

From Prisoners Of The Pit To Prisoners Of Hope

KEY TEXT

Zechariah 9:11-12 (NKJV)

Verse 11 - “As for you also, Because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit,

Verse 12 – Return to the stronghold, You prisoners of hope. Even today I declare That I will restore double to you.”

Every one of us has faced moments that felt like a pit — a dry, empty

place where joy has drained out and hope feels distant.

The pit has many names: depression, betrayal, addiction, regret, loneliness, spiritual exhaustion.

Zechariah was prophesying to Israel after the Babylonian exile. God's people had become weary exiles. They had come home from Babylon, but home didn't look like hope — Jerusalem's walls were broken, the temple was unfinished, and their hearts were still heavy, discouraged, broken and disillusioned.

Into that disappointment, God spoke:

“Because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.”

God was saying,

“Your story doesn’t end in dryness — it ends in deliverance.”

And then He gives a new name:

“Return to the stronghold, You prisoners of hope.”

The journey of the children of Israel is also our journey — from the pit of despair to the stronghold of hope, from captivity to sin to captivity to Christ.

Therefore, this morning, I would like to title my sermon, highlighting this journey -“FROM PRISONERS OF THE PIT TO PRISONERS OF HOPE”.

The outline of my sermon will be as follows:

- **The Prisoners of the Waterless Pit**
- **The Blood of the Covenant**
- **Return to your stronghold – Hope’s home**
- **Prisoners of Hope – Captives of Promise**
- **Our Journey Out of the Pit**

I. THE PRISONER OF THE WATERLESS PIT

In the ancient world, a waterless pit was a dry cistern —a hole meant to

store water, but now empty, dark, and useless.

It was sometimes used as a PRISON.

Remember Joseph — his brothers threw him into a pit before selling him into slavery (Genesis 37:24). It was dark, dry, and hopeless.



Joseph in the pit

That's what sin and separation from God do to the soul. They drain life of living water.

Symbolism of the waterless pit

Spiritually, the waterless pit represents:

- A place without the living water of the Holy Spirit **(John 7:38-39)**.
- A state of spiritual dryness, depression or bondage.
- Inner captivity, where a person feels cut off from God's refreshing presence, purpose or love.

So, a **“prisoner of the waterless pit”** is someone who:

- Lives in emotional or spiritual desolation.
- Feels trapped in shame, trauma, or spiritual oppression.

- **Has lost hope but still carries a deep, silent longing for deliverance.**

Psychologically [in deep-level Christian healing], the waterless pit can describe:

- **Emotional prisons formed by trauma, regret or abandonment.**
- **Inner child parts (or wounded soul fragments) trapped in despair, self-hate or fear.**
- **Dry spiritual seasons where a person feels cut off from the flow of God's love.**

These **“prisoners”** are often inner parts of the **SOUL** still bound in **PAST PAIN** – waiting for Jesus, the Deliverer, to bring living water and freedom.

You can be out of Babylon but still chained inside. You can leave the old life but still live in the dryness of shame.

Application: Maybe you’ve been there:

- Your prayer life feels dry.
- Your faith feels heavy.
- Your dreams feel dead.

But God says, **“I see your pit.”** And He does not leave His people **buried.**

II. THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT – THE CHRISTCENTRIC LINK

God doesn't just declare freedom. He bases it on something eternal:

“Because of the blood of your covenant....”

In the Old Testament, blood sealed a **covenant.** It was **God's promise of life in exchange for death.**

But here is the **Christ-centered revelation:**

Zechariah's prophecy points forward to **Jesus Christ**, whose **blood** would seal the **new and everlasting covenant**.

Hebrews 13:20 says, "Through the blood of the eternal covenant, God brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus."

It was Jesus who entered our **PIT** — the pit of sin, the pit of death, and by **His blood**, He **broke its chains**.

When He was buried in the tomb, it was the **ULTIMATE WATERLESS PIT** — dark, sealed, hopeless to human eyes.

But when He rose, He turned that **PIT** into a **PASSAGEWAY TO GLORY**.

Christcentric Truths:

- The **pit** symbolizes our **bondage**.
- The **blood** symbolizes our **deliverance**.
- The **stronghold** symbolizes our **belonging in Christ**.

Because of the **BLOOD**, you're no longer a **PRISONER OF GUILT**, but a **PRISONER OF GRACE**.

The **cross** is the **LADDER**
out of the pit, and the
empty tomb is the
DOOR into hope.



III. RETURN TO YOUR STRONGHOLD **— HOPE'S HOME**

Israel had been a prisoner in Babylon.
But God says, **"You are not a prisoner**

of despair. You are a prisoner of hope."

God says, "Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope."

**The stronghold isn't
a place; it's
a PERSON.**

The Psalmist says, "The Lord is my fortress and my deliverer." (Psalm 18:2)

When you come to Christ, you **come home.**

He becomes **your refuge, your strength, your strong tower, your security** = definition of "stronghold/fortress".

The command – "Return"

Notice the command: **"Return."**

That means some of us have wandered — not away from church, but away from **TRUST**. We've left the stronghold/fortress of **CONFIDENCE IN GOD** and camped near **FEAR**. We've stopped expecting good things from Him.

But He says, **“Return”**

- Not to your effort.
- Not to your past.
- But to your stronghold/fortress — to Me.

Application: Jesus Himself is our stronghold (**our refuge, your strength, your strong tower, your security**). How so?

- In temptation — He shields us.
- In trials — He sustains [supports] us.
- In tears — He holds us.

Christ doesn't just deliver you **from** something; He delivers you **to** Himself.

**Hope is not an
emotion — it's an
address: "In Christ."**

**When you dwell in Him, you can't be
overtaken by despair.**

IV. PRISONERS OF HOPE — CAPTIVES OF PROMISE

**The Lord doesn't just free them — He
RENAMES them. He calls
them "prisoners of hope."**

Even though the children of Israel were still waiting for full restoration, they were **BOUND TO HOPE**, not hopelessness.

What a paradox — still a prisoner, but of something different!

No longer chained by fear or regret — now held captive by **expectation of good**.

Meaning of "Hope"

Hope here isn't wishful thinking.

The Hebrew word for **"hope"** is **"tiqvah"** and it literally means **A**

**CORD, AN EXPECTATION OR
SOMETHING TO HOLD ONTO.**



The cord of hope

**It is the same word for the SCARLET
CORD OF RAHAB (Joshua 2:1) – the
sign of SALVATION AND RESCUE.**



Scarlet cord of Rahab

So, a **“prisoner of hope”** is someone **TIED TO HOPE BY A COVENANT CORD** – someone who can’t let go of expectation because **GOD HAS TIED THEIR STORY TO HIS PROMISE.**

Even when everything looks dry (**‘waterless pit’**) there is still a **CORD**

OF HOPE connecting you to **GOD'S FAITHFULNESS.**

In a nutshell

Hope is a confident trust in the covenant-keeping God.

Meaning of "prisoner of hope":

So, to be "a prisoner of hope" spiritually means:

- You may feel trapped in a hard season – but your captivity is dependent on **HOPE**, not despair.
- You can't escape **HOPE** because God's covenant love won't let you go.
- Your waiting is not wasted. It is a **DIVINE HOLDING PLACE** before double restoration.

God says,

“Even today I declare That I will restore double to you.”

That's the heart of Christ's redemption: **restoration beyond loss.**

That “**double**” represents **restoration, recompense (act of receiving a reward) and revival – for every loss, every tear, every delay.**

Job lost everything — but God restored twice as much.

Joseph was thrown in a pit — but God raised him to a palace.

Jesus went to the grave — but God exalted Him to glory.

So, what does that mean for you **personally**? If you feel like you are in a pit – emotionally, spiritually or circumstantially, **Zechariah 9:12** declares that you are not a **PRISONER**

OF YOUR PAIN BUT A PRISONER OF HOPE.

That means:

- Your faith keeps you **TIED TO GOD'S FUTURE** for you.
- Your circumstance cannot **CANCEL GOD'S PROMISE.**
- Your waiting is the **WOMB OF RESTORATION.**

**YOU ARE
IMPRISONED NOT
BY WHAT**

**HAPPENED TO
YOU BUT BY THE
CERTAINTY THAT
GOD WILL
REDEEM IT.**

**So, when you are a prisoner of hope,
you can look at your dry pit and
declare,**

**“This is not
where my
story ends.”**

Why?

**Because Christ Himself is the
ULTIMATE PRISONER OF HOPE.**

**He was bound, arrested, crucified —
yet even on the cross, He looked
forward:**

**“Father, into Your hands I commit
My spirit.”**

**He died hoping, trusting in the
Father’s promise of resurrection.**

**And because He rose, you can live
with UNSHAKABLE HOPE.**

**The tomb could not hold Him and no
pit can hold you too.**

**He is the one who entered the
“waterless pit” (the grave) and came
out victorious so that all who are in
Him are bound to RESURRECTION
HOPE.**

V. APPLICATION: YOUR JOURNEY OUT OF THE PIT

Step 1: Recognize your pit.

Don't deny where you are. God meets you in honesty.

Step 2: Remember the blood.

Your freedom was purchased by Christ. You're not climbing out alone.

Step 3: Return to the fortress.

Run back into the arms of Jesus — the safest place in every storm.

Step 4: Remain a prisoner of hope.

Let hope hold you tighter than fear ever did.

A Story: Once upon a time in a desert village, there was a young man named **ELIAB**. He was known for his laughter and his songs – until one day, betrayal came. A friend falsely accused him, and he was thrown into an **OLD DRY WELL**, a pit with no water, no light, and no sound except the echo of his own breath.

Days passed.

Eliab clawed at the dirt walls until his fingers bled.

He prayed for rain, but none came.

At last, his voice grew hoarse, and his hope dried up like the cracked ground beneath him.

He whispered, *"God, You've forgotten me. There's no water here – not even one drop of mercy."*

Then one night, a faint breeze swept across the pit. He thought it was just the desert wind – but it carried a **WHISPER:**

"Eliab..... I know this pit. My Son was in one too."

He looked up and saw a **SMALL WINDOW OF LIGHT** at the top of the pit. The whisper came again:

"You're not buried. You're planted."

Something **SHIFTED IN HIS HEART**. He began to sing again – weakly at first, then stronger:

"I will yet see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

That song became his **ROPE OF HOPE**.

Villagers passing by heard it, and one day a stranger came with a rope and pulled him out.

When Eliab stood again under the sun, he realized – he had not just survived. He had been TRANSFORMED.

The pit had taken away his pride, his anger, and his fear.

Now he was no longer a PRISONER OF THE PIT but a PRISONER OF HOPE – chained not by despair, but by faith in the goodness of God.

Years later, he built a well on that same spot.

This time, *WATER FLOWED*.

He named it *Tikvah* – which in Hebrew means *HOPE*.

A Faith Declaration

**“Because of the blood of Jesus,
I am no longer a prisoner of the pit.
I am a prisoner of hope.**

My past cannot define me.

My pain cannot confine me.

My Savior has refined me.

I will live in the stronghold of His faithfulness.”

MY TESTIMONY

I love **Zechariah 9:11-12** because it is one of the prophetic promises God gave to me when I was a prisoner of the waterless pit from 2012-2014. That three years of despair, betrayal, disillusion, pain and hopelessness was unbearable – not knowing if we would be able to rise from the pit. But then God quickened this verse to me in the midst of it, using His blood covenant to assure me of the certainty of a **double restoration** to come. Indeed, after three years, restoration began. It was after the third year from 2012 that God restored us with a brand new 4x4 Nissan pickup – the pickup that we

had to return to the bank in 2012. The ministry I thought I couldn't continue after the enemies assassinated our characters mercilessly and cruelly, God preserved and allowed us to continue serving this church for 14 years after 2012 "interruption" – 2 "seven" cycles – symbolizing perfect restoration of His calling – double. Today, I give glory to God that Etab is no more in the waterless pit financially. We don't have a lot but God gave us enough to survive as an indigenous church without any foreign support. That is another restoration by God from a waterless pit to hope. I want Etab and its people to be bound not by waterless pit of

despair but bound by the cord of Hope and Hope will not fail you because of Jesus. He came through the waterless pit to give us this living hope.

“Your story doesn’t end in dryness — it ends in deliverance.”

GOD HAS TIED YOUR STORY TO HIS PROMISE.

There is double restoration at the end of your waiting in the waterless pit.

End

