**The Spirit of Grace**

**Zechariah 12:1-13:1 (ESV)**

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We’re going to read together Zechariah chapter 12. We’ve been making our way through this amazing prophecy. It’s a prophecy that largely has to do with the nation of Israel, and yet we get to be included as Gentiles. The mystery of the New Testament is that we who were far away, we who didn’t have the covenants, we didn’t have the promises, we didn’t have the Scriptures, we who didn’t have a Messiah coming through our line. We who were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. That middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles has been broken down. So when we read these prophecies, we recognize they are for Israel, but we get to be part of them, too, and they are a great joy to our lives and hearts.

Today we’re going to look at Zechariah 12. We see the second oracle or burden that is going to be revealed to Zechariah. This burden, this word, this message, this prophecy has to do with the nation of Israel. It has to do with Israel becoming a nation again. It has to do with the prosperity of a land. It has to do with a future battle where the nations of the world will gather against Israel. It has to do with the Messiah who strengthens the people, and Israel through the Messiah overcomes. It has to do with a spiritual transformation, repentance of this nation as they look upon the one whom they pierced and they mourn, they repent of a past sin of rejecting the Messiah when He comes. So all of that is unfolded for us here in Zechariah 12. It’s a fascinating and wonderful piece of Scripture! Let’s read it together.

***1*** *The oracle of the word of the LORD concerning Israel: Thus declares the LORD, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him:* ***2*** *“Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah.* ***3*** *On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it.* ***4*** *On that day, declares the LORD, I will strike every horse with panic, and its rider with madness. But for the sake of the house of Judah I will keep my eyes open, when I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.* ***5*** *Then the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, ‘The inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the LORD of hosts, their God.’*

***6*** *“On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a blazing pot in the midst of wood, like a flaming torch among sheaves. And they shall devour to the right and to the left all the surrounding peoples, while Jerusalem shall again be inhabited in its place, in Jerusalem.*

***7*** *“And the LORD will give salvation to the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not surpass that of Judah.* ***8*** *On that day the LORD will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, going before them.* ***9*** *And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.*

***10*** *“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.* ***11*** *On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plane of Megiddo.* ***12*** *The land shall mourn, each family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves;* ***13*** *the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves;* ***14*** *and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves.*

**Chapter 13**

***1*** *“On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.*

What a day! We’re going to open up this great, amazing passage to the best of my ability, asking the Lord to use His Word to strike a fire in our soul. It’s a fire of hope in these dark days, that we would know that there is a Messiah coming. We know that there is going to be a national revival for Israel and ultimately a kingdom that the Messiah will bring. All that, if you’re in Christ, you get to participate in.

My pastor in high school, Dr. Bruce Dunn, uttered a phrase in a number of sermons that captured my attention. Dr. Dunn would say, “A pay day is coming! There has got to be a pay day!” In saying this, I knew that my pastor was wanting me to learn some big truths about life. First, he wanted me to know that today is not the pay day. Today is a day of struggle. It’s a day of hardship. It’s a day of adversity for those who are in Christ. It’s a day of labor without immediate reward. If I think that today should be my pay day I’m going to get really discouraged. I’m going to get frustrated. Perhaps I’m even going to get angry. Let us be sure, God does not promise that today is the pay day.

Secondly, my pastor wanted me to understand that God promises a future day where evildoers who seem to succeed in this life will pay in justice for their rebellion against God. This is to say a most sobering truth that no sin, no matter how small or large, will go undetected and unpunished. On that future day, those who defy God will realize their mortal error and be plunged into an abyss of hopelessness and horror. There will be no happy sinners on that day, that is to be sure. It’s sobering!

Then my pastor wanted me to know as well that God promises a future day where God’s people who seem to fail in this life will receive the reward of God’s grace toward them. It won’t be futile to have obeyed Him. It won’t be futile to have followed Him. It won’t be futile to have believed Him, regardless of the difficulty that such belief and worship might bring into our lives. On that day, the righteous will not be disappointed that they have believed in God, that they have been faithful to Him in the face of the world’s lies and persecutions and rejection. On that day, there will be no sad saints. A pay day is coming!

I thought of my pastor’s words this week as I read over Zechariah chapters 12-14 because the Holy Spirit in these chapters talks about a future day. He uses this little phrase over and over and over. You can’t miss it if you read chapters 12-14. The little phrase is “on that day.” Did you catch that as we read it? It appears seven times in chapter 12 alone. It will appear three more times in chapter 13 and it will appear seven more times in chapter 14. You see, God is drawing our attention to a future day. He is wanting us to know something about the future that is not evident in the present, and that it is that future day that provides us with hope and with strength to endure through everything this present day brings into our lives. Do you know what that day will be like? Well, let’s read about it.

***1*** *The oracle of the word of the LORD concerning Israel:*

If you’re taking notes, you might underline those last two words, “concerning Israel.” It tells us what this oracle is about. It’s about this one nation, a nation called Israel. It is a nation that was begun by a miracle of God as He promised Abraham and Sarah in their old age that they were going to have a son. It was begun then and prospered as God’s own chosen people. God set His love upon them and gave them promises and covenants. So this oracle is about Israel.

Remember, this is the second oracle or message that God gives to Zechariah. As we read chapters 12-14, which is this oracle or this message, the people to whom Zechariah are ministering are asking this question. “Do we have a future as a nation?” Remember, they are the Jews that were invited to return to Israel and 50,000 of them left Persia and came back to Jerusalem, where they began the work of rebuilding the temple. Immediately they are opposed militarily by a group of people who are already living in the land, the Samaritans. This group of Jews, remember, is still living under the dominion of a foreign power, Persia. They are only in Jerusalem because God ordained Persia to give them legal permission. They don’t know how long that permission will last. They know that permission could be as quickly rescinded as it was given. They’re asking this question, “Do we have a future as a people?” Here, God gives them a message of hope, and not only to them, but to us living today. The message to them is, “Yes! One hundred percent, yes. You have a future. I have placed my Name as a guarantee that you will be blessed as a nation forever. That’s what I have said. I will not let my Name be demeaned by failing to fulfill every promise to you.” He says, “Let me share with you more detail about this promise to encourage you, to give you hope.

The first thing we learn is that God is telling them who He is. He is reminding them of who He is. They already know who He is because of the way He has related to them all throughout their history from Abraham forward. But He reminds them who He is. We’ll see in a moment why He does this. Look at verse 1.

**The LORD who ordains our future. (12:1)**

*Thus declares the LORD, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him:*

He takes them all the way back to Genesis 1 and 2. Before they begin to think deeply about the promises of this future, He wants them to know who He is. He does that because these promises are so magnificent, especially if you’re a Jew living in Jerusalem, a tiny group of people living among all foreigners. These promises are so incredible, so astonishing that they defy belief. Upon hearing them, the Jews living in Israel in that day are going to think, “This can’t be! It’s not possible.” Yet all these promises are not only possible, but they are absolutely guaranteed because of the person who is making this promise. So God brings them back to remember who I am as you look at the promises that I give. The LORD who makes these unbelievable promises is a Lord powerful enough to bring them to pass.

This is the LORD who spoke and the heavens stretched out across the newly made sky by sheer force of His word. “Let there be…” and there was. He spoke again and the land separated from the sea. Then He took dust from the ground, the dust that He created by the power of His word and He formed that dust. He breathed into that dust and that dust became a living soul, a creature unlike any other creature, a creature created by God in His own image and His own likeness. He created a person who is vested with ability to know God, to walk with God, and to worship God all through life. He’s saying, “This is who I am. I’m the one who stretched out the heavens and the one who founded the earth, the dry ground. I’m the one who formed the spirit of man within him.”

Remember when we read prophecy who the one making the promises is. That’s so important. Every time we read a promise, there is a temptation in our soul to look at our circumstances and to look at our life and to look at, whether it’s the political landscape or the emotional landscape or the familial landscape and say, “That promise can’t be true for me.” But God says, “Remember who I am. When I make a promise, it’s a promise that is absolute and a promise that is guaranteed. I am the sovereign Lord who has infinite power and is able to accomplish everything that I purpose.” If the LORD created the world by a word, then He can bring a Messiah into the world who would be rejected and then exalted. He can also bring harsh discipline upon His people, discipline brought by Gentile nations. He can alsoordain the nations of the world to rise up against Israel. He is also the one who can deliver this tiny little nation from those powerful nations. He is also the one who could evenconvict Israel, a nation that has hardened itself, become dull in its understanding, and convict them of their sin of rejecting the Messiah. He is the one who can actually bring spiritual life to the whole nation. He is the one who can bring His people into the land that He promised them and allow them to prosper. He is the one who can place His very Son upon the throne of David in Jerusalem. He is the one then who through His Son can rule the whole world in peace and prosperity and righteousness. He can do all those things.

Here’s the truth that God wants us to understand from verse 1. God is able to fulfill every promise that He makes. Beloved, let us never doubt that God will do what He says He will do! Let us never doubt that. When we begin to look at our circumstances, doubts and fears and even despair and discouragement can take over. Let us realign our vision to God. That’s what God is doing. He says, “Take your eyes off of the rubble in the streets, off of the opposition that you see all around you, off of the tiny strength that you have as a nation militarily to even protect yourselves. Take your eyes off all of that and put your eyes on me.” It is only through a vision of God that we will have vision for life. The second idea that God gives through this oracle is that

**The LORD ordains a future battle. (12:2-3)**

***2*** *“Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples.*

All the surrounding peoples are the Gentiles.

*The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah.*

So he brings a sobering word that there is going to be a siege against Jerusalem. They’re just building the temple. They’re eventually going to build the walls, and yet God already prophesies that there is going to be a war ahead. There is going to be a siege of all the surrounding people. Are you afraid of the peoples? We think the word of comfort is, “Don’t worry. They’re going to leave you alone.” That’s not the word of comfort. The word of comfort is, “Yes, they’re going to come against you. There is going to be this huge massive siege. Not just one of them, but all of them are going to come against you. That’s my plan.”

What is described here is a future day when the Gentile nations surround Jerusalem to annihilate Israel as a nation. Daniel 9 teaches us that there is a false shepherd who was prophesied in Zechariah 11, who is going to make a covenant of peace with Israel in this future day. Then he is going to break that covenant of peace in the middle of it. It’s a seven year period. In the middle of it, at 3 ½ years, Daniel says he is going to break the covenant of peace. Jesus talks about these seven years as being a time of great tribulation. At the breaking of the covenant, Israel then will become odious to the whole world because this false messiah, this antichrist is the one who leads the nations.The nations are going to launch an offensive against Israel. This offensive war will not only be against Jerusalem, but against the nation as a whole. He says all of Judah at the end of verse 2.

God says then when the nations come against Jerusalem, the army of Israel will become a “cup of staggering” to the nations. What does that mean? Have you ever drunk a cup of staggering? I haven’t, thankfully. It’s a reference to strong drink, whether alcohol or a drugged drink. If you take a drugged drink, whether it’s alcohol or some other drug and you drink it, what happens? Here are these mighty armies and he says what is going to happen is Israel is going to become a cup of staggering. They touch you and all of a sudden, they just fall apart. They are unable to fight. You can’t drink a cup of staggering and fight. Notice what he says in verse 3. He proceeds.

***3*** *On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves.*

Did you catch that? Remember that Zechariah is preaching to a really, really weak group of people. They know they’re really vulnerable to really powerful enemies, the nations around them, and they’re frightened by this. How comforting these words are. He says in that day there is going to be a siege, but everyone who touches you, it’s like you’re like a heavy stone. I’m not a weight-lifter. Is that obvious? But I know some of you folks are weight-lifters and they have to be really careful. They wear these big belts. But occasionally, what happens? They lift a heavy stone and they’re just incapacitated. That’s the word picture that God is giving. He says you’re like a heavy stone. Everyone who tries to lift you or comes against you, they’re just going to become undone by you. They’re going to hurt themselves. But notice what he prophesies. He says in verse 3,

*And all the nations of the earth will gather against it.*

They will gather against Israel, against Jerusalem. Has that happened yet? The answer of course, is no. It has not yet happened. This war is not a local one. It’s a universal one. It’s a worldwide war against this one nation. The nations of the world are the aggressors and this is part of the campaign that John is going to describe in Revelation 16, during this time of the Great Tribulation. John says

**Revelation 16:12** The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates,

It’s a river just north of Israel.

**Revelation 16:12-13** …and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon

In other words, this is satanically inspired

**Revelation 16:13** …and out of the mouth of the beast

That’s the antichrist.

**Revelation 16:13** …and out of the mouth of the false prophet,

This is the world religious leader.

**Revelation 16:13** three unclean spirits like frogs.

In other words, they are demonically inspired to come against God’s people. Think about this. Why would the nations of the world hate one little nation so much? It’s because the hate is demonically inspired. It’s the one nation that is to be light. It’s through that one nation that the Messiah comes.

**Revelation 16:14** For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.

Then there is a little parenthesis that John writes. He says

**Revelation 16:15** (“Behold, I am coming like a thief!

This is the Messiah, now.

**Revelation 16:15** …Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”)

That’s a message for us. Let’s be ready. Like a bride waiting for her groom, we’ll be a church ready for you. Then it says

**Revelation 16:16** And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

It’s a valley, an amazing valley. It has been called the greatest warring plain on planet earth. They’re all going to be gathered there at this valley near Megiddo and that’s where the war is going to be central and take place. The LORD not only ordains a future battle, but also

**The LORD ordains a future deliverance. (12:4-9)**

It’s been scary up to this point. This isn’t a word of comfort. Now the comfort comes.

***4*** *On that day, declares the LORD, I will strike every horse with panic, and its rider with madness. But for the sake of the house of Judah*

Again, he is continuing to use these terms that define this nation.

*But for the sake of the house of Judah I will keep my eyes open, when I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.*

The peoples are the Gentile peoples. God is not going to let their machinations of war work.

***5*** *Then the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, ‘The inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the LORD of hosts, their God.’*

God is going to make it evident that He is the sovereign protector. He deserves the glory for His protection.The defeat of the nations described here is one of utter panic. Every horse is in a panic, he says. Every horse of the peoples has blindness. It’s a paralyzing terror. Israel will recognize on that day that the victory was from the LORD and not from their own abilities.

***6*** *“On that day*

Again, he’s still talking about this future day.

***6*** *“On that day I will make the clans of Judah*

I love this word picture!

*like a blazing pot in the midst of wood,*

If you put a blazing pot of fire in the midst of kindling, what’s going to happen? It just goes up in flames and burns it all. He says that’s what Israel is like among these nations. It just goes up in smoke. Then it’s

*like a flaming torch among sheaves.*

If you take a pile of leaves and put a flaming torch to them, that’s what it’s going to be like. I don’t believe this is going to be a very long battle, in other words.

*And they shall devour to the right and to the left all the surrounding peoples,*

This is all those who stand up against God’s people.

*while Jerusalem shall again be inhabited in its place, in Jerusalem.*

Notice how often he talks about the city, which is the capital of this nation. What a word picture of the destruction of the Gentile armies. He makes the statement,

***7*** *“And the LORD will give salvation*

You might underline that. He’s going to give salvation

*to the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not surpass that of Judah.*

It’s going to be the whole nation, but He’s going to first start with Judah. That little section, that one tribe had this little piece of ground. Salvation is used primarily to describe physical deliverance in this particular set of verses. But in a moment, we’re going to see that God’s salvation is going to transcend the physical deliverance. It’s going to enter into a spiritual transformation.

***8*** *On that day the LORD will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem,*

By the way, who are the inhabitants of Jerusalem? The answer is they are inhabitants of Jerusalem. I say that because there are a lot of Bible interpreters who have all kinds of, I’ll say, far-fetched ideas about who the inhabitants of Jerusalem are. It seems pretty straightforward if we take just a literal understanding of what Scripture is saying, that we would find an understanding of these prophecies. He’s talking about the inhabitants of Jerusalem over and over again.

*so that the feeblest among them*

I love this! The feeblest person in Jerusalem among the Jewish people

*on that day shall be like David,*

As you read that, if you’re a Jewish person, what is immediately going to come to mind? You’re going to be like David and it’s in the context of battle. What’s going to immediately come to mind? My four year old grandson could probably answer. What comes to mind is when the Philistine giant came out and defied the armies of God. David stood up and said, “What’s wrong with y’all? Why are we not going out there? God’s name is being defamed, here. Let’s go! I’ll go.” They said, “Okay, none of us are going. You can go.” Saul puts the armor on him and David said, “No, that’s too heavy.” He takes five little stones from the brook and he takes his sling. He declares, “God used me to protect my sheep from the lion and from the bear. Who is this Philistine?” Then when the Philistines sort of mocks this young man, David,

**1 Samuel 17:45** Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin,

I know you look more impressive.

**1 Samuel 17:45** but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts,

In other words, I want you to know who stands with me.

**1 Samuel 17:45** the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

This is about God’s glory, you see.

**1 Samuel 17:46** This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,

That’s the point. It’s not that this people deserve this kind of prominence, this kind of reward. They don’t. God is going to say over and over again, “You don’t deserve this. But I have attached my name to a specific people and I will not allow my name to be demeaned not now and not all the way to the end of human history. That all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.” That’s what Revelation chapter 19 is all about. That all the world might know that there is a God in Israel. He is the living God.

**1 Samuel 17:47** and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD’S, and he will give you into our hand.”

What Zechariah is being told is that every person in Jerusalem will be like David with that kind of faith and with that kind of divine enablement. Wow! What could you do with an army of David’s? Well, we find out, don’t we?

***9*** *And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.*

That’s what is going to happen. The LORD ordains a battle. He ordains deliverance. But the real miracle begins to happen with what we see in verses 10 and following.

**The LORD ordains a future repentance. (12:10-14)**

He ordains a future repentance for a people that were unrepentant. They were hardened.

***10*** *“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him,*

What kind of mourning is it, God? What kind of mourning? Tell us more about that mourning. It’s the kind of mourning

*as one mourns for an only child,*

when that only child dies. What kind of mourning is that?

*and weep bitterly over him,*

This one whom they have pierced,

*as one weeps over a firstborn.*

This is describing a future repentance, a repentance that mourns that when Jesus came, they rejected Him as the Messiah.

Here are some questions. The first question I ask when I think about the future repentance of the nation of Israel, and clearly it hasn’t happened yet. It’s never happened where the nation as a whole, the whole house has mourned over the crucifixion of Jesus. That has not happened yet. It was prophesied here. So I ask if Israel doesn’t repent of their sin and of their rejection of Jesus as God’s Messiah, would she receive these other promises? Let’s first ask that question because that’s an important theological question. If Israel would not have repented, would all these other promises of a future, of a land and of a kingdom, and of victory, deliverance over these nations, would that have happened? Here, the answer is absolutely not. Absolutely not!

Repentance precedes God’s blessing. God is not mocked. It would be a mockery to grant these blessings to a people who hadn’t repented. Repentance precedes God’s blessings always. That’s true for Israel. That’s true for my life. That’s true for your life. If you want to be part of God’s future blessing, repentance is absolutely the ground floor. It’s the foundation for everything.God’s righteousness requires that He not bless an unrepentant, obstinate people. He wouldn’t be righteous if He did. God will not bring this promise of blessing upon Israel as long as she is an unrepentant nation. So that caused me to ask the second question.

How exactly is it that God guarantee Israel’s future repentance? Repentance is an act of the will. A person has to be willing to repent. If the future blessing of Israel requires future repentance, how can God guarantee those future blessings to Israel? How can He guarantee a future repentance? We could even argue further that from the beginning of the nation’s history, Israel has not repented. She has not responded rightly and with a humble heart toward God. From Abel to Zechariah, and by the way, Zechariah is ultimately going to be killed by this people. Jesus tells us about that. He is killed for being God’s servant. From Abel to Zechariah, Jesus would say you have killed the prophets, every one of them that God sent. So how is it that we can say with 100% certainty that Israel will repent and turn in faith to God’s Messiah? How can we know that? How could God guarantee that here in Zechariah? The answer is God’s sovereign grace. This is a great mystery and wonder. God in grace will grant repentance to this nation. God in grace will bring this national repentance to pass. One by one, Jewish men, women and children will come to the Lord with a humble heart seeking His mercy to such an extent that we can say the nation as a whole are converted.

Here’s the truth about repentance. Our repentance is a work of God’s grace and it is not a work of our own hearts. If we have repented of our sin, let’s praise God for humbling us, for softening our hard hearts. We cannot boast that we are humble, repentant sinners. The credit for this work of repentance completely goes to God. Not one of us would repent of our sin and bow our knee to Jesus if God was not working to overcome the death of our own souls, the hardness of our own hearts.

I ask the question, who do you think is closer to repentance, the Jews who had the Law, the covenants, the promise of God, or the Gentiles in this world of Zechariah, who worshiped creation and who worshiped idols? If you were going to choose, which of the people, these Gentiles, the Persians and all the other Gentile nations who literally bow down to idols or the people who at least had the Bible and they revered the Bible and they had the covenants? Who do you suppose on a human standpoint would be the one to repent? From a human standpoint, we would rightly say that the Gentiles are less likely to repent of sin than the Israelites. But from a divine standpoint we would say both Jews and Gentiles need God’s grace to repent. It’s equally impossible left to themselves. That’s the reason why the wonder is that the Gentiles, many of us have repented. We are represented here. How is it that we who are without the covenant that God gave to Abraham, who are without the Scriptures, who are without all these promises that God makes to Israel, how is it that we would repent? Here’s what God says to us. He talks of some Gentiles who heard of Christ and came to Him.

**Acts 11:18** When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”

I love that because it tells us where repentance comes from. God granted these folks who were so far from Him, who were so distant from Him, He granted them repentance that leads to life. Anyone who is in Christ, it’s all a gift of God so that no one can boast. The nation of Israel will be brought to repentance from their sin and will embrace the Messiah.

***10*** *“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace*

I love that! That’s how repentance is going to come about.

*and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.*

What a miracle! When we think about this issue of repentance, it’s so important practically for our lives. I want us to pause and think about some truths, four specific truths related to repentance in our lives. It’s right for us to pursue repentance. It’s right for us to plead for God to grant us repentance and then to humble ourselves before Him. We’re responsible. We’re accountable if we don’t repent. Not one of us can say, “Well, God didn’t grant me repentance, so that’s why I’m not repenting.” Not one of us can say that. We’re responsible to obey this command to repent, to humble ourselves before the Lord. So here are four truths to remember.

First, repentance always begins with an act of God’s grace. God loves to hear His people plead for grace. So if you do not have a repentant heart, if you’ve kind of grown hardened to your sin and you’re walking in disobedience, saying, “Yes, I know, but I don’t know how I could ever sever these bonds from the sin that I’m committing.” Plead with God for repentance and then humble yourself before Him. He loves to answer that prayer for grace. The national repentance of Israel to Jesus as the Messiah is one of the most mind-exploding miracles recorded in Scripture. The nation will look upon Jesus as Nathaniel did when He first saw Jesus, and they will say with Nathaniel

**John 1:49** Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

The second truth about repentance is that repentance is fueled by the cross of Jesus.

***10*** *…when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him,*

Notice again who is speaking and acting all through in Zechariah 12. It says “Thus declares the LORD.” The “me” there in verse 10 is the Lord. The Lord is the actor all throughout.

***10*** *…when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced,*

This is God the Son who has taken human flesh form, who then goes to the cross, and now we know who this is. Zechariah had to have wondered, what does this prophecy mean? In fact, the New Testament even tells us that they wondered. I wonder exactly how this prophecy that God is using me to be the instrument, how will it come to pass? But we do know in our day because God has fulfilled so many of these prophecies so that we can now see clearer. We know that God the Son takes on human flesh and that He is literally pierced through His flesh. The God-man is pierced through as He makes sacrifice for our sin in dying upon the cross. John himself, as he reflects upon Jesus’ life and death, he is going to think back to Zechariah chapter 12, this very chapter. Listen to what John 19 says.

**John 19:33-37** But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled:…“They will look on him whom they have pierced.”

Now, the piercing part was fulfilled in Jesus’ first coming. The mourning part hasn’t happened. It didn’t happen in Jesus’ day and it hasn’t happened yet. That is yet future. This nation as a whole that rejected the Messiah at His first coming will be a nation as a whole that mourns over that great sin. Just as an aside, it’s not only the nation of Israel that needs to mourn over the piercing. The Romans were part of it too, and they represented all the Gentile world. Who crucified Jesus? Well, it was the Jewish nation that rejected Him, but it was also the Gentile nations who rejected Him. All of us are culpable of this greatest sin ever committed in the history of the world. There is no sin that is so dark and so evil as the sin of rejecting the Messiah! In Israel, that’s the sin as they look at the cross and they consider Him whom they mourn. I believe now they consider Him whom they mourn because He arrives in person and they see the nails in His hands. They see the scar from the sword in His side and they mourn.

*when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced,*

He is present with them. John writes this in Revelation 1.

**Revelation 1:7** Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

Why do they wail? They wail in mourning. “We have crucified the king of glory.”

Repentance on that last day is fueled by the cross of Jesus. It’s a terrible realization at the end time that we have committed this greatest of all sins, a rejection of God’s Messiah-King. We’re going to take communion in a moment. Isn’t it true that it is a reflection upon the cross that brings a humbling to our soul? It is why it’s so essential for us to take communion. Because it’s a vision of the cross, recognizing my sin held Him there and we mourn because we participated in that rejection.

I remember my youngest son, Jackson. I don’t know. He was about five, six, seven years old. He was sitting in the front and he hadn’t trusted in Christ, yet. We were taking communion and I looked down as I’m leading communion and he is just crying and crying and crying. He told his mom, “Jesus died for me because of my sin.” It’s the miracle of God to awaken a young kid to that reality and it’s a miracle of God to awaken an old guy to that reality. But it is the cross of Christ that fuels our repentance.

When I survey the wondrous cross

On which the Prince of glory died,

My richest gain I count but loss,

And pour contempt on all my pride.

Repentance mourns over sin and over our rejection of the Messiah. I wish we had time to look at this more deeply, but they will mourn as a person who mourns over the loss of their only child. I know that there are some in our church who have lost children. When I talk to them, you can see their aching heart no matter how many years ago it was. God wants us to know it’s that kind of mourning that is reflective of genuine repentance. It’s a mourning over the rejection of Jesus Himself. It’s that kind of mourning that the whole nation is going to experience, the nation as a whole. It’s yet coming. It’s not now. Israel as a nation has not come to that realization, but on that day. The last matter and this is the wonder of Zechariah 13:1, repentance brings God’s cleansing from sin.

**The LORD ordains a future cleansing. (13:1)**

***1*** *“On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.*

In other words, there is a national spiritual transformation in the hearts of individual lives. God’s blessing includes this world millennial kingdom blessing and prosperity and peace among nations. But the very root, the very foundation of it is this spiritual transformation, this spiritual blessing first of forgiveness. Ezekiel talks about this as well when he talks about the future of this nation. God says to this nation

**Ezekiel 36:24** I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.

Again Zechariah is speaking of this. It’s a place, a real place.

**Ezekiel 36:25** I will sprinkle clean water on you,

There is the cleansing aspect. Again, we see it reflected in Zechariah 13.

**Ezekiel 36:25-26** …and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

That is a heart that is soft, unhardened, repentant.

**Ezekiel 36:27-29** And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses.

**Ezekiel 36:32** It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord GOD;

God says, “It’s because of my promise. It’s because of my grace that I act.”

This fountain that cleanses us from sin brings forgiveness and brings a transformation away from sin so that we live clean and holy lives, obedient lives. We’re reconciled in our relationship. All this is the cleansing part; forgiveness, transformation, real reconciled relationship. All of this is this great hope. To us as Gentiles, we recognize that the fountain required the blood of Jesus. John would say

**1 John 1:7** and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

It’s the cleansing fountain. William Cowper read Zechariah 13 and he wrote a hymn. It’s familiar to I think almost all of us.

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains:
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

Do you see why this is a book that we’ve entitled *Return To Hope*? I don’t know where you are in your life. Sometimes the guilt of sin can be so weighty of sins done in the past, sins that are presently just fixed and have strongholds in our life, and we say, “Is there really hope for me?” Here, Zechariah says yes. There is hope for Israel and there is hope for any person, all of God’s people. We who are far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ, Paul says in Ephesians 2. Salvation is available. If you’ve never trusted in Jesus Christ, I urge you this morning to call out upon the Messiah who God provided who shed His own blood to cleanse you. If that’s something you’ve done, then look at that Messiah and treasure Him. How valuable is the Messiah? How valuable is He? I close just by reading Revelation 5 before we take communion.

**Revelation 5:8-10** And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

A pay day is coming! Let us be ready!