

BOOK OF ZECHARIAH
PRESENT ENCOURAGEMENT FROM GOD-PART 2
ZECHARIAH 8:9-17

Introduction

We saw how the encouraging prophecy of Zechariah 8:1-8 will only find its fulfillment in the establishment of Christ's millennial reign on the earth. But just like us, God's people needed some encouragement to help them in the days they were living! Here we see that the LORD did have a word to help the people of Zechariah's generation!

We see here that God gives them His assurance that He will indeed respond to the **repentance of their sin** and their **renewed obedience to Him and His Word** and that He has purposed a new time of blessing for them!

Last week we saw:

I. GOD SPEAKS OF BOTH THE PRESENT AND THE PAST. (Vs 9-10)
This remnant was to survey what had been accomplished since they undertook to obey God's voice. For there was a great contrast between the time before they took up the work of the Temple and the conditions of life since they hearkened to the voice of God through His prophets.

They were to continue in their renewed obedience to God's word and bring this good work to conclusion.

II. GOD PROMISED RENEWED FRUITFULNESS. (Vs. 11-12)

God had terminated their former harsh conditions and now informs them of His dramatic change of attitude toward them!

The improved conditions that the restored remnant had been experiencing since they sincerely set themselves to the task of building God's Temple, were only a pledge of the greater blessings that God was promising them!

Since they had heeded the prophetic warnings, repented and taken up the work of rebuilding, God would bless them in all their ways! Again, it is not human effort or even nature's effort that makes for our prosperity! Our prosperity is the gracious gift of God!

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III. GOD'S NEW PURPOSE FOR HIS PEOPLE. (Vs. 13-15)

The restoration of their covenant blessings is summed up in **verse 13**.

The Lord reversed their fortunes. They had been a curse among the nations because they had broken the covenant and inherited the curse of *Deuteronomy 28*.

But now, because of their renewed repentance and obedience, God would act to restore them, but that is not an end in itself.

He would save them and as a result they "*shall be a blessing.*" The LORD's people had a specific role to perform. They would be blessed by God so that they will be able to fulfil their proper function.

We will see this theme is expanded on in 8:20-23 in terms of their mission to the nations.

History proves that from the time of the Greek persecution to the Roman dispersion and numerous other Jewish persecutions down through the centuries that they have never been considered a blessing except for this short period when they were making sacrifices for the Persian King Darius and His sons (Ezra 6:10).

The only fulfilling of this blessing that the remnant became was that out of this community came Jesus The Christ. He was the seed through whom all the nations would be blessed (Gen. 12:1ff). It is because of Jesus Christ Who came from the Jews that we count them as blessing us!

It is obvious that this promise was intended for Zechariah's generation but there is a greater future fulfillment included here implied by the statement, "*It shall come to pass.*"

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We know that because of unbelief, by and large, Israel has been set aside by God for a period of time (**Romans 11:1-10**) although even during this time of the Gentiles there is still a believing remnant of Israel.

We know that even so, there will again be a time of future blessing for them according to **Romans 11:11-32**. This will happen when they are saved through inner spiritual and moral regeneration by belief in Jesus Christ as Lord. Because only His salvation can convert them [or any one] from a curse into a blessing!

Again we see the admonition, "*fear not.*" Don't you know that the memory of these calamities they had been cursed with must have stalked them like a persistent nightmare!

But the negative command prepares the way for the positive one, "*but let your hands be strong.*" When the heart is weak through fear, the hands cannot be strong.
2 Timothy 1:7—"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Their pathway to blessing and usefulness was by way of obedience to the task at hand. They were called on to be active in the duty presently assigned to them!
Then, in expectant faith, they would see how God will use their obedience to further His purposes. The grand promise of blessing was to encourage their willingness to be immediately active.

In the same way, we today are to get a glimpse of God's grace and the purpose that He has for us! He wants to strengthen us both in our inner and outer man. He has given us a both sure hope and a certain future!

Verses 14 and 15 show God's redetermination to do Israel good.

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But first we have the review of the past in **verse 14**.

This was the result of deliberate planning! It was not a rash striking out or a natural change of circumstances, but a purposed act for the punishment of wayward Israel and Judah. What happened to them was not merely accidental. Their calamities were not unexplainable calamities.

God's former purpose was to do harm - not moral or spiritual evil, but merely temporal or physical disaster to inflict His chastisement!

It was the afflicting of a disobedient, sinful people by allowing calamities to overtake them according to His all wise purpose! It was so that He might bring back a repentant remnant. God is faithful in carrying out His threat as well as faithful in fulfilling His good promises!

God says here, "*I repented not.*" God fulfilled the 70 years of captivity He said would happen!

As the contrast with Israel being made a "*curse*" and subsequently a "*blessing*" in **verse 13** so the same comparison is equated by the conjunction "*As*" used in **verse 14**. God's early purpose to punish them was past, His present intention was to do them good!

The certain fact of the past harm is now used to give assurance to the future good God has planned in **verse 15**.

"*To do well unto*" is the opposite of "*to punish.*" "*To punish*" means to afflict or punish for the sins of disobedience. "*To do well unto*" signifies to bless for faith and obedience. (To cause or purpose good.)

The LORD has again come to a determined conclusion, but now it is a matter of doing them good.

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As history proved when God purposed harm to them, it came about!
And just as certain was God's purposed good for the future!

Jeremiah 31:28; 32:37-42

Again we see in verse 15 the admonition, "*fear ye not.*"
God's people were not to be saddened or disheartened any more for
God is now speaking comforting words.

They were to walk forward in faith trusting in the LORD's provision
and promises! Walking in *GOD'S RENEWED PURPOSE FOR HIS
PEOPLE.*

IV. GOD IMPLEMENTING HIS WORD OF BLESSING.(Vs. 16-17)

In *verse 16* they were called on to produce fruit in keeping with
repentance.

*Luke 3:8—"Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and
begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father:
for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up
children unto Abraham."*

Here we have the obedience which is illustrative of those who will
received the promised blessings of God! Promises of immediate
blessing and future glory are to be responded to with faithful
spirituality and moral conduct.

Blessings are for the repentant and obedient, not for the unrepentant
and disobedient!

We've seen how that in **7:9-10**, that these things have previously
been set forth and this repetition is to again challenge his hearers to
faith and obedience, especially those who are just going through the
outward motions of religion.

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Now that they were aware of the good things which the Lord was
bringing to pass because of His purpose to do good to them,
we read "*These are the things that ye shall do.*"

They were to be as James 1:22 tells us to be, "*But be ye doers of the
word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*"

God's purposed blessing should have drawn out their love for Him!
Love is not a noun or just a feeling, but an obedient action!
*John 15:10—"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my
love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in
his love."*

First, they were to deal strictly in truth. A blessed man deals
truthfully with his neighbor. "*Truth*" is to control not only their lips
but also their hearts!

*Matthew 12:34—"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil,
speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth
speaketh."*

**Second, they were to render honest and peace producing
decisions.** These were court or judicial decisions that result in peace
because of the honesty of their wisdom and understanding. The truth
and discernment were to be rendered that resolves and silences the
litigation. "*In your gates*", describes the place just inside the city
gates where public court was frequently held.

The two positive injunctions of verse 16 are balanced by two
negatives ones in *verse 17*.

**Third, they were not to imagine or devise evil against one
another.**

Outward sin and despicable behavior begin in the heart!

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If they would guard their heart in this respect, then their behavior would be acceptable.

Fourth, they were not to tolerate a false oath or perjury.

This is speaking of an oath of falsehood, the giving of false information regarding another. An oath of falsehood is an abhorrent sin. It is characterized by deception, untruth, and lying which deceives, betrays and falsifies.

Again, if our God is a God of Truth (and He is!), then we must be people of the Truth!

The verse closes with a summery to bear in mind that God "*hates*" these evil sins of injustice and false oaths to man or society. Note that it is not merely said, "*That is wrong*", but that God hates them! (Cf. **Proverbs 6:16-19**)

What God hates, His people who expect to continue enjoying His blessings, are likewise to hate.

Conclusion

The enjoyment of God's covenant blessings is never independent of faith and obedience on the part of the recipient.

For God's people there is a divinely decreed link between blessing with obedience, and chastisement with disobedience.

Jerusalem will indeed become the "city of Truth" (v. 3) when its inhabitants are truthful and when true judgment is rendered.

But because the Jews have not rendered true judgment in regard to who the Messiah is they have been downtrodden among the nations down through the centuries!

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Today we look at the Jews and sense that they do seem to be "contemptible" among the nations.

Last century when Stalin's Communist took over Russia an estimated eight million Jews were murdered, and when Hitler's Nazis took over Germany an estimated six million Jews were killed.

In our own century even in their own country they are harassed and murdered and have no peace in the streets or in their hearts.

But one day the Lord will reverse their fortunes and transform them from a curse into a blessing. He will do this for the repentant remnant who come to Him in repentance and faith in obedience!

Have you become a Child of God through repentance and faith?

Do you have the blessings of God on your life as a Child of God?

Did you know that if we are living a life of disobedience that God's chastisement is sent our way to bring us back to the place of blessing?

God so much wants to bless us! Why not get in the place of His blessing?