

# Zacchaeus: Overcoming Obstacles

Joe Slater

There are always obstacles that can keep you from Jesus if you let them. Luke 19:1-10 shows how Zacchaeus experienced and overcame such obstacles.

We know Zacchaeus best for being short. Little children sing, “Zacchaeus was a wee little man . . .” Luke informs us that Zacchaeus “*sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way*” (19:3-4).

Remember what it was like for you as a child being unable to see over the heads of taller people. It’s still a challenge for short adults. Zacchaeus overcame the obstacle by climbing a tree! We might expect such from a young boy, but Zacchaeus was a grown man, old enough to have advanced to the rank of “*chief tax collector*” (19:2). Imagine the hoots, jeers, and snickers as the crowd saw him up in the tree!

Being short, however, wasn’t his greatest obstacle. Zacchaeus was a social outcast. Collecting taxes from fellow-Jews for the pagan Roman government marked him as a traitor in the eyes of many. Besides, tax collectors, including Zacchaeus, had a well-earned reputation for lining their pockets with extorted money. No wonder the crowd grumbled that Jesus had “*gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner!*” (19:7).

The good news is, Jesus came “*to seek and to save that which was lost*” (19:10). Under Christ’s influence, Zacchaeus repented, restored fourfold what he had taken wrongfully, and gave half of his goods to the poor (19:8). “*And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham’*” (19:9).

Zacchaeus didn’t let obstacles keep him from Jesus. Your obstacles may be different than his, but I urge you to overcome them as Zacchaeus did!

# If, But

If Christ is not raised, I and every other preacher may as well quit preaching. We have nothing of value to say. All we have believed is a lie. Jesus is dead and powerless. We have no hope of life. Our loved ones who died in Christ have perished.

But He is raised, and He lives! Those who came to the tomb to anoint His body were asked, “*Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen*” (Luke 24:5-6).

Two popular images of Jesus are a baby in a manger and a body on a cross. Both, taken by themselves, are images of weakness.

He is no longer a babe; suffering made Him our perfect Savior (Hebrews 2:8-9). He lives and makes intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). When we think of Jesus’ death, even in taking the Lord’s Supper, we should not leave Him in the grave. He is risen; He lives. He conquered Satan, Hell, and death.

Through Him who loves us we are more than conquerors.

--Cecil May, Jr. (via *Preacher Talk*)

## No Deposit, No Return

A styrofoam cup filled with coffee sits on the counter at the convenience store. Beside it: torn packaging that recently held cream and sugar, and a brown plastic stick used for a few seconds to blend the concoction. Four items useful for the moment, but soon forgotten and consigned to the dust bin.

Throughout the average day, most Americans will toss out dozens of single-use items like plastic bottles and candy wrappers. Evidence of this is amply supplied by the endless parade of garbage trucks that gather the

offal of an affluent society. Their common destination: trash monoliths that offer mute testimony to our “no deposit, no return” lifestyle.

Perhaps one day we can discover ways to be more efficient in our use of natural resources, even to the point of mining and recycling things long buried in landfills. However, my concern today is not with the trash itself, but the callous attitude that enables us to toss things away with little or no thought. I fear that more than just excess packaging is getting used and tossed aside.

It’s so easy to fall into the habit of using people that we casually come into contact with and then just unceremoniously dumping them from our consciousness. It isn’t as easy to do that in a small community like the ones I grew up in. But in big cities where you so often interact with people only once or twice, it’s far too easy to value them only slightly more than an empty soda bottle. There’s little point in being kind or even civil to these strangers because both you and they will blend into the crowded anonymity of urban life.

Why stroke up a friendly conversation with the supermarket checker? It will be a different person next time anyway. What’s the point in slowing down to let that old pickup merge ahead of you? If you see them again, it will only be through a windshield. And just how likely is it that they would yield a lane to you in return?

Yet how can Christians be the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16) with that kind of attitude? As He when about His ministry, Jesus made it a point not to regard anyone as disposable. Whether it was prostitutes or tax collectors or untold numbers of other societal outcasts, Jesus treated them like they mattered (Matthew 21:31-32). And because He treated them like they mattered, they were able to change for the better.

So look at those casual, everyday contacts with fresh eyes. Who can you and I treat with a little kindness and respect, in the hope that they will see “salt” and “light” in us?

--Mike Hinton (Blanchard, OK) via *Old Paths*