

Zechariah

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[0 : 00] And again to the ninth chapter in Zechariah's prophecy, and particularly we will consider the twelfth verse.

The twelfth verse in the ninth chapter of Zechariah's prophecy, Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope, even today do I declare that I will render double unto thee.

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Amen. This morning we considered together the situation that surrounded the island of Tyre, that island which supposedly was made impregnable by a great double wall being built around it and surrounded by sea and everything gave the impression that Tyre was beyond any power to subdue, to subjugate.

We mentioned that historically and according to God's prophecy, Alexander the Great, that powerful Greek commander came down with his armies down the coast of Lebanon and took his position in the old city of Tyre on the mainland that had been devastated previously by King Nebuchadnezzar, and had somewhat restored, and there Alexander the Great took his stem and laid siege upon this supposedly impregnable island of Tyre.

[2 : 27] And in due time, wisdom was given to Alexander to burrow under the sea from the mainland and to appear on the inside of the wall.

And taking the inhabitants who thought they were secure, suddenly and utterly by surprise, they found that they were in such a position that those walls and that situation in which they had trusted was no longer sufficient to secure them.

And Alexander entered into the city with his army and eventually 10,000 of its inhabitants were killed by the sword and 30,000 were taken into captivity.

So the island of Tyrus proved to be a false refuge. It promised false security and all the efforts of men proved insufficient to make their situation impregnable as God came out of his place to show the weaknesses of man's security when it is outside of himself.

Further on in this same chapter, we have the text that gives to us true security and associates with that true security a call, a call that I hope will reach you, reach me tonight.

[4 : 26] Turn you to the stronghold. But my friends, it speaks to certain characters.

Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope. And I commence my remarks this evening with this question. Are you a prisoner of hope?

Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope. Even today do I declare that I will render double unto thee.

The Lord gives great promise to those who look to him, who wait for him as the only security and promise of their souls.

First then, let us consider together, ye prisoners of hope. It seems to suggest people in captivity are hoping for deliverance.

- [5 : 46] ye prisoners of hope. Ye prisoners of hope. Now, I believe this is the position and condition of the saints under the sun.
- They are prisoners of hope. Hope that is seen is not hope.
- For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for, says the scripture? We hope for that we see not.
- And with patience do we wait for it. We're not yet in possession of that which we hope at length to obtain.
- We're prisoners of hope. And the text is directed to the prisoners of hope. We've sung together a blessed hymn this evening that's often repeated.
- [6 : 59] But it is the very living expression of prisoners of hope. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
- The blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ doesn't just have promise for the thing that now is.
- If we're rightly appreciating the object and end of God through the sacrifice of his dear son Jesus Christ, we're looking, hopefully, for something very blessed and yet to come.
- We're prisoners of hope. However deep and dark the prison, can that situation prohibit hope?
- I ask that question to spotlight the extent of the gospel.
- [8 : 29] wherein shall one of the Lord's prisoners, that is, one who is awakened to their state and condition, spiritually, as before God, prove to be in a hopeless state.
- The gospel reaches out to such a degree and such an extent that however desolate our condition may appear to be by reason of the guiltiness of sin and consequence of the law, for hope in Jesus Christ.
- For hope, ye prisoners of hope. Now, we're under the law, aren't we?
- We're in a condition that the confession of sin, acknowledgement of sin, becomes us.
- Day by day, we have to say before the Lord, guilty, guilty. We're prisoners within a body of sin and death.
- [10 : 10] How to do the thing that we would, we find not. When we would do good, evil is present with us. We're prisoners.
- We find that we're, as it were, confined to a body that is not what we would have it to be.
- It's a body that's fraught with sinful weaknesses, propensities to evil, that trouble us, that try us, that threaten us, that at times now overwhelm us, so that we feel almost beyond hope.
- That God will ever show mercy to such an one as we feel and know ourselves to be. We're prisoners in a body of sin and death.
- And sometimes the expression of sin in this body is fearful. Its power is terrible and terrifying.
- [11 : 16] My friends, the Lord's people, in their own estimation, are far from being a holy people.
- That I'm unholy, needs no proof. I sorely feel the fall, says one of our hymn writers. And who can walk about, who can examine their true condition, their spirit and reaction, without multiplied confession, that without the grace of God, without the mercy of God, how can a holy God, show favour to such an one as I?
- Prisoners, prisoners, but prisoners of hope, prisoners of hope, turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.

And then, my friends, when we consider the inevitable exercise of powerful adversaries, we can but acknowledge that we're prisoners when I think of the impending influence of death and dissolution, dissolution upon us.

Prisoners, we must all doubt and be as water spilt upon the ground, cannot be gathered up again.

[13 : 14] Can you escape it? Can you bypass it? Can you overcome it? Can you say to that great enemy, you will not lay hold of me?

My friends, we're all prisoners to the inevitable approach of that last enemy that will at length take hold of us as he's taken hold of so many whom we've known and laughed.

And in a sense, in that sense, we're prisoners, aren't we? We're confined to the conclusion that at length we shall be called to enter into that experience, to walk that way, to come into personal grip of that great power that is sufficient to throw every man down and prove to every person his or her insufficiency to discharge themselves in that walk.

we can say of the grave. Prisoners. We shall enter into the grave as prisoners.

The tomb is like a prison house in which the bodies of the saints are confined. And my friends, how do we approach these things?

[14 : 53] How do we look them in the face? How do we anticipate these situations that are inevitably before us? We consider them as prisoners of hope.

Prisoners of hope. O death, says one, where is thy sting? O grave, thy victory. Strength, of sin is the law.

Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.

God everything that constitutes our need is comprehended in the person of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I've said to you before, I repeat it, it's so simple, but it's so full, comprehensive, all you and I stand in need of is the Lord Jesus Christ.

[16 : 25] If he is ours, we have all that we need forever. now, you say, well, that is very concise, that is very simple, but my friends, it's exceedingly comprehensive.

Now, he is the stronghold. Who built that stronghold? God. God in covenant provided for his people a refuge, a refuge, a stronghold.

Sin had totally undermined man's security. Adam, in the Garden of Eden, had a security that was imperfect, because it was a security that was capable of being undermined through human weakness.

And human weakness was evident in the fact that Adam fell a prime to the tempter, disobeyed the commandment of God, God.

And as soon as he disobeyed the commandment of God, his security was lost. And you and I, as sons and daughters of Adam, enter into the world with our security lost.

[18 : 18] We have no security security, apart from the security which God has restored to mankind in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

And my friends, that is a perfect security. That has no area of weakness. There is no approach by Satan that is sufficient to undermine such security.

When he came to the Son of God, the Son of Man, in the wilderness and tempted him, he found an impregnable security confronting him.

He was not able to undermine, he was not able to overturn the Son of God. God, the Prince of this world, cometh and hath nothing in me.

Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope. Now, the prisoners of hope then, they're prisoners, but they find hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, looking away from themselves to him who is all security, perfect security, and such a security as to give ground for hope to those who are full of weakness, insufficiency in themselves, sinners.

[20 : 12] Yet, by faith in Jesus Christ, are possessed of a ground of hope for security, which is eternal in its consequence.

Now, I know nothing in the Lord Jesus, but what is appointed to promote hope in sinners' souls.

I want to consider our position under the law. The law of God requires perfect satisfaction, absolute obedience.

The law is a fearful consideration because we're all made under the law. We're all accountable to the law.

We haven't done with the law in the flesh. For every word, thought, and action, we must know that God will bring us into judgment.

[21 : 54] Things that you may have forgotten will be remembered in the day of Jesus Christ.

Sins that were superficially recorded and excused and passed over will in their true nature be presented and account will be called for in the day of Jesus Christ.

And for every sin and transgression there is a just recompense of reward.

My friends, you and I haven't finished with life when we've passed through it.

We're accountable creatures. Christians, know ye not, for all these things God will bring thee into judgment, says the scripture.

[23 : 09] And we're prisoners to condemnation. You and I, if we're rightly exercised, we smite upon our breasts, confessing our sin.

It's a fearful thing sometimes to consider one's state before a holy God. We're prisoners to condemnation.

But what relief and hope the Lord has provided in Jesus Christ, the sin bearer of his people.

Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope. What is the key, the answer to the sufferings of Jesus Christ?

Why did he come into the world? Whose sword was it that smote him when he was crucified and slain upon Calvary's tree?

[24 : 26] To what end did he sacrifice his life as the Lamb of God? Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.

He gave his life a sacrifice for sin. The sword of God's justice was unsheathed and thrust into the wounded side of Emmanuel.

He became the sin bearer of his people. He suffered the penalty of the law in their behalf. God cannot payment twice demand, first at my bleeding shortest hand, and then again at mine.

if the law found its satisfaction in the suffering Son of God, our sins are paid for.

The penalty of our transgressions has been perfectly met, and we are discharged from debt under the law forever and forever.

[25 : 57] and those that by precious faith turn to this stronghold, they see in the suffering Lamb of God ground for hope, ground for deliverance from the just penalty of the law of God, that as Moses cries aloud for satisfaction under the tables of the law given in the Mount Sinai.

So the Lord Jesus Christ answers, Moses demands in that cry from Calvary's tree, it is finished, and he gave up the ghost.

Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope. look to the precious wounds and precious blood of a dying redeemer, he that paid the debt due by his people to the law of God, down to the uttermost farthing, he that procured for them an absolute discharge from all their sin in the price of his own heart's blood.

My friends, this is the hope of the prisoners who know themselves to be law condemned and justly anticipate the wrath of God upon them forever, apart from the suffering of the Son of God in their behalf to put away their sin.

Turn view to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope. Oh, if there is one this evening here in the congregation that fears their sins, that looks as it were to the mountain of their sinful weakness and multiplied transgressions and say, how can I get to heaven?

[28 : 24] Listen to the still small voice of the Lord Jesus Christ as he speaks the fullness of redemption's love and purpose.

I am the way, the truth and the life. turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.

And then my friends, we have mentioned the great enemy of death. Oh, what an enemy is death to the human race.

strongholds, laying hold of one and another, laying them low, all efforts proving useless to withstand the power of that great adversary.

turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope. Death is the enemy of mankind generally.

[29 : 54] It's the termination of liberty and freedom, comfort, and everything that's congenial to the fallen human race.

If you're out of Christ, make the most of this. If you're out of Christ, make the most of this, because it's the best you'll ever have.

Mark what I say, if you live and die a stranger to Jesus Christ, make the most of it, with all its infirmities, with all its trials, with all its problems, it's the best you'll ever have.

You've got mercy now, tempering your difficulties under sin. You'll have no mercy at length. You see, my friends, what a solemn thing to be living and dying out of Christ.

But what is death to the believer? Well, it's a conquered foe. It's not a destroying power.

[31 : 20] I was going to say, it's an elevating principle. what does death do to the believer? Think of the death of some of the saints that have worshipped with us in this place.

What did death do for them? It liberated them. It liberated them. All their fears, all their trials, all their pains, all their sorrows, all their anxieties, were behind them, left behind.

Death was their friend, really, wasn't it? How could such an enemy be made a friend? as the servant of the Lord Jesus, who's conquered death?

Who's conquered death? O death, where is thy sting? You see, my friends, the saints haven't forfeited their security when they die.

They've realised, as never before, the strength of that security, that it's complete, that it's everlasting, eternal in its nature.

[33 : 02] death doesn't destroy the security of the saints, it destroys the security, the false security of the world, who've trusted in their riches, who've trusted in their honour, who've trusted in their wealth and their health.

Yes, death destroys that, it shows them the insecurity of all these things, but the security of the saints in Christ is absolute.

Death doesn't destroy it, death reveals the eternal security, the eternal nature of the security of the souls in Christ.

Turn you to the stronghold. Oh, my friend, turn you to Christ, turn you to the Son of God, turn you to the one that went into death voluntarily, willingly, subjected himself, as it were, to this experience, that he might overcome death, that he might destroy this great enemy, that in the reconciling power, as it were, of his kingship, he transformed this great enemy of the human race into a friend, that every effect and influence of sin upon the believer is eliminated, and that soul is elevated, lifted up by death to a crown of victory, to a place of felicity, to a liberty and freedom from sin and all its consequences forever and forever.

O death, where is thy sting? Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.

[35 : 29] We hope that when we come to the end, we shall find our friend there, don't we? Our best friend there, our high priest there, the Lord himself there.

I believe he said to me, unless I'm woefully deceived, and I don't really think I am, I will come again and receive you unto myself. Do you know, my friends, I'm looking forward to that.

I'm looking forward to that, that when I come to die, I'm going to see Jesus, my best friend. I'm living in anticipation of it, and what a meeting, never to part, again, forever, and forever.

well then, I mentioned the grave.

Now, there seems something very powerful in the grave, doesn't it? We lay the human remains of dear friends into the grave, the saints, peace.

[36 : 55] But, they're prisoners of hope, aren't they? They're prisoners of hope. You know, sometimes, in the last twelve months, when I've been called to the grave side of some of our friends to administer that solemn and yet sacred service, when it's fulfilled in the exercise of hope in Christ, I felt it's not really the end, it's but a sleep, isn't it?

It's but a sleep. It's a resting place. And the great conqueror of all the enemies of the Lord's people waits to call the bodies of the saints out of that corruptible situation into an incorruptible and immortal state eternally.

I don't think we're so far now from the time of that call. I seem to feel that the day of the resurrection is not so far ahead.

It seems as though the world is taking shape according to the word of God prophetically that that time draws nigh.

And my friend, what a day it'll be, won't it, when the graves of the saints by the command of Jesus Christ give up, they're dead, and the bodies of the redeemed rise, glorified and spiritual bodies, to be with Christ and like him in his kingdom forever.

[39 : 08] Turn you to the stronghold. when you feel your body wracked with infirmity, when you feel the weakness of age, weaknesses of age taking hold of your frame, when that taking down process is advancing with, I was going to say, unrestricted power and process, think that, yes, this is the measure of divine permission, that it may be sown a mortal body, but it will be raised an immortal body, it is sown a corrupting or a corruptible body, it will be raised in incorruption, it's sown in weakness, it will be raised in power, my friends, oh, the strength of the saints in the resurrection as they come forth in the power of

God, the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to show to all angels and men, that theirs is the victory, and the victory forever, through their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope. Look to the Lord, he's able to do these things, he's able to bestow this victory, he's able to grant this triumph, he's able to give this crown, turn to the stronghold, not such a stronghold as Tyrus had, a stronghold that could be demolished, could be overthrown, and patently false, but look to the Lord Jesus Christ, impregnable, sufficient, secure, forever, forever, and forever, in the face of all our enemies.

Amen. Amen. Lord, we would be thankful for the gospel, the love of Christ, from which none can separate, to deliver us from our fears, and grant us the confidence of faith in thy faithfulness, as we turn again and yet again to the precious refuge and stronghold of thy grace.

Pardon all that has been amiss, may the grace of the love of God, the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.

[42 : 36] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[45 : 07] Thank you.

Thank you.