

Zechariah 8:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.

Analysis

And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong. This verse announces the great reversal at the heart of God's restoration promise. The phrase "**as ye were a curse among the heathen**" (ka'asher heyitem qelalah ba-goyim, פֶּאֲשֶׁר הָיִתֶם קֶלֶל בָּאָגּוֹיִם) recalls Israel's exile shame when their name became proverbial for disaster—other nations said "May you become like Judah" as a curse (Jeremiah 24:9, 29:18). To be a qelalah (קֶלֶל, curse) meant embodying covenant judgment, becoming an object lesson in divine wrath.

The emphatic reversal comes with "**so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing**" (ken oshia etkhem viheyitem berakhah, כן אֹשִׁיעַ אֶתְכֶם וְהִיִּתֶם בְּרָכָה). The verb yasha (ישָׁע, "save") means to rescue, deliver, give victory—God actively intervenes to transform curse into berakhah (ברכה, blessing). This fulfills the Abrahamic promise that through Abraham's seed all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12:2-3, 22:18). From curse-object to blessing-source represents total covenant restoration.

The double command "**fear not, but let your hands be strong**" (al-tira'u techezaqnah yedeikhem, אַל-תִּירְאֻ תִּחְזַק נָאָה יְדֵיכֶם) provides immediate application. "Fear not" addresses paralyzing anxiety about their vulnerable position; "let your

"hands be strong" calls for vigorous work on temple rebuilding and covenant faithfulness. Strong hands characterize those who trust God's promises and act on them (Haggai 2:4, Nehemiah 6:9).

Historical Context

This prophecy came circa 520 BC during the second year of Darius, as the returned exiles struggled to rebuild the temple. The exile had left deep psychological scars—they had been scattered, mocked, enslaved, their cities destroyed, their temple burned. The phrase "house of Judah, and house of Israel" significantly addresses both southern and northern kingdoms, looking forward to reunification under Messiah (Ezekiel 37:15-28).

The memory of being a curse among nations was fresh. Lamentations describes how Jerusalem became "as a menstrual woman" among nations (Lamentations 1:17), how enemies wagged their heads and hissed (Lamentations 2:15-16). Edomites and others had mocked Judah's fall (Psalm 137:7, Obadiah 10-14). To promise transformation from curse to blessing would have seemed impossible by human standards.

Yet this promise finds fulfillment in multiple stages: the return itself, the completed temple (516 BC), the Christ-event where blessing flows to all nations through the Jewish Messiah (Galatians 3:13-14), and ultimately the eschatological restoration when Israel recognizes their Messiah (Romans 11:26). The New Testament shows Christ bearing the curse to make us the blessing (Galatians 3:13), and the church becoming God's vehicle for blessing the nations (1 Peter 2:9).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does Israel's transformation from curse to blessing demonstrate God's power to reverse the consequences of covenant unfaithfulness?
2. In what ways has Christ borne the curse so that believers might become a blessing to the nations?
3. When facing seemingly impossible circumstances, how can God's promise of reversal strengthen your hands for kingdom work?
4. How should the church today function as a blessing among the nations, fulfilling the Abrahamic promise?
5. What areas of your life need to hear God's 'fear not' and 'let your hands be strong' command?

Interlinear Text

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 8:9 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which

were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.

Zephaniah 3:20 (Parallel theme): At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.

Psalms 72:17 (Blessing): His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

Ezekiel 5:15 (Parallel theme): So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment unto the nations that are round about thee, when I shall execute judgments in thee in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I the LORD have spoken it.

Jeremiah 29:18 (Sin): And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them:

Jeremiah 24:9 (Curse): And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them.

1 Corinthians 16:13 (Parallel theme): Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Daniel 9:11 (Sin): Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.

Psalms 79:4 (Parallel theme): We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.

Jeremiah 42:18 (Curse): For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so shall my fury be poured forth upon you, when ye shall enter into Egypt: and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; and ye shall see this place no more.

