

Title: **“THE BLOOD OF THY COVENANT”**
Text: Zechariah 9:11
Date: Sunday Morning — February 25, 2007
Tape # Zechariah #50
Readings: *Jeremiah 31:3, 31-34; 32:37-42;*
 and Hebrews 8:8-13; 13:20-21

(Jeremiah 31:3) “The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”

(Jeremiah 31:31-34) “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: (32) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: (33) But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. (34) And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

(Jeremiah 32:37-42) “Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: (38) And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: (39) And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: (40) And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. (41) Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul. (42) For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.”

(Hebrews 8:8-13) “For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: (9) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. (10) 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. (13) In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old *is* ready to vanish away.”

(Hebrews 13:20-21) “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, (21) Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

INTRODUCTION

Turn with me to Zechariah 9. The Lord God is here speaking to his ancient people, Israel, the nation he had preserved, though other nations had been destroyed. **Throughout their history, the Jews had been distinctly and manifestly preserved as a nation.**

- Though they dwelt in Egypt for four hundred years, they were never absorbed into Egypt.
- Though they wandered in the wilderness among many other nations, they never became a part of them.
- Though they were often delivered into the hands of their adversaries because of their transgressions, they were preserved as a distinct people.
- Though they had wars continually, God preserved them.
- Though they were captives in Babylon for seventy years, they were kept distinct as a nation.

No other nation has experienced such distinct, lasting preservation. Why did they? **Why were they preserved as a nation in such a distinct manner?** The Lord God had made a covenant with Abraham on their behalf; and it was a bloody covenant. Its sign and seal was the bloody rite of circumcision. You will recall that when **Zipporah** circumcised her son, she threw the foreskin at Moses’ feet and said, *“Surely a bloody husband art thou to me...A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision”* (Exodus 4:25-26). **So, in Zechariah 9:11, the Lord God said to the children of Israel, when they were delivered from Babylon,** — *“As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.”*

As I have shown you countless times, *“All these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come”* (1 Corinthians 10:11). **That physical nation and all that they experienced by the hand of God was typical and designed by God to portray his works of grace to the church of his elect,** which the Holy Spirit calls, *“an holy nation”* (Ezekiel 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9) and *“the Israel of God”* (Galatians 6:16).

And, as we have seen, **this entire 9th chapter of Zechariah’s prophecy is talking about the coming of Christ to redeem and save his people.**

Proposition: Our text is our God’s declaration to his church that the basis

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of our deliverance, the basis of our salvation by Christ, is the blood of the covenant he made with us in Christ our Surety before the world began. — “As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.”

All believers have some share in that covenant made with Abraham, for he is the father of the faithful; and the covenant God made with Abraham was a picture of the covenant he made with us in Christ from eternity. We who trust the Lord Jesus Christ are of the seed of Abraham, not according to the flesh, but according to the promise. Therefore, Abraham is called, by the Spirit of God, “*the father of all them that believe*” (Romans 4:11); and we who believe are called “*the children of Abraham*” (Galatians 3:7). As the Jews of old were typically preserved as a people by covenant blood we too, are saved and kept as a separate and distinct people, not because of any natural goodness in us, or because of our superiority over others, but solely and entirely because the Lord has made with us eternal covenant, “*ordered in all things and sure*” (2 Samuel 23:5). It is a covenant ordered in all things and sure because the Lord Jesus Christ is himself the Surety of the covenant, the One upon whom the whole covenant stands. **Everything in our text is specifically addressed to and describes us.**

(Zechariah 9:11) “As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein *is* no water.”

PRISONERS

The first thing the Lord tells us is this. — We were all, by nature, prisoners in a “*pit wherein is no water;*” but we were, even in our fallen state, prisoners in a covenant relationship with the triune God.

Do you remember your days as a prisoner? I remember them well. **A prisoner is one who has lost his liberty.** That was our condition before Christ set us free. We were “*carnal, sold under sin,*” in bondage to our lusts, and taken captive by Satan at his will. Oh, like all others, **we boasted of our free will.** We thought we were the captains of our own souls and the masters of our own destinies. But our will was itself enslaved with all the rest of our nature.

Sinners are mocked when they are told that they are free, that they

have a free will. The notion of “free will” is just about the silliest, most absurd thing imaginable. Show me a convict toiling on the chain gang, and call him a free man if you will; but never call a sinner a free man, even in his will, especially in his will. **He is the slave of his own corruptions.** In our natural state, we wore chains, not on our arms and legs, but upon our hearts, fetters that bound us, and kept us from God, kept us from rest, kept us from peace, kept us from anything like freedom of heart and conscience and will. The iron entered into our souls. Horrible as slavery must have been in the ugly history of our nation, even the slavery of the body does not compare to the utter slavery of heart and soul.

A prisoner is also one who feels that escape from his prison is impossible. That is how I felt. And that is just exactly the state some of you are in this morning. **I longed for freedom** from the lusts and passions of my heart that were destroying me, but saw no possibility of it. **I heard about pardon,** but was convinced there was no pardon for me. **Though once I loved my chains and kissed my manacles, in time hell’s grip upon my soul became horrible, unbearable, and drove me to utter despair.**

- The law of God condemned me, the guilt of my sin tormented me day and night, and darkness filled my soul.
- I hated my darkness, but saw no light.
- I tried to pray, but could only recite words.
- I tried to repent, but found nothing but greater need to repent.
- I read the Bible, but only read words that were meaningless to my soul.
- I went to the house of God to hear the gospel, but found no word of grace sounding in my heart.
- I tried to believe, but found that faith was an impossibility to my wretched heart.

Had I known them, I could have used Paul’s words as my own, and would have cried, — *“To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.”*

I thirsted, O how I thirsted! But I was a prisoner in a pit wherein there was no water for my soul. In ancient times pits were used as prisons. When some tyrant wanted to keep a prisoner secure, he would have him cast into a deep, waterless pits. There, in ignominy, shame, and sorrow, the poor wretch would be shut up where no one could see him or hear his cries.

He was in a dark dungeon, with no hope of escape. **That is where I was when Christ Jesus came to me.**

Those of you who have passed through that state know exactly what I am talking about. **The conviction of sin brought you into a pit in which no comfort could be found, and no hope.** Looking back over your life, there was nothing to look back upon but sin. If you dared pry into the future, there was nothing “*but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.*” There was nothing within but a heart of stone, as hard as steel, nothing beneath but a gapping hell, and nothing around but thick darkness!

Spurgeon said, in commenting on this verse, “How dreary and dreadful is the state of man by nature, and how painfully conscious he is of his true condition when the Holy Spirit reveals it to him! Then is he indeed like a prisoner in a ‘*pit wherein is no water.*’”

COVENANT PRISONERS

I did not know it, at the time, but all of those things were but forerunners of mercy. Though I found no hope, I was a prisoner of hope. **As I have told you my soul’s experience in these things, have I described you?** Do you mourn over what you are? Do you hate what you know you are? Has the guilt of sin come into your soul? Perhaps, it is because you are one of those here called, “*prisoners of hope.*”

You see, **God’s elect are prisoners, but their condition in their prison, though they do not know it at the time, is altogether different condition from that of others. We were covenant prisoners, prisoners in a covenant with God himself.** We read about that covenant earlier in Jeremiah 31, Hebrews 8, and Hebrews 13.

The election of grace took place long before the worlds were made, in old eternity. The Lord God chose his own unto salvation and eternal life in Christ before ever an angel sang his praise, and gave us to his darling Son, our covenant Surety and covenant Head. He made a covenant for us and with us in Christ in eternity.

- A Covenant of Grace
- A Covenant of Peace
- A Covenant of Redemption
- A Covenant of Forgiveness

- A Covenant of Salvation
- A Covenant of Salt
- A Well-ordered Covenant
- A Sure Covenant
- A Covenant of Salt
- A Covenant of Love

Though they are born in sin, and grow up to be the children of wrath and disobedience, enemies to God by wicked works, even as others, yet the covenant made with Christ stands fast, “*ordered in all things and sure.*”

Does that seem strange to you? It did to me when I first heard a man talk about it. Yet, it is altogether true, one of the greatest, most soul-cheering truths ever revealed. Having said that, though it seems strange to men, **it shouldn’t.**

We were under a covenant of works long before we were born. Were we not? Adam stood as our federal head and representative in that covenant. You and I never stretched out our hands to take the forbidden fruit. Yet, we all did so in Adam’s rebel deed. And we all reap the consequences of Adam’s transgression because he was our covenant head.

You may say, “I do not like that. It is not right for me to be made a sinner by something someone else did.” If so, you must say the same thing about the gospel of God, because **the gospel declares that sinners are saved by the righteousness and death of Another, even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, the one great Federal Head and Representative of all who trust him** (Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

(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... (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.”

(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.”

The Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Adam was a type, took the place of all the countless multitudes of his elect who were given to him by his Father, and died on Calvary’s cross in their stead, though many had not yet been born. Through his substitutionary sacrifice, they were redeemed, justified, forgiven, sanctified, saved, and made righteous by his blood. **Indeed, they were “accepted is the Beloved” and blessed with all spiritual blessings before time began in the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world** (Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:3-7), for the Spirit of God declares, “*the works were finished from the foundation of the world*” (Hebrews 4:3).

DELIVERANCE FROM THE PIT

In the fullness of time, the Lord Jesus comes by his Spirit to set his covenant prisoners, “*prisoners of hope,*” free, and sends forth his covenant “*prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water*” by the omnipotent power and efficacious grace of his Holy Spirit (Isaiah 61:1-3).

(Isaiah 61:1-3) “The spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound; (2) To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; (3) To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.”

“Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature’s night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray;
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

Still the small inward voice I hear,
That whispers all my sins forgiven;
Still the atoning blood is near,
That quenched the wrath of hostile Heaven.
I feel the life His wounds impart;
I feel the Savior in my heart.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in him, is mine;
Alive in him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th' eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.”

The Son of God sets captive sinners free and sends forth his prisoners out of their prison by giving them life and creating faith in them. Believing him, they are made consciously aware of the super-abounding grace and covenant privileges bestowed upon them from eternity. **The covenant is not made with them when they believe.** It was made on their behalf by the Father and the Son in the eternal councils of grace long before the sun was set in the heavens, or the heavens were made to hold it.

COVENANT BLOOD

Look at our text again, and let me show you the means of our deliverance from the horrible pit. — *“By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.”*

The blood of the covenant here is declared to be the cause of deliverance. — Without this covenanted blood-shedding the prisoners could never be set free. **The blood goes in, the prisoner goes out.** The blood touches his chain, and it falls off. The blood drops on the prison-bar, and the gate flies open. It is blood that does it all.

It is the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ that is the essential thing in the covenant of grace. Everything hangs upon the blood. No grace can come to sinners, except the blood be shed. — *“Without shedding of blood is no remission.”* **The Lord God says,** *“When I see the blood, I will pass over you!”* And when I see the precious blood of Christ, I see in it all the

covenant fulfilled.

“Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of His sin-atonement blood
By divine assurance knowing
He hath made my peace with God!”

Thus it is that God can “*be just and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*”

The blood of Christ is the seal of the covenant. Speaking after the manner of men (How else can I speak of these things?), **until the blood was shed, the covenant was not ratified.** It was like a will that could not be in force, that could not be executed, because he who wrote the will had not yet died. That is exactly how God the Holy Spirit speaks of the blood and the covenant (Hebrews 9:14-18).

(Hebrews 9:14-18) “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (15) And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. (16) For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. (17) For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. (18) Whereupon neither the first *testament* was dedicated without blood.”

Christ himself, when he was made sin for us, was shut up in the prison of the tomb for three days; but it was the very same blood of the covenant that sent us out of the prison that sent him out. — “*The God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant*” (Hebrews 13:20). **Now, the covenant is ratified and validated. The Testator has died, and all his inheritance shall be bestowed upon his heirs! He lives again and reins on high, to make certain that his will is enforced and executed exactly as he intended from eternity.** Now, let me tell you a few things about this covenant blood.

1. **The blood of Christ, this covenant blood, removes the necessity for imprisonment.** The blood has made the satisfaction. It has met the claims of divine justice and satisfied the offended God. It has taken away our sins and our guilt. The necessity for the imprisonment no longer exists. The law consents to; no, the law demands the release of all for whom Christ's blood was shed at Calvary!

2. **The blood of Christ, this covenant blood, makes it right for God to deliver.** Deliverance must be the work of righteousness, not merely of grace, not merely of omnipotence, but of righteousness. **It was righteousness that sent the sinner to prison, and barred the door. It is righteousness that brings him out.** And this righteousness was brought in by the blood of the covenant. It is now as unrighteous to hold the captive, as before it would have been unrighteous to release him.

3. **The blood of Christ, this covenant blood, opens the prison-door.** The door is locked, barred, and guarded. No skill can open it, no force can remove the bar, no money can bribe the guards. It cannot be opened by earthquake, or fire, or force of any kind. — **No, not even the force of omnipotent sovereignty can open the prison!** Only the blood of the covenant, the great blood-shedding of the Lamb of God rolls away the stone and forces the prison-gates fly open.

4. **The blood of Christ, this covenant blood, makes it safe for the prisoner to come out and walk at liberty.** As at the City of Refuge, the avenger stands without, watching. He has a right to be there. He has a right to seize the prisoner, and to take vengeance. But the death of the High Priest removes the avenger, the blood silences his claims and stops him. Covenant-blood brings the prisoner out, and the sight of the blood bids the avenger flee. **That avenger was the executioner of guilt, and the guilt is gone. The blood has removed that which gave him power.** He sees the blood, and withdraws his hand.

5. **The blood of Christ, this covenant blood, reconciles to God.** It is the blood of propitiation, the blood of atonement. It removes the ground of separation, and brings nigh those that were afar off. The blood removes the righteous necessity of separation, and makes nearness a thing of which the law approves, and in which God delights. It is reconciling blood.

6. **The blood of Christ, this covenant blood, redeems.** — “*Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.*” The blood is the ransom money. It was necessary that the sinner, sold and imprisoned, should be redeemed (bought back) at a price that would satisfy law and justice.

7. **The blood of Christ, this covenant blood, cleanses.** We are washed from our sins in covenant-blood. Our robes are washed white in the blood of the Lamb. **All that sin had done the blood undoes.** All its pollution this blood washes away. It is purifying blood. As such, it fits us for worship, for drawing near to God.

8. **The blood of Christ, this covenant blood, pacifies.** It comes into contact with the sinner’s conscience, and removes guilt. It takes away terror. The soul is at peace, and is kept in peace by this blood. — Christ Jesus, our Lord, “*has made peace by the blood of his cross.*”

The blood of Christ, this covenant blood, is as efficacious as ever. It has lost none of its power. Age does not change it. Repeated use does not weaken its efficacy. It can still do all it once did for the sinner. Its potency is divine.

The blood of Christ, this covenant blood, is as sufficient, as suitable, as free, as near as ever. He whose blood it is comes to us, and displays it in all its fullness and power in the gospel as that which “*cleanseth us from all sin.*” **Take it as it is presented, and all the benefits of this covenant-blood are yours.** Though you may be the most unworthy of the unworthy, you are reckoned by God clean every whit, a forgiven sinner, a delivered prisoner, “*saved by the blood of the crucified One!*”

“Oh, precious fountain that saves from sin,
I am so glad I have entered in;
There Jesus saves me and keeps me clean--
Glory to His Name!

Come to this fountain so rich and sweet,
Cast thy poor soul at the Saviour’s feet,
Plunge in today, and be made complete--
Glory to His Name!”

Amen.