



The unfolding of your words gives light.

## To Seek and to Save

### An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke

<sup>27</sup>After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth<sup>a</sup>, and He said to him, “Follow Me<sup>b</sup>.”<sup>28</sup> And he left everything behind, and got up and *began* to follow Him<sup>c</sup>.<sup>29</sup> And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other *people* who were reclining *at the table* with them<sup>d</sup>.<sup>30</sup> The Pharisees and their scribes *began* grumbling at His disciples<sup>e</sup>, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners<sup>f</sup>?”<sup>31</sup> And Jesus answered and said to them, “*It is* not those who are well

<sup>a</sup> 5:27 **He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth.** There were two types of tax-collector. The general tax-collector, called *Gabbai*, collected the ground, income and poll taxes. The *Mokhes*, or custom house official, was known as one who sat along trade routes (like this one in Capernaum). He was known to be especially brutal to poor people. He exacted taxes on imports and exports, sales taxes, bridge money, road money, harbor dues and town dues. Alfred Edersheim (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*) says that a tax collector could come up with a name for about anything he wanted to tax, such as axles, wheels, pack-animals, pedestrians, roads, highways, admission to markets, crossing rivers, dams, license fees and luxuries. He had authority to stop travelers and rifle through all their personal belongings looking for taxable items.

What made this tax collector particularly loathsome was that he was a Jew—indeed a Jew bearing the name of the priestly tribe in Israel.

<sup>b</sup> 5:27 **He said to him, “Follow Me.”** Was this a call to salvation or a call to be a disciple? What is the difference? You cannot make dispensational distinctions regarding the call to salvation. Jesus has always called people to follow Him and empowered them to do so.

<sup>c</sup> 5:28 **he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him.** You do not have to earn salvation, but there is a great price to be paid while following Him. You cannot pick up some objects without letting go of others. Matthew knew that following Jesus meant an end to his swindling.

<sup>d</sup> 5:29 **Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them.** Even though Luke uses two different words that are translated “great” here, the picture he paints is of a big feast and a big crowd. Do not picture people standing around drinking and eating hors d’ouvres. Picture a formal meal with guests reclining and being served. When you love Jesus and you love others, it is only natural to want to introduce them. As J. C. Ryle said, “A converted man will not wish to go to heaven alone.”

<sup>e</sup> 5:30 **The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples.** This kind of grumbling in Scripture is almost always directed at leaders by those who think they have a better idea. Murmurers and grumblers in Scripture considered themselves the standard by which others should be judged but always found themselves on the wrong side of God’s judgment.

- Israel grumbled at Moses and Aaron for leading them out of Egypt when they saw the powerful inhabitants of Caanan. Moses had to intercede to prevent the Lord from destroying them (Numbers 14:11-20).
- They grumbled after Moses moderated God’s judgment of Korah and his followers and Aaron had to intercede to stop a plague from consuming the whole assembly (Numbers 16:46-49).

<sup>f</sup> 5:30 **Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?** There are a number of characteristics common to judgmental Pharisees:

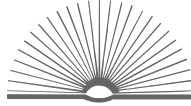
- They are frequently angry.

The Gospel of Luke  
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who need a physician, but those who are sick<sup>a</sup>.<sup>32</sup> I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance<sup>b</sup>.<sup>c</sup>

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- They engage in name-calling. Some names are emotionally-charged. It is a lot easier for me to believe you are an idiot than to explain why I believe you are an idiot.
  - They presume guilt by association.
  - They make judgment calls based more on bias than facts.
  - They have a very high opinion of themselves.

The Pharisees and scribes practiced an extreme form of the biblical doctrine of separation (2 Corinthians 6:15-18). There is no question that separation is taught in the Scripture, but like so many good doctrines, its practice can cross a line where to obey it is to disobey God. Separation is less a matter of the company you keep than it is a matter of how you stand out in the company you keep. Certainly some of us should stay away from certain people, but Jesus was not in danger of falling into the lifestyle of the people at this party. They were in “danger” of meeting the One Who would bring them out of darkness into His marvelous light.

<sup>a</sup> 5:31 **Jesus answered and said to them, “It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick.”** This may be a simple way to answer the whole *From whom should we separate?* question. When we find ourselves in the company of people of questionable reputation we should ask whether we are there for our own benefit or for the benefit of others. Jesus went where He was needed. He did not *need* to go where sinners were, but the sinners needed Him to come where they were.

<sup>b</sup> 5:32 **I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.** Jesus did not say that there are actually people who have a right standing before God based on their works. He said that only sinners need to repent. Some people never wake up to the need for repentance because they never see themselves next to a holy God.

<sup>c</sup> 5:27-32 Do you know shame? Have you ever had a dark secret come out that embarrassed you or your family? You are in a more blessed condition than those whose secrets have not yet come out or those who are convinced that their secrets are not worthy of shame. Here is not motivation to sin, but worthy motivation to acknowledge your sin and repent:

Awareness of being rescued from a horrible end naturally results in warning others as well as pointing them to deliverance.

1. Bless the Lord for the shame because without it you would look to the same places as the world for satisfaction.
2. Bless the Lord for the shame because without it you would not run to Him for forgiveness.
3. Bless the Lord for the shame because it connects you with others in a fellowship of the rescued.
4. Bless the Lord for the shame because without it believers would be no different from unbelievers.
5. Bless the Lord for the shame because with its memory comes humility.

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