

THE DOCTOR'S REPORT

Zacharias – Believing God's Promises

TEXT: Lk. 1:5-25, 57-80

INTRODUCTION: Luke the physician joined Paul, Silas, and Timothy on the second missionary journey at Troas in Asia around the year 51 A.D., traveling with the famous missionary Philippi in Macedonia where Paul and Silas were jailed and miraculously freed by God. He had to be among the first to hear the story of how the Philippian jailer was restrained from committing suicide by the apostle, who counted the sharing of the gospel more important than escape. He heard the father's impassioned question, "What must I do to be saved?" and Paul's simple but definitive answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."

Some seven to 12 years later, the Holy Spirit impressed Dr. Luke to write his gospel, setting forth a carefully researched, historical account of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus he writes in

Luke 1:1-4 ¹ Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, ² just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, ³ it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

Interestingly, Luke does not immediately begin with the entrance of the Son of God into the world He came to save. He backs up a bit to tell us of some important events that took place before what we rightly call "that holy night." The first of those accounts concerns the coming of John the Baptist to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. But although the account does tell us much about the approaching ministry of John, the account in Dr. Luke's report is really about his father, Zacharias.

Luke 1:5-25 ⁵ There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. ⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.

⁸ So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, ⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. ¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at

the hour of incense. ¹¹ Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

¹³ But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴ And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. ¹⁵ For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. ¹⁶ And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, *‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’* and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

¹⁸ And Zacharias said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.”

¹⁹ And the angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. ²⁰ But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time.”

²¹ And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. ²² But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. ²³ So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. ²⁴ Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, ²⁵ “Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on *me*, to take away my reproach among people.”

It would be correct to note that Dr. Luke is always purposeful in recording the specific accounts, words, and even thoughts of people that make for an accurate recording of the gospel. However, just reaching that conclusion would be to miss the more important point. It is the Holy Spirit Who is purposeful in selecting what is to be told that we most completely understand the gospel of grace. God has in the story, of a portion of the life of Zacharias, a message for me and a message for you.

Consider this.

I. ZACHARIAS DID NOT BELIEVE THE PROMISE OF GOD.

A. God promised him a son for whom Zacharias has prayed long and hard.

B. Zacharias did not believe because he and his wife were too old to produce a child.

Luke 1:18 And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years."

C. Zacharias wanted a sign to prove God's Word.

D. Gabriel cuts to the chase. The problem here is that you do not believe the promise of God.

Luke 1:20 But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time."

E. I wonder if Zacharias was a Baptist.

1. Had to be, didn't he? His son was John the Baptist!
2. But I wonder for more reasons than the name. **Sometimes we Baptists have trouble believing the promises of God**, don't we?

a. Like **concerning tithing**.

Mal. 3:10-11 ¹⁰ Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you *such* blessing That *there will not be room enough to receive it*. ¹¹ "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," Says the LORD of hosts;

Bro. Mike, how do you know that the reason believers don't tithe is because they do not believe God's promise? Let me show you. (Tell teens, if you give me \$1, I will give you \$2. See who will do it.) The ones who gave me the \$1 are the ones who believed my promise. If you believe that when you give the tithe that God will pour out a blessing so great you will not be able to receive it all, you will tithe. Nothing could keep you from bringing ten percent of all you receive in a week to the church, God's storehouse, if you really believed you were going to be blessed far beyond the value of the tithe.

b. Like **concerning forgiveness**.

Mt. 18:34-35 ³⁴ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. ³⁵ "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

But people do not believe this promise of God. They think they are the exception. God's promises don't have exceptions. When you refuse to forgive someone who sinned against you, you get locked in the prison

house of unforgiveness and the tortures start getting hold of you. They rob you of joy, vitality, health, peace, sanity. There are some of you in this place that I am confident there is someone you have not forgiven because the beating marks of the torturers are all over you. The problem is you do not believe the promise of God!

II. ZACHARIAS' LACK OF FAITH COST HIM THE BLESSINGS OF THE PROMISE.

- A. Zacharias was struck mute.
- B. The dream of his life was being fulfilled, and he could tell no one.
- C. God's children miss a lot of blessings when they do not believe the promises of God.
 - 1. When people don't believe God's promise concerning the tithe,
 - a. The Devourer consumes far more than 10%.
 - b. They miss the financial blessings that God wanted them to have.
 - c. They miss God's help in tough economic times.
 - d. They miss the joy of pleasing the Lord by walking in faith.
 - 2. When people don't believe the promise of God concerning forgiving others,
 - a. Their countenance loses its attractiveness.
 - b. Their health loses its vitality.
 - c. Their life loses its joy.
 - d. Their heart loses its peace.

III. BLESSINGS BEGAN TO FLOW WHEN ZACHARIAS BELIEVED AND ACTED ON HIS FAITH.

(Tell story of Lk. 1:57-63)

A. Blessings to himself.

Luke 1:63-64 ⁶³ And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled. ⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue *loosed*, and he spoke, praising God.

B. Blessings to others.

Luke 1:65-66 ⁶⁵ Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶ And all those who heard *them* kept *them* in their hearts, saying, "What kind of child will this be?" And the hand of the Lord was with him.

CONCLUSION: Because Zacharias repented of disbelief and instead acted in faith, the account of this portion of his life ends joyously.

Luke 1:67, 76-80 ⁶⁷ Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: ⁷⁶ “ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, ⁷⁷ To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, ⁷⁸ Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; ⁷⁹ To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace.”

⁸⁰ So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

Some of you here today know a promise that God has made in His Word, but your actions testify that you do not believe the promise. Maybe it is in tithing. Maybe it is in refusing to forgive. Maybe it is a promise I have not mentioned, but you know, and God knows.

How will this end for you? Will you today heed the message purposed by the Holy Spirit to call you to repentance for your disbelief and to call you to faith and trust. Will you humble yourself before the Lord and say, Lord, I'm sorry. I believe, and then act on that new faith right away.

If you will, the renewed joy of Zacharias can be yours as well.