

Title: **MARVELLOUS GRACE**
Text: Zechariah 8:6
Date: Sunday Morning — September 10, 2006
Tape #: Zechariah #38
Reading: *Psalms 116:1-13*

1. I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice *and* my supplications.
2. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live.
3. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.
4. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.
5. Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God *is* merciful.
6. The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.
7. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.
8. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, *and* my feet from falling.
9. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.
10. I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted:
11. I said in my haste, All men *are* liars.
12. What shall I render unto the LORD *for* all his benefits toward me?
13. I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.
14. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.
15. Precious in the sight of the LORD *is* the death of his saints.
16. LORD, truly I *am* thy servant; I *am* thy servant, *and* the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.
17. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.
18. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people,
19. In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

INTRODUCTION

(Zechariah 8:6) "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts."

The Lord God sent his servant Zechariah with a word of promise, assuring his people that Jerusalem would be rebuilt, that they would again enjoy a time of great peace and prosperity. Instead of young men being slaughtered in battle, old men and old women would dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, "*every man with his staff in his hand for very age.*" And the streets of the city would be filled of boys and girls playing in them. After their long time of captivity and sorrow, God promise his people that everything would soon to be prosperous in Israel again. We read in verse 12 — "*For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.*"

Such sweet words of assurance seemed almost unbelievable. They were startled by them. They did not say point blank, "This cannot be true," but God heard their thoughts. I do not know that I ever heard anyone who believed God openly deny his promises of mercy and grace. But we are all far too much like those ancient Israelites, terribly slow to believe our God.

When we read, or hear him speak, a word of promise, how often we immediately think, "How can that be?" or worse, "That is not going to happen." We do not speak such things openly; but we think like that. Do we not? We've seen and experienced so many disappointments. We've had so many hopes dashed to the ground. But they were hopes built upon our own desires, not hopes founded upon the Word of our God. How sad it is that we do not confidently trust our God to do what he says he will do, because he did not do what we thought he should have done! It is to such people as we are, such excuseless, unbelieving people as we are that our God speaks in Zechariah 8:6.

(Zechariah 8:6) "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts."

In the marginal reading, you will see that the word "*marvellous*" is translated "difficult." The text might be read, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If it be difficult in your eyes, should it also be difficult in mine eyes?" This is the only place in the King James translation where the word "*difficult*" is found, and in this case it is only found in the margin.

God and difficulty cannot exist together. How great it would be if we could always put the word "difficult" into the margin of our lives, and never let it stand before us! I wish I had faith to banish it forever! Where God almighty is, difficulty vanishes. If we would truly trust him as we ought, such faith would always put difficulty in the margin. If God be for us, all things can be accomplished. Things impossible with men are possible with God.

The remnant of the house of Israel could not conceive how God's promise could be fulfilled. Because the restored prosperity of Jerusalem would be a great wonder, they did not believe it would be accomplished. Yet, blessed be the name of the Lord, it was accomplished; for "*though we believe not, he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself.*"

It was truly a marvellous thing that Jerusalem should be rebuilt and enjoy such peace and prosperity. But we are called upon to believe in even greater wonders, even more marvellous things of a spiritual kind, marvels far more difficult to believe than material miracles.

I want to talk about the greatest wonder in all the world, — the wonder of God's great salvation, — the salvation of sinners by God's free grace, salvation by grace alone, in Christ alone, without any contribution from man.

CARNAL REASON

God's salvation is so contrary to carnal reason that men, all men, very naturally denounce it and say it cannot be. We have before us a specimen of man's natural reason. The Jews in Zechariah's day said, "It is too difficult. It cannot be true. It is marvellous in our eyes. It will never happen."

That is just the kind of speech comes from people when they begin to think about their souls, and begin to desire God's salvation. We declare, upon the authority of God's own Word, — "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*" — "*He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.*" — "*That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*" — "*He that believeth on him is not condemned.*" — "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.*" — "*He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*" — "*Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*" — "*To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*"

Immediately, as soon as you begin to hear the good news, the old serpent begins to hiss out doubts. — "How can that be? Can a man expect to receive complete forgiveness for a lifetime of sin instantly?" — "How can a life of ungodliness be transformed immediately?" — "No sinner's guilty, screaming, condemning conscience can be silenced and made clean, without him doing something." — "It just stands for reason that I must do something to atone for my sin. I must do something to make up for my wickedness." Carnal reason makes salvation a great difficulty. It says...

- You must reform.
- You must feel.
- You must experience.
- You must know.
- You must learn.
- You must be baptized.
- You must join the church.
- You must obey the law.
- You must make yourself clean.
- You must do.

But that is not the language of Holy Scripture. This is Bible language. — "*The gift of God is eternal life!*"

(Romans 4:16) "Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed."

(Romans 11:6) "And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

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

(Ephesians 2:1-9) "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;) (6) And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus: (7) That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. (8) For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast."

(2 Timothy 1:9) "Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before

the world began.”

“Nothing, either great or small,
Nothing, sinner, no;
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago.

When He from His lofty throne
Stooped to do and die,
Everything was fully done:
Hearken to His cry: -

‘It is finished!’ Yes, indeed,
Finished every jot:
Sinner, this is all you need,
Tell me, is it not?

Weary, working, plodding one,
Why toil you so?
Cease your doing: all was done
Long, long ago.

Till to Jesus’ work you cling
By a simple faith,
Doing is a deadly thing,
Doing ends in death.

Cast your deadly doing down,
Down at Jesus’ feet,
Stand in Him, in Him alone,
Gloriously complete!”

Yes, you must be born again.

(John 3:1-8) “There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: (2) The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. (3) Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (4) Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? (5) Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (7) Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. (8) The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

God promises, “*A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them.*” — He who believes on the Lord Jesus believes because he has been born of God. He has been made a new creature in Christ. But carnal reason says, “That cannot be.” — “*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.*” It would be a truly marvellous if you could do that! I am the first to declare, “Impossible!” No dead sinner can ever give himself life, or make himself a new creature. But God can!

What about perseverance? It is written, “*He that endureth to the end shall be saved.*” — “*The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.*” Again, I say, if perseverance depends upon you, “Impossible!” But it does not depend upon you.

(John 10:28-30) "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. (29) My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand. (30) I and *my* Father are one."

(1 Thessalonians 5:24) "Faithful *is* he that calleth you, who also will do *it*."

(1 Peter 1:5) "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

"But God demands perfection, absolute perfection, flawless righteousness. No man can hope to produce that. It is not possible for me to make myself holy as he is holy." I agree. You cannot do it. In fact you cannot even make a contribution to it. Do you ask, "*Who, then, can be saved?*" With men, it is impossible! But with God all things are possible!

(Romans 10:4) "For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

(1 Corinthians 1:30-31) "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."

(2 Corinthians 5:17-21) "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (18) And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (21) For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

(Jude 1:24-25) "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, (25) To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen."

O wretched unbelief! Unbelief makes the greatness of God's mercy a reason refusing to trust him! Help us, O Holy Spirit, to believe our God, and to cease from carnal reason! The Lord God our Savior declares, with regard to all his promises to all his people, "*My grace is sufficient for thee!*" O accursed unbelief that reasons, "Because salvation is so marvellous, it cannot be true!" The fact that it is marvellous is all the more reason to trust Christ for it!

GOD'S REVELATION

Our carnal reason defies God's Revelation of himself in his Word. And the Revelation of God in Holy Scripture ought to correct our unbelief. Hear what God says by his prophet Zechariah. — "*Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people*" (Zech. 8:6-7).

Whose promise is this? It is God's. Whose honor is at stake? God's. Let us never imagine that God cannot, or will not, for any reason do what he has promised he will do. God almighty, Faithful and True, does not look for you and me to fulfill his promises! He "*alone doeth great wonders!*"

(Exodus 34:10) "And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou *art* shall see the work of the LORD: for it *is* a terrible thing that I will do with thee."

(Job 5:9) "Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number:"

(Micah 7:15) "According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvellous *things*."

(Isaiah 25:1) "O LORD, thou *art* my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful *things*; *thy* counsels of old *are* faithfulness *and* truth."

Do you ask, "By what great wonders will God save his people? What marvellous thing will God do to save sinners?" I answer, "**He has already done marvellous things, he has already performed great wonders of grace by which he has saved his people.**"

- • **God has saved his people in his sovereign, eternal decree and purpose of grace** (Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Tim 1:9).

(Romans 8:29-30) "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (30) Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

(Ephesians 1:3-6) "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

(2 Timothy 1:9) "Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

- • **God has saved everyone of his people by the obedience of his darling Son unto death as our Representative and Substitute** (Matt. 1:21; John 17:4; 19:30; Gal. 3:13).

(Matthew 1:21) "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

(John 17:4) "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

(John 19:30) "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

(Galatians 3:13) "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree."

And that which God has done, he will do. He will yet save his people, all of them, by the mighty, effectual, irresistible power of his grace.

- By Regeneration
- By Effectual Calling
- By Gospel Preaching
- By Preservation
- By Resurrection

Do not measure the triune God by your yardstick! He "*alone doeth great wonders!*"

ORDINARY THINGS

With our God great wonders are ordinary, everyday things. Papists and Pentecostals talk a lot about miracles, and signs, and wonders. We see them, experience them, and live them every day.

- The Wonder of Redemption
- The Wonder of the New Birth
- The Wonder of Forgiveness
- The Wonder of God's Keeping
- The Wonder of His Unfailing Love
- The Wonder of His All-sufficient Grace
- The Wonder of A Good Hope
- The Wonder of Divine Providence
- The Wonder of Eternal Life

But there are wonders yet to be performed for us that we cannot even begin to imagine. I cannot imagine them; but I fully expect them.

- Easy Death and its Transition
- Christ's Second Coming
- The Resurrection
- The Judgment
- The Restitution
- The Glory of Heaven!

Let us enlarge our minds, enlarge our thoughts of our God, and enlarge our expectations. Come, blessed Spirit, reveal Christ in us, and cause us to know more of the greatness of our God. Teach us marvellous things. And teach us that this marvellous thing we call salvation is no marvel to our God, but the work of his infinite free grace, the work for which he made the world, rules the world and disposes of the world.

Amen.