

CHAPTER 10

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the foregoing chapter — to encourage the Jews that had returned with hopes that though they had been under divine rebukes for their negligence in rebuilding the temple, and were now surrounded with enemies and dangers, yet God would do them good, and make them prosperous at home and victorious abroad. Now,

I. They are here directed to eye the great God in all events that concerned them, and, both in the evils they suffered and in the comforts they desired, to acknowledge his hand (v. 1-4).

II. They are encouraged to expect strength and success from him in all their struggles with the enemies of their church and state, and to hope that the issue would be glorious at last (v. 5-12).

ZECHARIAH 10:1-4

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO TRUST IN GOD

Gracious things and glorious ones, very glorious and very gracious, were promised to this poor afflicted people in the foregoing chapter; now here God intimates to them that he will *for these things be enquired of* by them, and that he expects they should acknowledge him in all their ways and in all his ways towards them — and not idols that were rivals with him for their respects.

I. The prophet directs them to apply to God by prayer for rain in the season thereof. He had promised, in the close of the foregoing chapter, that there should be great plenty of corn and wine, whereas for several years, by reason of unseasonable weather, there had been great scarcity of both; but the earth will not yield its fruits unless the heavens water it, and therefore they must look up to God for the *dew of heaven*, in order to the fatness and fruitfulness of the earth (v. 1): “*Ask you of the Lord rain. Do not pray to the clouds, nor to the stars, for rain, but to the Lord; for he it is that hears the heavens, when they hear the earth,*” ~~212~~ Hosea 2:21.

Seasonable rain is a great mercy, which we must *ask of God, rain in the time of the latter rain*, when there is most need of it. The former rain fell at the seed-time, in autumn, the latter fell in the spring, between March and May, which brought the corn to an ear and filled it. If either of these rains failed, it was very bad with that land; for from the end of May to September they never had any rain at all. Jerome, who lived in Judea, says that he never saw any rain there in June or July. They are directed to ask for it *in the time* when it used to come. Note, We must, in our prayers, dutifully attend the course of Providence; we must ask for mercies in their proper time, and not expect that God should go out of his usual way and method for us. But, since sometimes God denied rain in the usual time as a token of his displeasure, they must pray for it then as a token of his favour, and they shall not pray in vain. *Ask and it shall be given you. So the Lord shall make bright clouds* (which, though they are without rain themselves, are yet presages of rain) — *lightnings* (so the margin reads it), for *he maketh lightnings for the rain*. He will *give them showers of rain* in great abundance, and so give to *every one grass in the field*; for God is universally good, and *makes his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust*.

II. He shows them the folly of making their addresses to idols as their fathers had done (v. 2): *The idols have spoken vanity*; the teraphim, which they courted and consulted in their distress, were so far from being able to command rain for them that they could not so much as tell them when they should have rain. They pretended to promise them rain at such a time, but it did not come. *The diviners*, who were the prophets of those idols, *have seen a lie* (their visions were all a cheat and a sham); and *they have told false dreams*, such as the event did not answer, which proved that they were not from God. Thus they *comforted in vain* those that consulted the lying oracles; all the *vanities of the heathen* put together could not *give rain*, ²⁴⁴²Jeremiah 14:22. Yet this was not the worst of it; they not only got nothing by the false gods, but they lost the favour of the true God, for *therefore they went their way into captivity as a flock driven into the fold*, and *they were troubled* with one vexation after another, as scattered sheep are, *because there was no shepherd*, no prince to rule them, no priest to intercede for them, none to take care of them and keep them together. Those that wandered after strange gods were made to wander, into strange nations.

III. He shows them the hand of God in all the events that concerned them, both those that made against them and those that made for them, v. 3. Let them consider,

1. When every thing went cross it was God that walked contrary to them (v. 3): “*My anger was kindled against the shepherds* that should have fed the flock, but neglected it, and starved it. I was displeased at the wicked magistrates and ministers, the idol-shepherds.” The captivity in Babylon was a token of God’s anger against them; in it likewise he *punished the goats*, those of the flock that were filthy and mischievous; they were set on the left hand, to go away into punishment. Though the body of the nation suffered in the captivity, yet it was only the goats and the shepherds that God was angry with, and that he punished; the same affliction to others came from the love of God, and was but a fatherly chastisement, which to them came from his wrath, and was a judicial punishment.

2. When things began to change for the better it was God that gave them the happy turn. “He has now *visited his flock* with favour, to enquire after them, and provides what he finds proper for them, and he has made them *as his goodly horse in the battle*, has beautified them, taken care of them, managed and made use of them, as a man does the horse he rides on, has made them valuable in themselves and formidable to those about them, *as his goodly horse.*” It is God that makes us what we are, and it is with us as he appoints.

IV. He shows them that every creature is to them what God makes it to be (v. 4): *Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nails.*

1. All the power that was engaged against them was from God. *Out of him* came all the combined force of their enemies; every *oppressor together* (and the oppressors of Israel were not a few) did but what his hand and his counsel determined before to be done; nor could they have had such power against them unless it had been given them from above.

2. All the power likewise that was engaged for them was derived from him and depended on him. Out of him came forth *the corner-stone* of the building, the power of magistrates, which keeps the several parts of the state together. Princes are often called the *corners of the people*, as ¹Samuel 14:38, marg. Out of him came forth *the nail* that fixed the state, the *nail in the sure place* (¹Isaiah 22:23), the *nail in his holy place*, ⁸Ezra 9:8. Out of him came forth *the battle-bow*, the military power, and

out of him *every oppressor*, or exactor, that had the civil power in his hand; and therefore to God, the fountain of power, we must always have an eye, and see every man's judgment proceeding from him.

3015 ZECHARIAH 10:5-12

ENCOURAGING PROSPECTS

Here are divers precious promises made to the people of God, which look further than to the state of the Jews in the latter days of their church, and have certain reference to the spiritual Israel of God, the gospel-church, and all true believers.

I. They shall have God's favour and presence, and shall be owned and accepted of him. This is the foundation of all the rest: *The Lord is with them*, v. 5. He espouses their cause, takes their part, is on their side; and, if he be for them, who can be against them? Again (v. 6), *I have mercy upon them*. All their dignity and joy are owing purely to God's mercy; and mercy, as it supposes misery, so it excludes merit. They had been cast off, the effect of which could not but be misery; they had been justly cast off, and therefore could pretend to merit nothing at God's hand but wrath and the curse; yet it is promised, *They shall be as though I had not cast them off*. The transgressions of their fathers, for which they had been rejected, shall not only not be visited upon them, but shall not be so much as remembered against them. God will be as perfectly reconciled to them as if he had never contended with them, and the falling out of these lovers shall rather be the renewing than the weakening of love. They shall have such a full assurance of God's being reconciled to them, and upon that shall be so well reconciled to themselves, that they shall be as easy as if they had never been cast off; and their condition, after their restoration to the divine favour, shall be so very happy that there shall not remain the least scar from the wounds which were given them by their being cast off. Such favour does God show to returning repenting sinners, who were by nature at a distance, and children of wrath; such fellowship are they admitted into, and such freedom does he use with them, that they are *as though they had never been cast off*.

1. The covenant they are admitted into is the same that ever it was: *I am the Lord their God*, according to the original contract, the covenant made with their fathers.

2. The communion they are admitted into is the same that ever it was: *I will hear them*. They shall be as welcome as ever to speak to him, and as sure as ever to receive from him an answer of peace; for, as he never did, so he never will, say to Jacob's seed, *Seek you me in vain*.

II. They shall be victorious over their enemies, that would draw them from either their duty to God or their comfort in God (v. 5): *They shall be as mighty men*, that are both strong in body and bold in spirit, men of vigour, men of valour, effective men. *Those of Ephraim*, as well as those of Judah, shall be *like a mighty man* (v. 7), that dares to go about a difficult enterprise and is able to go through with it. They shall, as mighty men, *tread down their enemies in the battle*, as the dirt that is thrown out of the houses is trodden with other dirt *in the mire of the streets*. And *they shall therefore fight, because the Lord is with them*. Some would argue that they may *therefore* sit still, and do nothing, because the Lord is with them, who can and will do all. No; God's gracious presence with us to help us must not supersede, but quicken and animate, our endeavours to help ourselves; and we must therefore *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*, because *it is God that works in us both to will and to do*. They shall fight with readiness and resolution because, if God be with them, they are sure to be conquerors, more than conquerors. For then *the riders on horses shall be confounded*. The cavalry of the enemies shall be routed, and put into disorder, by the infantry of the Jews. The preachers of the gospel of Christ went forth to war a good warfare; they charged bravely, because God was with them; and the *riders on horses* that opposed them *were confounded*, for God chose the *weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty*. But whence have they all this might? How come they to be so able, so active? It is in the Lord, and in the power of his might, that they are so (v. 6): *I will strengthen the house of Judah, and so I will save the house of Joseph*. Note, God saves us by strengthening us, and works out our happiness by working in us to do our duty. And thus we are engaged to the utmost diligence in using the strength God gives us; and yet, when all is done, God must have the glory of all. God is our strength, and so becomes both our song and our salvation.

III. Those of them that are dispersed shall be gathered together into one body (v. 6): *I will bring them again to place them*, bring them from other lands to place them in their own land. This was a token of their being perfectly restored to all their other ancient privileges — they shall be restored to the possession of their own land. This was fulfilled when the *children of God that were scattered abroad* were by faith in Christ incorporated in the gospel-church, and Jews and Gentiles became *one fold*, ^{<806>}John 10:16. In order to this (v. 8) *I will hiss for them*, or, rather, *whistle for them*, as the shepherd with his pipe calls his sheep together, that *know his voice*; and so *I will gather them*. The preaching of the gospel was, as it were, God's hissing for souls to come to Jesus Christ, his calling in his scattered sheep to the green pastures. *I will gather them, for I have redeemed them*. Note, Those whom Christ has redeemed by his blood God will gather by his grace, as a *hen gathers her brood under her wings*. This promise is enlarged upon v. 10, *I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt*. Some think this was literally fulfilled when Ptolemaeus Philadelphus king of Egypt sent 120,000 Jews out of his country into their own land, as was the promise of gathering them out of Assyria by Alexander the son of Antiochus Epiphanes. But it has its spiritual accomplishment in the gathering in of precious souls out of a bondage worse than that in Egypt or Assyria, and the bringing of them into the glorious liberties of the children of God and their enjoyments, which are as the beautiful fruitful pastures in *the land of Gilead and Lebanon*. All the land of promise is theirs, even Gilead, the utmost border of it eastward, and Lebanon, the utmost border northward. But how shall this be? How shall a people so dispersed be got together? How shall those that are set at such a distance from their own country be brought to it again? It is true the difficulties seem insuperable, but they shall be got over as easily, as effectually as those that lay in the way of their deliverance out of Egypt and their entrance into Canaan: *He shall pass through the sea with affliction*, as of old through the Red Sea, to the sore affliction of Pharaoh and his hosts, or to the sore affliction of the sea, the waves whereof *he shall smite*, so that it shall be *driven back*, as when *the sea saw and fled*, ^{<808>}Psalms 114:3. And *all the deeps of the river* (all the rivers, though ever so deep) *shall dry up*, as Jordan did, to make way for Israel's passage into that good land which God had given them. Does *the pride of Assyria* stand in the way of their deliverance? He shall give check to it who sets bounds to the *proud waves of the sea*, and it *shall be brought down*. Does the sceptre of Egypt oppose it? That shall *depart away*, so that it shall not be

able to obstruct the gathering in of God's Israel when his time shall come for the doing of it. When the gospel-church was to be gathered out of all nations by the preaching of the gospel great opposition was given to it by the enraged combined powers of earth and hell. Insurmountable difficulties seemed to be in the way of it. But, by a divine power going along with the doctrine of Christ, it became *mighty to the pulling down of strong holds*, and the conversion and salvation of thousands. Then the sea fled, and Jordan was *driven back at the presence of the Lord*.

IV. They shall greatly multiply, and the church, that new world, shall be replenished (v. 8): *They shall increase as they have increased* formerly in Egypt, and great additions shall be made to their numbers, as in the days of David and Solomon. When God gathers his redeemed ones to himself they shall help to gather in others with them, and their motion homeward shall be like that of a snow-ball. *Crescit eundo — The further it goes the larger it grows by accretion. I will gather them, and they shall increase.* Note, The church of Christ is a growing body, as long as it is in the present state of minority, till it comes *to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*. There are added to it *daily such as shall be saved*.

1. It shall spread to distant places. It shall fill Canaan, even to the lands of Gilead and Lebanon, so that no more place, no more room, shall be found for it there, v. 10. *In Judah only God had been known, and his name was great in Israel only*; here only he revealed his *statutes and judgments*. But in gospel-times that place shall be much too strait; the church's tent must be enlarged, and its *cords lengthened*: *Then I will sow them among the people*, v. 9. Their scattering shall be like the scattering of seed in the ground, not to bury it, but to increase it, that it may bring forth much fruit. The Jews are said to be dispersed *into every nation under heaven* (~~415~~ Acts 2:5); and, as it was their troubles that dispersed some of them, so perhaps others transplanted themselves into colonies because the land of Israel was too strait for them; and many were natives of other nations, but proselyted to the Jewish religion. Now these were *sown among the people*, ~~413~~ Hosea 2:23. And this contributed very much to the spreading of the gospel. The Jews that came from all parts to worship at Jerusalem fetched thence the gospel light and fire to their own countries, as those Acts 2, and the eunuch, Acts 8. And their own synagogues in the several cities of the Gentiles were the first receptacles of the apostles and their preaching, wherever they came. Thus when God *sowed them among the people*, that they might not get hurt by the Gentiles, but do good to them, he took care

that they should *remember him*, and make mention of his name *in far countries*; and, by keeping up the knowledge of God among them as he had revealed himself in the Old Testament, they would be the more ready to admit the knowledge of Christ as he has revealed himself in the New Testament.

2. It shall last to future *ages*. The church shall not be *res unius aetatis* — a *temporary thing*, but a seed in it shall *serve the Lord*, v. 7. *Yea, their children shall see it and be glad*; and *they shall live with their children, and turn again*, v. 9. Converts to Christ shall have their children about them, whom they shall teach the knowledge of the Lord, and bring with them when they turn again to the holy land and the way of holiness. It was said to those to whom the gospel was first preached, *The promise is to you and to your children*, ⁴¹⁹Acts 2:39. They shall be *so sown among the people* as never to be extirpated. Christ's family upon earth shall never be extinct, nor his purchased possession lost for want of heirs.

V. God himself will be both their strength and their song.

1. In him they shall be comforted, and shall have abundant satisfaction (v. 7): *Their heart shall rejoice as through wine*; for Christ's love, which is their joy, is *better than wine*. They shall be *like a mighty man*, and *their heart shall rejoice*. When we resolutely resist, and so overcome, our spiritual enemies, then our hearts shall rejoice. But we ruin our own joy if our resistance be feeble and we yield to the temptations of Satan. *Their heart shall rejoice*, and then they shall be as a *mighty man*; for the *joy of the Lord* will be *our strength*. And with their graces their joys shall be propagated: *Their children shall see it and be glad, and their hearts also shall rejoice in the Lord*. It is good to acquaint children betimes with the delights of religion, and to make the services of it as pleasant as may be to them, that, learning betimes to rejoice in the Lord, they may with purpose of heart cleave to him.

2. By him they shall be carried on with vigour, and enlargement of heart, in his service (v. 12): *I will strengthen them in the Lord*, strengthen them for their walk and work, as well as for their warfare. It is the God of Israel that *gives strength and power unto his people*, that strengthens all their powers and faculties for spiritual performances, above what they are by nature and against what they are by the corruption of nature. Now observe,

(1.) How they are thus enabled and invigorated for their duty: *I the Lord will strengthen them in the Lord, in the Messiah, who is Jehovah our strength, as well as Jehovah our righteousness.* Strength is treasured up for us in Christ, and from him it is communicated to us. It is *through Christ strengthening us that we can do all things, and without him we can do nothing.* His strength is commanded him for this purpose, ~~1883~~ Psalm 68:28.

(2.) What good use they shall make of this strength given unto them: *They shall walk up and down in his name.* If God strengthen us, we must bestir ourselves, must *walk up and down* in all the duties of the Christian life, must be active and busy in the work of God, must walk up and down as industrious men do, losing no time, and letting slip no opportunity. But still we must *walk up and down in the name of Christ*, must do all by warrant from him and in dependence on him, with an eye to his word as our rule and his glory as our end. To us to live must be Christ; and, *whatever we do in word or deed, we must do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, that we receive not the strengthening grace of God in vain. See ~~1817~~ Psalm 80:17, 18.