

The Capstone Set to the Cries of 'Grace! Grace!'

by Roger Ellsworth

The sermon emphasizes the importance of God's grace and the role of Zerubbabel in the rebuilding of the temple, drawing parallels to our own lives and the need for God's Spirit to complete the task.

Duration: 32:22

Scripture: Zechariah 4:6-10, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Grace"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the prophecy of Zechariah in chapter four. He explains that Zechariah received eight visions in one night, and the sermon concentrates on verses six through ten. The preacher tells a story to draw connections between the past and present, emphasizing the importance of the capstone. He assures the audience that there will come a day when the capstone of redemption will be put in place, and when that happens, the people will cry out 'grace, grace.' The sermon aims to encourage and uplift the listeners in their service to the Lord.

Transcript

The Prophecy of Zechariah, the Prophecy of Zechariah, and the fourth chapter. And tonight we are returning to this fourth chapter to concentrate our attention on verses six through ten. Zechariah chapter four, verses six through ten.

And I've been telling you that Zechariah is a book of visions. There are eight visions recorded here in this book, and we've been working our way through this prophecy and trying to understand these visions. One thing I haven't said to you is that all of these visions came to Zechariah in one night.

So he had quite a busy night, didn't he? And we still have a couple of visions to go. I talked with you the last time we met on Sunday evening, and my, there couldn't be a greater difference between two Sundays than between last Sunday and this Sunday. Who would have thought last Sunday that we would be having short-sleeve weather this Sunday? But the last time we looked at Zechariah, I tried to explain to you the vision of the lampstand and the olive trees.

And I'm not going to be talking about the lampstand and the olive trees tonight. We've already covered that ground. But I want to talk with you tonight rather about this matter of the capstone being set.

And the message tonight has the title, The Capstone Set to Cries of Grace, Grace. And this passage so blessed my heart a few months ago when I discovered it, that I have been eager to share it with others and eager to share it with you. And I just want to say I've been surprised at this book of Zechariah, that it has so much application for us and so much encouragement for us.

And if you're kind of dragging along tonight and you're wondering if you're going to be able to summon enough strength and energy to go on, and you're discouraged in your service to the Lord, may I simply assure you that the people of God are going to come to a great end. We're going to come to a great day. I want to assure you tonight that there's coming a day when the capstone of redemption is going to finally be put in place.

And if I may just anticipate the direction of this message, I want to tell you that when the capstone of redemption is put in place, that what we're going to be crying is grace, grace. And so I hope that this passage tonight will encourage your heart, even as it has mine in the past few months since I discovered this passage. Let me read the verses to you, beginning with verse 6. And Zechariah here is relating what the angel said to him.

And I've been saying to you that Zechariah had a tour guide through these visions, and this tour guide was this angel. So he answered and said to me, the angel answered and said to Zechariah the prophet, this is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel. And we encounter now this man, Zerubbabel.

We'll talk a little bit about him. This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts. Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain, and he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of grace, grace to it.

Moreover, the word of the Lord came to me saying, the hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple. His hand shall also finish it. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you.

For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the Lord, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth. Well, we certainly have more in those verses than we can deal with in the space of one message.

I do want to focus our attention on this business of the capstone. Now I want to tell you a story tonight. Everybody likes a good story.

So I want to begin with a story. And then after I tell you that story, I want to draw three lines from that story to our present day and age and our present experience. The story is one with which all of you, I think, are quite familiar.

It's the story of this nation of Israel. And you know that God chose the people of Israel to be his own prized possession. And you know how that God blessed the people of Israel, the descendants of Abraham.

There was a time there when they were in bondage in Egypt for a period of 430 years. And it looked as if God had completely forgotten about his people, that he had forever cast them aside. I wonder if you might be inclined to think in these days that God has forgotten all about his people, that he's inclined to cast them aside.

These are not encouraging days in many respects for Bible-believing, God-honoring, Christ-centered people. But God never forgets his people. And don't let appearances deceive you.

God never casts them aside. And after the people of Israel were in bondage in Egypt for over 400 years, God brought them out with a strong and mighty hand. Don't you just find fluttering within your heart the desire to see God reveal his strong and mighty hand on behalf of his people today? Wouldn't it be great if God would show his strong and mighty hand right here in the life of Parkview Baptist Church? Do you have a desire for that? Do you have a craving for that? Do you pray for that? May I just simply urge you, if you're not doing that, to begin, please begin praying for God to show his strong and mighty hand right here at Parkview Baptist Church.

I love, I'll get back to my story here in just a moment, I haven't forgotten it, okay? I love that 10th verse there, who has despised the day of small things? Now Parkview is a small thing and people these days despise small things. Small churches don't seem to weigh very much on the scale these days. Perhaps you're thinking, well nothing great can happen here at Parkview Baptist Church.

Parkview is too small to have anything great happen. Will you dare to believe that Parkview is not too small for God to do mighty things? Let's try to develop a yearning and a craving here for God to do something unusual in our midst. I'll say that Parkview has gotten down just low enough that if anything great here happens, God will have to get the credit for it, don't you think? I don't think that any of us could take any credit for it.

I think all the credit and praise would have to have to go to God. Now I want to go back to my story. I got excited, all right, but here we have Israel down in the land of Egypt and they were there for 430 years and then God showed his strong and mighty hand and he brought them out.

You remember he brought them out under Moses and he led them right up to the promised land and then Moses passed off the stage and Joshua took up the reins of leadership and God was very specific. Now he was about to bring the people of Israel into the land that he had promised, the land of Canaan, and God was very specific about what would be necessary if these people were to continue in the land that God was going to give them. You find this so clearly laid out in the book of Deuteronomy.

God said primarily that if they expected to continue in the land, they must at all cost avoid idolatry. They must serve the Lord God and serve him alone. Well, you know that they came into the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua.

We're going to press the fast forward button now. You know that they were ruled by judges for a while and yes, they had some problems with idolatry, but you know that God raised up David to be king of Israel and Solomon was raised up after David and these were great years in the life of the nation of Israel, but then catastrophe struck. After Solomon died, the kingdom was divided into two parts.

Is all this coming back to you? One part was Israel and the other part was Judah and God still was saying the same thing and that is if you expect to continue in the land, you must at all cost avoid idolatry, but we know that both kingdoms went after idols. They went headlong into idolatry and God sent prophet after prophet to preach to them and to say to them, you must repent of your idolatry and God had not only been specific about what they must do to continue in the land, but he had also been very precise about what they could expect to happen if they did go after idols. God said, I will bring in foreign countries and these foreign countries will carry you away captive.

Well, we know what happened. The people of Israel refused to listen to the prophets. They continued to go after their idols and the Assyrians came in and took them into captivity in 722 BC and the people of Judah,

we're talking now about the nation being in two kingdoms and the people of Judah continued.

The kingdom of Judah continued for a while, but they also went after idols and in 586 BC, God brought the Babylonians in upon them and they went down into Babylon for 70 long years of captivity. Now, we're primarily interested in this Babylonian captivity and in the people of Judah after the 70 years came to a halt, Cyrus, king of Persia, Persia had conquered Babylon. Cyrus, king of Persia, decreed that the Jews would be released and they could go back home and so they returned.

We've been talking about this as we've worked our way through Zechariah's prophecy and when they got home, they found a mess on their hands. Now, some of you are saying, well, what does all this have to do with me? I've taken my Sunday evening here and I've come to church and this man's giving me an ancient history lesson. Be patient.

Patience is a virtue, all right? It's one of the fruits of the spirit and so be patient. We'll get there, but it's so important that we have this background in place. These people, when they were released from Babylon, came back and they found their land of Judah in a complete mess.

I've described this for you. The walls of Jerusalem were lying in ruins. The temple of Solomon, the beautiful temple Solomon had built, was a pile of rubble and they didn't have houses in which to live and they came back and they did okay for a while.

They started rebuilding, rebuilding their houses and they started rebuilding the temple of Solomon, rebuilding that temple to the Lord and they did pretty well for a while and then they got discouraged and they quit. And this passage I've read addresses some of the reasons that they got discouraged. One reason was that the tasks seemed so great and their strength seemed to be so small.

They seemed to be so feeble and God says to them here, you must not worry about your feebleness because this temple is not going to be built by your might. It's not going to be accomplished by your power. It's going to be accomplished by the Spirit of God working in and through you.

It's right there in that sixth verse where he says, do you see that verse? Not by power but by my Spirit. Now we can raise here this question. On what basis can Parkview Church expect to see the mighty hand of God at work? If it's a matter of our might, if it's a matter of our ingenuity, if it's a matter of our cleverness, we're going to fail, folks.

If Parkview is going to succeed, the Spirit of God has to work here. Now what does that mean for us? That means that we must center on those things that please the Spirit of God and we must avoid those things that grieve the Spirit of God. Now may I just simply suggest that if we want to please the Spirit of God, we need to exalt Jesus Christ because the Holy Spirit came to this world for the express purpose of glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ.

So God's encouraging them. He says it's not a matter. You're talking about how feeble you are.

It's not a matter of your strength. It's a matter of my Spirit coming along and catching you and carrying you along. And oh, this needs to be our heart here.

It's for the Spirit of God to come and catch us and carry us along. And they were saying why rebuilding this temple seems to be like scaling an impossibly high mountain. We can't scale this mountain.

It's so high. But look at what God says to them there in verse 7. Who are you, O great mountain? He says this thing that you consider to be a mountain, it's no problem because I am sending you a Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was the political leader.

We've talked about Joshua being the religious leader along with Zechariah. Zerubbabel was the governor, the political leader that God was sending. And look at what he says here.

He says when Zerubbabel comes on the scene, that great mountain. You're talking about building the temple as if it were an impossibly high mountain. I tell you that under Zerubbabel's leadership, it's not going to be a high mountain.

It's going to be a level plain. And so God is assuring them here. And may I simply tell you the end of the story.

These people believed the message of God and they got to work and the spirit of God did come along and catch them and carry them along. And that temple was rebuilt. And there came a glorious day, ladies and gentlemen, when the temple was all done except for one stone.

That's called the capstone. And they planned a great ceremony on this day. God had encouraged them.

The spirit of God had come along and caught them and carried them along. And the temple was all done now except for this one stone being put in place, the capstone. And they planned this great day of celebration.

And on this day of celebration, Zerubbabel, the man that God had sent to lead them in this work, dropped that capstone into place. And when Zerubbabel dropped that capstone, the last stone in the temple in place, the people cried, grace, grace. And this is the thing that so caught my attention back a few months ago.

I found myself saying, what a strange thing for these people to shout. I mean, I've been to various sporting events. My son Tim and I and Daniel, my grandson, went to watch the Union men play basketball a week ago yesterday.

And it was while I was driving back that Brother Herman called me and said, what are we going to do about this snowstorm? And I said, ah, it's not going to snow much. It won't be any problem. Brother Herman proved to be right.

It did snow much. It did snow much. And I enjoyed watching the Union men win that basketball game.

And as I sat there, I heard various people shouting various things, but I didn't hear anybody shout grace, grace. I've heard it at sporting events, people you shout hooray. I've heard them say way to go.

I've heard them say all kinds of things, but I've never heard anybody at a sporting event shout grace, grace. I've attended a few baseball games in St. Louis. I have been a fan of the St. Louis Cardinals for almost all my 40 years.

Well, maybe a few more years than that. And I've had beer slopped on me. I've had smoke blowed in my face.

And I've heard profanity, but I've never heard anybody at a St. Louis Cardinals baseball game shout grace, grace. And I'll tell you what, if anybody were to stand to his feet and shout grace, grace at a St. Louis Cardinals baseball game, I dare say the ushers would probably escort him out. But that's exactly what we find here.

We find Zachariah or Zerubbabel dropping the capstone into place. And this is what the people cried, grace, grace. Back when I was just a mere lad, the Gateway Arch in St. Louis was constructed.

And it was interesting to see that arch go up and this leg would go up and that leg would go up and they'd reach higher and higher, each leg going higher and higher up into the air, 630 feet, I think. And then there came that day when those two legs were separated just a bit. And there was just one thing that remained, one piece to be put in place.

And they got a crane and they carefully lowered that last piece in place. And I remember reading about that in the St. Louis paper and I remember seeing accounts of it on St. Louis TV stations. And I can tell you, my memory is not as good as it used to be, but I can almost guarantee you that when that last piece of the arch was put in place, no one shouted, grace, grace.

It seems a very peculiar thing for these people. But ladies and gentlemen, I want to tell you that this was the fitting thing for these people to cry when Zerubbabel put the last stone in the temple. These people were right to cry, grace, grace, because when that last stone was lowered into place, it hit them with full force that it was God's grace who had enabled them every step of the way.

It was God's grace that gave them the desire to build that temple. It was God's grace that gave them the strength and the wisdom to build that temple. It was God's grace that enabled them to persevere in the building of that temple.

So that's my story. It's a good story, don't you think? It's a true story. It comes right from the pages of the Bible.

And now I'm ready to answer that question. What does it have to do with us? I said that I wanted to draw three lines from this passage here to our own day and age. And here they are.

I want to draw a line from the ruins of that temple to far greater ruin. I want to draw a line from that Zerubbabel to a far greater Zerubbabel. And I want to draw finally a line from that capstone being set in place to cries of grace, grace, and a far greater capstone being set in place.

And when that occurs, that will be our cry. Now some of you are saying it sounds like this is going to be a long sermon. I think I can deal with this in fairly short order.

I'll have you out of here before midnight, okay? Let me draw my first line from the ruin of the temple. I mean Solomon's temple was lying there in utter ruin. But I want to talk to you about greater ruin.

I don't have to go into detail about this because we've been exploring this on Sunday mornings. We've been talking about the calamity of sin. And oh I tell you ladies and gentlemen, sin did a number on us.

So much so that the apostle Paul says that we all come into this world in a state of living death. We're living physically but we're dead spiritually. Dead toward God.

We have no spiritual life, no spiritual interest. Oh what hope is there for people who are ruined by sin? And this is exactly where we were. Well there'd be no hope for us at all if it were not for the next thing.

I'm drawing my lines now from my story to our own experience. I tell you that we can draw a line from the ruin of Solomon's temple to the ruin of our own souls. Our souls were ruined by sin.

But let me draw a line now from this Zerubbabel here in Zechariah chapter four to a far greater Zerubbabel. And I'm talking now about the Lord Jesus Christ. Here you and I were in the ruin and the rubble of sin.

But the Lord Jesus came in just as Zerubbabel came in on this occasion back here in Zechariah's time. So Jesus came and he came specifically to deal with the ruin of sin. He came expressly for that purpose.

And the Lord Jesus, ladies and gentlemen, did essentially two things. He lived the life that you and I have refused to live and then he died a death such as no one before had ever died or any one since. And by that perfect life that Jesus lived he provided the righteousness that we need to stand acceptably in the presence of God.

And by that death on Calvary's cross he took the penalty that we deserve for our sins. This is Christianity 101. This is basic Christianity.

Here it is in a nutshell. Christianity means Jesus gets my sin and I get his righteousness. We sing about it in that great old hymn, the Sodal Drop, dressed in his righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.

I don't have the righteousness that God demands of me to stand in his presence. My righteousness according to the word of God and my testimony of myself corresponds to the word of God. My righteousness is as filthy rags.

But thank God for Jesus who came into the ruin and the rubble created by sin and who provided the righteousness that God demands and who took the penalty of my sin. Thank God for Jesus, I say. He's a far greater Zerubbabel than this Zerubbabel.

He came into far greater ruin and by his perfect life and by his redeeming death he rescues us from ruin and makes us right with God. And having said those things I want now just to close by drawing a third line and that third line is from the capstone being set here on this great day to a far greater day when another capstone is going to be set. And you know what I'm talking about now.

I'm telling you, brothers and sisters in Christ, that we have glory awaiting us. We're about to celebrate Easter here in a few weeks. Thank God for the hope that we have because of the resurrection of Jesus.

And thank God this world has not seen the last of Jesus Christ. I read about it there in First Thessalonians chapter four. The apostle Paul wrote to these confused, perplexed, bewildered Thessalonians and he says, I don't want you to be ignorant brethren concerning those who have fallen asleep, those who have died, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God. And listen, the dead in Christ shall rise first and then we who are alive and remain

shall be caught up together to meet them in the air.

And so shall we ever be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. I'm telling you my friends that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming again and when he comes he's going to gather his people home.

And when we've come into the glory of heaven, escorted there by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, redemption's work will finally be done. It'll finally be done. Yes, Jesus paid it all on Calvary's cross and he finished the work of redemption there in one sense.

He finished the provision of it, but I'm talking about the application of it being finished. And that will take place in the glory of heaven. You can read about it in Revelation chapters four and five.

And when we finally come into the presence of our Lord, when redemption's work is finally going to be done, when there's nothing more that remains of the work of redemption, the provision was made on Calvary's cross. Now we're talking about the application of it. When we come into his presence it will finally be done.

Nothing will be remaining to be done. And what shall we say on that day? Well you may imagine yourself saying on that day, way to go Jesus. Hooray for Jesus.

You may think that you'll go around high-fiving people on that day, but as for me, the cry of my heart will be grace, grace, grace. When the capstone of redemption is finally set in place and nothing remains to be done, we will cry as these people did when the capstone of the temple was put in place. Grace, grace.

Because we will realize on that occasion as we have never realized before that we're saved by grace. That we owe nothing to ourselves. There's nothing for which we can take credit.

And we will probably join in singing more lustily than we have ever sang here on this earth. The words of the great John Noonan. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost but now am found. Was blind but now I see. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear.

And grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear. The hour I first believed.

When we've been there ten thousand years bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun. Oh I tell you my friend, when the capstone of redemption is set in place, the cry of your heart will be grace, grace. And that will be the cry of your heart through the unceasing ages of eternity.

You will know that you are in heaven as a debtor to grace. And the people of God said, let's bow together for prayer. Father, our hearts get so tired and weary in this sin weary world.

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