

An Exhortation to come and see Jesus

by

**George
Whitefield**

*An EXHORTATION to
come and see JESUS.*

A

SERMON

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LUKE xix. 9,10.

And Jesus said unto him, This Day is Salvation come to this House, insomuch as he also is the Son of Abraham.—For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

IF it were possible for us to know the Opinion of the Angels, who, as ministring Spirits, are sent forth to minister unto them who shall be Heirs of Salvation; I say, if it were possible for us to know their Opinion concerning us, I doubt not but we should find them wondering that so many, who are called *Christians*, and look upon themselves as such, that so many should be raised to Union with, and to the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, and yet so seldom talk of him in this World, who should be the Theme of their Discourse here, and of their eternal Hallelujahs in a World to come: We should find them wondring to see so many nominal Christians, pretending that it is because of a Fitness in the Creature, God bestows his Grace upon him; a Doctrine of the Devil is this, making Man a Saviour to him

self,

self, teaching him to go to God in his own Name, when it should be only by Faith in Jesus Christ. This is a very fatal Error, and of pernicious Consequence. Our Salvation is the free Gift of God; we owe it to his free Love. Many Instances there are in Scripture to this Purpose, but none more remarkable than this Text, which treats of the sound Conversion that past upon *Zaccheus*. It may be well worth our Noticing, what Means were used to bring him to lay hold on Jesus Christ the Saviour.

If we examine the Particulars, we shall find our Lord passing through *Jericho*. He, who went about always doing Good, as he came on Purpose to fulfil the Will of his Father, thought no Place improper, or unmeet,

to preach the Gospel in. Wherever he went he was preaching Salvation to poor Sinners: Now, by the good Providence of God he was led to *Jericho*. *Zaccheus*, he knew, was to be called; he therefore must go through this Place. Nothing could keep the Heart and Feet of Christ from him; he will have his People to himself. *Behold!* says the Evangelist *Luke*, *there was a Man named Zaccheus, and he was rich*. There is something remarkable in this Word, *Behold*, to engage our Attention. Behold, how many Things in all human Probability concurr'd to render his Conversion impossible.

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1. He was one of the Publicans: (These were very odious in the Sight of the *Jews*; and we find them rank'd among Harlots:) He was famous for Extortion, and many notorious Iniquities; and it is probable that he was the Head, or Chief Leader, of that Faction, for it is said, that he was *Rich*.

2. He was a Man of Note and Distinction; and it is said, that his Riches were got by Fraud and Injustice. Not many mighty Men after the Flesh, not many Noble are called. *Woe unto them that are rich*, says Christ, *for they have received their Consolation. 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 Heaven*. The Poor have the Gospel preached unto them, they come and receive Christ, while the Rich oftentimes think themselves too wise to be instructed. *Zaccheus* was a rich Man, yet the Grace of Christ triumphs over all. Be astonished O Heavens, and rejoice O Earth! Behold! how Christ prevented him—He *sought to see Jesus*. It is a good Thing, tho' rare, for those that are Great to be diligently enquiring how they may see Jesus: They should let their Light so shine before Men, that others seeing their good Works might be led to glorify their heavenly Father.

But what induced the Publican to come so openly, to expose himself thus, in a Throng,

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to see Jesus? we may very well suppose was the same Principle that raises Thousands, this Day, to see a particular Preacher. He came out of Curiosity, he did not come to be fed with his Doctrine. Would to God, that many here this Day, led by the same Principles with *Zaccheus*, did meet with the same kind Providence.—But alas! here is another Difficulty arises: He could not see Christ because of the Press. This is the Case

with Thousands who call themselves Christians; they have a Mind to see Christ, they would willingly see him in his Glory, in the World to come, and would be happy with him there; but they are afraid of being laugh'd at, of hearing the Crowd say, *Here is another of his Followers*; they are afraid of losing their worldly Business, or of being counted mad and fit for *Bedlam*. I doubt not but there are many who are kept from Jesus Christ for fear of the Press; they are afraid of a little Hurt, or Inconveniency. What will such say, when Christ shall appear in his Glory? would you be glad to be confessed by him then, you must now confess him before Men. At that Day it will be found who are truly wise, and who are truly mad. Are you ashamed to stand up for the Cause of Christ in the World? Are you afraid of being Members of Christ? I tell you, just Persons would crucify him afresh. were he to come again into the World. But

do

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do not you so learn Christ. He sees into the innermost Recesses of the Soul.—It is true those that are sincerely good are set up as Marks for everyone to shoot at; he that would live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer Persecution. There is a continual Enmity between the Seed of the Woman and the Seed of the Serpent. If you were of the World, the World would love its own; but because Christ hath chosen you out of the World, therefore it hateth you. Do not think of following Christ into Glory unless you go through the Press here. Look forward into Eternity and behold Christ coming, and his Reward with him, to give a kind Recompence for all the Temptations and Difficulties of this present Life.

But to return. *Zaccheus* was led by Curiosity to see Jesus: He climbs up into a Tree and there sits, little thinking to be taken any Notice of by Christ. But how may we imagine, was he filled with holy Confusion, when he looks down on Christ, and sees him, not only looking up to him, but calling of him by Name. Christ knoweth all Things, however the Infidels of our Age may deny his Divinity. He is God over all, blessed for evermore; and that God, who made all Things is surely acquainted with the Actions of his Creatures; he knows every one that is come to hear me this Morning, as truly as he knew

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Zaccheus

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Zaccheus 1700 Years ago, or *Nathaniel*, when he was under the Fig Tree. He knows every Soul that comes, not only out of Curiosity, but to be built up in the Knowledge of himself. Behave yourselves then, with that Decency, as though you saw him in the Body now speaking to you—Behold! then Jesus Christ prevents *Zaccheus* by his free Grace. Pray what Fitness was there in him for this Work? Was his Curiosity this Fitness? No; for had Christ served him as, indeed, he deserved, he would have past him by without the least Regard. We would never apprehend Christ, unless we were first apprehended of him; we have no more Power to let in Christ, than a dead Man has to raise himself to Life; and unless Christ prevents us by his Grace, we shall be miserable to all Eternity. If we imagine we are rich, are whole, and need not the Physician, Christ has nothing to do with us: The Whole need not the Physician, but such as are sick. Those that thus cry for him, will find him all in all, to heal the raging Maladies of the Soul. Christ called this Man with an outward Call, but it no doubt it reach'd his Heart by the Operation of his blessed Spirit, that same Voice gave him also Grace to receive the Call.

Thus it is with the Word preached: I may preach to you while I live; I may speak till I can speak no more; but the Doctrines of

Christ

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Christ will never do you good, unless he impress it upon your Hearts. O then, let every Creature look up to the Creator for a Blessing upon the Word, and then this Foolishness of Preaching may become a Means of saving your immortal Souls. How many Times has Jesus Christ called all of us? and yet we will not obey his Gospel. He stretches out his Hand, but we will not hear nor regard him; we will not lay hold on the Door of Mercy: But what will you do should Jesus Christ leave off calling you? How do you know but this may be the last Opportunity God will favour you with? How do you know, but e're Midnight, your Soul must launch into Eternity? tho' you are not called by himself in Person, yet, he calls you by his Ministers. O make Haste and come down, come down from every high Thought and Imagination that exalteth itself against him; let his Love compel you to come to him. Perhaps, you may object and say, If I come to Christ I shall turn melancholly and find no true Peace of Mind henceforth. These false Reports are from the Devil,

they are like the Spies that brought up an evil Report of the good Lord. *Zaccheus* received him joyfully; and, indeed, there is no true Joy but that which flows from the Manifestation of Christ. The little Man has a little Laughter, which as a fair Appearance in the Eyes of the World, which however, is but

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as the Crackling of Thorns under the Pot, while the good and truly great Man has a Joy that none can take away from him.

Some will say, there is no such Thing as Joy in the Holy Ghost; but well do I know there is; it carries its own Evidence along with it. Plead then with God in the Name of Jesus Christ; Continue to wrestle with him until he bestow a Blessing upon you, and give you a feeling of that Joy with which the World intermeddled not, and are Strangers to.

See further here, *Zaccheus* becomes a Convert, he is justified in the Sight of God. Whenever we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are justified, and all our Sins blotted out. Thus will it be to everyone that believeth on him, and trusteth in him. How many precious Fruits are brought home to us, by the Hand of Faith? Let none dare say that the Doctrine of free Grace, Justification by Faith, in Christ, gives Liberty to Sin. Shall we sin that Grace may abound? God forbid. No; Faith is a living Principle in the Soul, it always puts the Believer upon Action to the praise of him, who hath called him out of Darkness into his marvellous Light; he is careful to maintain good Works, though this will go but a little Way without this Principle of Faith in Christ, through whom our Actions are rendered acceptable in the Sight of God. See here what

blessed

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blessed Fruit Faith produces; no sooner was the Publican reach'd by Christ, but he begins with Confession of what he had been, *Behold, Lord, half of my Goods I give to the Poor, wherein I have done Wrong, &c.* Wherein he was unjust he confesses his Faults; he cared not if the World knew what a Sinner he had been. So *Paul* when converted is the chiefest of Sinners. *Mary Magdalen* had seven Devils, yet, she loved much, because much was forgiven her. The more sincere we are in our Conversion, the more willing we are to confess what we were before we were converted, that the Grace of Jesus Christ may be the more exalted. *This Day*, says Christ, *is Salvation come to this House.* He who was also the Son

of *Abraham*, was favoured with the same Blessing as *Abraham* was, who believed God, and it was counted unto him for Righteousness. What would I give were this wrote on the Table of all your Hearts? This Day may Salvation come, not only to your Hearts, but Houses. Christ came to seek and save that which was lost; to us is the Word of this Salvation sent; for the Promise is to you and to your Children, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.

To make a short Application.

I Invite you all to come to Jesus Christ this Day; make Haste then, come down and re-

ceive

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ceive him as your Lord and Saviour. If you apprehend you are in a lost Condition, he came to save such: Such as labour and are heavy laden; such as feel the Weight and Load of Sin on their Souls, a Burden too heavy for them to bear, are weary of it, and lye down under the Pressure of it, I, in the Name of my Lord and Master, invite you to come to him, that ye may find Rest for your Souls. If you come, Christ will be so far from reproaching you, as justly he might, that he'll say unto you, *Son, Daughter, be of good Cheer, your sins are forgiven you.* This he said to others before you: And he is the same Yesterday, To-day and for ever. Though he suffered on the Cross above 1700 Years ago, yet, he is the same in Goodness and Power as ever he was. He calls you now by his Ministers; O make Haste and come down, beg of him to bend your stubborn Hearts, that you may be willing to be brought to him in his own Way to be made poor in Spirit, and entituled to all Inheritance among them that are sanctified. O, come and drink of the Water of Life, you may buy without Money and without Price; he brings back those that are lost in their own Apprehension; he is labouring for your Salvation; open the Door of your Hearts, and the King of Glory shall enter in. But if you are Strangers to this Doctrine, and account it Foolishness, or if you

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think you have enough of your own to commend you in the Sight of God: However, you may go to Church, or receive the Sacrament, you have no true Love to the Lord Jesus Christ, you are Strangers to the

Truth of Grace in the Heart, and shall never so enter into the Kingdom of God—What shall I say? my Heart is full. Is not every Soul worth the Blood of Christ? Is it not immortal? Methinks, this would constrain me to speak to you for ever. I could wish to speak so loud as the whole World might hear me. I cannot bear to see my Fellow-Creatures perish for lack of Knowledge. I cannot view so many around me, who are shortly to appear before Christ, to be judged and sentenced, either to everlasting Happiness, or eternal Misery, and not lift up my Voice like a Trumpet. Come then, by Faith, and lay hold on the Lord Jesus Christ, though he be in Heaven he now calleth thee. O let this be the Day of your Conversion. Dost thou think, O Soul, that Christ will not regard thee, because thou art not now hearing a Sermon in a Church? Christ lives in a Temple not made with Hands, he loves to magnify his Strength by the weakest Instruments, and hath sent me, the least of his Servants, to compel you to come in. Had I less Love for your Souls I might speak less; but that Love of God, which is sued abroad in my Heart, will not permit me to

leave

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leave you till I see whether you will come to Christ or no. O for your Life receive him, for fear he may never call you any more. Behold the Bridegroom cometh, it may be at Midnight this Cry may be made. How would you hear this Morning, and live this Day, were you sure to die at Night? Are you so stupid you will not awake at the Noise of an Eternity. God grant you may begin to live, that when the King of Terrors shall come, you may have nothing to do but commit your souls into the Hands of your Redeemer. And as those who shew their Faith, by their Works) I would exhort you, to offer every one his Mite, this Day, for the Relief of poor Orphans in *Georgia*. Indeed, it has been reported, That I was now enriching myself, but I have given myself to this Work, and, for fear any should think the contrary, an exact Accompt shall be given at the Day of Judgment. Lay up then for yourselves, Treasures in Heaven where neither Moth nor Rust can corrupt, nor Thieves break thro' nor steal. You will have a Treasure that will never forsake you, Bags, that wax not old. May the Lord guide you by his Counsel, until he come to fetch you into Heaven, and make you Partakers of his Glory.

Now, unto God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, be all Honour, Praises, Dominion and Power, henceforth and for ever, Amen.

