

Chapter 56

The Reversal — Perfect Restoration

“And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I *am* the LORD their God, and will hear them.” (Zechariah 10:6)

In Luke 24:47 our Lord Jesus tells us that he died as our sin-atonement Substitute “*that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.*” “*God commandeth all men everywhere to repent,*” and sinners must repent. “*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*” Gospel preachers call all who hear them to repent. Repentance is turning to Christ. Repentance is a change of mind, a change of masters, and a change of motives. You must repent of your sin (what you are), repent of your sins (what you do), and repent of your righteousness. To repent is to make a complete reversal.

But before any sinner turns to Christ, he must be turned by Christ. Ephraim, bemoaning himself, cried, “*Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented*” (Jeremiah 31:18-19). If a sinner turns to Christ in repentance, it is because the Lord Jesus has turned that sinner to himself by his almighty grace. If the sinner makes a reversal, Christ has reversed him by his grace.

Reversal Accomplished

It is this reversal of grace that the Lord Jesus says he died to accomplish. He did not say that he died so that we could tell sinners to repent, though we do. Rather, he tells us that he died that we might proclaim repentance, “*that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.*” There is a difference. When God commands all men everywhere to repent, he commands them to turn to him. But when our Savior, by virtue of his death on the cross, commands us to preach repentance, he commands us to proclaim the turning of sinners to him. By virtue of his sin-atonement sacrifice, we proclaim liberty to the captives (Isaiah 61:1-3; Zechariah 9:11-12).

The word repentance basically means “reversal.” And the gospel we preach proclaims a complete reversal. The repentance accomplished for us, the repentance we proclaim in the gospel is a reversal of all things for us by Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). The repentance commanded is a reversal of our thoughts, minds, and attitudes about how sins are remitted.

This proclamation of reversal is the blessed proclamation of the remission of sins. Everything has been reversed for God’s elect, because he has put away (remitted) our sins. His prisoners are sent forth out of their prison, because he has remitted their sins. “*And ye,*” you who have been turned to him by hearing him declare that he has put away your sins, “*are witnesses of these things*” (Luke 24:48). Every redeemed sinner is in his place Christ’s missionary, his witness, telling other needy sinners “*how great things the Lord hath done for us, and hath had compassion on us.*”

The Experience of Grace

Our experience of grace is made sure by and arises from God's eternal purpose of grace and Christ's accomplishments as our Substitute, when he died upon the cursed tree. But let us never imagine that one act of grace nullifies another, or is more important than another. We were saved by the sovereign will and eternal purpose of God the Father from the beginning, before ever the earth was made (Romans 8:28-30; 2 Timothy 1:9-10). And we were saved, redeemed, justified, and sanctified, when the Son of God died in our place at Calvary, even "*quicken together with him,*" when he rose again as our Mediator and took his seat in heaven as our Forerunner. When our Savior cried, "*It is finished,*" salvation's work was done. Sin was put away. Righteousness was brought in. Atonement was made. The redemption of our souls was accomplished.

But the purpose of God the Father is not enough to save us. Blood must be shed. Christ had to die, for "*without shedding of blood is no remission*" (Hebrews 9:22). Still, something else is required. The precious blood of Christ is not enough to make us "*meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*" If we are saved, if we are to enter into heaven's eternal glory, something else is necessary, just as necessary as the work of the Father and the work of the Son. We must be saved by the blessed work of God the Holy Spirit in the experience of grace (Titus 3:5-7).

It is the experience of grace that gives the sinner hope before God. God's purpose makes the salvation of his elect sure, but gives hope to no one. Christ's death upon the cross is the singular basis of the sinner's hope, but gives hope to none. It is "*Christ in you,*" formed in you by God the Holy Spirit in the experience of grace, that God says "*is the hope of glory*" (Colossians 1:27).

When Christ is formed in us by the omnipotent mercy and almighty grace of God the Holy Spirit in the experience of grace, granting us repentance toward God, giving us faith in Christ, he makes a complete reversal of all things, restoring that which he took not away, in the complete, perfect restoration of our souls to God. It is this reversal of all things, this perfect restoration that every chosen, redeemed sinner experiences in Christ in the sweet experience of God's saving grace. That is what is promised in Zechariah 10:6. — "*And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the LORD their God, and will hear them.*" Oh, what blessedness is in store for chosen, redeemed sinners who are yet to be called of our God! What blessedness is ours who have been called!

God's Salvation

This is the salvation promised by God our Savior to his elect. — "*I will strengthen the house of Judah.*" — Christ is our Strength. And when we are weakest, then we are strongest, because his strength is made perfect in our weakness. He who is our Strength declares, "*My grace is sufficient for thee.*" His word of grace is, "*He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD*" (Zechariah 12:8), "*strengthened with all might according to his glorious power*" (Colossians 1:11).

Our strength *“is to sit still”* (Isaiah 30:7), trusting Christ for everything before God. I have never yet met a person who lacked assurance as soon as he trusted the Savior. But I know many who struggle with assurance continually, after believing on the Lord Jesus for many years. Perhaps you do. If so, I can tell you why. You had no struggle with assurance in the beginning for one reason. — You looked to Christ for everything. In your great weakness, you found him to be your Strength. You started having trouble with assurance when you began to look for strength in yourself. As long as you look within yourself for anything to give you assurance, you will have none. Your inward graces and imaginary evidences of grace can never give you peace with God. If you would walk with God in *“the joy of faith”* in assurance, walk with him just as you did in the beginning, trusting Christ for everything and yourself for nothing. It is written, *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him”* (Colossians 2:6).

“I will save the house of Joseph.” — Yes, our great Joseph, the Lord Jesus Christ, will save all his house. See him yonder on his throne! He declares, *“I am in the place of God, to save much people alive!”*

“I will bring them again to place them.” — He will gather his elect out of the nations, hew them from the rock of fallen humanity, and dig them from the pit of Adam’s waste, that he might place them as living stones in his temple and jewels in his crown.

“For I have mercy upon them.” Here is the reason for it all, *“He hath have mercy on whom he will have mercy!”* Our only hope before the thrice holy God is mercy. What a blessed thing that is, because *“He delighteth in mercy!”*

The Reversal

“And they shall be as though I had not cast them off.” — This is the promise of a complete reversal and a perfect restoration. The Lord God has promised. — *“They shall be as though I had not cast them off.”* Just as the nation of Israel was cast off and carried away as captives in Babylon because of their transgressions, and just as the Lord gathered them again to place them in their land, so God’s elect were cast off with all other men because of the sin and transgression of our race in Adam, that he might gather his elect unto himself in grace and place them in his holy city, the Church of his Redeemed. — *“He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock”* (Jeremiah 31:10). And when he gathers his elect unto Christ by the mighty power and grace of his Spirit, when he causes chosen, redeemed sinners to trust his darling Son, — *“They shall be as though I had not cast them off!”*

What does that mean? I cannot answer that question fully; but I can give you enough of an answer from God himself to rejoice your heart forever, if God will graciously enable you to hear and believe his Word. If the God of heaven deals with you in mercy, he declares, — *“They shall be as though I had not cast them off!”*

If you are without Christ, at the present, you are far off from God by wicked works. His Word declares that you are *“condemned already”* and *“the wrath of God abideth”* upon you. But, he here promises perfect restoration to sinners who were cast off in the Garden. Not only does he make chosen sinners as though he *“had not cast them off,”* he makes them indescribably more

noble and glorious than they ever could have been had he not cast them off. Few people seem to realize it, but Romans 8:28 includes the Fall!

The sin and fall of our father Adam was not an accident. God ordained it, because he purposed something better for his chosen than we could have ever known or enjoyed had we not fallen. When the sinner is granted faith in Christ, he is made to know, in the sweet experience of grace, some things we could never have known had we not sinned in the Garden, had we not fallen in our father Adam.

1. Election

Had there been no fall, had we not been cast out from the face of the Lord with our father Adam, we could never have known the wonders of electing love, sovereign mercy, and distinguishing grace. But, as soon as the sinner is born of God, as soon as he trusts Christ, he knows God's electing love toward him. Election is known only when we are granted faith in Christ (1 Thessalonians 1:4-5).

2. Adoption

Had we never known what it is to have been cast off as an obnoxious, unwanted child, aborted from the womb, we could never have known the blessed sweetness of our adoption (Ezekiel 16:1-18).

3. Redemption

Had there been no fall, had we not been cast away with Adam, we could never have known the sweetness of redemption by the precious blood of Christ. But as soon as the sinner experiences God's grace in the new birth, he learns something of the blessedness of being redeemed from the curse. The curse is clean gone forever through him who was made a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). The anger of God is removed from us forever. As soon as the sinner looks to Christ, God says to the believing soul, "*Fury is not in me*" (Isaiah 27:4).

"Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine: Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God *that* pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, *even* the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again" (Isaiah 51:21-22).

4. Forgiveness

Had we never been cast off as guilty sinners, we could never have known the sweet blessedness of forgiveness. But as soon as a sinner looks to Christ, he obtains blessed forgiveness (Psalm 130:4; 1 John 1:9).

"Blessed *is he* whose transgression *is* forgiven, whose sin *is* covered. Blessed *is* the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit *there is* no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the

drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.” (Psalms 32:1-5).

In Christ we are so fully, so completely, so absolutely, so perpetually forgiven of all sin that we are altogether without sin, perfectly justified, completely righteous, and entirely guiltless before God.

5. New Creation

Had we not been cast off in the ruin of God’s creation by the entrance of sin into it, we could never have known what it is to be made new creatures in Christ. But when sinners are born of God, they are made new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; 2 Peter 1:3-4; 1 John 3:5-10). When our blessed Savior declares, *“They shall be as though I had not cast them off,”* this is what he means for us to understand: — *“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

This is one of those blessed promises Peter spoke of by which we have been made *“partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”* (2 Peter 1:3-4; 1 John 3:5-10). — *“They shall be as though I had not cast them off!”*

In the new birth God the Holy Spirit creates in us a new life, a life Adam could never have known in the Garden. He forms Christ in us, puts righteousness in us, makes us righteous, pure, and holy, puts in us a spirit in which there is no guile, and makes us *“meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light”*. This new man is *“Christ in you, the hope of glory”*. This is that *“holiness”* we must have, *“without it no man shall see the Lord.”* It is written, *“There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life”* (Revelation 21:27).

6. Communion

Here is something else. When Adam walked in innocence, he walked with God in the Garden; but he never had communion with him. He never could have enjoyed communion with him in that state. But, as soon as sinners are born of God, as soon as we are brought into union with Christ in the blessed experience of grace, we have fellowship with God, who is light. — *“Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ”* (1 John 1:3). God, beholding us in his Son and beholding nothing but his Son in us, sees nothing amiss; and we have communion with him.

7. Safety

In his state of innocence Adam had life; but was always in danger of losing it. He lived with the conscious awareness that he might die. But, as soon as the sinner is gathered in the arms of the Good Shepherd, he says, *“I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish!”* Once gathered by grace, we are forever safe. — *“They shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the*

LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them” (Ezekiel 34:27).

8. Better Garden

Added to all this is the fact that outcast sinners, when they are gathered by grace, are assured that we shall be gathered into a better garden. — *“The ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” — “Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away” (Isaiah 35:10; 51:11).*

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful...And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (Revelation 21:1-5, 27).

Assurance and Encouragement

Read the last two lines of Zechariah 10:6. Here is both the reason for all these things and the assurance of them. This is the reason why the Lord God does all this for us. — *“For I am the LORD their God.”* Then our blessed God and Savior makes a promise by which he encourages needy souls to seek his grace, trusting him. — *“And I will hear them.”* I think it is safe to assume two things from those words: (1.) If you pray for his mercy, God will give it. And (2.) if you pray for his mercy, it is because God has given you his mercy. — *“Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field” (Zechariah 10:1).*

Call upon him and he will hear you. He has declared, concerning all who call upon him for mercy, grace, salvation and eternal life, *“I am the LORD their God, and will hear them.”* He declares, *“I have mercy upon them.”* He has sworn, *“I will hear them and give them showers of rain!”* — *“And they shall be as though I had not cast them off!”* That is the reversal, the perfect restoration the Son of God has sent us to proclaim in all nations. That is the reversal, the perfect restoration that is yours forever, if you want it. It is written, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!”* Believe on the Son of God and everything is completely reversed by Christ in the perfect restoration of grace. You are a new creation in Christ.