

Luke 1:67-80: ***The Value of the gift of our redeemer.***

As a pastor there are fewer encouragements that can be received than seeing someone who has been a Christian for a long time, have all of the fruit of maturity, yet still, are willing to grow and learn new things about God and apply those to their lives. These are people that still reflect on their sin, who see the discipline of God positively, for what it is intended for, for good, because *they know* that the goal is to emerge stronger on the other side.

J I Packer *"He that has learned to feel his sins, and to trust Christ as Saviour, has learned the two hardest and greatest lessons in Christianity."*¹

These are also Christians who have and continue to mine the depths of God, who live daily in the resurrection power of Christ; people whose lives appreciate the value of the gift of our redeemer...

There are people in this congregation like that...
And that is precisely Zechariah's experience and what led him to composing this wonderful hymn of praise, in Vv. 67-80 of chapter 1 in Luke.

Review

By way of review you'll recall Zechariah had been praying for a child...

1:13-17 *But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; **your prayer has been heard.** Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John..."*

Zechariah's prayer was heard by God, but he didn't believe! Even though he'd been praying – Zechariah doubted God. (1:18) He *"asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years"* and Gabriel rebukes Zechariah because of his unbelief and he's left mute - albeit temporarily.

Then last week we heard how Elizabeth, this older barren woman, gave birth to John, and all the whanau were gathered for his circumcision and tradition might have dictated he be named Zechariah junior, but Elizabeth said (1:60) *"No! He is to be called John"*, even though no other relative had this name. We know that didn't matter, because God overruled, and Zechariah having written the name on a tablet, confirmed this...

¹ 40 J.I. Packer Quotes to Inspire Your Faith (ibelieve.com)

Zechariah had 9 months of 'not speaking' before coming to the realisation that when God speaks and God he/we ought to listen, believe² and respond. Zechariah had learnt his lesson, sought to put it right, and responded with gratitude in worship.

Can we then hear this hymn of praise and the excitement, expectancy and the heart of Zechariah's words³, appreciating something of the long-awaited promise and gift of Jesus, **our** redeemer.

(READ 1:63-80)

He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." ⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. ⁶⁵ All the neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. ⁶⁶ Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him

⁶⁷ His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: ⁶⁸ "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed *them.⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David⁷⁰ (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), ⁷¹ salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—⁷² to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant,⁷³ the oath he swore to our father Abraham: ⁷⁴ to rescue **us** from the hand of **our enemies**, and to **enable us** to serve him without fear ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

⁷⁶ And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,⁷⁷ to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

(v.64) Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God...

What a turnaround, from initially, not believing...

Before we move on it's important that we see, Zechariah's song is the response of a man with a changed heart; 9 months of silence taught him a few lessons...some of us may identify with a few of these...

Zechariah's Change of Heart

² Faith is giving feet to that which we believe in faith...

³ Who is not ignorant nor arrogant but sees the Lord, sees his need of salvation, sees his own need for gratitude and worship, see his need for obedience

1. **When we pray, believe God hears...**

Zechariah was mute for 9 months to reflect on his unbelief. God did that: it was the consequences of unbelief. His question of Gabriel (1:18⁴), might be different to our questioning of God. However, what are the prayers we pray, and pray earnestly but then we're surprised when God answers them?

2. **Zechariah needed to go through the process of God's discipline for unbelief.**

God takes our unbelief seriously, so I do think we need to continually check for areas of unbelief. *"Without faith..."* God certainly forgives sin, but often unbelief will still come with consequences and those consequences may involve the Lord's discipline.

The discipline of the Lord is hard, but it is good for us (see James 1:2-4⁵). And sometimes we need that, in order to see him for who he is, that we might be made stronger...

3. **God will have his way; he will work out his plan...**

Zechariah's initial response to God had no bearing on God's greater plan. (Luke 1:20) *"And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."*

Whether we fall into line with God's plan, or not, he *"is faithful to complete the good work that he begins"* (Phil. 1:6)

And I think another valuable lesson was that Zechariah realised even when you've known and walked with God for a long time **you never stop learning and there's always room for growth.**

In those 9 months of silence, I'm certain these are some of the lessons Zechariah learnt. And the result is this marvellous song, where his eyes, ears and mouth were newly opened in awe of the greatness of God, the providence of God, the mercy of God and the **redemption** of God, through Christ.

Listen to this again: Zechariah wrote on the tablet *"...Immediately his **mouth was opened and his tongue set free**, and he began to speak, praising God. All the neighbors were filled with awe...*

⁴ *"How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."*

⁵ See also Prov. 3:11-12; Heb. 12:5-11;

Can we allow the word of God and something of Zechariah's newfound heart and passion for God, his faith and excitement of/for the Saviour to give us great encouragement to *be filled with awe* and praise him...?

Zechariah's Song Of Praise

(v. 68) *"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them.*

V. 68 sets the main theme, because the rest of the song is about God redeeming his people...

Having had his spiritual time out and a check-up from the heart up, and after 400 years of God-silence, Zechariah says you've arrived, God. You have done what you said you would do. I see it, I get it. **Praise you!**

Jesus hadn't even been born, yet, but Zechariah recognised (now) the historic, prophetic, spiritual enormity of this moment.

Notice he says *"he has come to his people and redeemed them"*, as in, he has arrived, it's happened. It's done...

want us to really see how powerful this was for Zechariah and for us.

"Redeemed..." The word *redeem* means "to buy back" usually by payment of a ransom. In Greek thinking *to redeem* is to be loosed as in to be freed from chains and being bound in slavery. The picture being the purchase of a slave's freedom. The owner of a slave - who had been sold on - would come back and offer a ransom, the owner would buy back his former slave to free them and *redeem them*.

The bible says Christ has come *"to give his life as a ransom for many"* (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45). God has bought you back at a *price*. That *price* being the cost of his only son's life. What has he bought you back from? Being a slave, to sin. Chained to sin. Christ has stepped into the gap for you so you and I avoid eternal consequences of our sin. Being what? Separation from God. ***"Praise be to the Lord...because he has come to his people and redeemed them.***

Now, if I say to you, Jesus Christ your redeemer, took upon himself your sin, offered his life so you might have life, he has been merciful to you, he has extended grace to you, he has redeemed you from an eternity in hell for an eternity present with him...

...he has paid in full the penalty for yours and my sin...*what does that do in your spirit?*

What that does in your spirit is an indication of your appreciation and gratitude...

"Amazing love, how can it be, that you my God should die for me!"

I love how Charles Spurgeon described his experience: *"My life was full of sorrow and wretchedness, believing that I was lost. But, oh, the blessed gospel of the God of grace came to me, and with it a sovereign word, 'Deliver him!' And I who was but a minute before as wretched as a soul could be, could have danced for the very merriment of heart. And as the snow fell on my road home from the little house of prayer, I thought every snowflake talked with me and told of the pardon I had found, for I was white as the driven snow through the grace of God"*⁶

Spurgeon recognised that only Christ could redeem him. But he needed to recognise **first**, that he was **lost** without him.

Worship, thankfulness, gratitude, reverence, praise, are more pronounced when we first are so constantly aware of how lost we are without Christ...it's why Jesus says *"remember me"* (Luke 22:19)

Zechariah's praise is the result of *being so impacted by God*, sending his son, the redeemer...the remaining verses of the song are Zechariah telling us **how** God will redeem his people.

Jesus, Our Redeemer

Vv.69-71 again... *"He has raised up **a horn of salvation** for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), **salvation from our enemies** and from the hand of all who hate us..."*

Note the powerful imagery here. The *"horn of salvation"* is who? Jesus. This is the only place in the NT where Jesus is described this way.

The image in view here is of massive oxen⁷ with unbreakable horns. V. 69. says Jesus is the horn of salvation, meaning he is strong, he is mighty, he has tremendous power, he is a deadly weapon!⁸

Why is this important? He is the horn of salvation because as our redeemer he uses his power to defeat the enemy and to protect his people.

⁶ <https://illustrationideas.bible/white-as-snow/> (Charles Haddon Spurgeon, "Footsteps of Mercy," Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, vol. 15, accessed December 31, 2019)

⁷ (Ps. 22:21) *"Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen"*

⁸ If we think Jesus is all soft and passive think again, at the name of Jesus, demons flee...read Revelation to see what happens at the end...Jesus is no softy!

Who are his people? His people are Israel, and all those who know Christ as Savior and Lord.

What will God do, for his people? Look at v.71. God, through Jesus our redeemer, will provide *"salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us..."*

Explain this: whilst God can certainly do just that this side of Jesus' return, what Zechariah primarily means here is that Christ will one day literally destroy the enemy of Israel, and all who oppose and hate God and follow Christ, when Christ returns...

V. 71 tells us Jesus our redeemer provides salvation from our enemies and from those who hate us, but, look at Vv. 74 & 75. Zechariah's words show us that the goal of Jesus being our redeemer is (v. 74) *"to rescue us (redeem) from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear"⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

Serious business and **more relevant than we think**. Because Christ is our redeemer, we trust he has all things in hand, so whatever is going on...we do not fear!⁹ Fear and faith are incompatible¹⁰.

The *"enemies"* Zechariah had in mind were political, physical and spiritual. No different today...

In all cases it is still Satan and his demonic forces that are behind everything opposed to God. And we – as Paul said in Eph. 6 – *"war not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces of evil"*.

Satan is a real and present enemy. He is the god of this world, blinding the minds of unbelievers. For what reason? To stop them from seeing, hearing and responding to the light of Christ (see 2 Cor. 4:4).

He is a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Christ our redeemer ultimately¹¹ frees us from those forces....Z's praise... John Piper describes the scene of Zechariah's song like this: *"the scene would be of a distant hill at dawn, with the sun about to rise behind the hill, sun rays shooting up. And all alone, silhouetted on the hill in the centre of the picture...is a magnificent wild ox standing with his back (2m) tall and the crown of his head (3m) tall. On both sides of his head there is a horn curving out and up (2m) long and (300mm) thick at*

⁹ That Christ has come means we can serve him without fear

¹⁰ God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of love power and a sound mind...

¹¹ Not necessarily in this life but absolutely in the end...

the base. He stands there sovereign and serene, facing the Northern sky with his massive neck slightly (tilted), and impaled at the end of his right horn, hangs a huge lion, dead”¹²

“Praise be to the Lord...” that in Christ there is rescue and refuge from the devourer, Satan¹³. This is the promise for all those who commit their lives to Christ.

In the meantime, like then for Zechariah, we today can look forward to Jesus’ coming again and can give praise to the Lord that our redeemer, **Christ, is with us**. And because we know he is we can serve him **“without fear”**.

How is it that we can serve God *“without fear?”¹⁴*

...“fear not, I have redeemed you, I have called you by name...” (Isa. 43:1f)¹⁵

The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? (Ps. 27:1)¹⁶

What might you/we be fearful of, right now? Your faith is not in that which you fear, your faith and belief and trust is in the power of Christ our redeemer. Look to him, set eyes on him, Christ, the truth, (look at v.78) *“the rising sun (who) will come to us from heaven to (v. 79) shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”* Bring before him that which you are fearful of or about, and listen to what he says...

Jesus is our redeemer now, but we’re yet to really see the full impact and power of, our being redeemed...¹⁷ Christ, will one day return. All that is and we see in the world right now, all that we fear and worry about¹⁸, will be reconciled one way or the other when Christ returns.

It’s our confidence in that truth that means we can *“serve him without fear...”* I love this hymn of Zechariah’s. I have asked myself: *imagine staying faithful to God through that time of 400 years of silence, **hearing nothing** from the Lord. Nothing. Almost as if God may have forgotten them...he didn’t!*

¹² Adapted from: [Jesus Is the Horn of Salvation | Desiring God](#)

¹³ Heb. 2:14-15. *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

¹⁴ Aphobos = without cause to be afraid

¹⁵ To Israel first but I take this to be a universal promise. It has to be enough!

¹⁶ *“Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” ...my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. (1 Cor. 15:55, 58)*

¹⁷ This is the great hope of the Christian walk and life

¹⁸ But not ignorant of...

Zechariah had a technical glitch, but he was faithful to God. I imagine faithful followers of God at that time praying fervently '*God send the Saviour, send the redeemer...Lord you say this in your word...*' And he comes. Wow!

Can we now see why Zechariah would burst out in praise?!

He is an example of someone who doesn't rest on the spiritual past or who is willing to go down the spiritual motorway on cruise control, but rather, wants to know the Lord more deeply.

He worshipped, and praised because he saw, and felt and appreciated the **value of the gift of God**, Christ the redeemer. This was/is huge!

Think for a moment about the value of the gifts you've been given and you've given...*where is the value?*

I've been given some awesome gifts: this last Christmas my grandson Jayden gave me, one of the most special gifts ever. Several different parcels – plates, serving bowls, recipe, ingredients to make a curry, and even a mug for a cup of tea to wash it all down. The thought and planning we're all part of this special gift. I really appreciated that. The value is what is in behind the gift...¹⁹

Thought about this: how much more do I appreciate the value of the gift of Christ, do I appreciate the cross...?

"Praise be to the Lord..." that in Christ, this gift of all gifts, ...there is forgiveness of the disease of sin²⁰, and there is rescue and protection from the devourer, Satan²¹. This is the promise for all those who give their lives to Christ. And is why, we can *"serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days"*

Years ago Salvation Army officer, Captain Shaw, went to India as a medical missionary to a leper colony. His eyes welled with tears as he saw three lepers who were prisoners, with their hands and feet bound by chains that cut into their diseased flesh. Shaw turned to the guard and said, "Please unfasten these chains." "But it isn't safe," the guard replied. "These men are not just lepers; they're dangerous criminals." "I'll be responsible; they're suffering enough," Shaw said, as he took the keys, and carefully removed the chains and treated their bleeding ankles and wrists.

About two weeks later Captain Shaw had his first reservations about freeing the criminals. He had to make an overnight trip and feared leaving his wife and child alone. But his wife insisted she wasn't afraid; God would protect her. So the doctor left. The next morning when Mrs. Shaw went to her door, she was stunned to see the three

¹⁹ That he thought of doing this for me...?

²⁰ Heb. 9:26. *But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself*

²¹ Heb. 2:14-15. *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

criminals lying on her steps. One explained, "We know the doctor go. We stay here all night so no harm come to you." That was their response to the doctor's act of love for them—to serve him freely out of gratitude.

That should be our response to God freeing us from bondage to sin—to give our lives in service to Him.²²

Conclusion

My hope is that it won't take 9 months of being silenced to hear God's truth to us and believe what it says, follow what it says. He has redeemed, you.

I see in Zechariah's experience and song a valuable teaching:

- As we pray, we pray trusting God...
- ...we pray trusting in God's faithfulness and God's plan of salvation which will be worked out in spite and despite us...
- ...we praise him knowing that Christ our redeemer is with us, for us...
- ...we praise him because of the value of the gift of Christ our redeemer.

That's what Zechariah came to realise and so must we.

²² [Lesson 6: The Tender Mercy of Our God \(Luke 1:57-80\) | Bible.org](#)