


MAXIE DUNNAM



THE
WESLEYAN
JOURNEY

A Workbook on Salvation

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WEEK ONE

IT'S ALL ABOUT
SALVATION

DAY ONE



TO SEEK AND SAVE THE LOST

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

(Luke 19:5-10)

If you ever attended Sunday school as a child, you heard the story of Zacchaeus. You probably sang this song:

Zacchaeus was a wee little man,
a wee little man was he.
He climbed up in the sycamore tree,
for the Lord he wanted to see.

Some have called him a “treetop saint,” one not quite ready to say yes or get involved in the available opportunities to know Jesus. Whatever else we might say about him, and a lot has been said (and sung), we can confidently say he was curious; not yet convinced, but curious.

He had heard so much talk about Jesus, and, hearing that Jesus had come to Jericho, Zacchaeus

wanted to see him. He knew the crowd would be great and all would be pressing in to see and maybe to touch or speak to Jesus. How could he navigate the crowd? Being a “wee little man,” he had only one option: he would climb the sycamore tree. There, above the crowd, he would have a commanding view. Also, being a chief tax collector, he would not be seen and embarrassed by his curiosity. The crowd would not know he was anywhere around.

But Jesus knew. He not only saw Zacchaeus but also spoke to him, even calling him by name: “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.”

Because he didn’t hesitate a moment, we can easily believe that Zacchaeus had been pondering his life situation, feeling deeply the absence of meaning, obviously knowing he was “up a tree” in all sorts of ways. He jumped at the opportunity to come down. His response was as specific as the immediacy of his action: “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

Jesus was also immediate and specific in his response. “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Salvation! It’s all about salvation.

Zacchaeus was not aware that what had begun to unfold for him and the people in Jericho that day was something the prophet Isaiah had spoken of more than five hundred years before. Certainly, for Zacchaeus, this was the moment of God’s fulfilling of a promise that was proclaimed over and over again: *salvation*.

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn. . . .*

*I delight greatly in the LORD;
my soul rejoices in my God.
For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

(Isaiah 61:1-2, 10)

It’s all about salvation!

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Spend a few minutes reflecting on how you learned or what you know about Zacchaeus.

If you heard about him in Sunday school when you were a child, recall some of those memories.

Did you learn the song, “Zacchaeus was a wee little man”? If you are where you can sing it without feeling too embarrassed, do so.

Recall and reflect on any teaching that connected Zacchaeus with salvation.

DURING THE DAY

Have a conversation with at least one person today about Zacchaeus. Have they heard of him? What do they remember about him? Have they connected Zacchaeus with salvation?

DAY TWO



GARMENTS OF SALVATION

*I delight greatly in the LORD;
my soul rejoices in my God.
For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

(Isaiah 61:10)

It's all about salvation.

Yesterday we focused on Zacchaeus and Jesus's affirmation, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:9-10). We made the claim that what began to unfold in Jericho that day was something the prophet Isaiah had spoken of more than five hundred years before.

Jerusalem was leveled to the ground in 587 BC by the armies of Babylon. Much of the population was marched off to the Tigris and Euphrates River valleys. There they lived in exile for the next fifty to seventy years. Coming out of exile, their joyous optimism was short-lived. Their existence became bleak as they were abruptly challenged by tremendous economic difficulties. Facing meager food supplies and harsh weather conditions, the people found the task of rebuilding their once-proud homeland next to impossible. They came home to a forsaken and abandoned city in ruins.

God's promises, in which the people had faithfully believed during their exile, had not materialized. God had brought them back home, but their new life fell far short of what the exilic prophets had promised. It was to this disappointment that the prophet Isaiah spoke God's word. Though not presently apparent, a remarkable transformation is heralded by the Scriptures. Isaiah uses the metaphor of a grand and glorious wedding: "as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest / and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."

God promises a salvation through this most unlikely vehicle, the dress of a wedding party. God had not divorced God's people. The watching nations will see God's awesome sovereignty. Something unexpected and wondrous is happening. The God who loves justice alters the circumstances of the oppressed and the brokenhearted. The prophet hammers home the reality with powerful imagery:

*I delight greatly in the LORD;
my soul rejoices in my God.
For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness.*

It's all about salvation. Certainly, Israel needed saving, as did Zacchaeus. There is a sense in which the whole of Scripture is the story of salvation. That is what God is about, salvation. That's the reason God came to live among us in a man, Jesus. That's the reason Jesus lived, taught, suffered, and died on our behalf. It's all about salvation.

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Spend a few minutes reflecting on the claim, "It's all about salvation." Search your memory and rehearse your knowledge of Scripture. What passages, stories, persons, relationships, and incidents do you recall? Make some notes. What do the Scriptures you recall in this rehearsal have to do with salvation?

Do you have a favorite Bible verse? Does that verse say anything to you about salvation?

DURING THE DAY

Who were the first persons in your life who taught you the Bible or introduced you to the whole notion of salvation? Call or write one of those persons a note of thanks today.

DAY THREE



THE END IS IN ONE WORD: *SALVATION*

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. (Romans 7:15-20)

In his sermon “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” John Wesley summarized the goal of genuine Christian religion: “The end is, in one word, salvation.”

In its broadest sense, Wesley understands salvation as the entire redeeming work of God in a human life, “from the first dawning of grace in the soul, till it is consummated in glory.” Indeed, Wesley includes within his concept of salvation “all the drawings of the Father”—which he terms “preventing grace”—in the heart of a person as yet uncommitted to God. Whether or not it is ultimately embraced, this preventing grace is part of salvation in its broadest sense.¹

We will consider this later in our workbook journey.

The transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer was the chief theme of John Wesley’s life and work, and a distinctive contribution the Methodists make to the rest of the church. The British Methodist William B. Fitzgerald summarized Wesley’s theology of salvation with this fourfold dictum: All people need to be saved from sin, all people may be saved from sin, all people may know they are saved from sin, and all people may be saved to the uttermost.²

We don’t get far into the Bible before we are confronted with the fact of sin, and that all need

to be saved. It began in the garden of Eden. The way the story is told doesn't give a time line, underscoring the fact that Adam and Eve didn't live very long before they gave in to the serpent of temptation.

Chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis tell the story of Creation that is climaxed with God creating humans. All other dimensions of creation were described as good, but after creating humankind, God recognizes creation as "very good." Chapter 2 closes with the beautiful expression of the marriage covenant. The last verse of the chapter is a superbly simple expression of innocence. "Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:25).

In this fast-moving drama, chapter 3 opens with the serpent convincing Adam and Eve that they didn't have to pay attention to God's instruction that they were not to eat the fruit of one particular tree in the garden of Eden. From that point on, sin in human life has been a universal fact; and sin is like quicksand. When we get ourselves into quicksand and try to get ourselves out, we only end up getting in deeper. We are not capable of extricating ourselves from the messes we get into. And since we have violated God's way for us, we are helplessly estranged from him. We need a rescuer, a savior. Yet there is hope. Not only do all need to be saved, *all can be saved*. That's the clear message of Scripture. Yes, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," but they can be "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:23-24).

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

How do you respond to the assertion that all need to be saved? Is it true for you—do you know or have you known that you need to be saved?

Day Three

Reflect on the experiences and conversations you have had in relationships over the past few months. Do you know people who are unaware that they need to be saved?

Go a step further: Do you know people who may feel the need, but are doubtful that they can be saved?

DURING THE DAY

Make a list of the persons you have thought of who are unaware that they need to be saved or doubtful that they can be saved. Keep that list with you today, and find occasion, however brief, to pray for them. Also, if you encounter them, be mindful of your thoughts about them and let that inform your conversation.

NOTES

1. Aaron Mead, "John Wesley on Salvation," *Theologians & Theology*, www.theologian-theology.com/theologians/john-wesley-salvation/.
2. William B. Fitzgerald, *The Roots of Methodism* (London: Epworth, 1903), 191–217.

DAY FOUR



ALL CAN KNOW THEY ARE SAVED

If Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (Romans 8:10-17)

Most people in the Methodist/Wesleyan tradition of the Christian faith know at least the broad outline of the life of our founder, John Wesley. In 1725, having been nurtured by his mother, Susanna, and his father, Samuel, a priest in the Church of England, John, while a student at Oxford University, had a conversion to the ideal of holy living. There are few examples in history of a more disciplined religious person: he rose at 4 a.m., read the New Testament in Greek for an hour, and then prayed for an hour with his brother Charles and others who had joined him in what was derisively called the Holy Club. He spent time visiting prisons and gave to the poor all of his money except that which was absolutely necessary for his own living. He was almost neurotically preoccupied with the right use of his time.

He was a man desperately seeking salvation and assurance of his salvation. He was tirelessly

bent upon achieving that and drove himself as a merciless taskmaster in all the religious disciplines and services that could be imagined. He even went to the American colonies as a missionary to the Indians, but failed in that, and returned home from Georgia, downcast in mind, despondent in spirit, pierced to his heart with the futility of all his efforts and the emptiness of his soul.

It was in that despondent mood that he went to a prayer meeting on Aldersgate Street, London, on May 24, 1738. A layperson read Martin Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans and Wesley described later what happened in his own life: "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death" (emphasis mine).³

This was the watershed experience that gave Wesley assurance of his salvation. No wonder this became one of the four "alls" in Fitzgerald's summary of Wesley's understanding of salvation: all can know they are saved.

This Aldersgate experience transformed Wesley from a slave to a son. He knew that, in his words, "Christ had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death." The apostle Paul might say that Wesley did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but the spirit of sonship—the sonship that would enable him to cry, "Abba!" "Father!" (see Romans 8:15 NRSV).

REFLECTING AND RECORDING

Assurance is the privilege of all Christians, though not all Christians claim it. Spend a few minutes reflecting on whether you are claiming that gift.

EXPLORE THE WESLEYAN UNDERSTANDING OF SALVATION THROUGH GRACE.

The transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer was a central theme of John Wesley's life and work.

In *The Wesleyan Journey: A Workbook on Salvation*, beloved pastor and author Maxie Dunnam invites readers to spend time every day exploring Wesley's understanding of salvation through prayer, study, and reflection. Based on John Wesley's theology and the Bible's teaching on what it means to be saved, this workbook will help readers consider anew God's ever-present grace; the experience of acceptance, pardon, and forgiveness; and the lifelong journey to become more Christlike.

Through eight weeks, each with seven days of content and space for written reflection, Dunnam leads us through Wesley's understanding of salvation in the Bible, helping us see that full salvation is not a one-time experience of redemption but a lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus every day.



MAXIE DUNNAM became the fifth president of Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, and served for 14 years. Dunnam came to Asbury after 12 years of fruitful ministry at the 5,000-member Christ United Methodist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. From 1975 to 1982, Dunnam was world editor of *The Upper Room*. Dunnam is the author of more than 40 books, including the best-selling *Workbook of Living Prayer* (over one million copies sold). Dunnam presently serves as director of Christ Church Global at Christ United Methodist Church in Memphis, Tennessee.

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