

GOD'S SALVATION OF ISRAEL
ZECHARIAH 12:10-14

John Piper writes about the unlikely conversion of a sinner —

A great testimony to the power of the Word to beget and sustain faith is found in the story of the conversion and execution of **Tokichi Ishii**—a man who was hanged for murder in Tokyo in 1918. He had been sent to prison more than twenty times and was known for being as cruel as a tiger. On one occasion, after attacking a prison official, he was gagged and bound, and his body was suspended in such a way that his toes barely reached the ground. But he stubbornly refused to say he was sorry for what he had done.



Just before being sentenced to death, Tokichi was sent a New Testament by two Christian missionaries, Miss West and Miss McDonald. After a visit from Miss West, he began to read the story of Jesus' trial and execution. His attention was riveted by the sentence "Jesus said, 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.'" This sentence transformed his life.

I stopped: I was stabbed to the heart, as if by a five-inch nail. What did the verse reveal to me? Shall I call it the love of the heart of Christ? Shall I call it His compassion? I do not know what to call it. **I only know that with an unspeakably grateful heart I believed.**

Tokichi was sentenced to death and accepted it as "the fair, impartial judgment of God." Now the Word that had brought him to faith also sustained his faith in an amazing way. Near the end, Miss West directed him to the words of 2 Corinthians 6:8–10 concerning the suffering of the righteous. The words moved him very deeply, and he wrote:

"As sorrowing, yet always rejoicing." People will say that I must have a very sorrowful heart because I am daily awaiting the execution of the death sentence. This is not the case. I feel neither sorrow nor distress nor any pain. Locked up in a prison cell six feet by nine in size **I am infinitely happier than I was** in the days of my sinning when I did not know God. Day and night...I am talking with Jesus Christ....

The Word sustained him to the end, and on the scaffold, with great humility and earnestness, he uttered his last words, "My soul, purified, today returns to the City of God." [Desiring God, 147-8.]

We love stories of salvation that seem unlikely and improbable. We love the "only God could do that" story (and some of you have experienced that kind of salvation yourselves...).

Of all the "only God could do that" stories, one stands above the rest. It is the story of Israel's salvation. We know that God has promised to save Israel — that happened as far back as Genesis 12. Yet even then, it was an improbable story. Remember what Moses said?

"The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Dt. 7:7–8).

Why would God save Israel? If the story of Israel can be summarized in one sentence it is that while Israel was chosen by God, Israel has always been rebellious against God — “You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day I knew you” (said Moses, Dt. 9:24). Yet God promised to save Israel, and save her, He will. That’s the promise of Zechariah 12:10-14...

IN HIS SOVEREIGNTY, GOD WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE SPIRITUALLY.

God *will* save His people physically (vv. 1-9), but in a far greater act of grace, He will also save His people spiritually — the entire nation will repent and turn to faith in the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and God will forever have this redeemed people for His own (completely fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant, and all the other covenants that flow from it). How will God save Israel? Zechariah points to three provisions for Israel’s salvation...

1. **God Will Save Israel (v 10a)**
2. **God Will Save Israel by THE SPIRIT (v. 10b)**
3. **God Will Save Israel through FAITH and REPENTANCE (vv. 10c-14)**
 - ✓ The NATURE of faith (v. 10c)
 - ✓ The DEPTH of repentance (vv. 10c-11)
 - ✓ The BREADTH of repentance (vv. 12-14)

The hope of God’s Salvation —

1. God Will Save Israel (v 10a)

- Zechariah's prophecy has spoken frequently of judgment on Israel (1:12; 7:12-13; 10:2-3; 11:4, 14-16).
 - ✓ Some of that judgment was in the past, some was still in the future.
 - ✓ All of it demonstrates God's commitment to Dt. 28-30 — to discipline His chosen nation.
 - ✓ The people suffered from ungodly and oppressive leadership (10:2-3a; 11:5), they rejected God's benevolent rule (11:8b), and they experienced repeated discipline (like the 70 years in Babylon from which they had just returned).
 - ✓ Yet God has not violated or broken His own covenant with Israel. He would preserve them physically (8:3-8, 20-21; 9:9-10, 13, 16-17; 10:8-10). And 12:2-9 is a great expression of that provision.
 - ✓ But even more than that, God will also preserve His people spiritually — and save the nation as an entity (all the citizens repent and have faith in the Messiah). We have already seen indications of this salvation (2:10, 12; 3:3-5, 9; 6:12-13; 10:6). But 12:10 begins an extensive demonstration of God's provision of spiritual life for the nation (through 13:1, 9)
- Zechariah 12 emphasizes the work of God for His people — ***I will...*** (vv. 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10). The final ***I will*** of the chapter is 12:10 — ***I will pour out on the house of David...***
 - ✓ These declarations are a constant reminder of the provision of God for Israel. All that they have as returnees from Babylon and all that they will have in the Kingdom is not by their might, but by the power and provision of God. He is acting for His people (as He always does).
 - ✓ What is significant is who is receiving the action of God —
 - ***The house of David*** — this phrase is used 25x in the OT and generally refers to the Davidic line that will rule over the nation (1 Kg. 12:19-20, 26) in fulfillment of God's promise (2 Sam. 7:16).
 - ***The inhabitants of Jerusalem*** — the citizens; the "average Israelite."
 - Combined, the two terms refer to all of God's people — from the greatest to the least (leaders and commoners), they will all experience and receive God's grace (for salvation); no favorites.
 - ✓ YHWH is acting for His people. The ***LORD of hosts*** (armies; a key name in book) is defending His people physically, but YHWH of hosts is also sovereign to bring about the conversion of not just some people, but all His people so that the nation will repent and be saved. YHWH *will* do that.
 - ✓ "In the remainder of Zechariah 12 [and 13], the prophet sets forth, as nowhere else in Scripture with such vividness and power, the conversion of Israel to the Lord. Nothing in Israel's past history can be interpreted as the fulfillment of this passage." [Feinberg, *MP*, 332.]
 - ✓ This chapter is also a reminder and affirmation that salvation for Israel, as it is with all people, is always primarily the act of God — it's monergistic, God acting alone to save us (Tt. 3:5).
 - ✓ God will save Israel. But how will He do that? He does it by the Spirit...

2. God Will Save Israel by THE SPIRIT (v. 10b)

- What God will do for Israel is that He will ***pour out the Spirit***.
 - ✓ To “pour out” something did not mean a light drizzle — it was a sudden and massive spillage. It’s like standing under a water fall and being overwhelmed suddenly by water.
 - ✓ The word ***Spirit*** could be either a proper noun (Holy Spirit) or generic noun (man’s spirit). It is probably Holy Spirit because of the context of the passage is salvation and because it is more likely that God is explaining what the Spirit is like (gracious) rather than what His people will be like.
 - ✓ Additionally, consider how the Spirit is the object of this act of God in several other key passages:
 - **Ezekiel 39:29** — This is at the end of a long section on the battle with Gog and Magog (which likely will take place in the first half of the Tribulation, 38:8, 11). When those nations are defeated, God looks toward the end of the Tribulation and the redemption of Israel and the pouring out of the Spirit of God as a sign of their repentance.
 - **Joel 2:28-29** — in the MK (that day; 2:11, 31), God will provide the Spirit for ***all mankind***. It is the fulfillment of the New Covenant (**Jer. 31:31ff**). We already have this in part (the gift of the Holy Spirit, **Acts 2:16ff**), but not in full. The Spirit is the down payment for this day and eternity.
 - ✓ So when God says He will overwhelm His people with the Spirit, He is speaking of spiritual salvation, which is what He addresses next...
- What the Spirit produces/gives is a manifestation of who He is — He is ***the Spirit of grace and supplication*** — He is the Spirit who gives grace and gives supplication (pleading).
 - ✓ The word ***grace*** also includes the idea of commiseration — or perhaps pity. God’s Spirit is One who observes the weakness and sinfulness of mankind and responds by giving them grace (to believe). There is no merit in the Israelites for salvation; it’s all God’s kind work (e.g., Heb. 10:29).
 - ✓ He also is a Spirit of ***supplication***. That is, He produces supplication/requests in God’s people. He makes them to ask for salvation (because no one seeks [Rom. 3] or would ask on His own).
 - ✓ Similarly, Jesus says that He will send the Spirit who will convict (**John 16:8**), and when He convicts, it will result in people seeking salvation.
 - ✓ What is interesting about these two words, is that they come from the same root word, “grace,” suggesting that when the Spirit produces the request for grace, He will also give the grace they desire.
 - ✓ ***Grace*** is the blessing that comes only from God, and ***supplication*** is man’s pleading for grace (which is also a gift of the Spirit). God gives the longing for Him and then He provides the fulfillment of that longing.
 - ✓ [This is why we share testimonies at baptism and membership — we want to hear the stories of how God has acted for us in magnanimous grace. This is how people have always been saved and how they always will be saved — even at the end of the age, for Israel. Nothing changes.]

3. God Will Save Israel through FAITH and REPENTANCE (vv. 10c-14)

- Israel is saved *by the Spirit and His grace* (grace is what saves). How is grace received? It is received through two primary acts — faith and repentance (they are the mechanism by which grace acts to save).

- **The NATURE of faith (v. 10c)**

- ✓ The nature of faith is to believe in one's inadequacy to save himself and to look to God for help.
- ✓ Saving faith says, "I can't...You must!" (It's always been that way.)
- ✓ So God says about Israel in the last day — ***they will look on Me***. That is, they will be attentive to Him and look confidently at Him for their salvation, to receive His grace.
- ✓ What is shocking about this phrase is that they are looking at the One ***whom they have pierced***.
 - The word **pierced** doesn't necessitate a crucifixion, but it is a violent act and is often used with the idea of retribution.
 - How can it be that YHWH is pierced? Those hearing Zechariah's words had to be shocked and even scandalized — "How does he dare say that about YHWH?!"
- ✓ While it wouldn't be fully understood until Christ's death, there is a hint in the next phrase when God changes the pronoun from **Me** to **Him** — from the first-person Father, to the second person Christ.
- ✓ While He uses a different verb for "pierced," Isaiah affirms the same reality in **Is. 53:5** (**Jn. 19:37**).
- ✓ The second person of the Trinity, the God-Man, the suffering servant is the One who was pierced, and if there will be salvation, Israel will (and we must also) look to Him (**Jn. 3:14-15**; cf. Num. 21:9).

- **The DEPTH of repentance (vv. 10c-11)**

- ✓ The rest of this passage is saturated with the idea of grief and regret for sin: **mourn** is used 5x and **bitter weeping** 2x. They are words of sorrow and lament.
- ✓ For what are they grieving? They are guilty of **piercing** (and killing) the promised Messiah.
- ✓ He came as the Messiah (Zech. 9:9) and they rejected and killed Him. And one day (soon?) the people of Israel (from the King to the common man) will recognize the guilt and repent in grief.
- ✓ It is no superficial grief — it is like the grief over the death **of a firstborn**.
 - It is always a particularly harsh grief to bury a child — an "out of order" death. (Some of you have walked through those days and you know that particular bitterness.)
 - In the OT, it was even more than that because the **firstborn** carried the legacy of the family; because the one who would carry out family responsibility was taken away, the death of a firstborn was "catastrophic." Even more, it was considered a dishonor and curse.
- ✓ The grief is particularly horrific for Israel because Jesus was the **firstborn of creation** (Col. 1:15) and He not only died, but **they killed Him**. How deep will their grief go? (Verse 11 tells us.)
 - **In that day** is another reference to the Day of the Lord (Armageddon and Millennial Kingdom).

- It will be ***like the mourning of Hadadrimmon***. This is probably the name of a place — a village near Jezreel in the Megiddo Valley, which is where Pharaoh Neco killed King Josiah. What was particularly grievous for the nation then was that Josiah was such a great king (2 Kg. 23:25; cf. the lament of the people 2 Chron. 35:22-25).
- But the lament in these verses is even greater — not the loss of another, but the grief of their own sin and culpability. They sinned in rejecting Christ, and they are broken-hearted (Ps. 32).
- That's why Feinberg said, "It is not so much a mourning for the act committed, but for the Person involved." [Feinberg, *GR*, 180.] They are horrified that they acted against YHWH.
- ✓ What is important to observe is that this grief is a godly sorrow for sin. Not all grief is profitable. Regret can sometimes (often) be an exercise in self-pity. But here it does what it should do — makes the one grieving turn to God for salvation (Mt. 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 7:9-11).

- **The BREADTH of repentance (vv. 12-14)**

- ✓ Who will grieve and repent? ***Everyone***. From the most influential to the least. Every socio-economic class. Every family. Every individual in every family.
- ***Every family*** is every clan — extended family. The word ***family*** is repeated so it has the idea that they will be saved "family by family."
- ***The family of the house of David*** — that is, the King and rulers; the royalty of Israel.
- ***The house of Nathan*** — Nathan was the third son born to David in Jerusalem; originally the line of rulership went through Solomon, but one of the final kings of Judah, Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) was cursed, so the line then went through Nathan, giving his descendants the legal right to rule was passed (Mary descended from him). So to identify both lines of David is to say that all the rulers of the nation will repent.
- ***The family of Levi*** refers to all who were in the priestly line — all the religious leaders. He identifies ***the family of the Shimeites***. The priestly obligation went through Kohath, not Gershon, who was Shimei's father; so they were descendants of Levi, but not in priestly line. As with the kings, God is saying that everyone associate with the priesthood will repent.
- ***And their wives*** is to say that while the families are grieving and repenting, each individual is also repenting — including the wives. Every individual will be overwhelmed by grief and wanting to individually be reconciled to God.
- ***All the families*** (v. 14) — royalty, religious, and "ordinary" — the repentance is extensive. Whether great or small, prominent or unknown, every family will repent.
 - ... They all repent because they all are guilty of sin (in general), and because all the royalty, priests, and individuals were guilty in the death of Christ.
 - ... (Individuals will also repent and the inference is that most individuals will; can't be dogmatic that all will, but enough will repent that we can say "all Israel will be saved.")
- ✓ The rejection of God as King (1 Sam. 8) & Christ as Messiah was widespread. So will be repentance.

- ✓ To talk about the repentance of the nation in such a comprehensive way is to tell us that one day, the entire nation will be saved, and all the covenants made by God will be fulfilled. While Israel is God's chosen people, one day all the people Israel will be saved ([Rom. 11:25-32](#)).
- ✓ This is so hopeful — God's salvation plan for Israel and the nations will be accomplished. We tend to anticipate "every tribe and tongue and people and nation." Don't forget Israel. She is first.

The hope of God's Salvation —

- ***God still saves.*** The God who promised to save Israel in the OT and will save them yet is still the same.
 - ✓ God is still gracious. He was gracious to Israel to take her back to the land in Zechariah's day; He was gracious to send Christ as her Messiah, and *He will be gracious* to save Israel at the end.
 - ✓ God still stimulates our prayers. God still hears our prayers and responds to save.
 - ✓ God is a prayer hearing (and answering) God. His Spirit provokes our requests so He can answer.
- ***God's Spirit still functions and still saves.***
 - ✓ His power has not been emptied. He is still sufficient for salvation.
 - ✓ Your father, daughter, cousin, co-worker, neighbor *is not* beyond the power or authority of the Spirit to save. There is still time. Who knows what God will do?
- ***God still saves by faith and repentance.***
 - ✓ The means of salvation in the OT was faith and repentance. The means of salvation in Jesus' day was faith and repentance. The means of salvation today is faith and repentance. Nothing has changed. If anyone is saved it is because He believes in Christ and repents for his sin in sorrow.
 - ✓ To have faith means that we believe that only Jesus can forgive us of our sins and make us worthy to stand before God and claim righteousness. The standard God demands is perfect righteousness. And no man is righteous except the God-Man, Jesus Christ. If we will be saved, we must believe that He has taken away our unrighteousness (our sin) and imputed His righteousness (His perfection) to us. You cannot do anything to receive it; you can only take what He gives by simple trust in Him.
 - ✓ To repent means to have regret and sorrow for your sin — it means that by coming to Christ we are saying, "I am done with my sin, I hate my sin, and I want Jesus to change me so that I stop sinning." And that is exactly what He will do.
 - ✓ This was how God saved in the OT, and that is how He still saves today. If you are not saved and want to be saved (from God's wrath and from your sin), you must have faith and repent. Do you?
- ***God is faithful and trustworthy — even in a broken world.*** He is not inhibited by any power in the world or any rebel against Him. He will judge every sin and sinner (12:2-9) and He will save the most resistant heart in Israel. He will be trustworthy then; He is trustworthy now.