

Let Your Hands Be Strong

Zechariah 8:1-17



Background

- » Zechariah speaks to the days after the exile – return to the land
- » The temple reconstruction had begun but now has lapsed due to fatigue
- » The people were feeling overwhelmed

- » Zechariah (along with Haggai) wrote to encourage the people in their efforts
- » Temple reconstruction began in 536 BC (16 year differential)

- » Zechariah's message speaks to our day of:
 - » Chronic fatigue
 - » Low grade depression
 - » High stress
 - » Feeling overwhelmed with life

1. The Divine Jealousy (Zechariah 8:1-8)

The word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath.

Zechariah 8:1-2

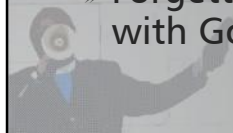
Jealousy

- » Hebrew – to become red
- » Greek – to boil
- » The words express deep feeling
- » A covenant word – Exodus 20:5; 34:14 (Ten Commandments)

Two Causes for Jealousy

1. Israel's Forgetfulness

- » Deuteronomy 4:23-24
- » Forgetting the covenant with God and making idols



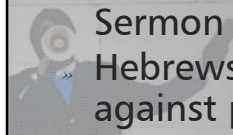
- » To forget who we are
- » To become distracted
- » To simply act as everyone else



Two Causes for Jealousy

2. Presumption

- » To take things for granted
- » To become insensitive to others
- » Jeremiah 7 – The Temple Sermon
- » Hebrews 6:4-6 – a warning against presumption

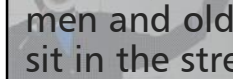


- » God is not passive
- » His divine jealousy speaks of tough love

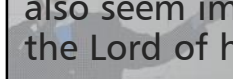


The Flipside of Divine Jealousy

Thus says the Lord: I will return to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts shall be called the holy mountain. Thus says the Lord of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem,



each with staff in hand because of their great age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. Thus says the Lord of hosts: Even though it seems impossible to the remnant of this people in these days, should it also seem impossible to me, says the Lord of hosts?



Zechariah 8:3-6

God's Ardour for Israel's Salvation

- » The Lord will return to Zion (v3)
- » Jerusalem will be restored
- » The Lord will be present in Jerusalem

» Verses 4-6 enumerate the blessings of the Lord – the kingdom of God as a safe park

» The aged will be present (v4)

» The children will play in the streets (v5)

Nothing is Impossible for God (v6)

- » Sarah asks – is it possible to have a child? (Genesis 18:14)
- » Gabriel's message to Mary (Luke 1:37)
- » A call to faith – to remember Yahweh

Thus says the Lord of hosts: I will save my people from the east country and from the west country; and I will bring them to live in Jerusalem. They shall be my people and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.

Zechariah 8:7-8

God Will Save His People

- » Bring his people back to the land (v7)
- » Glimpses of the new covenant are described in verse 8
- » "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts." (4:6b)

God's Message to a Tired People

- » I am on your side
- » You are not alone
- » God will empower his people
- » A word of compassion/gentleness

a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.

Isaiah 42:3

II. A Divine Partnership (Zechariah 8:9-17)

Thus says the Lord of hosts: Let your hands be strong—you that have recently been hearing these words from the mouths of the prophets who were present when the foundation was laid for the rebuilding of the temple, the house of the Lord of hosts.

Zechariah 8:9

Invitation to Mission

- » "Let your hands be strong"
– 2x v9 & 13
- » You have heard this word of the prophet (Haggai)
- » Take up your work – words first spoken to Joshua (Joshua 1:6)

- » Persevere in your work
- » Finish your task
- » Finish building the temple

A Remnant Theology

- » Word 'remnant' 3x (v6,11,12)
- » The small group of people who have returned to the land will be blessed
- » The land will be blessed (v12)

- » You will no longer be cursed but be a blessing to others
- » Language taken from Jeremiah 24:9, 25:18 (pre-exile)
- » Therefore strengthen your hands

Our Negative Capability

- » A term taken from John Keats (Romantic poet)
- » Our ability to rise up amidst the ambiguities of life
- » To overcome – push through the storm

- » Not to be derailed by life's stressors
- » Our negative capability to persevere one day at a time

Will We Persevere?

- » In the storm and in our faith journey
- » Not to give up
- » Philippians 2:12-13 – “to work out your salvation with fear and trembling”

For thus says the Lord of hosts: Just as I purposed to bring disaster upon you, when your ancestors provoked me to wrath, and I did not relent, says the Lord of hosts, so again I have purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah; do not be afraid.

Zechariah 8:14-15

- » The second section (v14-17) recapitulates the first section (v9-13)

1st section – v9 “Thus says...”
v11 “But now...”

2nd section – v14 “Thus says...”
v15 “So again...”

A Second Word of Hope

- » “Do not be afraid” (v15b)
- » But live out your faith in truth, peace and justice (v16-17)

A Calling

- » Don't live in an isolated bubble
- » But live as responsible citizens in the pursuit of justice for all
- » A call to partner with God
- » Israel was to be an example of a just society for other nations to emulate