

## GenZ - INTEGRITY

### Bible Glossary: People & Places

#### Paul

##### Sermon Reference

Paul is mentioned as a figure who fought against legalism and license in the early church and stood for integrity and authenticity. He confronted duplicity, such as that found in Gnosticism, and emphasized the wholeness of spirit, soul, and body in following Christ.

##### Importance in the Bible

Paul authored much of the New Testament, provided theological clarity on grace, faith, and righteousness, and modeled Christian integrity and leadership. His confrontations with hypocrisy and false teachings safeguard the church's doctrinal purity. Paul's life and letters teach believers how to embody the gospel in a broken world, marrying heartfelt transformation with visible, moral living. His legacy sets the standard for Christian maturity and integrity.

##### Background Context

Paul, originally named Saul of Tarsus, was a Pharisee educated under Gamaliel. Paul initially persecuted Christians but experienced a dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, where Christ revealed Himself to Paul (Acts 9). Following this event, Paul became a devoted apostle of Jesus Christ, dedicating his life to preaching the gospel to the Gentiles and strengthening early Christian communities across the Roman Empire.

Paul's missionary journeys are well documented in the Book of Acts and in the letters he wrote to various churches addressing theological issues, practical living, and church unity. Central to Paul's teaching is the doctrine of justification by faith—salvation as a free gift of grace from God rather than through works or legalistic adherence to the Mosaic Law. This theological foundation laid a new paradigm that distinguished Christianity distinctly from Judaism and other contemporary religions.

In this sermon, Paul's mission to address the problems of legalism and license reveals his emphasis on integrity: that a believer's external actions must align with inner transformation. Legalism, wherein people sought righteousness through strict rule-keeping without heart change, clashed with licentiousness, the false belief that internal knowledge of salvation could excuse sinful external behavior. Paul robustly opposed both movements, seeking to establish a holistic obedience marked by genuine faith and outward manifestation of godliness.

Paul's teachings have enduring importance to Christianity, establishing the ethical framework for living a life consistent with the gospel message. His insistence on integrity, wholeness of body, soul, and spirit predates and combats today's struggles with duplicity. Paul's role as apostle not only shaped the early church but also continues to influence Christian theology, discipleship, and leadership to the present day.

## Zacchaeus

### Sermon Reference

Zacchaeus is presented as a tax collector of Jericho with a bad reputation who sought to see Jesus by climbing a sycamore tree. After Jesus called him down and stayed at his house, Zacchaeus committed to restitution and generosity, becoming a man of integrity.

### Importance in the Bible

Zacchaeus stands as a vivid example of Jesus' ministry to the marginalized and sinners. His story underscores the bishop's teaching that integrity is not merely adherence to law but a radical inner transformation that manifests outwardly. Zacchaeus' restitution sets a precedent for Christian repentance, highlighting the cost and evidence of true change. His encounter with Jesus provides hope that no one is beyond restoration and that integrity is possible regardless of a person's past reputation.

### Background Context

Zacchaeus lived during the first century in Jericho, a well-known transit city east of Jerusalem, and a Roman stronghold. As a tax collector—a publican—in the Roman tax system, Zacchaeus was despised by his fellow Jews. Tax collectors often extorted money, overcharging citizens and enriching themselves at the expense of their own people. Their collaboration with Rome rendered them social outcasts, labeled sinners and traitors within Jewish society.

The biblical narrative found in Luke 19 describes Zacchaeus as short in stature, which physically limited his view of Jesus as He entered Jericho. Undeterred, Zacchaeus climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus. Jesus' response was immediate and personal: He called Zacchaeus down and chose to stay at his home. This gesture startled the crowd and scandalized social expectations, highlighting Jesus' mission to seek and save the lost, regardless of their past.

During dinner Zacchaeus declared his intent to give half of his possessions to the poor and repay fourfold anyone he had defrauded. This restitution signifies a radical change from selfishness to generosity and justice. Zacchaeus' repentance restored his relationship with God and community, moving him from a reputation of sin to one of integrity and faithfulness.

Zacchaeus serves as a powerful biblical example of salvation's impact on integrity. His story emphasizes that forgiveness and acceptance from Jesus lead not only to inner renewal but also to tangible acts of righteousness.

# Caesar Augustus

## Sermon Reference

Caesar Augustus is referenced regarding his issuing a decree for a census that led everyone to register in their own town, a tax reform measure that introduced a uniform poll tax and greater transparency in tax collection during the Roman Empire.

## Importance in the Bible

Augustus holds a unique place historically and biblically as the emperor at whose command the census was taken leading to the Nativity narrative in Luke.

## Background Context

Caesar Augustus, born Gaius Octavius Thurinus, was the first Roman Emperor and ruled from 27 B.C. until his death in A.D. 14. His reign marked the beginning of the Pax Romana — a period of relative peace and stability across the Roman Empire. Augustus established political, social, and economic reforms that centralized power in Rome while laying foundations for lasting empire governance, including changes in taxation that affected the provinces.

Tax collection before Augustus' time was infamous for corruption due to publicans (tax collectors) who manipulated property values and levies for personal gain; often overtaxing citizens while keeping surplus wealth. To address these inefficiencies and abuses, Augustus introduced reforms such as the census decree documented in Luke 2, which ordered all residents to register in their ancestral towns. This census was critical not only for taxation but also for administrative control — enabling better assessment of population and taxable assets.

The new tax system under Augustus replaced the inconsistent and overly exploitative individual estate appraisals with a uniform poll tax per person, making collections more standardized and verifiable. Even given these reforms, tax collectors retained significant leeway in levying taxes. The system illustrates the challenging balance between Roman legal authority and the abuses tax collectors sometimes committed. This background helps us understand why tax collectors like Zacchaeus were deeply unsavory figures despite conforming to Roman law and why their repentance was so dramatic.

Caesar Augustus' decree and reforms bear broader biblical significance as well. They fulfill prophetic expectations about the birth of Christ occurring during this census (Luke 2), situating the gospel message historically within the Roman imperial system. Augustus' reign provides the political framework in which Christian narratives unfold and helps us comprehend the cultural, social, and economic pressures surrounding figures like Zacchaeus.

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