

Zechariah 8:9-17 – Responding to a Welcoming God

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Henry, Handfuls, Geneva, Poole, Trapp, JFB, Phillips, Barnes, Clarke, Calvin, Gill, Eclectic?

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: **God has a passionate love for you.** And when you consider who you were and are, that makes his love even more special. **God never abandons you.** And when you think how many reasons he has to leave you, it makes God's presence even more special. **God gave you many promises** concerning your future. And when you think how little you deserve, you know you have to respond. **It is your response, then, that you will hear about today.**

Our headings are:

Resolve to Work Hard

Reflect on God's Goodness

Respond in Actions

Our goals are: **That seeing all the reasons for staying close to God, you will then tirelessly work, in thoughts, words, and actions, to advance the kingdom of Jesus,** your Savior.

Resolve to Work Hard

9 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: '**Let your hands be strong,** You who have been hearing in these days These **words by the mouth of the prophets,** Who **spoke in the day the foundation was laid** For the house of the LORD of hosts, That the **temple might be built.**

1. The Lord encouraged his people to boldness (刚强壮胆). They needed boldness to **rebuild the temple, restore worship, and ready themselves** for kingdom expansion. They needed boldness to persevere against the many terrors they were going to face at the hands of the Greeks and Romans!

2. How were the Jews emboldened for their great job? They were emboldened by the Word that was preached through the mouths of the prophets. Jerusalem became known as the city of peace. **They were emboldened by the Word that was preached consistently and believed by faith.**

10 For before these days There were **no wages for man nor any hire for beast;** There was **no peace from the enemy** for whoever **went out or came in;** For **I set all men, everyone,** against his neighbor.

3. For 20 years after captivity ended there was hardly any commerce (商业) – not for man, not for animals. There weren't **enough farmers to require laborers.** With nothing to trade, the **traders were living in poverty.** **God's curse was on them for ignoring his worship.** When they were not in worship **they could not hear preaching...and so suffered the consequences.** Haggai 1:6 "You have sown much, and **bring in little;** You eat, but **do not have enough;** You drink, but you are **not filled** with drink; You clothe yourselves, but **no one is warm;** And he who earns wages, Earns wages to **put into a bag with holes.**" ☹ "You looked for much, but indeed it **came to little;** and when you brought it home, **I blew it away.** Why?" says the LORD of hosts. "**Because of My house that is in ruins..** 10 "Therefore the heavens above you **withhold the dew,** and the earth **withholds its fruit.** 11 "For I **called for a drought (干旱)** on the land..."

4. So God exposed them to their enemies – domestic and foreign. Some enemies included robbers (强盗). People could not travel in safety. There were also **internal fights.** **But when God said that he would set all men against his neighbor, it did not mean that God was the source of sin.** It meant that God **would leave men to their natural notions.** God sometimes let men do as they wish. And since man's nature is sinful, he acts according to that nature. So brothers fought against brothers. Matthew Henry: **If you throw off God's love, you cannot expect to have peace with brothers.**

11 'But now **I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,**' says the LORD of hosts.

5. But then God, the Lord of hosts, ended poverty and strife because the Jews worked and worshipped faithfully. The Lord of hosts had power to make the earth produce! He had the power to destroy their enemies. He chose to not destroy the Babylonians in the former days, but he would stop the Samaritans and the Edomites presently.

6. Lessons:

- a. Strife between brothers ended because the Word was preached and believed.** This truth is applied to every marriage issue, child-rearing, or church struggle. This knowledge from God's Word will make you bold to do even the hard things!
- b. Bold preaching of truth is what the church must use to bring the lost to the New Jerusalem to find peace.**

Reflect on God's Goodness

12 'For the **seed shall be prosperous**, The vine shall **give its fruit**, The ground shall **give her increase**,
And the **heavens shall give their dew** — I will cause the remnant of this people **To possess all these**.

1. Prosperity would come when there is faith and obedience.

Produce in abundance. God's people could eat to their hearts' content. What they plant would grow!

Wine in abundance. Bread and water is for survival, but wine is for joy. So this was not survival this was splurging.

Water in abundance. This was given for the plants to grow. Dew was the most common water in Israel.

Remember (from Haggai 1) what life was like before a change in Judah's heart.

2. Prosperity would be kept. It was out of grasp of the Jews before the captivity (被擄), but not anymore.

Malachi 3:10 Bring all the tithes (十一奉獻) into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house,
And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If **I will not open for you the windows of heaven**
And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.

Zephaniah 3:20 At that time **I will bring you back**, Even at the time I gather you; For I will give you fame
and praise Among all the peoples of the earth, When I return your captives before your eyes ...

This was in fulfillment of God's future promise before even Israel fell ...

Hosea 2:18 In that day **I will make a covenant for them** With the beasts of the field, With the birds of
the air, And with the creeping things of the ground. **Bow and sword of battle I will shatter (使粉碎)**

from the earth, To **make them lie down safely.** ^[21] "It shall come to pass in that day That I will answer,"
says the LORD; "I will answer the heavens, And they shall answer the earth. **22 The earth shall answer**
With grain, With new wine, And with oil..

13 And it shall come to pass That just as **you were a curse among the nations**, O house of Judah and
house of Israel, **So I will save you, and you shall be a blessing.** Do **not fear**, Let your **hands be**
strong.'

3. Judah and Israel's prosperity would be visible to the nations. What a change from the past to where they were!

Jeremiah 29:18 And I will **pursue them with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence (瘟疫)**;

and I will deliver them to trouble **among all the kingdoms of the earth** — to be a curse, an

astonishment, a hissing, and a **reproach (斥责) among all the nations** where I have driven them,

Remembering God's grace from the past and at the present would make Judah and Israel bold.

And the only basis of God blessing his people was **because they come to him through Jesus Christ!**

4. Judah and Israel would cause the nations of the world to be blessed. When people would see the favor of God on Judah, many would rush to the Jews.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and
not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

14 "For thus says the LORD of hosts: '**Just as I determined to punish you** When your fathers provoked
Me to wrath,' Says the LORD of hosts, 'And I would not relent (发慈心) , **15 So again in these days I**
am determined to do good To Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear.

5. God confirmed these promises with an oath. This gave certainty.

The nature of the oath is interesting. God committed to blessing Judah, even as **he committed to punishing them** in Babylon.
Judah, knowing how seriously they suffered, would then be constantly assured that **God would just as strongly bless them.**

No one could stop the Babylonian captivity...and no one could stop the Jewish prosperity!

6. Lessons:

a. When you succeed in life, remember it is because of God. Don't take credit for what he does through you. He gave you
skill to work and to be a good father! He gave you skill to be a good student. You are God's son, but you are not as important
as you may want to think of yourself. Only God makes you special.

b. When you have your challenges in life, be bold! You are not fighting by yourself. Think of some of those challenges
you are facing: Worried about your health? Concerned about the future of your children? Troubled about Canada's future?
Don't be. Be bold. The Lord guarantees his church and people will continue forever...on earth...and then in heaven...when
he is ready. No one forces a change on God's schedule.

c. Judah's blessings, and the blessing he brings to the world, came from Jesus Christ. This blessing was never fulfilled
during Zechariah's time. Israel was still in the diaspora (流散他乡) . One writer put it nicely. [These things were fulfilled]
"when **Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shone on the earth**, and He chose from the Hebrews lights, through whom to
dissipate (驱散) darkness and illumine (照亮) the minds of people who were in that darkness." And then again:

Revelation 21:7 "He who overcomes **shall inherit all things**, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

Respond in Actions

16 These are the things you shall do: **Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; Give judgment in your gates** for truth, justice, and peace; 17 Let **none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor**; And **do not love a false oath**. For all these are things that I hate,' Says the LORD."

1. Man's response to God's promises start with worship.

Psalms 103:2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:

But it only starts there. True repentance is seen in changes to all areas of life. Note some highlights!

a. Speak the truth. Truth must never be hidden, but must be boldly spoken when the opportunity is presented.

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

b. Establish truth in justice, for the rich and the poor... for the widow, orphan, and foreigner. The point was that truth... **and the just application of that truth...** was fundamental to success.

c. Honor each other. This was to prevent them from needing to go to the gates for justice. The prevention of evil starts in holding brothers and sisters in high esteem (尊重) ...not thinking evil against them in your heart.

Proverbs 3:29 **Do not devise evil against your neighbor**, For he dwells by you for safety's sake.

Proverbs 11:23 The **desire of the righteous is only good**, But the expectation of the wicked is wrath.

d. Be careful with oaths. The Jews were not to take oath rashly (草率地) , and surely they were not to force others to take rash oaths.

Psalms 24:4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, **Nor worn deceitfully.**

2. Know that God hates a corrupted society with corrupted actions very much. Why? A corrupted society is not merely an abomination (令人憎恶的事情) to the Lord, it is also **evidence of the rejection of God's Son!** He never takes that rejection of his Son lightly.

Proverbs 6:16 These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, 19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

3. Lessons:

a. Without faithful explication of the Word of God and submission to that Word, the world will be lost. I saw a young man blame the "judgmental" nature of the older folks as the reasons millennials (千禧年问题) leave the church. But the truth is, if the Word is faithfully preached and submitted to, the world will be better because the church will be strong.

b. Have you ever heard the Latin phrase, "verba vivenda non legenda?" It means "words must be lived by (活出来 , 实践出来) ...not just read." This is what you want to see in your life. God requires all men, regardless of their religion or creed, to obey his Word.

Conclusion:

Stay close to God for all his benefits. But **remember your duties as well.** **Resolve to work hard** – working without fear. **Regularly reflect on God's grace** to you through Jesus Christ. And then **respond by showing true actions of repentance.**

Brother and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. To be able to do these things you need to be emptied of all selfishness. When you are emptied of your ego...showing people how good and smart you are, etc., then you will have room for Jesus and his glory.

2. So you must start with knowledge. Know all that the Lord has done for you. Regularly listen to good preaching. **Then ask God to empty you of yourself.** This is a spiritual work...or rather, a work of the Spirit.

3. When you do this then you can be sure that God's kingdom will come...as the nations come to him.

Finally: If you are not a believer, you don't have God's passion for you, you don't have his presence, and you don't have his promises. You can get them if you call to the Savior and ask him to make you his child. He will adopt you and give you a new name. He paid the price of your entry into his kingdom when he died on the cross.