

Title: **FALSE DREAMS AND VAIN COMFORT**
Text: Zechariah 10:2-3
Subject: *God's Curse upon False Prophets*
Date: Sunday Morning — May 6, 2007
Tape # Zechariah #54
Reading: *Ezekiel 34:1-31*

Introduction:

In the seventh chapter of John's Gospel the Holy Spirit tells us about a great multitude returning from Jerusalem. They had been in Jerusalem to observe the feast of tabernacles. They had gone through all the rites and ceremonies of their now empty religion. They had done all that they knew to do. They had done all that their religious leaders told them to do. But their religion had left them empty and their souls were still thirsty. Has your religion left you thirsty?

You have done all that preachers have told you to do. You have been baptized. You have joined the church. You observe the ordinances. You have been told that you are saved, that your sins are forgiven, that you are a child of God. You sing with the saints of God...

“Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine,
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchased of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood!”

But your soul is still empty. **Your religious bed** of ease is too short to stretch yourself upon it. **Your covering is a righteousness** that is too narrow to wrap yourself in it. **You possess none of the peace you hoped**

¹ Every time God allows me to preach, let me be certain that I...

1. Deliver a message. — Don't ramble.
2. Deliver His message.
3. Tell only what I know by experience.
4. Deliver the message in the power of the Holy Spirit.
5. Make Christ the object of my message.
6. My motive is the glory of God.
7. Deliver the message in the language of the people.
8. The message grips my own heart. — If it doesn't grip my heart, it won't grip anyone else's heart!
9. Preach in love.
10. Expect people to believe.

for; and your comfort is vain comfort. Has your religion left you thirsty? Hear what the Lord Jesus Christ says to you. — *“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink”* (John 7:37). Has your religion left you thirsty? Come to Christ this day, and drink of the life-giving Fountain.

All that you can ever need to quench your soul’s thirst is abundantly provided in Christ. Christ’s atonement brings peace to the conscience. His righteousness meets the demands of God’s holiness. His grace is sufficient. He is able to save the chief of sinners. The Lord Jesus Christ alone is the sinner’s hope and consolation. Though your soul is utterly famished with thirst, the Lord Jesus Christ says, *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.”* Oh, come to Him and drink! — *“Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation”* (Isaiah 12:3).

Every needy, thirsty soul is welcome. Come, oh come and welcome to Jesus, weary, thirsty sinner! It is not your goodness, but your sinfulness that makes you fit to come. Are you weary with sin, weary with empty religion? Are you thirsty for life? Whoever you are, wherever you are, the call is to you. — *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.”*

You must come to Christ, not to religion, not to works, not to priests, not to soul-winners, not to the church, not to the ordinances, not to the doctrine. These things will all leave you empty and thirsty. You must come to Christ himself. You must come to that personal, living Redeemer, who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree. The bleeding, dying, risen Son of God is the only Star of Hope for perishing sinners, the only Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings. Oh, may God give you grace to come and drink this very day!

No waiting or preparation is even hinted at. Anyone may drink of this water who will drink. A fool, a harlot, a thief, a murderer is welcome to drink. The sinfulness of your character does not bar you from the gracious Savior. It only enhances your need. My friend, the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Fountain of Life for your soul. Hear the blessed Redeemer’s voice as he speaks, and obey it. Are you thirsty? The Son of God says, *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.”*

ZECHARIAH 10:2-3

With that as my introduction, I want you to turn with me to Zechariah 10:2-3. The title of my message is **False Dreams and Vain Comfort**. Here, in verse 1, the Lord God our Savior, the very same Savior who cried, “*If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink,*” bids us ask of Him “*rain in the time of the latter rain,*” and promises to give to all who ask of Him, “*showers of rain.*” Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ freely gives to all who seek Him “*showers of blessing*” (Ezekiel 34:26). — “*He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth*” (Psalm 72:26). **Now, look at our text, and you will see why there is such a drought in the souls of men.**

(Zechariah 10:2-3) For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because *there was* no shepherd. (3) Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.

FALSE PROPHETS

First, the Lord God declares that eternity bound sinners have been deceived by false gods and false shepherds, who have given them a false peace. — “*For the idols (the gods of man’s making) have spoken vanity, and the diviners (the preachers who speak for the idols) have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd*” (v. 2). **Israel had been brought into Babylonian captivity because they had been duped with false religion.** Because their “*diviners*” (their idol worshipping, idol serving prophets and priests) told them “*false dreams,*” the children of Israel bowed to and worshipped idols.

Our Savior warns us repeatedly and throughout the Scriptures to “**beware of false prophets.**” They come in “*sheep’s clothing,*” transforming themselves into ministers of righteousness; but inwardly they are “*ravening wolves.*”

Thursday afternoon I had lunch with Pastor Gary Perkins and a friend of his. In the course of our conversation, Bro. Perkins’ friend asked me, “Why

do you think churches today are like they are?” I answered immediately, “The churches of our day are in the shape they are in because the teachers, preachers and religious leaders of our day are self-serving false prophets who fleece the sheep rather than feeding the sheep, men who serve their own lusts and line their own pockets, sacrificing the souls of men to the idols they serve.”

The contemptible religion practiced in our day (And the religion of our day is contemptible!) is the result of blind men following blind preachers in the practice of idolatry.

These “diviners,” as God calls them here, are men of whom God speaks plainly. He tells us that they are blind, without understanding.

- They turn each to their own way, each one seeking his own gain.
- They care nothing for the flock, but make merchandise of the souls of men.
- They pretend to be great soul-winners, but are really soul-destroyers.
- They do not search for lost sheep, but for unsuspecting souls that can be easily duped.
- They do not seek the salvation of men’s souls, but the money in their pockets.
- Feeding themselves, they fleece the sheep, and heal their wounds slightly, saying, “*Peace, peace, when there is no peace!*”
- They willingly distort the Revelation of God and proclaim as the truth of God the false dreams of their own depraved hearts.

Lest anyone imagine that I am being too hard in my denunciation of false prophets, hear what God himself says about them (Isaiah 56:10-11; Jeremiah 10:21; 23:1-3; 50:6; Acts 20:27-31; 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Jude 1:4, 11-13).

(Isaiah 56:10-11) His watchmen *are* blind: they are all ignorant, they *are* all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. (11) Yea, *they are* greedy dogs *which* can never have enough, and they *are* shepherds *that* cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.

(Jeremiah 23:1-2) Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. (2) Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited

them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.

(Jeremiah 50:6) My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away *on* the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace.

(Acts 20:27-31) For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. (28) Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (29) For **I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.** (30) **Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.** (31) Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

(1 Timothy 4:1-5) Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; (2) Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; (3) Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. (4) For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: (5) For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

(Jude 1:4) For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Jude 1:11-13) Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. (12) These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds *they are* without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by

the roots; (13) Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

FALSE DREAMS

Second, these false prophets delude and destroy the souls of men with their false dreams. — “*The diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams.*”

The prophecy made by the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 4 tells us that in these last days the world shall be inundated with the very same kind of preachers as those prophets and priests, the “*diviners*,” who led Israel into Babylon with their lies. And Paul’s prophecy has come to pass in our day.

(2 Timothy 4:1-5) I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; (2) Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. (3) **For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;** (4) **And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.** (5) But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Around the world, particularly in our own country, and specifically in Danville, Kentucky, religious people gather every week in solemn assemblies, in the name of Christ, to worship God. They read the Bible, say their prayers, invoke God’s blessing, and give their money. They are devoted. They are sincere. But they are lost! They have faith; but it is a false faith. They have hope; but their hope is a delusion. Having been led and taught by blind and ignorant men. — “*They will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts...they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears...They turn away their ears from the truth and (have been) turned into fables.*”

I am not talking about Papists, Hindus, Buddhist, and Mohammedans. I am talking about men and women who profess to know, worship, trust, and serve the living God by faith in his Son, Jesus Christ, through the power of

the Holy Spirit. Our friends, relatives and neighbors, having turned away from the truth have been turned unto fables.

FOUR FABLES

You know what a fable is. It is a brief story, dreamed up by a man to teach a moral, ethical lesson, but factually it is a lie. Here are **four common religious fables**, dreamed up by men to teach people moral principles. They are universally embraced, proclaimed and defended. These four fables will be presented throughout this city, across this country and around the world today as the very truth of God. But they are in fact lies which are damning to the souls of all who believe them.

1. “God loves everyone.”
2. “God wills the salvation of all men, without exception. He wants everyone to be saved.”
3. “The Lord Jesus Christ shed his blood and died to redeem and save all people.”
4. “The Holy Spirit of God is doing all that he can to save all people. He strives to save everybody.”

The whole religious world, to one degree or another, declares that salvation is accomplished by the will of man, the worth of man, and the work of man. But the Word of God declares that salvation is by the will of God alone, the worth of Christ alone, and the work of the Holy Spirit alone.

FOUR QUESTIONS

Listen carefully. — **If these things, so commonly and so universally embraced, believed and taught throughout the religious world** (Baptists and Papists — Charismatic and Non-charismatic — Protestants and Pentecostals — Fundamentalists and Liberals — Russellites and Campbellites — Mormons and Methodists), **are true**...

- If God loves all men without exception...
- If God wills the salvation of all men without exception..
- If Christ died to redeem all men without exception...
- If the Holy Spirit calls all men without exception,

I ask you to answer these four questions.

1. **What does the love of God have to do with anyone's salvation?**— **Absolutely nothing!** — If God loves all men alike, then when you tell me that God loves me, you've told me nothing. The love of God is totally insignificant and absolutely meaningless. If that is the case, then...
 - There is **no distinction** between God's love for the saved and his love for the lost. — He loves people who are suffering His wrath in hell just as fully as he does those who are glorified in heaven! — Either that, or God is mutable, changeable, and fickle, like man!
 - There is **no power** in the love of God to save and keep his own. His love really doesn't matter. — It is nothing but a helpless, frustrated, defeated passion in the heart of *poor God!*
 - There is **no comfort** in the love of God. — How can anyone derive even the slightest comfort from a love that is helpless and useless?
 - There is **no motivation** in the love of God. — If God's love for me is the same as his love for Judas, Pharaoh, and Cain, why should I love, serve, and seek to honor Him? — Indeed, if the difference between me and those who are damned is me, God ought to serve me! He ought to praise me!

2. If the Lord God wills the salvation of all and some are not saved, as is the case, **What does the will of God have to do with anyone's salvation?** — **Absolutely nothing!** — If that were the case, God's will would be just as irrelevant and meaningless as yours or mine. But that is not the case. He declares, "*I will do all my pleasure!*" — "*Our God is in the heavens. He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased!*" — "*Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the sea, and in all deep places!*"

3. If the Lord Jesus Christ shed his blood for all alike, if he died to redeem and save all men and some go to hell anyway, **What does the blood of Christ have to do with anyone's salvation?** — **Absolutely nothing!** — If, as is universally asserted, Christ died to save all men and some are not saved, then that blasphemous absurdity must follow that Christ died in vain for some, his blood was a meaningless waste, He suffered and died for nothing, His death really has nothing at all to do with anyone's salvation! — Horrid blasphemies these are; but they are inescapable conclusions that must be made, if we entertain the notion that Christ died for the multitudes who are in hell. — If Christ died for all men

without exception, if He shed His blood to save the entire human race, then the shedding of his blood was...

- An Atonement that does not atone!
 - A redemption that does not redeem!
 - A ransom that does not ransom!
 - A deliverance that does not deliver!
 - A sin-offering that does not satisfy!
 - A propitiation that does not propitiate!
4. If God the Holy Spirit is gracious alike to all, if He calls all alike, if His power is exercised upon all alike for the saving of their souls and some yet perish in unbelief under the wrath of God and are forever lost, **What does the power, grace, and call of the Holy Spirit have to do with anyone's salvation?** — **Absolutely nothing!** — If the Spirit of God strives to regenerate and save all men alike, if He seeks to bring every man and woman in the world to life and faith in Christ, and some are not saved, then...
- He has no power to give life to anyone!
 - He has no grace to regenerate anyone!
 - He has no ability to save anyone!

To say that God loves all people alike, that He wills the salvation of all, that Christ died to redeem and save all, that the Holy Spirit strives to save all is to declare, "Salvation is not of the Lord at all, but rather it is the response and work of man that saves!" It is to declare, "God has done all that He can do, but salvation is altogether up to you!"

FOUR FACTS

Now, I want, by the grace and power of God the Holy Spirit, to declare, in plain, simple, unmistakable terms, the teaching of this Book about these things. I pray that God will speak through me and cause you to hear what he has to say.

1. **The love of God has everything to do with our salvation.** — **It is the very foundation of our redemption** (Jeremiah 31:3; 1 John 3:1; 4:7-10, 19).

(Jeremiah 31:3) The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*,

Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

(1 John 4:19) We love him, because he first loved us.

How I wish I had the words and the ability to preach the love of God! It is infinite love! Everlasting love! Indestructible love! Love that “*passeth understanding!*” And it is saving love (Ephesians 2:4-5).

(Ephesians 2:1-5) And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins: (2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved!)

God’s love is not helpless, but almighty! God’s love is never frustrated, but always effectual! God’s love is not weak, but strong and saving!

- The love of God is in Christ.
- The love of God is immutable!—It does not change! Those who are loved of God are loved of God forever!
- “*God is love!*” We rejoice to declare it! — But the Lord our God is also a God of burning, unquenchable wrath!

“*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!*” — “*Our God is a consuming fire!*” — He declares, “*Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*” There are in this world vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy, vessels of mercy prepared by God for glory, and vessels of wrath fitted by unbelief and sin for destruction (Psalms 11:4-7; 7:11-13; 5:5; 2:12).

(Psalms 2:12) Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.

(Psalms 5:5) The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

(Psalms 7:11-13) God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry *with the wicked* every day. (12) If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. (13) He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.

(Psalms 11:4-7) The LORD *is* in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne *is* in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. (5) The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. (6) Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: *this shall be* the portion of their cup. (7) For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

If you imagine that God loves every person without exception, how can you explain...

- The flood? — “*Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord!*”
- Sodom? — “*The Lord saved Lot!*”
- Hell? — “*I never knew you!*”

“But,” I hear someone say, “God is no respecter of persons.” Right you are. To say that God loves all men alike is to declare that he is a respecter of persons, for he takes men to heaven only because of something they do by which they distinguish themselves from others!

If what I have shown you from the Word of God about the love of God offends you, it is because your heart is evil. An honest heart knows that none of us deserve or merit the love of the thrice holy Lord God. Only in Christ can the holy God love an unholy object, because in Christ the unholy are made perfectly holy!

2. **The will of God alone is the cause of our salvation in Christ** (John 1:11-13; Romans 9:16).

(John 1:11-13) He came unto his own, and his own received him not. (12) But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: (13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

(Romans 9:16) So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.

If salvation depended upon the will of man no one would ever be saved. What is the condition of man's will? It is the same as the man's condition.—Spiritually dead! — Depraved! — Perverse! — In Bondage!

(John 5:40) And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

(John 6:44) No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

What does the Book say?

- It was not my will that brought me to Christ, but God's will (James 1:18; Ephesians 1:3-5, 9, 11; John 6:37-39).
 - If God almighty willed the salvation of all, all would be saved (Isaiah 14:24; 46:9-11; Daniel 4:34-35). — "*The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely, as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have thought, so shall it stand!*"
3. **The blood which Christ shed at Calvary, the death he died as the sinner's Substitute upon the cursed tree was an almighty, effectual atonement for sin** (Isaiah 53:9-11; Romans 5:10-11). — "The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ shall never be discovered a miscarriage!" (Pro. Thomas Lawrence)

(Isaiah 53:9-11) And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth. (10) Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. (11) He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

We do not make atonement by believing on Christ, we receive the atonement he made!

(Romans 5:10-11) "For if, when we were enemies, we were

reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (11) And not only *so*, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

CHRISTIAN OR PAGAN?

Tell me what you believe about the death of Christ, why he had to die, what he accomplished in his death, what purpose his death served, and I will tell you what you think of Christ. This, right here, will determine whether you are a Christian or a pagan, an believer or an idolater! What do you see in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ?

1. **The cause of our Savior's death was the love of God for His elect** (John 3:16).

Could we with ink the oceans fill,
And were the sky of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade—
To write the love of God above
Would drain the oceans dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky!

2. **The reason why Christ had to die was that God might be just in the exercise of mercy and grace to the saving of our souls** (Romans 3:24-26). — “*By mercy and truth iniquity is purged!*”

Illustration: Daniel and Darius' Dilemma

(Romans 3:24-26) Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

3. **The purpose served in our Savior's death was the accomplishment of a work no one else and nothing else could accomplish — The putting away of sin!**

- All the Jewish sacrifices offered under the law could never put away sin (Hebrews 10:1-9).

Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain
Could give the guilty conscience peace, or wash away the stain.
But Christ, the heavenly Lamb, takes all our sin away,
A Sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they!

- The works of the law can never put away sin (Romans 8:3-4).
- God himself, who created the world by the word of his mouth, could not put away one sin without the shedding of Christ's blood (Hebrews 9:22).
- But Christ, the God-man, put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself (Hebrews 1:3).

I am telling you that the death of Christ was more than an attempt to save. His death upon the cross was the accomplishment of redemption for God's elect! What did the Lord Jesus Christ actually accomplish by his death upon the cursed tree? Hear what God has to say about the matter (Hebrews 10:12-14, 17-20; 9:12, 24-26; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18; 1 John 1:7, 9; Isaiah 53:4-6, 8, 10-12). Assuming that God is true, and that His Word is true, it is not possible for a man to both believe the testimony of Holy Scripture and believe that Christ shed his blood to redeem all men (John 10:11-16, 26).

Illustration: *The Paschal Lamb for Israel Alone*

4. **Regeneration, the new birth, eternal life is the gift and work of God the Holy Spirit, the operation of his omnipotent grace** (Psalms 65:4; 110:3; John 3:5-8).

Anyone who is familiar with the Word of God knows that all men and women have some awareness of God, of sin, of life, of death, of judgment, and of eternity (Romans 1:18-20; 2:14-15). Man is, by nature, a very religious creature (John 5:39-40). And unsaved religious people often recognize and believe some true facts about God and Christ and salvation

(John 3:2). But the quickening, regenerating work of God the Holy Spirit is much, much more than the mere revelation of facts. He reveals Christ (Galatians 1:15-16). He gives life!

- God the Holy Spirit gives impotent, dead sinners life (John 3:5-8; Ephesians 2:1-5).
- He convicts and convinces sinners of sin, righteousness, and judgment, revealing Christ in the heart (John 16:8-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-10; Zechariah 12:10).
- The Spirit of God effectually draws sinners to Christ and makes them willing to come (John 6:44-45; Psalm 110:3).

VAIN COMFORT

Third, if you will look back to Zechariah 10:3, you will see that the Lord God, our blessed Savior, declares that all who proclaim the dreams, the religious fables, of free-will, works religion, saying “*Peace, peace when there is no peace,*” do so only to the ruin of men’s souls. — “*They comfort in vain.*” Oh, how vain, how empty, how meaningless religion without Christ is! How utterly empty free-will, works religion is! Multitudes live in the delusion of false dreams, vainly comforting themselves with the delusion that something they have done, or something they are doing gives them acceptance with God.

I am sure that there is no one here who would be so foolish as to imagine that they are saved by works. But, I do not doubt, I am speaking to some who do, just as foolishly and vainly, imagine that they must, in some measure, supplement the work of Christ.

- By doing something to make up for your sins.
- By doing something to make yourself truly righteous and holy.
- By doing something to earn a greater reward in heaven.
- By doing something that will cause God to look on you in the day of judgment, and say, “*Well done.*”

If you entertain such hope, your religion will, as **John Trapp** put it, “finally serve you as Absalom’s mule served her master; whom she left at his greatest need, to hang between heaven and earth, as rejected of both. Lo such are all creature comforts, golden delusions, lying vanities, apples of Sodom, neither true nor yours.”

You have been brought, not into “*the glorious liberty of the children of God,*” but into religious bondage by false dreams and vain comfort, just as the Jews went their way into Babylon, “*as a flock.*” Like them, your religion has left you “*troubled* (looking down, beaten, depressed, brow-beaten), *because there was no shepherd,*” only false shepherds. — “*Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter*” (Isaiah 56:11).

God says, in Zechariah 10:3, “*Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats,*” identifying the imposter pastors as goats, not sheep, against whom his furious wrath burns. — “*Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves!*” (Ezekiel 34:2). “*My people*” he says, “*hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray*” (Jeremiah 50:6).

(Ezekiel 34:7-10) Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; (8) *As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock;* (9) Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; (10) Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.

As Job asked Zophar, let every sinner concerned for his soul say to the preachers of Arminian, free-will, works religion, “*How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?*” (Job 21:34). Oh, may God the Holy Spirit sweep away your refuge of lies (Isaiah 28:14-20).

(Isaiah 28:14-18) Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which *is* in Jerusalem. (15) Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: (16) Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a

stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. (17) Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. (18) And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

(Isaiah 28:20) For the bed is shorter than that *a man* can stretch himself *on it*: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself *in it*.

God has drawn the line in the sand. Who is on the Lord's side? There is no middle ground. This is the doctrine of Holy Scripture — "**Salvation is of the LORD!**" That work of grace, which God has wrought in us is the result of...

- God's sovereign, eternal, distinguishing love for us!
- God's eternal election of us unto salvation!
- Christ's effectual redemption of our souls!
- The Holy Spirit's irresistible grace (Romans 8:28-31).

To God be the glory both now and forever!

DIVINE VISITATION

But, blessed be his holy name forever, our great God, the God of all grace, will not allow his sheep to be destroyed by the false dreams of false shepherds. **The fourth thing revealed in our text is this.** — "**The LORD of hosts hath visited his flock!**" It is not possible for God's elect to be everlastingly deceived by Arminian, free-will, works religion. The only ones who shall follow antichrist to hell are "*they whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world*" (Revelation 17:8).

(Zechariah 10:3) Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.

I remind you again, this prophecy is altogether about the coming of Christ and the salvation of God's elect by him in this gospel age. Just as

he visited the house of Judah and brought his people out of Babylon and brought them home to their own land, he visits his own in omnipotent saving grace and brings them out of Babylon and home to himself by his dear Son (1 Peter 2:24-25).

(1 Peter 2:24-25) Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. (25) For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

And “*the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah,*” by sending the Gospel to them in the power of his Spirit, making it effectual to their souls (1 Thessalonians 1:2-6).

(1 Thessalonians 1:2-6) We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; (3) Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; (4) Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. (5) For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. (6) And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.

When he does, when the Lord God saves his own, he makes saved sinners triumphant over their foes, “as his goodly horse in the battle.” He takes his poor, weak sheep and makes them valiant for truth, riding triumphantly through the earth upon them (Job 39:19-25; Revelation 6:1-2).

(Job 39:19-25) Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? (20) Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils *is* terrible. (21) He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in *his* strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. (22) He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. (23) The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. (24) He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that *it is* the sound of the trumpet. (25) He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he

smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

(Revelation 6:1-2) And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. (2) And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

May He be pleased to visit you this day in almighty, saving grace, giving you life and faith in him, “*to the praise of the glory of his grace.*”

Amen.