Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Can you remember a time when you said something to someone, and they jumped in and said something like, “Wait, are you saying that … ?!” And you quickly had to reassure them that No, that is not what you said or meant, or you had to further clarify or restate some aspect of your argument. It is something that happens very often in conversations, isn’t it.

Well, it happens in the Canons of Dort as well. As you will recall, the Canons of Dort were written as a response to the unbiblical beliefs of a group in the church known as Arminians. And the authors of this confession knew exactly how the Arminians would respond to the points they were making. And so, quite often, we read further explanation of points that have already been made that is designed to remove any misunderstanding, or any mis-interpretation of what has been stated is rejected or refuted. And we have an example of that in the articles before us today. Our first two sermons on this head of doctrine explained the doctrines of total depravity and irresistible grace. So, we saw that our original and starting condition as human being is being spiritually dead. In other words, by ourselves, we simply cannot believe in Jesus. We must first be born again by the Holy Spirit. Only then can we respond to the gospel and believe in Jesus. And the doctrine of irresistible grace is that all those who God has chosen to salvation in Christ will be born again by the Spirit and will put their faith in Christ.

Now, this teaching can generate two, wrong responses:

The first is from **Arminians** who say that this view makes people like puppets on a string who are forced to believe. And they say this does not marry up with all the biblical invitations to choose or to receive or to follow or to believe.

And the second, wrong response is those who take these doctrines to extreme levels. They are known as **hyper-calvinists**. Their view is that if being born again is the hidden work of the Holy Spirit, and if God will bring all His elect ones to faith, then there is no need for evangelism. As they see it, God will do His business and He does not need us.

Well, both of these views are a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of biblical truth. And we want to see that today as we consider the account of Jesus’ encounter with Zacchaeus. And our ultimate goal is to see that **the Bible’s teaching of how a person is saved spurs us on to evangelize**. And we will see this as we consider Zacchaeus’ Original Condition, Zacchaeus’ New Condition, and How Zacchaeus was Converted.

1. So, first of all, **Zacchaeus’ Original Condition**.
   1. The account opens by telling us about a man named Zacchaeus who lived in Jericho. And **verse 9** reveals that Zacchaeus was a Jew; a “*Son of Abraham*.” So, he was a son of the covenant. He would have been taught God’s law from his earliest days. But in verse 9, Jesus also describes Zacchaeus as a lost one that He came “*to seek and to save*.” So, what this means is that while Zacchaeus was outwardly or physically circumcised, he did not have a circumcised heart.
      1. Way back in **Deuteronomy 6**, God said to the people of Israel, “*Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn*.” And then He went on to point out various areas of life where they were living in disobedience. So, while they were physically circumcised, it was clear from how they lived that there was no inward devotion to God, which is what having a circumcised heart is about.
   2. And this is exactly what we see with Zacchaeus. His name means pure/innocent. However, verse 2 reveals that he was a rich, **chief tax-collector**. And so, those that knew him probably thought that his name didn’t suit him at all! Why?
      1. Well, **Jericho** was a very important city. It lay on a main trade route into Jerusalem. And the land of Judea had been divided up into three areas with a central tax office in each area. And Jericho was one of these central tax offices. And what happened back then was that certain men paid the Roman government for the right to collect taxes or customs on all goods that were being imported or exported. They were called tax-farmers. And what the tax farmers did was to employ chief tax-collectors to gather taxes and customs for them. And then the chief tax-collectors employed tax-collectors who did the actual work of collecting the taxes. So, Zacchaeus was a chief tax-collector. Think of him as the manager of the Jericho branch of the Roman IRD, if you like.
      2. And if you turn back a few pages to **Luke 3**, you will see how tax-collectors operated. At that time, a large crowd of people had come to John to be baptized. And John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. So, John would call on them to repent; to stop sinning and to what was right. And so, different groups would ask John how they should change their ways. And in verse 12, we read that “*The tax-collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’ And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do."*” You see, it was common knowledge that tax-collectors ripped people off. They took more tax than they should have. And it stood to reason that if you were a chief tax-collector then you were further up the ‘rip-off chain.’
   3. And so, we see that **Zacchaeus was unconverted**. He was an unrepentant thief. And we can rest assured that Zacchaeus, as a Jew, knew the 8th Commandment very well – “*You shall not steal*.” But his love of money led him to rip off his own countrymen. And that is because, in his heart, he was not a follower of God. He did not long for the coming of the Promised Messiah, or, if he did, it was for a Messiah that would bring glory to the Jews, not a Messiah would bring him the forgiveness of his sins! So, Zacchaeus was lost; spiritually dead; a hostile enemy of God who was not capable, in and of himself, of any saving good.
      1. **And perhaps there may be some here today who are like Zacchaeus**. Brought up in a Christian home, been to Sunday school and catechism, heard many sermons, know the 10 commandments, but there is no love for Jesus in your heart. You go to church, but during the week, you are in unrepentant slavery to sin, whether it be the 8th or other commandments. Could this be you, my friend?
2. Well, that was Zacchaeus’ *original* condition – unconverted. But let’s look now, in the second place, at his **New Condition**.
   1. After Jesus called Zacchaeus to come down, we read that he “*hurried and came down and received [Jesus] joyfully*.” But look also at **verse 8**. There we are told that Zacchaeus said to Jesus, “*Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor*. *And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it four-fold*.”
      1. We noted earlier that the commandment alone had not been enough to help Zacchaeus resist the temptation to steal or to give to the poor or to pay back what he defrauded from people.
      2. And **Romans 1 and 2 and 8 talk about this**.
         1. Romans 2 explains that every single human being has the law of God written on his or her heart. We know what is right and what is wrong.
         2. But what does Romans 1 say? Unbelieving man “*suppresses the truth in unrighteousness*.” We do not want to obey God’s law in our natural condition, so we suppress it, we ignore it, we convince ourselves that there is no God, and we live how we please.
         3. Romans 8:7 puts it this way, “*For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot*.”
   2. So, what brought about this change in Zacchaeus? Answer? **Jesus**! In verse 9, Jesus declares that salvation had come to Zacchaeus. And as we saw last week, that means that Zacchaeus had been born again by the Holy Spirit. He was a new creation. He had been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God. He had received Christ and believed in His name, and was now an adopted child of God. And so, Zacchaeus was a convert – a **changed man**.
   3. And what this means, biblically, as we have learned in this Canons of Dort sermon series, is that before the creation of the world, the Father had chosen Zacchaeus to be among the number of persons that He will present to His Son, Jesus, on Judgment Day. And this was the day that that election in eternity past came to fruition in history! This was the day and the moment that Zacchaeus was irresistibly drawn to Jesus.
   4. Now, if we could have asked Zacchaeus about all this, he wouldn’t have said anything about election and irresistible grace and being born again. He would have said, Jesus told me to come down and I did! Jesus told me that He had to stay at my house, and I was glad to have Him! And I know that He is more than just a man – He is the Messiah! And it is because of Him that I am done with being a thief. I love Him and I want to obey the commandments. I want to serve Him and follow Him with all my heart!
   5. And **this is how it is with all genuine Christians**. Is this how it is with you? Are you converted? Do you love Jesus? Is he your only hope for salvation? Do you live for Him? Are you eager to obey His commands? Do you turn to Him in confession when you have sinned? Do you love your brothers and sisters – your spiritual family?
      1. If not, then please receive Jesus as your Saviour and Lord today. Rest in His work on the cross. It is sufficient to pay for *all* your sins! And tell Him about your sins. Lord, I have done this and this; I am so sorry. And then, change your ways. Turn away from sin and towards good. Live for Him.
3. And this leads us into our third and last point, which is **How Zacchaeus was Converted**.
   1. Boy and girls, have you eaten **Brussels sprouts**? Or broad beans or endive? I am not sure which food it is for you, but I am sure all of us can remember one type of food that we ate as children that we thought tasted absolutely disgusting. Now, here is my next question: With that food, is it right to say that you ate it? Or, are you like me, in that your mum or dad forced the brussels sprouts into your mouth and made you take each chew and swallow until it was all gone, even though it took 45 minutes for that one brussels sprout? And only then did you get dessert. And of course, the only way to get over such a traumatic experience is to do the same thing to your own kids :-) Well, I guess that’s probably illegal now or parents probably follow child-led eating philosophies. But back then, we were being taught important life lessons with forced feeding of brussels sprouts :-) Well, in all seriousness, **that is how Arminians see our view of salvation**. Because we hold that the Holy Spirit sovereignly works within a person to create a new heart that is made able to believe, they see that as akin to a forced salvation, or violent coercion of the will of the individual. They see this as us being like a puppet or a block or stone that is forced into salvation.
   2. But **is that what we see, here, with Zacchaeus**?
      1. Verse 3 tells us that “*he was seeking to see who Jesus was*.”
         1. The last part of chapter 18 tells the story of a blind man being healed as Jesus approached Jericho. Perhaps Zacchaeus had heard about that.
         2. But Luke has also recorded two episodes in which the Pharisees questioned Jesus about His willingness to eat with tax-collectors. One of these is in Luke 5 and it happens as a result of Jesus calling **Levi**, a tax-collector, to be one of His disciples. And the first thing Levi did after that was to host a feast for Jesus, at which many people, including many other tax-collectors, were present. And perhaps Zacchaeus had been there or heard about it on the tax-collectors Whatsapp group chat, because it caused quite the scandal at the time.
      2. Well, whatever the case, we are also told in verse 3 that Zacchaeus was “*small in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see [Jesus]*.”
      3. Does this sound like a puppet being led along, someone being forced to do something that he does not want to do? It doesn’t, does it. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus.
      4. And then Jesus arrived and looked up and said, “*Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.”* And Zacchaeus“*hurried and came down and received him joyfully.”* Again, does this sound like Zacchaeus didn’t really want to come down the tree but felt that he had no option? It does not.
      5. And did Jesus then tell Zacchaeus that he had to give to the poor and pay back fourfold what he had defrauded, and Zacchaeus grudgingly agreed because he couldn’t get out of it? Is that how it reads to you? No, it does not.
      6. He *wanted* to see Jesus. He *climbed* the tree. He *hurried* down. He *rejoiced*. He *volunteered* to give to the poor. This is the will of Zacchaeus on display; these are the action and choices of Zacchaeus on display.
   3. But we must also take the **full counsel of God’s word** into account. In **John 6:44**, Jesus said, “*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me* ***draws*** *Him*.”
      1. And we have referred to this verse and the significance of the word “draw” often. It is used two other times in the New Testament: once of fish in a net being drawn into a boat and once of a defendant who was drawn into court to face charges. So, the fish are not freely and independently climbing into the boat and the defendant isn’t in court because he chooses to be; they are both compelled or drawn.
      2. And in the ultimate sense, if Zacchaeus had been left to freely and independently act towards Jesus, He would *not* have wanted to see Him or climb the tree or hurry down when Jesus called Him. And He would *certainly not* have rejoiced and offered to give his money to the poor. He was drawn to do all that by the Holy Spirit.
   4. And that is the full biblical view of salvation that the Canons of Dort are trying to protect and promote. As Article 16 puts it:

*This divine grace of regeneration does not act upon men as if they were blocks and stones and does not take away the will and its properties, or violently coerce it, but makes the will spiritually alive, heals it, corrects it, pleasantly and at the same time powerfully bends it. As a result, where formerly the rebellion and resistance of the flesh fully dominated, now a prompt and sincere obedience of the Spirit begins to prevail, in which the true, spiritual renewal and freedom of our will consists. And if the wonderful Maker of all good did not deal with us in this way, man would have no hope of rising from his fall through this free will, by which he, when he was still standing, plunged himself into ruin.*

* 1. And so, going back to my brussels sprouts illustration, being saved is not at all like being forced to eat a food that you detest. A better illustration, though not perfect, would be a young baby who is being fed by its mother. And the food that the baby is being fed is food the baby loves and is hungry for, and it can’t gobble each mouthful down fast enough!

But as we conclude, what is the **key moment** in the account of Zacchaeus? It is when Jesus said, “*Zacchaeus, hurry and come down*.” For it is that call of Jesus that elicited the response from Zacchaeus.

And that is why we read **2 Corinthians 5**, earlier. There we read about the “*message of reconciliation*,” which is the preaching of the gospel. And that message had been entrusted to the Apostles for them to preach to others. And Paul said, “*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God*.” How does God call His elect ones and do the work of regeneration in them? What is it that make hungry sinners come to Jesus in repentance and faith? The preaching of the Gospel.

And this is why, when there were all sorts of things that Pastor Timothy could have done with his time, Paul said to him, “*Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching*.” And it is also why you and I must take every opportunity that we can to tell others the good news about salvation in Jesus. Jesus has not returned yet, so we know that there are more elect ones still to come to faith. And the Holy Spirit uses official preaching and your and my sharing of the gospel to bring sinners to faith in Christ.

Brothers and sisters, there are more Zacchaeuses out there. May the Lord use us to bring them to faith in Christ. Amen.