



Zacchaeus' repentance

Categories : [Apostate World](#)

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This past Sunday we heard the story of Zacchaeus, the tax collector, and how he came to be saved. Zacchaeus is the classic example of the **worker of iniquity** who repented through coming to know Jesus personally. Although the Bible passage presents us the first stage of Zacchaeus' conversion, there are actually two stages. The second stage is not mentioned in the Bible itself, but it is found in the writings of the Holy Fathers of the Church. Later, after his confession before our Lord and before all those present, Zacchaeus became an Apostle and accompanied St Peter on his missionary travels. Tradition says he followed St. Peter to Caesarea, where Peter appointed him the Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine. He died in peace.

http://orthodoxwiki.org/Apostle_Zacchaeus

Those who only go by what the Bible says miss out on the whole story and only get to understand half of what is required to gain salvation. The writings of the Holy Fathers are in fact an extension to the Bible which together with it form the complete Orthodox Church. The 2 parts are inseparable.

The first stage of Zacchaeus's repentance was to admit his sin of taking advantage of being in the position he was and ripping off the little guy. The second stage, and also the more subtle one, is that of Zacchaeus realising he was in fact part of a bigger apparatus of oppression, one that rewarded him for the kind of activity he was conducting on behalf of the authorities. Of this sort of iniquity is spoken in many places in the Bible and in the Psalms.

Psalm 9: *"He sitteth in ambush **with the rich in secret places**, that he may kill the innocent; his eyes are set against the poor. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den; he lieth in wait to catch the poor, to catch the poor when he draweth him in to him. In his net will he humble himself; he will crouch and fall when he shall have power over the poor."*

The Bible tells us that Zacchaeus confessed his sin and promised to give away half of his illicitly accumulated wealth and also make reparations to all those who fell victims to his wrongdoings.

But it is the second stage of his transformation that really gained him salvation. By admitting to his sin, a whole new understanding opened up before him, and the miracle in the Bible was just the starting point of a completely changed life, one that would ultimately be dedicated to Christ alone. Zacchaeus did not remain a tax collector. He very quickly realised that it was not enough just to decry his personal contribution to making things worse for the little guy, he started to understand that even if he stopped profiting directly, he would still be part of a system of iniquity whose purpose is the oppression of the poor. Therefore he later gave it all up and became an Apostle for



Christ.

Of Zacchaeus' second and most important phase of his spiritual transformation, we know little as it happened in a completely different manner - away from publicity and fanfare which is also a sign of his spiritual development. Also, it is extremely important to underline that the entire process was the result of personal choice as an exercise of free-will to follow Christ. If this process would had come as imposed from outside against his will, that would had had nothing to do with salvation.

It is worth noting that there is a universal principle that is fundamental to the process of one's spiritual development. The understanding of the state of sinfulness is a gradual revelation that happens one step at a time, and, over time, one comes to having a deeper and deeper realisation of his/her sorrowful situation. Repentance is not a one-time experience like many believe (protestants through charismatic revival), but it is rather a lengthy process, a life-long effort; the more one advances on his/her spiritual path, the more he/she realises how far away from the truth he/she really is.

Zacchaeus's story is today more relevant than at any point in history. Many of us strive to stay away from sin, but how many of us understand that there is a deeper, more painful and subtle side to it? We all try to not harm our neighbor, but how many of us really understand that we may be doing just that indirectly? Take the example of someone working in a bank or investment firm, helping skinning the poor guy for the benefit of some "shareholders"? Are we not contributors to an interest-based system which was declared to be lawless by God in the first place? How is getting everyone in a for-interest mortgage or a loan - slaves for life - different to what Psalm 9 says? Of course, if you asked a banker, they'll tell you they are doing God's work :)

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-treacy/goldman-sachs-doing-gods-work_b_4228965.html

But the financial world, besides being the most obvious place to look, is not the only place where we may become partakers in the work of iniquity. If you are a teacher and have to teach according to worldly wisdom and science, thus denying God, how is that better? And the examples go on and on and on ...

We strongly advise our Orthodox readers not to take any hastened decision on their own, but rather discuss the matter with their spiritual Father, failing to do so may lead to unwise decisions that may not be in an Orthodox spirit. As we highlighted in a related article (bellow), it should be the spiritual Father, who understands personal circumstances and has a good understanding of how to apply the principle of economy in the Orthodox Church, who's guidance each of us should seek in navigating these difficult times.

<http://orthodoxaustralia.org/2013/06/22/mark-of-the-beast-collective-sin-and-the-disavowal-of-christ/>