

THE FAITH OF ZACCHEUS, THE PUBLICAN.

Luke says that "Jesus entered and passed through Jericho; and behold, there was a man, named Zaccheus, 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, because he was little of stature; and he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree (or as some say, into a wild fig tree), to see him; for he was to pass that way; and when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said to him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house, and he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four fold; and Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he is also a son of Abraham," Luke 19: 1—9.

Paul says, For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our instruction; and though we know Zaccheus' faith, fruit, mercy, love and true conversion, it avails us nothing, if we do not practice and come up to his faith, with its contrite, pious fruits. I therefore entreat all my readers, who live openly in sin; all the wealthy, avaricious, unrighteous merchants and grocers, all financiers and bankers, all who love money; judges, lawyers, advocates, preachers, priests and monks, all drunken landlords, together with all those who deal in unlawful gain; I entreat all by the love of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, that they would well consider, with an understanding heart, this history and narrative touching Zaccheus, in order that they may learn therefrom, that they do not yet possess the right, true faith and that christian-

ity which avails with God; and that they have nothing but a fruitless, vain boasting of Christ and of faith.

Zaccheus was chief of the publicans, and he received Christ joyfully in his house and heart. He believed and was renewed; he reformed his life, and departed from his former evil ways. That our open transgressors do not yet reform their old, ungodly lives, and that they do not desire Christ and his faith, however much they may boast, is as clear as the light of day.

Zaccheus was rich, and one half of his wealth he gave to the poor. But our rich people seek more and more, how they may increase their money and possessions, build their houses splendidly, and add farm to farm. They do not defend the cause of the poor and needy; are unmerciful, proud, avaricious and wanton; do not remember what is written concerning them, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you; your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten; your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire," James 5: 1—3. Neither do you reflect on what David says, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like the green bay-tree; yet he passed away, and lo, he was not: Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found," Ps. 37: 35, 36. Ah! what a hard saying which the Lord uttered, "Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation," Luke 6: 24, and "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," Matt. 19: 24.

Zaccheus said to the Lord, "If I have taken any thing from any man by false ac-

cusation, I restore him four fold," but our miserably avaricious, never cease from defrauding their neighbor. For the whole, broad world, both man and woman, are so greedy after unlawful, shameful gain, that it cannot be imagined nor related.

Lords and princes daily invent new devices and practices, that they may increase their dominions, interests, tolls and rents. They tax, shave, grasp and rob without any mercy or bounds; they draw the very narrow from the bones of the poor, and show by their actions, that they are companions of those of whom it is written, "Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves," Isa. 1: 23. O that he knew Christ, would repent, cease to do evil, and would reflect more on love.

Judges, lawyers and advocates also seek all artifice to get unlawful gain; with few exceptions they all serve for gifts and money, for if they did not expect profit or gain, I am persuaded that burgomasters and judges would be few in the whole empire. For the sake of gain, they sit and judge, and they often encourage causes for the sake of a fee. Some of them pervert law and right for the sake of a gift, and do not reflect on what Jehoshaphat said to the judges, "Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment; wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take heed and do it; for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts," 2 Chron. 19: 6, 7.

Captains, knights, servants and such like bloody men, are ready to serve for the sake of gain, and swear with uplifted fingers that they will destroy cities and countries, take citizens and inhabitants, kill them and take their possessions from them, although they never harmed them, nor gave them any provocation. O God! what execrated, ungodly abominations and traffic. And still it must be said, that they protect the country and people, and that they assist in administering justice!

Priests, monks and preachers are equally bent upon unlawful gain. They are not shocked to make God's only and first begotten Son, his eternal, Almighty Word and Wisdom, the one and only everlasting foun-

dation of heaven and earth, Jesus Christ, with his holy apostles, to be open, false witnesses, heretics, and deceivers; for Christ says, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved," Mark 16: 16. But they say, He that believeth and is baptized, is a heretic, and shall be damned. Christ says, "But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," Matt. 19: 17. But they say, None can keep God's commandments.

Paul says, If ye live according to the flesh ye shall die; again, The unrighteous, drunkards, the avaricious, the haughty, the unchaste and the like, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But they say, We are poor sinners; who can always live as the Scriptures teach? Christ died for sinners, and the like consolations, whereby they deny Christ and his word, and thus encourage the whole world, rich and poor, small and great, in their hardened and wicked life, that there are, alas, few who truly repent, or seek after God. They preach what the ignorant blind world desires, that they may quietly enjoy the reward of Balaam (their cloisters and stipends, I mean), that they may lead an epicurian life without care; for they, poor creatures, know not that they are those of whom it is written, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core," Jude 1: 11, accursed people, 2 Pet. 2. O God, that they would beware!

The unrighteous merchants and grocers (I say the *unrighteous*, for I do not mean those who are righteous and pious), together with all those who deal avariciously and penuriously, are so bent upon accursed gain, that they exclude God from their hearts. They censure what they should properly praise, and praise what they should censure; they lie and swear; use many vain words; adulterate their merchandise to cheat the people, and to take what is not their own; they sell, lend and trust the needy at exorbitant gain and usury, never seriously reflecting nor taking to heart, that it stands written, "That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter," 1 Thess. 4: 6.

I would that they might more seriously lay to heart the doctrine of Sirach, "A mer-

chant shall hardly keep himself from doing wrong; and a huckster shall not be freed from sin; many have sinned for a small matter, and he that seeketh for abundance will turn his eyes away; as a nail sticketh fast between the joinings of the stones, so doth sin stick close between buying and selling. Unless a man hold himself diligently in the fear of the Lord, his house shall soon be overthrown." Eccl. 26: 29; 27: 1—3.

This I write as a warning to the god-fearing merchants and grocers, so that they will not imitate the ungodly, lest they be overcome by avarice, but be circumspect in dealing and beware of dangers.

Some are made thieves, some murderers, others jugglers, necromancers, some are whoremongers, others gamblers, others are betrayers, others become executioners and tormentors, and also some persecutors and slayers of the pious, &c., and all this for the sake of accursed gain, whereby they openly testify (because they walk in such a way and are so bent upon unlawful gain), that they are of the devil and not of God, that they have not the faith and word of Christ, but in every respect are inimical and opposed thereto.

Yes, kind reader, the whole world is so contaminated and involved in this accursed avarice, fraud, false practices and unbecoming gain, in this false traffic and merchandise, with this finance, usury, and self-interest, that I scarcely know how it could be worse; yet they are still the priest's and preacher's christians, and are said to earn their bread honestly, and to do justice to all.

Ah! my reader, how different all this is from the faith, disposition and converted life of Zaccheus. For if they had the mind, faith and power of Zaccheus, which we must have, if we would ever be saved, it is my opinion that few lords and princes would continue in their violence and wanton lives; few riders (knights) and servants in their ungodly service and deeds of blood; few judges, lawyers and advocates in their courts and offices; few rich persons in the unlawful use of their riches; few merchants and grocers in their usurious and dangerous trade; and few preachers, priests and

monks would continue in their incomes, stipends and cloisters. There would soon be a different state of things; because it cannot be, but that the righteous live by faith. Yea, they would, with joyful heart, say with Zaccheus, The poor we willingly serve with our goods, and if we have defrauded any one, we will gladly satisfy him.

All who, like Zaccheus, rightly receive Jesus Christ in the house of their consciences; rightly receive the word of Christ as he did, and be also truly born through the word; are rightly influenced by the Spirit of Christ; and are of the same mind with him, it is impossible that they could defraud any one even of a farthing; for we see that the disposition and usage of all true believers is to injure none on earth; but, as much as in them is, assist all; to defraud none, but to do justice to all. As Paul says, "Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good; that he may have to give to him that needeth," Eph. 4: 28.

But why say much? For my part I do not know where to find the mighty and the rich; in what courts we can find judges, lawyers and advocates; and in what cities and countries, merchants and grocers; or what cloisters and churches we can look for preachers, priests and monks, who rightly believe and follow Christ; who, being regenerated, penitent and pious, desist from all improper practices, fraud, craftiness, robbery, and unlawful gain, and say with Zaccheus, Those whom we have defrauded we will repay fourfold. The prophet complains that every one from the least even unto the greatest, is given to covetousness, Jer. 8: 10.

Since then they are determined upon accursed, abominable avarice, and unlawful gain, and deal so rudely and plainly contrary to love, and none any where repent, hence, it is evident that they are not in the church of Christ, for the church of Christ is called his body and bride in the Scripture. If the church be his body, she must then be flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone; and if she be his bride, she must be of his generation, be righteous, holy, meek, chaste, true, lovely, merciful; yea, hear and be obedient to his voice; therefore, Christ cannot admit of any other members in his church

but those who are of one heart, spirit and soul with him, partakers of his Spirit; who are dead to all unrighteousness, bury the old evil life of sin, walk by faith, unblamably in love, receive the truth joyfully, willingly serve their neighbor, as did this believing, regenerated and renewed Zaccheus.

He desired to see Christ, and received him with joy; he believed his word, and abandoned his ungodly life; he ministered to the poor, and reconciled those whom he had defrauded. In short, he proved himself to be a pious, sincere, regenerated child of God in all his actions; therefore he heard the peaceable, joyful word of divine grace, "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham," Luke 19: 9.

Behold, worthy reader, those who believe, are penitent and renewed as Zaccheus was, and walk in love, belong to the church and body of the Lord, as Christ himself says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my dis-

ciples, if ye have love one to another." They are the living stones of the Lord's temple, and the true citizens of Jerusalem; in which neither sorcerers, nor whoremongers, nor murderers, nor idolaters, nor whosoever loveth and maketh a lie, have part. Yea, as long as Zaccheus was such a one, he was without; for such, says Paul, have neither lot nor part in the kingdom of God and of Christ.

But as soon as he believed the word of the Lord, through faith he repented and turned himself to love; from that hour he was entitled to citizenship, with Christ himself; the path of life was opened to him, peace declared, salvation bestowed, and he was acknowledged and received as a joint-heir of grace, and a child of God, as the Lord says, This day is salvation come to this house, &c. For as Christ is holy, so must also his children, brethren, members, church and bride be holy; for it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.