? Surely few men have ever set out to find Jesus with less likely prospects. That he fared so well, not only reveals the graciousness of Jesus, but teaches how obstacles are to be treated. They are like enemies in time of war. They are to be discovered only that they may be overthrown. To any but those who are utterly feckless, hindrances, but increase nerve. The struggle against them often develops, as it did in the case of Zacchæus, unexpected energy of character.

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, v. 5. However eager anyone may be to see Jesus, Jesus is more anxious still to find him. The very errand on which He came to earth was to seek men, and to seek them that He might save them. There is joy in heaven when a sinner repents, and heaven's Lord hails with eager delight every least indication of turning towards better things. We may be sure of loving recognition when we come to the Saviour, for is not His spirit

expressed in the words of Jehovah as Isaiah records them: "It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (Isa. 65 : 24.)

To-day I must abide at thy house, v. 5. Dr. Maclaren, of Manchester, has a volume of sermons on "Christ's Musts." He divides these "Musts" into four classes. One class refers to the necessity for His death: "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up." (John 3 : 14.) A second expresses His filial obedience and consciousness of His mission: "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day." (John 9 : 4.) A third looks forward to His future triumph: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring." (John 10 : 16.) A fourth applies this greatest principle to the smallest duty: "To-day I must abide at thy house." (Luke 19 : 5.)

The half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold, v. 8 (Rev. Ver.). If faith is to be proven by works, as the apostle James says it must be (James 2 : 14-20), then Zacchæus' faith had solid testimony. A testimony, too, it was, that would tell amongst his friends and neighbors better than any other sort of evidence. He became strong just where he had been weak, righteous where he had been unrighteous, generous and unselfish where he had been miserly and churlish. "Surely," they would say, "this is of God." It is a lesson on witness-bearing deeply to be pondered. Saying without doing brings a profession of religion into contempt; infinitely better, doing without saying. But when a man's words are backed up by his deeds, men are constrained to believe in his genuineness. That is what is meant by letting one's light "so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5 : 16.)

And Jesus said unto him, To-day is salvation come to this house, v. 9. "It is to be noted that it is the house which has suddenly lost half its wealth, and not the poor who have