

ISAIAH

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Isaiah chapter 54 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Remember in our last study we saw the work of the Messiah, the work of our Savior, what He was going to do for us. We read in Isaiah 53:4-6, **“Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”**

And there was so much more there in Isaiah chapter 53 as we saw the death, burial, resurrection and the exaltation of the Messiah, of Jesus and that leads us right into chapter 54 that begins with the word, **“Sing.”** That is truly what we should do as we come to know all that our Lord has done for us! With that as our background, let’s begin reading in Isaiah chapter 54 starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word this evening.

ISAIAH 54**VERSES 1-3**

1. Keep in mind that we are talking about captivity here. The Babylonians would come and take the Southern Kingdom of Judah into captivity and spiritually speaking, we are in bondage, we are captive to sin and there is no way out except the Lord. And this captivity of Israel is likened to a barren woman but notice what she is doing, she is singing! How can that be? **“For more are the children of the desolate Than the children of the married woman.”** Isaiah 54:1.

What does that mean? These words are meant to encourage the Jewish exiles in Babylon, that they would come home and their numbers would increase. What is interesting is that Paul picks up on this and quotes this verse in Galatians 4:27 as he wrote, **“For it is written: ‘Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children Than she who has a husband.’”**

In this section Paul is contrasting Law and Grace and showing how they cannot coexist with each other. And Paul is showing us that there truly is freedom that comes from the New Covenant and that Covenant is based in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. It is not something that is worked for but it is a free gift of God, a grace gift that God has given to us and that is freedom.

Thus, in quoting out of Isaiah 54:1 Paul is saying that Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, will outnumber legalistic Jews, and we see that has come to pass! We sing forth praises unto God, we sing with joy unto our Lord for what He has done for us, the gift of grace that He has extended to us. And just as there was great joy when the Jews returned home from the captivity in Babylon, we rejoice because we have been set free from the bondage of sin we were in! Keep in mind that the Law did not produce any spiritual children, it couldn't! But Grace has and continues to do so!

2. We also see in these verses that God is going to enlarge their boundaries! Back in Joshua 1:4 God told Joshua that their boundaries would go as far north as Lebanon to as far south as the Nile River. To the west was the Mediterranean Sea and as far east as the Euphrates River. It covered an area of some 300,000 square miles!

And yet they never occupied all that land. Even during the time of David and Solomon when the nation reached the zenith of its power, they only occupied an area of some 30,000 square miles! They could have had it all, but because they did not walk by faith and were not obedient to God's directions, they did not appropriate all that God had for them into their lives.

Even today they occupy far less than they did before, only some 7,951 square miles. Let me give you a perspective on that. The land area of New Jersey is 7,836 square miles and if you include the total area it is only 8,729 square miles. So Israel is not very big right now and yet the world wants that land, go figure.

When will they occupy all the land that God had promised to them? Not until the Kingdom Age. Even today they keep giving land away for peace and that is not working and it will not work. But there is coming a day that they will occupy all the land that God has given to them or as the Lord said, **“For you shall expand to the right and to the left, And your descendants will inherit the nations, And make the desolate cities inhabited.”** Isaiah 54:3.

3. Now how does that apply to us or does it apply to us as Christians? I think it does. Just as Israel did not appropriate the land that God had given to them, we many times do the same. And I am not necessarily talking about physical land but taking all that God has for us and appropriating that into our lives. Walking by faith, walking according to the high calling by which we have been called, living out our faith to the fullest.

Paul said in Ephesians chapter 1, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”** Ephesians 1:3. And yet, many times, because of a lack of faith or not listening to God’s leading, we don’t appropriate all that God has for us into our lives. God wants to bless us, He wants us to grow in Him, to mature in the faith but He will not force us. We must walk by faith, following Him, trusting Him and appropriating all that God has for us into our lives!

4. Now that can be scary, especially when the world is coming against you for your beliefs. It can be difficult because you stick out like a sore thumb and you may want to hide your faith. Fear can cause us to do things we should not do. So what can be done about it? Let’s read on and see.

VERSES 4-6

1. Yes the children of Israel went through much affliction in their history. They were in bondage in Egypt, in Babylon and the nations came against them and still do. And in the midst of all that God says to them, “**Do not fear . . .**” I like that, in the midst of trouble you don’t have to fear, you need to trust what the Lord has said. Even in all their failures God is with them and He will restore them. You see, “**the God of the whole earth**” is with them!

And that applies to us as well. No matter what we have gone through, are going through or will go through we don’t have to fear because the God of the whole earth is with us! I don’t know about you, but I do need to be reminded of that often because as the storms of life come crashing down upon me, I tend to focus on those waves instead of the Lord. That truly is the key, looking to Him, trusting in Him and then we don’t have to fear, we can walk by faith!

VERSES 7-8

1. Did God really forsake the Jews? I don’t think so. Then what is this about? I think they felt forsaken because their sin had separated them from God, their sin brought them in captivity and they felt forsaken, they felt abandoned by God. God was chastening them and let’s face it; no one likes to be chastened. And yet God extends His “**great mercies**” towards Israel and this moment of feeling forsaken does not compare with the everlasting nature of the kindness that will come upon them! I think this is looking towards the Kingdom Age where the Lord will reign from Jerusalem for 1,000 years from the throne of David and instead of the Jews being persecuted, they will be praised!

2. I think sometimes Christians think of God like this, “He loves me, He loves me not! He loves me, He loves me not!” And that thinking goes on and on. When we do well, He loves me. When we don’t do well, then He doesn’t love me. That is not true, the Bible tells us that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is found in Christ Jesus, nothing! (Romans 8:35-39)

And I do think for many Christians it is easy to lose heart when difficulties come our way. Sometimes it is a result of our sin and sometimes it is just the result of the sin that is in this world and God will use both those things to test our faith, to help us to grow, to get us to look to Him or return to Him!

Paul said in II Corinthians 4:16-18, **“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, 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.”**

That is what the Lord was saying to the Jewish people here in Isaiah and it is a lesson we need to learn. When we are overwhelmed, when we feel forsaken and tired we need to understand that this life is like a vapor, it is just a moment when compared to the everlasting blessing that the Lord has for us, eternity with Him. Perspective is everything and I know it is hard at times, but remember what the Lord said, **“But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you.”**

VERSES 9-10

1. Notice the comparison here. First of all we are told that God judged the world by a flood for their sin, and after the flood God told Noah that He would not destroy the earth by a flood again. That judgment was over; it was only for a time.

Now the Lord applies this to His people, the Jews and He is saying that just as His judgment on the earth came to an end, so too will His judgment upon His people come to an end. When will that be? I see this in the Kingdom Age, after they turn to the Lord; they receive the forgiveness of sin that is only found in Jesus!

How can we be so sure? Because God's kindness, His covenant that He made with His people are more certain than the mountains and the hills. Think about this for a minute. It took just some 30 minutes, when Mount St. Helens exploded, for some four billion cubic tons of earth to be moved! That is impressive but the picture is that God's Word to His people will stand!

Jesus said, "**Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Word will by no means pass away.**" Matthew 24:35. You see, God's new covenant, the covenant of peace that is found in the blood of Christ, His atoning work for us, is an everlasting covenant. It is a covenant that is not based upon our faithfulness to keep it, but upon God's! You see, His love, kindness, compassion, mercy, grace, and-so-on are everlasting. And that is for both Jews and Gentiles!

VERSES 11-17

1. Look at the love of God for His people. He is the one who cares for those who are afflicted, tossed, not comforted. And let's face it, when we find ourselves in those situations many times we come to the conclusion that God doesn't care for us, He doesn't love us. That is not true, God does care and He wants to comfort us, it is a precious promise to us!

2. I see this looking ahead to the Kingdom Age when children will be able to play out in the streets without fear and they will be taught by the LORD! Peace and righteousness will fill this land. We are told in Isaiah 2:2-4, **“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, And shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.”**

Also, in Isaiah 11:6-9 we are told, **“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.”**

The Lord will rule and reign and teach His children! Peace will fill the land. What a glorious day that will be! There will be no fear because the Lord is reigning, not like in our day as leaders rule according to their desires and not in the fear of the Lord.

3. Now we do know what is ahead for the Jewish people. They are surrounded by over 100 million people who want them destroyed and one day, and I believe soon, these enemies will come down upon Israel with Russia helping to try and destroy them. But as Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 tell us, God will destroy this army and save His people.

Then sometime after this we see the Tribulation Period start and at the 3½ year mark of the seven year Tribulation Period we see the Antichrist come against the Jewish people because they refuse to worship him as God and he will try to destroy the Jews as they flee to Petra for safety. It is here that they call upon the Lord, that they receive Jesus, the One whom they pierced, as their Lord and Savior.

And Jesus will return, put down the armies of the world who have gathered together to fight against Him and Jesus will establish the Kingdom Age. No more weapons of war will be needed. Now we can understand the physical weapons of war, what is interesting is that the tongue is also mentioned as a weapon of war.

That seems strange but it is not. Think of the people that have been destroyed by the tongue. Spurgeon made these comments in regards to the tongue, "Satan leaves no stone unturned against the Church of God. He uses not simply the hand; but, what is oftener a sharper weapon, the tongue. We can bear a blow, sometimes, but we cannot endure an insult. There is a great power in the tongue. We can rise from a blow which smote us to the ground; but we cannot so easily recover from slander, that lays the character low."

Now that can be discouraging and yes, it can truly hurt, but Spurgeon also shows us that we need to trust in the Lord, "The more accusers, the more acquittals; the more slander, the more honor; so the enemy may slander us as much as he pleases."

4. Now some may argue, “How do we know that the Jewish people come to Jesus?” There are many verses but the one here in Isaiah 54:17, at the end of this verse makes it very clear, **“... ‘And their righteousness is from Me,’ Says the LORD.”** We are not saved by good works, keeping the Law, going to church; we are saved by the righteousness of Christ which is imputed into our lives by faith! We can rest in that and no matter what others may say of us, our righteousness is ultimately from Him!

I do realize that John Hagee and others believe that the Jews are saved differently than the Gentiles, than you and me and that is foolish and it is wrong! John Hagee believes that the Jews do not need to believe in Jesus (or come to faith in Christ) to ensure their salvation. Read Romans chapters 9-11!

Also, I think Peter clears this up for us as he spoke at the first council meeting in Jerusalem regarding Gentiles being saved and if they need to keep the Law of Moses. And Peter said they could not even keep the Law of Moses so how could they place this burden upon the Gentiles. Then Peter said this in Acts 15:11, **“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.”** In other words, the Jews are saved just as the Gentiles are saved, by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins!

5. Now how can I receive this righteousness from God? Let’s read on into chapter 55 and see.

ISAIAH 55**VERSES 1-2**

1. The Lord is getting the attention of every person on this earth to listen to Him because He is inviting them to come and receive this invitation of eternal life. What must we do to obtain it? You can't buy this but you can receive it by faith.

Then why does it say, "**Come, buy and eat**"? You need to read on because it also says "**without money and without price.**" How can that be? Because the price has already been paid for by Jesus! It is as Jesus said in John 3:16-17, "**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**"

The price for our redemption has been paid in full, all we must do is receive that free gift by faith and that gift is wrapped in Jesus you might say! Listen to how the last chapter of the last book of the Bible closes, with an invitation. In Revelation 22:17 we are told, "**And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.**" God keeps calling for us to come to Him, even at the very end!

2. Now verse 2 opens up with a rebuke for those that are buying things that can't satisfy and isn't it amazing what people try to fill their lives with today and in the end, they keep looking for bigger, faster, shiner, prettier, or whatever and they still are not satisfied. They fill their lives with all kinds of material things and our society is a vivid example of what covetousness is all about.

Think about this. We have storage units to store all the stuff we have that we can't fit in our house. And we want to make sure that we have 24 hour a day 7 days a week access to these units so we can get to the stuff that we might need in the middle of the night! And yet, Jesus warned us in Luke 12:15 when He said, “**. . . ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.’**”

You see, outside of Christ you will not be satisfied, it is an illusion that quickly falls apart, and you once again are searching for satisfaction in someone or something. God wants you to come to Him, to enjoy a meaningful relationship with Him. It is a free gift to you but it cost Christ His life! Thus, eat what is good, the bread of life, partake of Him and you will be satisfied. We are to delight ourselves in the things of God and yet, the church today wants us to delight in the things of the world that has been brought into the church.

What does God have for us? He tells us and the key here is that you need to be thirsty for God and if you are, He will satisfy that thirst in your life and you will want even more of Him in your life as you do.

The first thing the Lord talks about is *WATER*. In John 7:37-39 we read, **“On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”** Jesus is speaking of the refreshing, life-changing waters of the Holy Spirit, and all you need to do is come to Him and receive it.

The next thing the Lord speaks of is *WINE*. What is that about? Wine speaks of joy, a glad heart which God desires us to have. As one person said, “Joy is the flag that is flown in the heart when the King is in residence there!” And as Psalm 16:11 says, **“You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”**

And the third thing the Lord has for us is *MILK*. I know, it may not sound great but it is very important in our life. You see, when you think of milk you think of that which nourishes, and the thought that is being expressed here is the Word of God. The Word of God will keep you healthy and strong in your spiritual life.

As James 1:21-22 says, **“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”**

And we know what Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 3:16-17, **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”**

The key, of course, is being hungry and thirsty for the things of God. God tells us these things are free, you don't have to spend money for them you must only receive them into your life. God has given to us all we need to grow in Him but we must take them in. Salvation is a free gift for us, so, **“Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters.”**

VERSES 3-5

1. What does it mean to **“Incline your ear”**? It means you need to listen. Yes it is important that we read God's Word but we must then listen to what God is saying to us through His Word and obey. It is not just about information, which is important, it is also about application!

2. The Scriptures tell us that the Messiah would come from the seed of David and one day His Kingdom will be established over all the earth. And again the thought is that this invitation is open to all. Not only to Israel as we are told, **“Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, And nations who do not know you shall run to you. . . .”** Isaiah 55:8.

VERSES 6-7

1. Notice the urgency here. Don't pass up the opportunity to come to the Lord, seek the Lord while He may be found and that implies that one day it will be too late. I don't know how often people think about this but there is a day of God's grace which will come to an end and led into a day of God's judgment or wrath.

We see this in Genesis 6:3 where God said, **“My Spirit shall not strive [abide] with man forever, for he is indeed flesh, yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”** In other words God gave man 120 years to repent, or to turn around to God before God brought His judgment upon them by a flood to destroy the wicked. And God has been very gracious towards man once again, but that is coming quickly to an end.

And make no mistake about it, there is human responsibility here or when we are cast into hell we could blame God for not saving us! You see, as the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts, we have the choice of receiving what He is showing us or rejecting it. Remember what Jesus said in John 6:37, **“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”** The sovereignty of God and man’s free will that run side-by-side and are taking us to heaven!

2. Verse 7 is interesting in that it says, **“Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts . . .”** From this it seems that wickedness is demonstrated by our actions, the things that we do. On the other hand, unrighteousness can be found in our thoughts. Paul picked up on this as he wrote in Romans 12:2, **“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”** And in II Corinthians 10:5 he wrote, **“ . . . bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”** So this battleground for walking in righteousness is not only found in our actions but in our minds and thus, we must surrender our lives to the Spirit of God that we may walk as He leads and not as we want!

You see, this is what the Good News is all about. God desires us to turn from our evil ways and come to Him. As we do his mercy and pardon will be extended into our lives! Our life is a walk, either moving towards God or away from Him. When you walk towards God you are walking away from sin. When you walk away from God you are walking towards sin. You see, you are either being transformed by the power of God or conformed to this world. And may we understand that when we turn to the Lord He will never reject us, that is not the problem. The problem is that we fail; we refuse to return to Him!

VERSES 8-9

1. God wants us to understand something here and it is really very simple. He is God and we are not God! You see, God doesn't think like we think. He knows everything. Not only that, but God does not act the way we do. I am thankful for that. His actions are always right, fair, just, good and-so-on.

Now for some of you who think you are really smart, God wants you to know that if you were to compare His thoughts with your thoughts and your actions to His actions they are as far as the heavens are higher than the earth apart!

To put that into perspective, our universe has been estimated at being some 12 billion light years, and light travels at 186,000 miles per second. To give you an example of the enormity of our universe, if you were to jump on a light beam you would be able to circle the earth 7½ times in a single second. Obviously no meals on that flight!

And God measures the universe with the span of His hand! (Isaiah 40:12.) You see, if it only took intellect to believe in God, we would not need faith. That does not mean we turn off our brains when we become Christians. But it does mean we fully can't understand an infinite God with our finite minds, and thus, we must believe by faith what God is doing and what He has said. We must trust in Him!

2. Now how does this apply to our salvation? Think about it. The gift of salvation God has extended to everyone but they must receive it by faith. That means the worst sinner can enter into heaven by faith and the most righteous person, in his own mind he is righteous, will not apart from faith.

You see, we look at a person who has committed murder and think, "They are going to hell!" That may be but that is not necessarily true. If they come to Christ they are saved and they will enter into eternity with Jesus. On the other hand, we look at a person like Mother Teresa and think, "She is going to heaven, look at all she has done!" And apart from faith in Jesus she is not going to heaven no matter how much good she has done! In other words, the way we think of things is not the way God does and our actions of condemning people are not the way God does. He looks at their life in or apart from Christ and that is how He judges man.

Spurgeon sums it up like this, "You may conclude that it is not intended that you should understand the infinite, for you are told that his thoughts and ways are far above you; but you are required to seek him while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near." Today is the day of salvation, don't pass it up!

VERSES 10-11

1. Notice the picture that is being painted for us here in regards to the Word of God. In the Middle East, where rain is a commodity, the land is dry, it is hard, and yet, when the rain does come, seemingly overnight the land bursts forth with vegetation. You see, the life was already there in the ground, it just needed water to spring forth.

The same is true of our hearts. As God's Word is spoken, the refreshing waters of the Holy Spirit break up the hardness of our hearts and bring forth life. The Word of God is living and it is powerful, and it will accomplish that which God desires. You see, faith does not come by entertainment, skits, social programs, stories or anything else except what Paul said in Romans 10:17, "**So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**" Don't be ashamed to speak the Word of God, for it has the power to change lives, yours and mine!

VERSES 12-13

1. Look at the progression here. First of all for those that hunger and thirst after God they will be filled, they will receive the gift of life that is freely given to them, Jesus. Thus, seek Him while He can be found and let His Word fill your mind and your heart. We can't fully understand an infinite God but He has shown us who He is through His Word and as we allow God's Word to work in our lives it will bring forth fruit. When we, as God's people turn to Him, when we listen to Him, when we obey His Word then there is great joy and peace in our life. And that joy fills the whole earth and I think that is looking on ahead to the Kingdom Age.

Now I do realize that some people laugh at the trees clapping their hands or branches and it is probably poetic in nature, but maybe it is not. Remember as Jesus was coming down the Mount of Olives, and the people were saying, “**... ‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!**” Luke 19:38. And the Pharisees told Jesus, “**... ‘Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.’**” Luke 19:39. And I like what Jesus said to them, “**... ‘I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.’**” Luke 19:40. I get the impression that if the people were silent, the rocks and stones would have cried out! In fact, I have one of those stones that would have cried out at home. What a sight that would have been.

2. Make no mistake about it; the Kingdom Age will be glorious. The effects of the curse will be reversed, not removed yet completely, for that will not happen until God creates the new heavens and the new earth spoken of in Revelation chapter 22, verse 3. The land will be beautiful once again, righteousness will flow throughout the earth, the land will be restored in the Kingdom Age.

ISAIAH 56

VERSES 1-2

1. The Lord is speaking to those who were in captivity in Babylon and He is encouraging them to keep justice, to do what is right. Why? Because the day of His salvation is about to come, they are going to be set free.

I think that is just the nature of man, “What’s the use?” The Jews were in captivity, things did not look good for them to return to the land of Israel and many became comfortable living in Babylon. And the call is to awaken from your spiritual sleep and live your life in a way that would please God, do what is right, live justly.

The same is true for us today. Paul admonishes us in Ephesians 4:1-3, **“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”**

And like the Lord said to the Jewish people living in exile, John admonishes us to do the same thing in I John 3:2-3, **“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”**

God wants us to live a righteous life until He comes. Not for our salvation of course, but to live a life that would be pleasing to God, that would bring glory to Him. The result of living that kind of life is found in verse 2.

2. Notice what we see here. **“Blessed is the man who does this, And the son of man who lays hold on it . . .”** A person who follows after the Lord is blessed or happy. It is a joy to do those things that please the Father.

It is as the Psalmist said in Psalm 1, **“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.”** Psalm 1:1-3.

What is interesting is that the world is calling for us to be conformed to its image, to indulge in the things of this world. And as you look at what the world has to offer you will see that the world wants to draw you away from God, away from walking in holiness as He is holy. God does not forbid us to do things because He hates us but because they will destroy us, they will bring us down. And for many, they think they know better than God and in the end they will find out that they don't!

VERSES 3-8

1. Here is the love of God for the people of this world, not just the Jews. Yes, the Jews are His special people and they were to be the ones who shined the light of God to the lost, but they saw their light go out. Now it is the Gentiles that are lights that are shining and for those Jews also who come to Jesus. God is not done with the Jews but for now, His program is working through the Gentiles.

But what I love here is for the foreigner, a non-Jew, who comes to the Lord, they were not to be treated differently. They were to be welcomed into the family of God. You see, God will always receive those who come to Him. The Jew's thought differently, but even here in the Old Testament we see God's loving arm of grace and mercy extended to all men.

2. Not only the foreigner, but also to the eunuch, the person who completely devoted himself to the service of his master, and lived a life of celibacy in order to do his job more effectively. But the concern was that a eunuch would not have any offspring to pass the family name on, and in a sense, he was dry, a barren tree.

God is saying to those who have lived their lives in total devotion to Him, have given up some of the things in this life, like getting married and having children, that God will bless them. Their service to Him will not go un-noticed.

This also can be speaking of the handicapped. Yes, Deuteronomy 23:1-6 says that they could not serve in worship but that is not the last word to those who are handicapped, or even foreigners. God is open to all people to come to Him, to serve Him.

3. Now we do get a hint of it here in the Old Testament, a pretty big hint that God welcomes both Jews and Gentiles. But what had happened is the Jews excluded the Gentiles unless they became a Jew. Many Jews felt that the Gentiles were only created by God to fuel the fires of Hell and that Father Abraham stood at the gate of Hell to pull out the most wicked Jew out because Hell was not for them by birth!

And as you look at how the Temple courts were set up, you see this very thing of exclusion. Going from the inside out, there was the court of the priests, then the court of the men, then the court of the women, and finally the court of the Gentiles. And every so many feet there were signs saying that if any Gentile crossed into another court, passed the court of the Gentiles, their death would be upon their shoulders, it would be their fault. Jesus has broken down those walls of division, and both Jew and Gentile can boldly come before the throne of God and make intercession.

Paul made that point very clearly in Ephesians 2:14-18, **“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”**

4. Now let me set the stage for the rest of this chapter. We have been talking about Jesus Christ and how we are set free from our sins through His atoning work on the cross of Calvary. He is the good shepherd as we are told in John 10:11-16, **“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.”** Jesus is our good shepherd who gave His life for His sheep. Notice, not 2 or 3 or 4 different flocks, but one flock made up of a variety of different people, both Jews and Gentiles!

Now, as we move into verse 9 of Isaiah chapter 56 we will see the Lord speak of wicked shepherds, wolves in sheep’s clothing you might say, hirelings and what these men are all about. Not a pretty picture nor is it meant to be. It is a warning to stay clear of them.

VERSES 9-12

1. God is indicting the religious and political leaders of Israel. They have allowed wild beasts to come in and devour the people. They were blind, they were ignorant, they were lazy, and God called them greedy dogs. The Jews would call Gentiles “dogs” and it was a big time put down. You see, these leaders were more interested in their own gain rather than the safety, protection, edification of the people they were entrusted to watch over.

And instead of heeding the warnings of God, they just want to have a good time. I will give you one example and this is from Ezra Church in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin and this is what its flyer advertises and pay attention to what is missing. It says,

“CASUAL ATMOSPHERE / SHORT SERVICES / LOUD MUSIC / FUN FOR KIDS.”

What is missing? The teaching of God’s Word and that is the problem today. People go to church to have fun but it is not the happy spirit that we desire, it is the Holy Spirit and there is great joy as you read and study and learn about the God who loves us so much! I will post this ad on the web page at the end of the study because even the picture is not good but you can see for yourself, this is the church of the twenty-first century!

Paul warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:27-35, when he said to them, **“For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”**

Wolves would be coming in from outside the church and they would also be rising up from within the church to devour the people and draw the people to their own doctrine instead of Christ. And he was admonishing them to watch over the flock that God has entrusted them with. To warn of the false doctrine that is out there. He wanted them to teach the people that God had given to them the Word of God. He wanted them to equip them so they can stand strong and not be taken by the winds of false doctrine that blow through the church. And Paul ends his words by saying that he did not do this for money, for he worked with his hands to provide for himself, and his desire was to give all he could to those he was watching over.

When you move away from the Word of God you are opening your people up to false doctrine and we see that today as the church is denying the deity of Jesus, His virgin birth, that He was sinless, that He died for our sins or that there is no such thing as the blood atonement and-so-on. You don't have to be a theologian to refute those things you just need to know the Word of God.

Remember the story of King Josiah in II Kings chapter 22. He was a good King who brought reform to the nation after his grandfather Manasseh and his father Amon did evil before the Lord and sent the kingdom into a downward spiral from which they never fully recovered.

But Josiah tried to bring reform; he called for the Temple to be repaired, fixed up, to make it a place of worship once again. And as they were removing all the junk that had been piled up in the Temple, underneath it all, they found the Word of God. And as they brought the Word of God to the King and they read it to him, he tore his clothes because he recognized how far from God they were by their actions. And as the Word of God was spoken, lives were changed, revival broke out. The church today has covered up the Word of God with all kinds of programs, entertainment, psycho-babel, and-so-on. And what the people need to do is get rid of all that junk and get back to the Word of God.

Christians want revival and they want to spur the people on but that will be short lived. You see, only God can bring revival in our own hearts and in this land and it is done as we get back to the Word of God as the Lord said, **“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out with joy, And be led out with peace; The mountains and the hills Shall break forth into singing before you, And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”** Isaiah 55:11-12.

2. Now this is an issue that bothers me because there are so many that do this today, they beg for money because God is broke or this ministry is going to be shut down. God is not broke and maybe the ministry needs to be shut down. I am not saying you can't let people know where there is a need, and I am even leery of this at times, but don't beg for money.

In fact, many times you see these teachers begging for money and they are driving around in fancy cars, have mansions they are living in, and usually more than one, jewelry that would knock your socks off, and-so-on. They are greedy dogs, God says. They are looking out for their own personal interests and fleecing the flock of God.

What is the answer? Listen to what Paul tells us in I Timothy 6:6-12, **“Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”** Our contentment is found in the Lord not in things!

3. Let me close with this because it is not easy to live for the Lord when the world is coming against you. It is not always easy to do what is right, and it is not always popular, but it is what is best. Remember King Asa, as He was leading the people his own grandmother, Maachah, had an obscene image of Asherah, and because of that Asa removed her from being the queen mother.

Why did he do it? Because he wanted to do what was right before the Lord. That is always the best policy to follow, as difficult as it may be sometimes. Pray for our political leaders, that they would do what is right and that the religious leaders would get back to teaching the Word of God to equip the saints of God. That we would walk according to the high calling by which we have been called to honor the Lord!

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