

The unfolding of your words gives light.

To Seek and to Save

An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke

⁶⁷And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied^a, saying:
⁶⁸“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel^b,
For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people^c,

^a 1:67 **Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied.** The household of Zacharias is the only entire family recorded in Scripture to have prophesied because they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Like Mary’s song, the worship of Zacharias was not quoting long texts of Scripture but rather Scriptural thoughts overflowing from his heart. God had certainly gotten His way with Zacharias though His judgment. As Psalm 119:71 says, “It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.”

^b 1:68 **Blessed be the Lord God of Israel.** To praise or bless the Lord is the standard start of a Hebrew statement of worship. Just observe some of the words in New Testament letters:

- Romans 1:8: “I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all...”
- 1 Corinthians 1:4: “I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus”
- 2 Corinthians 1:3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort”
- Ephesians 1:3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ”
- Philippians 1:3: “I thank my God in all my remembrance of you”
- Colossians 1:3: “We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you”
- 1 Thessalonians 1:2: “We give thanks to God always for all of you...”
- 2 Thessalonians 1:3: “We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren...”
- 1 Timothy 1:12: “We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers”
- 2 Timothy 1:3: “I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day”
- Philemon 1:4: “I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers”
- 1 Peter 1:3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”

The lesson is that you ought to have something to say following the words, “Bless the Lord for...” If I say, “Bless the Lord right now for all you know about Him” you would have to draw on all you have been thinking about Him. How would you do?

^c 1:68 **For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people.** Our normal use of the word “visited” brings a picture to mind of the Lord just “dropping by.” That is actually not far from the common New Testament usage. Jesus used this word to describe those who will visit those who are sick and in prison (Matthew 25:36, 43). It usually means more than a friend stopping over for coffee. It is more like a friend stopping over to save your life. That is what Paul had in mind when he decided to visit the churches in Asia he had started (Acts 15:36) and what James meant when he taught that pure religion motivates us to visit widows and orphans in their distress (James 1:27).

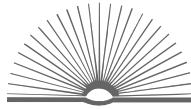
Certainly Zacharias’ reference to redemption was spoken without a full understanding of the cross, but the Old Testament Scriptures show the Lord as the sin bearer and the Redeemer even

*The Gospel of Luke
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The unfolding of your words gives light.

⁶⁹ And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of David His servant^a--
⁷⁰ As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old^b--
⁷¹ Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES,
And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US^c;
⁷² To show mercy toward our fathers,
And to remember His holy covenant^d,
⁷³ The oath which He swore to Abraham our father^e,
⁷⁴ To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies^f,

before both could be understood as acts made possible only by the cross. How could God accomplish redemption before the cross? Remember He dwells outside of time. We might just as well ask how a person can be glorified before he is even called by God (see the end of Romans 8).

It is also worth noting that Zacharias was not looking for the Lord to redeem everyone. The mission would fulfill the type played out in Egypt when the Lord went down to rescue His people (not the Egyptians).

^a 1:69 **has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant.** Zacharias saw the events surrounding the coming of Messiah as at least a partial fulfillment of the Davidic covenant from 1 Samuel 7. He was not only rejoicing in the birth of his own son to the house of Aaron. He was rejoicing in the coming birth of the son of Mary to the house of David.

^b 1:70 **As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old.** The biblical doctrine of special revelation is not a twentieth century invention. Zacharias understood that God speaks through His prophets in the Scriptures.

^c 1:71 **Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US.** This sounds like Psalm 106:10: "He rescued them from the power of the one who hated them. He rescued them from the enemy."

^d 1:72 **To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant.** Why was the coming of Messiah a mercy to the patriarchs? Because they are not dead and can now see the unfolding of the bigger picture they died before seeing.

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them...And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect. Hebrews 11:13-16, 39-40

^e 1:73 **The oath which He swore to Abraham our father.** One commitment the Lord made to Abraham was this one:

This was fulfilled in Messiah after Abraham died.

And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;
And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed. Genesis 12:2-3

This was fulfilled in Messiah after Abraham died.

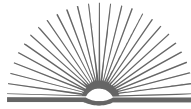
^f 1:74 **To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies.** Are the enemies to which Zacharias refers political or spiritual? He is going to answer that shortly, but consider what has been accomplished by the death evildoers in history. These are only little glimpses of the ultimate victory over what made those guys enemies in the first place.

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Might serve Him without fear,
⁷⁵In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days^a.
⁷⁶And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS^b;
⁷⁷To give to His people the knowledge of salvation
By the forgiveness of their sins^c,
⁷⁸Because of the tender mercy of our God,
With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us^d,
⁷⁹TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH,
To guide our feet into the way of peace^e.”
⁸⁰And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts
until the day of his public appearance to Israel^{f,g}.

^a 1:74-75 **Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.** The deliverance of Israel from her enemies has always been a picture (particularly the deliverance from Egypt) of salvation from sins.

^b 1:76 **And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS.** Zacharias addressed the infant with an eye toward God’s call on his life.

^c 1:77 **To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins.** This confirms that Zacharias understood salvation in more than political terms.

^d 1:78 **Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us.** This picture comes from Malachi:

The Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings for you people who fear my name. Malachi 4:2

Sunrise is a metaphor for hope. It signals the end of hidden things, the end of night terrors.

^e 1:79 **TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace.** This is part of Isaiah’s “Christmas prophecy.”

But there will be no *more* gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make *it* glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them. Isaiah 9:1-2

^f 1:80 **the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.** This is the last we will hear about Zacharias and Elizabeth. While we do not know how long they lived, there is evidence that John became part of the Essene Hebrew sect, which rejected the unbiblical Jerusalem traditions.

^g 1:67-80 Have you ever been in a heated discussion with someone where they were so wrong that you were about to burst with words that would bury them? That urge is common to the children of Adam. It works the same way when you think we have the answer to a question no one seems to get or when you want to look good to the people who are listening. The words that bubble up at those times reflect the way you think.

This text reveals the way Zacharias had been thinking. He had had nine months to keep his mouth shut. His last words had been unbelieving, but because he could not talk he had time to think. What you see in this song is what had built up over nine months. Like his wife and young relative, Zacharias thought God’s thoughts after Him.

Here are some reasons why you also need to get control of your thought life:

1. Because what you say is a direct reflection of the way you think. Jesus said that the mouth speaks out of what fills the heart (Matthew 12:34).
2. Because your thoughts and words are played out before the face of God (Psalm 19:14). If you follow the Lord Jesus your goal should be to please Him—thoughts and words included.

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3. Because if you think biblically you will act biblically. God talks to us through His word. Acting biblically is more than an outward behavior. It is the fruit of knowing what God thinks about what you think.
 4. Because if you think biblically you will communicate helpful things to those who are watching. Proverbs says the lips of the righteous feed many. You should not content yourself with simply avoiding gossip and slander.

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a *word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Ephesians 4:29

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