

His People and Their God
Part 2:
Theirs in Truth and Righteousness
Zechariah 8:8
By Randy Wages
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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:

Today's message is the 2nd of a 2 part series we began last week, a series that I've titled, "His People and Their God." To refresh your memory, the idea for this series was derived from my study for an earlier message whose text was taken from Ezekiel chapter 36. In the latter part of verse 28 of that chapter we read these words spoken by God through the Prophet Ezekiel as He said, "...***and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.***" And I was struck by the similarity of these words to those spoken by Ruth to her mother-in-law, Naomi in Ruth chapter 1, Ruth's resolute assertion to Naomi that "...***thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:***"

This biblical declaration to some that they shall be God's people and that He will be their God is repeated many times in various contexts. And this morning we will continue our examination of this declaration within these various contexts so as to heighten our understanding and appreciation of the simple, but glorious truth being communicated. If you heard last week's message, you may remember my emphasizing how these two truths cannot be separated. That is, (1) all of God's people, His elect or chosen people, will be His (a people purchased by the blood of Christ) and therefore, without fail (2) they will all come to know Him as their God – they will be saved!

Now whereas last week, we concentrated on the 1st part of this declaration, the phrase "Ye shall be my people," as part 1 of this series was so titled; today, I want to focus your attention on the 2nd part of this declaration, where God, says "...and I will be their God." Although we will consider quite a few scriptures again this morning, I chose one verse from among them as my primary text for today's message, Zechariah 8:8, where God, speaking through the Prophet, says at the end of verse 8, "... ***and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.***" I selected this as my primary text because I think it communicates the essence of what each and every one of these, God's people, come to see with the eyes of God-given faith when He is made known to them as their God. They come to the one true God in truth and righteousness. Accordingly, I've titled this morning's segment, "Theirs (as in their God) – theirs in Truth and Righteousness."

II. The one true and living God shall be **their** God: So today I want to direct your attention to how the one true God who has determined to have a people in that everlasting covenant, that covenant of (1) grace and (2) peace – (3) a people of inheritance, as we saw them described last week – that same God shall just as surely, in each successive generation be known by them. Again, 2 inseparable truths. Not only does God declare that they shall be His people, but He also says of these who were chosen in Christ from all eternity, that He shall (without fail) be their God! This speaks of the sure realization in time of God’s eternal purpose to save them. They shall be born again, made spiritually alive so as to have the eyes of their understanding enlightened whereby they come to know Him whom to know is life eternal!

A. A Heart Work: So in keeping with the 1st segment of this series, let’s look again at this phrase in several different contexts only today we will concentrate on the latter part of the phrase where God declares “...and I will be their God.” And so we will examine different facets of that which God’s people all experience in their regeneration and conversion that inevitably takes place in each of their respective lifetimes. Here we’ll see more about what it means for a sinner to come to know the one true and living God as their God.

First, in several places we see this described as a heart work. And when I say heart you know I’m not referring to that physical organ within our chest cavity that pumps blood. But rather I’m referring to our entire inner being. Even in our modern day vernacular, we often speak of “just knowing something to be so in our heart of hearts.” The heart as we speak of it in this context involves the mind (knowing something). But it also involves our affections and our will – our entire being.

1. Ezekiel 36:25-26: We saw that in the context of that earlier message I alluded to where in Ezekiel chapter 36, verse 28 God had said to them “Ye shall be my people and I will be your God. But just before making that declaration, we had read back in verse 25 where God had said, “***Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.*** <Speaking of their being cleansed and forgiven from all eternity based upon Christ’s shed blood on their behalf but then He continues saying...> ²⁶***A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.***”

That inflexible, hard-to-make-an-impression-upon heart of stone will be replaced so to speak as their hearts (their minds, affections, and wills) will be made pliable, impressionable by God the Holy Spirit, made willing to receive God’s truth as set forth in God’s Gospel of grace. These, God’s elect people, will be irresistibly drawn to Him by the regenerating power of God the Holy Spirit in God’s appointed time, in the day of His power. There will be a change of heart.

2. Jeremiah 24:7: We also see that knowing God as their God is a heart work from the context of Jeremiah Chapter 24, verse 7 where God says, ***“And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.”***
3. Ezekiel 11:19-20: And then again in Ezekiel 11, beginning in verse 19 we read, ***“And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: ²⁰That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them:***<There is a resulting walk of faith and obedience springing from a new motive of grace and gratitude> ***and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.***” As you can see, this is similar to the language we just looked at in Ezekiel 36, but I wanted you to see it here and make a mental note of how God qualifies it further by referring to it as one heart. I’ll come back to that in a few moments.
4. Clearly, these, God’s people, shall all without fail experience a second birth (a spiritual one) that involves a radical change of heart. So that tells us that knowing God as His people come to know Him is more than merely concurring with gospel doctrine – more than gaining a mere head knowledge of truth. When this gospel doctrine of Christ – of salvation by God’s sovereign grace is effectually applied by God the Holy Spirit it reaches to the heart. It most certainly does reach and affect the mind, but also the affections and the will as well!

B. Knowing God: Next let’s consider how this work whereby God’s people are given spiritual life so as to know Him as their own (in keeping with God’s declaration that He will be their God) – that in being a heart work that does not mean that it does not involve substantive knowledge. On occasion men (even preachers) will scorn clear Gospel preaching that would distinguish the Gospel doctrine of God’s sovereign grace from the many false gospels of which we are repeatedly warned about in the epistles. And this scorn sometimes will have them referring to such gospel-identifying distinctions as “cold, hard, doctrine” as they often go on to suggest that this ‘heart’ work is just something you feel but you can’t really define any substance to what is different.

It’s as if they are repulsed by substantive, definitive Gospel doctrine. So there is a lack of interest among many in delving into that which would distinguish the true Gospel doctrine of Christ from its many counterfeits. Many will acknowledge that the gospel is good news that pertains to Jesus Christ, but when it comes to preaching the scriptures which identify who He is and what He truly accomplished on the cross of Calvary there is often vagueness and ambiguity.

I've heard some insist, "I'm not going to try and describe what is different about the true Christ and true God I now profess to know, but if it (salvation) has happened to you, you'll just know it or you'll feel it like I do." They may hide behind clichés such as "I'm not sent to explain it, only to proclaim it" and while there is some truth in that, I fear that it sometimes is invoked in the interest of blurring true gospel doctrine so as to retain a larger following. There is only one way of salvation and as Christ told us, it's a narrow way and few be that go in there at.

Sadly, some will border on portraying salvation as something purely mystical, detached from any definitive Gospel knowledge that must be (and is) made known to all those whom God saves. While we concur that the miraculous regeneration and conversion of a sinner by God the Holy Spirit involves more than gaining some mere head knowledge indeed, being a heart work; yet we cannot deny that according to God's Word, the people of God are also identified by what they know – the doctrine of Christ as He is revealed in God's Gospel. As 2 John, verse 9 declares, "***Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.***" Salvation involves knowing right doctrine whereby we know God.

1. Jeremiah 31:33-34: Last week, we looked at Jeremiah 31 with an emphasis on how God's declaration to a people that they would be His was the covenant language of grace. But let's briefly look again at that passage. Beginning again in Jeremiah 31:33 we read where God said, "***But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.***³⁴ ***And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.***" Clearly, all these to whom God has declared that they shall be His people, who experience this work of the heart, they shall all come to know Him as He is.
2. John 17:3: Recall Christ Himself, in His high priestly prayer recorded in John 17:3, prayed unto God the Father, "***And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.***" This radical change of heart involves a radical change of knowledge. Spiritually alive, saved sinners are those who have come to know Christ and thereby know God the Father – know Him in a way totally opposed to what they previously thought in their spiritually dead state.

C. In Truth and Righteousness: So what is it that these come to know that we can equate with knowing God in Christ?

1. Well, now let's consider the primary text I chose for this message, Zechariah 8:8 where we read, beginning back in verse 7, ***“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; ⁸And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.”*** In truth and righteousness. Remember how in Jeremiah 23 it is said of the promised Messiah that His name shall be called “The Lord our righteousness.” And then in Jeremiah chapter 33 it is said of the church, those God saves, that she, the bride of Christ – that she too shall be called “The Lord our righteousness.” God's people come to know Him in truth as the righteousness of God in Christ is revealed unto them and made precious unto them by God-given faith. Paul wrote in Romans 1 that the Gospel was the power of God unto salvation because therein is the righteousness of God revealed. As Romans 10:4 teaches us, Christ is the end or fulfillment of the law for righteousness. Righteousness then refers to the perfect satisfaction to God's holy law and justice that Christ and Christ alone rendered in His obedience unto death on the cross. Christ's Person and His work are not to be separated. To know God is to have been given the revelation of faith whereby we know of His righteousness – of that which Christ fully accomplished for His people by His finished work on the cross.
2. So with the eyes of God-given faith, God's people come to see how all of salvation's conditions or requirements were fully met by Christ, their Substitute and Savior and not conditioned on them in any form or fashion. They embrace the Gospel of God's grace wherein the righteousness of God in Christ is revealed – His righteousness, not a presumed one of our own making. With their new hearts, they embrace the doctrine of salvation by grace and repent of ever thinking that something they did or didn't do could possibly do for them what actually took the doing and dying of the Lord of glory. They embrace the one true God as their God as they see the necessity of being made one with their Savior. They must have the very merit of His finished work, His righteousness, made to be theirs for they've come to see the reality of God's truth – that nothing else will fit their desperate need and reconcile them – bring peace between them and God the Father that they might be acceptable into His holy presence in heaven.

As 2 Corinthians 5:21 teaches us, just as the demerit of their sin was imputed or charged to Christ in order that He might pay the just penalty due unto their sin – sin that He had no part in producing, God has imputed or charged to their accounts, the very righteousness Christ rendered in perfect satisfaction to the law and justice of God, a righteousness they had no part in producing. This describes those who come to see God in truth and righteousness. They now see how God can be true to Himself – how He can be both a just God and a Savior in justifying ungodly sinners such as you and me.

3. Look briefly again at the passage from Jeremiah 32 which we also examined in last week's message. Beginning there in verse 38 we read, "***And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: ³⁹And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, ...***" Today I'm revisiting this passage to emphasize that these who will come to know God will do so with one heart, coming to Him one way. Recall I asked that you make a mental note of that qualifying language, "one heart" as we also found it so described Ezekiel 11 which I read a few moments ago.

In John, chapter 14 Christ said that He was the way, the truth, and the life and that no man cometh unto the Father but by Him. There are not many different paths that lead to this destination – to heaven's eternal glory. We must have been made one in Christ and all these who come to the Father, do so by virtue of Christ and His imputed righteousness alone! And with one heart they all come that one way.

- D. Turn from their Idols: Now if regeneration and conversion of a sinner is a (1) heart work whereby sinners come to (2) know God – (3) know Him in truth and righteousness – if they come to know something of which they previously were ignorant, then we know that when God becomes their God (in their minds and experience) that this also involves repentance – a turning away from having relied upon their dead works and from the former idols of their spiritually dead imaginations. I'm speaking of that which always accompanies God's gift of faith – the inseparable gift of repentance that shall be given to all these who come to know God in truth and righteousness as their God.

1. Ezekiel 36:31: Look again at Ezekiel 36 where we read in verse 25, "***Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.*** And from there He went on to talk about giving them a new heart and when we get to verse 31 God adds, "***Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.***" God's people shall repent of their former idolatry.
2. Ezekiel 37:23: Again, from Ezekiel 37, verse 23 we read, "***Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.***" See how this repentance from idols is integral to the realization of God's purpose to save them as He adds "...so <in this manner> shall they be my people and I will be their God."

3. II Corinthians 6:14-16 : And then finally in the New Testament, Paul in writing to the believers at Corinth shows us the eternal, spiritual application of the same words which had been directed toward the nation Israel as he borrows the language of Leviticus 26. Look with me at 2 Corinthians chapter 6, beginning at verse 14 where Paul writes, “***Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?*** <And here he is not forbidding all fellowship (we’re instructed to get along peaceably with all men if possible) but rather he is making reference to religious fellowship for he goes onto say...> ***and what communion hath light with darkness?*** ¹⁵***And what concord hath Christ with Belial?*** <BEE’-lee-uhl, speaking of Satan> ***or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?*** ¹⁶***And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.***” See how this turning from idolatry (wrong thoughts about who God is, what God is like as exposed by our wrong thoughts about how God saves sinners) – see how this experience of repentance is part of the identification of these people who shall be His and who shall know Him as their God.

- (a) No agreement with idols – They are marked as a people who have no religious agreement with the idols from which they now have been delivered, for in time they were enlightened under the Gospel of God’s grace, delivered out of darkness.
- (b) No fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness – And I think we can see here how this distinction between their former idolatry and their now having come to know the one true God is the distinction found in what we believe as it pertains to how God saves sinners – our gospel. Right now, all of us believe 1 of 2 things: We’ve been blessed to see that salvation is all of grace or else we continue in the false presumption that salvation is conditioned, at least in some degree, by some work of our hand – because we believed, or we repented – something other than or in addition to that which Christ alone accomplished for His people. It is either the religion of grace, wherein we see all of our hope for salvation in Christ’s Person and finished work or it is the idolatrous religion of works – that is, any other way other than by the one way, Christ and His imputed righteousness.

Salvation by works is a way of unrighteousness. Paul wrote of that to the Thessalonians as he warned the believers there to beware of Satan’s agents who would deceive them if possible with what he called the “deceivableness of unrighteousness.” That is, anything other than the one righteousness – the perfect satisfaction rendered unto God by the Lord Jesus Christ. Anything else is unrighteousness and one who has come to see His hope wrapped up solely in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, can no longer abide the religious fellowship of those who would dare to approach God for acceptance based on anything else. They’ve seen the deadly evil of such and have turned from that idolatry which casts such shame and reproach upon the very character of the one true God.

III. Closing:

A. And I will receive you: Now for any who come to experience this (1) heart work, whereby they come to (2) know God (3) in truth and righteousness so as to (4) repent of their former idolatry, of having dared to imagine that a holy God would save them based upon anything they as a sinner did or did not do, there is good news. Often it seems that when God begins to work with one of His own to draw them unto Himself, this question naturally surfaces: How do I know if I'm one of these, His people? The good news that assures these I've just described is this: That all of His people and only His people come to know the true God as He uniquely is revealed in the Person and work of Christ. So if you (in your heart of hearts) come to this Christ for all of your salvation He will receive you.

1. II Corinthians 6:16b-18: Had we continued reading there in 2 Corinthians 6, we would have seen this. Picking up where we left off at the end of verse 16, we read, "...***and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*** ¹⁷***Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,*** ¹⁸***And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.***"

2. John 6:37: Didn't Christ say the same of God's people, those whom the Father had given to Him? In John 6:37 Christ said, "***All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.***" Flee to this Christ. He will receive you! That's the evidence justified sinners have that they are His people

B. II Samuel 23:5: I believe that's key to understanding what King David was saying when he referred to his being blessed in that everlasting covenant of grace. In Samuel 23:5 we read of him saying, "***Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.***" David is saying that although it hasn't grown yet, (i.e. - although the promised Messiah has yet to come and fulfill the terms of this everlasting covenant of grace), he knows that it is ordered in all things and sure, because he has already experienced the fruit and effect of what His Savior would in time purchase for him. He, like all of God's chosen people in Christ (whether they lived before or after the cross) – they come to see as David had that Christ is all their salvation and all their desire! Does your hope lie there?

- C. In this series, we've examined over and over again God's clear declaration to some that, "Ye shall be my people and I will be your God." And recall in the first segment of this series our review of those words that have such a similar ring to them, the words voiced by Ruth to Naomi saying, "...*thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:*"
- D. Is this the resolve of your heart? Consider this: If King David were alive today, could you with the sincere conviction of your own heart truthfully say those same words to King David, just as Ruth said them to Naomi, "Your people shall be mine, your God mine." Could you sincerely say to David, "Why, David I've got the same covenant you have, ordered in all things and sure and I too know it is so because now Christ is also all my salvation and all my desire. Nothing else will do for me either."

If you have been so blessed by God to know Him in truth and righteousness so that you now identify with King David, with Ruth, with every believer in every generation in their identification with none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, seeing the necessity and therefore the reality of being made one with Him, needing (and so having) His very righteousness as your own – then rejoice for this only describes those with this new heart who come to Christ by God's irresistible grace.

And as I noted last week, all who believe God's gospel have the evidence thereby to say with assurance, "Why, He had been talking to me all along when He said, "You shall be my people and I will be your God!""

God has a people and He, the one true God, is their God – "Theirs in truth and righteousness" – "His People and Their God!"

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.