

FOUR UNWORTHY MEN ... and a glorious sequel
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Someone said, "Until a man reaches rockbottom, he has no chance of reaching the Rock of Ages. " There is reason to believe that this statement reaches the ultimate in wisdom. When a man believes in and proclaims his importance, his virtue may be suspect. Yet when a man believes he is totally inadequate, it is often possible to find possibilities of true worth amid his failures. A Pharisee prayed in the temple, and, in spite of his eloquent utterances, he lacked true goodness. A publican was overwhelmed by shame, and yet Jesus saw in him the beginning of real accomplishment. The Bible presents at least four shining examples of this type of man.

The schemer ... Jacob (Gen. 32: 10)

Jacob was a cheat, a schemer, a swindler! He stole his brother's birthright and for a time outwitted his father-in-law. All through his strange and bewildering life, Jacob lived by his wits. What he desired, he obtained, even if his methods were ruthless. It was nevertheless a fact of life that sooner or later such a man would meet a greater swindler. The account of Jacob's sojourn in a foreign land and of his dispute regarding two marriages and an inheritance, makes exciting reading. Jacob became homesick for his country and, relying upon his wits, tried to bribe his angry brother. When all failed, the schemer reached rock bottom and said, "I am not worthy" (Gen. 32:10).

The saint ... John the Baptist (John 1:27)

When John commenced his preaching, he said, "I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not. He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. " When we consider how Jesus said of John: "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist. . ." (Luke 7:28), it appears strange that John should consider himself to be unworthy. Yet the evangelist was comparing himself with Jesus and not with people. There are men who might consider themselves to be very tall if they stood alongside midgets. Yet they would be insignificant if compared with a giant. Even the apostle to the Gentiles said he was the chief of sinners. (See I Tim. 1: 15.) The best of men, standing before God and their consciences, can only exclaim, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips. . ." (Isa. 6:5). To reach the Rock of Ages, people must first reach rock bottom!

The soldier ... the centurion (Luke 7:6)

When Jesus was about to enter the home of the Roman centurion, the soldier became worried and said, " . . . I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof. " Many of the people standing there could have argued against that opinion. The Roman was probably the most commendable man in the city. His superiors obviously thought him worthy of promotion; they had made him a captain. The Jews admired his worth, for he had built a synagogue. To do this he must have been a wealthy man and therefore would have been considered worthy of anything! His love for a slave child indicated he was no ordinary soldier; slaves were very cheap in the market place. Yet, he loved that boy and did all he could to save the young life. Everybody considered him to be worthy, including Christ, who said the man's faith exceeded anything found in Israel.

The son ... the prodigal (Luke 15:2 1)

This prodigal son sacrificed everything in the hope of discovering happiness in a distant land. Alas, his ambitions were never realized and he finished by stealing food from swine. Only severe anguish brought him to his own personal rock bottom, where his soul yearned

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to regain what had been lost. When he returned home, he discovered his father had been watching for his return ever since he went away. As the old man's arms encircled the son's shoulders, the prodigal knew he had reached his Rock of Ages. The tears falling from the father's eyes revealed the overflowing compassion in his heart. God is like that!

The best of men, whether they realize it or not, are completely unworthy of God's attention, and, without the glorious sequel, the future would be bleak! John, describing the wonders of heaven, spoke of the Savior and went on to say ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands will, one day, unite to say, "THOU ART WORTHY." The righteousness of the Lord Jesus will overshadow our blemishes; His beauty will hide our insufficiencies. Without Jesus, the best of people will be bankrupt, both here and in eternity.

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