

Title: **A CUP OF TREMBLING**
 AND THE SPIRIT OF GRACE

Text: Zechariah 12:1-14

Subject: *Christ our Savior and our Defender*

Date: Sunday Morning — July 15, 2007

Reading: *Zechariah 12:1-14*

Tape # Zechariah #60

Introduction:

Turn with me to Zechariah 12. The title of my message is **A CUP OF TREMBLING AND THE SPIRIT OF GRACE**. We have before us a chapter full of sweet promises from God our Savior concerning his people in this gospel age. And “*all the promises of God in Christ Jesus are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God*” (2 Corinthians 1:20). As the Spirit of God gave this prophetic word of promise by Zechariah he not only continued to affirm the sure salvation of God’s Israel, his church, he declared the sure, universal triumph of God’s elect over all their enemies.

GOD OUR CREATOR

I have said that this chapter is filled with promises of grace, salvation, and triumph. But, as we all know, a promise is only as good as the one who makes it. — Is he able to keep his promise? — Can he be trusted to keep his promise? So this chapter begins by assuring us that the God who has promised these things is the God who able to perform them and the God who can be

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confidently trusted to do all that he has said, for he is God our Creator.

(Zechariah 12:1) “The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.”

This is “*The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel.*” — What can those words mean? Does the triune God have a burden? Here, speaking as a man, the Lord God reveals that which is the focus of his heart and being, the one thing about which he is concerned, and that is the everlasting salvation of his people, his Israel. What an astounding thought! The God of Glory is burdened for my soul! Is Israel’s everlasting comfort and her enemies’ everlasting confusion the determination, the burden of God? That is precisely what those words convey. — “*The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel.*” To him who is our God and Savior, it is a burden like wings to a bird, a burdenless burden. To his enemies and ours it is a burdensome stone (v. 3), heavier than the sands of the sea (Job 6:3; Matthew 21:44).

(Matthew 21:44) “And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”

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Thus the chapter opens with a solemn declaration of the Lord's distinguishing mercy, love, and grace upon his elect. Here the Lord our God confirms his goodness to his own. And he gives us assurance that he is not only willing to save his people, but that he is fully able to do so, because he is our almighty Creator. — *“The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens.”* He stretched out the heavens as a curtain over the earth; and he continually does so. — He *“stretcheth forth the heavens”* (Psalm 104:2).

He who is our God and Savior laid the foundation of the earth; and he *“layeth the foundation of the earth.”* He breathed into Adam's nostrils and man became a living soul; and he *“formeth the spirit of man within him.”*

Why does the Lord God choose to use the present tense, when speaking of these things? We know that creation was finished in six days. — So why the present tense? Providence is but the continual exertion of the creative power of our God and Savior, who upholds all things by the word of his power, until he has saved all his people. He intends for us to understand that he created and rules the universe for the salvation of his people (Romans 8:28). What a weighty blessing it is to know that!

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In verse 2 the Lord God says something that, at first, seems strange, very strange. He says...

(Zechariah 12:2) “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah *and* against Jerusalem.”

Jerusalem, his church and people, the place of his residence, the place from which he sends forth his Word, the place where he is worshipped and where he makes himself known, he says he will make “*a cup of trembling*” to those who set themselves in opposition to him and his people. The long and short of that is just this: — God almighty will cause those who despise him, his Son, his gospel and his people to become totally intoxicated with their enmity against him. When men are in siege against his church, they are in siege against their own souls; but they shall become so intoxicated with their hatred for Christ and his people that they shall be made oblivious to their own danger.

The church of God, here represented by Jerusalem, is like Jerusalem was before her apostasy, the one, singular source of blessing to men in this world. — “*Ye are the light of the world.*” — “*Ye are the salt of the earth.*” But the time will come when the preservers of the world shall become a burdensome stone by which God will crush the world into everlasting destruction (vv. 3-4).

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(Zechariah 12:3-4) “And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. (4) In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness.”

I do not pretend to understand all that is implied in these things, but when the Lord God punishes sinners with everlasting destruction from his presence, the memory of grace despised, mercy spurned, the gospel mocked, and Christ derided will cut them in pieces, and smite them with astonishment and madness in the blackness and darkness of hell! — Your memory of this preacher’s voice will be fire in your soul forever! Yet, your blindness will never be taken away.

And as he casts the damned into hell in the fury of his holy wrath and justice, the Lord God says, “*In that day I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah.*” He will forever look upon the chosen objects of his favor with delight and satisfaction. — “*He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied!*”

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THE GOVERNORS AND THE PEOPLE

(Zechariah 12:5-7) “And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem *shall be* my strength in the LORD of hosts their God. (6) In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, *even* in Jerusalem. (7) The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify *themselves* against Judah.”

I will leave it to others to argue about who these governors and their people may refer to historically. I do not know. But this prophecy is declaring what God shall do and is doing in this day of grace. It refers to spiritual matters, to things that involve us. I agree with **Robert Hawker**, who wrote, “It is sufficient to say, that every thing that is gracious is promised to Judah and Jerusalem; and every thing of evil to their enemies. The Lord will fight for them, and woe to them that oppose his people.”

Yet, as we seek to apply these things to ourselves in this gospel day and in the light of the New Testament, these

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things seem obvious to me.

- The governors of Judah are faithful pastors, gospel preachers, to whom God has given the rule of his church under Christ (Hebrews 13:7, 17).
- The hearts of such pastors are so wrapped up in the welfare of God's people that their hearts are strengthened and they faint not, even in the darkest of days, because they are assured that God will save his own (2 Corinthians 2:14-16; 4:1-7). — *“Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem”* (v. 6).

(2 Corinthians 2:14-16) “Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. (15) For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: (16) To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?”

(2 Corinthians 4:1-7) “Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; (2) But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (3) But if our

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gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: (4) In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (5) For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. (6) For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (7) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”

- Yet, those same pastors, like a fire devours wood and a torch consumes a sheaf, shall devour all who oppose them.
- And by those pastors, our Savior, feeds his sheep with his two staves, Beauty and Bands, the gospel of his grace and the ordinances of worship, binding our hearts together so that none seek to magnify themselves against others. — He is himself the glory of his house!

OUR DEFENDER

(Zechariah 12:8-9) “In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David;

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and the house of David *shall be* as God, as the angel of the LORD before them. (9) And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.”

The Lord our God fights for us. Woe to them that oppose his people! He is our Defender. Our all-glorious Savior is both a sun and a shield to his redeemed. He has promised that he will give grace and give glory to his ransomed (Psalm 84:11). The feeblest among us, he makes to be David, who though but a youth, subdued Goliath. And the house of David, that is, the church of God, the house of our spiritual David, the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be as God! How can that be? —

“With his spotless garments on,
Holy as the Holy One!”

By virtue of our union with Christ, because we are one with Christ, his wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption are ours, because he who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him!

Sweet, precious, refreshing things these are to every poor, feeble child of God! It is not what we are in ourselves that gives us joy, but what we are in him. It is not our attainments, or strength, or state that comforts

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our hearts, but Christ's all-sufficiency, all fulness, and perfection (John 1:14, 16; Colossians 2:9-10).

(John 1:14) "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

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

(Colossians 2:9-10) "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. (10) And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:"

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Now, look at verses 10-14. Do you ask, "How shall these things be? How is it that our God will cause his chosen to find life and strength and everlasting salvation in Christ? How does God save sinners?" I'm about to show you. As you care for your soul, give me your attention.

(Zechariah 12:10-14) "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

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mourneth for *his* only *son*, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn. (11) In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. (12) And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; (13) The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; (14) All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.”

This is the great promise of our God. Had the Prophet Zechariah been raised up by God the Holy Spirit for no other purpose, but to give us this one promise, every saved sinner would have cause to bless God forever for the ministry of this prophet.

As the Lord Jesus Christ, our Surety, with all his fulness and grace, was the promise of the Old Testament. This is the great blessing in the charter of grace the triune God promised Christ, as God-man-Mediator in the covenant of grace, as the result of his great undertaking and accomplishments as our Substitute. It was promised that he would give the Holy Spirit to Christ's redeemed, his seed and offspring (Galatians 3:13-14).

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(Galatians 3:13-14) “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: (14) That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

If you will carefully read our blessed Savior’s sermon in John 14, 15 and 16, you will see that he had the fulfillment of this promise in his heart as he approached the time of his crucifixion (John 14:26; 16:7, 13-15; 7:37-39).

(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 16:7) “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”

(John 16:13-15) “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

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you things to come. (14) He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show *it* unto you. (15) All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show *it* unto you.”

(John 7:37-39) “In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. (38) He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (39) (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)”

When our Savior finished his great work of redemption, when he had fulfilled all the will of the Father who sent him, he was crowned with glory as Lord over all. And the first act of our exalted King, when he ascended on high, was the out-pouring of his Spirit as the Spirit of grace and supplications upon his people, exactly as the Old Testament prophets said he would (Joel 2; Acts 2; Isaiah 44:1-5; 49:21-22).

(Isaiah 44:1-5) “Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: (2) Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, *which* will help thee; Fear not, O

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Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. (3) For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: (4) And they shall spring up *as* among the grass, as willows by the water courses. (5) One shall say, I *am* the Lord's; and another shall call *himself* by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe *with* his hand unto the LORD, and surname *himself* by the name of Israel."

(Isaiah 49:21-22) "Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where *had* they *been*? (22) Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in *their* arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon *their* shoulders."

The gracious work and operations of grace by God the Holy Spirit dwelling in the hearts of believing men and women, taking up permanent residence in our souls, giving us life and faith in Christ, comforting, instructing, and keeping us unto heavenly glory is the fruit of Christ's death at Calvary as our Substitute. When he had ascended on high, he received gifts for us, to bestow

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upon his church by his Spirit, that the Lord God might dwell among his people in grace, life, communion, union, and sweet fellowship (Psalm 68:15-20; Romans 8:9-17; Ephesians 4:8-13).

(Psalms 68:15-20) “The hill of God *is as* the hill of Bashan; an high hill *as* the hill of Bashan. (16) Why leap ye, ye high hills? *this is* the hill *which* God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell *in it* for ever. (17) 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.”

(Romans 8:9-17) “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (10) And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. (11) But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall

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also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. (12) Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. (13) For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (14) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (15) For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (16) The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: (17) And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.”

(Ephesians 4:8-13) “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (9) (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? (10) He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) (11) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: (13) Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect

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man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

Now, notice that this promise is made to a specific people. — God promised to pour out his Spirit upon “*the house of David*” and “*the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*” These are God’s elect, the very people to whom Christ comes and for whom he died and rose again. But these people, we know, are not the physical descendants of Abraham, because Joel tells us that they are a people made up of all people, of “*all flesh*” (Joel 2:28). The house of David is the chosen church of Christ, our almighty David (Isaiah 49:6).

(Isaiah 49:6) “And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”

Salvation is brought to the soul when the Lord Jesus pours out his Spirit upon the sinner as “*the Spirit of grace, and of supplications.*” Oh, may he do that for you! It is only by the Spirit of God coming upon us, coming into us as the Spirit of life that we have grace. When God the Holy Spirit comes in the saving operations of his omnipotent mercy, he brings grace, all grace with him.

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And when he comes with grace, he is in the heart of the heaven born soul “*the Spirit of supplications,*” causing sinners to seek the Lord, to seek mercy from him, and at last to find rest in him, trusting him, finding all in him (Romans 8:26-27).

(Romans 8:26-27) “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. (27) And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God.*”

I know that that is precisely the meaning of Zechariah’s words here because he goes on to tell us what the result of the Spirit’s work in the heart always is. — “*And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him.*” This looking and mourning is the sure result of the Holy Spirit’s work in the heart. When he reveals Christ in the redeemed by the gospel, the newborn soul is led by that grace poured out, to look to Christ, as One whom he has pierced.

We are made to see that our sins became the cause of our Savior’s death. It was not Judas that betrayed him, not the Jews, not the Romans, not Herod, not Pontius Pilate,

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that crucified him, but my sins (that crucified the Lord of life and glory!

If ever you are made to see this, by the gracious operations of God the Holy Spirit, you will beat on your chest, crying, like the publican, “*God, be merciful to me, the sinner!*” You will mourn because of him, as one mourns for his only son. You will be in bitterness of soul for hi, as one in bitterness for his firstborn. That is to say, the heaven born soul experiences sincere, heartfelt sorrow; that is deep and lasting, because of his sins, by which and for which the Son of God died.

The mourning is so great that it is compared to that in the sorrow of Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddo. Those places refer to two seasons of great, bitter mourning in the history of Israel. The first was in Judges 20:45-47, where we are told about the destruction of the Benjamites at the rock Rimmon. And the second was Josiah was killed at Megiddo (2 Kings 23:29-30). But the mourning spoken of here is a mourning caused by under the Spirit’s revelation of Christ crucified in our hearts. It is described, not as a general mourning, but distinctly private and personal mourning. When Zechariah speaks about the families apart, and their wives apart, he seems to be telling us he is describing an intensely private thing, that cannot be shared with or known by your most intimate companion. It is something strictly between you and God.

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- Only God can cause the groaning.
- Only God can hear the groaning.
- Only God can relieve the groaning.

“The heart knoweth his own business” (Proverbs 14:10). Sin is personal thing. Sorrow for sin is a personal thing, Repentance is a personal thing. Confession is a personal thing. Faith in Christ is a personal thing. Forgiveness is a personal thing. Salvation is a personal thing (Romans 10:9-13).

(Romans 10:9-13) “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. (10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (11) For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. (12) For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. (13) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Oh, may God be pleased to fulfill his promise in this place today! Blessed Son of God, pour out your Spirit upon chosen sinners in this place, as the Spirit of grace and supplications! — Wound hearts with the revelation

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of yourself. — Wound my heart afresh! — And reveal
yourself again for the healing of our souls!

Amen.