

The Spirit of Grace and Supplication

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Scripture Reading: Zechariah 12:9–13:1

Text: Zechariah 12:10

After the murder of Caesar by Brutus, a Roman senator tried to provoke the people to revenge the death of the late emperor by bringing out his bloody robe. He held up the robe for all the people to see, and cried, “Here is the robe of your late emperor.” When the rebellious people saw it, they repented of their sins, and took revenge upon the murderers of their emperor. Similarly, in the preaching of the gospel, when the bloody robe of Christ is lifted up, and the message is proclaimed, “Behold what sin has cost Jesus,” the Holy Spirit causes us, if we are believers, to repent and to take revenge upon our sins.

We wish to consider this blessed work of the Spirit, flowing out of Christ’s suffering and death, based on Zechariah 12:10, “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

With God’s help, we wish to consider the theme, *The Spirit of Grace and Supplication*, in three points: the

Spirit's given names, the Spirit's saving work, and the Spirit's personal application.

The Spirit's Given Names

Zechariah was a post-exilic prophet—that is, he prophesied to Israel after the Babylonian exile. A minority of the people—about 42,000—had returned from Babylon to Israel. No doubt this minority hoped that they would be only the first wave of many waves of successive return so that national life would be renewed in Israel. God commanded the people to rebuild the temple and reinstate His worship. Fortifying their souls with God's promises, this minority were longing for the day when all the nations of the earth would gather themselves together in Jerusalem to worship the Lord in His temple.

But soon a harsh, painful reality set in. After a difficult time of drought and local resistance, this minority became despondent. Soon they abandoned God's commands, and everyone began to look after their own families. They settled on the land, enlarging their homes and fields. They neglected the worship of God, forgot the importance of the temple, and abandoned the quest for reestablishing their national identity. Spiritual lethargy abounded. Even idol worship began to rear its head.

It is still the same today, isn't it? If we're not involved with God and His work and truth, we backslide rather than progress. We grow distant from that spiritual life which we once craved and enjoyed. Our spiritual aspirations wither.

God then sends Zechariah to the remnant who remained on the land—now down to about 22,000. Zechariah brings to a despondent, despairing people a striking message. God looks at His sinful people and determines to transform them, to change them: "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem,

the spirit of grace and of supplications” (Zech. 12:10). This is a striking contrast to the previous verse: “It shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem” (12:9). God says that He will pour out His just fury on the nations, even as He promises to pour out His Spirit upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem. God will turn in mercy to His people. When God does so, His mercy begins with the outpouring of His Spirit of grace and supplication.

God will pour out His Spirit upon the house of David—that is, upon the princes and rulers of Israel; and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem—namely, the common people. He will pour out His Spirit upon all of Israel combined—upon a guilty nation; upon a guilty David, who committed adultery and murder; upon Jerusalem, the city that would crucify the Lord of glory. The effect will be that “they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (12:10).

When we read this text, we immediately think about what happened on the day of Pentecost. Zechariah 12:10 was literally fulfilled on that glorious day when Peter preached the gospel to the Jews, accusing them of crucifying their Messiah. Three thousand were pricked in their hearts. They cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). They mourned over that Savior whom they had pierced.

Zechariah 12:10 is a fulfilled prophecy. We bring this prophecy before you again because we believe that God continues to fulfil this prophecy until the end of time; the Spirit is still being poured out today. Sinners are still brought to mourn for the Messiah whom they have pierced.

The Spirit of Grace

The first question we must ask is: What or who is that Spirit the Lord promises to pour out? *The Spirit of grace and supplication*. The Holy Spirit is here called a Spirit of grace. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of grace because of the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must never forget that the Holy Spirit, like the Father and the Son, was also provoked by the sin of man. The Holy Spirit was also angry with man for transgressing God's law and breaking His covenant. When we fell in Adam, the Holy Spirit withdrew Himself and His blessed influences from fallen man. Man was left void of all spiritual good. Man was left behind, dead in trespasses and sins.

The Bible teaches us that nothing is to be feared so much as the breath of the Almighty. Isaiah 11:4, speaking of God's wrath, says that the breath of the Lord shall slay the wicked. That breath is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is angry with the sins of the wicked.

But Christ's mediatorial work in dying for sinners opened the way for the Spirit to be a Spirit of grace, mercy, love, and compassion. That's why Christ said to the disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you" (John 16:7). Christ first had to complete His meritorious mediatorial work. He had to complete the mission assigned to Him by His Father and return to His Father—and then the Holy Spirit would pour out Himself and His gracious influences. The Spirit's outpouring was dependent on the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. This outpouring was a fruit of Jesus's mission being accomplished. Because of Christ's work, the Bible can call the Holy Spirit this beautiful name, *Spirit of Grace*.

The Spirit is also called Spirit of Grace because He authors all spiritual graces in sinners. He is the author of all genuine conviction of sin. He authors the grace of

repentance, the grace of faith, the grace of sanctification, the grace of perseverance, the graces of love and humility.

The Spirit is the author of all spiritual life. What sap is to a tree to make it bear fruit, what electricity is to a lightbulb to cause it to produce light, what air is to an instrument to make it play, so the Holy Spirit is related to all spiritual life. He is the author of all spiritual grace.

God's people experience the truth of this doctrine. They experience as a living reality that the Holy Spirit is the author of all grace. Have you also experienced this reality?

Without the Holy Spirit we remain dead in trespasses and sins, impenitent, and unbelieving. Just as Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5), the believer experiences that, after being born again, "Without the Spirit of Christ, I can perform nothing acceptable to God. I cannot give myself one spiritual grace. I cannot give myself faith. I cannot give myself hands to receive Jesus or arms to embrace Jesus. I cannot retain what has been given. I cannot endure to the end without the Spirit of grace. I am utterly dependent on Jesus Christ and His Spirit." Praise God that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Grace.

The Spirit of Supplication

The Holy Spirit is not only the Spirit of Grace. He is also the *Spirit of Supplication*. That is, He is the ultimate author of all true prayer. When we were little children, our parents taught us to pray. That is good, necessary, and unforgettable. But we need another teacher—we need the Holy Spirit to teach us to pray. He is the Spirit of supplication. As soon as He takes up residence in the heart of a sinner, the result is, "Behold, that sinner prayeth" (see Acts 9:11).

When the Holy Spirit begins His saving work, Jeremiah says that such sinners will come to the Lord with

weeping and supplication (Jer. 31:29). The Holy Spirit teaches us to cry for mercy and to beg for pardon. Without the Spirit's groaning within us, our prayer is little more than lip-work.

Grace and supplication are inseparable. When there is grace, there is supplication. Where there is much grace, there is much supplication. Where there is no grace, there is no genuine supplication.

Supplication here means *pleading*—pleading out of shame and desperation. It is akin to the groaning we read of in Romans 8:26, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

There are two intercessors for the Christian. We have an intercessor within the veil—Jesus Christ; He is objectively interceding for us. But then we have a second intercessor within our hearts. He is subjectively interceding for us; that is, the Spirit of God is touching the wellsprings of our affections. He is inciting prayer, He is provoking prayer, He is stirring us up to prayer.

Let me illustrate. Say you are attending an organ concert, where beautiful and reverent music is being played. You see the organist take his place at the organ, and watch his skillful fingers, that have practiced for years, fly up and down the keyboard; you marvel at the beautiful sound that is made. So the Spirit of God touches the strings of a believer's heart and creates a sort of music of the soul, and the consequence is that we cannot but pour out our desires to God. And when we do so, God recognizes that this is the work of His Spirit within us.

"We know not what we should pray for as we ought," but the Spirit teaches us. This is the extraordinary thing about prayer. Sometimes you go on your knees and you feel as dead as a piece of wood. You have had that experience

many times, and so have I. At times, I have said to myself, "How am I going to get through even a few minutes on my knees of addressing God?" You begin, but it doesn't work; it is terrible. You try again, and it is just as difficult. You struggle on. You pray that you may pray. Perhaps you are just about to give up when you say, "I'll try a bit longer," and then all of a sudden the Spirit of God fills your heart and it becomes easy to pray, even to pray at some length. You then arise from your knees and say, "Oh, that I had more time to pray. This is heaven upon earth; this is a heaven before heaven; this is the enjoyment of God!" Then you brush away your tears and you say to yourself, "What a glorious, beautiful thing it is to lay hold of God in prayer, to hold communion with the living God!" Well, that is because it is the Spirit helping us. We are not on our own. Christ is helping us at the throne and the Spirit is helping us here below in the depths of our mind and soul. So the doctrine here is that we should strive to pray in the Spirit.

Do you know the difference between praying and praying in the Spirit? Paul does not simply tell us to pray; he says we are to pray in the Spirit. In Ephesians 6:18 he says, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." So there is a difference between prayer and *prayer*. And here is a good test for your spiritual progress. Do you know the difference between prayer and *prayer*? Would you know the difference between praying, and praying *in the Spirit*? Now, this is not an absolute distinction, of course, but it is a relative one. In other words, sometimes when people pray, they receive help. Occasionally they get *extraordinary help*. Too often we feel as though we are struggling more or less on our own as we pray. But we are always desiring to get through that striving to the point where we are given that spiritual help. And that is what we should look for and wait upon God to give us. Whether

it be relative help or extraordinary help, it is the “Spirit [who] helpeth our infirmities” (Rom. 8:26).

But how exactly does the Holy Spirit help us in praying? What does this term “helpeth” mean here: “the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.” About this word *helpeth*, Charles Hodge says, “This word means to take hold of any thing with another. To take part of his burden or work.”¹ Calvin puts it this way: “The Spirit takes part of the burden with which our weakness is weighed down.”²

Let me illustrate what Paul, Calvin, and Hodge are saying. Imagine there is a large piece of wood, like a plank. Suppose a young boy, about seven, sees this plank, and wants to try out his own strength, even though his father is right behind him. “Let me do it, Dad,” he says. This is an common thing, isn’t it? Most boys that are growing in strength like to try out their vigor. So the boy picks up one end of the plank, and he can lift it six or so inches off the ground, maybe a foot. His father smiles and, realizing what the boy is up to, he comes behind him and says, “Now son, you take that end and I will take the other end, and between us we will carry it out through the door.” So the boy is delighted and he lifts it with all his strength. But the father skillfully, concealing somewhat what he is doing, puts both his hands under the plank near the center, so as to take ninety percent of the weight, and the boy, of course, thinks he is carrying a considerable portion, helping his father through the door with the plank. Now that is what this word *helpeth* means.

Prayer can be a great burden. The work of prayer is really too great for us. We are like children. Our strength is not up to it. “But,” says Paul, “Someone is helping our

1. Charles Hodge, *Commentary of the Epistle to the Romans* (Philadelphia: William S. & Alfred Marten, 1864), 437.

2. John Calvin, *Commentary on Romans*, 8:26–27.

infirmities.” Someone is there—the gracious Holy Spirit of supplication is there to help. We are not on our own with this burden. His mighty arms are underneath the burden, and we go forward carrying out our little end. The Spirit carries the bulk of the weight—in true prayer we are mostly following Him. In the work of praying, there are two persons with one burden. The burden is the cause of Christ upon the earth and the manifestation of the glory of God in the world.

A true Christian is one who can't be content without the Spirit of grace and supplication. He or she can't be content with prayerless praying. To be content with prayerless praying is like a sailor being content without any wind after he hoists the sail of his boat. You can't sail when there's no wind. Pray much for the wind of the Spirit. By all means, do set sail; do use the means. Do show the Lord His own handwriting; plead on His own promises. But remember, only the Spirit can empower prayer to move the soul. Without the Spirit's movement, the sails of prayer will hang limp.

A true Christian seeks grace to maintain the priority of prayer in everything he does. He strives to live out the advice of Bunyan: “You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.”

Now this blessed Spirit of grace and supplication shall be poured out, Zechariah says, and the result will be: “And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son.” Zechariah is speaking here of the Spirit's work in producing evangelical repentance.

The Spirit's Saving Work

The great end in view of all the operations of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ. Christ Himself said, “He will glorify

me” (John 16:14). That is what our text says here. The Holy Spirit will be poured out, and the result will be that Christ will be glorified. He will teach sinners to look upon Christ. Our text says, “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced” (Zech. 12:10). The Holy Spirit will make a sinner look to Christ—but, says our text, a Christ whom that sinner has pierced. Usually, the Holy Spirit does not get us to look first to Christ as our Redeemer and Savior, but as one whom we have rejected; one whom we have despised; one whose blood we have counted as an unclean thing; one whom we have crucified.

Our text is powerful: “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zech. 12:10). This prophecy was literally fulfilled on Pentecost. The multitude listened intently to Peter’s sermon. When Peter proved from the prophets that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah, their amazement gave way to perplexity, then to conviction and sorrow. When the multitude heard Peter’s terrible charge against them, “Jesus, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain”—they stood crushed before the bar of God and the bar of their own conscience. Then they cried, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” This prophecy was then fulfilled literally, “They shall look on me whom they have pierced.”

Those Jews began to look on Christ. They had despised and rejected Jesus. They didn’t even think Him worthy to be looked upon. They didn’t want to look upon Him. They didn’t want to think about the possibility that He could be the Messiah. But now, they began to reflect on what had happened with Christ. They began to see that their sins pierced Christ. The Holy Spirit persuaded them that the

one against whom they had cried, "Away with him; crucify him," was, in fact, the Messiah of God!

They mourned as one mourns for his only son. Their hearts were wounded, broken with sorrow and shame. The reality was crushing—"We are murderers of the promised Messiah!" The verse after our text, Zechariah 12:11, became an experiential reality. There was "a great mourning in Jerusalem." This was from the powerful, convicting, and blessed effect of the Spirit's outpouring.

Do you think that this prophecy is only applicable to the Jews because they were the ones who rejected and crucified Christ? Dear friends, we are guilty of the same crime. What the Jews did literally, we are inclined to do spiritually when we live under the preaching of the gospel and do not embrace the Messiah by faith. We reject Christ every time we hear the gospel and do not repent and believe in the Son of God. We crucify Jesus Christ with our unbelief.

What is unbelief? Unbelief is enmity against God. Unbelief is refusing to believe the record God gave of His only-begotten Son. Unbelief is disobedience to the Word of God. We reject and crucify Christ when we cleave to our sins and idols. We crucify Christ by cleaving to our self-righteousness; by refusing to bow under Christ as our Lord and Master, by refusing to take His yoke upon us as His disciples.

When Christ preached on earth, many were displeased. They were displeased because His sermons condemned them. His messages condemned their self-righteousness and worldliness. Christ preached, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13). Christ said, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the

righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of God” (Matt. 5:20).

Many picked up stones to kill Christ when He spoke such things because His preaching condemned them. And we do the same thing by nature. But we do not see this; nor do we believe this. In our foolishness, we say, “If I had been living when Jesus was on earth, I surely would have been one of His disciples.”

Unbelief is the reigning and damning sin of the outward Christian world. And yet, the Christian world is not aware of the tragedy of unbelief.

I’m afraid some of you scarcely think about these things. Some of you don’t even realize the seriousness of being unconverted. You don’t see it as a sin. You don’t realize the damning nature of your unbelief. You never stop to consider that it is your unbelief that will bring you to hell. You never weep over your unbelief. You never despise its cursed nature. You never bemoan it.

Unbelief is the crowning sin we commit against that God to whom we owe everything that we are, everything that we have, and unto whom we are obligated to give all that we are.

Many unconverted people think of themselves as victims of Satan, as people who are to be pitied, rather than as criminals. You think of yourselves as people who are to be *excused* rather than *accused* for being unbelievers. You say within yourselves, “It is not my fault; I can’t help it. What can I do about it? I can’t convert myself. I can’t bring myself to the right place.” How few think of being unconverted as a sin—as a terrible crime!

Some of you think that you’re not so bad. You’re outwardly moral. You live a decent life. You attend a conservative, Christian church faithfully. You believe in the truths of the Bible.

My friend, that is not enough. I fear that the devils believe in the Bible more than some of you. The devil believes more of Christ than you do. Of the devils it is written that they believe and tremble (James 2:19)—and that is more than some among us do. The truth is, my unconverted friend, you are an unbeliever. That means that you are unwilling to believe the testimony of God concerning yourself and concerning God. An unbeliever is an enemy of God and Christ.

Do you know what it is to be an unbeliever? Let me explain by way of illustration. Think of a sick man who has a particular disease that only one medicine, with God's help, can be used to cure him. What would you think if that man refused to take the only possible medicine that could cure him? That is an unbeliever. An unbeliever despises the only medicine that can save him from destruction—the shed blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

My friend, be honest with yourself. You are unconverted because you do not want God to be King over you. When Christ says, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life" (John 5:40), He also says of you. Deep down in your soul, you know that is true. You are not desiring Christ, you are not looking to Christ. You are not willing to forsake sin and surrender your idols. You are not willing to crucify your flesh and renounce your self-righteousness. You are not willing to be saved as a poor sinner trusting exclusively in Jesus's blood and righteousness.

But you do not see it—or, perhaps, more accurately, you do not want to see it. By nature, we hate to hear the truth about ourselves. Therefore, when Christ taught the Pharisees that they were in bondage, that the devil was their master, and that they needed to be delivered by Him, they took up stones to stone Him. Christ said, "Do you

want to stone me, because I have told you the truth?” (see John 10:32). He told them the truth about themselves, and therefore they hated Him.

It is no different today. People still don't want the truth to be told about themselves. By nature, they still cry out, “Away with Him! We don't want all our righteousness to be grounded in Jesus Christ alone.” By nature, we are like these pious Jews who had come from afar to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. They thought of themselves as pious and strict persons, believers in Jehovah, lovers of God's law, keepers of His ordinances, travelers to heaven. But then the Holy Spirit was poured out. They began to look upon Christ, began to see the truth about themselves and what they had done. They saw that they had rejected and crucified the Messiah, the only divine remedy for all their sins. They realized the enormity of their crime.

When the Holy Spirit teaches us the truth about ourselves, and our rejection of Jesus Christ, we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin in our own hearts and lives. Then we see that we have sinned against a holy and good God—against a God who has sent “His only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

When the Holy Spirit is poured out upon us, it becomes our sorrow that we have sinned against such a God. Then we confess, “How have I dared to sin against such a God? How have I dared to reject the Savior whom He has sent—a merciful, gracious Savior? Woe is me, I have despised the blood of the New Testament! I have rejected the merciful invitations of the gospel! My sins have nailed the promised Messiah to the tree. My sins are the cause of the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus. I have repeated the crime of the Jews against the cross. Oh, it rings in my ears: ‘whom ye have crucified.’”

Zechariah says that the bitterness of this mourning and true repentance may be compared to two sad occurrences: First, the grief a parent feels upon the loss of a firstborn or of an only son. Our text says, "They shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." According to Jewish custom, this grief would be the greatest sorrow God could lay upon a family. Jeremiah speaks of this mourning in Jeremiah 6:26 as a "most bitter lamentation."

Second, the grief the Israelites felt when the God-fearing Josiah was slain in battle by the Egyptians. For we read in the verse following our text, "In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon" (Zech. 12:11). When Josiah was slain at Hadadrimmon, a town in the valley of Megiddon, you can read in 2 Chronicles 35:24–25 that there was profound lamentation in Judah and Israel. Jeremiah wrote a book called Lamentations, in which he tells us that all of Judah and Israel mourned the loss of this God-fearing king. So, says Zechariah, a sinner who sees that he has pierced Christ with his sins, may be compared with these two events.

This sorrow is bitter and sincere because it sorrows over sin as sin. Then we do not sorrow only over sin's consequences—for the harm it does to us. But we sorrow for sin as sin because we see the dishonor and wrong that sin does to a holy and merciful God. Sin always has a Godward thrust. Sin is a grave matter. He who gives us our breath has so humbled Himself that, though He is the Creator of heaven and earth, He is affected by our deeds. Sin, as it were, pierces the Son of God.

Sin especially becomes sin when we see our sins in the light of Christ's sufferings. When we view our sins as the cause of the *red glass* of Christ's sufferings, as Thomas

Watson put it, then we will mourn “for him as one mourneth for his only son.”

The sufferings of Christ have been called God’s commentaries on sin—commentaries which the penitent sinner reads with sorrow. There is no better commentary on the subject of sin than the sufferings and death of Christ. To know what sin is, you must read this commentary on sin. You must see sin in the face of Christ’s agony. When our fathers tried to expound the sinfulness of sin in the Form for the Celebration of the Lord’s Supper, they place sin in the context of Golgotha: “The wrath of God against sin is so great,” they say, “that rather than that God would let sin go unpunished, He has punished sin in the bitter and shameful death of His Son on the cross.”

When Peter saw his sins against Christ in the light of Christ’s sufferings and love, he went out and wept bitterly. There is nothing so humbling as to see that my sins have nailed Christ to the tree. My sins have pierced the merciful Savior. When the rock of the heart is struck by the rod of the gospel, then the waters gush out.

Brokenness of heart and contrition of spirit is what God calls for in the context of Golgotha. This godly sorrow, which works “repentance not to be repented of” (2 Cor. 7:10), is the result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The glorious promise unveiled at the beginning of the next chapter is designed especially for such mourners: “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1).

A fountain opened for sin and uncleanness! Plentiful cleansing—more than you could ever need—enough, as Luther said, for a thousand worlds. This fountain is a tremendous illustration of God’s utter ability and willingness to save.

Zechariah is one of several prophets who often draws us back to certain portions of the Old Testament by using rare Hebrew words, sometimes, as in this case, using technical terms. The terms, *sin and uncleanness*, when used together in Hebrew, describe a particularly difficult and heinous state of defilement. In Numbers 19, we have the account of the red heifer, the most awesome of all the rites of purification that the people of Israel had, apart from the Great Day of Atonement. A red heifer or cow was taken out of the camp, slaughtered, and burnt. Its ashes were gathered together and used in combination with water as a rite of purification. So thoroughly sacred was this rite that anyone who came into the slightest contact with the red heifer and its ashes was regarded as unclean. This rite was used to cleanse people from every kind of defilement.

And that is what Zechariah is telling us: even sin and uncleanness can be cleansed—not by a little sprinkling of water with ashes from a red heifer, but by “a fountain opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” It is an everlasting, ever-present, ever-flowing fountain that is able to cleanse the chief sinner. It reminds us, doesn’t it, of Romans 5:6: “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

This fountain is God’s pure, sovereign grace. We need a thousand tongues to sing our great Redeemer’s praise for this open fountain of blood that invites everyone to come to Jesus just as they are and be saved by drinking from its fullness.

Sinners who have pierced Christ shall be given to look upon Christ as being crucified *for* their sins. First they look upon Him whom they have pierced, rejected, and despised—and see with horror that their sins were the cause of His suffering. But now they may look upon Him who loved them and did not reject them. Now they see that

His sufferings are the cause of their salvation from sin. Now they embrace with experiential reality the fact that “he was wounded for our transgressions; bruised for our iniquities” (Isa. 53:5).

Did you notice that Zechariah 13:1 says that this open fountain is for the very same people: “to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem”? Oh, what a wonder His grace is! God turns our sorrow into joy when we may see by faith that this fountain is opened, when we are led to the fountain of Jesus’s blood. When we may embrace Him as our Substitute, we know unspeakable joy. Then we begin to understand, as the Lord’s Supper Form in Reformed liturgy says: that “whereas you would otherwise have suffered eternal death, I have given my body and shed my blood for you—even unto death.”³

The Holy Spirit teaches proper communicants to look upon Christ: to look upon Christ crucified—Christ crucified *by* us and Christ crucified *for* us. Such lookers are welcome, yes, commanded, to come and show forth the death of the Lord till He comes again (Heb. 9:28).

The Spirit’s Personal Application

Zechariah 12 describes the conversion of Jews—of religious people—of people who have lived under the means of grace. When a thief is converted, he will mourn over his stealing; when an adulterer is converted, he will mourn over his adulteries. But when a gospel-despiser is converted, he will mourn over despising the gospel.

What is your sin? Theft? Adultery? Yes, in the heart—but most likely not in practice. Your sin in practice—the sin of the religious world—is the rejection of Jesus Christ as the exclusive Messiah. Peter tells the religious Jews in Acts 4 that they have killed God’s holy Child, Jesus.

3. *The Psalter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 138.

So wicked, so full of enmity, is a religious heart against the gospel.

Perhaps you think you're not guilty of that crime. You have many excuses for why you're not converted—even after hearing gospel sermons for decades. You say you *cannot* convert yourself, but you don't admit the deeper problem: you *will not* be converted. You *cannot* because you *will not*. *Your unwillingness is an active sin against God and His gospel.* You need to see that and become guilty under that truth. The sooner you stop excusing yourself, friend, the better. We can answer all your excuses, with the words of an old divine: "Save all your objections for the judgment day, and you will see what remains of them."

Have you ever looked upon Christ as being pierced by your sin? Such a sight kills all our self-righteousness, destroys all our so-called goodness. It makes us true penitents at the foot of the cross.

All evangelical repentance has a supernatural spring. The Spirit of grace and supplication authors it. Joseph Hart wrote,

*True religion is more than notion,
Something must be known and felt.*

If you do not look upon Christ now, whom you have pierced, the day is coming when Revelation 1:7 shall be fulfilled: "Every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him." One day you will be compelled to look upon Jesus Christ. But on that day, there will no longer be any time for mourning; God's fountain will be shut. Our hearts must be broken here by evangelical repentance; if it is not, be assured, our heart will be broken by eternal judgment hereafter.

Friend, you must begin *now* to reflect upon Him whom you have pierced; if you don't, you will begin

hereafter to reflect upon Him when it shall be eternally too late to be saved.

Dear believer, by grace you have been made one who looks to Christ here, and at times you long to behold Him hereafter. You long at times for the fulfillment of Hebrews 9:28: "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." One day you shall gaze on Him forever without any more mourning. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away; you shall be comforted with the oil of gladness. Forever you shall praise Christ, as you gaze upon the Lamb who sits in the midst of the throne. Forever, you shall take the crown from your own head and cast it at His feet, saying, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake" (Ps. 115:1).

Ask God for grace to encamp your soul at Calvary every day. Bring your sorrow for sin to Him and cling to His open fountain of blood and salvation. He has given you this imperative: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1). Drink deeply from that fountain. And one day you shall experience with all the redeemed the reality that "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev 7:16-17). Amen.