

Zechariah 9:12-17 – Prisoners of Hope

Henry, HebrewLexicon, TSK, Handfuls, Poole, Geneva, Clarke, JFB, Calvin, Barnes, INT, Phillip, 91

Beloved Christians: Ever heard someone say: “I am a prisoner of love?” What does he mean by that? He simply means that he is in the walls of love and he can’t break out of love. He is not in a literal prison, but in a figurative prison, and a good prison.

God used “prisoner” figuratively 比喻地 as well. He said the Jews were going to be “prisoners of hope.” God called the Jews “prisoners of hope” because he was talking about how the Jews were prisoners in Babylon, and virtual prisoners under the Samaritans and Edomites. So he simply continued to use the same language. The difference was that **he spoke of a better prison**: The Prison of Hope. You will hear today **how Judah would get hope through gifts of God**: Security, success, and splendor. (Imprisonment in Babylon was because of sin. Imprisonment in hope was because of the Savior.)

Our Headings are:

Hope comes from Security

Hope comes from Success

Hope comes from Splendor

Our Goals are: That you will learn to surround yourself with the knowledge of God’s protection so that you can be bold as you fight for and worship the Lord.

Hope Comes From Security

12 **Return to the stronghold**, You **prisoners of hope**. Even today I declare That I will **restore double** to you. 13 For **I have bent Judah**, My bow, **Fitted the bow with Ephraim**, And **raised up your sons**, O Zion, Against your sons, O Greece, And made you like the sword of a mighty man."

1. God provided a stronghold...high walls around his people. (Defensive weapon) But this was not referring to the literal wall around Jerusalem. There were still large breaks (破口) in the wall. These were unseen but effective walls to keep God’s people safe. The spiritual walls kept the Jews from falling into sin and slavery again. **The knowledge of God’s protection gave his people hope**. But on the contrary, those who abandon God are exposed to mortal dangers.

Jeremiah 17:13 O LORD, the hope of Israel, All **who forsake You shall be ashamed**...

And don’t forget that this stronghold was not because the Jews were good. From the last time you would remember that the Jews were called to return to Jerusalem **because they had the blood of the covenant counted as theirs**. They looked to Christ and were called to flee to the city of refuge – the church of God. This was the comfort for which Simeon looked. Lk 2. He had seen the Consolation of Israel!

2. God provided double for those inside of the walls. “Double provisions” likely referred to physical and spiritual provisions (供应). Abundant provisions enabled the people of God to do what they were sent back to do: **Rebuild the temple, restore worship, and ready themselves** for kingdom expansion. **Can you see how this would have given God’s people more hope? Israel received double for sins, now she gets double.**

Isaiah 40:2 **"Speak comfort to Jerusalem**, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity (过犯) is pardoned; For **she has received from the LORD’S hand Double** for all her sins."

3. God provided weapons of war to conquer the nations. (Offensive weapons) What were these weapons? God’s people. They were the means of conquering the enemies. **They were like the bow and arrow in God’s hands**. But bending of the bows shows that the work of conquering the nations was **done at God’s directions**. (Again, this was not literal, as the northern 10 ½ tribes, represented by Ephraim, were dispersed (被驱散的) around the world and did not return.)

Since God was the warrior here, wouldn’t this have given much hope to Judah? And consider this: **Where was Greece at this time? They were not known for anything**—not on the radar as a great empire. But God knew the future, and he knew the threat Antiochus Epiphanes – one of the 4 great Greek leaders after Alexander the Great - would pose to his people. **Judas Maccabeus was one of these tools God used to conquer the Greeks**. So when danger came, the people would know that God would protect them...and advance his kingdom.

4. Lessons:

a. God is a strong tower from your enemies. Don’t we sing, “Rock of Ages?” He defends you.

Psalms 125:2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem, **So the LORD surrounds His people** From this time forth and forever.

b. Go with the authority of the one who has all authority – to God into all the world and make disciples (门徒) of all the nations, baptizing (为...施洗) them, and teaching them to obey everything he has commanded.

c. Go with his provisions for body and soul! You fight for him. He will give you what you need.

d. Use is the Sword of the Spirit – the Word of God – to fight.

Ephesians 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God;

Psalms 45:5 Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; The peoples fall under You.

2 Corinthians 10:4 For the **weapons of our warfare are not carnal** (属血气的) but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,

e. There is always hope for a repentant (悔改的) people. Ezekiel 37 confirmed that dry bones can get life again. The covenant blood allows you to come in and stay into God's kingdom. If you stray, Christ's blood, which pays for all your sins, allows you to come back.

Hope Comes From Success

14 Then the **LORD will be seen over them**, And **His arrow** will go forth **like lightning**. The Lord GOD will **blow the trumpet**, And go with **whirlwinds from the south**.

1. God's people will have success.

a. God will be seen over his people. Protection. This is an allusion(暗指, 影射) to the wilderness wanderings. The Jews had a friend in high places.

b. God's people (arrows) will fight.

Psalms 18:14 He **sent out His arrows and scattered the foe**, Lightnings in abundance, and He vanquished them.

c. God will send lightning on his enemies. (Palestine was known for terrible lightnings.) This was allusion back to Mt. Sinai when God gave the law and put fear in his people.

d. God will blow the trumpet. This is not a call to battle, but a conclusion of battle. The victory is won!

e. God will sweep up their enemies as in a tornado. Could the Jews have gotten a stronger basis for hope?

15 The LORD of hosts will **defend them**; They shall **devour and subdue** with slingstones (弹石). They shall drink and roar as if with wine; **They shall be filled with blood like basins**, Like the corners of the altar (祭坛).

2. The enemies will then be devoured or subdued. This was an allusion to how David defeated the mighty Goliath with slingstones. And because **Goliath represented all of the Philistines**, they all became Israel's servants. **The world would come under the dominion of Christ and his people.** Calvin summarized the victory well: "God declares here that the Jews would be the **conquerors of all nations**, though they were then despised." And further: "...God will render his Church victorious against the whole world." What wondrous hope!

3. Judah would enjoy the spoils (掠夺, 战利品) of their success. They would have wine (not blood) in abundance. The wine would be overflowing, just like the blood of the animal sacrifices overflowed the altar. Surely this was not a literal promise. Men are not to drink and get loud. Drunkenness is verboten (禁止的). Wine pictured the Work of God's Spirit.

This picture of success was intended to give hope to the church in the future. Yes, things did not improve then, but God was reminding them of the future success of the kingdom.

4. Lessons:

a. Wait. Like Moses before the Red Sea, you must remember that the Lord will go with you and fight for you and you must hold your peace. Be patient. He will bring success and give you hope.

b. Work. Speak the Word of God and let the Spirit work his miracles. So when you are on the soccer field or in the park and you have opportunity, speak up for Jesus. Don't hide from the world.

c. Prepare. In order to speak the word you have to know the Word - know the story of the cross.

b. Think big. The promise for abundant spreading of the kingdom and the conquering of the nations has not been realized yet. Keep thinking "kingdom," and "covenant." Don't be trapped by individualistic (个人的) thinking. Think of success on a cosmic scale.

Hope Comes from Splendor

16 The **LORD their God will save** them in that day, As the **flock of His people**. For they shall be like the **jewels of a crown**, Lifted like a banner over His land —

1. God's people will be delivered...like a shepherd (牧羊人) would deliver his sheep from a wild animal.

This was an allusion to David who rescued his sheep from the lion and the bear. **And how he must have treasured the sheep he saved.** So God treasured his bride. **Jesus delivered you on the cross!**

Malachi 3:17 "They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "On the day that I make them **My jewels.**
Isaiah 62:3 You shall also be a **crown of glory** In the hand of the LORD, And a **royal diadem (冕旒)** In the hand of your God.

And he made the whole world see the bride's success... like on a huge banner. **Success is broadcasted.**
Isaiah 11:10 "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, **Who shall stand as a banner** to the people; For the Gentiles (外邦人) shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious." 12 He will set up a **banner for the nations.** And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth.

17 For how **great is its goodness** And how **great its beauty!** Grain shall make the **young men thrive,** And **new wine the young women.**

2. God's people will experience his goodness. So when Alexander had left the world in blood, when he went to Judah he left her in peace. God's goodness is a beautiful thing to behold.

Psalms 31:19 Oh, how great is **Your goodness,** Which You have **laid up for those who fear You,** Which You have prepared for those who trust in You In the presence of the sons of men!

God's bride will thrive. The men would eat and be satisfied. The women would enjoy God's blessings. If you look at sickly children along the airport when you enter a country, you would not expect to see healthy adults with big biceps (双头肌) and strong backs. But Christians will show God's strength!

Jeremiah 31:12 Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, Streaming to **the goodness of the LORD — For wheat and new wine and oil,** For the young of the flock and the herd; Their souls shall be like a well-watered garden, And they shall sorrow no more at all.

In Lamentations 2:12, the young people were staggering without food and drink before and during Babylonian captivity...but now they will have both physical and spiritual drink in abundance.

With all these provisions, no wonder God's Bride was called to go to the temple to see God's goodness.

Psalms 27:4 One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: **That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life,** To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple.

3. Lessons:

a. So much for those who speak of wine as evil! God used a "good physical provision" (wine) to teach about good spiritual provision.

b. Fear kills zeal. So let the knowledge of God's work through Jesus Christ make you bold to advance Christ's cause. God's Word grows faith. Faith kills fear.

c. Know that God goodness (in providing for all your physical and spiritual needs) is not only enjoyed, but admired as well. And this is ground for praising God.

d. Does the world see a beautiful bride, contented, unafraid, abounding in grace? Or does the world see a whining (发恼骚的), compromising (妥协的) and disagreeable bride of the Lamb of God?

Conclusion:

God blessed his bride with **security - salvation (救赎)**. God blessed his bride with **success over her enemies** and the promise of an expanding kingdom. God **blessed his bride with splendor;** she will not merely survive. These gifts gave hope...hope that no one could take away.

Beloved congregation of the Lord:

1. Are you a prisoner of hope. Do you know that **you were saved by the blood** of the Lamb from the teeth of the roaring lion and none can harm you? Do you know that the **Lord treasures you?** Do you know that **God's kingdom will expand – absolutely?**

2. If you do, then live like you have hope. Don't let despondency (沮丧) take over. Fight indifference toward Christ's work. Work for God without fear. Let faith drive you.

Finally: You have no real hope if you are not a Christian. Even the things you have in this life you can't really count on, for you have no power to preserve them. But if you look to the one who gives hope – the one who gave his life for the sins of the world -you too will be wrapped in the safe walls of hope.