

Our Contributors

Zacchaeus—Luke 19 : 1-9.

BY GEO. W. ARMSTRONG.

Comets appear in the firmament, startle us with their brilliance and unique forms and after a brief stay rush again into space from which they originally emerged. They are gone but have left an impression not easily erased and have found a place in the records of our world.

Many scriptural biographies have this comet like appearance. They come before us abruptly, they act a part on life's stage and then as abruptly pass away; but the lesson from it may be the one incident of their life which has found a place in Holy writ remains to instruct our race in some important feature of truth.

Such is the brief narrative of Zacchaeus the publican. The one incident in his life recorded by Luke is a condensed Pilgrim's Progress, a concise statement of The Plan of Salvation—the seeking sinner, the found Saviour, and the realized salvation.

The human mind has varied aspirations but the highest, noblest and best are those which prompt the soul to seek Jesus. Zacchaeus sought to see Jesus who he was, and one peculiarity about his so doing was that he was rich. There were few men in his day, as there are few now, who are rich who have desires; strong, burning unquenchable desires to see Jesus. As far as I can call to mind there are only three rich men mentioned in the gospels who sought to see Jesus—Nichodemus the young ruler and Zacchaeus, and with what sublime lessons the various interviews were pregnant. Rich men seeking Jesus was so rare an occurrence that Christ said: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven." Riches unless wisely used may be a snare. Rich men should ever remember that it is God who gives power to get wealth and acknowledge Him in all their ways. Zacchaeus seeking Christ shows us that such experiences are frequently surrounded by difficulties. It is seldom that any treasure can be acquired without difficulty. This is so in physical, mental, commercial and any other aims in life. In seeking Christ He is always accessible. The difficulties arise from environment. Zacchaeus' were two fold—He could not for the press and because he was little of stature, but as his experiences teach us difficulties grappled with yield to wise and prudently directed effort. Zacchaeus surveyed his surroundings, got past and above the obstacle and from the friendly branches of the sycamore tree could obtain the view he so much desired. Had he procrastinated, his delay might have been fatal and final for Christ never passed through Jericho again. Prompt, well directed efforts generally succeed. Zacchaeus' success was far beyond his expectations. He sought to see, he realized a guest. He desired a transient glance, he realized an abiding friend. With what rapture would Christ's words fill his soul: "Zacchaeus make haste and come down, for today I must abide at thy house." What undoubting obedience, what joyful and cheerful response! Christ's calls merit from all a ready and willing acceptance; He always calls to better and greater blessings. Multitudes are fickle. In Matthew's gospel, ninth

chapter, we read the multitude marvelled and glorified God; in the case of Zacchaeus they all murmured saying He is gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. A murmuring fault finding, unsympathetic crowd. Did these men appreciate Christ's purity of character? I think not. Their comment upon His miracles was: He casteth out devils through satanic agency. This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them. Precious truth. This was the great purpose of His mission: I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

Zacchaeus became in a double sense the host of Christ. He received Him not only in his house, but in his heart, and as out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; so from the overflowing of Zacchaeus' heart he bore the gratifying testimony of true conversion, of saving faith. His testimony was two-fold, 1st. Benevolence. Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. 2nd. Restitution. If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation I restore him four fold. Benevolence is a sign of christian character, a niggardly christian is an anomaly; but benevolence combined with restitution establishes the Christian beyond question. Restitution is real repentance. Such testimony and conduct secures an adequate reward, and this Zacchaeus obtained. "And Jesus said unto him, this day is salvation come to this house."

Christ's blessings are present blessings when the subject of them is prepared by testimony and experience to receive them, when the heart is ready the testimony is not long delayed; Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. If with open hearts we hear Christ's call and like Zacchaeus we respond joyfully, the blessing he received will also be ours for: "Behold now is the accepted time, today is the day of salvation."

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Widows' & Orphans', and Aged and Infirm Ministers' Funds.

It will be remembered that, during the sitting of the General Assembly last June, there was a meeting of the elders, very largely attended, the avowed object being an increase in interest and in help to the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund and the Widows' & Orphans' Fund. This meeting passed a series of resolutions which were submitted to the General Assembly and ordered to be printed in the volume of the Minutes. In these resolutions it is declared that the laity, as a whole, are prepared to give generously to these Funds if their claims are rightly presented, and believing that from a sense of delicacy, ministers did not give the prominence to them that otherwise they might, the meeting of elders pledged itself to the "generous support of these Funds that so deeply affect the interests of those for whom the church has a right to care, and that, as far as possible, the elders would individually support the ministers in Kirk session and before congregations in securing a more hearty support for these Funds."

It is some times said that resolutions often amount to very little, practically. We trust it will be far otherwise in this matter, and yet it will be noticed that, while the Widows' & Orphans' Fund and the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund this

year each asked from the church \$13,000. Not quite \$4,000 has been received for each within a fortnight of the close of the year. We suppose it is only necessary to remind the elders present at the General Assembly, and all the elders of the church, of the resolution adopted in June last, so as to secure from them generous aid for these schemes. At present, it would seem as if some drastic step would be necessary, more especially in connection with the Widows' & Orphans' Fund. The amount received, to this date, is only sufficient to pay the annuities for the half year ending last October, and there is nothing whatever in the Treasury to meet the annuities falling due next month, which are in the neighborhood of \$11,000. It is questionable whether the committee are justified in paying these annuities unless the church places in their hands the money to enable them to do so. It would be felt to be a very great hardship by many of the widows on the Fund, if the annuity should not be paid or even be reduced in amount, as many of them are largely dependent upon the income derived from this source.

Danger In Self Esteem.

This is what Paul wrote to Christians: "If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." But it is a fact that such a Christian does not want to believe that he is deceiving himself. When he thinks that he is quite free from a carnal disposition he believes that his telling it to others is for God's honor. He says that it is his duty to testify before men what God has done for him, and hence he testifies that all of his old nature has been swept out of him by God so that nothing but perfect love and pure spirituality have place and power in him. He says that it is wrong for one who is full of the Holy Spirit to say that he is "nothing", when in fact he is "something" more and better than ordinary Christians are. This good man cannot be persuaded that he is indulging in self-esteem. He asks, "How can I be indulging in self-esteem when I am all the while giving God the praise for making me perfectly pure and keeping me free from committing sin?" Well, Christ tells us of a pious man who thanked God that he was a much more faithful and righteous man than another man was who stood near him, but it is evident that Christ did not place any value on that man's thanks to God for what he himself was boasting of. The late Mr. Spurgeon in a sermon said: "It is to be feared that there is springing up in some parts of the Christian Church a deceitful form of self-righteousness which leads even good people to think too highly of themselves. It is a fashionable form of fanaticism, very pleasing to the flesh very fascinating and very deadly. Many, I fear, are not really living so near to God as they think they are, neither are they as holy as they dream. It is very easy to frequent Bible readings and conferences and excited public meetings, and to fill one's self with the gas of self esteem. A little pious talk, with a sort of Christian who always walks on high stilts, will soon tempt you to use the stilts yourself; but indeed, dear brother, you are a poor, unworthy worm and nobody, and if you get one inch above the ground you get just that inch too high." There is plenty of Scripture for such a presentation of the truth. There is always danger in self-