

ISAIAH

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Isaiah chapter 50 as we continue our study through the Word of God. As we have seen over the past few studies, God warned the Southern Kingdom of Judah that they would be going into captivity because of their idolatry, but they refused to ***LISTEN!***

And what God promised them came to pass; the Babylonians did come in and they destroyed Jerusalem, the Temple and took the rest of the people to Babylon. God also said that He would raise up a man by the name of Cyrus who would come in and destroy the Babylonians and let the Jewish people return home from their captivity. Again, I don't think they were LISTENING! The reason I say that is they did not expect to return home even though God promised them that they would.

The key for them and really the key for us is that we need to listen to what God is saying to us through His Word. Over and over again we see God speak to us and tell us to “**Hear the word of the LORD.**” Jeremiah 2:4. Jesus said in Revelation 2:7, “**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**” And yet, that is our problem, we do not listen, we are not paying attention many times to what the Lord is saying and it gets us in trouble, it causes us to lose hope!

We have two ears and they are on the outside of our heads not the inside because we are not to hear ourselves but we are to listen to the voice of God, we are to hear what God has to say to us and He uses words to speak to us. One writer put it like this,

Why does this matter? Malcolm Muggeridge framed the question in his typically delightful way some years ago in his London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity. What if, instead of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we'd found the Dead Sea Videotapes? Would the difference matter? Would it matter if Biblical faith had been handed down to us in images rather than in words? Does the camera make the same impact as the pen? And Muggeridge argued that the camera deceives us. It makes us think we are seeing reality.

But television, especially, brainwashes us with carefully edited fantasies. God encounters us meaningfully through words – words that illuminate, words that last, words that undeceive our confusion.

The Christian faith has come to us in words, not images; I find that passage in the first chapter of the Gospel according to St. John – the Word becoming flesh, and dwelling among us full of grace and truth – one of the most beautiful and profound things ever written. If it had come to us in images instead of words, it would not have lived as it has.

If God's way of getting through to us is the word, then we need to learn what it means to listen.

- Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., *Isaiah*, pp. 333-334

In the days we are living in and with the technology we have today I think we all understand how deceptive things can be as we look at them through our natural eyes. Now some may argue, "But how do we know God's Word is true? How can we be so sure and if we can't then we should not trust it either!"

That is very true; if any part of God's Word can't be trusted from Genesis through the book of Revelation then we can't trust the entire Book! But God's Word can be trusted. It has been analyzed, studied, pulled apart by so many people and in the end they come to the conclusion that we can trust God's Word! In fact Jesus even said in John 17:17, "**Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.**" Notice that Jesus did not say some of it is truth, or even most of it is truth, but "**Your word is truth**" all of it!

So this evening, as we are going through the Word of God may we have ears to hear and hearts to obey what God is showing us! With that as our background, let's begin reading in Isaiah chapter 50, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word this evening.

ISAIAH 50

VERSES 1-2a

1. Notice the picture that the Southern Kingdom of Judah is painting here against God and how God responds to it. They are blaming God for divorcing them. They are blaming God for putting them into slavery. And God is calling them on that and saying if I did divorce you then produce the divorce certificate! God is calling for them to show Him the receipt when He sold them into slavery! This is the mentality that they had towards God, it was His fault and we saw that in Isaiah 49:14 where we are told that the, "**... 'LORD has forsaken me, And my Lord has forgotten me.'**"

Of course that was not the problem, the problem was that they did not listen to God; they did not obey the Lord. In fact the Lord tells them the problem, “**For your iniquities you have sold yourselves.**” In other words, God is saying, “Don’t blame Me, you did this to yourselves! Your sins have brought you into this place and because you refused to listen to Me, these are the consequences of your actions!”

2. Now before we come down too hard on the Jewish people, we are no different. You yell at your boss and he sends you home early. You have a fight with your spouse and the walls go up. You get pulled over for drunk driving and that is not going to be good. And that list can go on and on and it does. And what happens is we like to blame God, “God I thought you loved me? I thought you cared for me? God where are you?” The reality is that God hasn’t moved away from us but we have moved away from Him by our sins. We find ourselves in situations because of our actions and the reason we do is that we are not listening to the Lord. We are not walking in the Spirit and thus, we are fulfilling the lust of the flesh and we don’t blame ourselves, we like to blame God just as the Jewish people were doing!

God loves us more than we will ever know. He will not leave us nor will He forsake us. Thus, don’t blame God for the situations you find yourself in because of your sins, your actions. God told the Jewish people it was their sins and He does the same with us, not because He hates us but because He loves us and He wants us to turn back to Him! If we reject Him and what He is telling us we cut ourselves off from God, we sell ourselves into slavery, God doesn’t!

3. Now that first part of verse 2 we see that God was calling to them, trying to get their attention so they would repent and return to Him, but they refused. No one wanted to listen, no one wanted to stand in the gap and do what is right.

Man is no different today. People refuse to come to Him, to listen to Him, and then they are upset with God when their lives are a mess, out of control. And they blame God or think He can't save, can't deliver them from the trouble they are in. How wrong they are!

One commentator had a little different picture of what is going on here. It is interesting and it may apply. He wrote, "Here the Lord compares Himself to a man and father of a household who is treated shamefully by his own wife and children. When he came home, there was no one to welcome him and when he called, no one answered him. Hence, He who had the right to all their respect was treated as one without any rights." (Bultema)

VERSES 2b-3

1. This is a rhetorical question and the answer is very simple, "No the LORD'S hand is not short that it can't save a person and no the LORD is not powerless to deliver a person or a nation!" Then what was the problem? They doubted the Lord, they did not listen to what the Lord was saying and thus, life was hopeless!

Make no mistake about it, God is in control and what He has told us will come to pass! And the Lord gives them a couple of examples of His power there in verse 2. And we need to remember that their captivity was not because God lost control or didn't have the power to deliver them, but it was because of their sin.

We are told this very thing in Isaiah 59:1-2, **“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.”**

2. Now what about the heavens becoming black and this sackcloth covering over it? I think the Lord is just speaking of how He sees sin and how He mourns over what His people are doing. This is not something they should have been doing. This is not something that they were forced to do. This was something that they choose to do and then they blamed God for what transpired because of their sin. We are no different today as I have said!

VERSES 4-5

1. First of all this is speaking of the Incarnation. Now in this is a picture of Jesus we see how the Father would awaken Him every morning and as they spent time together the Father directed Him and taught Him. We see this in Mark 1:35 where we are told, **“Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.”** That was the pattern for His life.

2. Not only was Jesus directed and taught in the Incarnation but the words He spoke brought comfort to people. Think about how the Words of Jesus have comforted your life over the years. Now what comfort is there from those that don’t know the Lord, what are they going to tell you? “Hang in there it is going to get better!” “One day at a time!” “It can’t get any worse!”

Those are empty words because it may not get better. This one day at a time thing sounds good but it is not helping. And it can get worse! That is the world, empty words that may help for a time but then they lose the power they once had when they don't work any longer. And yet, Jesus tells us, **“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”** Matthew 11:28-30.

That rest, that peace, that comfort is found in Him and not in the outward circumstances. We need to listen and obey and as we do we will find that comfort, we will find that peace in the midst of the storms that come upon us and they will come!

3. We are also told in verse 5 that **“The LORD GOD has opened My ear.”** What does that mean? Some feel it means that the Father opened His ears so that He could hear the voice of God, but I don't think that is what is being spoken of here.

I think what we see here is that Jesus willingly submitted Himself to do the Father's will. And the text seems to imply that Jesus was a bondsman, giving His ear to the Father to be pierced, which shows again that He willingly gave himself to the service of the Father.

We see this spoken of in Exodus 21:5-6 where a servant became a willing bondsman to his master. The sign of this willing servant was the ear opened by the piercing of an awl and done against the entry doorway of the master. This speaks of the total submission of the Messiah to the Lord GOD.

It is as Jesus said in the Gospel of John, **“I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.”** John 5:30. And He said in John 6:38, **“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”**

4. Now let’s listen and apply this to our own lives today. You see, many today want to know the secret to victorious Christian living, and here it is, ***“MORNING BY MORNING”*** spending time at the beginning of the day being directed by God and being taught by Him. God wants to talk with us, the question is, “Are we listening?”

And I believe that as we start our day with the Lord, as we spend time with Him and are directed by Him then our speech will bring comfort to those around us. We will not tear down and destroy but build up, encourage just as Jesus does with us. Paul warned us in Galatians 5:13-15, **“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!”**

Also, in Colossians 4:6 Paul tells us, **“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”** There is no excuse for speaking unloving, hateful words towards a person or their character. I am not talking about judging doctrine but the person, their heart. Our speech is to bring comfort to those who are hurting and not destroy them.

And the only way that is going to happen is if we surrender to the Lord, allow Him to pierce our ear in a sense and be a bonds slave of Jesus Christ! If we have ears and we do, then we need to listen and not just let it sink into our minds but into our hearts and see it manifested in our lives as Jesus did!

VERSES 6-9

1. The Lord has been talking to the Jewish people about deliverance, salvation in regards to their Babylonian captivity, but as we are going to see in the next several chapters, this salvation is going to be complete and it is found in One Man, Jesus Christ. We will see a glimpse of the beatings and the cross in these chapters as Jesus pays in full the debt that was owed for our sins, not just the Jews.

He was scourged by the Romans, which was lashings with a leather thong that had broken pieces of pottery, bone, anything that would cut with a ball at the end. And each time this struck the back of the prisoner, it would rip the flesh off his back. Thus, **“I gave My back to those who struck Me.”** (Mark 15:15)

We don't read in the New Testament of anyone plucking out the beard of Jesus but Isaiah tells us that this did take place. There are a lot of things the New Testament is silent on regarding leading up to and the crucifixion itself and yet we are told of them in the Old Testament.

He was spit upon, they punched Him in the face, a crown of thorns was placed upon His head and as Isaiah will tell us in chapter 52, **“. . . So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men.”** In other words, He was so badly beaten He did not even look like a man anymore! (Luke 22:63-65, Mark 15:19-20)

2. Now how could Jesus endure all that pain, that suffering? Some would say, “He is God!” That is true but that is not the reason. Remember, he laid down some of His Godly attributes, He felt pain, hunger and-so-on. The key for me is found in verse 7, **“For the Lord GOD will help me.”** That is the key for us as well. Not the help of man but of God!

Jesus had set His face towards finishing the work the Father sent Him to do, nothing was going to move Him off that course. Jesus was focused on the mission that He was sent to do. We see that spoken to us in Luke 9:51, **“Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.”** About 6 months from the cross at this point and Jesus was focused on completing His mission, doing the will of the Father! I think many times we are moved because we take our eyes off of God and we look at the situation. We are not determined to finish the work but we are distracted by so many things!

Spurgeon put it like this and this is so true and it cuts right to the heart. He wrote, “Many of us could give to Christ all our health and strength, and all the money we have, very heartily and cheerfully; but when it comes to a point of reputation we feel the pinch. To be slandered, to have some filthy thing said of you; this is too much for flesh and blood. You seem to say, ‘I cannot be made a fool of, I cannot bear to be regarded as a mere impostor;’ but a true servant of Christ must make himself of no reputation when he takes upon himself the work of his Lord. Our blessed Master was willing to be scoffed at by the lewdest and the lowest of men.”

Many times we fail in our efforts, our mission because we don't stay focused, we don't set our face upon the finish line, but become distracted by what is all around us. Paul put it this way in regards to what we are supposed to do in Philippians 3:12-14, "**Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**"

In other words, we need to keep ourselves focused on the Lord, we need to complete the work He has set before us and never forget the reality that this is not our home, our home is in heaven, we will be spending eternity with Him. What we endure in this life, as Paul says, is nothing more than light afflictions when compared with eternity with the Lord. Perspective is so important!

3. Now I do understand that the things we face can seem overwhelming to us but think about this for a minute. Who is going to contend with Jesus and win? No one! All the enemies of Christ will be silenced one day, as Psalm 2 says! In fact, the Lord laughs at them trying to fight against Him, it is foolishness.

And if you still doubt this, listen to what Paul says in Romans 8:31-39, **“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

You see, God is for us and we can be sure of that because that first applied to Jesus and because we are in Christ we too can rest assured that He will stand with us!

VERSES 10-11

1. Remember that God is calling for His people to listen to Him and that listening must be lived out, we must not only hear but obey. And that is what we see here. God is pleading with them and with us to turn to Him, that we would no longer walk in darkness but come to His light, trust in the Him.

If you refuse there is the fire of His judgment that will come upon you! And the idea here is that if you are lighting your own fires you are doing your own thing, you are not trusting in the Lord and you will be judged for it. God has provided a way out of that judgment that is coming but it is only through Him and not apart from Him! You need to walk in the light as He is in the light and understand that as our Messiah followed the Father so must we, He is our example!

2. Now the question may be, “Why should I listen to the Lord?” As we move into Isaiah chapter 51 we will see the Lord answer that question for us.

ISAIAH 51

VERSES 1-3

1. Here is the first reason we are to listen to the Lord, ***HE IS FAITHFUL***. Now the reason we know that He is faithful is because what He has promised to the children of Israel He has brought to pass. He birthed them as a nation, He brought them to life and thus, because what God has promised He was able to do in the past we can trust in what the Lord has said about the present or future situations we are in. For the Jews, God will not only bring them back from their captivity in Babylon but He will forgive them of their sins because of their faith in Jesus, which looks ahead to His Millennial reign when sits on the throne of David as He promised them!

How does this relate to us? He wants us to recognize that He has created us; we are a chip off the old block you might say. And not only were we created out of the rock, but God has pulled us up out of the miry pit of sin that we were drowning in. He wants us to remember our roots, where we came from, for as we look back we can rejoice over what God has done.

Too often people remember “the good old days” but the truth of the matter, outside of Christ, they weren’t good at all. We just have a bad memory. Be honest when you look back and thank God for His saving grace that pulled you out of death and destruction into His glorious light, His Kingdom! And if God has done that for you don’t you think He will continue to work in you and through you? You bet He will!

2. Now the Jews hold Abraham in high esteem. He is the father of the Jewish people. What many miss is that when God called Abram out of the Ur of the Chaldeans he was an idol worshiping Gentile who by faith obeyed God and crossed over the Euphrates River to go to a land he didn’t know, the land of Canaan. It was then he was called a Hebrew, which means “one who has crossed over” for he left the world behind to follow God’s leading. He had separated himself from the world and unto God. (Genesis 11:28-31, Joshua 24:2)

Again, how does that relate to us today? I think the Lord wants us to look at the roots of our faith, Jesus Christ, and take those steps of faith like Abraham did as difficult as they may be, for He will guide us. He is the Good Shepherd and thus, we need to follow Him!

I think the problem for us, as I have said so many times, is we get our eyes off of God and upon the situation and we lose all hope, we lose sight of God who is seated upon the throne! Redpath put it like this, “Once a Christian gets eaten up with discouragement and unbelief it takes a great deal to shake him out of it. Those two emotions are the masterstrokes of Satan. So long as the child of God maintains an attitude of praise and trust in the Lord, then he is invincible. Once the devil gets him discouraged, that poor man is really going to take a knocking!” In other words, listen to the Lord, the One who is with you, the One who saved you and walk with Him, obey Him, keep your eyes upon Him!

VERSES 4-6

1. The second reason we are to listen to the Lord is because ***HIS SALVATION AND RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE FOREVER***. Now when you look at this world do you see righteousness flowing forth? Absolutely not, now does that mean God is wrong? Absolutely not because we know that sin has infected this world, this world has not been redeemed back yet!

Also, as I have said already, this world is not our home. Paul makes that point in Philippians 3:17-21, **“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame - who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”**

Keep in mind that God is calling out to the people of the world, extending His arm of salvation to all before His judgment comes upon those who have rejected His gift of grace. He wants us to hold on to that which is eternal versus that which is temporary, this world and the things that are found in it. Since sin entered the world there has been a steady degree of wearing down, not only of the earth, but of the universe itself. The sun, for example, is giving off 1,200,000 tons of mass every second. That means every hour the sun is shrinking about 5 feet or its diameter is decreasing one-tenth per century. Thus, don't put your faith in things that are temporary, but place it upon that which is eternal - ***THE LORD!***

You see, our citizenship is in heaven and God is going to redeem these bodies of flesh one day and when He returns He will redeem this earth, He will restore it to like it was in the Garden of Eden. Righteousness will flow as Christ rules and reigns for 1,000 years from the throne of David. And then God will create a new heavens and a new earth with a new Jerusalem for us to dwell in, this is the eternal state!

So sin will be done away with, righteousness will fill the land! We also see that salvation will be forever! That is important for us to understand because some believe that you can lose your salvation or walk away from your salvation. I don't believe that you can. Let me show you what I mean.

Peter tells us in I Peter 1:3-9, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith - the salvation of your souls.”**

God has begotten us, He has saved us and this inheritance cannot be corrupted, it cannot be defiled, it will not fade away. Not only that, but did you know that God has a place reserved for us in heaven? He does and that reservation will not be taken away. How can I be so sure? Because this salvation is not kept by my power but by His! That is why I can be so sure and secure!

And yes, we will go through tough times but that is not to save us but to conform us into His image, to test our faith and help us to grow in Him! And Peter finishes up by saying that we should rejoice with such joy because we are going to be receiving the end of our faith – ***THE SALVATION OF OUR SOULS!*** To put it another way, Paul said, “**being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.**” Philippians 1:6.

Who began this good work in you? God did. Thus, who is going to finish this good work that He began in you? God will! What am I to do? Paul said in Philippians 2:12-13, “**Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.**”

Please note that we are not working to get in but what God has worked in us, our salvation, we are to work out or we are to be living what we say we believe, not for salvation but for identification, to show that we are Christians!

So don't hold onto those things that are going to perish, hold onto the Lord. And we need to listen to what He is saying because, as He said, “**. . . My salvation will be forever And My righteousness will not be abolished.**”

VERSES 7-8

1. Here is the third reason we are to listen to God and it is very simple. We need to listen to God, ***FEAR GOD, NOT MAN***. I think we see that in our own lives, the opposite of what I just said. Things happen and man rises up against us and we begin to fear man and the reason we are fearful is because we are not listening to the Lord, we are not trusting in Him.

What do I mean by that? Notice what God is saying here. For those that have His Law in their hearts, those that are saved, don't fear because the wicked will be done away with. Why are you afraid of them instead of trusting in the Lord who is all powerful?

In Proverbs 29:25 we are told, **"The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe."** It is as one person said, "When you fear God, you have nothing else to fear." Again, perspective puts things in a proper order for us. What can man do to me? If you fear man and not God it will be a snare to you, man will bring you down!

So fear God and not man or anything else, that is what the Psalmist said in Psalm 56:11, **"In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"** Also, in Psalm 118:6 we are told, **"The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"** And Paul said in Hebrews 13:6, **"So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'"**

Now let's think about this statement, **"What can man do to me?"** Now before we become smug with our answer, if you are not experiencing distress in your life right now, it is easy to say, **"What can man do to me?"** The bottom line is that man can cause us great harm, great pain, great suffering. That is just the reality in this sin-filled world. Then how can I have hope, how can I find rest? Look to the Lord!

You see, you need to have a proper perspective of the situation. Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:28, “**And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**” In understanding where we are at in Christ, then nothing should move us from the course that God has for us. Even in death the enemy does not win!

Paul, in II Corinthians 4:17-18 puts things into perspective for us as he tells us these things we face are nothing more than a, “**. . . light affliction, which is but for a moment, [and it] is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.**”

Think about the rest we can find as we cast our cares at His feet, that weight that has been taken off our shoulders. There truly is a freedom in letting go and letting God have control of our lives. We are in His hands and we can rest in that. And truly, if God is for us, then what can man really do to us? Nothing that is outside of His control!

What happens many times when we are in these distressing situations is we look to man to deliver us. And think about that one, has it really helped you? You may get temporary help, but not the lasting help, not the rest and comfort that you will find in the Lord as you go through these storms of life! Just because something works does not mean it is of the Lord. You need to obey His Word; you need to put your confidence in Him and what He will do rather than what man will do. You need to be still and know that He is God and His mercy endures forever! Not an easy thing to do but it is the best thing we can do. As the Psalmist said, **“It is better to trust in the Lord Than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord Than to put confidence in princes.”** Psalm 118:8-9. May we not forget that! Don’t let the fear of man cause you to stumble, fear the Lord and walk in His salvation!

2. So why should we listen to God? Because ***HE IS FAITHFUL***, we can trust in what He says and what God has done in the past encourages us in the present situations we are in.

So why should we listen to God? Because ***HIS SALVATION AND RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE FOREVER***. What a promise that is, this world and the wicked are passing away and all that is of God will remain.

So why should we listen to God? Because we are to ***FEAR GOD, NOT MAN***. The fear of man brings a snare; it causes us to do things that are wrong. But the fear of God leads us to live a life that is pleasing to Him. You see, what can man truly do to us!

VERSES 9-16

1. The Lord has been calling for His people to listen to Him and now we see them calling out to God, for God to awaken out of a sleep. Now that is interesting to me. They are calling for God to awaken and do something about their captivity in Babylon. They remembered how God delivered them from Rahab, which is symbolic for Egypt, and how He wounded the serpent, again speaking of Egypt or Pharaoh. They wanted God to intervene and bring them out of the captivity as He did back when they were in Egypt. (Psalm 87:4)

What is interesting is that we are told in Psalm 121:4, **“Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.”** If that is true and it is, then what is going on here? I think they are trying to wake up their own faith by remembering what God has done in the past to encourage them in the present situation that they were in. Even when we call upon the Lord we don’t awaken Him out of a sleep or awaken Him to our situation, it awakens our own faith!

Notice what they are doing. They are reminding God how He dried the waters of the **“great deep”** or the Red Sea so the children of Israel could cross through on dry ground. Again, God did not need to be reminded of this, but they did!

One side note regarding these waters that God dried up to let the children of Israel cross over in safety, there are some liberal scholars who try and point out that the Jews did not cross through the Red Sea, but the Sea of Reeds, which is only a couple of inches deep. And when a strong wind would come it could blow the water back so they walked on dry ground.

Two points on that. The Scriptures speak of the “**great deep**” and not the “great shallow”! And secondly, for those that reject the miracle of God drying up the waters of the Red Sea, they have a bigger problem and maybe an even greater miracle to dismiss. You see, if they crossed over at the Sea of Reeds, that means the entire Egyptian army drowned in a couple inches of water! What faith they must have to believe that or how foolish they are to reject what the Scriptures are saying!

So here we see the Jewish people asking God to act like He did when He destroyed the Egyptians and to free them from the bondage they are in, to deliver them from this captivity!

God wanted to deliver them; He was just waiting for them to call upon Him. He was waiting for them to repent of their sin and remember that He alone is God!

And notice what song they are singing, the song of redemption and it is a song speaking of their deliverance from Babylon. In Psalm 126 we see what that day was all about as they made their ascent up to the mountain of the Lord, up to Jerusalem. We read, “**When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion, We were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, ‘The LORD has done great things for them.’ The LORD has done great things for us, And we are glad. Bring back our captivity, O LORD, As the streams in the South. Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves with him.**” Sin caused them to go into captivity but God would be the one who would set them free, redeem them!

2. Now in verses 12-14 we see that God is asking them why they are fearful of man. Jesus said in Luke 12:4-5, **“And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!”**

All that man can do is destroy this body of flesh, but not the soul. If you know Christ, to be absent from the body, this tent, is to be present with the Lord! Today we are more fearful of what man can do to us than we are of what a holy and righteous God can do. Hebrews 10:31 says, **“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”** Why? **“For our God is a consuming fire.”** Hebrews 12:29. People need to think about that and turn to the One who can free them, Jesus!

3. I realize we have talked about this a lot but I think we need to be reminded of this issue. You see, we need to have a proper perspective of the situations we are in. Never take God out of the picture for when you do, things do look hopeless. God has created the heavens and the earth, He can handle our problems. And when we do take our eyes off of God and place them on the situation we tend to get ourselves in all kinds of trouble as we scheme to get out of the mess we are in. Remember what Proverbs 29:25 says, **“The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.”** God will preserve His people!

It is as Spurgeon wrote, “Ask the question again, ‘Where is the fury of the oppressor?’ And the answer comes; it is under the control of God. Even Satan, your fiercest foe, - God created him, God governs him, God can do with him just as he pleases. Then as to that poverty of which you are afraid, it will not come unless God permits it; and if it does come, the Lord can alleviate it.”

You see, the Lord shows that He is still in control, don't fear. God has given us words to say in the various situations we find ourselves in and His hand is protecting us. God is awake, He is not sleeping, in fact, we are going to see that God's people were the ones who were asleep. And like I have said, they were the ones who needed to be awakened to faith!

VERSES 17-20

1. Remember before they were calling for God to awaken out of His sleep. That was not the problem, here is the problem, they were asleep. And God is calling for them to awaken out of their spiritual sleep. Their sin, their idolatry is the thing that brought them into captivity and they have drunk from the cup of judgment, God did not force them. In fact, God sent them prophet after prophet to warn them but they refused to ***LISTEN!*** Remember, that is what this has been all about, listening to the Lord because if we don't we are going to be in trouble because we will be leaning upon our own understanding and doing our own thing instead of what the Lord desires!

And let's face it; sometimes God's people do fall asleep. Remember what Paul said in Romans 13:11-14, "**And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.**"

Who is Paul speaking of here, Christians or non-Christians? Folk's, he has to be speaking of Christians because we can be asleep in the faith but for the unsaved, they are dead in their trespasses and sins and thus, if they are dead they can't wake up unless they first come to Christ. They are not sleeping but they are dead! But Christians can be asleep in the faith, not earnestly contending for the faith that has been entrusted to them!

You see, it is time to wake up; the Lord is coming back very soon! May we understand this truth! The night of darkness is coming to a close and a new day is fast approaching where the Lord will rule and reign. Don't lose sight of that.

And now, because of that, may we cast off those works of darkness, those things that entangle us to walk properly and put on the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, as you do you will not have made or allowed any provision for the flesh to grow inside of you and be manifested in your life. If you have put on the Lord Jesus Christ, you will manifest His nature in your life, you will walk properly. Thus, ***IT IS TIME TO WAKE UP!***

2. As you read verse 18 I think Isaiah is speaking of the period of time towards the end of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, prior to their captivity! There was no godly leadership, and thus the people followed the direction the leaders were leading them, into judgment. I think we are seeing that in our own nation today, where our leaders will not stand up for what is right and the people will continue to follow their lead and judgment can't be that far down the road if we as a nation refuse to listen!

3. Make no mistake about it; God is chastening His people for their sins. Judgment was coming at the hands of the Babylonians and this is what it was going to look like. Upon the land and the city there will be desolation and destruction. Upon the inhabitants of the land, the people, there will be famine and the sword. And that is what took place. They destroyed the land, caused famine in the city as they cut the city off from the outside world, and once they came into the city they killed many people, all because they turned from God.

4. As we read on listen once again to what the Lord is saying to His people.

VERSES 21-23

1. Notice what God is saying here. **“Therefore please hear this . . .”** In other words the Lord is calling for them once again to listen to His Words. Yes judgment came upon them, God chastened them but not because He hates them but because He loves them and is trying to protect them from the danger that is found apart from Him.

Paul put it like this in Hebrews 12:5b-8, **“ . . . ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.”**

You see, if the Lord does not rebuke you it is because you are not His son, you are not saved! Love does what is needed even if it is hard. If you don’t love someone you will let them continue on in their sin but God does not do that!

2. And notice that they are drunk, but not with wine. They are drunk with sin and God poured out His judgment upon them. But God is not going to leave them there. God is looking to restore the nation and for those who oppressed God's people, judgment will now come upon them.

You see, God will take care of the situation; we don't need to pour out our wrath on anyone. In fact, we are to do just the opposite. We are to love those who hate us, those who oppress us, those who walk all over us. That is our responsibility.

Paul, in Romans chapter 12 makes that point very clear in regards to our responsibility, and God's. Starting in verse 17 we read, **“Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”** Romans 12:17-

21. A very different picture than what we see many times with Christians. We see just the opposite many times and that is not what God wants!

3. Let me close with this. It is not God who needs to be awakened, but it may be you! Where are you at with the Lord this evening? Wake up to the Lord and listen to His voice, obey what He is saying to you and see the salvation He will bring to your life!