

<u>Title:</u>	<b>“PRISONERS OF HOPE”</b>
<u>Text:</u>	Zechariah 9:12-13
<u>Subject:</u>	<i>The Experience and Expectation of Grace</i>
<u>Date:</u>	Sunday Morning — March 4, 2007
<u>Reading:</u>	<i>Psalms 88, 103, or 143</i>
<u>Tape #</u>	Zechariah #51

**Introduction:**

In the Word of God God’s elect are often represented as a people in prison, captives, confined, restrained and disconsolate. Imprisonment is used in Scripture to portray that captivity of the soul that is experienced by many in this world. Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us that he comes to open the prison doors and bring ransomed sinners out of captivity.

How often we find ourselves captives, in darkness and bondage, and disconsolate, because we have taken our eyes off our Savior. In this body of flesh, because of our unbelieving hearts, we are as people in prison, our souls are cast down. Sometimes, we are blessed with such visions of our Redeemer’s grace and glory that we are, as it were, like Paul, exalted to the third heaven. Then, we are buffeted by Satan, afflicted in the flesh, and cast down in weakness.

Our Savior soon appears again, brings us out of the prison house, frees us from captivity, and speaks peace to our souls, saying, “*My grace is sufficient for thee.*” Then, we are compelled to sing, “*O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid; thou hast loosed my bonds*” (Psalm 116:16).

Zechariah was inspired by God the Holy Spirit to proclaim a specific word of grace to such prisoners. They are distinctly identified as “*prisoners of hope.*” I want us to look at Zechariah 9:12-13 and hear what the Lord God here says to his “*prisoners of hope.*”

(Zechariah 9:12-13) “Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare *that* I will render double unto thee; (13) When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man.”

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I want to show you from the Scriptures how these words of grace are applied to us.

**A VERY GRACIOUS CALL**

Our text opens with a very gracious call, issued by God himself. The triune God says, “*Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.*” Let me talk to you first about the stronghold. Then, we will look at the call.

**You will notice that the stronghold to which we are called is identified with a definite article, distinguishing it from all other strongholds.** — “*Turn you to the stronghold.*” There is but one Stronghold for our poor souls; and that Stronghold is, of course, our Lord Jesus Christ. “*Tyrus did build herself a stronghold*” (v. 3); but Zion does not attempt such a foolish task. Zion is bidden, not to build a stronghold, but to “*turn*” to “*the Stronghold,*” Christ Jesus, the “*Tower of the flock, the Stronghold of the daughter of Zion*” (Micah 4:8). It is written, “*The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him*” (Nahum 1:7).

He is the blessed Rock of Ages, in whom alone we must take refuge. — “*Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength*” (Isaiah 26:4). He is our Buckler, our Defense and our Shield. In this Stronghold sinners are shrouded in security by from the dangers and distresses that encompass them on every side. All who run into the Stronghold, Christ Jesus, are safe! Like the man-slayer in the City of Refuge, we are safe in him.

One of those cities of refuge was called “*Bezer.*” That name is the same as the word translated Stronghold in Zechariah 9:12. It means “*fortress.*”

- Every sinner enabled by God the Holy Spirit to flee to Christ for refuge, is safe from offended justice of God, because Christ has fully satisfied divine justice by his blood, righteousness, and sin-atonement sacrifice.
- We are forever saved from curse and condemnation of the law by Christ, who was made a curse for us, who was made sin and executed under the just sentence of the law as our Substitute (Romans 8:1-4, 33-34).

(Romans 8:1-4) “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the*

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Spirit. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (3) For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

(Romans 8:33-34) “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? *It is* God that justifieth. (34) Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

- In Christ our Stronghold we are completely and forever freed from all sin, all its evil consequences, and all its guilt, because he who was made sin for us has put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself.
- Safe and secure in this mighty Fortress, “*the Stronghold,*” neither Satan, nor all the enemies of our souls, have power to destroy or even hurt us.

In Christ sinners saved by grace are out of harm’s way, beyond the reach of danger! On such, the second death has no power. Christ my Savior is “*my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort. Thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress*” (Psalm 71:3).

“Under the blood of Jesus,  
 Safe in the Shepherd’s fold;  
 Under the blood of Jesus,  
 Safe, while the ages roll!  
 Safe, though the worlds may crumble;  
 Safe, though the stars grow dim;  
 Under the blood of Jesus,  
 I am secure in Him!”

**The Lord, who is himself the Stronghold, here calls for us to turn to him.** — “*Turn you to the Stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.*” There is something especially special about that. He whom we have offended, whose wrath we deserve, bids us turn to him for grace, salvation and eternal life (Matthew 11:28-30). You will notice that the call is very personal. It is “*turn you,*” “*you*” individually, “*you*” personally. — “*Turn you to the Stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.*”

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(Matthew 11:28-30) “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (30) For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.”

Turn to John 6:37, and hear the blessed encouragement the Son of God gives to sinners, by which he graciously entices our hearts to come, by which he allures our poor souls to himself. — “*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*” — **“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”**

- No matter who you are!
- No matter where you are!
- No matter what you have done!
- No matter what you have been!
- No matter how you come!

Only turn you to “*the Stronghold,*” only come to him, and you will find him mighty to save and faithful, too. — “*Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*”

**PRISONERS IDENTIFIED**

Second, the Lord Jesus specifically identifies a specific people to whom he so graciously speaks. He never has spoken to men indiscriminately. And he does not send his servants with an indiscriminate message to an indiscriminate people. — “*Turn you to the Stronghold.*” Then he identifies those to whom he is speaking, — “*ye prisoners of hope.*”

As we have seen, God’s elect are Christ’s prisoners in their natural, fallen state, lost and ruined in death and in sin. Though we did not know it, while we were prisoners, with the sentence of death written upon us, we were even then Christ’s prisoners (v. 11).

(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.”

Even when we walked in “*disobedience, children of wrath, even as others,*” we belonged to our Savior. We were his from eternity. So, there is a sense

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in which these words, “*prisoners of hope*,” may be properly applied to us. We had hope, because we were his. We were in Christ, who is our Hope.

“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.”

**Yet, experimentally, perceptively, before Christ saved us, before we were born of God, we were without hope, altogether.** What hope can a dead man have? — “*Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*” (Ephesians 2:11-12). In the light of Ephesians 2, it is clear that while Zechariah 9:11 speaks of us as those prisoners Christ Jesus comes to save, Zechariah 9:12 speaks of those same prisoners as prisoners in whom he has graciously quickened hope, in whom he has aroused hope, in whom hope is found.

“*Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.*” — These words cannot be applied to the Jews who were still in Babylon, because they were no longer held as prisoners in Babylon. Cyrus had set them free by a royal

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decree. Those who remained in Babylon remained in Babylon because they wanted to stay in Babylon. They did not want deliverance, and were not hoping for it.

But those Jews who had come out of Babylon, as out of a pit, wherein was no water and were now settled in their own land, were still, in great measure, like a people in prison. They found themselves encompassed with difficulties, opposition, discouragements, and hindrances on every side. Yet, they hoped to see them overcome. They hoped for all that the Lord had promised. They hoped for the completion of his house, the complete restoration of his people, and the revelation of the glory of God in the Christ they expected.

**That is a very good picture of God’s elect, when first awakened by the Holy Spirit.** I know that the promise and assurance of salvation and eternal life in Christ is given only to faith in Christ. — *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* — *“He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life.”* But they are greatly mistaken who imagine that faith in Christ is, in any way, the cause of the new birth. Faith in Christ is the fruit of new birth, not the cause.

I do not suggest, or even think, that all who are born of God experience grace in the same way. They are not. In many, many ways, the experience of grace is the same; but in many ways it is different.

- Some experience God’s saving grace like the Gadarene demoniac, out of whom the powers of hell are cast instantaneously.
- Others are like the pitiful soul who, coming to Jesus, was thrown and torn violently.
- Sometimes the Lord Jesus gives full sight to his blind ones all at once.
- Sometimes he causes his blind ones to see just a little at a time. — *“I see men as trees, walking”* (Mark 8:24).

The old writers used to speak of “sensible sinners,” or “awakened sinners,” and “seeking sinners.” L. R. Shelton used to talk about “lost sinners.” I realize that we can make too much of this, but there is a difference between sensible sinners and sinners. Joseph Hart put it like this...

“To understand these things aright,  
This grand distinction should be known:  
Though all are sinners in God’s sight,

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There are but few so in their own.  
 To such as these our Lord was sent;  
 They're only sinners who repent.

What comfort can a Savior bring  
 To those who never felt their woe?  
 A sinner is a sacred thing;  
 The Holy Ghost hath made him so.  
 New life from Him we must receive,  
 Before for sin we rightly grieve.

Our text describes God's elect, not merely as prisoners in their natural, fallen condition, but as prisoners distinctly identified as "*prisoners of hope*." I hope that I am talking to some "*prisoners of hope*." "*Prisoners of hope*," will soon be free. Who are these "*prisoners of hope*"? I think it can safely be said that these words, "*prisoners of hope*," refer to God's elect in three distinct ways.

**HOPE BEFORE FAITH**

In the experience of grace, there is a hope that is the forerunner of faith. I would not suggest that it is hope without faith. That is not the case. But it is hope that is accompanied with faith not yet revealed and made known in the soul, hope that precedes a confident, lively faith.

John Gill was exactly right when he wrote, "All men are concluded in sin, shut up under the law, and led captive by Satan; but some are not sensible of their imprisoned state, nor desirous of being out of it, nor have any hope concerning it. Others groan under their bondage, long for deliverance, and are hoping for it."

- They hope that Christ will receive them and save them.
- They hope that he will pardon their sins.
- They hope that the Spirit of God has begun a good work in them, and will perform it.
- They hope for salvation and eternal life in Christ.

I know that we live in a day of cock sure, "know so" religion; but the Word of God speaks of sinners hoping for God's salvation (Lamentations 3:25-32).

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(Lamentations 3:25-32) “The LORD *is* good unto them that wait for him, to the soul *that* seeketh him. (26) *It is* good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. (27) *It is* good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. (28) He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne *it* upon him. (29) He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope. (30) He giveth *his* cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach. (31) For the Lord will not cast off for ever: (32) But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.”

Our Lord Jesus speaks of these who are awakened to know their need of him as...

- Mourners who shall be comforted.
- Hungry souls that shall be filled.
- Thirsty souls that shall be satisfied.
- And meek ones, who shall inherit the bounty of his grace.
- Broken-hearted, contrite sinners with whom he is pleased to dwell.
- Sin-sick souls who have need of healing.

**Is there here a sinner who senses in his very soul the things I am talking about?**

- You are in distress. You know there is comfort for sinners in Christ; but you find no comfort.
- We speak of “*a good hope through grace*,” but you remain hopeless.
- You hear use sing of life, but you feel death deep in your soul.
- The more we talk about blessed liberty in Christ, the more you sense your bondage.
- The more you hear about being free from condemnation, the more condemned you feel.
- The more aggravating and hateful your sins become, the more strongly they hold you.

Because you have rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the most High, he has brought down your heart with labor, and there is none to help! Oh, how sad your condition is! I know. I’ve been there. But sad as your condition is, though you think yourself hopeless, now that you find there is none to help, the Lord Jesus stands before you and says, “*Turn you to the Stronghold, ye prisoners of hope!*” — “*Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.*” — “*I have trodden the winepress*

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*alone...I looked, and there was none to help. Therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me!” — “I am thy Salvation!”*

He who calls the prisoner of hope to turn to him is the Lord Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners. The crucified, risen Lamb of God bids us cast ourselves into his omnipotent arms of mercy.

“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On thy mind arms I fall;  
Be thou my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my all.”

- He is the good Samaritan who does all for the fallen.
- He is the Great High Priest who made atonement and intercedes for sinners in Heaven.
- He is the compassionate Savior, who, in his love and pity, has redeemed the sons of men.
- He is God who “*delighteth in mercy!*”
- He is the Christ who has promised he will in no wise cast out any who come to him, assuring all who come to him that it is his Father’s will that he raise them up at the last day!
- His salvation is a salvation that is entirely free!
- It is his to give to whom he will!
- And he has promised that he will give it to all who come to him!

**Prisoners of hope are Christ’s covenant prisoners, in whom God has begun his operations of grace.** If the Lord God has awakened hope in you, I have hope for you. If he has wakened hope in you, his is hope “*that maketh not ashamed.*”

**HOPE WITH FAITH**

Then, once the Spirit of God reveals Christ in us, once he gives us confident, lively, assurance of faith and an assured hope before God, we are still, as long as we live in this body of flesh, “*prisoners of hope.*” I find within me “*the company of two armies,*” constantly at war. When I would do good, evil is present with me (Song of Solomon 6:13; Romans 7:14-23; Galatians 5:16-17).

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(Romans 7:14-23) “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. (15) For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. (16) If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good. (17) Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (18) For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. (19) For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. (20) Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (21) I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. (22) For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: (23) But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

(Galatians 5:16-17) “*This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. (17) For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”

Is it not so with you? Are you not constantly constrained, with the Apostle to declare, “**By the grace of God I am what I am.**” That is not merely my doctrinal confession. It is my daily experience. Try as I may...

- I cannot pray, except he put a prayer in my heart.
- I read the Book of God, but I cannot hear his voice, except he speak by his Word.
- I call upon him, except he call me.
- I cannot run after him, except he draw me.
- I cannot turn to him, except he turn me.
- I cannot seek him, except he seek me.
- I cannot worship him, except he inspire worship in me.
- I cannot speak to him, until he speaks to me.
- I cannot hold him, except he hold me by his grace.
- I cannot resist the slightest temptation, except he save me from the tempter’s power.
- I cannot but fall, except he uphold me by the right hand of his righteousness.
- When I fall, I cannot cease from my downward spiral of iniquity, except he stretch out his arm and catch me in his mighty hand.

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- When I am fallen, I cannot get up, except he pick me up and cause me to stand!

Yes, we are prisoners in these houses of clay; but blessed be his name, we are Christ’s prisoners, and we are “*prisoners of hope,*” and ours is “*a good hope through grace,*” because Christ is our Hope. He “*is the Hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof*” (Jeremiah 14:8). We have been begotten of God by the resurrection of Christ unto a living hope, and that living Hope is Christ himself living in us, “*the Hope of glory.*”

*The hope of the hypocrite shall be cut off, and his trust shall be as a spider’s web*” (Job 7:14). But Christ our Hope “*maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost*” (Romans 5:5; Lamentations 3:21-26).

(Lamentations 3:21-26) “This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. (22) *It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. (23) They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. (24) The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. (25) The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. (26) It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.*”

- Our Hope is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. — “*The Lord is my Portion!*”
- Our hope is his mercy. We are “*looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*”
- Our hope is his great compassion.
- Our hope is his faithfulness.
- Our hope is his great goodness.
- Our hope is his salvation.

How delightful, how blessed it is while in this prison, ever to turn to the Stronghold Christ Jesus! Though I am a prisoner in this body of flesh, I am a prisoner of hope; and my hope I shall enjoy. I hope, at last, to be presented by God my Savior, faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy!

**HOPE IN DEATH**

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And when we die, when this tabernacle of clay is dissolved, we shall go to our graves in hope. Oh, I do not doubt that we will have some sorrow in bidding farewell to our earthly friends and families, but “*we sorrow not as others which have no hope*” (Psalm 16:8-11).

(Psalms 16:8-11) “I have set the LORD always before me: because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved. (9) Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. (10) For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. (11) Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.”

I read, yesterday, that **Winston Churchill** arranged his own funeral. Great hymns by the congregation. Of course, an honorable, impressive eulogy was given, and a funeral message was delivered. But at the end of the service, Churchill had an unusual event planned. That is what people remember. When the benediction was given, a bugler high in the dome of St. Paul’s Cathedral on one side played Taps, the universal signal that the day is over. There was a long pause. Then a bugler on the other side played Reveille, the military wake-up call. That was Churchill’s way of telling all, “I have said Good night here, but it’s Good morning for me forever in Glory.”

Almost a hundred years before Churchill was born, late in November 1863, there was a young confederate soldier from Smyrna, TN named **Sam Davis**, who had been sentenced to die. He was offered a pardon and freedom, if he would betray his comrades and their sympathetic informer. Sam Davis (just 21 years old) replied, “If I had a thousand lives, I would give them all here before I would betray a friend or the confidence of my informer.”

The night before he was to be hung, he asked Chaplain James Young if they could sing, “On Jordan’s Stormy Banks.” Young later said, “I will never forget that young soldier’s animated voice as he sang, ‘I am bound for the Promised Land; I am bound for the Promised Land!’” That night, he wrote to his mother, “Oh, how painful it is to write to you! I have got to die tomorrow morning —to be hanged by the Federals. Mother, do not grieve for me. I must bid you good-bye...I do not fear to die. Give my love to all.”

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Soon, I too will step into my grave; but as I do, I will be stepping in in hope and stepping up to everlasting life!

**BLESSED ENCOURAGEMENT**

Now, look at our text (Zechariah 9:12) again, and you will see what blessed encouragement God our Savior gives us to turn to him and take refuge in him. — “*Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: **even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee.***” A double portion is the portion of the firstborn. Our God owns and acknowledges us as his firstborn, as one with Christ his Firstborn, as “*the beginning of his strength,*” by giving us “*a double portion of all*” (Deuteronomy 21:17; Isaiah 40:1-2).

- **Double for All our Troubles.** — The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had lost.
- **Double for All our Shame** (Isaiah 61:7).

(Isaiah 61:7) “For your shame *ye shall have double*; and *for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion*: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.”

- **Double for All our Need** (John 1:16).

(John 1:16) “And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.”

- **Double for All our Expectation** (Ephesians 3:20).

(Ephesians 3:20) “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.”

All who turn to the Stronghold, Christ Jesus, may do so confidently expecting to enjoy all fulness of grace, all the blessings of his grace, all the promises of God for this life and that which is to come, and all the glory of heaven.

The word “*double*” is to be connected with the word “*declare,*” and should be read “*this day,*” at this present time, no matter how distressing the day

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may be, or you how uncomfortable and distressed you may be in it, “I declare double” to you. Double grace! Double blessedness! Double joy! Double satisfaction! He is saying, where sin abounds and sorrow abounds, grace does much more abound!

Both John Gill and Robert Hawker suggest that this promise of mercy has reference to our risen Savior’s gift of his Spirit and the bounteous blessings of his grace conveyed to us by the Divine Comforter (Psalm 68:17-20; John 14:16, 26; 16:13-14; Ephesians 4:7-8).

(Psalms 68:17-20) “The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand, *even* thousands of angels: the Lord *is* among them, *as in* Sinai, in the holy *place*. (18) Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, *for* the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell *among them*. (19) Blessed *be* the Lord, *who* daily loadeth us *with benefits*, *even* the God of our salvation. Selah. (20) *He that is* our God *is* the God of salvation; and unto GOD the Lord *belong* the issues from death.”

(John 14:16) “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;”

(John 14:26) “But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

(John 16:13-14) “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. (14) He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show *it* unto you.”

(Ephesians 4:7-8) “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (8) Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”

**GOD’S WORK ALONE**

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Look at Zechariah 9:13, and you will see exactly when Christ’s “*prisoners of hope*” will turn to the Stronghold. — They do not turn to the Stronghold when they decide to turn. — They do not turn when the preacher talks them into turning. — The prisoners of hope turn to the Stronghold when they are turned by the Stronghold. The whole work is God’s work. — “*Surely after that I was turned, I repented*” (Jeremiah 31:19; Psalm 80:19; Lamentations 5:21).

(Psalms 80:19) “Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”

(Lamentations 5:21) “Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.”

**That is exactly what we see in Zechariah 9:13.** Isn’t it?

(Zechariah 9:12-13) “Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare *that* I will render double unto thee; (13) **When I have bent** Judah for me, **filled** the bow with Ephraim, and **raised up** thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and **made thee** as the sword of a mighty man.”

The work is the Lord’s work alone; and the glory is his alone! It is he who bends Judah for himself. It is he who fills his bow (his hand) with his chosen. It is he who raises up the sons of Zion. It is he who makes them as the sword of a mighty man in his hand.

(Psalms 40:2-3) “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, *and* established my goings. (3) And he hath put a new song in my mouth, *even* praise unto our God: many shall see *it*, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.”

“My heart was distressed ‘neath Jehovah’s dread frown,  
And low in the pit where my sins dragged me down;  
I cried to the Lord from the deep miry clay,  
Who tenderly brought me out to golden day.

He placed me upon the strong Rock by His side,  
My steps are established and there I abide;

**“PRISONERS OF HOPE”**

No danger of falling while here I remain,  
And stand by His grace until the crown I gain.

He gave me a song, ‘twas a new song of praise;  
By day and by night its sweet notes I will raise;  
My heart’s overflowing, I’m happy and free.  
I’ll praise my Redeemer, Who has rescued me.

I’ll sing of His wonderful mercy to me,  
I’ll praise Him till all men His goodness shall see;  
I’ll sing of salvation at home and abroad,  
Till many shall hear the truth and trust in God.

He brought me out of the miry clay,  
He set my feet on the Rock to stay;  
He puts a song in my soul today,  
A song of praise, hallelujah!”

Amen.