

The Man, My Fellow

Zechariah 13:7

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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

- I. Introduction: My text for today is simply one verse, Zechariah 13:7, which reads, **“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man *that is my fellow*, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.”** In my Bible (and perhaps yours) the words that were added by the translators are in italics and if we leave them out, the first part of this verse would read, **“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man my fellow,...”** And while we will consider the fullness of this entire verse, the description of Christ here, “...the man my fellow...” is what prompted my study of this passage and is the reason I’ve titled today’s message, “The Man, My Fellow.”

In this verse, we can know with a certainty that the One described here in this prophetic passage as God’s “shepherd,” and as “the man,” and as God’s “fellow” is one and the same and none other than Jesus Christ. Christ Himself confirmed as much in the discourse with His disciples at the Mount of Olives on the evening before His death on the cross. Look at that with me in Matthew 26. Christ and His disciples had just finished the last supper as we pick in verse 30 where it reads, **“And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. ³¹Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: <and then referring to Zechariah 13:7, He said...> for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. ³²But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.”** In quoting from Zechariah here, Christ confirms that He indeed is the One to whom God (through the prophet) referred to as “my shepherd,” “the man,” “my fellow” who was about to be smitten by the sword of God’s justice in His death on the cross.

- II. I want to focus your attention on 3 main aspects of this verse, Zechariah 13:7:

- The Commission or the Command given to the Sword
- This Glorious Person against whom the sword was commissioned
- And the Consequences of the sword’s deadly stroke

A. The Commission or the Command Given to the Sword:

1. A Command from God: Notice first that this command is from God, as it reads, “...saith **the LORD of hosts...**” Secondly, notice that the instrument of death is the sword. This is the sword of God’s inflexible justice that would execute the death sentence on the sinless Son of God, a just sentence due against all the sins that were imputed (or accounted) to Christ. And so that the sword might receive (or hear) God’s command the Spirit led Zechariah to personify the sword. In representing the unerring, the all-wise, holy justice of God, this sword answers only to God. It’s His voice and none other that the sword would hear. It would remain in its sheath and not be awakened until the hour God had appointed for it to do its work.
2. 2-fold Command: Next notice that God’s command to the sword is 2-fold.
 - a. Awake: The verse begins with God’s command to “**Awake, O sword.**” Think of the forbearance of God in not dealing spontaneously with our sins as they are committed. This sword of God’s eternal justice against the sins of His dear children, His elect, had slumbered if you will, remained inactive since the 1st sin of Adam, and throughout the respective lifetimes of each of the objects of His everlasting love in each successive generation up until the cross; God, from eternity past, having accounted unto them the very merit that Christ would later accomplish by His doing and dying, God’s justice having been satisfied by the God purposed (and therefore inevitable) death that Christ would die.

Likewise, this sword of God’s justice had slumbered as it pertains to exacting His justice due unto the sins of all His elect, including those of us who have lived on this side of the cross, not imputing their sins unto them but likewise, having reckoned the demerit of their sins (even before they were committed, before we were born) to our Substitute and Surety, Jesus Christ – and that from eternity past.

When I think of this command from God for His sword of justice to awake and do its work, and of the certainty that this would take place (and did take place), I’m reminded of the power and of the sovereignty of the living God of this Bible. When we consider how crazy this world can seem at times, we should take comfort by remembering that our all-powerful God is sovereign and fully in control and for us who love Him, who are the called according to His purpose, all things are actually working together for our eternal good as we’re told in Roman 8:28.

And here we see the sword of God’s justice had remained in its sheath all this time and would only answer to the command of our Sovereign God to awake at God’s precise appointed hour and not until then.

Consider how in John, chapter 7, Christ was teaching in the temple and He angered those listening when He told them that they didn't know God the Father who had sent Him and as a result (and as recorded in John 7:30) we're told, **"Then they sought to take him: <they wanted to kill Him> but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come."** They couldn't touch Him for the sword would only answer to God at His appointed hour. Again in John 8, after Christ had told the Pharisees that they neither knew Him nor His Father, we read in John 8:20, **"These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: <as in Chapter 7> and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come."**

But at God's appointed hour, and not until then, the sword would awake and Christ knew full well when and for what purpose. After Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, as the hour of His crucifixion approached, in John 12:27, Christ told the crowd gathered there, **"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour."**

And then after the Last Supper, Christ goes into the Garden of Gethsemane to pray and three of His disciples accompanied Him and awaited there a stone's throw away we're told while He prayed. But each time Christ would pray and return to them He would find them asleep until finally we read in Matthew 26:44-46. **"And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. ⁴⁵Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me."** And it goes on to say that Judas approached with a multitude in His betrayal of Christ, even as He was speaking these words.

Think of the gracious mercy of God in sparing us by not sparing His own Son – by calling (at His appointed time) for the sword of His justice to "Awake." But as I said, the command or commission given to the sword is 2-fold.

- b. Smite: He not only commanded the sword to awake but also to smite this One who was to endure the just punishment of God due unto the sins He bore. Acting upon the full authority of God, the sword of God's justice was not just a threat to frighten or motivate us to straighten up our act, this was not a mere rattling of the saber. Rather, it was awakened to "smite" – that means to slay Him, to deal a death blow that would fully atone for the sins He bore, paying the sin debt due them in full.

To believe (as so many do) that Christ died for all without exception is a denial of redemption by His shed blood by which all for whom it is shed is saved. His death on the cross was not a mere attempt made, but rather a payment paid!

In Romans 6:23 we read, **“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”** The wages of sin is death (and the sentence was to be fully executed upon the sin bearer so that the gift of eternal life might be given to each for whom He died and that upon a just ground – through that justice-satisfying work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Full remission (payment) was made and thereby the debt was forgiven for all the sins for all those for whom Christ died – His chosen sheep in Christ.

He was smitten. When you think of what it took to satisfy the justice of God, the precious blood of Christ, it should make us marvel how we, like others, would ever have considered our difficult times as God’s judgment against our sins or judged our good times as God’s blessing to us for refraining from sins or for our good deeds. Why, that in itself is an awful sin – to have imagined (as we all naturally are inclined to do) that anything we could do or refrain from doing would take care of that which actually took the physical and soul suffering and death of the eternal God-man. We dare not to place our doing or some decision we make in rivalry with the precious blood of Christ.

So we see in our text, this 2-fold command to the sword of God’s justice: (1) To awake at God’s appointed hour & (2) to smite – to deal a death blow.

B. This Glorious Person against whom the sword was commissioned: Now let’s delve into this glorious Person against whom the sword of God’s justice was commissioned given the 3 descriptions we find in this verse.

1. God’s Shepherd: The sword was to awake against and smite God’s Shepherd. God, speaking through Zechariah said, **“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd... <and then He commands the sword to> smite the shepherd...”** Notice, God the Father refers to Him as His Shepherd. He is God the Father’s shepherd as He was chosen, called, set up and sent by Him. In the everlasting covenant of grace, Christ, God the Son, willingly became accountable to God the Father for the sheep – the flock He was sent to save by His doing and dying, those chosen in Him from before the world began. The title, “Shepherd,” refers to His office as Mediator, as we read in I Timothy 2:5, **“For *there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*”** This One who is God’s shepherd is the good shepherd who giveth His life for the sheep (John 10:11).

Bill has been preaching recently from Isaiah 53 and recall in verse 6 it speaks of the flock in this way saying, **“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him (the shepherd) the iniquity of us all.”** That is – all the sheep. This one mediator (this shepherd) purchased the flock (His church) with His own blood (Acts 20:28) and on that basis, God’s Shepherd is indeed also the shepherd of each and every one for whom He was smitten – for whom He lived and died and who in each generation, just as surely receive His blood-bought gift of faith. Oh what great news for believers to confidently rejoice with the Psalmist saying, the **“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.”** (Psa. 23:1)

2. The Man: Secondly, note that this glorious person against whom the sword of God’s justice was commissioned is called the man, as it reads, **“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man...”** For God’s justice to be satisfied due to the sins of the sheep, Christ had to come to this earth and be made like unto those whose sins He bore. Paul wrote to the Corinthians in I Cor. 15, beginning in verse 20 this: **“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. ²¹For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”** We read in Romans 5:19, **“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one <as in another man> shall many be made righteous.”**

As 2 Corinthians 5:21 teaches, the sheep are made righteous in Him, God the Father having imputed (or put to their credit) the very righteousness Christ established in full satisfaction to God’s Law and justice. Christ, as truly man, coming under the same jurisdiction of all humanity, subject to and commanded to obey the revealed will of God, said of Himself that He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it, every jot and tittle (Matthew 5:17). And by His sinless obedience unto death was the law and justice of God fully satisfied, both in precept (by His perfect, sinless obedience) as well as the penal demands being met by His suffering the just penalty (His obedience unto death) due unto the sins of His flock that were imputed to (or accounted unto) Him, whereby they are justified – declared not guilty!

Recall from Genesis how Satan had triumphed over the nature of man in the fall of Adam but then in Genesis 3:15, the same nature (a man) was promised to conquer death, hell, and the grave for all for whom Christ would ages later live and die for on this earth. As God says to Satan, the serpent, in Genesis 3:15 **“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”** “Her seed” can only refer to Christ who was born of the virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit, not the seed of man.

Because God is just and because salvation is indeed a matter of His law and justice, the same nature which had rebelled should obey and that perfectly by the man who the Bible tells us knew no sin, Jesus Christ. And likewise the same nature which sinned (humanity) must atone. This man who was God really died! Do you see the majestic wisdom of God in this, God's one way of salvation in and by the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ?

We read further of the necessity of Christ's humanity in Hebrews 2:14-17, where we read, **"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; ¹⁵And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶For verily he took not on *him* the nature of angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷Wherefore in all things it behoved him (He was indebted) to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining to God*, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."** This is the only way God could be true to Himself as both a just God and a Savior!

This Shepherd (or Mediator) was truly man as we read earlier in I Timothy 2:5, **"For *there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*"** That's to say "the man-God who saves."

3. **God's Fellow**: Lastly, this One against whom the sword of God's justice was to smite is identified not only as His Shepherd, and the man, but also as God's fellow. As our text reads, **"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man *that is my fellow*,..."** To be God's fellow is to be His equal. This is an expression of the closest relationship possible, as in the next of kin. This is an equality that can't be undone. In other words, this Shepherd who would be born into this world (this man) was also none other than God Himself. Yes, Christ was fully man but not a mere man. Christ made this claim Himself as we read in John 8:58, **"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."** He's referring to the eternal "I am" – the uncreated eternal God. For a mere man to claim He was God would be considered blasphemy and because they did not believe Him to be God, manifest in the flesh, they considered Him a blasphemer – but God's word makes clear that He truly was God, manifest in the flesh.

As Paul wrote to the Philippians in Philippians 2, beginning in verse 5, **"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."**

What condescension, what humility and love for His sheep is reflected in this One who is the Word that was in the beginning (eternal God), to become the Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1) and experience all the infirmities of the flesh, yet without sin. “Being in the form of God” in verse 6 means He is the exact image of God or God Himself – God’s fellow. We sometimes will refer to other humans as our fellow man. This one is fellow-God. And “being found in fashion as a man” in verse 8 means He truly was born, lived and died as man. It would be robbery (taking that which does not belong to you) for any mere man to consider Himself God’s fellow – His equal, but not this man. It wasn’t robbery for God’s fellow, the Lord Jesus Christ, for He was very God.

I noted earlier how because God’s law and justice were concerned, Christ’s humanity (His incarnation) was a necessity. The same human nature that had rebelled in sin would need to be the same nature which should atone. But because sin is against holy God and all of God’s divine perfections then are concerned, then the One who willingly undertook the redemption of the sheep must be the man that was God’s fellow – Jesus Christ, the God-man! None but man could die so as to redeem. Likewise, none but God could render an offering valuable enough to accomplish redemption.

In the Old Testament, the animal sacrifices (which all pictured the one sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God) were offered on an altar. The altar is what set the offering apart as a sacrifice so as distinguish it from the random slaying of an animal. Likewise, it’s appropriate (as you’ve heard it said) to say that this One who God the Father called “my man, my fellow” offered the sacrifice of His humanity on the altar of His Deity. It was His Deity that set apart and made efficacious His sacrifice whereby He established an everlasting righteousness for all of His sheep. As we read in the first part of I Timothy 3:16, “**And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh ...”**

- C. Consequence of the deadly stroke: Well, we’ve seen from our text that the command given to the sword of God’s justice was to awake and to smite; and that against the glorious Person of Christ, the One God called His Shepherd, the man, His fellow. Now I’d like for us to further consider the consequences of this deadly stroke. And of course the most significant consequences involve the earned exaltation of Christ to the right hand of the Father based upon His successful, finished work of redemption whereby those for whom He died are saved from their sins. I’m speaking of the consequence of salvation itself and the highest manifestation of God’s glory as seen in this, the Person and work of Christ in saving His sheep.

In Ephesians 1:3-7 we read, “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: ⁴According 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: ⁵Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. ⁷In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;” That speaks for itself.**

Look with me now at the two consequences of this deadly stroke as specifically mentioned in the latter part of Zechariah 13:7. It reads, “**...and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.**”

1. Scattered sheep: First it notes that the sheep shall be scattered. And certainly this would apply to the disciples of Christ as they abandoned Him at the cross. This was necessary because as prophesied of Christ in Isaiah 63, He had to tread the winepress of God’s wrath alone. He was to receive no comfort or assistance, willingly offering Himself as a ransom for the sins of His sheep without any human assistance or even the aid of angels, all just as the triune God-head had purposed. Earlier we looked in Matthew 26 where Christ quoted our text verse from Zechariah 13. Later on in that same chapter, after Judas had betrayed Christ and led the multitude to Him to take Him away, we read in verse 56, “**But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.**”

And this was just as Christ had told them earlier in the chapter – that they would be scattered. We’re told in John 20:10 that after His death, “**Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.**” Clearly, they suffered in unbelief and so disbanded. So we see the immediate application of this prophecy to His disciples as they did indeed scatter.

This also could be in reference to the scattering of all of God’s sheep, believers all over the world – scattered in order to spread the Gospel. Right after His resurrection, when Christ first appeared to the disciples in Galilee is when He gave them His great commission telling them to “**...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.**” (Mark 16:15). Notice again the last phrase of our text as it reads, “**...and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.**” Now we know that the Bible (and particularly the book of John) often refers to God’s elect as the sheep. The little ones to whom God says He will turn His hand upon appears to refer to the same sheep that are scattered (and that throughout the world) – the sheep to whom He does turn His loving hand of grace in the day of His power.

As I read earlier from Isaiah 53:6, it says, **“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”** The Bible describes us all that way by nature, saying in Romans 3:12a, **“They are all gone out of the way...”** As we often quote from Proverbs 16:25, **“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”** The way of salvation that initially seems right to us by nature isn’t. We’re inclined to think there is something we can do to save ourselves or at least contribute something so as to make the difference, but the truth is, we’re born spiritually dead and have to be given the spiritual life that our Shepherd purchased for us or else we will never see and come to understand that our only hope is to be found in Christ, washed in His blood and clothed in His perfect righteousness.

2. Hand of grace: At the end of our text verse, we see a second consequence of the work of God’s sword of justice against His Shepherd, the man, His fellow. Justice thereby being fully satisfied, the debt paid, the debt forgiven, righteousness established – that insures that God’s hand of grace will draw each and every one of His otherwise wayward sheep unto Himself in their respective lifetimes. It’s interesting that Zechariah 13:7 begins with the hand of God’s justice, the sword, and ends with the hand of God’s grace because the hand of saving grace would not be there without the hand of justice having awakened to smite.

This hand that turns to the little ones is not the hand of justice for that was laid on Christ. It would be unjust to exact further punishment from those for whom He died. And here it is not referring even to His hand of chastisement, but rather to His hand of grace, mercy, power, and protection in drawing His sheep to Himself and keeping them.

Due to God’s holy, unerring justice, the righteousness Christ established demanded Christ come out of that grave just as that same righteousness imputed to His sheep demands their resurrection unto spiritual life; And just as sin imputed to the Substitute, the Shepherd of the sheep, demanded He die. We see that clearly in Romans 8, beginning in verse 10: **“And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. ¹¹But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”**

This hand of grace is turned to what God here calls “the little ones.” What an appropriate description when you consider how defenseless and helpless all of God’s sheep would stand at the judgment, hopelessly facing the accusations of Satan were it not for their standing in Christ, having the perfect merits of His finished work of righteousness put to their account and thereby declared, “Not guilty.”

And this is so that all glory might be of God. Think of just how “little” these “little ones” to whom God is gracious are. First we know they are few or little in number for broad is the road that leads to destruction in comparison to the narrow road that leads to eternal life (Matthew 7:13-14). They are humbled to be little in their own estimation when the Spirit convinces them of sin and righteousness so as to have them bowing at the feet of Christ. And they don’t think their believing is the difference maker either. They are brought to realize how they are of little faith, prone to the same unbelief as the disciples had shown at His death and for which they were upbraided by Christ concerning their unbelief when He first appeared unto the eleven in Galilee after His resurrection (Mark 16:14). Christ has done for all of these little ones what none of us had any hope of doing for ourselves.

III. Closing:

In keeping with my title, The Man, My Fellow, in closing I want to paraphrase some encouraging words that were written by Robert Hawker in a daily devotional he wrote on Zechariah 13:7. In essence, he said, whenever you look up to the cross (whether daily, hourly, or continually) never lose sight of this glorious union of God and man in Jesus. Fix your eyes, your heart, your whole affection upon Him; and while you’re resting all your assurance of pardon, mercy, and peace, the joy of this life, and the glory of that which is to come, wholly upon Jesus; Oh! Let your ear of faith receive in transports of delight, this proclamation of God the Father concerning Him, “the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts.” No other could have accomplished our salvation. Only this One that God calls “the man, my fellow” could and did get the job done!

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God’s grace found in the only infallible source, God’s word itself – the Bible.