

Title: **WHEN WILL SINNERS TURN TO CHRIST?**
Text: Zechariah
Subject: *The Turning of the Chosen*
Date: Sunday Morning — March 25, 2007
Reading: *Jeremiah 31:1-26*
Tape # Zechariah #52

Introduction:

When will sinners turn to Christ? That is the question I want to answer in this message. When will a sinner turn to Christ? Does the Word of God tell us? Indeed it does, in many places.

My text is Zechariah 9:12-17. Our text begins with a very gracious call, a call issued by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. — *“Turn you to the Stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.”* The only stronghold for our souls is Christ himself; and he throws open the door and says, *“Turn you to the Stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.”* Let all who need mercy and hope for redemption and grace turn to Christ!

- **To you who are lost**, the Son of God says, *“Turn you to the Stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.”*
- **To you who are in trouble**, cast down with care, overwhelmed with sorrow, and heavy hearted, your Savior says, *“Turn you to the Stronghold, ye prisoners of hope”* Matthew 11:28-30; Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:24-25).

(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.”*

(Hebrews 4:14-16) *“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. (15) For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”*

(Hebrews 7:24-25) *“This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. (25) Wherefore he is able also to save*

them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Not only does our blessed Savior open the door and call us to take refuge in him, he promises grace to all who do. — *“Even today do I declare that I will render double unto thee.”*

Surely, none can refuse the sweet call of such a tender Savior. None will refuse to turn quickly unto him. At least, it would appear so. But the fact is, no sinner will, of his own accord, by his own will, by his own choice turn to Christ. Not only that, his own people, you and I who have *“tasted that the Lord is gracious,”* will never, of our own accord, by our own will, by our own choice, turn to him in our times of great need. He calls, but we refuse. He stretches out his hand, but we regard it not. He throws open the door of mercy and bids us come, but we draw back.

That none can and none will come to Christ, that none will turn to the Stronghold of their own accord, the Scriptures universally assert. Yet, many have turned, and, we are assured that, many shall yet do so. That being the case, I ask, “When will sinners turn to Christ?” The question is answered distinctly right here in Zechariah 9:12-17.

THE DECLARER

First, we see that the prisoners of hope will turn to Christ the Stronghold when God the Holy Spirit is given to them. He is the Declarer spoken of in verse 12. — *“Even today do I declare that I will render double unto thee.”* Young’s Literal Translation translates those words, — “Even to-day a second announcer I restore to thee.” John Gill suggests that the words might be translated, “another declarer, discoverer, or shewer forth, do I render unto thee.” That is exactly what our Lord Jesus promises in the Gospel of John (John 14:16, 26; 16:8-14).

(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 16:8-14) “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: (9) Of sin, because they believe not on me; (10) Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; (11) Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. (12) I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. (13) 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.”

God our Savior announces his grace in his Word and graciously invites sinners to turn to the Stronghold by the preaching of the gospel. But it takes more than the written Word and/or the preached Word to cause lost, ruined, doomed, damned, spiritually dead sinners to turn to Christ. It is only when God the Holy Spirit is given that the sinner will arise and flee to Christ. As **Robert Hawker** put it...

“The whole work, the whole glory is the Lord’s. And the beauty and loveliness of Christ shall be known, felt, and adored in that day; and the wine of the Gospel shall be drunk, and the love of Christ be sought after as the chief good. Remarkable to this purpose was the pouring out the gifts of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and from that period to the present, and so on as long as the Church continues on the earth, in the glorifying Christ to his people’s view, and forming him in their heart, *the hope of glory.*”

It is only when the sinner is born again by God the Holy Spirit that he turns to Christ in faith. It is only when the Lord Jesus is revealed in us by the gift and call of God the Holy Spirit that we are made willing in the day of his power and compelled by omnipotent grace to trust our Savior (Psalm 65:4; 110:3; Zechariah 12:10).

(Psalms 65:4) “Blessed *is the man whom* thou chooseth, and causeth to approach *unto thee, that* he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, *even* of thy holy temple.”

(Psalms 110:3) “Thy people *shall be* willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.”

(Zechariah 12:10) “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.”

When the gospel comes to you not “*in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance*” (1 Thessalonians 1:5), you will turn to the Stronghold, but not until then. And when you turn, you will know your election of God.

That is verified in the experience of every believing sinner, as we read in Jeremiah 31:19. — “*Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.*” Would you be saved? Bemoan yourself before God, like Ephraim of old, and cry unto God for mercy, as Ephraim did, “*Turn thou me, and I shall be turned*” (Jeremiah 31:18).

Let us ever seek such grace. Even as believers, knowing that we will never and can never turn to the Stronghold and rest in him, except he turn us by his grace (Psalm 80:3, 7, 14, 17-19; Lamentations 5:21).

(Psalms 80:3) “Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”

(Psalms 80:7) “Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”

(Psalms 80:14) “Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine.”

(Psalms 80:17-19) “Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself. (18) So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy

name. (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.”

JUDAH BENT

When will a sinner turn? When God the Holy Spirit comes in saving power and turns him. *Second*, the sinner will turn only when he is bent for the Savior by omnipotent grace (v. 13).

(Zechariah 9:13) “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.”

We can never enter the Stronghold until we bow; and we will never bow to Christ as our Lord and our God, until we are bowed by him. You must bend the knee before him, or perish by him. But you will never bend until you are bent. Therefore he tells us that his “*prisoners of hope*” will turn to him, “*When I have bent Judah for me.*”

He says, “*I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved*” (John 10:9). But the only way you can enter is on your knees, “*For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God*” (Romans 14:11). The word of faith says, “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (Romans 10:9).

Christ the Stronghold is the Stronghold of the broken. — “*He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds*” (Psalm 147:3). The proud, stiff-necked I must be bent. And when it is bent, the sinner is turned to the Stronghold. Then, he confesses, “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*” (Galatians 2:20). God the Holy Spirit must bend me and bow me by his grace, making me happy for Christ to reign as Lord over all and as Lord in my heart, — “*that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so*

might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 5:21).

O God! in tender mercy break
The iron sinew of my neck;
The softening power of grace impart,
And melt my hard and stubborn heart!

To be broken is to bemoan yourself before the holy Lord God (Jeremiah 31:9).

(Jeremiah 31:9) “They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim *is* my firstborn.”

To be broken is to have no rights before God. It is not merely surrendering your rights to him, but recognizing that you have none! It is being nothing and having nothing that you call your own, neither time, money, possessions, nor position. And that will only happen when Christ crucified is revealed in you, when your very souls is ravished by your crucified Redeemer’s mercy, love and grace! Then, and only then, can you say with Paul, “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*” (Galatians 2:20).

“Oh, to be saved from myself, O Lord,
Oh, to be lost in Thee,
Oh, that it might be no more I,
But Christ that lives in me.”

Over the door of the Stronghold, and on the side posts, is sprinkled the **precious blood of the Lord Jesus**. As we bow our knees to go through, the blood cleanses us from all sin. — “*The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (1 John 1:7-9).

Notice who those sinners are who are bent by his grace. — “When I have bent **Judah** for me.” Judah is God’s elect. — “In Judah is God known” (Psalm 76:1), because he “chose the tribe of Judah” (Psalm 78:68). He says, “I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah” (Zephaniah 1:4). — Judah is “his sanctuary” (Psalm 114:2). — “The vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant” (Isaiah 5:7). — Speaking of the day of his saving grace by the revelation of Christ, the Lord God says, “And the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off” (Isaiah 11:13). — “And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there” (Isaiah 65:9). — “The LORD shall inherit Judah his portion” (Zechariah 2:12). — “Judah shall dwell forever” (Joel 3:20). — “Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts” (Zechariah 14:21).

The Lord Jesus goes on to tell us that this bending of his chosen is the filling of his bow with Ephraim, raising up the sons of Zion, and making his elect “as the sword of a mighty man.” By the saving operations of his grace, the Lord Jesus fills his hand with his chosen and uses them as his sword, “the sword a mighty man,” “to the pulling down of strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:4).

THE RESULT

Last Sunday morning Bro. Mahan preached to us about **God’s Provision and the Sure Result.** We have seen God’s provision. Now, in verses 13-16, we see the sure result. When God our Savior bends his elect for himself, when he sets free his “prisoners of hope” and turns them to himself, when he brings his own into the Stronghold of his grace, this is the sure result.

1. “**And the LORD shall be seen over them**” (v. 14). — They shall see the Lord Jesus as their only Savior; and shall see him over them. We see Christ over us as our only Savior, our only Head, our only King, our only Lawgiver, our only Advocate, and our only High Priest.
2. “**And his arrow shall go forth as the lightning**” (v. 14). — The Word of God is not bound, but runs swiftly through all the earth, like an arrow shot from a bow. As his lightning, it shines forth from Zion “unto the ends of the earth” (Job 37:3).

3. “And the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south” (v. 14). — The Gospel we preach is the Jubilee Trumpet that proclaims liberty to the captives, the cancellation of all that has been lost, and the complete restoration of the fallen. — Blessed, blessed beyond description it is to when the Lord God himself blows the Trumpet by the mouth of his chosen to the ears of his needy ones! When he blows the Trumpet, the Gospel goes with the power of “*whirlwinds of the south,*” in the effectual power of his Spirit it is made “*the power of God unto salvation.*”

Notice this, too. This whirlwind is a south wind. Not only is it the power of God unto salvation to every heaven-born soul, the Gospel of Christ, like the southern wind, brings warmth and serenity, calmness. It brings the rain of heaven and makes our souls fruitful unto our God (Jeremiah 31:12).

(Jeremiah 31:12) “Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.”

4. “The LORD of hosts shall defend them” (v. 15). — Blessed Defense! (See Psalm 59:9, 16-17; 62:2, 6; 94:22).

(Psalms 59:9) “*Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: for God is my defence.*”

(Psalms 59:16-17) “But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. (17) Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.”

(Psalms 62:2) “He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.”

(Psalms 62:6) “He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved.”

(Psalms 94:22) “But the LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge.”

5. “**And they shall devour**” (v. 15). — Christ is the Manna of our souls, the Bread of Life upon whom we live. We live by feeding upon, devouring him (John 6:53-58).

(John 6:53-58) “Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. (54) Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. (55) For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. (56) He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. (57) As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. (58) This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.”

6. “**And subdue with sling stones**” (v. 15). — Our God uses the weakest of instruments to perform his greatest deeds. As David brought Goliath to the ground with a sling stone, so the mighty God, by his church, by the preaching of the gospel, subdues sinners before his throne of grace.
7. “**And they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine**” (v. 15). — Sinners subdued by grace, safe in the Stronghold, feeding upon Christ, eating his flesh and drinking his blood, intoxicated with free grace, are louder and more uncontrollable than drunks in a bar, in noising abroad his praise, his fame, his grace and his goodness.

(Jeremiah 31:4) “Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.”

(Jeremiah 31:11-13) “For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of *him that was* stronger than he. (12) Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. (13) Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both

young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.”

8. **“And they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar”** (v. 15). — As the bowls of the altar were filled full with the blood of the sacrifice, and filled full with the fine flour and oil of the meat-offerings, so saved sinners are filled full with Christ.

(Jeremiah 31:14) “And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD.”

(Jeremiah 31:25-26) “For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. (26) Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.”

9. **“And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people”** (v. 16). — *“They shall never perish!”* Saved by Christ, we shall be saved forever *“as the flock of his people!”* — He has saved us by his eternal will from eternity. — He has saved us by his blood at Calvary. — He has saved us by his omnipotent grace in effectual calling. — He has saved us by preserving us in his grace since our calling. — He is saving us now. — He shall save us tomorrow. — And he shall yet save us in resurrection glory!
10. **“For they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land”** (v. 16). — Like precious gem stones in a king’s crown, blood-bought, saved sinners are precious jewels set by the Son of God in his crown, jewels of grace by which he adorns himself forever!

Wondrous, condescending, magnificent mercy! — The Son of God takes such things as he digs out of the dung-heap of fallen humanity, sets us as jewels in his crown, and holds us up in his Land of Grace as ensigns, a banners proclaiming his victory and his glory! He takes such things as we are, washes us in his blood, robes us in his righteousness, and crowns us with his glory, and sets us up as ensigns in his land...

- To Cheer His People. — *“There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth”* (Luke 15:10).
- To Entice Others to the Stronghold!

THE REASON

Now, read verse 17, and you will see the reason for all this.

(Zechariah 9:17) “For how great *is* his goodness, and how great *is* his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.”

“How great is his goodness!”

- As our Covenant Surety!
- As our Righteous Representative!
- As our Sin-atonement Substitute!
- As our Sovereign Lord!
- As our Advocate with the Father!

“And how great is his beauty!”

- As God in Human Flesh!
- As the Lamb Accepted!
- As the Man on the Throne!

The corn of his grace and the wine of his mercy, the Gospel, is a feast of fat things, of wine upon lees well-refined, that makes the young believer as well as the aged saint, though utterly weak in themselves, strong. And that same Gospel, that same free grace and infinite mercy makes our hearts, though often broken with grief and much oppressed with corruption, cheerful! Feast! Feast, O my soul, upon Christ crucified. Drink, drink, drink of this wine, without moderation! This is his word to every “*prisoner of hope*” turned to “*the Stronghold*”: — “*Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved*” (Song of Solomon 5:1).

Amen.