

Zechariah 12:10

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[0 : 00] Let us turn again to the chapter we read in Zechariah, and just the first part of verse 10.

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that when they look on me, on him whom they pushed, they shall mourn for him.

As we know, biblical prophecy is fascinating. And some of the prophecies, of course, they're quite easy to understand.

Others are quite hard to understand. And part of the problem is that some of the prophecies have been fulfilled, and it's very clear to us that they have been fulfilled.

And we can see that there are other prophecies that haven't yet been fulfilled. And so there is this tension that we have what has already been fulfilled and what hasn't been fulfilled.

[1 : 07] Now, this prophet Zechariah was a man who was born in exile, and his ministry was to go back to Jerusalem and to encourage the Jews who had returned from exile to go back and to complete or to restart the building project, the building of the temple and the building of the walls of Jerusalem, to rebuild the temple, because they had, as it were, laid down the tools for quite a while.

So this was part of Zechariah's work. He went back to encourage the people to get on with the building. Now, one of the features that we know about this prophet is that he speaks more or prophesies more about Christ than any other prophet bar Isaiah.

He speaks of Christ as the servant, of Christ as a branch. He prophesies about Christ riding on the donkey.

He prophesies about Christ being sold for 30 pieces of silver, of Christ being wounded in the house of his friends. And in the next chapter, of course, there's that great one about the sword being lifted up against the shepherd.

Now, this prophecy that we have here caused the Jews a lot of problems, because when it says here, I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, it's very obvious that it's the Lord who's talking.

[2 : 47] So that when they look on me, on him whom they have pushed, this really gave the Jews an incredible amount of difficulty in trying to understand what this was saying.

How could God be pushed? And this, of course, was a huge problem to them, because this is the Lord speaking.

Now, it's very easy for us now, with the full light of Revelation, to understand that prophecy, because it's been set out for us. We know, in fact, in John's Gospel, it tells us that they looked on him whom they pushed.

But before the coming of Jesus Christ, it would have been very hard for them to understand how could the living God be pushed? He could only be pushed by taking to himself something that could be pushed.

And, of course, we know that that's exactly what Jesus did, that he took our nature, and in our nature, he was pushed. Now, in the context that we have here, we find that the Lord is saying, first of all, and I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy.

[4 : 11] And I think we see here, of course, that there's this great, as it were, like a national spirit of repentance. And, you know, that's something I think we need to understand, that repentance is like faith.

Faith is a gift from God. That faith is saving faith. And so is repentance. And it is something that we need to pray for.

Lord, give us the spirit of repentance. Otherwise, we cannot truly repent. We do not see the heinousness and the level of our sin.

We can be troubled by a little by sin. But that real sense of how we have offended God, that real sense of our nothingness before God and what our sin deserves and our duty and response before God is something that's not clear to us.

And we often, maybe glibly, ask the Lord to forgive us our sins. And we do have an element of repentance. But that real repentance is something that is God-given.

[5 : 29] It is where God gives that spirit of repentance. And that is something that we should be praying for personally, individually, praying for it for our communities and praying for it, that spirit for our land.

That the Lord would pour out this spirit upon us. So that otherwise, we will never repent. Unless we are convinced and convicted by God.

Unless he reveals to us our sin. We cannot. We do not see the ultimate need. As I say, we can glibly, at a surface level, confess our sin.

But we don't get to the heart of it. Until that spirit is poured out. So we need to pray for that. And we find, of course, that this is what the Lord is here prophesying.

That he's going to give the spirit of prayer, the spirit of grace and pleas for mercy. And, of course, at the very heart of it, for the Jews, is our discovery of what they have really done.

[6 : 35] Where they have pushed the Son of God. Now, of course, that's speaking about what happened 2,000 years ago.

But, of course, we know that what happened 2,000 years ago is still absolutely relevant to us today. We're here because of that. We're here because of the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is something that people cannot remain neutral about. There are many things in life that we can have a position of neutrality.

And that we're not either this way or that, or we're not too much one way or too much another. This is something that demands a response. What are we going to do with Jesus? We cannot ignore him.

We cannot walk away from him. If we do, we've made a response. A response is one of rejection. We either accept or reject. There is no in-between. And so, the Word of God is forever challenging us and saying, look, you're either with me or you're against me.

[7 : 41] You're either on my side or you're not. You're either following me or you're not. You're either rejecting me or you're accepting me. And so, it is imperative that we lay to heart these truths.

So, focusing really on what it is saying here, where we find that there's this turning to the Lord, where it says, so that when they look on me, on him whom they have pushed.

That brings us back to the actual setting when Jesus was pushed upon the cross. And let us think for a little and try and apply it to ourselves.

Who looked upon Jesus as he was pushed? Well, the first obvious group of people who looked upon Jesus as he was pushed were the Jews.

They were the ones who were responsible for putting him to the cross. And they hated him. It wasn't that Jesus just irritated them or that Jesus annoyed them a wee bit. They hated him with a passion.

[8 : 49] And they wanted rid of him. And the very fact that he was crucified is evidence of that hatred. It wasn't good enough that he'd just be executed. That he would be beheaded.

Or that he would be hung. Put him to death in the most shameful, in the most excruciatingly painful, lingering way possible.

Maximize the torture. Make it so long and lingering that he will suffer for hours and hours and hours. That's what they thought of Jesus Christ.

They hated him. And what was the cause of their hatred? Well, the Bible tells us it was envy. And we've mentioned this on many other occasions. Always remember that envy is murderous in its intent.

That green-headed monster that cannot look at people reasonably or rationally. If a person has eyes and a heart of envy, their view is distorted.

[9 : 50] And that's what was wrong with the Jewish leaders. Their view of Christ was distorted because of the envy that was in their heart. And we're told that it was because of envy that they delivered him up.

And we can go through the Bible. We've mentioned it on many occasions. The list is as long as your arm of people like Abel, who was put to death because Cain was jealous of him.

Joseph was sold by his brothers because they were jealous of him. David was hounded by Saul for years because Saul was jealous of him. Daniel was put into the den of lions because the other leaders were jealous of him.

And here is Jesus on the cross because of the envy. And so these Jews hated him, hated him. And they were looking on him whom they had pushed.

And they were looking with a perverse satisfaction. It's extraordinary. There was a perverse satisfaction in their heart. We've got him at last.

[10 : 59] And you know, the spirit that put Christ on the cross is still here today. There are still many people in our land who their whole aim and motive in life is to obliterate the Christian cause.

They do not want the cause of Christ to flourish. If in God's purposes and in God's overruling providence, that it was now that Jesus was being born into this world, if it was now that the incarnation took place, Jesus would still be put to death.

Such is the hatred and such is the evil in the heart of man. And there are many people who, they hate Christianity.

It's illogical. It's twisted. It's perverse. When you think about it, there is no reason. Because when you analyze it, you say to yourself, it's madness. Nobody brought greater good into this world than Jesus Christ.

He was the only perfect man to walk on the face of this earth. Death. Only person in perfection since the fall. And the world couldn't cope with him. The world didn't want him.

[12 : 15] They wanted rid of him as soon as possible. And so we find that the Jews, and there were many of them there, and they were looking at him.

Him that they had pushed. And then there were the Roman soldiers. They were the ones who were carrying out the execution. That was what they were doing. And for them, an execution was just a normal daily event.

These were men who were so hardened by death and hardened to people's feelings that pity was not part of their makeup at all.

They would look on people in all their agonies. And in fact, for some of them, it was just a source of amusement. And it's one of the most disturbing things, that man who was made in the image of God, man who was a, and when I say man, I mean mankind, a human race, who were elevated above anything else within this creation, can go so low that their actions are that of, in fact, you would say, you can't even say they were the actions of a beast.

It becomes so perverse and so evil and so malicious and so twisted. And it's a reflection of the evil that really is within the human heart.

[13 : 45] There are many people who went through the war, and some of those who were in the very worst in Russia, the Eastern Front, and some of the Germans, have written about some of their experiences.

And they were amazed at themselves, at their own descent into total cruelty and just being void of feeling.

People who were normal, ordinary folk. And they descended through this spiraling descent. And afterwards, couldn't quite understand how they had behaved in the way and in the manner that they did.

But it shows us what is there within the human heart, just the utter and absolute depravity. So there were these soldiers, and they were looking upon Christ who was being pushed.

They were the ones who were physically pushing him, putting the nails into his hands and feet. And they were indifferent. It didn't mean anything to them.

[15 : 00] And it's still the same today with some people regarding Jesus. He doesn't mean anything to them. There are many people, and the gospel of Jesus Christ, it means nothing.

You can speak to them about Christ's love and about the salvation and the eternal life and all these things, and it doesn't mean they're completely indifferent.

They're not antagonistic, but they're not anything. They're just completely indifferent to Jesus. I hope there's nobody in that category here tonight.

Because you know it's possible to go through periods where you hear the gospel, but it's like it just brushes over you. It doesn't affect you.

It doesn't touch you. It's just like the wind that's passed. It's gone. It doesn't mean a thing. I hope there's nobody like that here. But there was somebody else amongst the Roman soldiers.

[16 : 02] There was one who was different, and that was the centurion. And of all the soldiers, he was the one who looked upon the one they pushed more than any. That was the centurion who would have been in charge of operations.

He was the one who was, and it tells us in the gospels, that he stood facing Christ. He wasn't with the other soldiers, because we're told that they were casting lots for his clothes.

But they were, this centurion stood apart, and he was facing the cross, and he was watching what took place. And remember that at the end, after the darkness, and after the earthquake, and after Jesus had spoken several times, and finally, with a cry of triumph, had committed himself into his father's hand.

And this centurion turned around, and he said, truly, this was the Son of God. There was a moment where the truth dawned into his heart, because he was somebody who stopped, and he considered, and he thought about what he was seeing, and he thought about what he was hearing, and he came to the conclusion that the claims that Christ had made were true.

And you know, there's always hope for somebody who will consider, somebody who thinks, somebody who will say, well, I must stop and think, and reflect, and dwell upon what this truth is actually saying.

[17 : 37] And so the centurion is such a person. He falls into that category. And I hope tonight that there might be someone here who will come to that conclusion, because you have been under the word.

Some of you have been under the word for years. I don't know where some of you actually stand or sit in relation to Jesus. It's a very personal matter, and I can't see into your heart any more than you can see into my heart.

But the Lord sees. The Lord knows. And you've got to ask yourself, where am I? It's not a matter of how it is with somebody else. It's how is it with me?

How is it between myself and the Lord? That is the most important question. Am I right with God through Jesus Christ the Lord?

But then there was somebody else there who was looking upon the one they pushed. And for this person, this must have been the most painfully difficult moment in her life.

[18 : 51] And that was Mary, the mother of Jesus. Because we read that Mary was part of the group of women that had made their way to the cross. Just as there were women, as somebody said, women were the last at the cross and women were first at the tomb.

Well, here is Mary. Now, God in his providence and in his grace chose Mary amongst all the women of the world to be the mother of Jesus.

And that great honor also came at a great cost. And you will remember that when Mary and Joseph went up to the temple when Jesus was just a baby, that Simeon, that old saint, took Jesus in his arms.

And he made many wonderful prophecies regarding Jesus. But he said to Mary, a sword shall push your own soul also.

And I'm sure Mary often thought about that because elsewhere it tells us that about the sayings of Jesus, it tells us she pondered these things in her heart.

[20 : 01] She thought about them. And I'm quite sure there were many times that Mary thought, I wonder what that really means. And there were many situations that Mary had to learn.

One of the things that she had to learn, that even although she was the mother of Jesus, she was not number one. There was somebody who had a greater place.

And that was Jesus with his Father in heaven. But this was the most agonizing moment for her.

Because there she stood below the cross, looking upon the one that they pushed. And there she saw her son. Jesus' friends had run away from him.

His disciples had fled. And yet Mary, she stood there below the cross. And so it must have been an incredibly difficult moment for her.

[21 : 00] And that even on the cross, Mary had to learn that at the end of the day, while she was still Jesus' mother, she needed Jesus as her Savior.

And Jesus addressed her from the cross as woman. And he was showing her however powerful and strong our relationship has been in this world.

You still need me as Savior. And you know, friends, that's how it is. We all need Jesus. It is the most supreme relationship of all.

Our relationships in this world are amazing. God has blessed with these things. But here is a relationship that affects all that we are forever and ever.

It is the most powerful relationship of all. And Jesus is teaching us that very thing. But then there was somebody else below the cross.

[22 : 05] and his heart would also have been so sore. And that is John. The disciples were told in the Bible whom Jesus loved.

Now it is obvious that Jesus loved all the disciples. And out of the, well, there were twelve disciples. There were eleven, really, that we could say that were of that group because Judas, Judas had a devil.

But out of the group there were three, Peter, James, and John who were privileged or Jesus took to himself even at a closer level. But out of that three there was one and that was John.

Now at the very beginning John, like the other disciples, they ran away. It tells us they all forsook him and fled. When Jesus was arrested they all ran away.

Now we know there was a returning, Peter returned because Peter followed afar off. But it is very evident here that John came back. The others, some of them were away, they went to their own homes, some of them were behind locked doors, but John was back.

[23 : 11] What took John back? Well, it was his love for Jesus. See, that is what love does. Love won't let go. Love can sometimes take a knock, it can take a battering, but love won't let go.

That is the beauty of love. That despite everything that happens and the blows and the batterings and whatever may come, love will cling on. And that is why John was back at the foot of the cross because he loved Jesus and he had to be there.

And it is very interesting that probably or arguably the two people who had the greatest place and it is not something that we can define or be 100% accurate about, but I am saying in all probability at an earthly level.

The two people, maybe Mary of Bethany could come into it as well, that Jesus had the greatest place for his mother and for John. And from the cross he put his mother into the care of John.

People assume that Joseph had subsequently died, that he died by this point and that that is why Jesus is committing his mother into the care of John because there was obviously in the heart of John something that Jesus recognized as a man of love, of a growing love.

[24 : 40] The son of thunder and he was in the early days but that love was beginning to come through more and more and more and it was developing under the teaching of Jesus and it continued to develop under the ministry of the Spirit and when you come to John's writings in his letters they are oozing love.

Love is at the very heart of what he writes. He is termed the apostle of love. And Jesus knew this is a man I am going to put my mother to.

This is a home. Here is somebody who will care for my mother because if Mary was a widow, widows didn't have any protection of rights in those days.

So Jesus was putting it and remember from the cross he said, woman, behold your son and he said to John, behold your mother. But then there was somebody else who looked on Jesus on the one they had pushed and this was the only one who didn't look from below.

This was somebody who was looking from a side-on position and that was one of the thieves. Probably they both looked upon Jesus because they were feroce side by side and Jesus was in the middle and as we know there was one who both of these men were criminals.

[26 : 01] One of them he continued in his hatred and he sided with the enemies of Jesus all the way. The other one remember how he turned to Jesus.

He was on the cross not like Jesus. Jesus was on the cross as an innocent man. He was on the cross because of his sins. He said that to the other one. We're here because we deserve to be here but this man has done nothing wrong.

But he didn't just see Jesus as man. He saw him as man but he saw him as more than man. He saw him as the incarnate Son of God. He saw him as the Savior.

He recognized on the cross this person beside me is the Savior of the world. There is a possibility that this criminal because the land Israel the land of Palestine wasn't a big place in all probability this criminal had heard Jesus along the way in Jesus' three years of public ministry.

There is every possibility that he heard him preach. He may have seen miracles he may have been part of the crowd at some stage and maybe what he had seen and what he had heard along the way they were lying there dormant and then on the cross he was saying and it's only it's quite remarkable because if there was any person who looked unlike the Son of God at that moment it was Jesus because he was so battered and bruised he had been so abused he was in such a mess physically that you would look and say you would almost turn away because the picture that was facing you was abhorrent and yet this criminal saw this is the Saviour and what hope that gives us and he turned to Jesus and he said Lord he said remember me when you come into your kingdom and Jesus turned to him and he said today today you will be with me in paradise have you seen

[28 : 21] Jesus as Saviour I hope you have have you seen him as a risen Saviour if not ask God to do for you what he did for that criminal on the cross God opened the eye of the criminal to see this is a Saviour he's able to save me despite all I've done and I'm right I'm at death's door I'm dying I know today I'm dying I don't know how many hours I've got left but I'm dying and he turned to Jesus and Jesus saved him Jesus will always save even at the very last second he will save the cry that comes to him there are many other things we could say but if we went to John's gospel there are two other characters that emerge and they also look upon the one whom they pushed these are what we would term secret disciples there was

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus who came to Jesus through the night and both these men came and they asked for the body of Jesus so they were looking upon the pushed body of Jesus as they took him down from the cross and as they dealt gently and carefully with him and buried him in the tomb Joseph's tomb and you know that's the amazing thing about a secret disciple you know a secret disciple can't stay a secret disciple forever both these men were told that that Joseph was somebody who had like so many of them for fear of the Jews he had kind of kept it quiet Nicodemus he came to Jesus and he came at night didn't want others to know and I believe the church the Christian church is full of what we term secret disciples people are trying to keep or they're ashamed or they're not sure or they're uncertain or they're afraid that if they came out in the Lord's side that they wouldn't keep going and they're just not there's all kinds of reasons but you know this the funny thing is the secret disciple is recognized by the believer other believers will say how he or she you you cannot help but see the work of grace in a person's heart or life even if you you might be here tonight and you think nobody knows and all around you there's people who know and they're waiting for a time for you to make that more public but the other thing is the

Lord often has a way of bringing these things out even although we may try and conceal them and hide them the Lord brings something or does something so that there comes a place and a point where we have to confess that Jesus is Lord and that's what happened for these two men and what a declaration what a time to come forward when Jesus his own disciples most of them were in behind locked doors afraid of the Jews these two men who had been following in secret emerged well we've seen a variety of people tonight who've been looking upon him whom they pushed what about you because let's remember all of us have pushed Jesus and you say to yourself how's that well there was only one reason why Jesus was pushed it was because of our sin that's why he was on the cross our sin put Jesus to the cross our sin pushed the son of God so all of us we have to look upon Jesus but you know the thing is this that you have to ask yourself this question do I believe the word of Jesus do I because I think there's an incredibly important question if you believe the word of

Jesus to be true why don't you act on it or do you not believe the word of Jesus it's one of the most solemn and hurtful things a person can do is to refuse to believe the word of another if you kept telling people this or sharing with people and you'd say to somebody you tell them this and you tell them that and they would always refuse to believe you you'd get really hurt and you'd say to yourself it's not fair nobody believes anything I say if your own family were dismissive of everything you said you'd get very hurt by it well here's Jesus the son of God and he says so much to us he tells us of the great glory that lies ahead he talks to us about eternal life he talks to us about the importance of receiving and accepting him in order to receive eternal life and to escape the judgment of

God do we really believe it well if we do and I hope we do then we've got to act upon it because it's madness to believe it and not to act upon it let us all look upon the one who was pushed that's a great invitation of the Bible look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth let's pray Lord our God tonight we pray that we might indeed look to Jesus that we might believe in him that we might learn from him and that our souls will be given light and life bless us richly in the gospel we pray bless the fellowship that we'll be meeting very shortly after in the hall and be with us throughout this week guiding us and keeping us in everything take away from us all our sin in Jesus name Amen