

Future Salvation: But About Now

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Zechariah 9, 9, and I'll read through chapter 10 and verse 2. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem!

! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war horses from Jerusalem.

And the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth.

As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit. Return to your fortress, O prisoners of hope.

Even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you. I will bend Judah's, I bend my bow, and fill it with Ephraim. I will rouse your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and make you like a warrior's sword.

[1:10] Then the Lord will appear over them. His arrow will flash like lightning. The sovereign Lord will sound the trumpet. He will march in the storms of the south, and the Lord Almighty will shield them.

They will destroy and overcome with sling stones. They will drink and roar as with wine. They will be full like a bowl used for sprinkling the corners of the altar.

The Lord their God will save them on that day as the flock of his people. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown. How attractive and beautiful they will be.

Grain will make the young men thrive, and new wine the young women. Ask the Lord for rain in the springtime. It is the Lord who makes the storm clouds.

He gives showers of rain to men, and plants of the field to everyone. The idols speak deceit. Diviners see visions that lie.

[2:11] They tell dreams that are false. They give comfort in vain. Therefore the people wander like sheep, oppressed for lack of a shepherd. Lord. Well, an integral part of our life as a family is we have meetings, morning meetings, where we talk about what we're going to do that day and what the kids have to do and things we might do later on.

And this is what's coming up today, and this is what's going to happen in a few days. And then we talk about, okay, so now what does that mean we need to do now?

Right? Well, last week in Zechariah 9, the Lord has been telling Israel of things that he is going to do in the future for them. He's going to make them strong.

He's going to come and fight for them. He's going to bring them into this place of prosperity and health. I heard someone once say that the health and wealth gospel is right about the health and the wealth.

They're just not right about the time. They are right. God is promising health and wealth and prosperity, but he's not promising it to us now.

[3:36] How attractive and beautiful they will be. So God promises to do what exercise and all amount of plastic surgery can never do.

He's going to make us forever young, forever whole on the inside, forever whole on the outside. But that is then.

Remember Peter's words in 1 Peter 5.10, And the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast.

To him be the power forever and ever. Amen. So there's this order to it. Suffering now, and steadfast, firm, strong later.

Well, Zechariah 9 was a lot about things to come. So for little Judah, the coming of the king, riding gentle, riding on a donkey, coming to them, that was in the future.

[4:42] And we can relate to that because that's very much of how we feel. He has come once, but our salvation isn't done. We're still looking for another coming. We're looking for the king to come in his final appearance, to receive full salvation, and only together with them will this Zechariah 9 promise come true in all of its fullness.

And so now we wait. But the question is, is what about now? What about now? Future salvation is good.

I'm looking forward to that. That gives me hope. That helps me continue on. But what about now?

What about the present problems? What about the present needs that I have?

So future salvation is good, but God, what about now? And so in Zechariah's day, that was a grand vision of what was going to happen.

They were looking forward to their Messiah coming, but when they looked out their windows, when they looked out at their present life, when they looked in their refrigerators, so to speak, what did they see?

[5:57] Well, they saw that they're barely getting by. There's not enough crops. They need rain. There's hungry mouths to feed and not enough food to go around. And so you can feel with them.

You can relate to them. When you say future salvation is great, but I have present needs now. Lord, what about them? We need food now.

What do we need to know to live now? How do we live in these present days? That's the question that presses us here. That's them. That's me.

That's you. Because each one of us has things that we need now. That we are facing now.

Challenges now. Trials now.

Things that make us afraid now. Where we need God's present grace in our lives. And so there's things that you can't do. That you need God to act.

[6:58] Can you think of those things? I can think of just preparing this. I thought of several things in my life where it was, Lord, these things, I need you to act now.

Well, in Zechariah's day, the farmer could plow the field. He could plant the seeds. But he couldn't send the rain. And all the plowing and all the planting you wanted to do, if you did not get the rain, you did not get the crops.

You need rain. And I can't make it rain. Well, maybe for you, it's the salvation of a loved one. You've talked to them and you've talked to them.

You've witnessed to them. You've led them. If they're children, you've brought them up. But still, you don't have what it takes to see them saved. Maybe it's the perseverance for a long trial.

And so your trial isn't a sprint. It's more of the Iron Man triathlon. And it seems like when you get done with one aspect of the trial, there's a whole other field waiting for you in front of you.

[8:05] And you have a long way to go and you need endurance. And you're only so much. You only have so much. Maybe it's patience in the face of provocation.

Someone has mistreated you. Misunderstood you. They've wronged you and it's hurt deeply and you just can't brush it off. But what do you need?

You need mercy. You need grace to love them. Perhaps it's wisdom for some decision. You know, we can do all the homework and do the most research that we can and get as much advice as we can.

But at the end of the day, don't we, aren't we running running into that reality? Lord, I need wisdom. I need help to make the right decision. And only God can do that.

Well, that's the fact. That's the present fact. You have present needs. You do have present needs.

And so, what do you, what do we do with the word that we heard in Zechariah 9?

[9:14] About the, about the king coming. And about the Lord coming and fighting for us. And his promise to help us, to make us strong, to save us. What do we do now?

With all the things that we read about in Zechariah 9. Well, today, that's what we're going to look at. These two verses, chapter 10, 1 and 2. And we have two lessons, two now applications.

Two things to do now. And, there's two lessons, there's two verses, and lesson one is in verse one and lesson two is in verse two. And, lesson one is this.

Put your trust in God for your present needs. Okay? Put your trust in God for your present needs.

Verse one, Ask the Lord for rain in the springtime.

It is the Lord who makes the storm clouds. He gives showers of rain to men and plants of the field to everyone. Judah needed rain. They could plow and they could plant, but there was no way they could bring the springtime rain.

[10:23] They needed rain. And so, verse one says, Ask the Lord for rain. Ask him for it. They couldn't make it rain, but here, here they ran into what we are always running into.

It's our humanity. It's our limitedness. The fact that we aren't God. That we have needs. That we can't do. That there's things that we can't bring to ourselves.

So we need food to live. But what brings the food out of the ground? Well, it's the rain. And that's the very thing I can't do. And so the first now application of God's promise to bless in the future, to do all these wonderful things for them, to love them, to make them strong, and so on, is that if all of that is true, that God is going to do that, that God is going to bring you into heaven, into prosperity, and joy, forevermore, that he's going to send his king again, if all of that is true, shouldn't you trust him for your present needs?

Ask him then. Ask the Lord for rain. And so let's go back again to that list of things that where maybe we are feeling our humanity, feeling our limitedness.

And so you need perseverance. You need wisdom. You need grace in the face of provocation. You need endurance. Moms, maybe you just simply need physical energy to get through the day.

[11:52] Maybe you need joy in your life. You need to see that person saved. You need it, but you can't do it. Well, so, because God is so committed to you that he is going to make you everlastingly happy in the Lord.

That he's going to do all these things for you. He's going to win the day for you. He's going to save you like a shepherd saves his flock. Well, because God is so committed to you, ask him for what you need now.

That's what he's going to do. Well, ask him for what you need now. If he's willing to give you Christ in heaven, surely he'll give you everything you need to get there. And if he's willing, if he didn't spare his own son, how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things?

So, how encouraging this is. This is, chapter 10, verse 1, ask the Lord for rain in the springtime. It's this wonderful invitation to ask God for things that I can't do with the implicit promise that he'll do it, that he'll give it to us.

It's an invitation to ask. It's an invitation to get what you need. And the wonderful thing is, is all you have to do is ask. In our home, we have a yes box.

[13:13] And it's especially for our youngest. It's a box that is full of good snacks and stickers and gum and suckers and things like that. And guess what amazing thing you have to do in order to get something out of the yes box?

You just have to ask. And if you ask, the answer will always be yes. It doesn't matter if it's five minutes before dinner.

The answer is yes. It doesn't matter if he's been, no, sorry. It doesn't matter if people have been rotten that day. You just have to ask. It's our commitment to him that all he has to do is ask.

Now, before you criticize our parenting, you can ask me afterwards and I'll explain it to you and it'll make sense. But in Zechariah 10.1, God is saying there is a yes box for your needs.

You need rain? Ask the Lord for rain. Trust the Lord for rain. He says, I'm generous. I give showers of rain to men. I give the plants of the field for everyone. You don't need to go anywhere else.

[14:23] All you need to do is ask. Ask. You know what's crazy about the yes box? Days go by where someone doesn't ask for something.

It's not that the box is empty. It's that he forgets to ask. And so I have to come down, get beside him and say, hey, do you want something out of your yes box?

He's like, oh, yeah. And so we get him something. Now, believe it or not, he doesn't go through the whole thing all at once. He has that opportunity, I guess, but he never does.

And that's kind of like us, isn't it? God says, here's Jesus Christ, and every promise is yes and amen in him.

He's our yes box. So do you need wisdom? It's in Christ. All the treasures of wisdom are in Jesus Christ. God says, I'm the father of the heavenly lights. All you need to do is ask, and I will give it to you without finding any fault.

[15:30] Do you need grace to love in the face of provocation, perseverance, strength, physical energy, joy, comfort, peace? Are you dirty and need cleansed? Do you need help getting unstuck

from your past?

Well, God is Jesus' yes box, or Jesus is God's yes box, and everything you need there is for the asking. We're so rich in Christ.

We're so rich in Christ. You are so rich in Christ. God has given us his very own son, and along with him, he has given us the Holy Spirit that joins us to his son.

And so the Holy Spirit is our connection between Jesus and ourselves, and so now the life we live, it's Christ. It's in him.

It's connected to him, and everything that we need comes from him to us. And so, your riches, your potential, your help is not measured by your weakness.

[16 : 35] It's not measured by your humanity. It's measured by all the riches of Jesus Christ and his strength, and that's why Paul can say, I'll boast all the more in my weaknesses because in my weaknesses, it's like the open door for Jesus Christ's strength to come in.

So I will boast all the more. I will make my weaknesses known because when my weakness is known, Christ's power is also known. And so, again, our weakness, our inability to do these things, to bring the rain, is not so much the problem.

God created us to be dependent. God created us this big. He didn't create another God. He created creatures who need him.

And so, the basic problem is not that we're small and that we're weak. Our basic problem is our forgetfulness. It's our self-sufficiency. We keep ourselves poor.

We have a yes box, but we don't use it. You know, Caman doesn't empty his yes box because he forgets to ask.

[17 : 51] It's not because we've ever said no. It's because he forgets to ask. And that's one of the lessons that God wants you to learn from Zechariah 9. When you have need, when you have present needs, don't forget to ask.

ask. Now, if God is going to do all this for me, then I can trust him for my present needs now. That's the first lesson.

And the second lesson is found in verse 2. And we can just sum it up very simply. It's just saying, don't bother with idols. Just make it very simple.

Don't bother with idols. The idols speak deceit. Diviners see visions that lie. They tell dreams that are false.

They give comfort in vain. Therefore, the people wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd. Well, why not go to the idols? Because they lie.

[18 : 54] They speak deceit. They don't keep their promises. They don't live up to their word. They don't live up to what we pour into them. And that's what we do. We make a created thing just like ourselves with the same limitations and the same problems, the same weaknesses as ourselves.

And we pour expectations in them. And we inflate them. And we desire them so much that they become functional gods. And as we pour our expectations into them, we make them say to us, you promise, I promise I'll keep you safe.

I promise I'll give you the rain. I'll promise to bring you life. I promise to do all these things. Now, in Zechariah's day, there were idols, physical idols. And there were household gods. There were other gods.

And the things and things like that. And the point was is if you asked them, if you did what they, the idols were supposedly wanted, then they would give you what you needed. And so, they, remember what little Judah couldn't do.

They couldn't make it rain. They needed rain. No rain, no food. No food, no life. So if you follow the logic back, these idols held life and death in their hands, supposedly.

[20 : 17] So whether I eat or whether I starve, whether I live or whether I die, whether I have what I need or I don't have what I need, depends on those things.

So idols are, idols are always about us overcoming our creatureliness. They're our way of securing ourselves. So we're always running into this wall, into this reality that I have need.

and I only have so much strength that I, and so much of what I need I can't do. And so I need someone, something more than myself.

I need someone to tell me who I am. I need someone to tell me that I'm right, that I'm okay. I need someone to, or something to guarantee me blessing. That's what an idol does.

I need someone or some way of breaking through the sense of brokenness and smallness that I have.

[21:20] And an idol is a great way of doing that. Not because it works, but it's great because it leaves me in control. Idols always can be bought.

I don't care what idol you have. It always works on the works principle. I work, I do, I am, and if I am what that idol demands, then I will be blessed, I tell myself.

But ultimately, I'm in control. I'm in control. Idolatry is always about me saving myself.

Me trying to do what God only can do. Me doing what only Christ can do for me. And so, idols back then, they were other gods. They were little statues and things represented by that.

Well, today, idols look differently. Today, idols can look like work. Today, idols can look like what other men think of me. It can be sex.

[22:23] It can be romance. It can be money. It can be where I live. It can be the city I live in. It can be anything. We're so, I mean, who was it? John Calvin said, the heart is an idol factory.

It's never done. It can create idols out of anything and everything. And so, how I play sports. I don't play sports. I play chess. I'm part of the theater club. You name it. I can sing.

I'm no good at singing. I'm good at video games. I don't play video games. Today, it's what I look like. Today, it's my friends, my job, my bank account.

So, idolatry takes a created thing and turns it into my God. And my God is going to do what I can't do. It's going to take me past my limitations. It's going to give me the ability to control the rain.

It's going to send the rain. And if I obey it, and if I live up to it, it will bless me. And if I don't, it will also curse me. So, you can make money, an idol, and not have any of it.

[23:29] And you can feel cursed and like a failure because you're not living up to your God. And you can be as ugly as sin and still have an idol of how you look.

You'll feel miserable and you'll feel cursed. Or you can be as pretty as an angel and feel right and clean and feel like the world's your oyster and now I can do anything and everything I want.

But what Zachariah is saying is at the end of the day, all of that is a delusion. It's a lie. They are liars.

They can't give you what they promise. They can't keep their word. He talks about them showing the visions of the future. They paint these visions of what will be if you worship.

But they can't do it. So how often do people say, if I just had a little more of this, whatever that is, if I could just do this, if I could just reach this, if I could get here, then I would be happy, then I would be satisfied.

[24:36] There's this vision of happiness and they go after it, but at the end of the day it doesn't make them happy. It's like a dog who wants to catch the car. I don't know what the dog is going to do when it catches the car, but this is what I do know.

It must be great in that dog's mind, doesn't it? But what really happens when dogs chase cars? Do dogs catch cars? No.

Dogs get run over. That's how idolatry works. So, when you boil it all down, sin works by faith.

Did you know that? We take the lie by faith. We count on it. We bet our lives on it. We bet our eternities on it. It's the promise of sin that gives its power.

And so, we're going to trust something. We're going to try to take someone or something out of its word, but God says, don't do it with the idols. They lie. They're unfaithful.

[25:40] And so, how many times have people said, if I was married, if I had a boyfriend, or if I had a girlfriend, if only, if only, if only, I would be happy. And they get it, and actually, the place they end up with is anything but happy.

It's the deceitfulness of sin that promises one thing and then gives you the exact opposite. Because the wages of sin is death. Whatever it promises you, at the end of the day, you get paid in death.

Saying, I'll make you better. I'll help you to get on. Everything is going to be okay. You're an alright person. And meanwhile, it's pumping you full of cyanide and saying, just one more shot and you'll feel better.

Or you're dying of thirst and the idol says, what you need is salt. So you believe it. And you just get thirstier. That's idolatry. And where does it always end?

Well, the last part of verse 2, it leads you far away from God. It leads you to misery. Distant from God, far from home, far from freedom, far from blessing.

[26:52] Therefore, the people wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd. So imagine a wandering sheep. A wandering sheep is in danger.

It's in real danger. Their prime target for a roaring lion seeking for someone to devour. And so, little bit by little bit, the lie leads you away, away from God, away from your shepherd.

And you might as well crawl under the silver platter for the devil to eat you. A wandering sheep is confused because he has no way of knowing where he's at, where he's going, how to get back.

A wandering sheep, if he's in his right mind, is scared. He might leave with confidence, but eventually he gets to the place of realizing, I'm in great danger.

I'm in this strange country all alone. And that's where sin takes you. That's where idolatry takes you. Away from God, into fear, into danger, into confusion, and into oppression.

[28:03] They go like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd. So it's not life. It's not freedom. It's oppression. It's the weight on you all the time.

Remember Israel down in Egypt and they're groaning under their captivity. That's oppression. Have you ever been there? You're far away from God and every minute feels like a hundred tons on your heart oppressed.

It's not life. Sin says it's a benefactor. Sin says it will give you what you need. But it's just a dictator. The North Koreans call Kim Jong-un their great benefactor.

And the reality is exactly the opposite. So think of a slave in the South. Think of somebody working in one of those terrible factories in 1900 in the meatpacking factory for 20 hours for hardly anything. That's oppression. So not a day of joy. No true joy. No hope. No future.

[29:17] You can't even look ahead with hope. Well that's where living and trusting someone other than God gets you. So we've seen these two alternatives.

Jesus Christ. God's yes box. where every promise every grace is ours for the asking. And all we need to do is ask.

Where God says you're weak and you're needy right now. That's okay. Just ask. You can't do it.

That's okay. Just ask. The idol says the very same thing but it's all in vain.

It's all a lie. It all leaves us in the end wandering far away from God. And so as we end I just want to talk to Christians first and then to non-Christians or the other way around.

Let me just talk to non-Christians first. If you aren't a Christian and we saw this this morning you are at a crossroads. In this in these two verses they put the signs up for us.

[30:21] It says trust in God on one side and it says trust in the idol on the other side. and this this passage lays out okay what's going to happen if you trust in this direction?

You'll get what you need. God will keep his word and if you trust the idol if you trust yourself one road leads to life and then it's an eternal life that begins even now.

The way of the righteous shines brighter and brighter. It's life now. The other road leads to death and it's not just death later. It's death that starts even now where your your life gets smaller and smaller and smaller and more and more bitter and your joy will shrink until you will crave death and at the same time you will hate it and be terrified of it.

And so God says right now I put before you life and death. Choose life. Choose life. And then secondly to us Christians just two things.

What a wonderful thing. Just this first part 10.1 where it says ask the Lord for rain in the springtime. Now I don't know what your rain looks like.

[31:51] I don't I don't know what the particular need that you have and how God needs to answer that. But the wonderful promise is that he gives us and he says no you just ask.

So we need to be asking for things. We need to be asking for things. Instead of running into our humanity and our weakness and our need and saying it's over it's done depressed weak and just living in that moment we need to say I've run into this now I need to ask.

So like bounce it straight up to the Lord ask the Lord for rain so we can pray send rain send rain Lord into my heart into my family into my spouse into my children send rain into our country send rain we have needs Lord send it for us give us what we can't do and then secondly brothers or sisters do you feel like you're wandering like a sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd are you far away right now you've turned away from that from God's love and you're you're falling into this idolatry the word there is repent then turn around and the wonderful thing about repentance is and the wonderful thing about turning around is no matter how far you've gone the moment you turn around

Jesus is there Jesus is there right behind you as soon as you turn he'll be right there as soon as you turn he'll take you into his arms and carry you right back home and so dear believers the issue is the same for us life and death and the same word is for us we need to choose life well let's pray heavenly father we thank you for these wonderful words that tell us of the things that we struggle with even presently thank you for uncovering the lies of sin and idolatry and thank you for giving us this wonderful promise that if we ask you will give that you encourage us to ask for the things that we need and so there are things this week there are going to be things even this evening that you call us to do that are going to be too much will you please remind us then to ask and to find what we need for that help and that grace in our hour of need holy spirit walk with us and and put into our minds and into our hearts this desire to be asking and when we've asked or when we've asked and you've given then to turn around and say thank you thank you that you give us this whole life of give and take of need and and you meeting our needs pray that we would learn to trust you and then learn to walk thankfully with our

God securely and encouraged confidently knowing that it's not all up to us and it's not us or nothing but we have our Lord Jesus who is the same yesterday today and forever and so we can say I will not be afraid for you my Lord the Lord is with me pray for those who are lost help them to remember the message that we heard but more than remember give them ears give them hearts give them desires for you to turn away from death and to turn and find life in Jesus Christ we ask this in his name amen