

Title: **Once A Curse – Now A Blessing**

Text: Zechariah 8:13

Subject: *God's Elect Made a Blessing*

Date: Sunday Morning — October 8, 2006

Reading: *Zechariah 8:1-23*

Tape # Zechariah #41

Introduction:

The typical nation of Israel was a nation distinctly chosen of God as his covenant people. The Lord God had made a covenant with them in their representative, Abraham, long before any of the Jews were born. He redeemed them out of Egypt by the blood of the paschal lamb before they were cursed by his holy law given at Mt. Sinai. Yet, though providentially blessed above all people, the Jews became, according to God's infinitely wise and good purpose, a cursed people by their own doing. Because of their willful, defiant rebellion and sin, Israel and Judah became a curse among the nations of the earth.

Their idolatry was high treason against God, treason that gave the heathen occasion to blaspheme God's holy name. The Lord God said, by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, "*Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water*" (Jer. 2:11-13).

Israel turned aside from Jehovah to worship Baal and Ashtaroth, and countless other false gods. So great was their evil that God's covenant people led others into idolatry, dishonoring the name of the Most High, and became a curse among the nations.

Does that seem astonishing to you? It shouldn't. The same is true of all the Israel of God. Though loved and chosen of God before the world began as his covenant people, though redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, God's elect "*go forth from the womb speaking lies,*" and are "*children of wrath even as others,*" a curse among men by nature and by deed. Yet, the Lord God has promised in his Word that he will make them everyone a blessing among men by his grace. That is the message of Zechariah 8:13.

(Zechariah 8:13) "And it shall come to pass, *that* as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, *but* let your hands be strong."

A Curse

The first thing revealed in our text and constantly set before us throughout the Word of God is the fact that every unregenerate man, every unbeliever, is a curse. Unpleasant as that fact is to deal with, it is a fact confirmed by history and confirmed by the consciences of all.

Every lost soul is under the curse of God's holy law because of sin. Will you hear me? You who are without Christ are cursed of God. I know, you have been told all your life that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life; but the Book of God speaks otherwise (Ps. 11:5; Isa. 1:14; 63:6; 66:15; Nahum 1:2; John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 6:23; Eph. 2:1-5; 5:6; Col. 3:6; Rev. 14:10; 16:1).

(Psalms 11:5) "The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth."

(Isaiah 1:14) "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear *them*."

(Isaiah 63:6) "And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth."

(Isaiah 66:15) "For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire."

(Nahum 1:2) "God *is* jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and *is* furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies."

(John 3:36) "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

(Romans 1:18) "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

(Romans 6:23) "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

(Ephesians 2:1-5) "And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins: (2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)."

(Ephesians 5:6) "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

(Colossians 3:6) “For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.”

(Revelation 14:10) “The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.”

(Revelation 16:1) “And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.”

Do you hear what the Scriptures declare? The wrath of God is upon you. Your conscience echoes that which I have just read to you from the Book of God. I know it does. You may try to suppress the screams of your accusing, guilty conscience, but you know that I speak the truth.

- You are guilty.
- You have broken God’s law from your youth up, and continually do so.
- Except you flee to Christ and find refuge in him from God’s holy, just and furious wrath, hell will be your portion forever!
- God help you now to flee away to Christ, the only City of Refuge for your soul!

Perhaps you think to yourself, “Well that is my business. If I go to hell, it is no business of yours. I harm no one but myself.” — Hardly! **Not only are you cursed by God, your whole life is a curse.** You are cursed; and you are a curse! Again, I give you nothing to consider except the plain, unmistakable Word of God himself. Oh, may God whose Book I now read to you cause you to hear (Isa. 1:4; Jer. 6:28; Rom. 3:10-19).

(Isaiah 1:4) “Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.”

(Jeremiah 6:28) “They *are* all grievous revolters, walking with slanders: *they are* brass and iron; they *are* all corrupters.”

(Romans 3:10-19) “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. (13) Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips: (14) Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness: (15) Their feet *are* swift to shed blood: (16) Destruction and misery *are* in their ways: (17) And the way of peace have they not known: (18) There is no fear of God before their eyes. (19) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”

It does not matter how moral you think you are, or how moral others think you are, with every breath you draw, you breathe out iniquity. Drinking iniquity like water, you spew out iniquity with every breath, every word, and every deed. Man's heart, "*deceitful above all things and desperately wicked,*" is like the upas tree, — the sap is deadly poison (Mark 7:20-23).

(Mark 7:20-23) "And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. (21) For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, (22) Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: (23) All these evil things come from within, and defile the man."

- Every God-hating rebel is **a curse upon the earth**. His very life is a curse, a curse that calls for the wrath of God upon the whole world.
- Every lost man is a curse **to his own family**. He infects his children with his own poisonous nature. And by his ungodly character and conduct, he teaches them to hate God and run to hell.
- Corrupt **fathers** corrupt their families.
- Corrupt **mothers** corrupt their daughters.
- Corrupt **children** corrupt one another.
- Corrupt **teachers** corrupt their students.
- Corrupt **politicians** corrupt the nation.
- Corrupt **pastors** corrupt churches.
- Corrupt **churches** corrupt the world.

Oh, what a curse every fallen descendant of fallen Adam is! — A curse everywhere! Like the barren fig tree in our Lord's parable, cumbering the ground, he is a curse and he is cursed (Luke 13:6-9; Matt. 21:19).

(Luke 13:6-9) "He spake also this parable; A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. (7) Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? (8) And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung *it*: (9) And if it bear fruit, *well*: and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down."

(Matthew 21:19) "And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away."

· Cursed and a curse you are by nature. And, **unless God himself intervenes** and saves you by his omnipotent grace and sovereign mercy, you shall be damned forever in his holy wrath!

Children of God, I remind you that is exactly where we were when the Lord God our Savior called us by his grace and revealed Christ in us. And that is exactly what we are by nature, corrupt and corrupting sinful people (Isa. 51:1; Eph. 2:1-5; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Tit. 3:3-7; 1 Cor. 4:7; 15:10).

(Isaiah 51:1) “Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock *whence* ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit *whence* ye are digged.”

(1 Corinthians 6:9-11) “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, (10) Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

(Ephesians 2:1-5) “And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins: (2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)”

(Titus 3:3-7) “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another. (4) But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, (5) Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; (6) Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; (7) That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

(1 Corinthians 4:7) “For who maketh thee to differ *from another?* and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it?*”

I was once a curse; but Christ was made a curse for me and took the curse away (Gal. 3:13). All that I once was is now gone; and I am a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

(1 Corinthians 15:10) “But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

Salvation Promised

Go back to Zechariah 8:13. The Lord God declares, “*as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel, so will I save you!*” What a great promise. — “*As ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel, so will I save you!*”

This salvation is promised to a specific people. — “*The House of Judah and House of Israel*” (Isa. 45:17).

(Isaiah 45:17) “*But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.*”

· **God’s Chosen People** (2 Thess. 13-14)

(2 Thessalonians 2:13-14) “*But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: (14) Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

· **God’s Covenant People** (Heb. 8:10-12)

(Hebrews 8:10-12) “*For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: (11) And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. (12) For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*”

· **God’s Redeemed People** (Isa. 44:21-24; 54:4-8)

(Isaiah 44:21-24) “*Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. (22) I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. (23) Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel. (24) Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.*”

(Isaiah 54:4-8) “*Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. (5) For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. (6) For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. (7) For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. (8) In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.*”

The salvation promised is the work of God himself, the work of God alone. He says, “*So will I save you.*” — “*Salvation is of the Lord!*”

- Election is God’s work, not ours.
- Redemption is God’s work, not ours.
- The new birth is God’s work, not ours.
- Faith in Christ is God’s gift to us, not our gift to God.
- Salvation is by God’s will, not by our will.

(Romans 9:16) “So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”

In our text, Zechariah 8:13, the Lord God promises that he will save his elect in a specific way. — “*As ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel, so will I save you!*” He says, “*as ye were a curse...so will I save you.*” If ever you find out how we became a curse, you will find out how God saves sinners (1 Cor. 15:21-22; Rom. 5:12-21).

(1 Corinthians 15:21-22) “For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. (22) For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

(Romans 5:12-21) “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (13) For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. (14) Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. (15) But not as the offence, so also *is* the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. (16) And not as *it was* by one that sinned, *so is* the gift: for the judgment *was* by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification. (17) For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) (18) Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life. (19) For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (20) Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (21) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

- As we became sinners by what Adam did, so we are made righteous by what Christ did.
- As Adam’s sin was imputed to us, so Christ righteousness has been imputed to God’s elect.

- As Adam's sin was imparted to us in birth, by natural generation, so Christ's righteousness is imparted to us in the regeneration of grace.
- As in Adam we were made sinners, so in Christ we are made the righteousness of God.

Made A Blessing

Look at our text again. The Lord God here declares that as we were made a curse by the sin and fall of our father Adam, all who are saved by God's free grace in Christ are made a blessing in him and by him.

(Zechariah 8:13) "And it shall come to pass, *that* as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, *but* let your hands be strong."

Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, the Lord God has, by his saving grace made you a blessing and shall yet make you a blessing. Did he not promise, "*thou shalt be a blessing*"? (Gen. 12:2) — What does this mean, "*Ye shall be a blessing.*" — He does not simply say, "My blessing shall be upon you," or, "I will bless you," though that is certainly true and we rejoice in it. Here he says, "*Ye shall be a blessing!*"

The Lord God made us a blessing before the world was, when he made us accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:3-6; Isa. 65:8). — God's elect are a great blessing to all the earth, because the only reason the rest of the world is not immediately consumed in his furious wrath is the fact that his elect are yet in it (2 Pet. 3:9).

Illustrations: *Lot in Sodom*

The Light of the World

The Salt of the Earth

(Isaiah 65:8) "Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and *one* saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing *is* in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all."

(2 Peter 3:9) "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Saved sinners are the means by which God conveys the blessings of his grace to other sinners (1 Cor. 1:26-31).

Illustrations: *Achish to David* — "*As an angel of God.*"

Paul was as an angel of God to the

Galatians

(1 Corinthians 1:26-31) “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: (27) But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (28) And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: (29) That no flesh should glory in his presence. (30) But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

Yet, there is more. **The Lord God will soon cause all creation to acknowledge that these things are so and bless his people** (Zeph. 3:20). The tables will soon be turned. Those who now despise and curse us will envy us forever.

(Zephaniah 3:14-20) “Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. (15) The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, *even* the LORD, *is* in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. (16) In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: *and to Zion*, Let not thine hands be slack. (17) The LORD thy God in the midst of thee *is* mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. (18) I will gather *them that are* sorrowful for the solemn assembly, *who* are of thee, *to whom* the reproach of it *was* a burden. (19) Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. (20) At that time will I bring you *again*, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.”

And we shall be an everlasting blessing to God our Savior (Eph. 2:7).

(Ephesians 2:7) “That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

(Zechariah 8:13) “And it shall come to pass, *that* as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, *but* let your hands be strong.”

Oh, may God make this salvation yours, for Christ’s sake. It is my prayer that he will bless you by his grace and make you a blessing, to the everlasting praise of the glory of his grace in Christ.

Amen.

Let’s sing #63 in our *Songs of Grace* book.

Salvation! What a Blessed Word!

Long Meter

Salvation! What a blessed word!
Good news, most pleasing to our ears,
Redemption by our sov'reign Lord—
Almighty grace dispels our fears.
Salvation, now received by faith,
Was fixed by God's most firm decree
And purchased by Christ Jesus' death,
Who by His Spirit set us free.
Though dead and helpless in our sin
Long at the door of hell we lay,
God raised us up by grace divine,
O happy, glorious, blessed day!
Saved by almighty grace alone,
Saved through the blood of Christ the Lamb,
Washed in the blood, our sins are gone!
Christ frees us from all guilt and blame!
Salvation! Sound the word to all!
Proclaim good news to fallen men!
All who on Christ for mercy call,
Shall be forgiven of their sin!