

A Prisoner of Hope



Sons of Zion vs Sons of Greece (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

I want to turn for the opening passage of Scripture to a passage that's already been read here, that's Zechariah chapter 9. The title of my message is "Sons of Zion vs. Sons of Greece." We'll read in verses 12 and 13.

> "Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope; Even today I declare that I will restore double to you. For I have bent Judah my bow, fitted the bow with Ephraim. And raised up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece; And made you like the sword of a mighty man."

Originally I only intended to preach on verse 13 but as I was preparing I was gripped by the phrase "prisoners of hope" and I began to ask myself, What is a prisoner of hope? Who is a prisoner of hope? I came to the conclusion that I am a prisoner of hope and maybe many of you also are. You see, a prisoner is somebody who's bound, who is not free to move, who's held in place by something. The hope that I have in my heart determines where I am; it holds me in place. The place it holds me in is Jerusalem.

What is the hope I have? The hope that God will fulfill every covenant and every promise that He ever made to Israel concerning the city of Jerusalem, the Jewish people, and the land of Israel. I have that hope, I can't escape from it. It's in me. I didn't put it there, the Lord put it there. When God saved me I had no special interest in the Jewish people, I knew very little about them. I was a soldier in the British army and the British army sent me to what was called the Middle East. I spent four-and-a-half years here in the Middle East, ended up in this land, which was then called Palestine, married a Danish lady and became a resident of Jerusalem. Actually, I was living with my family in Jerusalem in 1947 and '48 when the state of Israel was born.

I wonder if there's anybody else here today who could say that? You were here when the state was born? So I experienced the birth pangs. I can recall when 600,000 Jews were surrounded by 40 million Arabs with six highly armed modern armies. In the natural it was totally impossible that the state would survive. But, it did. And I personally consider that to be as great a miracle as some of the military victories that are described in the Bible. And so my association with this land goes back actually nearly 50 years.

Through the study of Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit, I am gripped to this hope. I cannot get away from it. A few years ago Ruth and I owned a small condominium in Hawaii on the big island on the west coast: two rooms on the seventh floor of a building that looked right over the Pacific Ocean. And every night we could see the sun set in its glory. Life was very simple, all we had to do was go to the grocery store and buy groceries and just keep living. Sometimes I yearn a little for Hawaii because life is not simple in Jerusalem. You'd agree with that, those of you who live here. At the moment it's even less simple than usual, I won't go into those reasons.

But, I'm a prisoner of that hope. Let me just pause for a moment. How many of you would say "I'm a prisoner of the hope of the restoration of Israel"? That's why you're here. God bless you. From so many countries, it's wonderful.

Well, so God says to the prisoners of hope, "Return to the stronghold." The stronghold, I understand, is the Lord Himself. Nahum 1:7 says:

> "The Lord is good, He is a stronghold in the day of trouble and He knows those who trust in Him."

The word return suggests that somehow people have got away from where they should be. I believe that's true of the church, I believe it's true of Israel as a nation. Probably most of us here are exceptions but I believe God's word is "return to the hope."

While we were praying and discussing the course of these meetings the word hope was brought up with great emphasis. I want to return to that emphasis later in my message.

I need to say that I was really as much a son of Greece as anybody who's not Greek could ever be. I started learning Latin when I was nine and Greek when I was ten. I spent the next fifteen years studying Latin and Greek, and the last five years at Cambridge University studying Greek philosophy. I became what is called in the jargon of Cambridge, a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. My two most admired persons were Plato and Socrates. I look back and I can't believe it was true, but my fellowship dissertation was entitled "The Evolution of Plato's Method of Definition." You believe that! And I hope I won't sound boastful but I grew up among what you'd call the ruling classes of Britain. And remember, Britain was a very class structured country, and still is to some extent, much more than most European nations, certainly more than Denmark.

So I mixed with the people who were to be the future leaders of Britain in every field. Eton College, where I was for 5 years, has contributed twenty-five prime ministers to Britain. I want to say that we were mostly sons of Greece. We were all theoretically Christians. I never heard about being born again till I was twenty-five but we respected Christ and Christianity. But, we also respected the Greek poets and tragedians and philosophers. I would say Plato was more often quoted than Paul. We would mention the names of the Greek gods without exactly believing in them but certainly not disbelieving in them. They had a really important place in our thinking. We would more often express ourselves in quotations from Greek writers than we ever would think of quoting from the Bible So, we were really sons of Greece.

You don't need to turn there, but in Daniel chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about an image which portrayed the future course of Gentile empires. The head of it was gold, which represented Babylon; the shoulders and the arms were silver, which represented Medo-Persia; the belly and the thighs were bronze, which represented Greece; and the legs were iron which represented Rome. That was the succession of empires that followed Nebuchadnezzar. All has been worked out in history.

But sometime ago it occurred to me that the procreative organs are found in the belly and the thighs. And if you analyze history, Babylon has had very little real influence on Western history. Persia has had relatively little influence. Rome has had a great influence but you need to remember that Rome defeated Greece militarily but Greece defeated Rome philosophically; the Romans came under the thinking of the Greeks. So, the procreative life that issued from that historical background was the life of Greece. It's hard for people who are not familiar with it to realize how much the thinking and the culture of Europe and the countries that have been influenced by Europe have been under the dominion of Greek thought.

It always amazes me, this is by the way, that later on a famous Catholic theologian would try to produce a version of Christianity that agreed with Aristotle. I mean, of all the impossible things to ever achieve, that probably is at the head of the list. But it illustrates the influence that Greek thinking had on so-called Christians.

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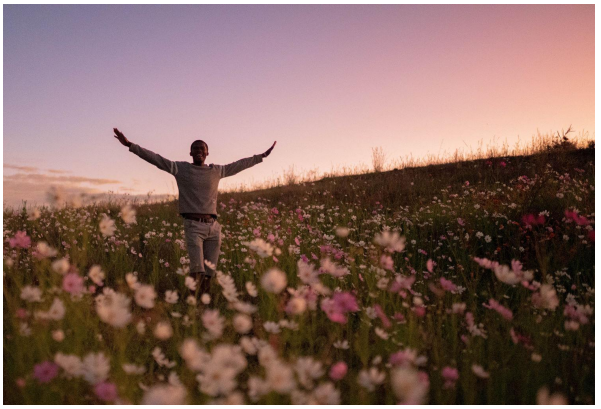

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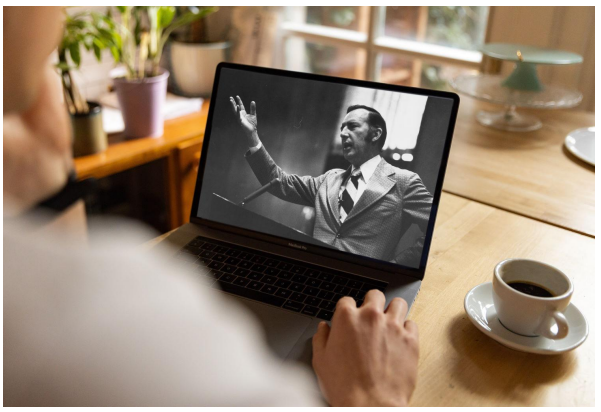

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