

Mid South Conference 1978-08 Zechariah's Visions

by Bob Clark

God's personal care and powerful control can turn trials into something sweet and fragrant, and he will ultimately return to Jerusalem with mercy and build his house among his people.

Duration: 20:46

Scripture: Psalm 37:7

Topics: "Zechariah"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the challenges and distractions that prevent people from prioritizing their relationship with God. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's personal care and seeking His guidance in troubled times. The speaker also highlights God's powerful control over all aspects of life, including circumstances, relationships, and even the local church. He uses the analogy of animal horns to represent the forces that scatter and oppress God's people, but assures that God remembers and will bring justice. The speaker concludes by urging the audience to proclaim God's message and lift their voices like a trumpet.

Transcript

God's people feel that they're down in a deep ravine, and God says, I'll turn it into something very fragrant. The word myrtle is hadassah. It's not an uncommon name for the Jewish girl who was chosen that name by her parents because it meant sweet and fragrant.

And our blessed Lord wants us to understand that the very times of trial, the very low places, the deep, dark ravines in which we find ourselves, can often be turned into a sweet, fragrant time if you'll see the presence of the Lord with you. And Zechariah looks out and he says, there he is, right with his people. It's going to be the mark of the millennial time that God will take away the briar and the thicket and the thorn in Isaiah 55 and 13, and he said, and I'll plant myrtle trees, fragrant, sweet myrtle trees.

That's what's going to grow in the promised land at that time, rich and fragrant and beautiful. Throughout the scripture, Isaiah 41 and 19, another token, millennial periods and there's going to be a myrtle tree growing, a time of blessing and prosperity when the nation was to come and put up their booths and their great holidays at a feast of tabernacles, they would sit down the myrtle tree and make little booths out of it. All to talk in the blessing, the richness, the joy, the greenery, the fragrance of the presence of God.

Do you sense that, beloved God? Do you sense that, child of God? No. I must be honest. I get so upset with my circumstance.

I get so distressed with physical pain. I get irritable. I sometimes feel so annoyed that I have really gotten impatient with some of my dear Christian friends.

I sometimes feel the trials and burdens and exercises of soul and physical demands are sometimes too much for me, and I lose sight of my blessed Lord wanting to turn that very trying time and that difficult experience into something very sweet and fragrant. You're a believer. You're the only one that you know of in your class.

The other fellows in the locker room have nasty, miserable, rotten language, and you kind of fall along with it. You don't want to suffer. You don't want to be in that lonely, dark place of identifying yourself with Christ.

How often there in the lunchroom have you ever waited, whether or not you'd ever own the Lord and acknowledge and give him thanks for your food? How many times on that day have you conjured in your mind whether you should or whether you shouldn't, and then given into your desire and then feeling miserable and unhappy later, and the Lord wants to turn every one of these experiences into something very real and personal for you? God has a personal care in you, beloved of God, and Christ is interceding on our behalf. Every one of us goes through trial. Some of us have different tolerance levels.

People like myself can't bear very much, and so the Lord doesn't lay too much upon us, but others of you have got good, strong, tolerant levels, and God has brought you through harrowing, trying experiences. But is it not true? When you've seen and felt him with you, you smelled the fragrance of his intercession. Our blessed Lord has a multiplied work before God on our behalf.

Toward you who are sinners and unsaved, he is your mediator, because he is the mediator between God and man to bring you into a relationship to God, and some of you have never understood and would never grasp the value of a portion like this, because you're not a believer. You're yet in your sin. You've never accepted Christ as your Savior, so you are totally estranged from God.

You are living your life in your own strength and well on your way to eternal judgment, and Christians are praying for you that you'll be convicted and awakened by the Spirit of God, and this very night, when others are leaving, you're going to stay behind and talk with me and find out how you can be rid of the guilt of your sin. He is the mediator between God and man for the unsaved, but for those believers who sin, he is our advocate and pleads our cause. But here he is pictured as our priest, suffering, succoring, understanding, sensitive priest.

For we have not a priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmity. What have you ever experienced that he has not been there before? Loneliness? Grief? Separation from a loved one? He has been that road before, and he intercedes for you, and something of his heart and compassion is, oh Lord, how long will you spare your mercy for your people? What a blessed Savior we have! Just rejoice in his grace and goodness, and make him real in the very face of these trials and burdens that you are called upon to go through. And then, the Lord answered the angel that talked with me.

See, this is the third person now, not the Lord. The Lord is not speaking to him in this vision. He's speaking through the angel that talked to him, and the Lord answered the angel that talked with me with good words, comfortable words.

The word good means handsome, pleasant, attractive, lovely, charming. There's a multitude of meanings to the word, depending on its context and the structure of the word. Good words.

The angel turns and ministers to Zechariah, and he says the message is God has a personal care for you. He ministers to him good words and comfortable words. Might be a better translation, solace, pitying.

The understanding is a compassionate understanding. How nice that the Lord knows your needs. Do you take time to go to him? Dear young folks, do you ever turn to him with the pressures and problems of your life? Do you feel misunderstood and alone and facing a real difficult time, social difficulties, moral pressures, business demands, family? Are we forgetting to turn to him and avail ourself of such blessed comfort and encouragement? The advice that we got earlier is to have a real relationship with God, we start first with the repentance of sin, then we learn from the failure of others, and we learn from the faithfulness of God, and then God comes in and the first blessing for your soul is realize deep within, in the face of all your adversity and difficulty, God has a personal care in you.

The sweet fragrance rises up out of the bottom. He hears the sweet and lovely, comforting words, and so the angel that communed with me said unto me, cry now, saying let's say of the Lord of hosts, and here Zechariah is commissioned in verse 14. Cry, lift up your voice like a trumpet, enunciate clearly, what? Thus saith the Lord of hosts.

48 times in this little volume, thus saith the Lord, thus saith the Lord. 42 times Jehovah is called the Lord of hosts, and Zechariah is being reminded of the absolute authority of the message, and that we can take it out and apply it. It's not the interpretation, it is an application to us.

The interpretation is, God has promises for Israel, and Israel will have their promises fulfilled because of God's sovereign care for his people, the nation. They were fair known of God, they shall inevitably be his, and there is a revocable authority based on God's word that he still loves and cares for them. The proof of it is, in his grace he reaches down and digs out a remnant of believers, saves their souls, implants the Holy Spirit within them as a token of what he's going to do for them in a national way in a day to come.

But for you and me, God has a care in the middle of all your troubles, but notice how God strengthens. He does not sympathize. God never sympathizes.

His ministry is positive and direct. Those of us with a pastoral heart or a shepherding care, mothers if you want to help your children, husbands if you want to be of any aid and minister to your wives, when there are times of trial we do not sympathize. Human sympathy is debilitating.

It is draining. It takes away and people learn to lean on you, and we have nothing to give one another. We must minister God's word, and God comes back with authority and says, I am jealous for Jerusalem.

Now the mind is cast upon God. Zechariah knows that the Lord is interceding for him. He has comfortable words in his heart.

He's been commissioned to announce this to God's people, and what's going to strengthen him? What gives the ring of authority? God says, I love my people. I have chosen them. They belong to me.

I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy, and don't you worry you Jewish people down there in Jerusalem, even though there's only 60,000 of you. I am so displeased with the heathen that are at ease. You think everything's going well for them.

You think the wicked prosper and God has not noted. You think that the false teachers and the corrupt and those in animosity and enmity against God's people in your local church, that they go on well. Ah no.

God says, I know what's going on down there, and I'm in absolute control. I know what's happening in your high school, and I know what's going on in your class. I realize what's in your local church and I have my plans and purposes, but we must learn to lean upon him.

That's where the strength comes from. Looking unto Jesus. Deepening our personal relationship with him.

Do you? I know at conference we have a good time, and it's profitable to sit and hear the teaching and the ministry of God's word. But I know when you go home, the floors still need waxing, the house still needs training, the business still has to be attended to five or six days a week, the children still have diapers, and on and on goes the routine, and somebody's forever asking you to go to a meeting besides. And when you're finished with that, you're so drained you have no time for God, and he's been blocked out of our life.

The vision? God's personal care. The first counsel and advice for us in troubled times is to see the intercessory care of our blessed Lord, and have the authority of his word for the dilemmas that we face. I am so displeased with the heathens.

It would appear this is a difficult thing to interpret, and so it becomes human opinion, but it would appear verse 15 is saying that the Gentile people that were used by God for discipline of the nation of Israel oversteered the limitations that God desired. They did not merely discipline and bring them into captivity, but they were some kind of abuse. They exceeded what God desired.

That's what I believe is the implication of verse 15. And God says, I am displeased with the heathen. I was but a little displeased, meaning with Israel, but they forwarded the affliction.

They did too much during these 70 years, during the Assyrian invasion, during its various times that they've tried, and God is aware of it. The enemy extends himself, and God shall come in. Have you ever felt like it's been a little bit too much than you can bear? The discomfort, the suffering, the loneliness, the grief or heartache? God says, I know all that you've gone through.

Therefore, thus saith the Lord, I am returned to Jerusalem with mercy. Can you see God coming back to Jerusalem with that motley company, laden with the mercies and cares and blessings and enrichment designed for them? I am returned. I am with you there.

My house shall be built. Right now, they have a little framework and a foundation. They don't even have a wall surrounding their city.

My house shall be built. I have sent a surveyor out to stretch the line around the city of Jerusalem, and it's going to be a massive metropolis. It's not going to be a little city on a hill.

No. He says, take a look at this while I tell you my city through prosperity shall be spread abroad. It'll be a literal megalopolis.

It'll be just city upon city upon city. The nation will prosper. What is he looking forward to? The coming of Christ.

And when the Lord comes to reign, it's not going to be a little handful of people. It'll be a massive nation in a very citadel and center of all activity. So, what does that got to do with what we're talking about? Beloved

of God, that's what you should be looking forward to.

And if you and I had the art today, during the time of Gentiles, to understand the grace of God given to us, and if we had half a grain of concern for Messiah, our blessed Lord, and his coming kingdom and his glory, when he shall receive the adulation and praise, this is the reasoning of Peter. He says the trial of your faith will come out what? To be praise and honor and glory at his appearing. Because it'll be woven into the warp and roof of our life and garment in that coming day.

And we'll reflect his majesty and glory. Isn't that how you feel, honestly? Do you see the coming of Christ as a great triumph for him? In every prayer of yours, do you say, thy kingdom come? Are you looking for the Lord to return and finally receive the praise and the worship and the adoration? He is deservant of it all. And that time is going to come, says Malachi, when a sweet fragrance will rise from every tribe and tongue and nation in the world.

That should be a good time for us to look forward to. All of the world praising and worshiping the Lord in some fashion, understandably or not, and he'll be the center of it all. And you and I be with him.

A kingdom of priests to reign over the earth. What a blessed privilege is ours. And this is the thrust of this vision.

As you've got problems, Zachariah, you feel like you're in a low place, but turn it into a fragrant, sweet time. Sense the presence of the Lord. Know his intercession and fix your mind on the thought that God is going to come and reign in Jerusalem and fulfill all of his promises.

That's a very blessed anticipation. But Zachariah thinks to himself, well, that's all right, but take a look around. Look at the Assyrians.

Look at the Babylonians. Look at those people out there in the northeast. And look at the Egyptians down there.

Why, you know how those Egyptians can be. Is that right, brother? Yes. And why, the killer that struck into his heart.

And he says, that doesn't do anything for us. Look at the problems and difficulties that we face in all of this time around here. Then lifted up my eyes and saw, and behold, four horns.

Not horns like we have seated up here, not an instrument, but the horns of an animal. The broad mass of horns of a wild ox. Priding himself in his youth, using those horns to push and thrash and demonstrate his power, this massive animal is proud of his horns.

And he sees animal horns, a set of four of them. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, what be these? And he answered, these are the horns which have scattered. The Hebrew word is the same as winnowed, threshed.

It isn't just that the fact that they were dispersed. That's a gentle English word. The fact that they were taken and thrown and thrashed and ground down.

God's people. And God remembers every kingdom that's done it. Every government that persecuted his people.

Everyone that has turned their head and thought and heart and intent against the nation of Israel. These are the horns which have scattered Judah and Israel and Jerusalem. And then the Lord showed me four carpenters.

Your Bible may have blacksmiths. Your Bible may have a number of different ways of translating it. But it's rather interesting, and it conveys the thought best to us in our Gentile minds, that in the Septuagint version, this word that is used, the Greek word is tektonik, meaning technician.

And it's not so much that they are people that cut or saw or work with their hands or metal, but it's the idea of somebody who is uniquely skilled at accomplishing what their purpose or their skill is. A technician. A craftsman.

Somebody that is really capable to use or do what their purposes are. God says, look at these horns. These are the nations that have persecuted Israel.

Now I'll show you four craftsmen. What came these to do? He said, these are the horns that have scattered Judah that no man may lift up his head. Israel has suffered terribly, but these are come to terrify, to frighten and terrify those and cast out the horns of the Gentiles which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.

God is here promising his people that there will be divine retribution. Every nation that has persecuted Israel shall suffer, and God shall raise up the power. Inasmuch as there are four, it's logical to think that he is alluding to the four Gentile powers, and each one were abusive of the nation of Israel in Daniel's vision, and the last one, which will destroy the fourth, the first one oppressed God's people and scattered them, and God raised up the second and afflicted them.

Babylon, then Persia scattered Babylon, and then the Greco-Macedonian scattered the Persian, and then the Rome came and overcame and conquered and scattered and tormented God's people, and ultimately the last one will be Christ himself, and his great kingdom shall rule and reign and finally destroy all opposition to Israel. You say, well that sounds like a prophecy lesson. Yes, but what does it mean to you and me? Well, God's powerful control.

Each of these eight visions are going to have three words, at least begin with the same letter. It's kind of a silly way that I have of making things stick in my mind. God's personal care is the first vision.

The second vision is God's powerful control, and if God can control empires and governments and great powers, can he not control your circumstances, your business, your friends at school, your social companion, the troublesome circumstances in the local church? Are we always going to allow the trivial, the temporal, the casual things of life to unsettle our spiritual well-being? What did I say the first vision was? God's personal care. I didn't, did you get that? What was that again? God's personal care. The second vision is God's powerful control.

Do you believe that? I pray so. I know you've joined with me in thanking the Lord for this message. 510.

Notice the words, please. Oh, how great thy loving-kindness, faster, broader than the sea. Oh, how marvelous thy goodness is, lavish all on me.

Jesus, I am resting in the joy of what thou art. I am finding out the greatness of thy loving-kindness. 510.

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