

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



I S A I A H

These transcripts are taken straight from live audio recordings of Adrian Rogers during his tenure as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. As such some of the transcripts may contain stutters, stammers, transcription errors, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

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A Biblical Perspective on Homosexuality

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 25, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 3:8–9

*“For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue
and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory.”*

ISAIAH 3:8

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Introduction

Find Isaiah chapter 3, would you, please. When you've found it, look up here.

I read something in the newspaper that was a very sad and a very poignant story. The title of this article was in Thursday, June the 19th, USA Today, “Missing Stop Sign: Lost Lives.” Lithia, Florida: “On the last night of his life, eighteen year-old Kevin Farr scored a pretty fair 218, and then turned to his brother, Jay, as he left the bowling lanes. ‘Tell Mom I’ll be home by midnight,’ he said, ‘and tell her not to worry.’ It was 11:55 p.m. when Farr and his two teenage buddies sailed in his Camaro into a country crossroads, passed a stop sign that lay unseen on the ground. A semi-trailer truck hauling phosphates slammed into the car killing Farr, Brian Hernandez, and Randall White, both eighteen. The impact of the collision shook residents from their beds more than a mile away. Like the sickening sound that carried across the quiet country fields that night, the repercussions from the crash on February 7, 1996, continue to reach far and wide.” And then it goes on to tell about some people evidently on a lark, some young people, who removed a stop sign at an intersection and the tragedy that resulted.

I believe in a way that’s a parable to our society today. We have people who are removing stop signs. And we’re having young people and adults alike who are meeting with calamity and disaster because some have failed to hold up the sign and put it there

to begin with, and others are trying to remove them as fast as they can.

Isaiah chapter 3, verses 8 and 9. Here's what God said ruined Jerusalem. Would you like to know what ruined Jerusalem? Listen to Isaiah the prophet. "For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of his glory. The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin like Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! For they have rewarded evil unto themselves."

Now we cannot dodge the unpleasant subject of homosexuality. I wish that I did not have to address you on this subject, but it's a subject that faces every one of us head-on as individuals, as families, as a church, and as a nation. We do not have the luxury of putting our head in the sand like an ostrich and saying, "Let's just talk about something a little more pleasant."

Now the incident at hand is a resolution that was passed at the Southern Baptist Convention that met recently in Dallas, Texas. I have a copy of that resolution I'm going to read to you. Interestingly enough, that resolution is between two other resolutions.

One, there's a resolution on religious persecution, and it is a resolution to say that Christians need to stop being persecuted. Many of them are being martyred and killed. More Christians have died for the faith in this century than any century since Jesus was here on the face of the earth. And religious persecution is a terrible and a horrible thing. That resolution made no news.

Now the resolution on homosexuality and Disney was the next resolution. And then, the one that followed that was on world hunger, a resolution urging Southern Baptists to compassionately do what they can do to alleviate world hunger.

I was there at the convention, and I saw all of the television cameras lined up, a veritable army, a forest of television cameras when the Disney resolution was being discussed. But when the resolution on doing something about world hunger began to be discussed, they left in droves, because they were not interested, it seems; in religious persecution, not interested, it seems; in world hunger; but interested on this particular subject.

Here is the resolution: Resolution #2, Resolution on Moral Stewardship and the Disney Company:

"Whereas everything Christians possess of time, money, and resources is given to them by God as a stewardship, for which they will give an account before a holy God; and, whereas, those who serve the public in any manner also have a stewardship before God regarding their services, and those who have greater influence have greater responsibility for their stewardship and must give a greater accounting; and, whereas many entertainment providers, including, but not limited to the Disney Company, are increasing promoting immoral ideologies, such as homosexuality, infidelity, and

adultery, which are biblically reprehensible and abhorrent to God and His plan for the world that He loves; and, whereas the 1996 Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution regarding these issues with a specific appeal to the Disney Company, which had long been a respected leader of family entertainment in keeping with traditional moral values; and, whereas the aforementioned resolution called for our Christian Life Commission to monitor Disney's progress in returning to its previous philosophy of producing enriching family entertainment, and the Christian Life Commission has now reported that the Disney Company has not only ignored our concerns, but flagrantly furthered this moral digression in its product and policies; and, whereas, we realize that we cannot do everything to do stop the moral decline in our nation, but we must do what lies before us when it is right through a proper use of our influence, energies, and prayers, particularly when it affects our nation's children; be it therefore resolved that the messengers of the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Dallas, Texas, June 17–19, 1997, urge every Southern Baptist to take the stewardship of their time, money, and resources so seriously that they refrain from patronizing the Disney Company and any of its related entities, understanding that this is not an attempt to bring the Disney Company down, but to bring Southern Baptist up to the moral standard of God; and, be it further resolved that we encourage Southern Baptists to refrain from patronizing any company that promotes immoral ideologies and practices, realizing that the Disney Company is not the only such provider; and, be it further resolved that we ask our pastors and church leaders to become informed regarding these issues and to teach their people accordingly, and that we urge all Southern Baptists to graciously communicate the reasons for their individual actions to the Disney Company and other company; and, be it finally resolved that we pray that God would use these actions to help the employees of such companies to respect the enormous stewardship they have before God and that we affirm those employees who embrace and share our concerns." That is the resolution that caused such repercussions here across America and around the world.

And what is the Disney Company doing? What is this? Some people say that we are mad at a mouse, that we are tilting at windmills. And I have a article here taken from the *Advocate* magazine, April 29, 1997. That is a homosexual magazine. And it is reporting with favor on what the Disney Company is doing. And I can tell you that the homosexual community is very well pleased with the rapprochement of Disney..."—and I'm going to break in. This is a long article. And I have much to say. This is only laying the groundwork, so I want to be brief. But it speaks of their basic adulation for Disney, and I quote—"Over all, ABC and Disney are to be commended for their courage in airing the come-out episode (that's an episode of a lady who claims to be a lesbian who came out on a television sitcom, I suppose, called "Ellen."), and he says they're to be commended

for their courage in airing the coming out episode,” he says,” particularly given Disney’s All-American reputation. In fact, gay content has gradually crept into the company’s product over the past decade.” Now, this is what the homosexuals themselves are saying.

“In 1995 the company withstood bitter protests from religious groups regarding “Priests,” a critically acclaimed movie about homosexuality in the Catholic Church that was released by Disney’s Miramax Film Division. And subtle gay allusion has found its way into several of Disney’s animated features. The genie in Aladdin, whose voice was supplied by Robin Williams, emulates a swishy clothier in one scene. And Gaston, the primping muscle-bound hunk of Beauty and the Beast, was reportedly an homage by gay animator Andres Deja to his favorite West Hollywood gym clones.” And then it goes on the say, “Disney has presented positive gay images on the small screen as well.” And then it goes on to talk about other places on television where Disney has begun now with the homosexual theme that begins to permeate all of this.” I’m going to cut to the bottom, the last paragraph in this long article, and it speaks of a man who is from the inside of Disney. And it says, “Nuron, for one, is optimistic. ‘People see Disney as a squeaky clean image of America,’ the producer says. ‘But, in fact, the company has become a more realistic reflection of America, one that includes gays and lesbians. That’s only fair, since so many of us are creating those images in the first place.’”

Now they say, “Disney may seem squeaky clean, but it has a gay-lesbian agenda.” And they say, “That’s only fair because we’re the ones, the insiders, that are producing this.” Now you may think that this does not run deeply and that Disney does not have these proclivities and these philosophies, but I could tell you that I could take all of my time to teach tonight giving illustrations, but I’d rather leave that and go to the Word of God and tell you why America is in such a crisis.

I want to say four things tonight about homosexuality. And I trust that these things will be biblically based, that they will come from wisdom, they will come from love, and I pray God that He will help us as a church in these last desperate days in which we live to stand wisely, compassionately, courageously, and intelligently.

I. It is a Sinful Problem

The first thing I want to say is that homosexuality is a sinful problem. Homosexuality is a sinful problem. Now the Bible, without any stutter, stammer, equivocation, or apology, calls homosexuality a sin. Jot these Scriptures down. Leviticus chapter 18, verse 22: “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.” Romans chapter 1, verses 26 though 28: God speaks of a people who have turned from Him, and it speaks of His judgment upon them. And this is what it says, beginning in verse 26: “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did

change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.” That means not seemly, not fitting.

Then, here’s the third Scripture I want to give you tonight—I Corinthians chapter 6, verses 9 through 11: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators (those are they who practice sex outside of the bonds of marriage. That’s called fornication), nor idolaters (those are they who worship idols), nor adulterers (those are they who practice sex outside the bond of their own marriage with somebody who is not their married partner), nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, no extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God.” Oh, excuse me, I left out the very phrase I wanted. “...Be not deceived; neither, fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers (now here’s the next one), nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind.” Those two words are translations of Greek words which mean passive, an act of homosexuality. The effeminate, being the passive partner, the abuser of themselves with mankind, the active, aggressive partner. “Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” Now notice this next phrase: “And such WERE some of you, but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

Now I say that homosexuality is a sinful problem, a sinful practice. In the Old Testament and the New Testament historic Christianity, from the founding of the church to this day, has always seen homosexuality as a sin. Now the homosexual community may say that it is not, but the Word of God does not change by politically correct speech. We do not live by morality by majority.

Now, let me say this: Homosexuality is a sin like other sins. And Paul mentioned a number of sins: covetousness, stealing, adultery, fornication, idolatry. Homosexuality is only one sin. Don’t get the idea if you’re not a homosexual that you don’t have a sin problem. Sin is a problem that is real to us all. And so God says that it is a sin. Therefore, homosexuality is a sin of choice. It is not that somebody is a “victim” of homosexuality any more than a person would be a victim of adultery or a victim of idolatry. It is a sin of choice.

Now there’s only one physical, sexual relationship that is allowed by Almighty God, and that is one man having a sexual relationship with one woman who is his wife. That’s what God says. The Bible teaches that adultery is a sin. The Bible teaches that fornication is a sin. The Bible teaches that lesbianism is a sin. The Bible teaches that

homosexuality is a sin. The Bible teaches that bestiality (that is, having a sexual relationship with an animal) is a sin. All of these things transgress the spirit of the seventh commandment. Now we cannot blame genetics. We cannot blame society. We must say that it is a sin. Now that's the first thing I want to say. Just clearly and plainly, no stutter, no stammer, no apology, no vindictiveness, but as plainly, as clearly as I can say It, the Bible teaches, like other sins, that homosexuality is a sin. It is a sinful problem.

II. It is a Spiritual Problem

Second thing I want to say. Homosexuality is a spiritual problem. This sin is a matter of the heart. It comes primarily from a wicked heart. Now what is your authority from that, pastor? What psychologist do you want to quote? What psychiatrist do you wish to quote? Which sociologist do you wish to quote? None of them. I want to quote the Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to hear what Jesus has to say.

Mark chapter 7, verses 21 and following: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these things come from within, and defile the man."

Now Jesus said they come out of our heart. Now here's what you need to understand. We hear people talk about someone being a latent homosexual. Well, that is true. That is true. People are latent homosexuals and latent murderers and latent thieves and latent liars and latent adulterers. All of these things are latent in the human heart. They're there. And people do these things because that sin is there in an old wicked, depraved heart. It is a spiritual matter. These things indeed are latent. But because unclean, immoral desires are latent in the human heart does not mean that they are right. Jesus said, "Out of the heart of men precede evil thoughts." That's not right. It's there latent. Adulteries: it's not right, but it's there. Fornications: not right, but it is there. Murder is not right, but it is there. Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness – all these things are latent. And the fact that we may have these latent desires does not remove the guilt, nor does it remove the responsibility to respond to these in a positive and a redemptive way.

You see, this is what redemption is all about. Our Lord takes these wicked hearts of ours and forgives them, and then cleanses them, and then gives us a new nature, and therefore infuses us by the Holy Spirit with power to live as we ought and as we could not without Him. The fact that somebody has a propensity toward a particular sin does not excuse that. Some men are more, and women are more, genetically predisposed to alcoholism. Some are more predisposed to sexual lust.

I heard a man on the television this past week who is a child molester. And when

they let him out of prison, he did it again and again. And he said they said to him, “Do you think you can control this?” He said, “No.” He said, “If you let me out, I’ll do it again.” Well, what was he saying? He is saying, “That is latent in me.” Did that make that right, just because he says, “I have a particular urge to do a particular thing”? Of course not. Some people have an inborn, inbred, desire for adultery. Where does it come from? It comes out of the heart. We have to confess that all are born with an inclination to sin. That does not make any class of sin right because somebody says, “I have an inclination to that particular kind of sin,” no matter what it is, whether it be adultery, whether it be homosexuality, whether it be rage, murder, theft, or whatever it is. This is a sinful problem. It is a spiritual problem.

III. It is a Social Problem

Now I want to say a third thing. Homosexuality, which is a sinful problem and a spiritual problem, is a social problem. Now some people say, “Well, it really doesn’t make any difference what two consenting adults do together.” Well, it does make a difference.

Leviticus chapter 18, verses 22 through 24, let me read. I’ve already read a part of it. Let me just read the rest of it. “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. Neither shall thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith...” And notice that God links this sexual perversion of homosexuality with bestiality. Would a person say it’s nobody else’s business what I do in the bedroom with an animal? Some, perhaps, would say that. “Thou shalt not lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith, neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto.” It is confusion. Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for all these nations are defiled which I cast out before you.” God said to Israel, “This is why I destroyed the Canaanite civilization, because they defiled themselves with this kind of sexual perversion.” It is a social problem.

God destroyed, as we saw Sunday, Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone because it was a city given over to sodomy. Do you know why Jerusalem fell? We already read that Scripture to you. Listen to it again from Isaiah chapter 3, verse 8: “For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen...”

Notice what I Kings chapter 14 has to say about it, verses 24 and 25: “And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. “ Now God had said in Leviticus, “Don’t do it!” But they did. “And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem.” And that, my friend, was the beginning of the end. Why? God said because of this particular sin.

Or you could find this if you were to study history. Greece, one of the most cultured nations that the world has ever known—if you visit Athens, you’re impressed with the

culture, the beauty, the intellectualism of Athens. It reached its apex about three hundred years before Christ. And the Parthenon built there was an antiquity in the time of Christ, a beautiful, gorgeous building—but Greece was given over to homosexuality. And when it was, the empire began to die.

Rome, the greatest empire that the world has ever known, the Roman Empire crumbled from within, and the parallel was a decline in sexual morals, primarily in the area of homosexuality. Fourteen of the Roman emperors were homosexuals. Nero, the one that perhaps we know the most about, was a homosexual. And Nero led Rome to the graveyard of the nations. If you visited, as some of us have done, Pompeii, that was destroyed by Mt. Vesuvius, and Herculaneum, the sister city there, it was the playground of Rome. It's embarrassing sometimes to even visit the ruins of those places to see the graphic descriptions that are still there on the walls and the remaining statuary that has been buried in ash, to see that they were given over to the grossest kind of immorality, that I would be embarrassed to talk about and am embarrassed to talk about from this pulpit.

It is a social problem. We're faced with an epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases. And these sexually transmitted diseases can be traced back to flaunting God's laws concerning sexual chastity and promiscuity. God rewards sexual chastity with good health, and God punishes promiscuity with disease and death.

Now think about heterosexual promiscuity. Think about people who are not homosexual, but who fail to keep God's laws concerning sex. The so-called "sexual revolution" has led us to an epidemic of syphilis, gonorrhea, herpes, and other diseases. No one can deny, I don't think, logically, legitimately, the connection between AIDS and homosexuality. Four out of five AIDS victims are homosexuals, statisticians tell us. And many of the rest are contaminated by blood donated by homosexuals. Some intravenous drug users contract AIDS by a dirty needle that has been shared many times with a homosexual. Many women are infected with AIDS by bi-sexual men. Some children are born to those women infected with AIDS. Certainly, not all people who have AIDS are homosexual, and, certainly, not all are guilty. But I'm going to tell you one thing, and I defy anybody to argue with the truth of this statement: That if people, homosexual and straight, would clean up their act sexually, AIDS would not be a problem in America. It would not be a problem. I mean, we're saying, "Give us more money. Give us more money. Give us more money," when we have an answer, but people don't want God's answer. They think that they are smarter than God.

Now that brings up an interesting question. I'm saying that this is a sinful problem. It is a spiritual problem. It is a social problem. Are these diseases God's judgment? No, no! When God judges, God will judge with a lot more exactitude and specificity than that. I mean, a little baby with AIDS, is that God's judgment? A hemophiliac who

contacts AIDS, is that God's judgment? No! These diseases are not God's judgment, as such; they are consequences of disobeying God's law.

You see, God made us to function a certain way. That's the reason the apostle Paul said in Romans that these people do things which are against nature. God built people by nature to co-habit together, to reproduce the race, for one man and one woman to express love one to another, but this is God's way to build the family unit, because the nation is no stronger than the family. But they do that which is against nature.

Now think of the laws of nature. Let's think of the most common law of nature that we can think of probably: the law of gravity. That's why you're on your seat right now rather than the ceiling. That's the law of gravity. It's a natural law.

Now you can do that which is against nature, if you want. You can go up to a ten-story building and step out the window. When you do, you're doing something against nature. Now you will not break the law of gravity. You will demonstrate it. You will be broken on that law. You will not break that law.

Now the Bible says there are certain things that are contrary to nature. That's what he says: "They do that which is against nature." Now you can choose to do that. Now listen very carefully. You are free to choose, but you are not free to choose the consequences of your choice. You are free to choose. God made us a moral agent. You are free to choose against God's nature, just as a man is free to step out of the window of a ten-story building. But he is not free to choose the consequences of stepping out of that window. And so these problems that we have, these social problems, this sickness, this pandemic thing that is sweeping across America, and tends, if we're not careful, to wipe out whole nations in Africa, it's not a judgment, per se; it is a consequence of simply saying, "I do not want God's law. I do not want God's way."

Now I want to say this: That I believe in free speech until it reaches the bounds of obscenity, and I believe that every homosexual has a right to free speech. I believe he has a right to present his cause, present his philosophy. I would not deny him that right. I don't want anybody to deny me my right to preach the gospel and free speech. But I want to say this: That we also have a right to protect society from any social lifestyle that may destroy families and bring disease and death associated with it. Homosexuals have labeled Christians who confront morality, their morality, as bigots.

Now what is the attitude of this church? What is the attitude of this pastor? And when I say this, I realize that we are many. And about the only thing two Baptists can really agree on is what a third one ought to give. But let me just say what I think is the consensus that we have here. We will as a church always respond with compassion to those who are struggling with this sin or any sin. And, folks, we're all struggling. Is there anybody here who is perfect? Will you stand up? I want to see you. Is there anybody here who doesn't have a struggle? Is there anybody here who says, "I have arrived? I

don't have any problem?" No! And if a person is a struggling person with this problem, or lust, or adultery, or alcoholism, or drug abuse, or whatever it is, they are welcome here, and we're here to help them and share the love of Jesus Christ. And let me say this: If anybody has an idea that they can promote an unrighteous cause here or parade an unrighteous cause, they're wrong.

You see, Paul brought this judgment, this word of God on sexual immorality. And go back, if you will, to Romans chapter 1 for just a moment. And I want you to see what the apostle Paul said that the terrible thing about it was. He describes them in verses 26 and 27: "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: even as their women did exchange the natural use for that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was fitting." But now, notice how he concludes this in verse 32: "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death (and he's talking here beyond physical death. He's talking about spiritual death and eternal death. Notice this last phrase), not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." That is, they want to export this sin. They want to merchandise this sin. They want to parade this sin. That's why Isaiah said that Jerusalem was ruined and Judah was fallen. They show their sin as Sodom. They hide it not. Not only do they do these things; they take pleasure in these that do them.

Now, if a person is struggling, if a person wants help in this area or any area, we want to treat them with compassion and love. But if a person thinks that this congregation or any Bible-believing congregation will no longer call this a sin, but a socially accepted practice and take pleasure in it, they will meet with godly opposition. We will not because it would be the same thing as removing a stop sign at an intersection. And the lives that would be wasted would be such a tragedy.

Now to those who suffer, no matter how they contracted a disease, they will be met with compassion. And we will do all that we can do to help and to care for and to cure this and other diseases. And it doesn't matter how a person got hurt. If he's hurting, that's what matters. And we're to have compassion. However, we will stand to protect our families, our church, and our nation as best we can to keep them from contracting the same kind of diseases. We'll do what's prudent.

Now what have I said? It is a sinful problem. The Bible makes it clear. It's sin. It is a spiritual problem. We cannot blame anybody except our own sinful heart for this or any other kind of sin. It is a social problem. It is a problem that has caused the downfall of other nations and could cause the downfall of this nation. As somebody said, "If God doesn't judge America, He's going to have to raise up Sodom and Gomorrah and apologize to them."

IV. It Is a Solvable Problem

I want to say, last of all, that homosexuality is a solvable problem—a solvable problem. Homosexuals need to know that we love them and that God loves them. Now they sneer when we say this. They say, “Don’t tell me that you love me if you call me a sinner.” No. Am I therefore your enemy if I tell you the truth? Now we do love them. And we love fornicators. And we love adulterers. And we love drunkards. And we love those who are addicted to narcotics.

I want you to listen to one of the most healthy verses I believe in all the Bible. It shows that there is hope for the homosexual. First Corinthians chapter 6. Again, I read this to you before, but I’ll read it again. First Corinthians chapter 6, verses 9 through 11: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived (now listen. If you’ve been looking down your nose at the homosexual, listen to this). Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind (those last two things speak of homosexuality), nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” “Pastor, if I ever did one of those things, does that mean I can’t go to heaven?” No, it means if that is your lifestyle, what you believe in and practice, and you have an unrepentant heart, you need to get saved: that’s what that means. But notice what he says in verse 11: “And such were some of you, but ye are washed, you’re sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” That’s the reason I believe there’s hope. He mentions people, homosexuals included, and he says, “Such were some of you.” That’s the reason I don’t believe that homosexuality is a civil rights issue—not at all.

I have heard of some ex-homosexuals; I know some. We have some in our church. Wonderful people. I’ve never known an ex-Asian or an ex-black. It’s not a civil rights issue. The Constitution does not guarantee conduct rights anymore than adulterers or fornicators, anybody else says, “We need to be treated as a class.” I believe that all Americans ought to be treated fair and equally, but I do not believe that we give conduct rights to people who choose to act a particular way, and say, “Now we need to be treated, perhaps even promoted, by conduct rights.” No! You see, this is a choice. “And such were some of you.” Don’t tell me that you can’t help it, because God condemns it. Do you think God would cripple a man and then blame him for limping? No, there is a choice. And those people who get into this lifestyle, and some of you have children who are in this lifestyle. And if you think that I’m down on your kids, I’m not. I’m with you and for your kids. We’re here to help. But we cannot help by removing the stop signs. We’ve got to say clearly and compassionately that it is a solvable problem. It is not something that is irrevocably in the genes and the chromosomes.

Dr. George A. Rekers, Professor of Neuro-Psychiatry and Behavioral Science at the

University of South Carolina School of Medicine says, and I quote, “There’s no such thing as a natural inclination toward homosexual involvement. Instead there are adverse situations in a child’s life that can lead to homosexual temptations.” That we know, and many other kinds of temptations. But there is hope in the saving, sanctifying power of the gospel of Jesus Christ for the homosexual and for the heterosexual sinner.

I just want to read a little bit, and I’ll be finished, but this is an interesting editorial written by a black man. He’s an intelligent black man. His name is Armstrong Williams. And the title of this editorial, and I’m not going to read it all to you, and it’ll take about three minutes and I’ll be finished. The title is, “The Difference Between Tolerance and Support.” The sub-title, “Standing Up For What is Moral and Right is Not Bigotry.” I break into the middle of the editorial. “The agenda of the homosexual extremist is taking root. They have blurred the line between tolerance and support. They have claimed rights for themselves that are not rights. They have twisted political correctness to intimidate good people from standing against them. With the support of many in Washington and Hollywood, they have labeled Christians who confront their immorality as bigots.”

Now many of you, when you went to work Monday or Saturday or Friday, had to face ridicule on the job because of this. You were called a bigot. Now notice this: “They have labeled Christians who confront their immorality as bigots. When our children witness homosexual marriages on TV, it is time to take a stand. When the Clinton White House supports a bill that would lead to preferential hiring of homosexuals, it is time to take a stand. When the Supreme Court of Hawaii decides to hear a case regarding the legalization of same-sex marriages, it is time to take a stand. Homosexuality is not normal; same-sex is not normal. Same-sex marriages should not be legalized. Images reinforcing and encouraging homosexuality should not dominate primetime TV. Our children should not be given materials in schools in the guise of sex education that describe homosexuality as a normal alternate lifestyle. It is time to understand that showing compassion does not mean giving acceptance; that demonstrating tolerance does not mean offering support. We can love the person while denouncing his or her condition. Standing up for what is moral and right is not bigotry. Standing up against same-sex marriages is not bigotry. Standing against the teaching of homosexuality as a normal alternate lifestyle is not bigotry. Standing up against the images of homosexuality in the media is not bigotry. Homosexuals and liberal extremists have initiated this war of values through Washington and Hollywood. They have intoxicated many with the new permissiveness, promoting a culture of moral relativism. Their definition of moral authority is a large and vocal group shouting loudly. But moral authority (here’s the key to it: listen to it), but moral authority does not come from a group’s size or decibels, because it doesn’t have anything to do with man at all. Moral

authority comes from God and from God alone. No matter how forceful and loud the homosexual extremists may become, they will always be wrong, and we should not be afraid to say so.” That’s a good editorial.

Conclusion

Folks, my heart is broken tonight. I received a letter just before I came out here that broke my heart. A person evidently believes that we’re self-righteous, full of pride, arrogance, and bigotry. I don’t know what to do except to keep loving, keep praying, keep preaching, and keep going on for Jesus.

Now just remain standing for a moment. I think I know what that applause means. I don’t think it’s arrogance. I think it’s encouragement, and I appreciate that. But now, if you can, and not all of us can do this, I know. And for some it would be very difficult. But, if you can, rather than applaud, let’s go to our knees. Would you just slip down on your knees right now if you can? If you can’t, just sit where you are.

O God, deliver us from any genuine bigotry, arrogance, hard-heartedness, spiritual pride. Lord, there are godly parents here who have children who’ve come home and announced that they’re homosexuals. There are those who have brothers and sisters, perhaps fathers and mothers who have chosen this lifestyle. Our Father, we pray that we will have such a baptism of holiness and righteousness and love and compassion; Lord, that the beauty of Jesus will be seen in us. And, Lord, we don’t expect everybody to love us. Lord, You’ve said the servant is not better than his master, and You said, Lord, if they hated You, they’ll hate us. And, Lord, if we suffer shame for Your name, so be it. Help us to glory, Lord, in the cross. And, Lord, we pray that as a church we will be loving and wise and holy. And, Lord, everybody here tonight is struggling with sin. I know in my own heart, Lord, I am so far from being the man I could and should be. And, God, forgive any self-righteousness in my own heart. Lord, move us all closer to Jesus in whose name we pray, amen.

Why I Am Pro-Life

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 19, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 5:20

“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

ISAIAH 5:20

Outline

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I. It Is a Matter of Life

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Introduction

Isaiah chapter 5, one of the most poignant verses in all of the Bible, that describes our day as much as any one single verse in all of the Bible: “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

Why I am pro-life. Now, we have people who say they are pro-choice, but that’s unfinished. Tell me what you choose. Now, if they say, I believe in the choice to kill a baby in the mother’s womb, then it doesn’t sound quite so good. But they call themselves pro-choice. It is the choice to take an innocent life in the mother’s womb. It is really a choice between life and death. And God’s Word says clearly, in Deuteronomy chapter 30 and verse 19, that we are to choose life. Now, I want all who are listening to me, and those of you on the radio, to understand that you are free to choose. You are free not to choose, and you are not free to choose the consequences of your choice.

In America, between three and four thousand lives will be snuffed out tomorrow. These persons who are persons who have not had the benefit of a trial, they will have no counsel to represent them. They will be executed—executed—in a cruel and inhumane way. One will die just about every 21 seconds. They will have committed no crime.

Now, who are the conspirators of this atrocity? Who is it that is putting the unborn to death? The conspirators, first of all, Supreme Court Justices—nine of them, high priests of humanism, wrapped in their robes, who together, though not all of them unanimously,

voted to do this. And then, there are the governmental social planners, some of them getting government money, like Planned Parenthood. Planned Parenthood does for parenthood what Orkin does for bugs. Willing physicians, owners of abortion clinics, who are getting wealthy on the death of the unborn; willing mothers and fathers who are willing to have an abortion done. And then, many who are silent and unconcerned. Some of them may be in this building tonight.

Thirty years ago, January the 22nd, 1973, was one of the darkest days in American history. A day, in my estimation, like Pearl Harbor, a day that will live in infamy. Like 9-11, that we speak of so often, this day. May I tell you, in America, it is now legal to kill a baby. That probably just went right past you. It is now legal to kill a baby. Here is the only requirement—Number one: the baby still lives inside the mother, at least a portion of the baby. Part of the baby can now be outside the mother. Condition number two: the mother wants the baby killed. Condition number three: a doctor is willing to do the killing. Pharaoh and Herod, just go back into the shadows. You have fallen back. You are not number one any more.

In America, if you crush the egg of a bald eagle, you can be fined 5,000 dollars, and spend a year in jail, but you can make a handsome living killing babies in the mother's womb. It is now legal for any physician to kill a baby while the mother is in labor, and the baby is partially delivered, partially out of the birth canal.

Now, what did Roe v. Wade say in 1973? Would you like to hear the law? Here is what the Court ruled: "A state is forbidden to proscribe—that means forbid—abortion any time"—now, notice the term any time—"prior to the birth, if, in the opinion of one licensed physician, an abortion is necessary to preserve the life"—now, watch this—"or the health of the mother."

Now, few would argue about the life of the mother. But what do we mean now by the health of the mother? Well, let's let the Court tell us what they meant by that. They said, "The medical judgment may be exercised in the light of all factors, physical,"—now, watch this—"emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman's age, relevant to the wellbeing of the patient. All of these factors may relate to health."

Now, let's get some illustrations. It includes such matters as when the pregnancy would, number one, force upon a woman a distressful life in the future; number two, produce psychological harm; number three, tax mental and physical health by child care. Next, bring the distress associated with an unwanted child. You say, if I don't want this child, then that's a mental health condition that says the child can be put to death. Or next, bring a child into a family already unable psychologically, or otherwise, to care for it. That is, we can't take care of the baby—kill it. Next, bring the continuing difficulties and stigma of unwed motherhood. Look, we didn't get married. So we are not married. We are pregnant. Kill the baby.

Woe unto them that call good evil, that put light for dark. You know, this is America, God-blessed America. In America, a teenage girl can, in schools, many schools, receive amoral sex education in school-based health clinics, and they can even be given, in some public schools, contraceptives with government money. And, if the child, in spite of the contraceptives, and the lecturing in the school-based sex clinic, comes up pregnant, the child can be taken to a Planned Parenthood clinic. And there, without her parents knowledge or consent, they don't even know anything about it, can have the unwanted pregnancy aborted. Yet in many of these same schools, the school administrators would not dare give an aspirin without parental consent.

Now, I am telling you, friend, that is barbaric, and it is also crazy. It is also crazy. Now, I want to tell you why I am pro-life. I want to give you three reasons why I am pro-life, and I pray God will write these upon your heart.

I. It Is a Matter of Life

First of all, I am pro-life, because it is just that: a matter of life. What is being put to death in the mother's womb is a human life. When the ovum and the sperm are united, it becomes human life. Someone wrote Dear Abby, and this is the argument. They said they were pro-choice. Here was their argument—and I quote: “To believe that the ovum—that is, the egg—and sperm united are human life would like believing that a vehicle was in existence after a nut and bolt were joined together at the beginning of an automobile assembly line.” So, if you have the egg and you have the sperm, and they come together, that's no more life, they would say, than a nut and bolt in an automobile factory is an automobile. There is a great, great difference. By the way, this shows the convoluted logic of these people. A nut and bolt is only a nut and a bolt. But when the egg and the sperm come together, that is a life, a human life, and nothing is added. No carburetor is added. No fender is added. No steering wheel is added. No seating is added. No engine is added. Everything is there. Everything, all that it needs for it to grow is nutrition and water. You don't add anything. It is a human life.

And yet, all of the components of life being there, some say, that is only some sort of a blob. They say it is not human life. Well, let me ask you a question: is it life? Of course! It is living. Let me ask you another question: What kind of life is it? Is it animal life, or vegetable life, or human life? Of course, it is human life. It is not a part of the mother's body. Mothers talk about having the right to their own body. It is not a part of her body. It is a new life, altogether different—may have a different blood type than the mother; certainly has a different DNA than the mother. And it is life, and it is life from God.

Put in your margin Psalms 139, beginning in verse 13—the psalmist is speaking of his development in his mother's womb: “For thou has possessed my reins:”—that is, the

things that control my life—“thou has covered me in my mother’s womb...”—notice this—“me in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance...”—oh, what an important word—“which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.” Now, this is a very beautiful verse worth you carrying home and studying: Psalm 139, verses 13 through 16.

But here is what it tells us. When a mother is pregnant, God Himself is forming a child within her. And, according to this psalm, it is both wonderful and awesome. Wonderfully and fearfully made literally means awesomely made. And it also tells us that that little baby being formed in the mother’s womb is the object of God’s love and God’s concern. The Bible—listen—the Bible does not distinguish between prenatal and postnatal life. The Bible speaks of babies in the womb as people and persons.

Put down Jeremiah chapter 1, verse 5. Jeremiah the prophet heard God say to him, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” Now, I was ordained as a nineteen-year-old man. Jeremiah was ordained in his mother’s womb. Now, you don’t ordain a blob of tissue. God said I knew you, Jeremiah; you were, are, my prophet. I have ordained you to be a prophet.

John the Baptist—Jesus said there is not a greater born of woman than John the Baptist. John the Baptist was in his mother’s womb, Elisabeth, when his cousin, according the flesh, Jesus, was there in Mary’s womb. And the two mothers are visiting. Put down Luke 1, verse 41: “And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary,”—in other words, Mary says, hello, Elisabeth—“when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb, and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.” Now, she is carrying around a little baby. Mary says, “Hello, Elisabeth,” and John the Baptist leaps in his mother’s womb. Now, notice the phrase there—it says here, “and the babe leaped.” The word for babe is *brephos*, if you want to Anglicize it and spell it, the Greek word. Thayer’s Lexicon, the Greek/English Lexicon—that’s just a fancy name for a dictionary—says this: “The word *brephos* is an unborn child, embryo, fetus, a newborn child, an infant, a babe.” Whether in the womb or out of the womb, the Bible uses the same word. For example, in Luke chapter 18 and verse 15, speaking of bringing children to Jesus, “And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them.” And the same word for infant is the same word that is used for John the Baptist in his mother’s womb. What I am trying to say is this: that the Bible language does not distinguish between prenatal and postnatal life.

When does life begin? Well, let's consider not only an argument from the Bible, but an argument from science. The nucleus of a human cell is composed of 46 chromosomes—23 are furnished by the father, and 23 are furnished by the mother. So it is not merely a part of the mother's body; it is much a part of the father as it is the mother. Well you say, "Pastor, it is a fetus." I agree it is a fetus. Do you know what the word fetus means? It is just a Latin word for child. That is all it is. That's all it is. To say fetus is to say child in Latin. Listen, no matter how small, it is a child. We all are in a continual process. Each age is only a part of it.

Rob, you stand up over here. You stand up over there. Now, this is a tottering old man right here, just as old as he can be—may you be that one day. All right now, over here get back a little bit more. Over here is an egg and a sperm just as small as a grain of sand. All right now, this is a human being. That is a human being. There is just simply a continuum from here, then he becomes a baby that can suck his thumb in its mother's womb. And then, he comes down the birth canal. And then, he is born. And then, he is a little helpless babe. And then, he becomes a toddler. And then, he becomes a child that can run and play. And then, becomes a teen. And then, he comes into the teenage years, and his twenties, and thirties, and forties, and fifties, and sixties, and seventies, and eighties, and nineties, and then, you. All right now, I want to tell you something, friend. It's all just simply a continuum. Just because he is little and young, and you are old and ugly, has nothing to do with it. We are a child all the way through. Thank you. Did very good. Thank you. Be seated. Give them a hand. All right, they are good, good guys.

Now, friend, listen. Some are newly conceived; others are developing in the womb. Some are just born; some are toddlers, some have completed the first day in school, others are in adolescents, others are adults, some are elderly. There is a gradual development. But one is no less a person than the other. Don't pick on people because they are little. Don't pick on them because they are young. When a baby is conceived, he is as small as a grain of sand. But the father's sperm enters into the mother's egg, and a new human being has begun.

Now, why am I pro-life? Well, very simply this: I believe the Bible, and I believe that it is a crime against Almighty God to kill innocent life. Proverbs 6, verses 16 and 17: "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood." I am telling you the taking of life in the womb is an abomination to Almighty God..

Bernard N. Nathanson, who was an obstetrician, gynecologist, once an assistant professor at Cornell University Medical School, a leader in the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws—that is, he was opposed to laws that proscribe abortion—not prescribe, but proscribe, keep us from having abortions—and he was the director of

the first and largest abortion clinic in the western world. Dr. Nathanson—here is what happened to him. He had his eyes opened. He suddenly changed his tune, after his clinic had performed 60,000 abortions in 18 months—60,000. He resigned, and he lamented. Here is what Dr. Nathanson said: “I am deeply troubled by my own increasing certainty that I had in fact presided over 60,000 deaths.” Think of it. Doctors and nurses told Dr. Nathanson of nightmares and depressions that they were experiencing, and personality changes among them and other personnel at the clinic, because of the taking of innocent life. Friend, I am pro-life, because it is a matter of life.

II. It Is a Matter of Love

Second reason I am a pro-life: because it is a matter of love. Abortion transgresses the Golden Rule. What is the Golden Rule? Matthew chapter 7 and verse 12: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” Jesus said, you want to take the entire Old Testament, and let me give it to you in a sentence? Whatever you want people to do to you, how you want people to treat you, then you treat them in the same way.

Well, mother, the one who is carrying the baby in her womb, would you want to be put to death? Then don't put that child to death. Mother, would you want to be killed by being dismembered by some vacuum device? Then don't do that to a child. What doctor would want to be trapped in a cell somewhere, and have some corrosive acid poured on him, and some substance poured on him that would be forced into his lungs and stomach, and be left to convulse for hours until he dies. Well, doctor, if you don't want that to happen to you, don't do it to somebody else. Whatever you would have others do to you, then do to them.

Think about partial birth abortion. You talk about something that is grizzly that takes place in America. You know, now it is known as intact dilation and extraction. Doesn't that sound good? Oh, what is happening is it is a gruesome disregard for human life. Partial birth abortion is legal in America, pre-born babies developing at the fifth month of their development. The child is partially delivered. The little feet are out; the baby is turned around so it is a breach birth. The little hips are out, the stomach, the chest, the arms, up to the neck. The neck is still in the birth canal, and the head. At that time, the doctor takes a blunt pair of scissors and stabs the baby in the base of the skull and makes an opening that allows access to the baby's brain. And then, the baby's brain is sucked out and the head collapses, the baby dies, the body is removed. You say, “Pastor no.” Yes. Yes. And the former heads of the Senate would not even let a bill come to pass that the President could sign to forbid such a thing. I believe soon, at least, partial birth abortion is going to meet its end. You pray for President George Bush.

You say, “Well, what if it is necessary?” May I tell you what former Surgeon General C. Everett Coup said, who is a medical doctor? “With all that modern medicine has to offer, partial birth abortions are not needed to save the life of a mother.” Now, I am saying, what mother would like to be treated in such a way? I am saying, what doctor would like to have an instrument put in the back of his skull and have his brains sucked out? I am saying, what judge would want to be torn from his home and ripped apart by a powerful machine? No, friend, it transgresses the law of love. It is absolutely contrary to basic human instinct.

One of the signs of the last days is written in Romans chapter 1 and verse 31. The Bible speaks of a generation, “without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, and unmerciful.” The word natural affection, you know what that means? It is the word *astorgos*. And what it literally means is the lack of love and natural affection toward one’s own children. The basic maternal instinct is to protect the unborn. The basic maternal instinct is to protect the born. But the last days, the last step on the road down is sexual perversion, and lack of love for the unborn. It is contrary to basic human instinct. The abortion business is based primarily—not altogether, but primarily—on selfishness.

Now, we are told the way it used to overburden the poor. Fifty-three percent of those who have abortions have no other children; most are over twenty, most are white, and middle and upper class. Over one third of women who have had abortions are going back for the second, third, and fourth abortions. These people, in many instances, have conceived through illicit sex, or are professional women who do not want their profession interrupted, or by people who just don’t want to be bothered with a child. And the ultimate selfishness is the grizzly abortion business itself, which pays good money. It is a multimillion industry. Many of the abortionists are living lavishly, but I want to tell you that every brick in that home is a child’s bone, and all the mortar is baby’s blood, and they are in the business of killing for hire. It is a terrible thing.

Now, the Bible says, in Deuteronomy chapter 27, verse 25, “Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person: and all the people shall say, Amen.” Listen to that verse—Deuteronomy 27, verse 25: “Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person: and all the people shall say, Amen.”

Now, I tell you, when a doctor is in the business of taking human life, I can tell you without any stutter, stammer, or apology, fear of contradiction, the curse of God is on him. Now, I know some people don’t like this. I don’t even like preaching it. But the Bible says, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and spare not, and show my people their sin. How can we ask God to bless America when we do what we do in America?

III. It Is a Matter of Logic

I am pro-life, because, friend, it is a matter of life. I am pro-life, because it is matter of love. We are to do to others as we would have others to do to us. Thirdly, and finally, I am pro-life because it is a matter of logic—logic.

There are such illogical reasons that the pro-choice people have. Silly reasons like, life begins with breathing. By the way, that's one I believe Bill Clinton used. He also says, you are not smoking dope if you don't inhale. The baby is already alive. The oxygen comes through the umbilical cord.

Another they say: abortion is sometimes necessary to save the mother's life. That may be true in rare instances. But let me tell you what Dr. Jerome LeJeune, a world famous geneticist, said. This is great. Now, I want you to listen to it: "I would do everything I could to save the life of the mother, but I would never attack and kill an unborn child." So he said, I don't set out to kill a child. I may set out to save the life of a mother, and, if in the process, the child dies, tragic. "But I would never attack and kill an unborn child." And with today's medicine, an abortion to save the life of a mother is extremely and very rare.

Well, somebody says, "What if the abortion is the result of rape or incest?" Ethel Waters, who is now in heaven, sang many times in the great Billy Graham crusades, a great Gospel singer, was born out of pregnancy that was due to rape. Who would say that Ethel Waters should not have come into the world to bless the world? Ruth, who is an ancestress of the Lord Jesus Christ, was a descendent of Moab, who was born out of an incestuous relationship. You can't play God in cases like that. Let me ask a question? If there is a baby that is one month old in the crib that was born a victim of rape, would you kill the one-month-old baby? Well, if you wouldn't kill the baby when it is one month old, don't kill the baby when it is one month before being born. Now, only one tenth of one percent of today's abortions are performed on babies conceived because of rape. This is an argument that is raised that does not hold water. Of course, rape is a terrible, horrible, heinous, hateful crime, but the baby didn't commit the crime.

Somebody says, "Well, there may be a danger of deformity." Well, there may be. Are we going to eliminate everyone we feel is defective or deformed? Here is a question: how perfect do you need to be in order to be allowed to live? And, if we eliminate the deformed in the womb, why don't we eliminate the deformed after birth? And, if we are going to eliminate the deformed, where do we stop? Is it infanticide? There is a very eminent professor now who is advocating just that: infanticide. You keep the baby for a while to decide whether or not you want the child to live. Euthanasia—when you get old as Mark over here. Are we going to get rid him? What about genocide? No. These arguments don't hold water.

Somebody says, well, a woman's body is hers to do with as she wishes. She has

freedom of choice. She does not have freedom of choice, in my estimation, and God's sight, to kill another person, even if that person is living inside her body. I have no right to kill an unwanted guest in my home. They may cause me inconvenience, but I have no right to put them to death. No mother has a right to kill her own children. You say, "Well, I choose not to have this baby." No, you already have a baby. Your choice is, are you going to choose a live one or a dead one? You already have a baby. That is the point. Now, no woman has the right to kill her own children.

"Well, I believe I have a right over my own body." No you don't. Do you have a right to ingest crack cocaine? Tell that to the Sheriff's Department, and see what happens. Do you have a right to be a prostitute? Then, why do they arrest people for prostitution? Well, she says, "It is my body." No. We have a law against that. You don't have control over your own body altogether. Suppose I had a hatchet here, I put my thumb up here in your sight, took that hatchet, and chopped off my thumb. Plop. Put my finger up there, chop off my finger. By the time I got to the third finger, I would hope you would come up here and stop me. I mean, I am up here chopping off my finger. I say, it is my body; leave me alone. Number one: it is not her body. It is a child—different, completely different. But, even if it were her body, she does not have complete control over her own body.

Well, unborn babies are victims of child abuse. There is no proof that they are more apt to be abused, and besides that, there are many loving parents who are standing in line, saying, give us that baby. We will love it and take care of it.

Well, somebody says, "The abortion laws are unfair to the poor." The poor do not have the access to abortion, or medical help, or it is easier for a rich person to break any law. And it is. It is easier for a rich person to get hold of heroin than it is for a poor person. So if it is, does that mean that we ought to be supplying heroin to the poor, because the rich can get it easier? Of course not! The arguments are so foolish.

"Well, Pastor, there are so many people. We need to be concerned about the population explosion." We are below zero population growth now. Who knows who we may be eliminating? We may be eliminating the person who has the answer to AIDS, the cure for cancer, or whatever, because we put them to death.

Well, I am going to tell you every argument that the pro-choice people have, in my estimation, is fallacious and wicked. Woe unto them that put good for evil, evil for good, light for darkness, darkness for light. That we have it upside down, sweet for bitter, and bitter for sweet. What a crazy age we live in.

Conclusion

Conclusion. What should we as people of Bellevue do? What should I do as a citizen, you do as a citizen? Number one: be informed. I know that there are people out there

who are seething, who don't like this message. I am sorry. I have not come to antagonize you, but I must say it. I must say it. My people perish for a lack of knowledge.

Number two: we need to vote for life, and work for a constitutional amendment. And there are those who begin to see the first gleams of that on the horizon. I am telling you the tide is turning, and thank God for it.

Number three: we need to teach sexual morality at home and in the church. And don't some of you parents get bent out of shape if some of our youth leaders teach what the Bible has to say about sexual morality. And you teach it at home. The one voice that needs to be speaking the most is often the most silent.

Next, we need to have compassion on the unwed mother so that she is not afraid to come to us. So often we drive these unwed mothers into the arms of the abortionist. Surely sex outside of marriage is wrong, but we need to have love and compassion and forgiveness, and not a hypercritical spirit.

Next, we need also to have compassion and teach forgiveness to people who have had an abortion. I am not here to put you down, to hurt you. I don't want to do that. And I want to tell you, there is mercy and forgiveness and grace with Almighty God. And God will remove the guilt. He may not remove the pain, but He will remove the guilt. And we need to have that compassion and show the love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Next—and here is why I am doing what I am doing tonight—we need to speak out clearly. Isaiah 58 and verse 1: “Cry aloud, and spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” Now, people say, I don't believe in this kind of preaching. Well, let me read that verse again—Isaiah 58:1: “Cry aloud, and spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” And then, a sister verse—Proverbs 24, verses 11 and 12: “If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? And shall he not render to every man according to thy works?” Speak up. Speak up on the bus. Speak up in the office. Speak up on the street. Speak up at the ball game. Speak up in the Sunday School class. Refuse—refuse—to be swayed by the high-sounding arguments of the liberals, and the humanists, and the social planners, and the experts. What do they know? They haven't got a clue. They do not have a clue. Woe unto them that put good for evil, and evil for good; light for darkness, and darkness for light; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. They are absolutely mixed up. Isaiah 5: 20: “Woe unto them that call evil good, good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

Next, we need to pray that God will give us time as a nation to repent. We are on the

threshold of what could be a disastrous war. And that may be only the tip of the iceberg. We don't know what the terrorists may have in mind for our nation. We don't know what the so-called axis of evil has in mind; we don't know about North Korea, the nuclear capability of Pakistan. We don't know about Red China. But friend, we need to bring this nation to God in repentance, and say, "God have mercy on us for the shedding of innocent blood." I believe we are making progress. The abortion rate is dropping. People are finally getting their eyes opened.

And then, last and finally, we need to teach and preach Jesus Christ. When people come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, then their eyes are going to be open. They are going to be able to take this book and read it. Their understanding is going to be enlightened. And they are going to live with the compassion and love of Jesus. Friend, look up here. I, Adrian, I am pro-life. It is a matter of life. Remain standing. It is a matter of life. It is a matter of love. It's a matter of logic. And I believe that you are pro-life too, because you are on your feet. "Father, seal the message to our hearts. In the strong name of Jesus. Amen."

The One True God

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 7, 2001

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 6:1

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple."

ISAIAH 6:1

Outline

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- I. The One True God Is the Triune God
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Introduction

Is it well with your soul? Take God's Word and find Isaiah chapter 6—will you?—one of the great chapters in the Word of God. And everything that is worthwhile—everything—depends upon your concept of God. It's interesting to see what children think of God. Here's a newspaper article entitled, What Happens When We See God?

"When I see God, I will give Him a big hug," says Whitney.

"Then I will go say hi to all the people in Bible times. Then I will ask Him everything that I asked my parents that they can't answer."

"I will fall down on my face and worship God," says Blaine, who's 8. "Then I will go to see my dog in heaven. Next, I will go see my cousin."

Here's another. "I will go to see Jesus, and ask Him if you ever get to play in heaven."

"I love God," said Carson, who's 8.

"My eyeballs will fly out of their sockets, and my mouth will fall to the ground," says Hillary, 8, "and God will be glowing. I will hold onto his leg so tight He can't let me go, no matter how much power."

"I would fall and faint," says Christopher, 8. "I would scream. I'd be surprised. I would know that I'm in heaven."

"I would come to Him, and say, 'I love you, God,'" says Amber, 9.

"I would bow down to Him, and praise Him, and adore Him, and worship Him with all my heart. I would want to stay with Him all day. I would ask Him to preach to me about

the Bible. I would want to know more and more about Him, and, as I grow up, I will always remember the day I met Him.”

Well, from a child’s viewpoint, and that’s precious. But let’s read about a man, a prophet, whose name was Isaiah, who did see the Lord. And it was an amazing event. Isaiah chapter 6, verse 1: “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. And above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain—that is, with two—he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”

Today, like never before, we need to get a glimpse of God. Not any god, and not many gods, but the one true God. Now, we know that there are not many gods, but we wonder, is there one god who just has different names.

We’re hearing today, “Well, it doesn’t make any difference whether you believe in Jehovah or Allah. After all, we believe in one true God.” Well, how many gods are there? One. How many capitals of Tennessee are there? One. Now, suppose I were trying to get you to a destination, and someone might say, “Well, we call the capital of Tennessee, Nashville, but I call it Memphis. But what difference does it make, as long as we believe in one true capital? Things that are different are not the same.

Now, we need to understand there is one true God. Jeremiah chapter 2, verse 11: “Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.”

I want to make it abundantly clear: I believe in pluralism. I believe that’s what makes America great, is our pluralism. I’m grateful that, in the area of faith, we allow room for those who don’t believe in God at all. I would fight for the right of a man to say, “I don’t believe in God.” We have those who believe in many gods. They’re New Agers, who are more or less pantheistic. They believe that God is everything and everywhere. They believe that we are God, and God is us, and the trees are God, and the rocks are God, and the dirt is God. And so, if we’re God, we’re dirt. I mean, think about it. That’s what they believe. If they want to believe that, this is America. They’ve got a right to be wrong.

I believe in pluralism. I believe you can believe in Buddhism, Shintoism, Confucianism, Vegetarianism. You can believe in this or that. That’s what makes us God, that’s what makes us Americans, and we don’t believe in forcing our faith on anybody. Forced religion is an abomination to Almighty God. We don’t believe in that.

We believe a man is free to believe what he wants to. He's going to have to give an account to God about it. I mean, he's going to have to face Almighty God with his beliefs. But we believe in pluralism. But, you know, what we have today is not pluralism. Those who prate the most about pluralism don't really believe in pluralism. What they believe is syncretism. There's a difference between pluralism and syncretism.

In, pluralism, we all practice our faith. If a Jew wants to pray with his prayer shawl on and his skullcap on, I say that's the way a Jew prays. I respect that and admire it. If a Buddhist wants to pray the way he prays, or an Islamic wants to pray the way he prays, I respect that. That's his right. I would not try to keep him from doing that, or force anybody else to pray that way. And I, as a believer, I pray in the name of Jesus, and I think that needs to be respected.

There are those today who want us just to dumb it all down, and put everything in a blender, and mix it all together, and it's not pluralism; it is syncretism. And somehow today we are un-American if we don't put our arms around everybody else and say, "Your religion is just as good as mine." I'm here to tell you, and I want you to listen to me, there is but one true God. Now, you say, "Well, that's your opinion." That's exactly right. That is my opinion. But I want to show you that it is more than my opinion, if you believe the Bible.

Now, there are many things about God that we cannot understand, and nobody understands God. As a matter of fact, I wouldn't have any confidence in a God I could understand. I wouldn't have any in one you could understand, either. You don't have to understand God to know God. Einstein believed and taught and understood the theory of relativity. Now, they asked Mrs. Einstein, "Do you understand the theory of relativity?" She said, "No, but I know Dr. Einstein." You don't have to understand how God runs His mighty universe to know God.

We all have questions, and we sometimes have doubts. Tom Skinner, a black evangelist, said this, and I think it's one of the greatest quotes I've ever read. I want you to listen to it. He said, "I spent a long time trying to come to grips with my doubts, and suddenly I realized that I had better come to grip with what I believe. I have moved from the agony of questions I cannot answer to the reality of answers that I cannot escape, and that's a great relief." Listen to it again. "I have moved from the agony of questions I cannot answer to the reality of answers I cannot escape, and that is a great relief."

Now, I want us to think about the God of the Bible, the God of revelation, and I just read to you about Isaiah, who saw the Lord high and lifted up. It was the year of national crisis. The king had died. And it seemed as though Isaiah had pinned all of his hopes for his country upon King Uzziah. And Uzziah died. And in a time of crisis, he went to the temple of God, and there he saw the Lord, high and lifted up, sitting upon a throne, and his train filled the temple. Now, boys and girls, he's not talking about a railroad train.

Do you ever see a bride come down the aisle sometime with that long, flowing train behind her? Beautiful. Or, in ancient times, a monarch, a king would have a robe, and sometimes the greater the pomp and circumstance, the longer would be the train coming behind him. In our Passion Play, you see those kings as they come up, those Magi, and they come, and they will have a long train, so long that it takes attendants to carry the train of these men, speaking of their glory and their majesty.

Isaiah said, "I saw the Lord. His train filled the temple," talking about the glory, the majesty of our great God. And when Isaiah saw the Lord, he saw many things about Him. I want to mention three attributes today of the one true God that Isaiah saw—three attributes. Now, there are infinite attributes of God, I suppose, but I want to mention three, and I pray God that you'll get a lock on these three attributes.

I. The One True God Is the Triune God

Number one: The one true God is the triune God. He is the triune God. Now, look in chapter 6, verses 1 through 3, again: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I also saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim;"—now, the word seraphim means burning ones; these were angels—"each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried to another—now, listen to this—and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And then go down to Isaiah chapter 6 and verse 8: Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Now, don't miss this: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me."

Now, Isaiah here has seen a vision of the triune God, and not only the one true God, but one God in three persons. This is the great Christian distinctive, and it may be the hardest concept for all of us to grasp, whether we're Christian or non-Christian, the idea that our God, the one true God, is revealed in three persons. To deny the Trinity is the root of many heresies.

For example, Unitarianism. The Unitarians don't believe in the Trinity. Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in the Trinity. Mormons do not believe in the Trinity. Islam does not believe in the Trinity. Our Jewish friends will not accept the doctrine of the Trinity.

So what I'm talking to you about today is not incidental. What I'm talking to you about is absolutely fundamental. It is a stumbling block to some, and many, many Christians are ignorant about the Trinity. You ask a Christian, "Tell me about the Trinity," they say, "Well, there's God, then there's Jesus, and the Holy Spirit." Wrong. There's God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We do not worship three gods; we worship one God who reveals Himself to us in three persons.

Now, we don't worship three gods. That's polytheism, or tri-theism. We worship one God revealed in three persons. You say, "Pastor, how do you know that? Did you figure it out?" No, I didn't figure it out, and you didn't figure it out; nobody's ever figured it out. The only way that you understand the doctrine of the Trinity is by divine revelation. Did you hear that? By divine revelation. Say amen. By divine revelation. That's the only way you can know God.

Charles Wesley asked this question: Can a worm understand a man? Can a human being, the finite, understand the infinite? Only by revelation. Not by investigation, not by logic, not by philosophy, not by science, and not by mathematics.

Now, listen. It may sound contradictory to logic. It is not contradictory to logic; it is beyond logic. You say, "Well, if I can't understand it, I can't accept it." Many of you don't know how windshield wiper works. You don't understand it. Do you understand infinity? Do you understand how God can be everywhere at the same time? Do you understand eternity, that God never had a beginning and will never have an ending? None of those concepts fit human logic, so don't get upset if you can't understand the idea of the Trinity. By the way, a five-year-old child can ask questions that nobody can answer.

The doctrine of the Trinity rises or falls on Bible revelation. And don't ever get caught in the trap of saying, "Well, I can prove the Trinity." No, you can't. Well, you say, "God is like this," or "God is like that." Oh, really? Listen. There's only one God, so there's nothing you can compare Him to.

Put down in your margin Isaiah 40, verse 18. God says, "To whom then will you liken God? or to what likeness will ye compare him?" Think about it. I mean, I can say this pulpit's like another pulpit. That plant's like another plant. This man's like another man. This building's like another building. And I can show the similarities and the differences. But listen to me. There is only one God, so you can't compare Him really to anything. Think about it.

Now, you can see reflections of His triune nature, because, when you see the reflection of His nature. For example, time. Time is God's creation. Time is past, present, and future. The past is not the present; the present's not the future; the future is not the past. Each is distinguishable, all are inseparable, and you can't have one without the other. That's a reflection of His triune nature. Just one time, but time is past, present, future.

Space—height, width, and depth. Height is not width; width is not depth; depth is not height. Each is distinguishable, but all are inseparable. You can't have one without the other. And God is the one who created time and space. And God created man—body, soul, and spirit. Body, soul, and spirit are separable, but they are a part of a unit. And we're made in the image of God. But none of these things are proofs of the Trinity. All they are, are reflections of the Trinity.

Now, I want to show you, from the Old Testament, since Islamics and Jews and Christians all believe the Old Testament. I want us to look in the Old Testament today, and I want us to see what the Old Testament says about the triune nature of God.

Now, we see this in the vision of Isaiah. Look in Isaiah chapter 6, verse 1: "In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up." The word for Lord is *Adon*, *Adonai*, and it is a name for God only—*Adonai*. And in verses 3 through 5, Adonai is shown to be the Jehovah of Hosts. Look: "And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord"—this is a different word for God, the Jehovah of Hosts—"the whole earth is full of his glory."

Now, Isaiah saw the Lord. And then, he asked a question in verse 8—the Lord is speaking Himself; Jehovah, Adonai, is speaking: "I also heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send,"—now, put that down. The I is singular—"and who will go for us?" That is plural. Now, here is Adonai. Here is Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, saying, whom shall I send? "Who will go for us?" Here is the Holy Trinity acting in concert. No wonder that we read, in verse 3, the seraphim are saying, "Holy, holy, holy"; holy is the Father, holy is the Son, holy is the Spirit.

You see, here Isaiah speaking of God with a triune nature. You see not only that, but you see the Trinity in the creation story. The opening verse of the Bible has the Trinity. Genesis chapter 1 and verse 1: "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." Now, the name for God there is the Hebrew word *Elohim*—*Elohim*—and it has an *im* ending. An *im* ending means that it's plural in nature. It could be translated gods, but the translators of the Scripture just say God. "In the beginning, *Elohim*." You see, that's a plural ending.

For example, we read in Isaiah chapter 6 about the seraphim—seraphim. It ends in *im*. A seraph is one angel; seraphim are many. Or you read about cherubs and cherubim. A cherub is one angel; cherubim more than one. And here, God has the same *im* ending. Here God is Elohim, and, "In the beginning, Elohim created the heaven and the earth." Not three gods, but one God that is plural in nature.

When God made man, listen to this—Genesis chapter 1 and verse 26: "And God—that's Elohim—said, Let us make man in our image"—Genesis 1:26—Let us. Now, God is speaking. Elohim is speaking. "And God said, Let us make man in our image." Now, to whom is God speaking? You say, "He's speaking to the angels." No, we're not in the image of angels. God didn't make us half angel and half man. We wouldn't be in the image of either one. Angels are sexless. Angels don't marry. Angels are ministering spirits. We have a different nature. We're not made in the image of angels. To whom was God speaking? The triune Godhead was taking counsel together.

You see, who created everything? The triune God. Now, put these verses down—Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning, Elohim God created the heaven and the earth." That's

God the Father. But now go to the New Testament, John chapter 1 and verse 1: "In the beginning was the Word." Now, that's the word, that's the name, for Jesus. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God—now, watch this—and the Word was God." Is that double talk? No, that's the Trinity. The same was in the beginning with God, and all things were made by Him; without Him was not any thing made that was made."

We read in Genesis 1:1 that God made it. Now, we read in Genesis 1, verses 1 through 3, that Jesus made it. But then, turn to Job chapter 26, verse 13: "By his spirit hath he garnished the heavens." God said, 'Let us make man.'" Now, in the beginning, the triune God made it all. You see in the vision of Isaiah the tri-unity of God. You see in the creation of the world the tri-unity of God. You see in the great confession of Israel the tri-unity of God. The reason that some of our Jewish friends will not accept our faith is they think that it's blasphemy to believe that God had a Son, because if you believe that God had a Son, they think you've got more than one god. And so, the great confession of Israel—put it down; it's Deuteronomy chapter 6, verses 4 through 5—and it's called the Shema, the great confession of Israel.

And here it is, and pious Jews would repeat this every day: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might." They say, "Since He's one God, we cannot accept the Trinity." That's the prime proof text, but the word Lord is translated from the word Jehovah. The Jehovah, our Jehovah, is one Jehovah. But it doesn't say Jehovah, our Jehovah. It says Jehovah, our Elohim, is one. Jehovah, our Elohim, is one. Jehovah is singular. Elohim is plural. And the word one is *echad*—E-C-H-A-D. Write it down. That's the word one. Now, that word does not mean a singular one. It means a collective one. Don't check me out now. You listen to this. You say, "You're getting too arcane now." Now, we're talking about the one true God. When the Bible says that the Lord Jehovah, our Elohim, is one, He uses the word *echad*, and it means one as a collective one. Now, jot these Scriptures down very quickly.

Genesis 2, verse 24: "they two shall be one flesh"—husband and wife, a collective one. Genesis 11:6: "Behold, they are one people"—all of them are called one. In Numbers 13, verse 23: "one cluster of grapes"—a bunch of grapes, but one cluster. First Samuel 13, verse 17: "one company of people." First Chronicles 17, verse 21: "one nation."

What He's talking about is one as a unity. The Jehovah, our Elohim, is one, a unity. Now, we are not worshipping three gods, but we're worshipping one God who is a triune God. Now, you see this in the great confession.

Now, the Bible makes it clear, therefore, that the eternal Father is triune. Let me give you. I've talked about the vision of Isaiah. I've talked about the creation of the world. I've

talked about the great confession of Israel. We're still talking about the fact that God is a triune God.

Now, you're going to see the tri-unity of God in the prophecies concerning Messiah. Let's think about that. The Bible makes it clear that the eternal God—listen—has an eternal Son. Put these scriptures down, and I must go fast.

Daniel 3, verse 25. The three Hebrew children were in the fiery furnace. The king looked in. "And he answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." They went into the fiery furnace for God, and the Son of God got in there, in that fiery furnace, with them. By the way, Jesus didn't come to get you out of trouble; He came to get into trouble with you.

Proverbs 30, verse 4—listen to this question: "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?" Well, we're talking Old Testament now.

Psalms 2, verses 6 and 7—God the Father is speaking, and says, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree:—now, God the Son is speaking—the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." The holy king that God sets upon His hill of Zion is the Son of God.

And then, that classic passage in Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God..."—who? The Son, the child—"the mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." And the term mighty God is *El gabor*. It literally means the God-man—the God-man—Jesus Christ, the Son of God. There is no way—no way—to explain the deity of Jesus apart from the Trinity. You cannot accept the full deity of Jesus unless you accept the Trinity. Now, that's Old Testament.

How does the New Testament treat Him? Did Jesus believe Himself to be God the Son, as well as the Son of God? John 8, verse 58: "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was—now, listen to this—I am." That's the name for God, the most holy name for God in the Bible, the great I AM. He didn't say, "Before Abraham was, I was. I got here first." No, no: "Before Abraham was, I am." That's the reason Jesus said, in John chapter 5, verses 23: "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."

John 14, verse 6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Matthew 11, verse 27: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any

man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the son will reveal him." According to Jesus, the only way you can truly know the Father is through Him.

John 5, verses 22 and 23: "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."

John 14, verse 9: "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet thou hast not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

Friend, this is the treasure of the Trinity. We worship a triune God. Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty; God in three persons, blessed Trinity. It's the reason we sing, Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Listen to me. The one true God is the triune God. Got it?

II. The One True God Is the Holy God

Number two: The one true God is the holy God. Look in Isaiah chapter 6, verse 3: "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." If you had to go through all of the lexicons of this world to choose one word, all the dictionaries to choose one word, every thesaurus, to choose one word that would characterize God, it would have to be holy. God is a holy God. This is His inward character of perfect goodness. It means that He takes sides against everything that is bad and evil.

There's a story that's told many times about former President Calvin Coolidge, who was a man of few words. He went to church, and his wife stayed home. He came home. His wife said, "Well, did you go to church?" He said, "Yes." She said, "Did the preacher preach?" "Yes." "What did he preach about?" "Sin." "Well, what did he say?" "He was against it."

So is God. So is God. God is holy. Now, that means that God will punish sin. You don't really break the laws of God. You don't break the Ten Commandments. They stand. You're broken on the Ten Commandments. A man who tries to break God's law is beaten. He is defeated before he starts.

You step out of a ten-storey building and say, "I'm going to break the law of gravity"—you don't break the law of gravity; you demonstrate it. You're broken on it. You become a glutton, and eat everything in sight; you say you're breaking the laws of health. No, you're the one that gets broken. You're the one that is broken. And you cannot—you cannot—truly break God's law, because, although you disregard it, and in one sense break it, what you do is, you put yourself on the side of sin. And God is holy, and God is forever against sin.

Now, most Americans have never really seen the holiness of God. Sometimes it takes a crisis for us to see the holiness of God. They've never worshiped God as a holy God. It was when King Uzziah died that Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up. I want to say something. The hope of America is not the White House; it is the church house, and the hope of the world is not America; it's God. It is God. We need to see God as the holy God. Isaiah had his eyes on the wrong king. And then, when Uzziah died, he saw the Lord, and it made a difference to him. You know, the answer, friend, is Almighty God. We need to see that God is a holy God.

These seraphim, these are angelic creatures. The only place I know of in the Bible they are mentioned, and they are creatures with six wings. With two, they cover their eyes, because He's too holy for these angels to look upon, and they cover their eyes. And with two, they cover their feet, because, in shame to even stand before His presence. And with two, they fly to serve Him. One of these angels brought a coal from the altar, we're going to see, and so, they're seeing, and they're standing, and their service is wrapped up in these wings that these have as they hover around the throne, and they're saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts."

And that's the missing message today in America. We think of God as some sort of a glorified grandfather, or the man upstairs. He is the thrice-holy God of Israel. And you don't have a concept of God until you see the triune nature of God, until you see He is the triune God. He is the holy God.

III. The One True God Is the Saving God

I must go on and come to the third and most wonderful thing. He is the saving God—He is the saving God. The answer to the New Age, friend, is the new birth—the new birth. Look in Isaiah chapter 6, verses 5 and 8: "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone."

I was studying recently the 5th chapter of Isaiah, and Isaiah there is mentioning six different woes. He's coming down on sin. He's excoriating sin here, and sin there, and sin there, and sin here, and sin there, and sin there, and he's saying, woe to this, and woe to that, and woe to this, and woe to that, and woe to that. And then, he sees the Lord, and he says, "Woe is me!" If you're self-righteous, if you're pointing the finger at other people, and condemning the sin of other people, and not fall on your face before God, you've got a serious problem. Now, Isaiah says, "Woe is me!—look at it—because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

Now, I love verse 6: "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

Then said I, Here am I; send me."

You see, here was an answer to Isaiah's sin. Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall; Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again. There's a lot of theology in that. You just can't repair a broken egg, and you can't repair a broken life. But God can. The Lord Jesus can.

You know, you come to church not to hear a sermon; you come to church to meet God, and to find God. Thank God there is a way. And what was the way? One of these seraphs went to the altar. The altar is where there was a blood sacrifice. And they put that sacrifice upon that altar, and, drip by drip by drip, that blood fell into those burning coals, and was consumed.

And that seraph goes to the altar with a tong, and he gets a coal from that altar, and places it on Isaiah's lips, and says, "Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged." That's the God that we serve. Friend, all of this is a prophecy and a picture of the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, that cleanses from all sin, for without shedding of blood is no remission of sin.

And any kind of belief in God that does not see this God as a God of love, and a God of grace, and a God of forgiveness, and a God of salvation, has missed the one true God. There is only one way to know this one true God, and that is through a bloody sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes unto the Father but by me." He is the triune God. He is the holy God. And, thank God, He is the saving God. There's salvation in the name of our great God and Savior.

I was watching the news the other day, where those workmen had gone down into the ruins of the World Trade Center, those colossal towers, and workmen found two beams of steel. You saw it on the news. One beam of steel like this, and another like this, and they were joined together and made a cross. And they've lifted up that cross, and men are coming to that cross there as they are working in that rubble, coming to that cross to find solace and to worship. And I thought of that song that we sing, Jim, In the cross of Christ I glory, towering o'er the wrecks of time. Thank God, in all this confusion, thank God, in all of this heartache, there is a cross. It is the cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And there is a way.

These terrorists have the idea that they could go to heaven if they would murder others and sacrifice their own life.

Conclusion

Let me tell you about the God of the Bible. He doesn't say you'll go to heaven when you take the lives of others. He said, "I will lay down my life for you." And Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in infinite love, died upon that cross.

There's a story I read years ago. In the time of Cyrus the Great, the great emperor,

there was a man who lived on the outskirts of his great kingdom, and his name was Cagilur. And he was kind of like, perhaps, Osama bin Laden. Cagilur could not be penned up and holed up, and he did all sorts of devastation. One day, Cyrus the Great said, "I'm going to bring my whole army against him," and they captured Cagilur. And they brought him into the judgment hall to be sentenced, and then to be put to death. Cyrus was sitting on the throne, and they brought Cagilur in, along with his wife and his two little children.

Cagilur was a handsome man, tall and broad-shouldered. He had piercing blue eyes. His wife was a noble-looking woman that you would think would be married to a chieftain like he was. His two little children were exquisitely beautiful, with golden ringlets of hair coming around their face. Cyrus was impressed with Cagilur, and Cyrus asked him a question. "If I were to pardon you and not put you to death, what would you do?" He said, "If you were to pardon me, I would serve you the rest of my life."

Cyrus looked down at those two little children, and said, "If I were to spare the lives of your children, what would you do?" He said, "Sire, if you were to spare the lives of my children," he said, "I would go back, and your enemies would be my enemies, and I would fight for you, and I would gather my scattered horde and make them a part of your army, and fight for you."

And then, Cyrus looked at Cagilur's wife, and said, "If I were to spare your wife, what would you do?" He said, "Sir, if you would spare my wife, I would gladly die for you." Cyrus was so moved that not only did he pardon him, he sent him back to be the governor of that province. When they got back home, Cagilur had never been in a place like that, he said to his wife, "When we came in through the portico, did you see the marble, how all the colors were blended together? Did you see the tapestry on the wall? The colors looked like the sunset at evening." She said, "No, husband, I didn't see that." "Oh," he said, "did you see the throne? It looked like it was made of one piece of solid gold. I've never seen a throne like that. Did you see that?" She said, "No, I didn't see it." "Well," he said, "what did you see?" She said, "I saw the face of a man who said he would die for me."

Friend, when I get to heaven, it's not streets of gold of gates of pearl. I want to see Jesus, the one who died for me. What a mighty God we serve! How blessed we are to have the one true God, the only God, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the triune God, the holy God, the saving God, the God who's knocking at your heart right now. Would you bow your head in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Remember, I told you that we sang Amazing Grace. What a shame it would be, if you, precious friend, were to sing about that grace and not know that grace. The Bible says, "For by grace are you saved through faith." Would you pray a prayer like this: O Lord Jesus, thank You for your amazing grace, that you died for me. I'll pull my faith in You. I

open my heart. I receive You now as my Lord and Savior, and I will follow You all the days of my life. I will never be ashamed of You. I will gladly stand for You. I will let people know that I love you. Give me the courage this morning to make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Treasuring the Trinity

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 29, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 6:1–3

“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.”

ISAIAH 6:1

Outline

Introduction

I. The Trinity in the Old Testament

II. The Trinity in the New Testament

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn with me, if you will, please, to Isaiah chapter 6, a very familiar passage of Scripture. And, in just a moment, we’re going to be talking on this subject: Treasuring the Trinity—Treasuring the Trinity.

Now, the doctrine of the Trinity is one of the great Christian distinctives. As a matter of fact, it is what makes Christianity stand out from all of the religions of the world. While it is, perhaps, our great distinctive, it is, beyond the shadow of any doubt, the hardest to understand, or to grasp. The idea that we worship one God—not three gods, but one God—but that one God has revealed Himself in three persons. And I want to say there are many who do not accept that doctrine. For example, Islam. They say there is one God. His name is Allah, and they believe that we, as Christians, worship three gods. And, of course, our Jewish friends say, “How can Christians worship three gods? How can they call Jesus God?” Then, of course, the Jehovah’s Witnesses say it is impossible that Jesus could be God’s Son and God at the same time.

Now, folks, I want to tell you, this coming decade, it is the doctrine of the Trinity that needs to be preached and taught more than anything else. And so, I’m taking a risk this morning. Let me tell you what the risk I’m taking is. The message this morning is complicated, so would you, even if you don’t understand it, would you look like you do? I mean, just be saying “Amen” all the way through, because it is complicated, but it is so necessary. And I could just talk about something that would be a blessing to us all, but the message this morning is absolutely, radically, fundamental to all that we say, all that

we are, all that we believe. So I want you to listen.

I'm going to say something else. I'm going to be using this morning an incredible amount of Scripture, and so you may want to get a pen and pencil and jot the Scriptures down because you may not have time to turn to all of the Scriptures. As a matter of fact, I, in preparing this message, have listed the scriptures, and listed them down, so as to save time and compress time. Do you understand that?

Now, let me say that we are not talking about polytheism—that is, worshiping three gods. The Bible, completely, totally condemns the worship of any god but Jehovah God. But we do worship a Trinitarian God.

Now, Isaiah chapter 6, verse 1: "In the year that King Uzziah died—this is Isaiah speaking—in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." What kind of train is he talking about? Well, when a bride comes down the aisle, she has a long train on her dress many times, the last part of her dress that comes down the aisle. Kings will come up to sit upon their throne, and often the king will have attendants just carrying a part of his robe that's called the train. What Isaiah's saying, this king has such majesty that it goes from one end of the temple to the other. That's what he's talking about. His train fills the temple. The longer the train, the greater the majesty. "And above it stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said—now, listen to this—Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." Now, Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, and Isaiah said holy once, holy twice, and holy three times. And you're going to see, even here, we see an insight into holy is the Father, holy is the Son, and holy is the Spirit. Go down to verse 8. Isaiah said, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go..." You'd expect Him to say, who will go for me, wouldn't you? But he says, "...who will go for us?" "Whom shall I send—singular; who will go for us—plural. Isaiah answers, "Then said I, Here am I; send me."

Now, how do we know about the Trinity? Let me say that the only way—the only way—any of us can understand or believe the Trinity is by divine revelation. You would never learn about the Trinity by human logic, not by investigation, not by philosophy, not by mathematics, not by science. The only way any of us can know that God Almighty is a triune God is by divine revelation, by picking up the Bible, and reading it. Well, you say, "Pastor, it sounds a little contradictory to me that God is one, and yet God is three." Well, listen. Don't worry if you can't understand it. I wouldn't have much confidence in a God that I could understand or that you could understand. Somebody said, "Try to explain the Trinity, you lose your mind; deny it, you lose your soul." You don't say, "I figured this out." You don't say, "It makes logical sense to me." The Trinity is not

contrary to logic; the Trinity is beyond logic. And, by the way, if you don't understand it, let me remind you of this. A five-year-old child can ask questions nobody can understand, isn't that right? I mean, just think about infinity, and think about eternity. Just think about those two things. Infinity—space never ends. Eternity—existence never ceases and never began. How does that fit in your logic? You can't understand that. I mean, that's beyond us. God is the infinite, eternal God. So don't try to cram God into your mind, and say, "Because I can't understand God, because I can't understand the Trinity, the Trinity is an impossibility." Charles Wesley said, "When a worm can understand a man, then maybe man can understand God." We know about the Trinity, not by logic, not by philosophy. We know about the Trinity by revelation. God tells us in the Bible. Now, every now and then, somebody will try to illustrate the Trinity. They'll say the Trinity is like this, or the Trinity is like that, and they have some illustration. There is not one illustration you can ever get that will illustrate the Trinity, not one. Why? Because everything else can be compared to everything else. One man can be compared to another man; one chair to another chair; one carpet to another carpet; one preacher to another preacher. But there's only one God, isn't there? There's only one God. So God throws out this challenge in Isaiah chapter 40, and verse 18: "To whom, then, will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" There's nothing you can say, "This is like God," because God is not like anything. God is God. He is separate. Now, you see reflections of the Trinity all around. Because God, who is a triune God, you see reflections of His tri-unity in everything that He has created. For example, God has created space, and space is height, width, and depth. You can't have height without width, or width without depth, or depth without height. They are all part of the same. Each is distinct, and yet each is distinguishable and inseparable. Or time—time is past, present, and future. You can't have a past without a present. You can't have a present without a future. You can't have a future without a past. But past, present, and future are all distinguishable. All are yet a part of the same. A man—a man is body, soul, and spirit. And yet there is just one man standing here speaking to you, and yet this one man, made in the image of a triune God, has a triune nature. I'm body, soul, and spirit. But these are not proofs of God's tri-unity. These are only reflections of God's tri-unity. I'm telling you, folks, there is absolutely nothing you can compare God to. Listen again to Isaiah chapter 40, and verse 18: "To whom, then, will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" Somebody says, "Well, it doesn't make sense." One plus one plus one equals three. Well, what about one times one times one? That equals one. You see, we're not trying to rationalistically come to the doctrine of the Trinity. And don't try to water the Trinity down or explain it away. You say, "Well, there's just one God, but He appears to us in three different modes." Just like we say we have one senior pastor here at Bellevue Baptist Church, but he's also a father, and

he's also a husband. So Adrian is both pastor, father, and husband—one in three. Oh, no. That doesn't fit the Trinity. We're not just talking about three different modes in which God appears. There are three distinct persons in the Godhead.

I. The Trinity in the Old Testament

Now, I want us to go, first of all, to the Old Testament, and we're going to find the doctrine of the Trinity in the Old Testament. Don't think that the doctrine of the Trinity suddenly appeared in the New Testament. We're going to spend some time now. Remember, you're going to look excited, even if you're not, because you need to know this. You need to understand this. You need to learn this. Believe your pastor. What I am saying is so essential in this day and in this age.

Now, where do you find the Trinity? You find the Trinity in the first verse in the Bible—the first verse in the Bible. In Genesis chapter 1, and verse 1: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Now, look at the word God. Do you see the word God there? It is a plural noun—Elohim, Elohim. “In the beginning Elohim created the heaven and the earth.” Elohim is not a singular noun; it is a plural noun. It has the plural ending i-m, im—Elohim. That's the plural ending. Like one angel is a seraph; more than one are seraphim—i-m. One angel may be a cherub; more than one, cherubim—i-m—with that ending. That's the plural ending. And so, what this literally says, “In the beginning Gods created the heaven and the earth.” This same word is translated Gods, exactly the same word, in Exodus chapter 20, verse 3, in the Ten Commandments, where it says, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” That's exactly the same word—Elohim. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” But there it comes as plural. It's the same word as is in Genesis 1:1, and it's the same word that is used, when God warns against pagan gods in Deuteronomy chapter 13, and verse 2: “And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods...”—other Elohim. So, you have, the verb in Genesis 1:1 is singular, but the noun is plural. It is a plurality acting as a unity. The same thing is seen in, not only the creation of the heaven and the earth, but the creation of man. Look, if you will, in Genesis 1, verse 26. God now has fashioned the earth. He's going to put a man on it. And listen to what God says. Now, this is God and Elohim—Elohim, remember, that's plural—Elohim said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” Now, to whom is God speaking? Well, He's not speaking of the angels. We're not made in the likeness of the angels. God says, “Let us make man in our image.” Well, He's speaking as Jehovah God communing with His tri-unity. You see, who made everything? Well, you say, “Genesis 1:1 says God made it. But what does John 1 say? It says Jesus made it. And what does the Book of Job say? It says the Holy Spirit made it. Let me give you those Scriptures. Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

John 1, verses 1 to 3: “In the beginning was the Word—that’s the logos—and the word was with God, and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him—that’s Jesus—and without Him—Jesus—was not anything made that was made. Wait a minute. I thought it said in Genesis 1:1 that God made it? That’s right. I thought it said in John 1 that Jesus made it? That’s right. And then in Job 26, verse 13: “By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens...” Well, I thought that Jesus made it. Well, Job said the Spirit did it. Well, that’s right. Why? Because Gods made the heaven and the earth. “Let us make man in our image”—God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts.” Now, our Jewish friends, I could tell every one of them this. Their great profession of faith is called the Shema. That is a passage of Scripture taken from the Book of Deuteronomy that is quoted in the synagogue services very regularly. To start the daily liturgy, morning and evening, they quote a verse from the Bible from the Old Testament. And every good Jew is supposed to quote it at least once a day. And I want to give it to you. It is Deuteronomy chapter 6, verses 4 and 5: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” That is an incredible passage of Scripture. In the New Testament, when they asked Jesus Christ what was the great commandment, in Mark chapter 12, verse 29: “And Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments is: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.” Jesus said the Jews are absolutely right. This is it. This is the whole thing. This is the first commandment: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our god is one Lord.” And some would say, “Well, this is the prime text for the unity of God, not the tri-unity of God.” Well, I want you to stay with me. The word Lord comes from Jehovah, and so we can read it this way: “Hear, O Israel: The Jehovah, Jehovah, the Jehovah, our Elohim, the Jehovah, our Gods is one Lord.” Now, the word Jehovah is singular—Lord. The word God is plural—Elohim. And there’s no contradiction here, because he explains it as he goes on. Listen to it. “The Lord our God is one Lord.” Now, look at the word one. You are in Deuteronomy chapter 6, verse 4: “The Lord our Gods is one Jehovah.” Now, the word one, echod, is a very interesting word. One—it doesn’t mean one as a singular absolute digit. It means a collective one. I told you it’d get deep. Are you still with me? Lift your hand and say, “Hi, Pastor.” Okay now, listen—listen. This word one is a very interesting word. It doesn’t mean just a singular digit one. It means a collective one. Let me show you some places in the Bible. I’m going to rattle these off real quick, but I’m going to show you some places where this is used. For example, Genesis 2, verse 24: “they two shall be one flesh.” Got that? Man and a woman, one flesh. Genesis 11:6: “Behold, they are one people.” Here’s a good one—Numbers 13, verse 23: “one cluster

of grapes.” A bunch of grapes is one cluster of grapes. First Samuel 13, verse 17: “one company.” Second Samuel 2, verse 25: “one troop.” First Chronicles 17, verse 21: “one nation.” Now, what is God saying to Israel? Hear, O Israel: Jehovah, our Gods, is Jehovah, a unity—a unity. One unity. That’s what the word echod means. It doesn’t mean a singular digit, but it means a collective one. I’ve given you all of these verses where that exact same word is used. Now, when Isaiah came to worship the Lord, in our text that we read, he saw the Lord high and lifted up. His glory filled the temple. There were those seraphim there who were praising Him, and they were saying, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts.” Isaiah’s feeling the call now, and he asked the Lord, in Isaiah chapter 6, verse 8: “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Jehovah is saying, “who will go for us?” Not, who will go for me, but who will go for us? Now, in verse 1—Isaiah chapter 6, verse 1—the word for Lord is Adonai, which is a name used for God alone. But in verses 3 and 5, Adonai is identified as Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts. And so, it is Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, who is asking, “who will go for us?”

Now, let me tell you another way that we see the Trinity. I’m just picking out passages in the Old Testament and showing you the Trinity. Let me show you the Trinity and the prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. And by the way, let me say this. Don’t get the idea that suddenly in the New Testament we learn that God has a Son. We learned that God had a Son in the Old Testament. And, any Jew who would pick up his Bible can learn from reading the Bible that God has a Son. Let me give you some Old Testament Scriptures that speak of the Son of God.

Daniel chapter 3, verse 25. Remember when those three Hebrew servants of God were thrown into the fiery furnace and the king looked in? “And he answered and said, lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” Read in Proverbs chapter 30, and verse 4. Here’s a good question by divine inspiration. “Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists, and hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son’s name, if thou canst tell?” And then, read in Psalms, the second chapter, I think, perhaps, comes very close to being my favorite Psalm. Psalm chapter two, verses 6 and 7. God speaks of all of the contortions and imaginations of the wicked people of this earth, and yet God overrules history, and He says, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. And I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” These are all testament passages of Scripture. And so, you see, prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament. And there He is shown, even in the Old Testament, as co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father.

Now, I want you to turn to this verse, because I want you to see it. Turn to Isaiah

chapter 48—Isaiah chapter 48. Begin reading in verse 12, okay? You still with me? Hello. Okay. Good. Okay. Isaiah chapter 48. Don't flake out on me now. Stay with me. This is so important. Isaiah chapter 48, beginning in verse 12. God is speaking. He says, "Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called: I am he, I am the first, I also am the last. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens; when I call unto them, they stand up together." Now, who's He talking about? God. I mean this is the one who's the first and the last, the one who made the whole shooting match, folks. This is God. Now, go on down to verse 16: "Come ye near unto me, hear this; Have I not spoken in secret from the beginning; and from the time that it was, there am I; and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me." Now, wait a minute. God sent God? That's right. This is talking about God of their God. And He says, "The Lord God sent me." I thought we were just talking about God? We were. God sent God. That's what He's saying: "...now the Lord God, and his Spirit, sent me." There you have God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord thy God, who teacheth thee..."—the Lord our God is the Redeemer. And so, it's just wonderful, when you see that. Look in Isaiah chapter 63. Just fast-forward to 63, for a moment. You're going to see the same thing. You're going to see the Trinity. Now go ahead; turn the pages. Look at it, because, folks, I want to promise you you're going to get a lot more out of it if you put your eyes on it, and you take your pen, and just kind of circle some of these things. What I'm showing you is the Trinity in the Old Testament. Isaiah chapter 63, and verse 9: "In all their affliction, he was afflicted..."—now, just circle the word he, because the context makes it very clear that is Jehovah—"...and the angel of his presence saved them..."—underscore angel of his presence—"...in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bear them, and carried them all the days long, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit..." There you have Jehovah. There you have the angel of His presence. The messenger of His presence is what the word angel means. That's Jesus. And vexed his Holy Spirit—that's the Holy Spirit. By the way, the Holy Spirit here is a person who can be vexed. You have three distinct persons in the Godhead: Jehovah God, the angel of His presence, and the Holy Spirit. Now, you're in Isaiah. Just go on to Isaiah chapter 59, if you will, with me for just a moment. Isaiah 59, verse 19: "So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up the standard against him." Underscore the Spirit. Now, verse 20: "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion..."—underscore Redeemer, that's Jesus—"...and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord." That's Jehovah. There you have Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in just two verses. You see, this Jesus in the Old Testament is God—co-equal and co-eternal with

God. Now, the Christmas season is not too far away, and we will be quoting Isaiah chapter 9, and verse 6. Jot that one down. You know that one by heart. Isaiah chapter 9, and verse 6: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given...” Now, the child was the earthly Jesus; the Son was the heavenly Messiah, one and the same person. “...Unto us a child is born—that’s His humanity—unto us a son is given—that’s His deity. Now, listen to this—and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name—the child’s name—shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” Well, is He the child, or is He the Father? Yes—yes. He is the Mighty God, and the word Mighty God is El Gabor, that literally means God-man. He is the God-man. Isaiah 10, verses 20 and 21, make certain that Mighty God refers to God the Father alone, and yet it is spoken of as God the Son also in Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6. I’m just telling you, folks, I’m telling you that in the Old Testament you’ll see that God has a Son, and that Son is the Mighty God. That Son is called the Everlasting Father. And when Jesus Christ was born into this world, He was older than His mother, and just as old as His Father. And don’t ever get the idea that there was a time when Jesus was not. He existed in the bosom of the Father through all eternity. If God is the Everlasting Father, then there must be an Everlasting Son.

II. The Trinity in the New Testament

Now, let’s just leave the Old Testament. I’ve got a few more minutes now. Let’s get into the New Testament. I want you to see the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament. I want you to see the doctrine of the Trinity, for example, in the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Luke tells us about the virgin birth of Jesus, and I love this story. In Luke chapter 1 and verse 35: “And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee—all right, that’s the Spirit—and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee—who’s the highest? The Father—therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” There you have the Trinity: the Holy Ghost, the Father, and the Son of God. You have the same thing in the baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ when Jesus was baptized. Matthew chapter 3, verses 16 and 17: “And Jesus—that’s the Son—when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove—there’s the Spirit—lighting upon Him. And, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” There you have it—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There’s no way to explain the deity of Christ apart from the Holy Trinity. Now, Jesus, when He was here on earth, spoke of Himself as having a unique relationship with God the Father. He was not merely the Son of God; He was God the Son. Let me give you some scriptures. Now, these are coming fast because we’re running out of runway, and we’re about to hit the pine trees, so I want you to listen real

carefully to me right now. I'm going to give you some scriptures, and I want you to see who Jesus says that He is. In John chapter 8, verse 58, He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." That was the great Old Testament name for Jehovah God, the great I am—"Before Abraham was..." He didn't say, I was. He said, I am. That is, there never was a time when He was not. He is the great I am. John 5, verse 23: "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father, which hath sent him." John 14:6: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Matthew 11, verse 27—Jesus said, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, except the Son, and to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." John 5, verses 22 and 23: "For the Father judges no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father, which hath sent him." John 14, verse 9: "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" Suppose you were to say to me, "Pastor, show me God." And I'd say, "You're looking at Him." You'd say, "Get the butterfly nets." Jesus said—listen—"If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. I and my Father are one." Folks, this is the treasure of the Trinity. The Father above us, the Spirit within us, the Savior who died for us. And that's the reason we stand and sing the song that we sang the first Sunday that I was here at Bellevue in 1972. The Bellevue congregation stood and sang a song, and, when they did, the presence of God so filled the house. This is what you sang. Some of you were there. Holy, Holy, Holy, Merciful and Mighty, God in Three persons, blessed Trinity. So many times we enjoy beginning our service here singing, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise Him all creatures here below. Praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." We worship one God who has revealed Himself in three persons. And when God wanted to bless, you know, when God wants to bless a congregation, you know what the blessing is? Numbers 6, verses 22 through 27: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, In this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee—that's Jehovah God—The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee—that's the Lord Jesus Christ, because we see the face of God in Jesus; the grace of God came through Jesus Christ—the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace—that's the Holy Spirit. For the fruit of the spirit is peace—and they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them."

Conclusion

And I want to say this to you, my people. Listen to me today. The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” Thank God for the treasure of the Trinity. What a mighty God we serve! And I’m wondering, Brother Jim, if we could just sing the doxology. Praise God, from whom all blessings flow. Let’s stand and sing it right now—just the doxology. You know it by heart.

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

Amen. Remain standing, and heads are bowed. No one moving. Father God, we thank You for the treasure of the Trinity. And now, Lord, I pray that should there be anyone here who does not know God the Father, through God the Son, in the power of the Spirit, that today they might receive it. And, precious friend, if you’re here without God today, let me tell you that God so loved you that He sent His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus, who was God in the flesh, who suffered, bled, and died, and with His blood paid your sin debt. And the Holy Spirit is here today to open your heart, to give you faith, to help you to believe in God the Father who sent His Son. Would you pray this prayer right now, if you want to be saved, while you stand there with your head bowed: “Lord God, I am a sinner. My sin deserves judgment. I need to be saved. I repent of my sin. I open my heart. Now, by faith, I receive Christ as my Lord and Savior. I put Him upon the throne of my life, and by grace I will live for Him. Save me now, Lord Jesus.” Pray it and mean it: “Save me now, Lord Jesus, and help me never to be ashamed of you.” Amen.

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer, or you still long to pray that prayer and you need some more help, as soon as we begin to sing this invitation hymn, I want you to leave your seat and come forward. Standing at the head of each of these aisles will be a minister of this church to welcome you. You say, “Pastor, if I’m going down there to give my heart to Jesus, I’ve never done that. I wouldn’t know what to say; I wouldn’t know what to do.” We understand that. You just tell the minister—just tell him this: “I’m trusting Jesus,” or, “I want to be saved,” and we’ll take an open Bible, and respectfully, and courteously, and gently, guide you. And you can go home from this building today leaping and dancing and skipping, and saying, “I know—I know my sin is forgiven. Christ is in my heart. I’m heaven-born and heaven-bound.” And I want you to do it. Don’t wait to see what anyone else is going to do.

God's Answer to Loneliness

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 23, 2001

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 7:14

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

ISAIAH 7:14

Outline

Introduction

- I. Loneliness Is a Common Fact
 - II. Loneliness Is a Crippling Force
 - III. Loneliness Is a Conquered Foe
- Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's Word and find a familiar Christmas passage, if you will, Isaiah chapter 7 and verse 14. While you're turning, may I remind you that Christmas is for many the most joyful, glorious, happy time of the year, and at the same time the most lonely season for other people. Now, why is it? Well, those who are lonely are lonely already, but then they look around and they see so many others who are laughing, who are hugging, who are kissing, who are fellowshiping, who are singing, smiling, jubilating, and it just reinforces that emptiness and that loneliness that's in them. It's no wonder that at Christmas time suicides increase, family fights increase, drunkenness rises, depression sinks in. And what ought to be the happiest day of the year is for many the saddest and the loneliest time of the year.

Now, what is ironical and sad is that it is so unnecessary, for Christmas is about undoing loneliness. If people could only understand what I want to share with you today, and what Isaiah shared with us seven hundred years before Jesus Christ was born.

Isaiah chapter 7 and verse 14—look at it—a wonderful passage of Scripture:

“Therefore, the Lord Himself shall give you a sign, Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call his name Emmanuel.” Now, what does Emmanuel mean? It means, ladies and gentlemen, God with us. And if God is with us, how can we ever be lonely again?

I. Loneliness Is a Common Fact

Three thoughts I want to lay on your heart this morning. Number one, loneliness is a common fact. Need not deny it; far more people are lonely than we may dream. Thomas Wolfe, who was a very famous novelist, said—and I quote him: Loneliness is far from being a rare and curious phenomenon; it is the central and inevitable fact of human existence. And an eminent Swiss psychiatrist, Paul Tournier, said this: that loneliness is the most devastating malady of this age. People are lonely! And we have to ask ourselves this question: What is loneliness?

Well, let me tell you what loneliness is not. Loneliness, for example, is not solitude. Thank God for solitude. Jesus, many times, would withdraw Himself from the crowds to be alone. The Bible said He would get alone by Himself; He would withdraw Himself, go up on a mountaintop. He had a place in the valley where He would pray, the Garden of Gethsemane, where the Lord Jesus Christ would go to be alone. Thank God for that.

I enjoy solitude. Not long ago Joyce went to Atlanta, Georgia to be with some grandchildren over there, to help a grandchild celebrate a birthday, and I went with her, and had to come back a little bit by myself, and I was in that house by myself. Now, don't tell Joyce, but I enjoyed it—I enjoyed it. It was just great, just being alone by myself with the Lord Jesus Christ. And I could walk, I found myself even talking to myself out loud, and I enjoy conversation like that. It's just great to be alone. Didn't Jesus say, when you pray, enter into your closet and pray? Solitude is a good thing.

Yeah, I believe that's one of the reasons we have the twenty-third Psalm. David was alone. David was alone out there with the Lord and with his sheep, just alone. Sometimes, the great things come when we're alone—isn't it right? You know, I have an idea if little David the shepherd had a CD player, we never would have had the twenty-third Psalm. I'm grateful for this solitude. Solitude is not loneliness.

And I want to tell you something else. Lonesomeness is not loneliness. You can be lonesome and not lonely. I mean, if you're in a hotel or an airport somewhere, and you're away from home and you're lonesome, ready to get back home, it's the fact that at home there are friends and family, people who love you, who care for you, and you think about them. You may be lonesome, but you're not lonely, in the classic sense of the word. You may sing, I'll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams; but at least the dream is there, right? At least you know there are those who love you, who care for you, who consider you, and people that you desire to be with, so that you can be lonesome, but not lonely.

Isolation is not loneliness. As a matter of fact, you can be lonely in a crowd. Sometimes, a crowd may increase the loneliness. A wise man said, a big city is a place where hundreds and thousands of people are lonely together. That's the reason in the big city you have the Lonely Hearts Clubs, the singles bars; that's the reason that you

have the chat rooms on the computer. There are people who are not isolated; they are insulated. They're in a big crowd. You see them in restaurants—the restaurant may be full. Over there's a person in solitude, eating, lonely. Sometimes they're in church. You can be in a church building like this one with thousands of people present—there are thousands of people here this morning in this building—and you could be here surrounded by people and be absolutely, totally, abjectly lonely.

Loneliness is not solitude; it is not lonesomeness; it is not isolation. May I tell you what loneliness is? Loneliness is a painful sense of being unwanted, unneeded, uncared for, maybe even unnecessary. Nobody seems to care for you; nobody seems to want you, to need you. You wonder, What is my purpose in life? Every person has three basic emotional needs, and I'm going to show you how Jesus is going to meet those needs in this message.

Every one of us, first of all, we have a need for someone to love, and someone to love us, someone we can share with intimately. We all have that need, someone to love and to share with. Everybody has it—you have it, I have it. Second need that we have is somebody who understands us; I mean, who knows how we feel, understands and still accepts us. And the third thing that we desire is somebody who wants us and needs us. We need to be needed—everyone of us. We have a desire for someone to love us, someone we can share intimately with. We have a desire for someone who understands our deepest thoughts, feelings, emotions, desires, joys, victories, and somebody who says, I desire you, I need you, I want you; you are important to me.

Now, if you don't have that, you have a devastating malady, as we've already said—as Paul Tournier said—that devastating malady is loneliness, and there are people all around us who are lonely like this. By the way, what causes us to be lonely? How does a person get in that situation?

Well, number one, past rejections. You may have been rejected in the past—maybe a broken engagement, maybe a broken marriage, maybe a father or mother who deserted, maybe a child who has done you wrong—and you have been rejected in the past, and you're afraid to try again because you've been hurt so bad, you don't want to try again. Mark Twain said, if a cat sits on a hot stove he'll never sit on a hot stove again, and he said, he won't even sit on a cold one again. And if you've been hurt once, maybe you've had some past rejection—and people have been hurt like this, and loneliness is sometimes caused by past rejections.

I'll tell you another reason that people are lonely. Some people are lonely because they have a basic insecurity. They have a poor self-image; they don't feel that they are worthy of friendship, they're not worthy to be accepted, and so they don't reach out for other people. And the reason that some of you cannot accept other people is you've never yet accepted yourself. You say, Well, we're not supposed to love ourselves.

Where'd you get that? Not out of the Bible. The Bible teaches, we're to love others as we love ourselves. If you don't love yourself, that's the reason you can't love others. But some people have this feeling, this basic insecurity—and, by the way, Jesus is the answer to all of these things.

Now, sometimes people who have suffered much grief are lonely. You know why? They feel like, nobody understands how bad I hurt! I've seen it happen. I've seen a death come to a family, grief come to a family, and I've seen people close up, drop out, huddle down, hunker down, live lonely, live a life of isolation and loneliness, because they think nobody understands, nobody knows, and we lose our perspective.

Job did that. Listen to what Job said, in Job chapter 19, verses 13 through 19: "He hath put my brethren far from me and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me." Now, this is the voice of a lonely man. "My kinsfolk have failed and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in my house and my maids count me for a stranger. I am an alien in their sight. I called my servant and he gave me no answer. I entreated him with my mouth, my breath is strange to my wife. Though I entreated for my children's sake, for the children's sake of mine own body. Yea, young children despise me. I arose and they spake against me. All my inward friends abhorred me and they whom I have loved are turned against me." Now, friend, that is a lonely man, and yet he was a man who in his heart loved God, but he hurt so bad—such grief! And it just warped everything, and he felt absolutely alone in his sorrow. And I'm speaking to some of you who are crushed with sorrow, and you've closed yourself in to loneliness.

I'll tell you another reason people are lonely: it's self-centeredness. I mean, they're just all wrapped up inside of themselves, and they make a very small package. They live in a bubble of pride and self-centeredness. There's no life so empty as a self-centered life. There's no life so centered as a Christ-filled life. But there are many people today who are living for self, and self alone, and that's the reason they are so lonely, because they're closed into themselves.

C. S. Lewis, one of the most quoted men in the Christian world today, said this, To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it—that is, your heart—intact, you must give your heart to no one. Wrap it carefully with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it safe in a casket of your own selfishness. There it will not be broken, it will become unbreakable, unpenetrable, and irredeemable. Wise words. And there are many people, because of this self-centeredness, they're lonely. Are you self-centered, wrapped up in yourself, miserable in your loneliness?

I'll tell you another reason that people are lonely. A sinful lifestyle can make you lonely. Sin builds walls. Love builds bridges. Cain murdered his brother Abel, and this is what he said in Genesis chapter 6, beginning in verse 13: "And Cain said unto the Lord,

My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou has driven me out this day from the face of the earth, from thy face shall I be hid, and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth.” Here’s a man driven away from the presence of God, from home, from loved ones, because of his own sin. Sin builds walls. Is there sin in your heart? Not all loneliness is because of self-centeredness. Not all loneliness is because of sin. But some of it is because of a sinful lifestyle.

I’ll tell you another reason that we’re so lonely today, and it is the depersonalization of society. Have you ever noticed how depersonalized we are today? We live in a computerized society. We don’t even have to go to the store anymore; we can do our shopping on the Internet. We don’t have to look at a person anymore; we can talk to strangers on a blue-face screen. You go through the Atlanta airport, who talks to you? A machine: you’re now entering the transportation mall. Get away from the door! The door is about to shut! You get in your car, your car dashboard speaks to you, says, You’re running out of gas, stupid. Doesn’t say it in those words, but that’s what it says. Bad enough to have a wife to nag you—now your car nags you. I mean, everything is just so impersonal.

You go into the store to buy something. You give that person a piece of plastic, they run it through that thing, hand you back a slip of paper, and you sign it, and neither one of you ever make eye contact—isn’t that true? We live in houses, don’t even know our neighbors. We kind of wave at them as his garage door goes up and ours goes down. We live behind triple locks. The average person moves fourteen times in a lifetime.

Loneliness—why? We just live in a society where everything is depersonalized, and what I’m trying to say is this, folks: that loneliness is a common fact.

II. Loneliness Is a Crippling Force

Now, let me tell you something else about loneliness. Not only is loneliness a common fact, but loneliness is a crippling force. It is a crippling force. It may cripple you emotionally. Loneliness is not just some mild thing. As a matter of fact, I, in my research for this message, read a statement that was startling. One survey showed that 80% of psychiatric patients say they sought help because of loneliness. And any counselor will tell you that loneliness is a leading cause of suicide. I mean, it’s deleterious, it’s hurtful, it’s heinous emotionally.

It’ll hurt you physically. Fifty percent of the heart patients were lonely and depressed before they had a heart attack. It shows up—loneliness shows up—as fatigue, loss of appetite, or just the opposite, overeating. Have you ever seen a person sitting by themselves in a restaurant? Many times that person is overweight, and there’ll be a mound of food there, just sitting there eating, because they’re lonely, and they’re destroying their body through loneliness.

It can cripple you spiritually. You know the irony of ironies—and I've seen it happen so many times—you let a person have one of these things, these devastations that we call loneliness, and what do they do? They drop out of church—the very place that they need help, where they're going to get strength, where they're going to get encouragement, where they're going to get built up. They drop out. They close down. They say, I just don't want to go anymore, and they sit at home and drink from the intoxicating cup of self-pity, and they have a hangover called loneliness.

III. Loneliness Is a Conquered Foe

Loneliness is a common fact, it is a destructive force; but listen to me, friend: it is a defeated foe. It may be a conquered foe. Listen—listen. Jesus is Emmanuel. Thou shalt call His name Jesus, He'll save His people from their sin; but Mary will call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is God with us. Now, listen to me carefully. Jesus alone is the ultimate answer to those who feel alone. Jesus is the answer like no other person.

Let me tell you why. First of all, Jesus has known loneliness like no other person has ever known loneliness. I preached just recently from Isaiah 53, and I want you to listen to Isaiah 53, verse 3, speaking of Jesus in His humanity: “He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised and we esteemed Him not.” That means He lived a life of loneliness. Even His own Jewish brothers and sisters would not accept Him. John 1:11 says, “And He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” And when Jesus was dying on that cross, the Gospel of Matthew chapter 27 tells us, as He was stretched out on that hellish cross, that He had to cry out, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

No one has ever known loneliness like the Lord Jesus Christ understands loneliness. But what does that have to do with your loneliness? Hebrews chapter 4, verse 15, says, “We have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we.”

He knows how you feel, lonely lady. Sir, He understands. We all have a need of somebody who understands how we feel. I can tell you that He understands. And here's the wonderful thing: Jesus, who's Emmanuel, wants to be your friend. Put this scripture down—John 15, beginning in verse 12: “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, than a man lay down His life for His friends.” Now, listen to this: “You are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth, but I've called you friends.” You see, the master tells his servant what, but he tells his servants why. I call you friends, “for all things that I have heard of My Father

I have made known unto you.”

Do you remember those three basic needs, three basic needs, what are they? First of all, we need someone to love and to share intimately with. Number two: we need somebody who understands our deepest needs, wants, fears, or whatever. And, number three: we all have a need for someone to need us, to want us, to desire us. And we have all of these things in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is someone who understands that pain that you feel, that loneliness, that ache, that void. He knows. He cares. He has been there. And friend, there's not a thought in your mind that He doesn't know altogether. Psalm 139, verses 1 through 4: “Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.” Now, if you're a sinner, that will scare the wits out of you. If you're a child of God, what a blessing that is: that He knows and that He understands.

I'll tell you what else we have: we have need of someone who desires us, and He does desire us. He wants us. You see, to the Lord, friend, you're a name, not a number. In this depersonalized society, so many of us are just given numbers. You call up to order something on the telephone, all you do is just give them a list of numbers. But Jesus doesn't turn the world into a concentration camp with all the inmates numbered. He gives us a name, not a number.

There was a little man whose name was Zacchaeus, short of stature, a wicked, vile man, a crook, a tax collector, but he heard about Jesus, wanted to see Jesus. We all remember the story, how Zacchaeus ran ahead of the crowd, found down there in Jericho a sycamore tree, and climbed up in the sycamore tree so he could see over the heads of the crowd. When Jesus came by, He said, Zacchaeus, come down, for today I must abide at your house. I don't know what all went through Zacchaeus' mind, but I'll tell you three things surely must've gone through his mind when He said, Zacchaeus. He said, You know, He knows me. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine a president coming to Memphis, Tennessee, and calling you by name out of the crowd—can you imagine that? Zacchaeus, come down.

Not only does He know me; He desires me. Come here, Zach, and then what else? He needs me. I must abide at your house. May I tell you—look up here; let me tell you something—He knows you, He desires you, He needs you. You say, Me? Yes. Friend, He doesn't love all of us; He loves each of us. Jesus meets the need. Someone to love—I call you my friends. Someone who understands—He knows all about you. Someone who desires you—He wants you as a friend.

Let me tell you what friendship with Jesus will do for you if you're lonesome this Christmas season, and all of us can get lonesome from time to time. Let me tell you

what His friendship will do for you. Number one: it elevates you—it elevates you; I mean, to think about it, that you're a friend of Jesus; He's a friend of yours. I really don't believe in name-dropping. Now, we all like to drop names a little bit, don't we? If we know important people, we like to just work it into the conversation, drop a name there: When I was with so-and-so, he said to me da-da-da-da-da. Namedropping can sometimes be a tad obnoxious, but friend, I just love to drop the name of Jesus. I love to say, You know, I've got a friend; let me tell you who my friend is. Friend, I am an intimate of the one who made the universe. And that's not just rhetoric; that's not just sentimental gibberish. Jesus said, I call you friends. Friend, that elevates us.

And I'll tell you what else it does. Not only does it elevate us, but it enlarges us. What does it mean to be a friend of Jesus? Well, it means this: that the friends of Jesus are friends to the other friends of Jesus. Have you ever thought about what a circle of friends you have when you have a friend in Jesus? You know, when I meet a new friend, before long I get to be friends with the friend of that friend. That's one of the great things about friendship. There are pods of friendship. I meet David, and I get to know David's friends, and then, when I get to know some of David's friends, I get to know those friends. That's the way the family of God is. Do you know every friend of Jesus is a friend of mine? And how many friends does Jesus have? Jesus said, You've got brothers and sisters, houses and lands all over the world.

I was in the Atlanta Airport, as I was telling you about just a while back, and I thought I had lost my driver's license and my photo I.D., and I said, Oh, no, now what am I going to do? I went back to retrace my steps, back to where I checked in. Actually, I hadn't lost it—I'm the most absent-minded man on earth—I'd put it in a different pocket, but I had thought, you know, where is this? Man, I'm looking, Bob Sorrell's sitting out here, he knows exactly the kind of a person I am about those kind of things, but as I went back out to check, I saw a dear brother standing out there, and he was handing out Gospels of John, and tracts, and I walked over near him. He said, May I give you a Gospel of John? I said, Yes, you may. Thank you very much. I appreciate that so much; thank you for what you're doing. He looked up at me, and said, You love Him, don't you? You love Him, don't you? I said, I sure do—I sure do. I just want to thank you for what you're doing. He said, Who are you? I said, I'm Adrian Rogers. He said, Good night, said, I just listened to you preach. Said, What a blessing you've been to me! And friend, we stood there on that sidewalk, I put my arms around that man's neck and gave him a hug, and we worshiped and loved Jesus together. As far as I know, I'd never seen him before, but he's got a place in my heart. That's the way the friends of Jesus are, friend.

Do you know every friend of Jesus is a friend of mine, and I want to say every enemy of Jesus is an enemy of mine, whether it be Satan, lies, demons—whatever it is.

His friendship, it enlarges us. His friendship elevates us. His friendship enriches us. Jesus said, I don't call you servants—literally, the word, it means slaves—I call you friends. The servant doesn't know what his master does; his friend does. Think about it. You feeling lonesome? Friend, Emmanuel, God is with you; Christ is your friend, and He whispers into your ear sacred secrets.

Let me give you one of the most astounding verses. Now, be sure to write this one down—Luke 10, verses 23 and 24: “And He turned Him unto His disciples and said privately, Blessed are the eyes that see the things which ye see, for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see and have not seen them and to hear those things which ye hear and have not heard them.” Did you know when you're a friend of Jesus that you can hear and see things that kings and prophets of the Old Testament never knew? Now, friend, Isaiah was the prince of prophets. Solomon was a king, from a human perspective, the wisest who ever lived, and did you know that the humblest friend of Jesus can know more than Isaiah or Solomon? That's what Jesus said. He said, Kings and prophets have desired to see the things that you see and hear. Why? Because He now says, I don't call you servants; I call you friends. You are an insider with me. A friend is a person who enriches your life. “As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens the countenance of his friends.”

Conclusion

Well, let me bring this to a conclusion. Let me tell you several things that this means to you. And, by the way, you may be thinking, well, He was a friend, He was God with us when He was here, but He's gone away again. No, you've missed the whole point—you missed the whole point. He's not gone. Jesus, before He ascended, said, I'm not going to leave you comfortless. He, the Comforter, will come, and then He said, I will come for you. Who is the Holy Spirit? He's Christ in the Christian. I mean, He's not way up there in heaven peering down through the clouds. He walks with me, He talks with me, He tells me I'm His own. I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses, and the voice I hear falling on my ear the Son of God discloses.

I drive in a car with Jesus. I'm not boasting—well, I'll namedrop a little bit. Jesus and I drive around together. We walk through the house together. I speak to Him. I love Him. I walk with Him. He is as real to me, David, as you are, and more real. Jesus is alive and real. He said, I'm not going to leave you alone; I'm not up there peering through the clouds at you.

Now, we need to practice His presence. Are you lonely? Jesus is Emmanuel. He is a friend, a friend to enlarge, enrich you. What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. I've found a friend, oh such a friend; He died to save me, and not alone the gift of life, but His own self He gave me. He gave Himself for me, that He might give

Himself to me.

The message is over, but let me tell you what you need to do. Listen, friend: If you're lonely—if you're lonely—let me tell you that you need not be lonely. God loves you so much, so much that He allowed His Son to step out of heaven, robe Himself in human flesh, be called Emmanuel, God with us. When I thought of this verse last night before I went to sleep, I thought, How incredible that is! God—God is with us—God is with us. If you've never ever received Him, you'll never know the joys of Christmas, and you'll never know Him as friend until you receive Him as Lord and Savior. He's not a friend to rebels. Have you bowed the knee? Have you received the gift of Christmas? Have you trusted Him? If not, I'm going to ask you to do it in just a moment.

One last word to those of you who already know Him as friend: do you know what your great joy is this Christmas season? To introduce others to your friend. Let me tell you about my friend. That's what I'm trying to do. Would to God I had a better vocabulary. Would to God I could say it better. Come to Jesus, know Him, and say, I've found a friend, oh such a friend, and I am no longer lonely, or He is Emmanuel, God with us.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Begin to pray for those round about you who may not know Jesus. How many of you would say, Pastor Rogers, if I were to die today, I know, absolutely, beyond any shadow of a doubt, I would go to heaven, not because of my good life, not because of mere sentiment, not because of political correctness, but because I've repented of my sin and trusted Jesus as my Lord and Savior? Would you lift your hand? Thank you. Now, take it down.

If you could not lift your hand, may I lead you in a prayer right now, and let's get it settled, wherever you are, forget anybody else is here. We're going to pray and do business with God. Would you pray this prayer? Dear God, I'm in need today. I'm a sinner, my sin deserves judgment, but I need and I want mercy. Jesus, you died to save me; you promised to save me, if I would trust you. I do trust you, Lord Jesus. I believe you're the Son of God. I believe you paid my sin debt with your blood on the cross. Thank you for doing that for me. I believe that God raised you from the dead, and I now receive you into my life as my Lord and Savior. I take myself off the throne of my life and enthrone you, Lord Jesus. Save me, and begin now to make me the person you want me to be. Thank you for doing it. And now give me the courage to make it public. In your name I pray. Amen.

His Name Is Wonderful

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 12, 2004

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 9:6

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

ISAIAH 9:6

Outline

Introduction

I. Jesus’ Supernatural Nature

II. Jesus’ Sovereign Nobility

III. Jesus’ Saving Name

Conclusion

Introduction

That was wonderful. Amen. Well, while the choir is finding their place, would you open your Bibles please to Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6, and look up here and let me tell you something. Some years ago—you may remember it, I remember it vividly—man went to the moon. And the president of the United States said, “The planting of human feet upon the moon is the greatest event in human history.” No disrespect to the president—I want to say he was totally wrong. The greatest event in human history was not planting human feet upon the moon, but when God came to earth, and His feet were planted upon planet earth. That’s the greatest event that ever happened. We call that the incarnation—that Almighty God stepped out of heaven, came out of the ivory palaces into this world of woe, and put His feet upon this earth.

I want to read to you what God says here in Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6: “For unto us a child is born—of course, you know His name was Jesus—unto us a son is given:”—the child being born speaks of His virgin birth. The Son being given speaks of His eternity, who has been the Son of God with the Father through the ages—“and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

This was written seven hundred years before the first Christmas. Isaiah dipped his pen in golden glory and wrote these words about the coming Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I used to work, as Brother Whitmire did also, down in Cape Kennedy. And our members were endeavoring to put a man upon the moon. And that took a lot of intellectual ingenuity. Well, I want to say, dear friend, that the educated man is ignorant, the strong man is weak, and the wealthy man is poor if he doesn't understand about Christmas—I mean, the true meaning of Christmas. What good does it do us to put a man on the moon if we can't get God in our hearts? What good is it to know astronomy and how the heavens go, and not know Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star, and how to go to heaven? What good is it to know botany and the study of flowers and not know Jesus, heaven's sweetest rose, the Rose of Sharon, who can perfume any life? What good is it to know history and to know the events of history, and not know Jesus and know that history is His story? For it is in Him we live and move and have our being. What good is it to know geology and the ages of the rocks, and not know Jesus, the Rock of Ages? The greatest event was not man going to the moon, but God coming to earth in the form of a baby. And so we're going to be thinking about that today. And the title of our message is simply this: "His Name is Wonderful."

And I hope before the message has closed you will say with me, "Yes, His name is wonderful." There are three mighty facts I want to lay upon your heart from this passage of Scripture, and first of all is Jesus' supernatural nature.

I. Jesus' Supernatural Nature

Now, He was not just another child—He was supernatural. He was not just the Galilean peasant, the great teacher. You won't understand Christmas until you understand the supernatural nature of the Lord Jesus. Look again in verse six: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." This child, Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14, tells us, was born of a virgin. This child is the very Son of God.

The first Christmas, God sent a package to earth, and this package was a gift of deity wrapped up in humanity. Well, what a marvelous thing this is. It's supernatural. Jesus—never forget this—Jesus is God in human flesh.

Now, put in your margin John chapter 1, verses 1 to 3—let me share it with you: "And in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Jesus is called "the Word." What is a word? A word is an expression of an invisible thought. You can't hear my thoughts, but you hear my words, and therefore you know my thoughts. You can't see my thoughts. My thoughts are invisible. But my word makes the invisible known to you. Jesus makes the invisible God known to man. He is the very Word of God. He is God's Word to this human race. He is God in human flesh.

Now, Jesus is fully God. Look again in John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Now, who wrote this? The apostle John. The apostle John had walked and talked with Jesus. He had seen Jesus in all

manner of situations. And now Jesus has gone back to heaven. The apostle John now is an aged man. And this is the reflection, these are the thoughts, of a man in his maturity. And the apostle John, who was a Jew, who would have an ingrained resistance to any kind of idolatry, said of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He is fully God. Everything that God is, Jesus is. Everything that God has, Jesus has. Everything that God does, Jesus does. Jesus is God. Can you say amen to that? He is fully God. He is not part God and part man. He's not all God and no man. He's not all man and no God. He is the God-man. There has never ever been another like the Lord Jesus Christ who has this supernatural nature.

Now, if somebody comes to your door and doesn't believe that Jesus is God, he's a false prophet. Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 8: "But unto the Son he saith—the Son of God—Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom." Our heavenly Father has said of His heavenly Son, that your throne is forever and ever and ever and ever, and You, My Son, are God.

Now, He's not only fully God, but He is forever God. Jesus did not have His beginning at Bethlehem. When the Bible says, "In the beginning was the Word," it's not talking about a start; it's talking about a state. There never was a time when Jesus was not. There never will be a time when Jesus is not. A billion, billion, billion years for now, He'll still be God. He is God from everlasting to everlasting.

When Jesus was born, He was older than His mother, and as old His Father, because He was the Son from heaven. And so, Jesus did not begin in a manger. He came to this earth and was manifest in a manger.

Now, that's what I want you to think about: His humanity. That little baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger was the great, eternal, uncreated, self-existing, Word made flesh. Are you listening? The little baby in Luke 2 is the mighty God of Genesis 1. He is the One who made it all. Before Him there was nothing that is made. That little baby lying in the straw with dimpled feet is the One who swung planets into space. That little toddler learning to walk holding on to Mary's hand is the eternal, uncreated God. The little baby boy playing with shavings there in Joseph's carpenter shop is God of very God, God manifested in the flesh.

I love 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 16: "And great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." Now, you may not understand that, and I can understand that you don't understand it, because the apostle Paul said, "I don't understand it." Great is the mystery of God that God stepped out of heaven and came to this earth through the portals of a virgin's womb.

I know there are people who sneer at the idea of a virgin birth. They say, "Well, how could this happen?" Do you know what the angel said to Mary? "With God nothing shall be impossible." Do you believe that? With God, nothing. Listen. If you have trouble with

the virgin birth, let me tell you where your real trouble is. Your real trouble is with God. I mean, listen, folks. Be reasonable. If God could make the first man without a father or a mother, don't you think He could bring His Son into this world in a virgin birth? You see, if you don't believe in the virgin birth, you have some character problems. Your problem's the Word of God, and you believe the character of the Word of God is flawed, because the Word of God clearly, plainly teaches it.

And not only do you have difficulty with the character of the Word of God, but friend, if you do not believe in the virgin birth, you have difficulty with the character of Mary, because if Mary had a child out of wedlock, then Mary was an impure woman. And if you don't believe in the virgin birth, not only do you have difficulty with the character of the Word of God, and the character of Mary—you have difficulty with the character of Jesus.

Now, if Jesus were not the Son of God, He's the Son of Adam. And, in Adam, all die. If Jesus had not been born of a virgin, Jesus Christ would have the same human tendencies and proclivities that you and I have who are by nature the children of wrath, because Jesus Christ would have been the son of Adam, and in Adam all die. You have difficulty with the character of Jesus.

I want to tell you something else. If you don't believe in the virgin birth, I have difficulty with your character. I'm going to tell you something very clearly and very plainly. I don't mean to be rude. If there's not virgin birth, you're going to hell. Your salvation is inextricably interwoven with the virgin birth. No virgin birth, no deity. No deity, no sinless life. No sinless life, no sacrificial death. No sacrificial death, no salvation. No salvation, you're going to hell. Jesus came to earth that we might go to heaven. Jesus was born of a virgin that we might be born again. Thank God for the virgin birth. Amen?

II. Jesus' Sovereign Nobility

Now, friend, this is His supernatural nature. He is absolutely supernatural. He was born of a virgin, clearly and plainly.

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see. Not only His supernatural nature, but I want you to see His sovereign nobility—His sovereign nobility. He was born a king. The Scripture says in Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6 that “the government shall be upon His shoulder.” And look, if you will, in verse 7, as that is fleshed out: “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.” How's it going to happen? Well notice this: “The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.” That is, this little baby was born a king, and He is King. We didn't elect Him, and friend, we'll not impeach Him. He is King. He is King. He is

Lord

Some people say, “Well, have you made Him Lord?” You’re too late for that. God has already declared Him Lord. This is His sovereign nobility. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. And if you miss that, you miss the meaning of Christmas. You have to take the cradle and the cross and the crown, and put them together, or you don’t have the true story of Christmas. He is King of kings, Lord of lords.

Question: have you made Him Lord? No. Can you receive Him as Lord? Yes. You can bow your knee to Him and say, “O Lord, you’re the King, and the government is upon your shoulder. Therefore, I yield my heart to you.”

III. Jesus’ Saving Name

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to see: not only His supernatural nature, not only His sovereign nobility, but let’s get to the real good part for us: His saving name—His saving name. This is a verse that speaks of His name. Look again: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder”—now, watch this—“and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

Now, what is in His name? Well, first of all, wonder is in His name. Do you stand in awe of the Lord Jesus Christ? Or have you become oblivious? Do you not get excited when you think of Jesus? If you don’t, you’ve lost the wonder. You have calluses on your soul. Oh, friend, Jesus is wonderful. Say amen. He is wonderful—wonderful in His birth, wonderful in His life, wonderful in His teaching, wonderful in His miracles, wonderful in His death, wonderful in His resurrection, and, oh, yes, wonderful in His Second Coming. His name is wonderful.

I heard of a man riding on a train one time looking out the window, and he was saying, “Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, wonderful.” And the man sitting next to him said, “Why do you think everything is wonderful?” He said, “I’ve been blind, and I’ve just had surgery, and I’m seeing things that I had long since forgotten how beautiful they are. And they are wonderful to me.”

Friend, if Jesus is not wonderful to you, you need something done to your spiritual eyes so you can see just how wonderful Jesus is. There is wonder in His name.

But not only is there wonder in His name—listen to me—there is wisdom in His name, because His name is Counselor. Do you need a counselor sometime? People come to me for counsel sometimes. I can’t solve their problems. So when I counsel with people I try to lead them to the One who can solve their problems: the Lord Jesus Christ. I don’t want them dependent upon me. I want them to know Jesus. He is the Counselor. There is wisdom in His name. He’s made unto us, Paul says in 1 Corinthians, wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Are you going through a problem right now? You don't know the way out. You don't know what to do. Every answer seems wrong. I want to recommend my counselor to you. His name is Jesus.

And not only is there wonder in that name; friend, there is wisdom in that name. And not only is there wonder and wisdom in that name, but oh, precious friend, He is the mighty God, and there is wealth in that name. That means it all belongs to Him. He made it all. What's the world coming to? The world is coming to Jesus. It came from Him. It is for Him. It is coming back to Him. He made it all. Billions of suns came from His hand when He spoke. Oceans dripped from His fingers. He made it all, billions, billions and billions of stars and suns mightier than ours. This little planet earth is a speck in the galaxy, just a speck. And yet He made it. The earth is the Lord's.

I was reading that in one—listen—in one drop of water, if you were to take all of the molecules in one drop of water and turn each molecule into a grain of sand, you would have enough material to build a bridge a half a mile wide, two feet thick, from New York to San Francisco. That's the molecules in one drop of water. What a mighty God we serve. Friend, He is the mighty God. There is wealth in His name.

And then, His name is the everlasting Father. There is worship in His name. Do you know that Jesus is to be worshiped? Now, who do we worship? Only God. Well, if Jesus is not God, we have no right to worship Jesus. Now, when the Jehovah Witnesses come to my door, I want to be nice to them, I want to be kind to them. And I admire their zeal in going from house to house and door to door. But I have one question that always stops them in their tracks. Would you like to know what it is? Here it is. Do you worship Jesus? "Oh," they say, "we revere Jesus." I say, "No, I didn't ask you that. Do you worship Jesus?" "Oh, we believe He's the Son of God." I didn't ask you that. Do you worship Jesus? "Oh, we believe this..." I say, "No, no, no. Please answer my question. Do you worship Jesus?"

Now, they're on the horns of a dilemma. Because if they say, "No, we don't worship Jesus," I'll say they did in the Bible. I'll show them, for example, the story of the wise men who came to the child Jesus, and the Bible says, "and they worshiped Him." Over and over and over in the Bible, He is worshiped, He's worshiped, He's worshiped. So, if they say "No, we don't worship Jesus," I say, "then you're not biblical." "Well," they say, "then we do worship Jesus." Then I say, "You must confess then that He is God." No, we don't believe He's God. Well, how can you worship Him if He's not God? The Bible says, "I am the Lord Thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. Worship Him and Him only." Only God is to be worshiped. Jesus received worship and God approved the worship of Jesus.

Now, if Jesus is not God, that's the grossest form of idolatry. And Jesus was incredibly wrong to allow it. If Brother Mark were to bow down before me and say, my

Lord and my God—now, I know he’s been tempted to do it—but, I mean, how foolish that would be—for one man to worship another man, if that’s all that man is.

In the book of the Revelation the apostle John saw a mighty angel. He was so overwhelmed he bowed down to worship the angel, and the angel said, “No. Get up. Worship God and Him only.” What the angel was saying, “Look, John. If you worship me, you’ll be in trouble for idolatry, and, if I allow it, I’ll be in trouble too.” But Jesus received worship. Friend, He is the mighty God. He is the everlasting Father. That’s the reason that I told you that when He was born, He was older than His mother and as old as His Father. There’s worship in that name.

I’ll tell you what else there is: there’s welfare in that name. Oh, the thing that your heart is yearning for, your heart wants, is peace. And He is called the Prince of Peace. Do you want peace? Romans 5:1: “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God—peace with God.” And then the Bible says, “Let the peace of God rule in your heart.” You see, God, through Jesus, came to give you peace.

Has anybody ever left you anything in a will? Jesus did. Upon the cross He said, “My peace leave I with you. My peace give I unto you.” Now, Jesus is going back to the heavens, and this is the legacy that Jesus, young man, left for you. Jesus willed His body to Joseph of Arimathea for burial. Jesus gave His mother to the apostle John. Jesus yielded up His spirit to God the Father. But Jesus gave His peace to you, and there’s no lawyer on earth that can break that will. It is yours. It is your throne gift.

Now, if you don’t have peace, it’s because you don’t understand what you have in the name of Jesus. There’s welfare in that name. I was speaking to a man and trying to witness to him. And he was standing out in front of his house. I knew him. I knew him pretty well. And he was what you would call a self-made man. He felt pretty comfortable in his status in life. And we had a friendly conversation, but I broached the subject of Jesus. “Oh,” he said, “I’m fine. I’m fine like I am.” He said, “You see that house? It’s paid for.” He said, “There’s my wife on the inside. She loves me, and I love her.” And he said, “I have my retirement income.” He said, “I’m doing quite well, thank you.” I said, “Sir, may I ask you a question?” “Well, sure.” I said, “Oh no, don’t say it lightly. I want to ask you a question, and I want you to think about it, and answer me honestly. Will you answer me honestly?” He said, “Of course.” I said, “Now, be careful. You said you would, and I want you to do it.” I said, “Sir, do you have peace in your heart?” He said, “I told you, I’m good.” I said, “You said you would answer the question. Now, answer it. Do you have peace in your heart?” His chin began to quiver, and his eyes brimmed with tears, and he said, “No, I don’t have peace. How did you know?” I said, “Because the Bible says, There is no peace, said my God to the wicked.” The only peace you will ever know—real peace, I’m not talking about happiness, I’m not talking about numbing yourself with drugs; I’m talking about the peace that passes understanding—it is in the

wonderful name of Jesus. In His name there is the welfare of peace.

A woman was dying. They said to her, do you know that you're dying? She said, "Yes." Have you made peace with God? She said, "No." Perhaps she didn't understand, so they asked her again, said, "Do you know you're dying?" She said, "Yes." Have you made peace with God? She said, "No." She said, "I am resting in the peace that Jesus made on the cross." Amen? He made peace between God and man.

Conclusion

What a wonderful, wonderful name is Jesus. The name Jesus literally means Savior. It literally means Jehovah saves. That's why the angel said, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." He's a Savior. Jesus is a Savior.

I want to tell you how foolish your pastor is. One day this past week, I drove my automobile off the hot pavement out into a grassy area because I knew where there was a persimmon tree, and I love persimmons, and I thought, "Well, this is about the time those persimmons would be ripe." And so I drove out there past that tree. There wasn't a persimmon on the tree. So when I start to drive away my tires went zzzzzz. I thought, uh-oh, the ground is wet. I'll be very careful. So I started to go very careful and my tires went zzzzzz. I said, well, I'll back up and get a running start. I went to back up—zzzzz. I said, Oh, I'll rock the car a little bit. Zzzzz—zzzzz—zzzzz. And I'm sinking the whole time. I got a board, went out and got a board, tried to dig myself out. I got in the car—zzzzzzz. I found a piece of carpet out there in the woods and put that underneath—zzzzz. By this time, I'm going down, down, down. I am stuck in the mud!

Well, there are two things I wanted. Number one: I didn't want anybody to see me. And, number two: I wanted somebody to see me. And so I prayed, I said, "Lord, I'm in the mud." I really prayed this way. I said, "Lord, I'm in the mud. I need your help. Lord, I'm helpless here. Lord, get me out." And just almost at the same time, a man came to me. He saw me before I saw him. He came to be before I even asked him to come. He had a four-wheel vehicle. And he said, "You're stuck?" I said, "Obviously." He said, "Well, don't work." He said, "I have a cable and I have a hook." And we hooked that hook to my car, put that cable there on his bumper, and that man with that mighty truck pulled me slowly out of the mud. And he said to me, "Now, you be careful."

When I got back on solid ground, I was so grateful that that man had come along. I believe he was God's angel. I believe it was an answer to prayer, I really do—because I prayed, I didn't know what I was going to do. Immediately, God sent me someone in a four-wheel truck with a cable and all of this. I just praise the Lord for that.

But I got to thinking about it. It's so much like salvation. We are looking for the things of this world, and sinking in the mud. We say, "Well, I can get myself out of this." I know how, you know; I can handle this situation. And the more we try to handle it, the deeper

and deeper and deeper we sink. We need somebody who will see us, care for us, come to us, and get us out. Jesus is a Savior. He's a Savior. He comes to us. He has what it takes to extricate us from the mud that we've gotten in. Well, he pulled me out. I got on solid ground, and I began to praise the Lord. Thank you, Lord. Thank you. The Singing Tree was beginning pretty soon; I needed to get cleaned up. I said, "Thank you, Lord. Thank you."

You know, when I got home, my car was covered with mud. And I got the hose out there and began to hose it off and get the mud off, and I got to thinking. You know, that man got me out of the mud, but it was up to me to deal with the mud that was still on there. And, you know, when I got saved, I was kind of covered with mud. And I've been all this time just letting Jesus, the water of life, clean me up.

But what I'm trying to say is this, friend: you can struggle all you want, but all you're going to do is sink deeper—all you're going to do is sink deeper. You do not have what it takes to get out unless someone takes you out. And that one is Jesus. His name is wonderful. He, friend, is the mighty God, the everlasting Father, He is the Prince of peace. And I'm so glad, friend, He has taken me out of the mud when I was a teenage boy. And He's kept me. He's kept me through these years. And He wants to save you. He promised to do it, wants to do it, and will do it, if you trust Him.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. If you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, I want to invite you to pray a prayer like this:

Dear Jesus, I need You. I'm a sinner. I'm lost. And I need You. I don't want to die in my sin and go to hell. I need You, Jesus. Come to my life and pull me out. The harder I try, Lord, the deeper I sink. Come to me and take me out, Lord Jesus. I trust You, Jesus. I believe You're the Son of God. You paid for my sin debt with Your shed blood on the cross. Thank You, Lord, for doing that. Thank You for saving me. Now, give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer and were sincere, I praise God for you. How wonderful that is, because if you were sincere, God saved you. You say, "Well, how can I know I'm sincere?" Well, are you willing to make it public? You can't sneak into heaven. The faith that will not lead to confession will not lead to heaven. Jesus said, "If you are ashamed of Me and My word before this sinful and adulterous generation, I'll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with holy angels." But He said, "If you will confess Me before men, I will confess you before My Father." Walking an aisle doesn't save you. It's what it indicates that saves you: that you're not ashamed of Jesus; you're openly and publicly acknowledging Him as your Lord and Savior.

Now, there'll be a minister of the gospel standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front to welcome and receive those of you who will be coming forward from the ground floor. Up in the balcony, there'll be a minister under this banner

over here that says “Redeemer,” this one in the corner that says “Messiah,” to welcome those of you in the balcony who will be coming to make decisions.

And if you prayed and asked Jesus to come into your heart, then when we sing, I want you to step out and say to the minister, I’m trusting Jesus. Well, what will happen? Well, we’ll rejoice. Number two: we’ll give you some Scripture to stand on. Number three: we’ll seal it with you in prayer. We’ll treat you courteously and lovingly, and this will be the best Christmas you’ve ever really known, because Christ, the Christ of Christmas, will be born in your heart.

The Infinite Infant

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 30, 1980

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 9:6

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

ISAIAH 9:6

Outline

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Introduction

I want you to listen to it, now, Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6: *“For unto us a child is born”*—that speaks of the first Christmas morning—*“For unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”* (Isaiah 9:6) That’s such a wonderful verse. Brother Whitmire is going to teach us to sing a Scripture chorus tonight so that we might understand that verse, and hide it in our hearts, and learn how to memorize it and sing it. And, we’ll be preaching from it all this Christmas season.

Today, I want to speak to you about this: “The Infinite Infant”—“The Infinite Infant.” I want us to think about that baby who was in that cradle, because I want to tell you that babe who was laid in that cradle—that manger—so far away, so long ago, was none other than God. Now, did you hear that? Don’t let that go past. Friend, that is an earth-shaking thought. This is the cradle that rocked the world. That baby was God. That little baby—that little infant—was infinite.

Now, listen to what Isaiah says again—listen to it: *“For unto us a child is born”*—well, we can understand that—*“and unto us a son is given”*—well, we could understand that—*“and the government shall be upon his shoulder”*—well, I think we can understand that—*“and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor”*—thus far we can say, “Well, He may be like other religious leaders. But now, wait a moment—*“his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor”*—and then, do you hear the rest of it?—*“The mighty God, The everlasting Father.”* (Isaiah 9:6) Think of it: that baby has a name which is Mighty God; that baby has a name which is Everlasting Father.

You know, the liberals don't like that: they don't believe in the deity of Christ as we believe in the deity of Christ. And, the false cults don't like that. As a matter of fact, most every false cult is wrong on the person of Jesus: they do not ascribe to Jesus that Jesus is coequal and coeternal with God the Father. But, I want to tell you that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh. And, if He were not God in human flesh, He is a liar, and He is an imposter, and He is not worthy of our adoration, He's not worthy of our love, He is not worthy of our service at all, but He ought to be repudiated. Someone wrote these words: “If Jesus Christ is a man and only a man, I say that of all mankind I will cleave to Him and will cleave to Him alway. But, if Jesus Christ is a God and the only God, I swear I will follow Him through heaven and hell, the earth, the sea, and the air.” Now, that sounds very good, but friend, there is a flaw in that. Listen to it again: “If Jesus Christ is a man and only a man, I say that of all mankind I will cleave to Him and cleave to Him alway.” But, I want to say, friend, that if Jesus Christ is a man and only a man, He needs to be repudiated, He needs to be turned from, He cannot be honored, for He's not even good if He's not God. For Jesus said, *“[There's] none good but one, [and that's], God.”* (Matthew 19:17; Mark 10:18)

And, it has well been pointed out, and you've heard before, when you face the historical Jesus—and He was a fact of history. There's more evidence of Jesus Christ than Julius Caesar. He was a fact of history—and as you face Jesus Christ, you're going to have to do something with Him. You can't just tip your hat to Him. You're going to have to make a disposition of Jesus, for you're on the horns of a trilemma. Jesus Christ was one of three persons: He was either the Lord from heaven, or He was a liar, or He was a lunatic. He was one of the three. Either He was who He claimed to be, or else He was a liar who knew that He was not God but pretended to be, or, even worse, He was a lunatic who thought He was God and wasn't. Now, you're on the horns of trilemma: either Jesus Christ is Lord, liar, or lunatic—Deity, deceiver, or deceived. Was He really the Lord? Was He the God from heaven?

I believe with all of my heart and agree with Isaiah the prophet that He was the Mighty God, that He was the Everlasting Father. And, I want to give you three lines of evidence to show that the babe of Bethlehem was the Everlasting Father, that He was

the Infinite Infant. And, I want to give these three lines of evidence: first of all, I want us to look at Jesus and see that He has the attributes of the Everlasting Father; secondly, I want us to look at Jesus and see that the Lord Jesus received the adoration that should only come to the Everlasting Father; and then, I want you to see, thirdly, that He has the abilities that only the Everlasting Father, the Mighty God, could have—these three lines of evidence.

I. By His Attributes He Is Shown to Be the Everlasting Father

First of all, I want you to notice His attributes. Now, He has, in the New Testament, the names and the attributes that are attributed to Jehovah of the Old Testament. Do you know who Jehovah is? Do you know the name Jehovah? Well, Jehovah's a name that the Jews used for God in the Old Testament—a very marvelous name. It is used over seven thousand times for God in the Old Testament. He is called "Jehovah" or "Jehovah God."

Now, if you have a King James Version of the Bible, that name Jehovah is translated in your Bible "LORD," but it is a word that speaks of God—a name for God that speaks of God in His covenant relationship with His people. That is, as God deals intimately, and personally, and caringly, and savingly, and redemptively with His people, His name is called Jehovah. The Jews held this name in such reverence that they would never even speak it audibly. And, when the Scriptures were read and they would come to this name, they would just bow their head, and close their eyes, and meditate. The congregation would do the same thing. Such a reverence they had for the name Jehovah. And, you know, they had no printing presses in this day; and so, when they came to transcribe the Scriptures—to write the Scriptures—when that Jewish scribe who was writing by hand the Scriptures would come to this name, Jehovah, he would lay aside his old pen and get a brand new pen just to write the name Jehovah. How important was this name Jehovah, this honored name for Almighty God!

But, I want to show you—and I want you to pay attention, and I want you to take notes—because I want you show you today that the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Jesus of the New Testament are one and the same person—Jesus of the Old Testament and Jehovah of the New Testament. Jesus said, "*I and my Father are one.*" (John 10:30) And, I'm going to show you that, from the Scripture, that you cannot separate the Jehovah from the Old Testament and the Jesus from the New Testament.

I think I told some of you one time, a long time ago, that I was out in the front of my house, and a man came up who had some books. And, he was a religious-talking fellow, and he wanted to sell me some books and tell me some things about his faith and his religion. I said, "Well, what denomination are you from? What church do you attend?" "Oh," he said, "well, that doesn't make any difference. I'm just a believer." I

said, “Well, it makes a difference to me. I’d like to know who you are.” And, I said... “Well,” he said, “no.” He said, “Let’s just talk about God.” I said, “Well, I want to know where you’re coming from.” I said, “Are you ashamed of the group that you’re affiliated with?” He said, “No.” I said, “Well, then tell me, you know, what group...” “Well,” he said, “I’m a Jehovah’s Witness. Does that make any difference?” I said, “No, so am I.” He said, “You are?” And, he said, “Well,” he said, “I’ve never seen you at the Kingdom Hall.” I said, “I don’t go there. I go to the Baptist church.” And, he said, “You do? Isn’t that strange?” I said, “No.” I said, “We enjoy it there.” He said, “And, you’re a Jehovah’s Witness?” I said, “Yes, because,” I said, “you see, the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Jesus of the New Testament are one and the same. And, Jesus said, ‘*Ye shall be witnesses unto me.*’ (Acts 1:8) And so, I am His witness, and while I’m His witness, I’m witnessing for His Father, the Lord Jehovah.” I don’t know whether he ever really understood what I was saying, but I hope you’ll understand it—and I hope you won’t misunderstand what I’ve said. I’m a Baptist through and through.

Somebody said to someone, “If you weren’t a Baptist, what would you be?” He said, “I’d be ashamed,” and that’s the way I feel right now, dear friend. I’m just a Baptist. I don’t think you have to be a Baptist to go to heaven, but you have to have Jesus as your personal Savior to go to heaven. And, I want to tell you that the Jesus that you have to have as your personal Savior is coequal and coeternal with God the Father. And, if you have any other Jesus, you don’t have the Jesus of the Bible—you have a false Jesus and a Jesus who cannot save. And, the Bible says, “*If any come to your house and bring not this doctrine (the doctrine of Christ), receive him not into your house and neither bid him God speed, lest thou become a partaker of his evil deeds.*” (2 John 1:10–11) And, *before you can ever settle the sin question, you’ve got to settle the Son question.* Who is Jesus? Who is Jesus? Dear friend, it makes a lot of difference who Jesus is. I’m not talking to you about ephemeral things; I’m not talking to you about extra things and things that do not matter. I am talking to you about basic Christianity. And, you’d better understand that this babe that was born in Bethlehem was the Everlasting Father—He was the Mighty God. And, unless He was, He could not be the Prince of peace, and the government could not rest upon His shoulder.

Now, let me just give you something very exciting here for a moment. We’re in the book of Isaiah. Turn to Isaiah chapter 40 and verse 3—Isaiah chapter 40 and verse 3. Well, let’s... Okay, I think that’ll do. Isaiah 40, verse 3: “*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD*”—now, remember what that word LORD means—“*Prepare ye the way of [Jehovah], make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*” (Isaiah 40:3)

Now, I want you to turn to the New Testament and see how that’s fulfilled. Turn to Matthew chapter 3, verse 3 in the New Testament. Now, these are scriptures that not

only should you be turning to; you ought to jot them down, because you're going to need them. Matthew chapter 3 and verse 3—well, let's start in verse 1: *"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet [Isaiah]"*—now, John the Baptist is about to present someone that he says that Isaiah was talking about. And, who was Isaiah talking about?—*"Prepare ye the way of Jehovah."* (Matthew 3:1–3) Isn't that what Isaiah said? He did, indeed. Now, John says, *"[I am] the voice of one crying in the wilderness, [saying,] Prepare ye the way of the Lord, [and] make...straight [his] paths"—or, "make his paths straight."* (Matthew 3:3) And, who was John talking about? Well, look in verse 11: John said, *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. But he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; [and] he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Then cometh Jesus"* (Matthew 3:11–13)—Jesus of the New Testament. Is that Jehovah of the Old Testament of whom Isaiah prophesied? Do you see it? If you don't see it, you just jot those scriptures down and go back home and meditate upon it until you do see it.

Go back, for example, to Isaiah chapter 44 for just a moment. You might as well just lick your fingers and do this. It's good; it'll help you. Isaiah chapter 44—and look in verse 6: *"Thus saith the LORD"—that is, "Thus saith Jehovah"—"the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God."* (Isaiah 44:6) This God is the first, and He is the last. And, there is no other God. You can't have two Gods. Sometimes people accuse Christians of being polytheist. They say we worship three Gods: we worship Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We worship one God who has revealed Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We worship one God. *"There is but one God."* (1 Corinthians 8:6) But, that Jehovah of the Old Testament and that Jesus of the New Testament are the one and same God.

Now, remember here, in the scripture that we have before us, in Isaiah chapter 44 and verse 6, Jehovah calls Himself *"the first, and...the last."* (Isaiah 44:6) Now, turn to Revelation chapter 1 and verse 17. That's the last book in the Bible. Most of us can find that one—that is, if you don't get mixed up in the Concordance. Revelation chapter 1—some people think Concordance is a book of the Bible—in Revelation chapter 1, verse 17, John has just had a vision of Jesus, and John said, *"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last."* (Revelation 1:17) Now, in Isaiah chapter 44, verse 6, Jehovah is *"the first, and...the last."* (Isaiah 44:6) In Revelation chapter 1, verse 17, Jesus is *"the first and the last."* (Revelation 1:17)

Now, I'm not going to read the rest of these. You just jot them down. In Psalms 24,

verse 10, Jehovah is *“the [Lord] of glory.”* (Psalms 24:10) In 1 Corinthians 2, verse 8, Jesus is *“the Lord of glory.”* (1 Corinthians 2:8) In Isaiah 43, verse 11, Jehovah is the only Savior. (Isaiah 43:11) In Titus 3—excuse me, in Titus chapter 2—verse 13, Jesus is *“the great God and our Saviour.”* (Titus 2:13) In Psalms 23, verse 1: *“The LORD [Jehovah] is [the] shepherd.”* (Psalms 23:1) In Psalms—in John 10, verse 11, Jesus is *“the good shepherd.”* (John 10:11) In Exodus chapter 20, verses 10 and 11, Jehovah is the Lord of the Sabbath. (Exodus 20:10–11) However, in Matthew 12, verse 8, Jesus is the *“Lord of the sabbath.”* (Matthew 12:8) What I’m trying to say to you, dear friend, is that this little baby that was born on Christmas Day was Jehovah God. He is the Mighty God. He is the Everlasting Father. Just think of the attributes that belong to Him.

A. **Eternality**

For example, eternity belongs to Jesus. There never was a time when Jesus wasn’t. Just mark it down: there never was a time when He wasn’t. He was the eternal Son who rested on the bosom of the Father without a mother and rested on the bosom of a mother without an earthly father. When He was born, at His birth, He was as old as His Father and older than His mother. There never was a time when Jesus was not. The Bible says, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* (John 1:1) *“And [this same] Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory...as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”* (John 1:14)

Let me show you something interesting. Turn with me, if you will, to John chapter 8 for a moment. Jesus was having a controversy with the Pharisees. The Pharisees, the rulers of the Jews at that day, would not accept the Lord Jesus Christ, and they were in a controversy with Him. And, they made a slur concerning the Lord Jesus. The slur was that He had been born out of wedlock, that He was not virgin-born at all. And, this was the way they made that insinuation: they said, *“We know who our father is,”* (John 8:41) indicating—at least implying—that He did not know who His Father was. And, their father, of course, they were pointing to was Abraham. They were so proud of their ancestry. But, I want you to notice what Jesus said here in John chapter 8, beginning in verse 56. I want you to get this now. Jesus said, *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.”* (John 8:56) Now, remember that Abraham had been dead and buried for centuries. And, Jesus said, *“Your father Abraham [saw] my day”—“rejoiced to see my day”—“he saw it, and [he] was glad”—well, they couldn’t understand that; and so, they say in verse 57—“Then said the Jews unto him, [Art] thou...not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?”—“He’s been dead for centuries. You’re not even fifty. How could you have seen him?”* Then, notice in verse 58. And boy, I want to tell you, this is a tremendous verse. And, I preached on it before,

and I've told you to mark it before. If it's not marked, I want you to put a star by it, I want you to draw a key around it, I want you to put an asterisk by it, I want you to underscore it, because it is so very important—*“Jesus [saith] unto them, Verily...I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”* (John 8:56–58) Now, notice He didn't say, “Before Abraham was, I was.” He didn't say, “Before Abraham was, I have been.” He said, *“Before Abraham was, I am.”* (John 8:58) You say, “Well, what's so important about that?” Well, you see, “I AM” is the most important—one of the most important—names for Almighty God in the Old Testament: I AM.

You remember when Moses was getting ready to lead the children of Israel out of the land of bondage and into the Promised Land. They were slaves down there in Egypt, and Moses—and God—said to Moses, “I want you to go and lead my people out.” (Exodus 3:10) Now, the Egyptians were notorious idolaters. They had twenty-two hundred different kinds of gods, and they'd given names to all of them. And so, they had names for all of these gods, and names of a god were very important. And so, Moses says, “Well, all right, if I go down there, who shall I say sent me?” And, remember what God said? You know this, don't you? In the Old Testament, Jehovah God said, “You tell them I AM sent you—I AM.” (Exodus 3:14) That was a name that God chose for Himself: I AM. What did that mean? Not “I will be,” not “I have been”—just “I AM.” “There never was a time when I was not. There never will be a time when I will not be.” He is the great I AM. It was one of the most reverential and awe-inspiring names that God's ancient people had for themselves. They were so proud that they were the people of the great I AM. And then, they said to Jesus, “Have you seen Abraham?” And, Jesus said, *“Before Abraham was, I am.”* (John 8:58) He used this same title for Himself. Then, you can understand the next verse—says, *“Then took they up stones to [stone] him”—“to [stone] him.”* (John 8:59) Why? Because they understood what He was saying.

I'm saying, dear friend, that He has the attributes of God. He has the great eternity of God. There never was a time when Jesus was not. *“Before Abraham was, [He is the great] I am.”* (John 8:58)

B. **Holiness**

God is holy, and Jesus is holy. Listen, do you know what Jesus said to this same bunch? He looked at this bunch and said in John chapter 8—He says in verse 46: *“Which of you convinceth me of sin?”* (John 8:46) That is, “Is there anybody here who can point out a sin in my life?” Friend, I wouldn't even ask my friends that question, much less my enemies. *“Which of you [can convince] me of sin?”* (John 8:46) Jesus wasn't arrogant; Jesus wasn't bragging. But, I want to tell you, there's only One that is completely holy, One that is sinless, and that is God. One of the great proofs of His

deity was His sinless life that He lived. He never committed one sin—no, not one. And, not any place in the Bible do you ever find Jesus praying for forgiveness. He didn't have to.

What I'm saying to you is that this baby—this cradle that rocked the world, this babe of Bethlehem—was the Mighty God; He was the Everlasting Father. I know so, first of all, by His attributes.

II. By His Adoration He Is Shown to Be the Everlasting Father

But, I want to say I know also not only by His attributes, but by His adoration—by the worship that was given to Him. If you will, please, I want you to turn to Luke chapter 4. Turn to Luke chapter 4, and I want you to look at, with me, at verse 8. Jesus has been tempted of the devil, and the devil is trying to get Jesus to worship him. The devil has always wanted to be worshipped, because he is perverted in his desires. And, the devil said to Jesus in verse 7: *"If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine"* (Luke 4:7)—"I'll give you the kingdoms of this world if you'll just fall down and worship me." But, I want you to see what Jesus said in Luke chapter 4 and verse 8: *"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written"*—and I want you just to mark this now—*"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him"*—what's that next word?—*"him only"*—*"him only"*—*"shalt thou serve."* (Luke 4:8) You're not to worship anyone else but God—never, never! Don't ever worship anybody or anything but God. *"I am the LORD thy God... Thou shalt have no other gods before me."* (Exodus 20:2–3) There is only One that is worthy of worship, and that is God. Have you got that in your heart? Have you got that in your heart?

All right. Now, let's move on. Let's look, if you will please, in the book of the Revelation. Turn to Revelation chapter 22 and verse 9. Let's see if the angels in heaven understand this. Revelation chapter 22, verse 9. God has been giving the Apostle John marvelous, and wonderful, and indescribably beautiful prophecies and revelations. These revelations have been mediated to him through an angel, and John is just so carried away by the awesome presence of this angel that he has a tendency in his heart to fall down and worship this angel. And look, if you will please, in Revelation chapter 22 and verse 8: *"And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things"*—now, an angel is not God, is he? So, John had no business doing this, did he? Of course not. Look in verse 9—*"Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God"*—*"worship God."* (Revelation 22:8–9) Do you know what this angel said to John? This angel said, "John, you'd better get up off your feet or we'll both be in trouble"—amen—"Don't you worship me. You'll be in trouble for worshipping me. I

will be in trouble if I allow you to worship me. God is the only One who's to be worshipped."

Now, what I'm about to show you is this: that Jesus allowed Himself to be worshipped. Now, if Jesus were not God and Jesus allowed Himself to be worshipped, He was guilty—inexcusably guilty—of aiding and abetting the chiefest of all sins, which is idolatry. Do you understand what I'm saying? If Jesus allowed Himself to be worshipped, and yet He were not God of very God, He is transgressing the most rudimentary principles of the Word of God: "*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only*" (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8); "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*" (Exodus 20:3) Worship God!

And yet, we find in the Bible where Jesus's followers worshipped Him. For example, turn to Matthew chapter 28. Let me give an example of what I'm talking about. Look in Matthew chapter 28 and verse 9: "*And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him*"—they just put their arms around the feet of the blessed Lord, the risen Lord, and they bowed down with tears of joy and exaltations of praise. And, they said, "Oh, blessed Savior, dear Savior!" And, they bowed down and worshipped Him. And, did He rebuke them? Look in verse 10—"*Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go unto Galilee, and there they shall see me.*" (Matthew 28:9–10) He didn't rebuke them for this. He allowed it; He even encouraged it.

I want you to look again, if you will please, in John chapter 20 for a moment. This is the key of all of them, so turn to it—John chapter 20. Old Thomas was not there when Jesus first appeared to the disciples, and he had to be convinced that Jesus was risen from the dead. And, Jesus said to Thomas when Thomas saw Him eight days later—He said, "Thomas, don't be a doubter. Be a believer," said, "Thomas, feel the nail prints in my hand. Thomas, take your hand and put it in my side and feel the place where the spear was. And, don't be a doubter. Be a believer." (John 20:27) And then, I want you to notice what Thomas did as a result of that. I'm reading here in John chapter 20, verse 28. I want you to see old Thomas as he says this to Jesus: "*And Thomas answered and said unto him, My LORD and my God.*" (John 20:28) Now, suppose someone were to come up before you and to bow down before you and say, "My Lord and my God," what would you tell them, huh? "A case of mistaken identity"—amen. "*My LORD and my God.*" (John 20:28) Did Jesus rebuke Thomas for this worship? Did Jesus rebuke Thomas for this adulation? Not at all. But, Jesus said unto him, "*Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed*"—believed what? That He is Lord and God—"*blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*" (John 20:29)

III. By His Abilities He Is Shown to Be the Everlasting Father

By His attributes He is shown to be the Everlasting Father. By His adoration He is shown to be the Everlasting Father. And, I want to say by His abilities, therefore, He is shown to be the Everlasting Father. Have you ever noticed in the New Testament the times it mentions the word *able* in conjunction with the Lord Jesus Christ? He is able. For example, listen...and we don't have time to get into these; and so, I'll just mention them. You can jot them down and do them for a little Bible study, because they're worthy of a message all their own.

A. He Is Able to Save

But, you know, for example, in Hebrews chapter 7, verse 25, the Bible says, "*Wherefore he is able...to save.*" (Hebrews 7:25) A man couldn't save another man, but God can save you. You see, He's the Mighty God. "*[He's] able...to save.*" (Hebrews 7:25) You want to be saved? Jesus is able to save you. That's why the angel said, "*Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their [sin].*" (Matthew 1:21) Do you know what *Jesus* means? It means "Jehovah saves." That's what the name "Jesus" means: "Jehovah saves." "*He is able...to save.*" (Hebrews 7:25)—Hebrews chapter 7, verse 25.

B. He Is Able to Subdue

He's able to subdue. Philippians 3, verse 21: the Bible speaks of His mighty power, "*whereby he is able...to subdue all things.*" (Philippians 3:21) You have some habit? You have some temptation? You have some problem? The devil's on your trail? You can't get the victory? Well, Jesus can. He is able to save, and He is able to subdue.

C. He Is Able to Satisfy

You have some need? You need a supply? You need a sufficiency? Well, listen to this—Ephesians chapter 3, verse 20: the Bible says, "*[He's] able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we [can] ask or think.*" (Ephesians 3:20) He's able to satisfy. Not only is Jesus necessary; bless God, Jesus is enough—He is. He's enough. He's all that you need. He is able to satisfy—He is.

D. He Is Able to Secure

And, He is able to secure. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 1, verse 12: "*he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*" (2 Timothy 1:12) You say, "Brother Rogers, I'd like to be saved, and I'd like to be a Christian—I really would—but I'm just afraid if I were to come down there and give my heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, I wouldn't be able—I wouldn't be able—to live it." Friend, it's not your holding onto Him. He is able to secure you. The Apostle Paul said, "*[For I] am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*" (2 Timothy 1:12)

A little boy was lost from his home. He found a policeman and said, “Mister, can you tell me how to get home?” And, the policeman said, “Well, son, you do this and this,” and he tried to explain to him. The little fellow couldn’t quite understand it. And, the policeman said, “Well, never mind. Come, I’ll take you,” and just took him home. I want to show you—I want to tell you, friend—that Jesus is not merely the way-shower; He is the way. (John 14:6) He’s the One who takes us by the hand and He brings us home, and He will never, never let us go. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Conclusion

Who is this person named Jesus? Who is He? *“What think ye of Christ?”* (Matthew 22:42) To the artist, *“[he’s] altogether lovely.”* (Song of Solomon 5:16) To the architect, He’s *“the chief corner stone.”* (Ephesians 2:20) To the baker, He’s *“the living bread.”* (John 6:51) To the banker, He’s the *“hidden [treasure].”* (Isaiah 45:3) To the biologist, He is the life. (John 11:25; 14:6) To the builder, He’s the *“sure foundation.”* (Isaiah 28:16) To the doctor, He is the Great Physician. (Matthew 9:12–13) To the educator, He is the Great Teacher. (John 3:2) To the farmer, Jesus is *“the Lord of the harvest.”* (Matthew 9:38; Luke 10:2) To the florist, He’s *“the rose of Sharon.”* (Song of Solomon 2:1) To the geologist, He’s the Rock of ages. (1 Corinthians 3:11) To the jurist, He is *“the righteous judge.”* (2 Timothy 4:8) To the jeweler, He is the *“pearl of great price.”* (Matthew 13:46) To the lawyer, He is my advocate. (1 John 2:1) To the publisher, He is *“good tidings of great joy.”* (Luke 2:10) To the philosopher, He is *“the wisdom of God.”* (Luke 11:49) To the preacher, He is the Word of God. (John 1:1, 14) To the sculptor, He is the *“living stone.”* (1 Peter 2:4) To the statesman, He is *“the desire of all nations.”* (Haggai 2:7) To the theologian, He is *“the author and [the] finisher of our faith.”* (Hebrews 12:2) To the traveler, He is *“a new and living way.”* (Hebrews 10:20) To the sinner, He is *“the Lamb of God, [that] taketh away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29) And to all believers, He is *“The everlasting Father, [The mighty God,] The Prince of Peace.”* (Isaiah 9:6) *“His name shall be called Wonderful”* (Isaiah 9:6)—Wonderful, Wonderful.

Let’s bow together in prayer. Do you know Him? Why don’t you open your heart and ask Him to come in? Because I want to tell you, friend, He is able to save: He’ll save you. He is able to subdue: He’ll handle your problems. He is able to satisfy: He’ll meet your every need. He’s able to secure: He’ll bring you all the way home. Why don’t you pray a prayer like this: “O God, I’m a sinner, and I’m lost; and I can’t save myself, and I need to be saved. And, I want to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me if I would only trust you. I do trust you, Jesus, right now, this moment, with all of my heart. Come into my heart—come into my heart. Forgive my sin, and save me”? Would you pray a prayer like that? You may just put it in one word: “Lord, save me.”

Let me say a word to those of you who are watching by television, while others have their heads bowed. Right there by your television set, you can bow your head and say, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart and save me," and He will. He's knocking at your heart's door. And, there's someone standing by on the telephone right now to pray with you and to help confirm you in this decision. And, if you would like someone just to pray along with you, or to guide you, or to give you some scripture to help you, would you call the number given you on the television screen? Someone right now will pray with you. Just get up right now. Don't even watch the rest of the program. Just go right now and dial that number. We're not asking you to give anything or join anything; we just want to help you to receive Jesus. You can get it settled right now.

And, those of you who are in this building, I want you right now to say, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart, and save me. And, give me the courage to make it public. Help me, Jesus, not to be ashamed of you." Lord God, we pray that many shall come. In Jesus's name. Amen.

The Prince of Peace

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 24, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 9:6

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

ISAIAH 9:6

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Peace That Is Plainly Promised
- II. The Peace That Has Been Purposefully Postponed
- III. The Peace That May Personally Possessed

Conclusion

Introduction

All is well. And it is, if you know the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter what else happens. And that is what I want to talk to you tonight about, and that is the Prince of Peace, and how to be able to say it and mean it. All is well, no matter what. We sing that song, “I heard the bells on Christmas day their old familiar carols play, and wild and sweet the words repeat of peace on earth, goodwill to men; and thought as ho, the day had come, the belfries of all Christendom had rolled along the unbroken song of peace on earth, goodwill to men. And, in despair, I bowed my head. “There is no peace on earth,” I said. “For hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth, goodwill to men.” Yet pealed the bells more loud and deep; “God is not dead, nor doth He sleep; the wrong shall fail, the right prevail with peace on earth, goodwill to men.”

One of the wonderful names of our wonderful Lord is the Prince of Peace. And I want to say that Jesus holds the key to peace, whether it’s personal peace in your heart, domestic peace in your home, eternal peace in heaven—Jesus Christ is the key to that peace. Now, here is what the Bible says, in Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

That’s the name that Isaiah prophesied. And, when the angel came to Mary, here is what the angel said to Mary, in Luke chapter 2 and verse 9: “For, lo, the angel of the

Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” Literally, this is not the message to Mary but to the shepherds: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, peace good will toward men.”

There is no doubt about it: Isaiah prophesied peace, the angels proclaimed peace, and, certainly, there is a need for peace. But look around in the world. I watched the news today, and yesterday, and in the Middle East, that little town of Bethlehem, there will be very few people there tonight. And they will be under heavy guard, because that little place where Jesus was born, where the angels said, “Glory to God in the Highest, and in earth peace, good will toward men,” it is ravaged there by war, division, bombing, terrorists acts. H. G. Wells, only a year into the nuclear age, said this: “For man and his world there is no way out.” And, as we look at history, it seems like we are just kind of looking into the muzzle of a loaded cannon. And yet, the Bible prophesies peace. Well, why don’t we have any peace right now—I mean, in the world? Well, we don’t have to guess why we don’t. Isaiah 57, verse 21, says, “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”

I was witnessing to man, and I asked him if he was a Christian. And he said to me, “I am pretty well off.” I said, “Well, I didn’t ask you if you were pretty well off; I said, are you a Christian?” He said, “Do you see that home? I own that home.” He said, “Do you see that car? It is paid for.” He said, “My wife loves me, and I love her.” And he said, “I have enough money to last me out the rest of my life.” He said, “I am doing quite well.” I said, “If I ask you a question, would you give me an honest answer?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Now, I don’t want you to say that lightly. Look me in the face. Will you give me an honest answer—before God, an honest answer?” Well, he said, “What’s your question?” I said, “I want an honest answer.” He said, “All right.” I said, “You have all of these things. Do you have peace in your heart?” He said, “I told you. I own all of this.” I said, “No, I am asking for an honest answer: do you have peace in your heart?” And, right now, as I am telling this story, I can see that man’s face as his chin began to quiver and the tears welled up. He said, “No, I don’t have peace in my heart. How did you know?” I said, “Because the Bible says there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” I don’t care who you are. You may have happiness. You may have so-called security. But there is no peace apart from the Prince of Peace. Now, that brings the question this Christmas Eve, what happened to all of this peace? I mean He, Jesus, is the Prince of Peace. And the angel said, “Peace on earth, good will toward men.”

I. The Peace That Is Plainly Promised

Three simple thoughts I leave with you this Christmas Eve. First of all, there is a peace that is plainly promised. God has promised peace—no ifs, ands, and buts about it. There is peace promised, and there will be peace on this earth.

II. The Peace That Has Been Purposefully Postponed

Here is the second point. A peace that has been plainly promised is a peace that has been purposefully postponed. God has postponed that peace. Why did God postpone that peace? God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus, into the world as the Prince of Peace, but they rejected the Prince of Peace, and they crucified the Prince of Peace.

When Isaiah said there would be peace on earth, here is what else he said—he said, “His name shall be called the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it and to establish it. And with judgment and with justice from hence forth, even forever the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.” There will be no peace until the government is upon the shoulder of the Lord Jesus. And, as we said, the first time He came, and they rejected Him, and they crucified Him. He has gone back to the Glory. And there will be no peace on this earth until the world that has rejected our Savior receives Him again in power and glory.

Here is what Micah said, in Micah chapter 4 and verses 3 and 4, speaking of Jesus, when He comes again: “And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they 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 any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.” But until that time, there will be wars and rumors of wars, until Jesus comes again. And the only true hope for peace for the church, for the nation, and the individual, in many ways, is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

I heard about a man who died, and when his widow read his will, he left her nothing. She had put on his tombstone “Rest in peace till I come.” This world will not rest in peace until Jesus comes. He is the key to peace. There is a peace that has been plainly promised, a peace that was purposefully postponed when the world rejected the Prince of Peace.

III. The Peace That May Personally Possessed

Now, the third and final thing, and I am going to be very brief. There is a peace yet that may be personally possessed. There is another kind of peace, and it is peace in the heart. Now, let me tell you what this peace is like. Romans chapter 5 and verse 2 says,

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” We have peace with God. Do you have peace with God? You see, sin is warfare against God. Mankind declared war against the kingdom of heaven when man sinned. And so, there must be a peace made. And the Lord Jesus Christ came, the Prince of Peace, to undo what Adam did, our first father, and to reconcile God and man.

Colossians chapter 1, verse 20, says that He made peace through the blood of His cross. And so, this Christmas, do you have peace with God, or is the war still going on? Now, the only way that you can have the peace that Jesus made is to surrender to Jesus in absolute, total, unconditional surrender. He has fought the battle, and the battle is won. But it will do you no good until you bow to Him.

I was reading many years ago about Lord Nelson, the great British naval officer, the Admiral. And the English were fighting the French, and the English had won. And a French general came to Lord Nelson’s ship to surrender. But that French admiral came with all of his regalia, dressed smartly, as they do. And he came with his shining sword hanging there at his side, and walked up to Lord Nelson, the victor, and put out his hand to shake hands with Lord Nelson. Lord Nelson stepped back, and put his hands behind him, and said to that French admiral, “Your sword first, sir. Lay your sword at my feet before you endeavor to shake my hand.”

Now, many of us would like to cozy up to the Lord Jesus, but I want to ask you a question. Have you laid down the sword of rebellion? Have you laid your sword at His feet? He has made peace with the blood of His cross, but that peace does you no good until you bow to Him with total surrender. There is peace with God. And, once you have that peace with God, then you can have the peace of God.

Philippians 4:7 says, “And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” I was thinking today about that peace, and knowing that I would speak to you, and I asked myself this question sincerely: Adrian, do you have peace in your heart? Thinking of what I asked that man so long ago. And, do you know, I do, I really do—not rhetoric, not sermonizing. There is a wonderful peace. The Bible speaks of it as peace like a river. You know a river comes from a source higher up. A river just keeps on flowing, and it is beautiful. From the time, on the corner of Calvin Avenue and 39th Street, I bowed my head, and said, “Lord Jesus, I trust You, You only, to save me once and for all, now and forever,” from that time to this time, there has been a wonderful river of peace flowing in my heart. Because I have peace with God, I now have the peace of God.

Did you know that Jesus Christ left you a legacy? Just before He died, He said, “My peace I leave with you, my peace give I unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you.” You think of things that Jesus willed. He willed His Spirit to His Father. He said, “Father, into Your hands I commend My Spirit.” He willed His mother to John. He said,

“Son, behold your mother. Mother, behold your son.” He willed His body to Joseph of Arimathea, and His body was placed in a borrowed tomb. But He willed to me and to you His peace. And He said, “Not as the world gives, give I unto you.” And my prayer for you this Christmas is that you might have peace with God, and that you might know the peace of God.

Conclusion

Now, I am finished. I want to say to you, as your pastor on Christmas Eve, I love you with all of my heart. Margaret and I came to the platform tonight walking together—Margaret Lafferty. And I said, “Margaret, I want you to know I love you, and I thank God that He sent you to this church. You are one of the great treasures of Bellevue Baptist Church.” And she said to me, “Pastor, God did a wonderful thing for me when He brought me here and put me here.” And I said, “Margaret, God did a wonderful thing for me when He brought me here.”

And, as your Pastor, as your brother, as your friend, I want to thank you this Christmas Eve for letting me be your pastor. I want to thank you for praying for me, for overlooking my faults, and my failures, and my foibles. There are many of them. But when I make these mistakes, I believe that most, if not all of the time, they are mistakes of the head not of the heart. The deep desire of my heart is to be the best pastor to you I can be. No pastor ever had a congregation just like this one, in my estimation. We are so big and yet so unified. There is such a sweet spirit in our services. I have to be careful what I ask you to do, because you will do it. You will do it. We have never laid a challenge before this church that you have not risen to. What a wonderful church! What a privilege is ours to be together this Christmas Eve! And, tonight, as your pastor, I bless you. I bless you with peace from the Prince of Peace. I bless you with peace in your heart, peace in your home, and eternal peace from heaven. It is yours in Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Peace plainly promised, peace purposefully postponed until Jesus comes, as far as world peace is concerned, but peace that may be personally possessed when you have Jesus in your heart. Because I want to tell you this: wherever Jesus is, there is peace. There is peace in heaven, because that is where He is. If He is in your heart, there will be peace in your heart.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Every head bowed. Every eye closed. How many of you would say tonight, Pastor Rogers, I have given my heart to Jesus Christ, I know Him as my personal Lord and Savior? And you said that you have peace in your heart, that you had peace with God and peace, the peace of God? May I ask you a question? Do you have the same? Could you give me this testimony tonight, to say, Pastor Rogers, I have repented of my sin, I have trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior, He has lifted that burden of sin and the peace of God is in my heart

tonight, very real, and I know that I know that, if I died tonight, I would go straight to heaven? If you can give me that testimony, would you just lift your hand and hold it up? Thank you. Now, take it down. The reason I asked you to do this was to cause you to think, and to cause all of us to think, because not all could lift their hands tonight. And, if you could not lift your hand tonight, I want to help you to receive Jesus. And what I am going to ask you to do right now, in a very real sense, is to do what Lord Nelson told that French admiral to do. I am going to ask you to lay your sword at Jesus' feet. That is to honestly, sincerely, totally surrender to Him tonight in unconditional surrender, and then know the peace that He purchased at Calvary.

Would you pray this prayer after me, if you are not certain that you are saved? "Lord Jesus, You died to save me, and promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You, right now, tonight, with all of my heart. I lay my sword at Your feet. I surrender to You. I acknowledge You as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. I come in unconditional surrender, trusting You only as my Lord and Savior. I, from this moment on, by Your grace, and for Your glory, will follow You. I am weak, and You are strong, so You will have to help me. But I give You my heart, once and for all, now and forever. I trust You as my personal Savior and Lord. You died for me. You paid my sin debt. You made peace with the blood of Your cross. And I receive it by faith. And that settles it. Help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen."

History's Greatest Happening

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 8, 1991

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 9:6–7

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

ISAIAH 9:6

Outline

Introduction

I. His Supernatural Nature

II. His Sovereign Nobility

III. His Saving Name

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn please in God's Word to the prophet Isaiah—Isaiah chapter nine. In a moment we are going to look at verses six and seven. And I want to remind you before we read this scripture that it was written seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ. Isaiah the prophet dipped his pen in the golden glory and prophesied the coming of the Messiah.

Some years ago, an American astronaut climbed down a ladder and put his feet on the surface of the moon. And the President of the United States of America said, the greatest event in human history is when man put his feet first upon the moon. All do respect to that President, the greatest event in human history was not when man first put his feet upon the moon, but when Almighty God came down and worked and walked upon this earth. That, my dear friend, is the greatest event in human history. When God stepped out of heaven and walked on earth. We call that the incarnation. We call that Christmas morning.

Isaiah prophesied. Look if you will in Isaiah chapter nine and verse six. For unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called—we sang it already this morning, Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. Upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it. And to establish it with judgment and with justice from hence forth,

even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall perform this. That is, Almighty God has put all of His divine energy in seeing that this is done. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall perform this.

Now, my friend, History's Greatest Happening—that's the title of our message. History's greatest happening was when God came to earth in the form of a baby boy named Jesus. And may I say with all due respect to all of the learned people of this world. To all of those who worship at the shrine of their computers, and are involved with their cyclotrons and their musty, dusty tombs of history. If you do not understand this event, you don't have the golden key of all history. You do not have the key to knowledge.

How sad to know biology, the study of life, and not know Jesus Christ the giver of life. How sad to know astronomy, to study the stars, and to see how the heavens go, and not to know Jesus Christ, the bright and morning star, and how to go to heaven. How sad to know Geology, and the strata of the rocks, and all of the Geological ages, and not know Jesus Christ, the rock of ages. And to be able to say on Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand. How sad I say it would be to know Botany, and the study of flowers, and not to know Jesus, Sharon's sweetest rose, who can perfume any life. How sad it would be for a person to claim to be educated, and to know history from beginning to end, and to miss the central event in history, which is the story of Jesus. His story.

I want to say that a wise man is ignorant, a rich man is poor, and a strong man is weak, until he knows the Lord Jesus Christ, until he knows what Isaiah spoke of right here, in Isaiah chapter nine and verse six, seven to eight hundred years before Jesus Christ was even born. When he said unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

The three major thoughts in that brief passage that I want us to look at. And all of them cohere around the Lord Jesus Christ that we have been talking about this morning. All of them are the story of Jesus, and I don't know about you, but I never get tired of thinking about Christmas—I never get tired of preaching or hearing about the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want to say with the songwriter, tell me the story of Jesus. Write on my heart every word. Tell me the story most precious, sweetest that ever was heard.

I. His Supernatural Nature

Chapter one in that story is what I want to call His supernatural nature. Look at it. Look at verse six. And you see His supernatural nature. Do you see it? Unto us a child is born. And then, unto us a son is given. Now that's not just a repeat of the same thought.

There are two thoughts there. Unto us a child is born. That speaks of the humanity of Jesus. Unto us a son is given. That speaks of the deity of Jesus—Heaven's Son given to earth. And there you have His supernatural nature.

When God sent His Christmas gift to this earth, what was God's Christmas gift? It was the gift of Himself. It was deity wrapped in humanity. That was the first Christmas gift. Deity. God of very God, a Son given wrapped in humanity, a child born. Now, my dear friend, Jesus Christ did not have His beginning in Bethlehem. Now, take your Bibles and put your bookmark there in Isaiah chapter nine, and then turn over to John chapter one—John chapter one. And let's think for a moment about the majesty of His deity. John chapter one, and beginning in verse one, the apostle John says, in the beginning was the Word. Do you see that? Word? Word? Word. In the beginning was the Word? Underscore that. And you say, what does that mean? Well, it's a translation of the Greek word logos. In the beginning was the logos. The Word. And the logos—the Word—was with God and the Word was God.

Now, wait a minute. Was He with God, or was He God? The answer is yes. Yes. He was with God and He was God. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. Back before history was. Just simply called the beginning. He was with God. All things were made by Him. By whom? By the Word. And without Him was not anything made that was made. Everything that you see has this stamp, made by the Word. The Word. The logos.

Now, what does John mean when he says, in the beginning was the Word? Well, the Word, a word, is an expression of a thought, the expression of an idea. Jesus Christ is called the Word of God, because He is the expression of God. Jesus Christ articulates God. And therefore He is called the Word of God, the expression of God. As my words are expressing my ideas and thoughts and concepts, Jesus Christ coming in the flesh is the Word who articulates God.

Now learn this about Jesus Christ. And if you don't hear anything else that I say today, I want to say what I've said I guess a thousand times since I've been preaching I want to say it one more time. Jesus Christ is God. Jesus Christ is God. He is fully God. Remember that, John the Apostle now, is writing as an older man. He has fifty or sixty years to think it over. He has an ingrained horror against blasphemy. And yet the apostle John writes down the Word was God. Everything that God is, Jesus is. Everything that God has Jesus has. Everything that God does, Jesus does. The Word was with God and the Word is God. The Word, Jesus, was the one who spoke the world into existence. Look in verse three: All things were made by Him—by the Word—and without Him, was not anything made that was made.

Now, let me just give you a few more verses to put in your margin there, just to show beyond a shadow of any doubt that Jesus Christ is God, very God. My friend, that is the

cornerstone of orthodox Christianity. And if any cult peddler comes to your door and does not believe that Jesus Christ is the very Son of God, not only the Son of God but God the Son, you just say, there is the sidewalk, my friend. You can get on it, as far as teaching your heresy here at my house—you will not be able to do it.

Here are some scriptures. Hebrews chapter one and verse eight: But unto the son he saith, thy throne, O God, is forever and ever. Unto the son, he saith, thy throne, O God, is forever and ever. The Son is God. Titus chapter two and verse thirteen—the Bible says we are to be looking for Jesus to come again, and it says, looking for the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior, Jesus Christ. Our Savior is the great God who is coming again. When Thomas saw Him after the resurrection and realized after He had been raised from the dead—John chapter twenty and verse twenty-eight—Thomas fell before Him, and said, my Lord and my God.

Now, when the apostle John says in the beginning was the Word, he's not talking about a start, he's talking about a state. That is, He always has been God; He always will be God. A billion years from now, the Word will be God. When Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, that was not His start. When He was born, He was as old as His Father, and older than His mother. There never was a time when Jesus was not. The Bible says He was God. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God. That's in the imperfect tense. It means it's just a continuous state. Jesus did not begin with the manger. He did not begin with Mary; He has His existence in eternity.

And so you have, dear friend, what I want to call the majesty of His deity. A son is given. But also, I want you to see the mystery of His humanity. A child is born. Go back to Isaiah nine six. A child is born; a son is given. That's His deity. A child is born, that is His humanity.

Now you see, the Word was translated into a language we could understand. Have you ever been to a foreign country, and heard people speak languages you couldn't understand? Well, you see, God exists in a realm that we cannot understand. So God translated himself into a word that we could understand. And the name of that word is Jesus. And so, God took deity and translated deity into humanity.

And I love what Dr. John Phillips, who has spoken from this pulpit, has to say about that. He said the great mystery of the manger is, that God should be able to translate deity into humanity without either discarding the deity or distorting the humanity. Isn't that a beautiful statement? Listen to it again. The great mystery of the manger is that God would be able to translate deity into humanity with out either discarding the deity, or distorting the humanity. And so that little baby laid in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes, is the great God who created the universe.

The little baby of Luke 2 is the great God of Genesis one. And the little toddler growing up in Joseph's carpenter shop is playing with those with shavings that came

down from Joseph's carpentry, is the eternal God who created the world.

My dear friend, God became flesh. You say I don't think I understand that. Well, I'd be ashamed of you if you said that you did understand it. None of us understand it. First Timothy chapter three, verse sixteen, Paul says, and without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh. No argument about that, friend, we're talking here about a great mystery. This is what God has done. You see, the miracle of the ages is the virgin conception of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah nine six tells about His coming.

But Isaiah chapter seven and verse fourteen tells about His conception. Do you remember that? Conception. Do you remember about that? Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign, behold a virgin shall conceive, and be with child. Well you say, how can a virgin conceive? That's an impossibility. That's exactly what Mary said when the angel came to her. And Mary said this is going to happen to you and Mary said how can this be? And the angel said in Luke one and verse thirty-seven, with God, nothing shall be impossible, say amen.

Friend, don't tell me that you have difficulty with the virgin birth. When you tell me that you have difficulty believing the virgin birth, do you know what you're really telling me? You have difficulty believing in God. That's it. I mean, why do you have difficulty believing that God could cause a woman to conceive in her womb a child and still be a virgin? Why do you have difficulty believing that a man-child could come into this world, without an earthly father, when God made the first woman and the first man out of nothing. Out of nothing. I mean, why do you have difficulty believing that?

It's far listen. If you can get past Genesis 1:1, you don't have any difficulty with any miracle. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. When you believe in that, then your not going to have any difficulty believing in the rest of the miracles my dear friend.

Don't tell me it's a biological impossibility. And if you doubt the virgin birth, or if you discard the virgin birth, my dear friend, you are taking the cornerstone out of all of our faith. I'm telling you the greatest event in human history, was when God through a virgin, through the portholes of a virgin's womb, came into this world.

And if you doubt the virgin birth, the humanity of Jesus and the deity of Jesus, let me tell you the difficulty you have. First of all, you have difficulty with the character of the Word of God. Because the Word of God plainly teaches that Jesus was born of a virgin—Isaiah chapter seven and verse fourteen.

But not only do you have problems with the character with the Word, you have problems with the character of Mary. Because if Jesus was not born of a virgin, Mary was a harlot, and she conceived outside of wedlock.

But not only will you have difficulty with the character of Mary, your going to have

difficulty with the character of Jesus. Because if Jesus was not born of a virgin, Jesus was a descendant of Adam, just like you are and just like I am, and in Adam, all die. Jesus was a sinner by nature and a sinner by practice if He was not born of a virgin.

But I'll tell you, not only do you have difficulty with the character of the Word, the character of Mary and the character of Jesus, but if you don't believe in the virgin birth, I've got difficulty with your character—with your character. Because, my dear friend, he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar. And there is no hope of heaven apart from the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why, Adrian, do you so contend for the virgin birth of Jesus Christ? Because, my dear friend, the deity of Christ is wrapped up in His virgin birth. A child is born; a son is given. You see, Jesus came as He did, virgin born, to be what He was—sinless. He was what He was, sinless to do what He did—die for our sins as a sinless substitute. He did what He did that we might be what we are, sons and daughters of God by faith in what He did upon the cross.

You see my dear friend, no virgin birth—no sinless Christ. No sinless Christ—no atonement. No atonement—no forgiveness. No forgiveness—no hope of heaven. No hope of heaven—my dear friend, you die and go to hell. Thank God for the virgin birth. Thank God for the virgin birth. You see, you take away the virgin birth and the whole house of Christianity collapses like a house of cards. Unto us unto us a child is born. But unto us a son is given.

II. His Sovereign Nobility

What do we have here? We have here supernatural nature. Thank God for such a dear wonderful Savior. But now here's the second thing I want you to see. Not only His supernatural nature, but I want you to see His sovereign nobility. Look at it verse six. And the government shall be upon his shoulder. He's also a noble. He is the ruler. He is the sovereign. He came not only to redeem; He has come to reign. He was born a king. The government will be upon His shoulder.

Look in verse seven. And of the increase of his government, and peace there shall be no end. Upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it and to establish it with Judgment and with Justice from henceforth even forever the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this. That, my dear friend, is His sovereign nobility.

Now, He came the first time to redeem us; He's coming the second time to rule and to reign over us. And His second coming is just as certain as His first coming. He came the first time according to prophecy, and He's coming the second time according to prophecy. He came the first time in the fullness of time. He's coming the second time in the fullness of time. But when He comes the second time, He's coming not as a little baby, but as a mighty monarch. And the government will be upon His shoulder. Every

now and then some preacher will be preaching and stretch out his hands to the congregation and say, will you make Him Lord? Now, I know what they mean by that, and I've said that myself; but, in the strictest sense, you can't make Him Lord. You're too late for that. He is already Lord. He's already Lord. The only thing you can do, my dear friend, is recognize His Lordship, and bow before His Lordship.

You see, the cradle, the cross, and the crown are inseparably, inextricably woven together. A giddy crowd can dance around a manger and love a little baby, but, my dear friend, we're not just called to be giddy about a little baby, but to bow before Him, and to crown Him as Lord of Lords and King of Kings—because the government shall be upon His shoulder.

III. His Saving Name

Now here's a third thing and final thing I want you to notice. Not only His supernatural nature, not only His sovereign nobility. But I want you to notice His saving name. His saving name. Look again in verse six. And His name shall be called Wonderful.

What's so wonderful about His name? Well, what is His name? Matthew chapter one and verse twenty-one. He was named by God the Father. The angel came to Mary, and said Mary, you're going to have a baby. And this is His wonderful name. Are you ready for that name? The angel said, and thou shalt call His name, what? Tell me. I don't hear you. Thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins. Thou shalt call His name Jesus. Now, Mary didn't think up the name. The name was given to Mary. And what does the name Jesus mean? This wonderful name? It is a saving name. It is a saving name. Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. It is a compound name. And it literally means, are you ready for this? Jehovah saves. That's what the name Jesus means. Jehovah saves.

Now, Jehovah is the most sacred name for God that the Old Testament Jews new. And it means the great I AM. Never was a time when I was not, never will be a time when I will not be, not I was not I shall be, but I am. That's the name Jehovah. Jehovah. The great I am. And now, Jesus takes that name. I am. I am. Jehovah saves. Jesus said to His detractors and His critics, before Abraham was, I am. It was then that they took up stones to stone Him. They didn't like Him calling himself the great I am. The Jehovah who saves.

I was in my yard working one day and a person came up and they were carrying a satchel, and they wanted to talk about the Bible and religion. And I was happy to do that. And we talked a little bit. And I said, by the way, I said, tell me a little about yourself. I said, oh, where do you worship? And he said, oh, we meet in thus and such a place. I said, well, tell me, what do you call yourself? He said, well, we just want to study the Bible. I said, no; I said, don't beat around the bush.

Said, tell me—of course I already knew, but I said, tell me. Who are you? What are you? Well, he said, I'm a Jehovah's Witness—does that make any difference? I said, no, so am I. He said, what? You're a Jehovah's Witness? I said, I surely am. I said, you know, I'm going to tell you something else. I believe that Jesus is Jehovah. And Jesus said, ye shall be witnesses unto me. And I said, I get no greater joy than to witness about Jesus, our Jehovah.

Now, my dear friend, that's what I'm talking about: a son is given. He was the Son of God and God the Son; as much God as if He were not man at all, as much man as if He were not God at all. The name Jehovah means that Jesus saves. And that's the reason the prophet Isaiah said, His name shall be called Wonderful. What wonder, what awe, that this baby would be called Jesus—Jehovah saves.

In His birth, He was wonderful. In His life, He was wonderful. In His works, He was wonderful. In His words, He was wonderful. In His death, He was wonderful. In His resurrection, He is wonderful. In His ascension, He is wonderful. In His intercession, He is wonderful. And when He comes again, wonder of wonders, He is coming again.

And so, first of all, my dear friend, His name is Wonderful. And there is wonder in that name, but also His name is Counselor. Do you see it? Look at it. Thou shalt call His name Wonderful; and then, Counselor. And not only is there wonder in that name, but there is wisdom in that name. You see He is the counselor. He is the one that gives you wisdom.

How are you supposed to live? How are you supposed to learn? What are you supposed to do? It's all wrapped up in Jesus. Colossians chapter two and verse three, the Bible says in Jesus, or He had all of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. There is wonder in His name; there is wisdom in His name.

Well, you say, we don't need Him. Oh, we don't? Well you tell me then what six thousand years of human history have brought about with man's wisdom. Where have we gotten where we're now passing out condoms in high schools and where we have ravished with plagues called aids and other things, and we don't know what to do? I'll tell you what to do. Just live according to this book. Live according to this book. Oh, we don't want that, oh no. Of course we don't want that. Because my dear friend, you have rejected the wisdom of God and you have become a foolish nation.

You see, my dear friend, there is wonder in this name; my dear friend, there is wisdom in this name; but further, He is called the Mighty God. Look at it. Jesus, this child is called the Mighty God. And may I tell you there is wealth in this name. He is the Mighty God. It all belongs to Him. Jesus has been given all power on heaven and in earth. Jesus is the one who made it all, as the Mighty God who created everything. And billions of sons came from His hand and oceans dripped from His fingers. Think of all of this universe.

I was reading sometime ago that if you were to take the molecules in just one drop of water and change every molecule to a grain of sand, you could make a highway one half mile wide, one foot thick, from New York to San Francisco. Just the molecules in one drop of water if they became grains of sand. How infinitesimally small and yet how magnificently inconceivably wide is God's mighty universe. And it all came from the hand of Jesus Christ. He my friend, the Mighty God.

I am telling you friend, there is wonder in that name. I am telling you there is wisdom in that name, I am telling you there is wealth in that name, He is the Mighty God. I am telling you there is worship in that name. For He is the Everlasting Father. He is the Everlasting Father. He is the one who can say, I and my Father are one. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. Suppose you said, Adrian, I'd like to see the president of the United States. Can you show him to me? And I just said, well, your looking at him. You say get the butterfly net. They said, show us the Father. He said. Philip? Have I been with you this long, and you've not known me? This little baby is the Everlasting Father—the Everlasting Father. And because of that, we worship Him. My dear friend, you listen to me: If Jesus is not God, you have no business worshipping Him at all. Because that is idolatry, if you worship more than one God. I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have no other God before me.

There is wonder in that name, there is wisdom in that name, there is wealth in that name, my dear friend, there is worship in that name, and oh He's the Prince of Peace, there is welcome in that name. He's saying come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden. And I will give you peace. You say, didn't the Bible say, peace on earth? There's no peace on earth. Not yet, there will be. There will be when Jesus comes again.

I heard of a man who died and his widow bought a beautiful tombstone with all of her money for him, a gravestone. She put these words: rest in peace. Then she read the will and found out that he didn't leave her anything. She went back and had these words added: Till I come. Friend, this world will know no peace till He comes. Till He comes there will be no peace. But when He comes He will bring peace.

We rejected the Prince of Peace. And that's the reason there will be no peace until there's peace in Jerusalem, and there be no peace in Jerusalem until Jerusalem crowns her king the Lord Jesus Christ. But, oh, my dear friend, there can be that personal peace, that peace with God, peace like a river, Isaiah called it. A river comes from a higher source. It's beautiful; it overflows; it just keeps on coming. I've got peace like a river. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is my friend welcome in that name. Wonderful name.

Conclusion

I'm speaking to some today—oh, you're wondering, what is it all about? Let me just sum it up. Oh, listen to me, please. Let me just tell you what Christmas is all about. It is this: Unto us a child is born, a son is given. That is His supernatural nature. God came to this earth to live, breath, work, laugh, cry, weep and teach, then carry our sins to the cross and die—His supernatural nature. His sovereign nobility—He is Lord, He is King of kings and Lord of lords. And His saving name—Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.

Pastor, would Jesus save me? Oh, He will; He will, if you'll trust Him—if you'll trust Him. If you'll say, come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me, Lord Jesus, I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, if you will trust Him, if you will repent of your sin and trust Christ, He will save you. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. No one stirring; no one looking around. No one moving—this is the most important part of the service.

Let me ask a question here right now while heads are bowed, and eyes are closed, and everyone, get exceedingly still right now. How many in this building can say, Pastor Rogers, if I died right now, I have the full assurance that I would go straight to heaven because I know that I have trusted Christ as my personal Savior. I have openly and publicly confessed Him before men. I have followed Him in the water of believer's baptism. I am living for Him in the fellowship of a New Testament church. And God's Spirit agrees with my spirit that I am a child of God. If you have that kind of a testimony would you just slip up your hand? And hold it up... take it down.

Now the reason I did that was to cause us to think because not everyone has that testimony. Some have not yet trusted Christ, and some have trusted Him, but you've not yet made it public and because you've not yet made it public, though you may be saved, you can't have any real joy and any real assurance, because you've not obeyed the Lord to make it public. Others have not yet followed Jesus in believer's baptism. Others perhaps, are out of fellowship—you're not in the fellowship of a New Testament church. And others just have real serious doubt as to whether or not you ever really trusted Christ. But you want to know that you are saved.

Right now, this morning, where you are, you can get it settled, if you would pray a prayer like this. Those of you who couldn't lift your hand you might pray a prayer like this. Dear God, I need to be saved and I want to be saved. Jesus, you died to save me and you promised to save me, if I would trust you. I do trust you, Lord Jesus. I'm so sorry for my sin. I repent of my sin. I know I deserve judgment. I know I deserve hell. But I repent of my sin. I turn from my sin. I turn to you, Lord Jesus. I trust you right now to save me. Come into my heart; forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus. Save me, Lord Jesus. Pray that prayer. Say it. Mean it from your heart. Save me, Lord Jesus.

Did you ask Him to save you? Then pray like this: thank you for saving me, Jesus. And begin now to make me the person that you want me to be. And help me, Lord Jesus, never to be ashamed of you. In your name I pray. Amen.

The Christmas Story According to Isaiah

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 24, 1983

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 9:6–7

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

ISAIAH 9:6

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Introduction

“For unto us a child is born, [and] unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” (Isaiah 9:6–7)

In Handel’s “Messiah,” my heart is always filled with praise when we come to this wonderful part of that oratorio: “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” I love it. And, that’s what we’re going to be thinking about today, and there are about four things I want you to see

in Isaiah's prophecy. Isaiah's prophecy came about 700 years before the Lord Jesus was born. And, by the way, one of the great truths of the inspiration of the Bible is the fulfillment of prophecy.

I. The Nature of Jesus

Now, first of all, Isaiah talks to us about the nature of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—His nature. Look, if you will, in verse 6: *“For unto us a child is born, [and] unto us a son is given.”* (Isaiah 9:6) Now, when Isaiah says, *“A child is born,”* (Isaiah 9:6) Isaiah speaks of His humanity. And, when Isaiah says, *“A son is given,”* (Isaiah 9:6) Isaiah speaks of His deity, because this is the nature of the Lord Jesus: He was both God and man. He was an earthly child, but He came from heaven above. A son was given; a child was born. He was the earthly child of a heavenly Father and the heavenly Son of an earthly mother. And, how beautiful, here, Isaiah describes both the human nature and the divine nature of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

A. The Majesty of His Deity

Now, let me talk to you for just a moment about the majesty of His deity. He was the Son of God from heaven. *“A son [was] given.”* (Isaiah 9:6) *“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”* (John 3:16) He is the Son of God; therefore, He is equal with God. We don't worship three gods, but we worship one God who has revealed Himself in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is God. Let me give you some verses here very quickly. John 1:1–3: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* (John 1:1) Now, the word that we use here—*logos*, “the Word”—means that Jesus is the expression of an invisible concept or idea. The words that you hear now are expressions of concepts and thoughts. And, if you couldn't hear my words, you couldn't know my thoughts. Now, Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus is the expression of Deity. Jesus is the expression of the invisible thought of Almighty. Jesus is the expression of the invisible God. And so, He is—He's divine. He is the virgin-born Son of God. Again, Hebrews 1:8—here speaking of the Lord Jesus: *“But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom”—* *“[Now to] the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God...”* (Hebrews 1:8) Not to the Father, but to the Son: *“Thy throne, O God...”* (Hebrews 1:8) Titus 2:13: The Bible says we're to be *“looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”* (Titus 2:13) Our Savior Jesus Christ, therefore, is the great God. Oh, dear friend, I want you to know this: that Jesus did not begin with the manger and with Mary. Jesus is from eternity. He never had a beginning; He shall never have an

ending. He is fully God; He is forever God.

I witnessed to Muhammad Ali, the one-time heavyweight boxing champion of the world. We sat together for an hour or so and discussed the Bible. He practices the Muslim faith. And, he said to me, “You say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God because He was born of a virgin.” He said, “Adam didn’t have a father or a mother. Wouldn’t that make Adam more a son of God than Jesus?” I said, “Champ, listen to me: Jesus was not the Son of God because He was born of a virgin; He was born of a virgin because He was the Son of God.” I want you to understand this, dear friend: He existed eternally as the Son of God. That Son was given. That Son was with God the Father in the bosom of the Father from eternity past. He is forever God.

B. **The Mystery of His Humanity**

But, not only do you see the majesty of His deity but the mystery of His humanity. “*A child is born.*” (Isaiah 9:6) A little baby, God, became a man. First Timothy 3:16: “*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.*” (1 Timothy 3:16) Remember that John called Jesus the Word of God? Now, do you know what God did at Christmas? God translated that Word into a language we could understand, and nothing was lost in the translation. “*The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.*” (John 1:14)

And so, here Isaiah speaks, first of all, of His nature: He is the heavenly Son. He is the earthly child. “*For unto us a child is born*”—that is His humanity—“*[and] unto us a son is given*” (Isaiah 9:6)—that is His deity.

II. **The Nativity of Jesus**

But, I want you to think with me not only about His nature, but I want you to think with me for a few moments about His nativity. Now, the Bible says, “*A child [was] born.*” (Isaiah 9:6) What child? Well, you’re in Isaiah 9; turn to Isaiah 7:14, and look at it for just a moment: “*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and [thou] shall call his name Immanuel.*” (Isaiah 7:14) The child that was born was the virgin-born Son of God. This is His nativity: Jesus was born of a virgin.

Somebody says, “Oh, the virgin birth is not all that important.” Before you say that, let me ask you something: Have you thought about what is true if the virgin birth is not true? Have you thought about what it says about the character of the Word of God? If the virgin birth is not true, then this book has lied. Have you thought what it says about the character of Mary? If the virgin birth is not true, Mary was immoral. She conceived out of wedlock, but yet Jesus was not born of a virgin. If the virgin birth is not true, think not only what it says about the character of the Word of God and the character of Mary,

but think what it says about the character of Jesus: Jesus was not the Son of God but He was the illegitimate offspring of sinful parents, if the Word of God is not true concerning the virgin birth. I've heard some learned theologians say the virgin birth is not all that important. But friend, if there's no virgin birth, there's no salvation.

Let me tell you why. Jesus, who was God's Son from eternity, came into this world through the portals of a virgin's womb for a specific purpose—that is, that He might save us. You see, had there been no virgin birth, there would have been no sinless life. Had there been no sinless life, there would have been no perfect sacrifice. Had there been no perfect sacrifice, there would have been no atonement. Had there been no atonement, there would have been no salvation. Jesus came as He did (born of a virgin) to be what He was (sinless). He was what He was to do what He did (die for our sins), and He did what He did to change what we are. Now, let me tell you something, friends: Jesus came to earth, that you might go to heaven. Jesus was born of a virgin, that you might be born again. And so, Isaiah tells us of His nativity: this child was born. Thank God for the virgin birth.

III. The Nobility of Jesus

But then, Isaiah goes on to speak not only of His nature and not only of His nativity, but he speaks of His nobility. Look, if you will again, in verse 6: *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder.”* (Isaiah 9:6) That is, He's the One who is to rule; He is to reign. He is Lord—Jesus Christ is Lord. *“The government [is] upon his shoulder.”* (Isaiah 9:6) He was born a King. Look in verse 7: *“Of the increase of his government and [of his] peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.”* (Isaiah 9:7) Born a King—this is His nobility. That little baby was indeed a King. The wise men knew it when they brought gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. He is Lord.

Have you made Him Lord, this Christmas, of your life? Well, in a sense, you can't make Him Lord. God did that. He beat you to it. He is Lord! Have you recognized Him as Lord? This is His nobility. Now, dear friend, you're never going to understand the cradle unless you understand the cross and the crown.

IV. The Names of Jesus

But, I want you to go on very quickly and look at the last thing that Isaiah says—not only His nature, not only His nativity, not only His nobility, but I want you to notice His names. Look at it in verse 6: *“and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, [and] The Prince of Peace.”* (Isaiah 9:6) Think with me about the names of the Lord Jesus, that baby whose birth we celebrate today.

A. Wonderful

First of all, “*his name [is] called Wonderful*”—“*Wonderful*.” (Isaiah 9:6) Jesus is wonderful. Everything about Him is wonderful: His birth is wonderful; His life is wonderful; His works are wonderful; His words are wonderful; His death is wonderful; His resurrection is wonderful; His ascension is wonderful; His intercession for us is wonderful; His coming again is wonderful.

I heard of a preacher who was on a train, and he noticed a man looking out the window. And, as they went past the landscape—and it was beautiful landscape—but that man kept saying, “Wonderful—wonderful.” He’d pause and look for a while, wipe the tears from his eyes, and would say, “Wonderful.” The preacher’s curiosity was aroused, and he went over and sat by this man. And, he said, “I’ve never seen someone enjoy a train ride quite so much. Can you tell me why it is so wonderful?” He said, “Sir, you don’t understand.” He said, “I’ve just had surgery,” and he said, “I have been without sight for years and years and years and years; and now, I am seeing things that I’d long since forgotten. I’d forgotten how blue the sky was, how green the grass was, how beautiful the trees, how bright the flowers.” He said, “It’s wonderful—it’s wonderful.” I pray God today that He’ll just open our blinded eyes, that you just might see how wonderful—wonderful—the Lord Jesus is. His name is Wonderful.

B. Counselor

But, not only is His name Wonderful; His name is Counselor. That means that not only is Jesus worthy of our praise because He’s wonderful, but oh, how we ought to follow Him because He is our Counselor. Jesus is so full of wisdom. We think we’re so smart, but six thousand years of recorded human history have brought us to the very brink of destruction. But, Jesus is “*the wisdom of God*.” (1 Corinthians 1:24) Still in the book of Isaiah, turn to Isaiah 11:2: Isaiah continues to speak of our Counselor, and he says, “*And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.*” (Isaiah 11:2) That’s the Spirit that was upon the Lord Jesus. And now, Jesus is in me, and He is “*made unto [me] wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*” (1 Corinthians 1:30) Some of you this Christmas—you’re floundering about like a ship without a sail and a rudder on a dark and stormy night. You don’t know the will of God. Don’t you think it’s about time you let Jesus, the Counselor, take over your life? His name is Counselor.

C. The Mighty God

And then, I want you to look: His name is Mighty God—Mighty God. This little baby that was upon the straw is the Mighty God of Genesis 1. This little baby who held Mary’s hand as a toddler and learned to walk is the One from whose fingertips suns sprang and

oceans dripped. He is the Mighty God. This little boy playing with the shavings in Joseph's carpenter shop is the One who made every tree, and every hill, and every mountain. He is the Mighty God. We have some people today who'd like to take the deity from the Lord Jesus. I wonder what they're going to do with Isaiah 9:6, where He is called "*The mighty God.*" (Isaiah 9:6)

D. The Everlasting Father

And then, look again: His name—the Everlasting Father—this speaks of the love that He has for us. "*Like as a father [pitied] his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.*" (Psalms 103:13) Jesus is the Everlasting Father. When Jesus Christ was born, He was as old as His Father and older than His mother. How was He as old as His Father? Because He said, "*I and my Father are one*" (John 10:30)—"*he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.*" (John 14:9) Jesus, therefore, can rightly be called the Everlasting Father, because you cannot separate God the Son from God the Father, and God the Father from God the Spirit, and God the Spirit from God the Son. And so, Jesus could aptly say and truly say, "*I and my Father are one.*" (John 10:30) And, notice He's the Everlasting Father, according to Isaiah 9:6. About sixteen years ago, *Life Magazine* had on their front page in big bold letters, "God is Dead"—sixteen years ago. Seven years later, *Life Magazine* was dead. God's still alive—God's still alive. He is the Everlasting Father, and because He's the Everlasting Father, He's the Father of love today to meet every need that you have.

E. The Prince of Peace

And then, the Lord Jesus is called here "*The Prince of Peace*"—"The Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6) He is the secret of peace—of personal peace, domestic peace, international peace. And, world peace waits upon His coming, but friend, you don't have to wait 'til Jesus to come for you to have peace. For the Bible says that "*therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (Romans 5:1)

When Jesus was on the cross, He made a will. Jesus gave His Spirit to God the Father. Jesus gave His body to Joseph of Arimathea. Jesus gave His mother to John the apostle, but Jesus gave His peace to you. Jesus said, "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*" (John 14:27) Jesus, my friend, this Christmas, is the Prince of Peace.

Conclusion

Some of you who are out there today, you need someone to praise—Jesus is wonderful. You need someone to follow—Jesus is the Counselor. You need someone to give strength—Jesus is the Mighty God. You need someone to love you—Jesus is the

Everlasting Father. You need peace in your heart—Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Now, if you don't know Jesus this Christmas season, would you let us tell you about Him? Would you just call on the television right now? There's somebody standing by to lead you to Him. Just leave the television set right now, and call, and say, "I want to know Jesus." How wonderful it would be if, on this Christmas Day, you found Christ as your Lord and Savior.

A lady was dying. The doctors were not certain that she knew that she was dying. They told the loved ones, "She can't live long. You'd better go in and talk with her." And so, they didn't know how to tell her she was dying, so someone came to her and thought they would kind of beat around the bush a little bit. And, they said, "Have you made your peace with God?" She smiled radiantly and beautiful and said, "No, I've not made my peace with God." They said, "Well, do you intend to make peace with God?" She said, "No, I don't intend to make peace with God." Again, her countenance was absolutely beautiful. They said, "Aren't you afraid to meet Him without making peace with Him?" She said, "I have no reason to make peace with God. I am resting in the finished peace that Jesus has already made by His cross." And, the Bible says, "*Having made peace [by] the blood of his cross [he hath reconciled God and man].*" (Colossians 1:20) Jesus, my friend, is the Prince of Peace. Isaiah speaks of that peace, and he calls it "*peace...like a river.*" (Isaiah 66:12)

The God-Man

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 7, 1980

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 9:6–7

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

ISAIAH 9:6

Outline

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Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6—Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6. We’re thinking today on this subject: “The God-Man”—“The God-Man.” Isaiah the prophet said in Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6: *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”* (Isaiah 9:6) We’re going to be talking today about a subject that is mind-boggling.

Harry Reimer was a scientist and a great man of God who lived in yesterday, but I read where Harry Reimer had a friend who was an Indian named Will Snow. And, this Indian who lived in the northern mountains of California had never been away from his mountain home, where he lived there with the other Indians. But, Harry Reimer needed to train Will Snow, a forty-year-old Indian, so he could go back and teach his Indian friends certain things. So, Harry Reimer took Will Snow from the mountains of northern California to San Francisco. This Indian had never seen a motor-driven vehicle. He had never seen an electric light. He had never seen an elevator. He had never seen many of the things that we take for granted. And, of course, he was amazed by all of these

things, but the thing that amazed him most was the Pacific Ocean, because he'd never seen an ocean. The only body of water that he'd ever seen was Clear Lake there near where he lived.

And, when Will Snow saw the ocean, he said to Harry Reimer, "What is the name of this lake?" And, Harry Reimer said, "It's not a lake. It's an ocean." He said, "How big?" Well, he knew that he couldn't tell this Indian in terms of cubic feet of water. He knew that he would have no idea if he told him in miles. He'd have nothing—no frame of reference—so he thought he would try to put it in a form that he could understand. And, he said to Will Snow—he said, "You know about Clear Lake?" "Ug." He said, "Can you imagine ten Clear Lakes?" "Yes." He said, "Can you imagine one hundred Clear Lakes?" "Not sure." He said, "Will, if you were to take one hundred Clear Lakes out of this ocean, it would be like taking a drop of water out of your Clear Lake. That's how big it is."

He said, "Who drinks it all?" He said, "You can't drink it. It's salty." And, the Indian didn't understand that, and he went down, and knelt, and took a handful of water, and spat it out. Then, he went fifty yards down the shore, took another handful of water, and spat it out. And then, he ran another fifty yards and took another handful of water, and out that went. Finally, he waded out waist-deep and took a taste and spat it out. He was finally convinced it was all salty. He couldn't believe that—that it was all salty like that—and he was just amazed at this Pacific Ocean.

Later on, they saw all of the other things in San Francisco. And, after they'd done the things to do and it was time to leave, Harry Reimer said to Will Snow, "We've got to go back. What do you want to see for one final time?" He said, "Ocean." And, they went back, and he just sat there on the bank and looked at that vast expanse of water. And then, when Reimer said, "Let's go," the Indian got up, and took out of his pocket a pint bottle, and went down and filled the bottle up with ocean water. Harry Reimer said, "What are you going to do with that?" He said, "When me go on back, they no believe me when I tell them about ocean. But," he said, "I show 'em bottle—make 'em believe." Well, Reimer said he laughed at that so often, because who could ever understand the Pacific Ocean by a half-pint or a pint bottle full of water? How ridiculous that is. Now, it is true that all that was in that bottle was ocean, but not all the ocean was in that bottle.

Now, I'm going to talk to you about some facts about God today, but I'm going to tell you, dear friend, the facts that I'll give you will be true (as all facts are), but, dear friend, I want you to understand that none of us in our half-pint minds are ever going to be able to even begin to understand the greatness of our God. Oh, the great God! It would be easier to contain an ocean in an bottle than it would be for us to think that we, with our finite minds, could understand the infinite God.

And, one of the greatest truths about this infinite God is found here in Isaiah chapter

9, verse 6, for whether you see it or not, the God-man is talked about in Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6. The virgin birth is talked about in Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6, for notice what it says: *“For unto us a child is born”*—that speaks of the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. But—*“unto us a son is given”*—*“a son is given.”* (Isaiah 9:6) That means the Son had to exist somewhere before His birth in order that He might be given. *“A child is born”* (Isaiah 9:6)—that’s the natural birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was born naturally. It was His conception that was supernatural. His birth was very natural. It speaks of the humanity of the Lord Jesus.

But then, think of the fact that *“a son is given.”* (Isaiah 9:6) This speaks of the virgin conception of the Lord Jesus and the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, for Jesus was the God-man—Jesus was the God-man. Now, what do I mean by the “God-man”? I mean that Jesus was as much God as though He were not man at all; and yet, He was as much man as though He were not God at all. Now, He was not half-God and half-man. That would have made Him a freak. Nor was He all God and no man. That would have made Him a phantom. Nor was He all man and no God. That would have made Him an ordinary human. He was the God-man—never another like Him. The Bible calls Him *“the only begotten Son of God.”* (John 3:18) That means He was the unique Son of God. And, as we think of the virgin birth, and as we think of the God-man, I want to ask three questions.

I. Could Jesus Have Been Born of a Virgin?

First of all, I want to ask this question: Could Jesus have been born of a virgin? Could Jesus have been born of a virgin? And, the answer, of course, is yes. Now, there are those who talk about “biological impossibilities,” and maybe there are questions that pop into your mind, if you’re a learned person, about how it is possible for someone to be born of a virgin.

Well, I want you to turn, if you will, to Luke chapter 1 for a moment. And, there’s the Christmas story, and I want us to look at it. Now, put a bookmark there in Isaiah chapter 9, and turn to Luke chapter 1. And, here is the little virgin girl whose name is Mary, and the angel is telling her that she’s going to conceive in her womb the Lord Jesus. And remember, now, that Mary has never had physical, intimate relations with any man; she is a virgin girl. And, I’m reading here in Luke chapter 1 and verse 30: *“And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. [And] he shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The*

Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren”—and now, put a big star by verse 37—“For with God nothing shall be impossible.” (Luke 1:30–37)

Now, look up here. Do you want me to tell you why people have difficulty believing in the virgin birth? They have difficulty believing in God—just that simple. Anybody who believes in God has no difficulty with the virgin birth. *“For with God nothing shall be impossible.”* (Luke 1:37) Do you know there are some people who think that somehow God created this entire universe and then He’s a slave to the universe that He created? You see, dear friend, God does not operate according to the laws of nature; the laws of nature operate according to God. You see, God—they’re His laws. He’s the One who formed it; He’s the One who framed it.

Picture with me a man who has a miniature railroad train, because I said, “a man who has one.” They’re not bought for boys, you know; they’re bought for men. And, boys get to play with them very little. And so, you just imagine: here’s a man who’s bought a beautiful miniature railroad, and he has it all spread out there over the family room. And, he’s got the trestles, and he’s got the gates, and he has everything fixed up. And, he’s sitting behind the little switchboard. He makes the whistle toot. He makes the smoke puff. He makes the train go forward. He makes it back up. He put it together, and he’s running it all from this little switchboard. And then, there’s something about it he wants to change, so he gets up from behind the switchboard, goes over there, picks up one of those cars and turns it around and places it on the track another way. Now, that’s not exactly the way it’s designed to happen: he’s supposed to run it from behind the switchboard. But, don’t you think he has the right to get up if he wants to and pick up one of those cars and move it around if he wants to? I mean, after all, didn’t he assemble it? After all, isn’t he the one who runs it? Now, you see, God assembled and created this universe. And, God is there at His switchboard in Glory, and He runs it all. But, I tell you, any time God wants to He can get up, step into it, take His hand down, and do anything He wants to do with any part of it at any time. Amen? He doesn’t have to have your permission; He doesn’t have to have my permission. All a miracle is is the great God of Glory, who made it all to begin with, just stepping into His creation and doing that which pleases Him.

Somebody says, “Explain the virgin birth.” I don’t have to. Friend, you can’t even explain a natural birth. I don’t have to explain miracles—I don’t have to explain miracles any more than I have to explain God. And, incidentally, *I wouldn’t have any confidence in a God I could explain.* I’m glad that we’ve got a God that is inexplicable. I’m glad that we’ve got a great God. I’m glad that we have a miracle-working God. Don’t get mixed up

and think that you have to understand everything.

I don't understand electricity. "Oh," you say, "well, you poor thing. I do." No, you don't. Einstein didn't understand electricity. Einstein said before he died he hoped that he would understand what electricity was. I don't understand it. You don't understand it. But, I don't intend to sit around in the dark until I do. There are a lot of things we don't understand.

You know, sometimes when we talk about things like the virgin birth, everybody comes in to say, "Well, now it could be possible under this circumstance. After all, there are certain insects that reproduce without a male and a female. And, after all..." And, they try to explain it on scientific terms, just like Jonah and the whale—they try to explain that, and they say, "Well, now, you know, there is a certain kind of a fish with a gullet big enough that could swallow a man and keep him down." You don't need to explain it, friend. You don't need to help God out. If God wanted to, God could have prepared a fish with a refrigerator and eight rooms of furniture for Jonah. You don't—you don't—have to make it easy on God. You don't have to say, "Now, this might be possible for us to have a virgin birth." You remember what the angel told Mary? *"With God nothing shall be impossible."* (Luke 1:37) Could Jesus have been born of a virgin? Yes!

II. Was Jesus Born of a Virgin?

Second question: Was Jesus born of a virgin? Answer: Yes, He was. Go back to the prophecy now in Isaiah. We were in Isaiah chapter 9. I want you to go back just a chapter or two to Isaiah chapter 7 and verse 14—Isaiah 7, verse 14: *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive"*—literally, it says, "The virgin shall conceive"—*"and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."* (Isaiah 7:14) Incidentally, there are some people who say this doesn't refer to the Lord Jesus Christ but it refers to an incident that happened in Isaiah's time, and it just speaks of someone who happened to be a virgin at that particular time—was just like any little lady: she had sexual relations with her husband, and then she had a child. But oh, no, that isn't what it says here. Actually, the word *conceive* is more of an adjective in the Hebrew. And actually, what it says is that "the pregnant virgin shall bear a child"—"the pregnant virgin shall bear a child." It is an adjective that describes someone who has never known a man who is going to have a child.

And, let's see if that came to pass. Turn to Matthew chapter 1, if you will, for a moment—first book in the New Testament and the first chapter of that book—and let's see how God deigned to start this New Testament. I'm reading here in Matthew chapter 1, verse 18: *"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the*

Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” (Matthew 1:18–23) You see, the Bible tells us that Jesus was virgin-born.

Now, you know what one liberal preacher said? You won't believe this. Well, knowing the liberals, you might. Here's what he said: he said, "I don't believe in the virgin birth." Why, Mr. Liberal Preacher, don't you believe in the virgin birth? He said, "Well, it's only mentioned in two of the gospels"—"only mentioned in two of the gospels." He says, "Mark didn't speak of the virgin birth, and John didn't speak of the virgin birth." Now, you know, that's ridiculous.

Suppose here's a man who is arrested for a crime for stealing, and there are two witnesses that testify against him. And then, he says, "But, Your Honor, if you'll wait just a moment, even though you have two men that did see me steal, I can go out and bring in a hundred that didn't see me steal. I think I ought to be acquitted." Now, does that make sense? Oh, dear friend, the argument from silence is a pretty stupid argument. If I used the argument from silence, I'd have to say in the Gospel of Mark, the birth of Jesus is not mentioned at all, so, therefore, He wasn't born.

You see, look, how many times does God have to say a thing for it to be true? If God said it one half of one verse that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, then that settles it once and for all, now and forever. We have a little saying, you know: "God said it. I believe it. That settles it." God said it; that settles it, whether you believe it or not. Friend, listen, Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ—was born of a virgin.

III. Why Was Jesus Virgin-Born?

Now, the first question: Could He have been born of a virgin? "*With God all things are possible.*" (Matthew 19:26; Mark 10:27) Was He born of a virgin? Yes. "*Behold, [the] virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.*" (Isaiah 7:14) Third question: Why was He virgin-born? Why the God-man? Well, He was born, first of all, the way He was to be what He was: the God-man.

Now, let me talk with you a little bit about Mendel. We're going to have Handel tonight, so let's have Mendel this morning. Mendel was a geneticist—that is, he studied inherited traits. And, Mendel had a law—the law of genetics. Now, I want you to hear

what Mendel's law of genetics is—I quote from him: “Every individual is the sum total of the characteristics, recessive or dominant, in its two immediate progenitors.” Now, what does that mean? Well, in plain English it means, dear friend, that there is nothing in you that was not in your parents, and it also means that everything that was in your parents is in you. Now, that may be helpful or discouraging, I don't know. But, there's nothing in you that was not in your parents, and everything that is in your parents is in you. Now, it may be dominant: your daddy may have had red hair and you have red hair. Or, it may be recessive: it may not show up in you, but somehow, somewhere, there is that gene; there is that chromosome. “You're the sum total of your progenitors”—that's Mendel's law of genetics.

Now, let's take that and apply it to the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and you'll see why He had to be born of a virgin in order to be the God-man—why He had to be born of a virgin, that it might be said of Him, “*Unto us a child is born*” (Isaiah 9:6) and that it might be said of Him, “*Unto us a son is given.*” (Isaiah 9:6), that you have both His humanity and His deity. Well, you see, remember that the offspring is the sum total of the parents. Now, let's suppose that He had a human mother and a human father, whether Joseph be the father or some other human be the father, as some of the unbelievers like to sneeringly insinuate that Jesus was the illegitimate son of a German soldier. Let's suppose that Jesus had two human parents: then man plus man equals man. He would have been a man—nothing more, nothing less. That would have meant that He could not have been anybody's Savior. He would have been a human being like I'm a human being, like you're a human being, and, therefore, incapable of saving anybody else.

All right. Now, let's just back up and say, “Well, let's suppose that His father was God and His mother was also deity—that He had a divine father and a divine mother.” Now, the Bible doesn't teach that, but suppose that He had a divine father and a divine mother. Then, what do you have? God plus God equals God. He would have been God. He would have been the Son of God, all right. But, as such, He could not save me; He could not redeem me. He would have been only God and not man. And, you see, I need a substitute. And, for someone to be my substitute, he has to be a man like I'm a man. He has to taste flesh and blood in order to take my place, in order to die on the cross for me. And, if God plus God equals God—if He had a divine mother and a divine father—then, according to the law of genetics, He could not have been my Savior. He would have been remote and unapproachable to me.

But now, let's suppose that He had a human mother and a human father, which we don't have to suppose at all, because that was the case—excuse me, a human mother and a godly father (or, God for a Father, the Holy Spirit for His Father). Then, what do you have? You have man plus God equals the God-man. Now remember, He was the

sum total—the sum total—of all that He inherited. He was as much man as though He were not God at all; and yet, He was as much God as though He were not man at all. That's the reason He was born of a virgin with a human mother and with God for His Father.

But now, why the virgin birth? Let's just...let me give you three reasons from Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6, why He was born of a virgin. Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6—let's look at it again. Turn to it, and let's note it carefully—Isaiah 9, verse 6: *“For unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given”*—that phrase speaks of the fact that He is the God-man, the virgin-born God-man, God in human flesh—*“and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”* (Isaiah 9:6) Three reasons that I want to give—of course, there are many more, but I have chosen these three to emphasize this morning: first of all, God became man, that God's glory might be revealed; secondly, God became man that God's grace might be received; thirdly, God became man that God's goal might be realized. Now, just keep those three things in your mind.

A. **That God's Glory Might Be Revealed**

First of all, God became man—Jesus was the God-man—that God's glory might be revealed. You see, the Bible says, *“The Word was made flesh, and [He] dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory...as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”* (John 1:14) And, who was this baby? What was He called? Look at it here in Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6: *“and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God.”* (Isaiah 9:6) You see, dear friends, you and I can't know that God except He's meditated to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

How can we know this wonderful God? How can we know this mighty God unless the Son discloses Him? For Jesus said, *“No man hath seen [the Father] at any time.”* (John 1:18) And yet, Jesus said, *“He that hath seen me [has] seen the Father.”* (John 14:9) Is that a contradiction? No! He's saying that God is a great Spirit, and no mortal can see with physical eyes the spiritual nature of God or comprehend the great transcendent God. And yet, somehow, as we preached last Sunday, the Infinite became an infant. And, we see God in human flesh, and as we see Jesus walking, we see God walking. As we see Jesus talking, we see God talking. As we see Jesus weeping, we see God weeping. As we see Jesus healing, we see God healing. As we see Jesus helping, we see God helping. As we see Jesus teaching, we see God teaching.

A little boy was drawing a picture, and his mother said, “Son, what are you drawing?” He said, “I'm drawing a picture of God.” She said, “You can't do that.” He said, “Why?” She said, “Because no one knows what God looks like.” He said, “They will when I'm

finished.”

Well, friend, I want to tell you, the portrait of God is not what some little boy has scribbled; the portrait of God is Jesus—it’s Jesus. You want to know what God is like? You’re going to find that God’s glory is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. God became a man. He became the God-man, that God’s glory might be revealed. And, Jesus Christ could say, *“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”* (John 14:9) He is wonderful. He is the mighty God.

B. That God’s Grace Might Be Received

Number two: He became man not only that God’s glory might be revealed, but that God’s grace might be received. Look again in Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6, and there you’ll find at the end of that verse that Jesus is not only called *“The mighty God,”* (Isaiah 9:6) but He is also called in that verse *“The everlasting Father”*—*“The everlasting Father.”* (Isaiah 9:6) Now, what do we mean by *“The everlasting Father”*? (Isaiah 9:6) Do you know how this is better translated? *“The Father of eternity”*—*“the Father of eternity.”* Now, what does that mean? It means, dear friend, that eternal life is in His hands. He is the Father of eternity. And, why did Jesus Christ come to this earth? Jesus said, *“[I’ve] come that [you] might have life, and...have it...abundantly.”* (John 10:10) *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but”*—what?—*“have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16) And, who brought that everlasting life? The Father of eternity, the Lord Jesus Christ—that God’s grace might be received.

But, dear friend, listen, it was necessary for this baby to die. He was born to die. He came to *“be [a] propitiation for our sins.”* (1 John 4:10) The Bible says in 1 John that God *“sent his Son [into the world] to be the propitiation for our sins.”* (1 John 4:10) Now, that’s a big double-jointed word. What does *propitiation* mean? It means that He might be the satisfactory substitute for our sins. Now, pay attention. In order for Him to be my substitute, He had to be a man. But, in order for Him to redeem me and be a satisfactory substitute, He had to be sinless. And, therefore, for Him to be a man and for Him to be sinless at the same time, He had to be virgin-born. Do you understand it? Oh, I hope you do. Listen. Pay attention. He came as He did (born of a virgin) to be what He was (sinless). Now, what He was to do, what He did—die on the cross as a propitiation for our sins. Now, He did what He did (die on the cross as a propitiation for our sins) to change what we are (sinners). And, it is through His death that I receive life.

Now, some people say, “Oh, well, the virgin birth is not important.” Friend, listen, the virgin birth is this important: because if there’s no virgin birth, there’s no deity. If there is no deity, there is no sinlessness. If there is no sinlessness, there is no atonement. And, if there is no atonement, there is no hope. So, you write it down: the virgin birth is very

important. You see, He was born of a virgin, that you might be born again. He came to earth, that you might go to heaven. And, Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6 tells us that this baby that was born was the Father of eternity. (Isaiah 9:6) He is the giver of eternal life. And, He came not only that God's glory might be revealed, but that God's grace might be received.

"[I've] come"—He said—*"that [you] might have life, and...have it...abundantly."* (John 10:10) "Well," you say, "I'm already alive." No, you're not—not without Jesus. You have existence, not life. Jesus comes to give life. Oh, it'll be a wonderful time when those who are just drawing their breath and drawing their salary will discover the life that only Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Christ of Christmas, can give.

C. **That God's Goal Might Be Realized**

Let me give you the third reason that Jesus Christ came, that He was born of a virgin, that He was the God-man: not only that God's glory might be revealed, not only that God's grace might be received, but that God's goal—G-O-A-L—God's goal might be realized.

What is God's goal? What is God moving toward? What is the purpose of all eternity? To enthrone His Son, the Lord Jesus, as King of kings and Lord of lords. Read again Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6: *"For unto us a child is born, [and] unto us a son is given"*—now, look at this—*"and the government shall be upon his shoulder."* (Isaiah 9:6) Read verse 7: *"Of the increase of his government and [of his] peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever"*—and then, note this, and note it clearly—*"The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."* (Isaiah 9:7) God says, "I've taken all of my energies, I've taken all of my intent, I've taken all of my holy zeal, and I'm going to enthrone my Son, the Lord Jesus."

Let me tell you why He became the God-man, why the virgin birth, why the virtuous life, why the vicarious death, why the victorious resurrection, why the visible return—I'll tell you. To this end: He both lived and died and revived again, that He might be Lord of the living and the dead. The Bible speaks of the Incarnation in Philippians chapter 2 when it says, *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation"*—that's talking about that Christmas morning, when the Infinite became an infant—*"[he] made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant... And being found in [the] fashion as a [servant], he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"*—now, listen to it—*"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name [that] is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in [earth], and things in [heaven],*

and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:5–11) One of these days three worlds are going to confess it: heaven will confess that He’s Lord; Earth will confess that He’s Lord; the demons in hell will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. God’s goal is going to be realized.

You watch men play checkers. And, they put those checkers on the board, and they move them around a certain way. And suddenly, one man will move his checker into King’s Row and say, “Crown him!” I want to tell you that God is moving the nations of this earth on the checkerboard of time. And, one day—and one day soon—God is going to move His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into King’s Row and say, “Crown Him! Crown Him!” And, *“every knee [shall] bow...and...every tongue [shall] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”* (Philippians 2:10–11) And, it’s all wrapped up in the God-man—the God-man—who is going to sit upon the throne of His father, David. And, He shall rule, and He shall reign forever and forever. And, God’s people said, “Amen.” That ought to excite you, friend. These days, where it looks like everything’s coming loose and everything’s gotten out of hand, the Bible says, *“The zeal of the LORD of hosts will [accomplish] this.”* (Isaiah 9:7) The God-man—the God-man.

Julian was a Roman emperor. At first, he claimed to be a Christian. He wasn’t a real Christian, but he claimed to be a Christian. And then, Julian repudiated Christianity. He laughed at it. He scoffed at it. He mocked it. He spat upon it and vowed and decreed that he would exterminate the Christians from the Roman Empire. They called him “Julian the Apostate.” One day, there was a Roman soldier laying the lector’s lash on the back of a Christian, and Julian came up and, with a smirk on his face, he looked at that Christian and he said to the Christian, “What is the carpenter of Nazareth doing for you now?” And, that Christian turned and looked up into the face and said, “Oh, Emperor, the carpenter of Nazareth is driving nails into your coffin.” How true it was! In just a few days, Julian the Apostate was wounded in battle. And, with his dying breath it is said that he reached in, and took a handful of his blood, and flung it to the skies, and said, “O Galilean, thou hast conquered.” And, He will conquer—He will conquer. The last word is His. He will rule. His enemies will lick the dust. “He cannot fail, He must prevail.” (Baylus Benjamin McKinney)

Conclusion

This is the Christ of Christmas. I want to tell you, dear friend, you’ll never understand Christmas unless you link the cradle with the cross and the crown. He is coming. He is coming, dear friend, not only to reveal God’s glory—*“glory to God in the highest”* (Luke 2:14)—not only that we might receive God’s grace, the Father of eternity, but, dear friend, that God’s goal might be realized, Lord of lords and King of kings. Don’t you want

to be a part of that? Here's the wonderful thing: you can be a part of it. We sing that song about the little baby in Bethlehem, and then we sing, "O Christ that was born in Bethlehem, be born in me today." Do you want Him to be born in you? Do you want to be born again? You want to be a child of God? You can be—you ought to be—if you'll pray.

Let's bow your heads in prayer—every head bowed, every eye closed; no one stirring, no one moving, please, anywhere in the auditorium. Sit perfectly still. If you're not a Christian now, if you're not sure that you're saved, if you don't know that you know that your sins are forgiven, if you're not absolutely certain if you died today that you'd go to heaven, you can be and you ought to be. Christ died for you on the cross. Salvation is a gift. You cannot earn it. You cannot buy it. You will never deserve it. It is freely offered to those who will receive it. Why don't you pray right now out of your heart, "Lord Jesus—Lord Jesus—I'm a sinner, and I'm lost; and I cannot save myself. And, I need to be saved, and I want to be saved. Jesus, you died to save me. You promised to save me if I would only trust you. Lord Jesus, I do trust you right now, this moment, with all of my heart. Come into my heart. Forgive my sins, and save me"?

The Prince of Peace

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 14, 1980

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 9:6–7

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

ISAIAH 9:6

Outline

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Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Isaiah chapter 9, and we’re going to be looking together at verse 6. The title of our message today is “The Prince of Peace,” or perhaps I could elaborate the title and say, “Peace through the Prince of Peace”—Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6.

Now, if you’ve been attending the last several Sundays, you know that we’ve been preaching from Isaiah chapter 9, which is a prophecy of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, a Christmas prophecy, something that our choir sang in *The Messiah*—wonderfully beautiful passage of Scripture beautifully set to music. And, we talked about the fact that He is called—the Lord Jesus Christ is called—in Isaiah chapter 9:6, on the first Sunday when we discussed it, He is called “*The mighty God.*” (Isaiah 9:6) And, we talked about the Infinite Infant—that this little baby that was born on Christmas Day was God in the flesh. And then, on the next Sunday, we talked about the fact that He was also the God-man, for Isaiah chapter 9:6 says, “*For unto us a child is born*”—and that speaks of His humanity—“*and unto us a son is given*” (Isaiah 9:6)—and that speaks of

His deity. And, we talked about the God-man, the Lord Jesus.

But now, today, I want us to see something else that Isaiah chapter 9:6 talks about:

“For unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”—the Prince of Peace (and that’s what we’re going to be thinking about today). The Bible goes on to say in verse 7—“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

(Isaiah 9:6–7) Oh, Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace! Many wonderful, wonderful names for our wonderful Savior—but I can think of no name for Jesus that is more meaningful to this sin-soaked, war-torn, strife-weary world than “Prince of Peace.” And, I want you to pay attention, because there’s not any one here who doesn’t need peace and Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Jesus is the key to peace internationally. Jesus is the key to peace nationally. Jesus is the key to peace domestically, and Jesus is the key to that peace right within your heart.

Now, when we talk about the Lord Jesus as the Prince of Peace, sometimes we have consternation because it doesn’t seem like there is very much peace. We sing that carol, “I heard the bells on Christmas Day / Their old familiar carols play.” (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow) You remember that? Longfellow wrote that. And, as he was thinking about peace on earth, it came to him that we sing so much about peace, but there doesn’t seem to be much of it. Here’s the way he put it:

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.*

*I thought how, as the day had come,
[And] the belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along the unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.*

*And in despair I bowed my head:
“There is no peace on earth,” I said.
“For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.”*

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail*

With peace on earth, good will to men.”

—HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

And, because that is true, I want us to think about it today. And, there are three things I want us to learn about Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and the peace that comes from the Lord Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

I. Peace Has Been Promised

The first thing I want you to learn is that it is a peace that is clearly promised. Now, I read to you from Isaiah chapter 9:6, and the Bible says that *“his name shall be called...The Prince of Peace”*—and verse 7 says—*“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.”* (Isaiah 9:6–7)

A. International Peace

Then, I want you to turn to Luke chapter 2 with me for just a moment. Just take your Bibles now and turn to the Christmas story, and see what not only Isaiah prophesied, but what the angels proclaimed on that first Christmas morning. In Luke chapter 2, beginning with me, please, in verse 9—well, let’s go back to verse 8: *“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes”*—and there are those who say that this phrase, “swaddling clothes,” literally means “burial garments,” “wrapped in burial garments”—*“lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will [to] men.”* (Luke 2:8–14) And again, we see it, Isaiah prophesied it, the angel proclaimed it—peace on earth.

And yet, look around. How much peace do you see? The diplomats huddle together. The UN meets, and they plan for peace. But, our world is in pieces; it’s not in peace. And, nation has risen against nation. China’s operational head recently said to the President of the United States of America that “mankind is indisputably headed for world war.” And then, he went on to say, “This is beyond man’s will.” Now, what he said is it’s going to happen and there’s nothing that the will of man can do to stop world war. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the Russian dissident—that mighty intellect who has come to the West—has said, “It is too late to avoid the third world war.” Now, it’s not what some wild-eyed fanatic is saying. “It is too late,” he said, “to avoid the third world war.” And, the editor of Canada’s leading news magazine was asked about the thing that worried

him the most, and he said, “The thing that concerns me and worries me the most is the thing that concerns and worries most of the editors of the news magazines—that World War III will soon be declared.”

Clare Booth Luce called herself an optimist, and she said, “I think that good things can happen, but they probably won’t.” And, she said, “I expect a nuclear war in the next twenty-five years.” And, the President of France, Valéry Giscard—Valéry Giscard d’Estaing—said, “The world is unhappy. It is unhappy because it doesn’t know where it is going and because it senses that, if it knew where it was going, that it would be headed for disaster.” And, who among us can forget seeing Henry Kissinger on network television as he stood in the Middle East weeping, broken, and crying, as he said, “One has to live with a sense of inevitable tragedy.” What was Kissinger saying? He’s saying, “I’ve run out of diplomatic ideas.” Think of the words that this diplomat was using—this man who is supposed to have been the man who can somehow put it all together: “inevitable tragedy,” weeping on television. And, the late Albert Schweitzer said this—and I quote from him: “Man has lost the capacity to foresee and forestall. He will end by destroying the earth.” That’s what Albert Schweitzer said. And, the noted historian H. G. Wells said—and, incidentally, H. G. Wells only lived one year into the nuclear age, but he lived long enough to say this—“For man and his world there is no way out.”

And, George Rathjens, who is a technologist and Professor of Technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology—at the well-known, prestigious MIT—collaborated with some other technological experts from Harvard. They put their heads together, and this brain trust did some thinking and some planning. And, this is what they said: they judged that man can expect nuclear war in the next twenty-five years, and they said it will probably be triggered by one of the smaller nations, like Israel, or like her Arab neighbors, or perhaps Pakistan, or India, or one of the African nations. And then, they said that the only thing that could hold back this inevitable holocaust—the only thing that they could possibly see would be—and I quote: “a very nasty kind of world government.” Of course, we know that’s going to be the government of the antichrist. The only thing that can hold it back—“a very nasty kind of world government.” This is what MIT and the Harvard professors are saying together. These are not some sort of doomsday, soothsaying preachers. All thinking people have the idea that they’re looking down into the open end of a loaded canon and it is about to go off. There is no peace internationally. And, the Russian soldiers are encamped round about Poland, and Iraq and Iran are there. And, the Middle East is a tinderbox. And, who knows what’s going to happen in Middle America and Latin America? Who knows what’s happening now there in Africa and those nations there? The entire world is seething and pulsating with wars and rumors of wars; and yet, Jesus Christ is called the “Prince of Peace.”

B. **National Peace**

But, not only, dear friend, internationally—nationally. Look at America. How much peace do we have in America? How much peace is there in this city or any major city? Do you know what is happening to our cities? Our cities are becoming swamps of discontent where the mosquitoes of hate are breeding by the millions.

C. **Domestic Peace**

And, look into our homes—our very homes. Our homes are at war—husbands at war with wives and wives at war with husbands. I was shocked, and grieved, and brokenhearted to read the other day that, in the last decade, single-parent families have increased eighty percent in a decade—in ten years, eighty percent—children being raised without father or without mother. And, our divorce rate soars because there is no peace in our homes.

D. **Individual Peace**

And, there's no peace in human hearts. Most of the people in Memphis, Tennessee, are trudging our streets, thinking vainly that somehow peace comes out of the mouth of a bottle; thinking somehow that peace can be encapsulated in a pill that can be swallowed; thinking somehow that peace comes from the psychiatrist's couch or, somehow, that peace comes from a new toy, whether it be a speedboat or a sports car; thinking perhaps somehow peace can be found in achievement or in entertainment. But, all of these things do not bring peace to the human heart, and I'll tell you why. For the Bible says in Isaiah chapter 57 and verse 21: *“There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked”*—*“There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”* (Isaiah 57:21) And, the Bible declares in Isaiah chapter 59, verse 8: *“The way of peace they [have not known].”* (Isaiah 59:8) This world doesn't know peace because it does not understand Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

Well, I want to ask you a question: If Isaiah prophesied peace, and if the angels proclaimed peace, and if Jesus promised peace, were they wrong? I mean, what went wrong? Like Longfellow—bowed his head, and in despair, *“There is no peace on earth, I said”*—well, what went wrong?

II. **Peace Has Been Postponed**

I want to tell you, dear friend, the peace has been prophesied and promised, but the second thing I want you to see today is that the peace has been postponed—the peace has been postponed. When Jesus Christ came to this earth, He came as the Prince of Peace. But, do you know what we did with the Prince of Peace? We nailed Him upon a cross. We took the Lord of Glory, Jesus Christ, and we crucified Him and rejected Him. *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”* (John 1:11) And, therefore,

since we crucified the Prince of Glory, since we denied the Prince of Peace, there will be no peace on this earth until Jesus Christ is received, and recognized, and enthroned.

Now, look again at the prophecy of Isaiah in Isaiah chapter 9, and you'll see what Isaiah says about the Lord Jesus Christ and when this peace will be. Look at it again—Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6: *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”*—when is He, dear friend, the Prince of Peace? I'll tell you when: when the government is on His shoulder. Notice in verse 7—*“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”* (Isaiah 9:6–7) Now, what does that mean? It means that our world is going to know peace when Jesus Christ is enthroned upon David's throne. Did you understand that? This peace will come when Jesus comes in His Second Coming to rule upon this earth. There is going to be peace. There's going to be a time that has not yet come.

You're in Isaiah 9. Turn to Isaiah 11; begin in verse 6: *“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; and their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. [And] they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as...waters [that] cover the sea.”* (Isaiah 11:6–9) Hallelujah for that!

And then, I want you to turn, if you will, to Micah chapter 4, verses 3 and 4. Here's another prophecy concerning the Prince of Peace: *“And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more...they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.”* (Micah 4:3–4) There will be peace, but this peace will come when the Lord Jesus Christ rules and reigns here upon this earth. He is now the rejected Savior.

I want to tell you, dear friend, when Jesus was here on earth, there was no war. Did you know that? One of the few periods, if any, in history, when there'd been no war, was when Jesus Christ was here. For the thirty-three years that Jesus Christ was here upon this earth there was no war. We rejected Him. He went to heaven. And, when He went to heaven, the Prince of Peace took His peace with Him, and there's now peace in

heaven. There are only two places where there's peace right now: there's peace in heaven, and there's peace in the heart of the person who knows Jesus and has Jesus in his heart. For where Jesus is, there's peace; and where Jesus is not, there is no peace. We rejected Him, and we refused Him. And, He's taken His peace, and He's gone to heaven. But, when He comes back again, He will bring that peace with Him and He will sit upon the throne of his father, David. And, I love that hymn that we sing:

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
[Doth] his successive journeys run;
His kingdom [spread] from shore to shore
'Til moons shall wax and wane no more.
From north to south the princes meet,
To pay their homage at His feet.
And barb'rous nations at His word
Submit, and bow, and own their Lord.*

—ISAAC WATTS

But, until Jesus comes—get ready for it—the world cannot look for peace, for Jesus clearly said in Matthew 24, “[*Until the end there will be] wars and rumours of wars.*” (Matthew 24:6)

“Well,” you say, “Brother Rogers, that kind of—that kind of—frustrates me today. I don't believe I could be optimistic if I believed that there could be no peace 'til Jesus comes.” Friend, I want to tell you something: I don't believe I could be optimistic if I thought the UN was going to bring in peace. I don't believe I could be optimistic if I thought the United States Congress were going to do it. I am optimistic because I know that I know that I know that this world will know peace. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. There is coming a time when men will “*beat their swords into plowshares...their spears into pruninghooks.*” (Micah 4:3) And, people shall dwell safely when Jesus, the Lord of Glory, comes.

You say, “Well, then, Brother Rogers, does that mean that we're not to work for peace and pray for peace?” Not at all! Even though we know we're not going to have perfect and worldwide peace until Jesus comes, we ought to work for peace and pray for peace. I'll tell you why: Jesus said—the Bible teaches that—“the poor you have with you always.” (Matthew 26:11; Mark 14:7; John 12:8) Does that mean since there are always going to be poor people that we shouldn't feed the poor and care for the poor and love them? Of course not! The Bible teaches that not everyone is going to be saved, for Jesus said, “*Broad is the way, that [leads] to destruction, and many...go [therein].*” (Matthew 7:13) But, does that mean that we're not to witness to everyone, and tell them about the Lord Jesus, and save as many—get as many saved—as we

possibly can? The Bible teaches there are going to be “*wars and rumours of wars.*” (Matthew 24:6; Mark 13:7) Does that mean, therefore, that we’re not to pray for peace, work for peace, and look for periods of peace and tranquility? The Bible says that we’re to pray “*for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we [might live] quiet and peaceable [lives].*” (1 Timothy 2:2)

I would like to have a time—a period—of peace, in which to raise my children and in which to preach the gospel. And, I’m going to be working for it, and praying for it, and saying, “Lord, hold back your judgment. And, dear God, give us, as long as we’re here, that peace that we might have—limited as it is, small as it might be in scope.” But, I tell you, dear friend, the final hope, the ultimate hope, the only hope of this world for real peace is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And, we ought to be praying for Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to have the government upon His shoulder—because we’ve made a mess of the government—and that, dear friend, that He might reign and rule from the throne of His father, David.

III. Peace Can Be Personally Possessed

Now, the third thing I want to say... The first thing that I’ve tried to say is this: peace has been promised and prophesied—a prophesied peace. The second thing I want us to see is that this peace has been postponed. When we rejected, neglected, and crucified the Lord of Glory, He went back to heaven, and the Prince of Peace took peace with Him. Now, the third thing I want us to see is this peace personally possessed. And, even though there cannot be and will not be worldwide peace until Jesus comes again, you can know the peace of God in your own heart. You can have personal peace today. You can know “peace, like a river, [that can attend your] way,” (Horatio G. Spafford) because remember, where Jesus is there is peace. And, if Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, reigns and rules supreme in your heart, then you can know peace. Now, let me talk about this kind of heart peace. It is twofold: first of all, it is peace with God; and secondly, it is the peace of God that comes from God.

A. Peace with God

Now look, it is peace with God. Did you know, dear friends, that the sinner without the Lord Jesus Christ is at war with God? Did you know that an unsaved man is at war with God? The Bible says that “*the carnal mind*”—that is, the mind of an unsaved person—“*is [warfare with] God*” (Romans 8:7)—that our sins are an affront to heaven’s King, that our sins are warfare against the Lord of Glory. And, there’s a war, and this war needs to be ended. And, I’ll tell you how it’s going to be ended: only by Jesus, the Prince of Peace. It is the cross that reconciles God and man. That’s the significance of this little baby being wrapped in burial clothes: He was born to die. Now, the Bible says in

Romans chapter 5, verse 1: *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God”* (Romans 5:1)—“peace with God,” “peace with God.” That is, the war is over. There’s no longer a warfare between God and man—peace with God—because I want to tell you, in a war between God and man, you know who’s going to win, don’t you? Hmm. All right, you’d better—you’d better, you’d better—settle this one, and you better somehow come to a peace treaty with the Prince of Peace, the Lord of Glory.

Now, peace with God—how is it brought about? Jot in your margin “Colossians 1, verse 20,” which says—and listen to it: *“And, having made peace [by] the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself.”* (Colossians 1:20) It is the blood of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ that makes peace and reconciles God and man.

Years ago, I heard a story someone told of a battle that was going on. And, out on the battlefield, where communications are so vitally needed, a line was severed. And, the power was running through that line. And, the line had been broken by a bombshell, and it was lying there. And, communications were severed. There was a man in the communication corps who said, “I believe I can put those two lines together.” They said, “It’s dangerous.” He said, “If I don’t go, the battle will be lost.” And, under heavy artillery fire and gunshot, he went out there to try to patch the lines and to bring them together. And, he took hold of the dead wire with one hand, and he took hold of the living wire with the other hand. But, when he did, the bullets riddled his body, and he died with his hands still grasping those wires. And, the power and the message flowed through his very body. The battle was won. Later, when they came out on the battlefield, they found this man out there as though he had been crucified, with his arms stretched out with a wire in this hand and a wire in that hand, and through him there was a reconciliation; through him the message had flowed.

This is what Jesus did on the cross. With one hand He took hold of holy God, and with the other hand He took hold of sinful man. And, with the blood of His cross He made peace and reconciled God and man.

*O, can it be, upon [the] tree,
[My] Savior died for me?
My [heart] is thrilled, my [soul] is filled,
To think He died for me!*

—JOHN NEWTON

The Prince of Peace made peace with the blood of His cross.

And then, first of all, there must be—there must be—peace with God. Do you have peace with God? Have your sins been forgiven? If not, I want to tell you there is a war between you and holy God, and you’re going to lose. You cannot win, because your sins must be paid for; they must be atoned. And, the blood of the cross of the Lord Jesus has made peace for you.

B. Peace of God

But now, because there has been that peace with God, then—hallelujah! Thank God! Glory to God, Glory of glories, Wonder of wonders!—you can have the peace of God. You know, the Bible speaks of the peace of God in Philippians chapter 4, verse 7—not only peace with God, but it says, *“And the peace of God...shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:7) This is peace that protects you like soldiers protecting a fortress. The peace of God will keep, guard, protect, garrison around your hearts by the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 4, verse 7).

Say, have you ever picked up the paper and read where someone was heir to a fortune—maybe a hundred thousand, two hundred thousand, a million, two million dollars left to someone? And, you say to yourself, “Well, I wish I had some rich relatives.” And, you probably had the idea that all your rich relatives are going to die in the poor house and nobody’s going to leave anything to you—that you’re not going to have any legacy. I want to tell you something today: you’ve been remembered in a will, and it was a will that the Lord Jesus Christ made for you on the cross. On that cross Jesus was making a will. Let me tell you, He willed His body to Joseph of Arimathea, and it was buried in a borrowed tomb. He willed His mother and bequeathed His mother to John the apostle when He said, “Son, behold thy mother.” (John 19:27) He willed His Spirit to God the Father when He said, *“Into thy hands I commend my spirit.”* (Luke 23:46) But friend, He also willed you something, and it’s found in John chapter 14, verse 27. And, this is what Jesus left you. Are you ready for it? Jesus said to you, His child, *“Peace I leave with you”—“Peace I leave with you”—“my peace...give [I] unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”* (John 14:27) This is your blood-bought legacy, the peace of God from the Prince of Peace: *“Peace I leave with you.”* (John 14:27)

It has been said, “There’s no will on earth that four lawyers, if they get together, cannot break.” Well, dear friend, I want to tell you, all hell can’t break this legacy—all hell can’t break this legacy. The world cannot take it away because the world can’t give it. It’s peace that the world cannot give and peace that the world cannot take away. It’s peace that the world doesn’t even understand. It is *“the peace of God, [that] passeth...understanding.”* (Philippians 4:7) It is the peace that comes from the bosom of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died to make peace with God, that we might have the peace of God. *“My peace...give I unto you.”* (John 14:27)

I know today that I’m speaking to some of you who’ve just lost loved ones—some of you in this very congregation. I know you. I know that your hearts are breaking. But, I’ve stood and looked in your face. Some who are sitting here have looked right into my face, and you said to me, “Pastor, it’s okay—it’s okay. Jesus is there. I know that peace.” I’m speaking to some of you today whose bodies are being wracked and hurt by pain. I know that. But, I’ve talked with you and prayed with you this past week, and I’ve

seen the light of the glory of God upon your face, as there has been that “peace, like a river, [that attends your] way.” (Horatio G. Spafford) And oh, I love that phrase: “*peace...like a river*” (Isaiah 66:12) that Isaiah speaks about. What is “peace like a river”? Well, a river is overflowing, and this is an overflowing peace. A river is constant, and this is constant peace. A river is beautiful, and this is beautiful peace. And, a river comes from a source higher up, and this peace that we have, dear friend, comes from a source that is higher up. “*My peace...give I unto you.*” (John 14:27)

Conclusion

But, I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that you can never know the peace of God until you know peace with God. And, peace has been prophesied and promised, and peace has been postponed. And, we’ll not know peace in this war-torn world until Jesus comes. But, thank God, we can have peace with God, and we can have the peace of God in our hearts. For where Jesus is, there’s peace. And, if Jesus is in your heart, then there can be peace in your heart. And, that’s a wonderful message of Christmas today: “Good will to men. Peace on earth”—“Peace on earth.” (Luke 2:14) And, some translators say that means “peace to men of good will”—that is, men whose hearts have been changed by the gospel, the wonderful gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

You know what the Bible says? The Bible says, “*Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.*” (Colossians 3:15) Do you know, I can tell when I do something wrong when I lose that peace—when I lose that peace. There is to be peace like a river flowing in me. And, there’s only one thing that ceases—that causes—that river to cease flowing, and that’s sin in my heart and in my life.

You know what this word, “*let the peace of God rule in your [heart],*” (Colossians 3:15) literally means? “Let the peace of God referee in your heart.” You know, when you’re playing ball and the referee blows the whistle, it means you’ve done an infraction; you’re out of bounds. You see, the Holy Spirit is there to blow the whistle on you when you’re out of bounds. And, when the Holy Spirit blows the whistle, it’s the peace of God that’s refereeing. That means you lose that peace. And, when you confess that sin and get that sin under the blood of Jesus, that peace starts to flow like a river again.

Listen, there’s nothing that you do to me that can take the peace out of my heart. My reaction to what you do to me might take the peace out of my heart. And, incidentally, if you want to know what I am, don’t watch my actions; watch my reactions.

My actions are planned. I know that you’re looking at me today. I’m looking at you, too. You don’t look so good either. All right. Now look, I know that you’re watching me. That’s the reason I’m trying to project my voice, and stand a certain way, and speak logically, and so forth. I realize that. That’s the reason why I comb my hair and try to get my tie straight. I know that you’re watching me. And, what I say today I already planned

to say before I ever got up here. I sat down at my desk and thought it out, prayed it over, wrote it down, thought it through. And, what you're seeing—you're seeing my actions. But, if you want to know the real man, watch my reactions. Watch what happens to me if I get headed off on the expressway, or somebody steals my parking place, gets ahead of me in a line somewhere, or says something mean to me when I'm not expecting it. It's my reaction that'll show what I really am—amen—what you really are.

I'm talking to you, too, not just me, 'cause, you know, I'm talking really to you, 'cause, all right... You're enjoying that; I don't want you to enjoy it. All right. Now look, it's your reaction. As we well said, *if you want to know what you're filled with, you see what spills out when you're jostled—and that's what you're filled with.*

Now, what I'm trying to say to you, dear friend—that there is nothing that somebody does to you that can take the peace out of your heart. You say, "My neighbor ruined my Christmas." Your neighbor can't ruin your Christmas. You're saying, "That boss of mine has taken the peace from my heart." He can't take the peace from your heart. It is peace that Jesus gives. The only thing that can take that peace from your heart this Christmas is your reaction to your neighbor, your reaction to your boss. You let the peace of God referee in your heart—He'll tell you when you're out of bounds. *"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts."* (Colossians 3:15) I'm saying that through the Lord Jesus Christ, this Christmas season, the Prince of Peace can give peace in your heart. It is a peace that is promised. It is a peace that is proclaimed. It is a peace that has been postponed, but it is a peace, still, that can be possessed in every human heart, where Jesus Christ comes to rule and to reign. For the Bible says Christ is our peace. (Romans 5:1)

A little lady was very sick and about to die. The doctor said to her loved ones, "She will not make it. It's your decision as to whether or not you want to tell her whether she can live or not." The loved ones said, "Well, we think that if a person is going to die, they ought to know it." And so, they came to this little lady, and they said to her in as nice of terms as they could possibly say, "Do you realize how sick you are?" She nodded her head. They said, "Do you know that the doctor says that you may not live much longer? Do you understand that?" She nodded her head. But, there was a look of serenity and peace upon her face and such a calm resignation to what she sensed was the will of God. And so, they said to her, "Well, have you made your peace with God?" She shook her head no, but she was still smiling. They thought, "Well, maybe she didn't understand." So, they went back again, and they explained it to her very gently but very carefully: "Do you know that you're going to die? Have you made your peace with God?" She just smiled, and they said, "We don't understand it. Why not? Why haven't you made your peace with God?" She said, "Because I have no need to make peace with

God. I'm resting in the finished peace that Jesus has already made for me on the cross." Now, she had something I wish that you had today, resting in the peace that has been made. He made peace; you don't have to make peace. But, dear friend, you must receive it and rest in it by faith. There will be peace when Jesus comes; Jesus will reign. Jesus will rule. But, you'll not know that peace, for you'll not enter into that peace—you'll be lost and in hell—if you don't have peace with God and the peace of God. You'll never know peace when Jesus comes to rule and reign.

Do you know Him? Have you received Him? Have you prayed, "Lord Jesus, O, thou Son of God, come into my heart. There was no room for you in the manger the first time that you came. You're despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows"—*"He came unto his own, and his own received him not"* (John 1:11)—"but, Lord Jesus, this Christmas I receive you. I open my heart once and for all, now and forever. Come, Jesus, into my heart. You made peace with the blood of your cross, and let the peace of God that passes all understanding be my legacy this Christmas. You left me that peace, and I claim it by faith"? Will you do it? Oh, friend, receive Him. And, *"though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be...white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."* (Isaiah 1:18) Every stain, every blot, every blur, every blemish that ever came across your soul Jesus can wash and make whiter than snow. Receive Him, and He'll save you. For He says, *"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man [will] hear my voice, and open the door, [the Prince of Peace] will come in."* (Revelation 3:20) And, where Jesus is there's peace.

Let's bow our heads in prayer—every head bowed, every eye closed; no one, please, moving, stirring about in any way whatever. I want you to be in a spirit of prayer—everyone praying. And, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I'm going to ask you now, if you've never done so, to receive Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, the Prince of Peace, into your heart.

Let me say a word to our television audience. Those of you who are watching me right now on television, I want you today, now, to ask Christ into your heart—right there by your television set: "Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Forgive my sins, and save me." He will save you—He really will. For the Bible says, *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* (Romans 10:13) And, dear friend, I have someone standing by right now to pray with you on the telephone. If you'd just like to share with someone on the telephone—just someone to give you some scripture and have a prayer of commitment with you about receiving Jesus Christ—I'm going to ask you to go right now—right this moment; just leave your television—and go to the telephone and call the number given to you. It's flashed on your screen right now. And, tell that person, "I want to receive Christ." He'll rejoice with you and have a prayer of commitment with you. There's something wonderful about sharing it with someone else. And, Jesus will

save you today. We're not going to ask you to join anything or give anything. We just want to pray with you. We want to rejoice with you if you'll receive Jesus.

Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed here, let me say to those of you in this congregation, I'm going to ask you in a few moments to leave your seat and come forward. Let your coming forward be your way of saying, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I believe He was born of a virgin. I believe He died on the cross. I believe He was raised from the dead. I believe He's coming again, and I'm trusting Him—and Him alone—to save me." Now, you don't have to say all of that audibly; you just let your coming forward be your way of saying, "I believe those things, and I'm trusting Jesus." When we stand and sing in a moment, I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward.

Now, let me say this about the Holy Spirit: the Holy Spirit's not going to shout at you. Sometimes when I get enthusiastic in my preaching, I shout, but the Holy Spirit doesn't shout. The Holy Spirit is "*a still small voice*." (1 Kings 19:12) The Holy Spirit will never push you; He only invites you and leads you. Oh, how gentle is the voice of the Holy Spirit! I want you to hear that gentle voice of Jesus saying, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and [I'll] give you rest*." (Matthew 11:28) And, Jesus invites you today to come to Him, and I want you to do it right now, today. In just a moment, when we stand and sing, I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. And, your coming forward will be your way of saying, "I'm trusting Jesus to save me."

Others of you have been saved, and you've gotten settled in the privacy of your own home and the precincts of your own heart. But, I'm going to ask you to come forward now and give Jesus the glory by making it public. If you've not had believer's baptism, you are missing the joy that you ought to have. You're not being obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ. You've not properly acknowledged Him and confessed Him. Your testimony is lacking, and your Christian life will be unfulfilled. And so, if you need believer's baptism—you know that you're saved, but you've never proclaimed it before men and presented yourself for baptism—I'm going to ask you to come. And, let me tell you, dear friend, if you were saved after you were baptized, you were not baptized at all. Real baptism follows real salvation. And, you may need to come and present yourself as a Christian for believer's baptism.

There are others who've been saved and baptized, and you know that that's all settled but you wish to come and transfer your membership to Bellevue Church. If you'll be a faithful member and live so as to bring glory to Jesus through this church, lovingly, we invite you to come, transferring your membership.

So, if you want to be saved, come. If you have been saved and need to present yourself for baptism, come. And if, today—if, today—you need to transfer your membership, I'm going to invite you to come.

Let's pray. O Father—Father—in Jesus's name, help people today, that they will say, "Yes" to Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Holy Spirit of God, give power during the invitation. Give faith and courage. In Jesus's name. Amen.

The Prince of Peace

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 15, 1985

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 9:6–7

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

ISAIAH 9:6

Outline

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Introduction

Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6: *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”* (Isaiah 9:6–7)

When the angels appeared there to those shepherds, they came with a song of *“peace [on earth], good will toward men.”* (Luke 2:14) And, indeed, as these two have beautifully sung, Jesus Christ is the King of Peace and the Prince of Peace, but that brings up a real question: if you’ll look around, there doesn’t seem to be much peace. As a matter of fact, our world is saturated with a lack of peace. Now, there’s an old Christmas carol that goes this way:

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will [toward] men.*

— HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

It's bad to be heckled by an organ. These automobiles—you get in, you know, and they tell you to buckle your seatbelt, and close the door, and turn off the lights. They talk to you. Bad enough to be nagged by a wife—when your car starts to do it and your organ starts to talk back, you've got difficulty. Listen again:

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will [toward] men
And [I] thought [as] how...the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along the unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.*

*And in despair I bowed my head
“There is no peace on earth,” I said,
“For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.”*

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail
With peace on earth, good will [toward] men.”*

— HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

I want you to think about this peace, and I want you to think along with me about Jesus Christ, the King of Peace, the Prince of Peace. There are three things basically that I would lay upon your heart.

I. Peace Has Been Plainly Promised

Number one is that peace has been plainly promised. Anyone who can read Isaiah 9:6—anyone who can read Luke 2:9–14—knows that God has promised peace on earth. This peace has been clearly, plainly prophesied by Isaiah, promised by angels, preached by preachers, sung by choirs and carolers down through the centuries. Peace plainly promised, but peace poorly possessed.

A. **No International Peace**

Let's think about our world situation. I did a little study—a little research—and, frankly, after studying what I study, researching what I researched, if I did not know Jesus Christ, I would be a genuine pessimist. Let me read some things to you. Listen, dear friend.

China's operational head said recently that "mankind is indisputably headed for world war." Now, he said, "You don't argue about it. Without dispute, we're headed for world war." And, he said (and here's the frightening part), "This is independent of man's will." That means you don't have a choice about it, neither do the Chinese. One man that I admire very much is a brilliant Russian dissident. His name is Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. You ought to read some of the things that Solzhenitsyn has written. But, one thing he has written would send a chill over you. He said, "It is too late to avoid the third world war." He didn't even quibble about it, Bob: "too late to avoid the third world war." The editor of Canada's leading news magazine was asked what his chief worry was, and he replied this—and I quote: "Just what every news magazine editor worries about: World War III being declared." Another great writer and publisher, Claire Boothe Luce declared herself "an optimist who thinks good things can happen, but probably won't." She said, "There is a great likelihood of nuclear war in the next twenty-five years." The President of France said, "The world is unhappy. It is unhappy because it doesn't know where it's going and because it senses that if it knew, it would discover that it is heading for disaster." We all remember Henry Kissinger, the great diplomat negotiator. He went to the Middle East to see if somehow he could untangle the threads of war there. And, he stood before television cameras and almost burst into tears, and he said, "One has to live with a sense of inevitable tragedy." Inevitable! Frustrating! No way out! H. G. Wells, the great historian, lived only one year into the nuclear age, and he said this, however, before he died: "For man and his world, there is no way out."

Now, I don't want you to think I'm agreeing with all of these people. Friend, there is a way out, and it's up. I don't want you to think I'm agreeing with all these people; I'm just painting you a picture of what this world looks forward to—what we call peace. George Rathjens, a Professor of Technology at MIT—he collaborated with four other Harvard experts, and he judged that "man can expect war—nuclear war—in the next twenty-five years being triggered," he said, "by one of the smaller nations like India, Pakistan, Israel, or one of the Arab states, or," he said, "one of the African nations." And then, the consensus of this brain trust—this brilliant man from MIT with the Harvard men—the consensus said, "The only alternative to all of that is"—and I quote—"a very nasty kind of world government." And, of course, that will come under the antichrist.

But, all of these people have the ominous feeling that we're all looking down the barrel of a loaded cannon and it's about to go off. And, the diplomats huddle together,

and the UN meets. And, the world is not in peace; it is in pieces, and it is getting worse. And yet, that little baby... The angel said, "Peace on earth." (Luke 2:14) Isaiah said He is "*The Prince of Peace.*" (Isaiah 9:6) Well, peace was plainly promised, but I want to tell you, dear friend, there is no peace on this earth.

B. **No National Peace**

And, there is no peace here in America. Our great cities have become places where the citizens themselves are the prisoners who lock themselves in every night. And, our streets have become swamps of hate and discontent where the mosquitoes of crime and violence breed by the millions.

C. **No Domestic Peace**

And, our homes—what peace is there domestically in the home? Battered wives, abused children, divorce pandemic. In the last decade, one-parent families have increased eighty percent—in a decade.

D. **No Internal Peace**

No peace in the homes. No peace internationally. No peace domestically. And, how many people have peace in their hearts? People walking the streets of this city and every city haunted by the ghost of guilt, tormented by the pains of a conscience that's not right with God. They're trying to find peace from the mouth of a bottle; peace from some pill they swallow; peace from some toy, some possession, some relationship. But, the Bible says, "*There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*" (Isaiah 57:21) Isaiah 59:8 says, "*The way of peace they [have not known].*" (Isaiah 59:8) And yet, yet, there was a peace plainly promised.

II. **Peace Has Been Purposefully Postponed**

Well, what about this problem? Well, let me say this peace plainly promised has been purposefully postponed. It is coming, but it has been purposefully postponed. You see, God sent the Prince of Peace into this world. Do you know what we did with the Prince of Peace? We crucified the Prince of Peace. Now friend, you will never have peace apart from the Prince of Peace. And, what this world has done—it crucified its King. We nailed Him upon a cross.

Now, the Bible knew that He would be nailed on a cross, and this all didn't take God and His prophets by surprise. And, the peace that Isaiah is talking about is a peace that is not now; it is a peace that is in the future. I want you to look at it again in Isaiah 9:6: "*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder.*" (Isaiah 9:6) This peace comes not until the government is upon the shoulder of the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice verse 7: "*Of the increase of his government*

and [of his] peace there shall be no end—do you see now where His government and His peace are inextricably interwoven?—“*Of the increase of his government and [of his] peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David.*” (Isaiah 9:7) Now, when is Jesus going to sit upon the throne of David? When He comes again in all of His glory and all of His splendor.

This same prophet, Isaiah, (11:6–9) speaks of that time when the lamb and the lion shall dwell together and children will play with poisonous snakes. (Isaiah 11:6–8) And, “*the earth shall be [filled with] the knowledge [of the glory] of the LORD, as...waters [that] cover the sea.*” (Isaiah 11:9) And, we sing about it:

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run,—
His kingdom spread from shore to shore,
'Til moons shall wax and wane no more.
From north [and] south the princes meet
To pay their homage at His feet,
[And] western empires own their Lord,
And savage tribes attend His word.*

—ISAAC WATTS

What a day that will be! “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*” (Revelation 22:20) “In this age,” Jesus Christ said, “there will be wars and rumors of wars.” (Matthew 24:6; Mark 13:7) We’re experts at winning the wars and losing the peace; and now, in America, we can’t even win the wars any more.

Now, I don’t mean that we, because the Bible prophesies there’s going to be war, I don’t mean that we ought not to seek peace. The Bible says we’re to seek it. (Psalms 34:14) I don’t believe that we’re not to pray for peace. We are to pray that there might be periods of peace and tranquility. But, just as the Bible teaches we’re going to have famines, that doesn’t mean we’re not to feed the hungry. And, just as the Bible teaches that not everybody is going to be saved, that doesn’t mean that we’re not to try and win the lost. And, because the Bible prophesies there’s not going to be any peace, that doesn’t mean we’re not to work for peace. But, I’m telling you, this peace that has been plainly promised has been purposely postponed, because man crucified—nailed upon a cross—the Prince of Peace. And, mankind will know war until they recognize one more time God’s King, the Prince of Peace.

III. Peace Can Be Personally Possessed

Now, the third thing I want to say this morning: peace plainly promised, peace purposely postponed—but I want to speak now about peace personally possessed, because even though there will be no worldwide peace until Jesus reigns, remember this: wherever

Jesus is there's peace. Now, when He was on a storm-tossed lake, He said, "*Peace, be still.*" (Mark 4:39) And, those waves laid down like whipped puppies at His feet. I want to tell you, my dear friend, when Jesus entered into the portals of heaven, there is peace in heaven, and God's will is being done in heaven. Wherever Jesus is there must ultimately be peace. And, if Christ is in your heart—enthroned in your heart—you can have peace in your heart.

Now, this peace that the Lord Jesus Christ gives is twofold: first of all, it is peace with God; secondly, it is the peace of God. And, there always must be that order—first of all, peace with God, and then the peace of God.

A. Peace with God

Now, how do we have this peace with God? You see, man by nature is at war with God. He's an alien with God. He's an enemy of God, alienated from the life of God. But, the Bible says in Colossians 1:20—listen to it: "*And, having made peace through the blood of his cross*"—Jesus Christ suffered, bled, and died, and—"*made peace with the blood of his cross...to reconcile all things unto himself.*" (Colossians 1:20) Now, the idea is this: that our sins are an affront to a holy God, and they bring God's anger—they bring God's wrath. They put us at war, dissidents with God. But, the Lord Jesus Christ abolished that with His own blood. He paid the sin-debt. He took my place; He took your place. He carried our sins to the cross, and with His blood He atoned for our sins and made peace with God.

Years ago, I heard the story of a battle that was ensuing between two factions. And, out there on the battlefield it was very important that they have communication from headquarters, and the line had been blown apart by a landmine or a bomb. And, the wire was severed so that the message could not come through, and they needed that line to be attached again. And, a soldier told a young—at least, a captain told a young—soldier in the communication corps to go out there and repair the line. He went out under heavy fire, and he tried to bring those two ends of that wire together. But, the wire was too short, and he couldn't connect them again. And so, he had to make a decision. And, he took hold of one wire with one hand, took hold of the other wire with the other hand, and let the impulses and currents of those wires flow through his own body to restore that broken communication. They found him the next day on the battlefield, of course, still holding the ends of those wires. And, when they looked at him, his body was in the form of a cross. When I heard that story, I thought about our dear Savior who took sinful man with one hand and holy God with the other and by the blood of His cross He reconciled God and man.

A woman lay dying. They went in to tell her that she was dying, to break the news to her. And, one man went in well meaning, and he tried to put it to her this way: he said,

“Lady, have you made your peace with God?” She said, “No, I haven’t.” He said, “Well, I’m here to tell you that you need to do that because you’re gravely ill. Don’t you think that you ought to make peace with God?” She sweetly smiled and said, “No,” but there was a look of serenity and peace on her face. And, they said, “Lady, you don’t understand. You are going to die. You’d better make peace with God.” She said, “Not so. I have no need to make peace with God, for I am resting in the peace that He has made for me.” We don’t make peace, friend. He made peace through the blood of His cross, and we rest in that peace.

Now, what are God’s peace terms? What are God’s peace terms? Just because Jesus Christ died and made peace, that does not mean, however, that we have entered into that peace. Romans 5:1 says, “[And] therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”—“justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1) Have you put your faith in Him this morning? Have you said, “Lord, I can’t save myself. I know I cannot save myself. I cannot work my soul to save, but I trust you, Lord Jesus Christ, with all of my heart, with all of my soul”? If you do that, dear friend, you will have that peace with God.

B. Peace of God

But then, not only is there that peace with God—that peace with God results in the peace of God. And, Philippians chapter 4:7—the Bible says this, and it’s a very wonderful passage of Scripture: “*And the peace of God*”—God’s peace—“*shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus [our Lord].*” (Philippians 4:7) Now, the peace of God becomes yours when you have peace with God. It is God’s kind of peace. You don’t keep this peace; this peace keeps you. “*And the peace of God...shall keep your hearts and minds.*” (Philippians 4:7) The word *keep*, as I told you several weeks ago, literally means “to protect”; it literally means “to guard.” It’s a military word. It means as soldiers guard a garrison or a garrison about a fortress. It means here that God’s peace just surrounds you in the midst of a troubled world.

You know, God gives you His peace. When Jesus Christ was facing the cross, He said in John 14:27: “*Peace I leave with you, my peace...give [I] unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*” (John 14:27) This was peace that the world cannot give and, therefore, peace that the world cannot take away. Have you ever thought that when Jesus died, it’s as though He was making a will? And, He willed His body to Joseph of Arimathea as long as Joseph’s tomb could hold it. He willed His Spirit to God the Father: “*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.*” (Luke 23:46) He willed His mother to John the apostle. But, you know what He left us? His peace. “*My peace...give I unto you.*” (John 14:27) It is bequeathed by our dear Savior that we are to have the peace of God. The literal peace that Jesus had—the peace of God—I can have in my

heart this morning. This same prophet, Isaiah, called it “*peace...like a river.*” (Isaiah 66:12) A river is constantly flowing. A river is beautiful. A river comes from a higher source, and it just keeps on flowing.

May I give you a testimony? I don’t say it braggingly, but I say it gratefully: you’re looking at a man that has two things in his heart—number one, joy unspeakable; and number two, peace like a river. And, I’ve had it for a long time—joy unspeakable and peace like a river. And, by the way, I can tell when I get out of fellowship with God when that peace disappears. You know, the Bible says we’re to “*let the peace of God rule in [our] hearts.*” (Colossians 3:15) And, that word *rule* literally means “referee.”

Did you watch the ballgame last night? The Tigers did pretty good, didn’t they? Now listen, folks, whenever a basketball player steps out of bounds, the referee blows the whistle: you’re out of bounds. I’ll tell you, whenever you, as a Christian, step out of bounds, God’s Holy Spirit blows the whistle. That’s the peace of God that is refereeing in your heart. And, whenever you’re out of bounds—whenever I do something, or say something, or act some way that I ought not to act—I lose that peace; I lose that joy. And, that peace—that joy—becomes the referee in my heart. I have, because of Jesus, the King of Peace, I have peace with God and I have the peace of God.

Conclusion

Vance Havner said that people are trying to find peace with the four T’s. You know what they are? First of all, treaties—peace treaties. You know why the UN will never work? Because of wicked people. A scrap of paper means nothing to a wicked man. Other people are trying to find peace through thrills. They think that, you know, that somehow, if they could just have enough pleasure, they’ll have peace. But, you see, pleasure is never meant to be a main business; it’s meant to be a byproduct, and those who seek it the most have it the least—real joy and peace. Then, other people try to get peace out of things, but the Bible says, “*A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things [that] he possesseth.*” (Luke 12:15) As a matter of fact, the more things you have the more things you have to worry about. Isn’t that true? Really true. It’s ironic—it’s really ironic. Listen, folks, if things would make you happy, then those who have the most of them would be the happiest, wouldn’t they? Well, look around—look around. “*A man’s life [does not consist] in the abundance of the things [that] he [possesses].*” (Luke 12:15) And, not only in things and thrills and treaties, but one other thing he mentions—theories. People try to find peace in philosophies, but the Bible says, “*The way of peace [they’ve] not known.*” (Romans 3:17) The way of peace is Jesus Christ. Folks, there is no peace, no joy, no happiness apart from our dear, dear, wonderful Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Prince of Peace. And, one day, He is coming, and “*[this] earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as...waters [that] cover the*

sea.” (Habakkuk 2:14)

I heard of a man who died. He was married to a woman, and she said, “Well, I’ll prepare a very beautiful marker for his grave.” And, she put on there in granite... She didn’t have much money in her household budget. He was quite wealthy, but he was very close with his money. She took what she had. She bought this marker and had put these words on it: “Rest in Peace.” And then, they went to the lawyer, and the will was read. And, she didn’t receive anything. She had very little money left, but she went back to the stonecutter and said, “I want you to add three more words: ‘Till I come.’ ”

Friend, I want to tell you something: I’m resting in peace till He comes—till He comes. And, when He comes, He will bring peace. The prophet Isaiah clearly, plainly said that Jesus is “*the Prince of Peace.*” (Isaiah 9:6)

And, this Christmas season I want to remind you that just as clearly, just as plainly, just as certainly as Jesus Christ came the first, He will come again. Next Sunday morning I’m going to be preaching on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as our Christmas message to show people that the Christ of Christmas who came actually, literally, physically, bodily is prophesied to come again the same way. If He should come today and if we should not meet next Christmas morning, are you one hundred percent certain that, if He should come, you’d be caught up to meet Him in the air? Let’s pray together.

Dealing with Stress

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: Unknown

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 40

“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.”

ISAIAH 40:28

Outline

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 - A. The Demands of Service
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 - C. The Devices of Satan
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Introduction

We've been in a series of sermons dealing with God's psychiatry: "How to Handle Your Emotions Before Your Emotions Handle You." And, we've talked about such subjects as doubt and depression. We've talked about loneliness. Today we're going to be talking about stress. This is the day of the quick cash, the mad dash, and a lot of stress. Now, we think we're very intelligent. We think we're very smart. But, really, when you analyze it, about what we have added to civilization is speed and noise. We get there faster, but we still don't know where we're going. We don't go on a bicycle anymore; we go on a motorcycle. And, we get there and just make a lot more noise. Somebody has said that this generation can be described in three words: hurry, worry, and bury.

I read an interesting statistic: "Americans consume 4 ½ million pounds of aspirin every year." Can you imagine that? This is an aspirin age—4 ½ million pounds of aspirin. We're all tense. We're all stressed up and nowhere to go. That's all right. You ought to have seen the eight o'clock crowd. We are so wrapped up in hypertension.

I was reading the newspaper *USA Today* this past week, and they were talking about this fact that more of us are hypertensive. Nearly 20 million people in the U.S.A., who last year were considered to have normal blood pressure, have been reclassified as hypertensive by the American Heart Association. The Association now estimates that 55 million adults and 2.7 million children have elevated blood pressure. In 1985, only about 39 million were considered hypertensive. Well, think about it. We're all under stress. Well, what does the Bible have to say about stress? Quite a bit, I believe.

I want you to look now in Isaiah chapter 40. And, by the way, Oliver Cromwell, the great British statesman, said that Isaiah chapter 40 is the greatest chapter in the Bible. Isaiah dipped his pen into golden glory when he wrote Isaiah chapter 40. Those of you who are musicians know that Isaiah chapter 40 was the inspiration for Handel, as he wrote the mighty oratorio, *The Messiah*. Those of you who know church history know that Isaiah chapter 40 was the chapter that put iron into the blood of the great Martin Luther, when he stood before that religious council and said, "Here I stand; I can do no other. God help me." Who was that? That was God speaking through Martin Luther, who had received his strength from Isaiah chapter 40. I want us to look at this wonderful chapter, but not all of it. I want us to look just at the few verses at the end. You know the verses by heart if you've been saved very long. These are old familiar verses, but I pray God that their familiarity shall not cause you to look casually upon them this morning. Isaiah chapter 40, verse 28: *"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."*

I. The Problem of Stress

Our outline this morning is going to be exceedingly simple. First of all, I want you to notice what I am going to call the problem of stress. Look, if you will, in verses 29 and 30: *"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall."*

Years ago a Spaniard named Ponce de Leon came to Florida. He was seeking a fountain of youth. Somebody had told him, or somewhere he had been led to believe, that there was a fountain in Florida, and that if you would drink the waters of that fountain, you wouldn't get old anymore, and that you would have the secret of perpetual youth. Alas and alack, there is none for the body, but praise God, there is one for the soul. And, it's right here in Isaiah chapter 40, and I want you to pause long enough to

take a deep drink of the soul's fountain of youth, but *"though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."*

Now, what is the problem of stress? The problem of stress is that gap between the demands that are placed upon us and the strength we have to meet those demands. Now, that is the stress ratio, and that is the stress factor. Over here are the demands that we have: the necessities, the deadlines, the opportunities, all of those things that we must do, want to do, have to do, and ought to do. Over here is me and my weakness. Over here is my *ought to*, and over here is my *weakness*. And, the difference between those things causes stress, okay?

Now, here is the problem of stress. Even the youths—the young people—are going to find themselves stressed. They're going to find that their strength is gone. They do not have the strength to meet the need. And, it's not a sin to be stressed. It's not a sin to be weary. It's not a sin to run out of strength. You may be weary for three basic reasons.

A. The Demands of Service

Number one is just for plain demands of service. For example, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself was weary. The Lord Jesus knew what it was to get tired. Do you remember in John chapter 4 before he had witnessed to that Samaritan woman? The Bible teaches that Jesus was weary, and He sat upon the curbing of the well there at Samaria. Jesus had been traveling those hot dusty roads, and His body was depleted and drained of strength, because He was human. He had humanity just like we do.

Do you remember there in Mark chapter 5 when Jesus was preaching and teaching, and the crowd thronged Him, and there was a little lady who had an issue of blood? She elbowed her way through that crowd, and she stuck out that thin transparent hand. She thought, "If I can just touch the hem of his garment, I'll be made whole." And, she touched Him, and immediately she was healed, but Jesus turned around and He said, "Who touched me? Virtue has gone out of me," and the word that is translated "virtue" might well be translated, "strength is gone out of me; life, vitality, has gone out of me into her."

Now, friend, whenever you minister, whenever you serve, if you're truly ministering, if you're truly serving, you are giving of yourself, and virtue goes out of you, strength goes out of you, and life goes out of you. It was said of John the Baptist, *"He was a burning and a shining light,"* and friend, there can be no shining without burning. And, when you burn, you're consumed. Virtue goes out. Every time I preach, something goes out of my very life, out of my strength, and out of my character. When I stand here and preach four times a Sunday, I am literally giving of myself. And, on Sunday nights you can just slide me under the door.

That would be true of anybody. That's true when you sing. When this young lady stood here and sang a while ago, you could tell she had prayed over the song and soaked it in prayer. She was giving of herself. And, that's the reason we were blessed, because we received more than the song. We received a part of her life as she gave of herself. Every time there is shining there has to be a burning. "Virtue has gone out of me."

The Lord Jesus knew what it was to be weary. He got so tired one time that He went to sleep in the middle of a storm on the fantail of a little ship in the Sea of Galilee. Now, you've got to be weary to do that. Jesus wasn't lazy. He was weary, bone tired. And, even the youths shall faint and be weary. And, as you serve God, as you do those things that you ought to do—the very necessities of life—you're going to find that strength goes out of you. And, yet duties remain. And, the difference between those duties that you have and the strength that you have to meet those duties causes stress and frustration. How am I going to get it done? How am I going to meet these deadlines? Where is the strength coming from?

B. The Dissipation of Sin

But, not only the demands of service, but also the dissipation of sin, will take strength out of you. Now, the one is not bad, but the other is. Think of ole Samson, that heavyweight champion of the Old Testament, strongest man who ever lived, as far as I know. He destroyed a mighty lion as though he'd been a little baby goat, carried off the gates of the city of Gaza on his shoulder, slew an army of Philistines with the jawbone of a jackass. Mighty, mighty, but he began to flirt with a trashy harlot named Delilah. He prostituted his relationship with God, and because of his sin his strength was depleted. And, sin, my dear friend, will weary you; it takes out physical strength, emotional strength, moral strength, and spiritual strength. But, all of that is compounded by the devices of Satan.

C. The Devices of Satan

Now, look: the demands of service, the dissipations of sin, and the devices of Satan. Satan waits until he sees that you're weary to oppose you spiritually. We mentioned this a few Sundays ago. Remember when the children of Israel were leaving the land of Egypt, there was a king named Amalek, and he was a demon-possessed king. He kept his eyes on the children of Israel. And, God reminded Moses, in the Book of Deuteronomy He said, "Do you remember what Amalek did to you?" He said, "He watched and he smote behind most of you when you were weary. That's when he came. That's when he smote you."

Now, folks, all of us are going to know the stress factor. And, good people and bad people, sinners and saints, young and old, even the youths, shall faint and be weary.

There are demands that are upon us, and there is this negation of strength, and there's a gap, and that gap is the stress factor, okay?

II. The Promise of Strength

The second thing I want you to notice: not only what I want to call the problem of stress, but I want you to see the promise of strength. Now, look at it again. Look. The Bible says, in verse 31, *“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.”* They shall—not may, they shall—renew their strength.

Now, look at the word *renew*, the Hebrew word *chalaph*. It literally means, they shall “exchange” their strength. You see, listen. The Christian life is not so much a changed life as it is an exchanged life. Did you take a Christmas present back this year to the department store and exchange it? Now, what we do is we take our so-called strength, which is weakness, and we exchange it for God's strength. “They that wait upon the Lord shall exchange their strength.” I give Him my strength, which is really weakness, *“and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”* And, the strength of men is but weakness. And, I give that to God, and God gives His to me, and there is a change, there is an exchange. It's the same thing that the Apostle Paul talked about in Galatians: *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”* That is more than a changed life: it is an exchanged life. Did you know—listen, folks—that you can put off your weakness just like you take off a coat, and you can put on God's strength just like you put on another one? “They that wait upon the Lord shall exchange their strength.”

Now, that comes that brings us to a real question: How do you wait upon the Lord? Because this is the crux of the whole matter. And, here is the answer to stress. The key to dealing with stress is in this little phrase here in Isaiah chapter 40 and verse 31, “waiting upon the Lord.” The Psalmist said almost the same thing in Psalm 27, verse 14: *“Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.”*

Well, the question comes, “Pastor, what does it mean to wait upon the Lord?” And, here's where most of us are going to miss it. Most of us might think that waiting on the Lord is some form of passivity, sitting around waiting for God to do something. It is not passivity. It is activity. Waiting on the Lord is not being passive, is not sitting around until God finally moves. When you wait upon God, you take the initiative.

You know back in the olden days when a boy would be courting a girl, do you know what they would call it? That young man is *waiting* on that young lady. You could take that several ways too, I suppose—*waiting* on her to get ready. But, folks, that's not what they meant. When they meant that he was *waiting* on her, it meant that he was pursuing

her very actively. Well, listen. When I was head over hills in love with Joyce—and I'm more in love with her today than I was then—I was actively pursuing her. My mind, my emotions, my will, and everything, was to pursue this girl that I loved. And, dear friend, when you're waiting upon God, you're not just sitting around. You're active, actively pursuing God.

Now, I found four verses in the Bible that deal with and use the word *wait*. And, I want to show you what those four verses mean, so far as waiting upon the Lord is concerned, because if waiting upon God is the secret of strength, you need to learn how to wait upon God.

A. Long for Him

Now, first of all, it really means that you are to long for the Lord. There is to be a deep, deep desire in your heart for God. Let me give you the verse—Psalm 62, verse 1: *“Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.”* That is, “Oh, God, You're the one I need. Oh, God, I long for You.” *“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.”* “I long for You, Lord. I desire You. I seek You.” Do you desire God? To wait upon God is to long for Him, to desire Him, to want Him more than anything else.

B. Listen to Him

And, if you do, then to wait upon God means something else. If you long for Him, you'll listen to Him. Proverbs chapter 8, verse 34—listen to this verse: *“Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.”* Now, God here links waiting with listening. I listen to God. When I wait upon the Lord, I have tuned my ears to God. And, how do I do it? I watch daily at His gates. That is, God and I have an appointment. God and I have a quiet time. God and I have a time and a place at His gates and at His doors where I rise and I go to meet Him and I wait upon Him. I look to Him, and I listen to Him. I'm going to put this sermon in a sentence right now. Dear friend, the answer to stress is a quiet time with God. That's so simple.

“In quietness and confidence possess ye your souls.” “Come away, my beloved.” “Be alone with God.” We talk about this quiet time. We preach about it. We sing about it, but we don't practice it. And, dear friend, that's the reason so many of us are so stressed. We have not met God early in the morning. We've not sought His face. We've not shut other things out and shut ourselves up alone with God. We've not saturated our souls in His Word and bathed ourselves in His presence. It is no wonder that we're stressed.

C. Look to Him

To wait upon God means, number one, to long for Him. And, because we long for Him, we listen to Him. And, dear friend, when we listen to Him, we learn to look to Him. Listen

to this. In Psalm 145, verse 15, God is talking about the creatures of the field, the animals and all of these creatures that God has created. It says, *“The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.”* Do you know what that means? They all look to God. The birds look to God, the foxes look to God, and the beasts of the field look to God. *“The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.”* “Lord, I look to You. I don’t know what the need is today, God, but You’re sufficient. I don’t know what the problem is, God, but You’re sufficient. God, my hope is in You.”

You see, when I long for Him, I’ll listen to Him. And, when I listen to Him, I will look to Him. My strength cometh from the Lord. *“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills.”* No wonder we’re stressed.

I wonder in this vast congregation this morning how many have a consistent quality quiet time with God. Most of us would not want it to be known how much quality time we spend with God. Well, no wonder why we’re so tense. No wonder why we’re so nervous. No wonder why we’re so stressed.

D. Live for Him

We are to wait upon God. And, that means to long for Him. That means to listen to Him. That means to look to Him. And, my dear friend, it means one more thing: it means to live for Him. Listen, if you will here, in Proverbs chapter 27, verse 18. Again, he uses this word *wait*. *“Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof.”* That is, how do you keep a fig tree? Well, you prune it, fertilize it, nurture it; you do whatever is necessary to keep the things that would harm it away. You spend time on that fig tree. Now, he says, if you prune a fig tree, then you have a right to eat the fruit thereof. But now, wait a minute. He’s not finished yet. *“So he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.”*

Now, God is our Master, and if we wait on the Lord, that means that we are to be doing for God what a person would do to a fig tree if He wanted fruit from a fig tree. When a person serves a fig tree, he gets fruit from a fig tree. When a person serves God, he eats Heaven’s fruit. *“So he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.”* What does it mean to wait upon God? It means to serve God. It means to live for God. When you go to a restaurant, and the waiter comes, why do we call him a *waiter*? Because he serves us.

I told one the other day, I said, “I don’t know why they call you the waiter. I’ve been doing the waiting.” But, the word *wait*, in the real sense, to *wait* upon somebody, means, to “serve” him. When you wait upon God, that doesn’t mean you’re just sitting in a chair waiting, saying, “When is God going to do something?” It means you are living for God. When a man takes care of a fig tree, he eats the fruit thereof,” and when a man waits upon his master, his master honors him.

Now, what does it mean, therefore, to wait upon God? Listen to me. They that wait upon the Lord are going to exchange their strength. To wait upon God means to long for God. It means to listen to God. It means to look to God. It means to live for God. That is, my life is wrapped up in Him. Are you waiting upon God? If not, no wonder you haven't exchanged your strength.

III. The Program of Service

All right now, the third and final thing I want you to see: first of all, the problem of stress; secondly, the promise of strength; thirdly, the program of service. What happens when we wait upon God? Why does God give us strength? Well, look—verse 31: *“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength;”*—why? Well, number one—*“they shall mount with as wings as eagles;”*—number two—*“they shall run, and not be weary;”*—number three—*“and they shall walk, and not faint.”*

Now, there are three things that cause stress. One is adversity. The storms of life, they cause us stress. The other is opportunity, the things that we want to do and we're afraid they're going to get away from us. They cause us stress. And, the third is necessity, the things we have to do. Adversity is those things that come upon us unexpected. Opportunity, those are those glorious things that we want to seize upon; we don't want them to pass us by. Necessities, those are the things we have to do day after day.

Now, I want to show you, dear friend, if you fail in any of these areas, you're going to have stress. Now, adversity comes to us, and it's like a storm. And, God here uses the analogy of an eagle. And, he says, *“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles.”* Now, the eagle sees the storm. The eagle is no earthly bird. He's not a bird of the barnyard and the mud and the filth. He is used several times in the Bible to speak of the saint. We're like eagles. I've studied the life of eagles. I've read books about eagles. I've been impressed with eagles. Well, let me tell you about an eagle. An eagle looks to the storm, and longs for the storm, because he knows that those thermal updrafts of the storm can cause him to soar and to rise higher than he ever would rise before. He spreads his mighty wings, and that storm is no threat to him, because he rides on the storm. He rises above the storm, and he just puts those wings out there, and he soars.

Let me tell you what a storm will do for an eagle. Number one: It causes him to rise high. Because of that, it causes him to see further, and it causes him to fly faster. Did you know that an eagle normally flies at about 50 miles an hour, but in a storm he's been clocked at speeds of almost 100 miles an hour? How is that, Mr. Pilot, for an eagle, almost 100 miles an hour? And, those very winds that would defeat others, he just catches, and he rises up, and God gives him strength in times of storm.

Now, friend, I want to tell you something. You're going to face some storms, and those storms are going to stretch you, unless you're waiting on God. But, if you wait upon God, God's going to exchange your weakness for His strength, and you're going to rise up, and God is going to give you strength for elevation. But now, wait a minute. Not only is God going to give you strength for elevation, but God is also going to give you strength for acceleration, because not only does He say, "*they shall mount up with wings as eagles,*" but he also says, "*they shall run, and not be weary.*"

You see, dear friend, not only are we going to face adversity, but we're going to face opportunities. There are going to be opportunities, and there are going to be times when we need to be so fast. There are going to be times when we need to meet deadlines. Do you ever meet deadlines? Oh friend, I face deadlines. I live by deadlines. I think I understand why they call them deadlines. You just, I mean, day by day—day by day—I have things coming at me—"It's time to preach again, Adrian"—and it's like the end of a runway coming at you. And, you live this way. I preach 6 times every week, sometimes 10 and 12 times a week. It's coming at you, coming at you, coming at you, coming at you, and these are opportunities that I don't want to miss. I don't want to fail, and I have to run.

*Be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant my feet;
[For my] God is marching on.*

—JULIA W. HOWE

God took this man Philip out there in the desert—he was a deacon. And, there was the Ethiopian eunuch—he was in a chariot. And, God said to Philip, "*Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.*" And, the Bible says that Philip ran. The time was short, but the time was right, and at that precise moment Philip and that Ethiopian eunuch got together. Had he argued with God, that opportunity would have gone past.

I read about a sign on a barrel of fish: "If not delivered in three days, never mind." Friend, there are opportunities, and what glorious opportunities, all around us. Philip ran and he joined himself to that chariot, and he shared with that man the Lord Jesus Christ. And, tradition tells us that that Ethiopian eunuch was the man that opened all North Africa to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Friend, listen. When you see opportunities, things you want to do, things you ought to, things you should do, and you just don't have the strength to meet them, you'd better spend time waiting on the Lord. Brother Bob, a guy said something to me the other day that really put me under conviction. I think it was truth from God. He said, "No one should ever attempt to do anything more than he can pray over." No one should attempt to do more than he can pray over. That's pretty good, isn't it?

You see, "*they that wait upon the LORD.*" When adversity comes, you wait upon God. God gives you strength to soar. When opportunity comes, and you wait upon God,

He gives you strength to surge, to rise, or to run; but if you can't rise, and you can't run, then distress. Wait a minute. God is coming to the climax now. You may say what he's about to say now is anticlimactic, but if you understand the way the Hebrews wrote, and understand anything about poetry or writing or divine inspiration, God is not diminishing; God is not trailing off. He has saved the best for the last. Not only elevation, not only acceleration, but determination. "We shall walk, and not faint." Friend, that may sound prosaic. But, that's the best, and that's the highest.

Do you want me to tell you what victorious Christian living is, primarily? It's not soaring like an eagle or running like a deer. It's walking day by day—for Jesus Christ day by day. You want me to tell you what the victorious Christian life is? It is fixing breakfast, dressing the kids when you can't find but one sock, getting them off to school on time, and still praising Jesus, or getting to church on time, amen?

Brother, I'll tell you what. It's no wonder the lost people don't come to church. We had to have an act of Congress to get our kids to church on Sunday morning when they were little. The time we got here, we needed to be here; we lost our religion getting here. It's cleaning toilet bowls, doing the same old grind on the job. It's serving God in good days and bad days, hot days and cold days, every day, every way, day after day, night after night, week after week, walking with Jesus. It is religion in shoe leather. And, more of us fail in these areas than we do in times of diversity or times of opportunity, just times of necessity. It's one thing to have soaring power; it's another thing to have surging power, but friend, it's something wonderful to have sticking power—to stay, to walk and faint not, to keep on keeping on for the Lord Jesus.

This past week I went in to see one of our deacons, who is in the hospital with a malignancy, Skip Pleasants. He's one of the most marvelous men I've ever met. A young man, his body being eaten up with a malady, a malignancy, he's paralyzed from this far on down. He's on a special bed to help relieve the pain. They're giving him high doses of painkilling medicine, but it's not enough. He can hardly speak. I went in to try to give him comfort, and I said, "Skip, how are you doing?" Do you know what he said to me? He said, "Preacher, one day at a time." And, brother, I felt the strength of God, for it is God who says, "*And as thy days, so shall thy strength be,*" "*and they shall walk, and not faint.*" I said, "Skip, I'm going to a deacons meeting. What do you want me to tell the deacons?" A tear rolled out of the corner of his eye, and he said, "You tell them, 'Praise the Lord—praise the Lord.'"

Now, friend, that's Christianity. Some of you say, "Oh, I want faith to be healed." Wonderful, if God gives you faith to be healed. I want to tell you there's a greater kind of faith. It's faith not to be healed, and today praise the Lord. Amen? Not to be healed, and to say, "Praise the Lord," and "*though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,*" one day at a time.

Conclusion

Why does God give us strength? Acceleration, elevation, but primarily determination to live for our Lord and the little things. “They that wait upon the Lord, they will exchange their strength.” Dear friend, the stress factor is the difference between the necessities that are laid upon you and the strength that you have in your life. When you see the factor, that is stress, and when God removes that factor, that, my friend, is surrender.

How Do We Handle Stress?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 3, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 40:28

“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.”

ISAIAH 40:28

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Be finding in God’s Word Isaiah chapter 40, would you, please. And, we’re going to begin in verse 28. And, when you’ve found it, look up here. And, I remind you again that when we come to the holidays many of us find ourselves all stressed up for the holidays. And, these days that we look forward to are days many times that make us very frenetic. But, it is not just during these seasons. I have been studying this thing of stress, and I have learned some amazing statistics. According to one expert, he said that 89 percent—89 percent—of Americans are suffering from what he calls chronic stress syndrome. So, that means most of us here today. Unless we’ve learned the answer, we have emotional, physical, and spiritual problems that cause us to be stressed and to be defeated. We find ourselves with the days too long, the nights too short. We don’t seem to get it all done. There is so much to do. There’s so little time to do it. But yet, in the scripture that we’re going to read today, I want to tell you there is hope. And, I know it to be true for two reasons. Number one: God’s Word says it. Number two: I have experienced it and do experience it.

I want you to read here Isaiah chapter 40, verse 28: *“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”*

Thank God for this passage of Scripture. We’re going to look into it deeply this morning. And, I pray God that the Holy Spirit will rivet every word upon your heart of God’s Word, and help you to learn how to deal with this problem of stress that will destroy you, and do the same to you physically that sand will do to machinery, and spiritually will distract you and keep you from loving and enjoying the Lord as you ought to love and enjoy the Lord.

I. The Problem of Stress: Exhaustion

Now, the first thing I want you to notice is what I’m going to call the problem of stress, or exhaustion—exhaustion. Look in verses 28 again, and following. He says here, *“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding.”* Now, what does this mean? It tells us, folks, that God never gets stressed. God never gets tired. He is the unfailing, omnipotent, all-knowing God. A few Sundays ago we sang this song:

*Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great Name we praise.*

—WALTER C. SMITH

God never gets worn out. God never gets tired. God never faints.

I was in California a few days ago, and a man told me that he had his little four-year-old son. And, he had taken him, Brother Whitmire, to a praise service. And, in this praise service they were singing that wonderful praise song, “He is exalted. He is exalted. He is exalted on high.” And, the little boy was just singing that song, “He is exalted.” And, then he was carrying the little fellow up to bed that night. It was about 11:30, and he had the little fellow on his shoulder, and he was still singing that song, only he was singing, “He is exhausted. He is exhausted. He is exhausted on high.” And, I want to tell you, God is never exhausted. God never gets tired. God never faints. God is never weary. His strength is unflagging and unfailing.

But, what about yours? Look at the rest of us in verse 29. The Bible says, *“He giveth*

power to the faint;”—that’s us—“*and to them that have no might he increaseth strength*”—that’s us. Even the young people. Look: “*Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.*”

Now, what is stress? What is stress? Well, stress is that gap that exists between the demands that are placed upon us and the strength that we have to meet those demands. Over here there are certain demands that are upon us, certain responsibilities, certain necessities, certain deadlines, certain opportunities, things we want to do, things we need to do, things we ought to do, things we have to do, and we face those every day. That’s on one side of the equation. On the other side of the equation is our inability, our weaknesses, our faults. We have an *ought to*, we have a *must do*, but we also have an *I cannot*, and the gap in between those things, and we know it. You know it. I know it. That is stress. There’s a chasm between the *ought to’s* and the seeming *can’t do’s* that overwhelm us. And, that is stress.

Hey, listen. Perhaps you think if you had an executive job you wouldn’t have any stress. I was reading where a company of well-paid executives had an executive staff. They noticed that the morale on the staff was very low, and so they hired a clinical psychologist to come in and examine these people. Do you know what they found out? That 21 of the 22 men on the executive committee were suffering from such things as ulcers, high blood pressure, depression, and they all summed it up in one word: stress. Folks, listen. That was 21 out of 22 executives.

Well, you say, “I’m not an executive.” Well, if you have a more mundane job, we find out that stress is very high, and such people as waitresses, machine operators, miners, inspectors, painters, hair dressers, meat cutters, plumbers, warehouse workers—also, I hate to admit it, but according to survey—preachers are under an incredible amount of stress. And, a lot of clergymen are living lives of quiet desperation, because they’re not able to cope. There’s so much to do. They’re making up their mind. Well, which parishioner shall I make mad today? Somebody wants me over here. Somebody wants me over here. Somebody wonders why I didn’t do this or that. And, stress is there. And, even young people today are under incredible stress. That’s the reason so many of them are turning to drugs and promiscuity and alcohol. It is because of stress.

And, you know, we talk about the empty nest syndrome. There’s another syndrome that’s happening today. It’s the re-feathered nest. A lot of young people having graduated from college, not able to find jobs, not able to live out there in the hostile world, are coming back home to somehow try to find some rest, some peace of mind. And, as a result of all of this stress, folks—listen—we’re coming apart at the seams. There are broken homes, unpaid bills, scarred lives, and in this community, every community, there is this great army of the walking wounded who are being destroyed by stress. The results physically: indigestion, upset stomachs, shortness of breath, pains,

headaches, muscle pain, fatigue, boredom. Emotionally: temper tantrums. You and your wife are far more likely to have an argument if you're stressed and tired and all bent out of shape. You're more apt to get away from God and to fail to have your quiet time. Folks, if you're too busy to pray, or too tired to pray, there's something wrong in your life—if you're too busy, or too tired, to pray.

Ron Blue—remember we had the series, the economic series, that Ron Blue taught on video here a few years ago. It was a great blessing. We called it, “Lord of All.” Ron Blue—I was reading a few days ago something he said in one of his books. He said that the University of Washington School of Medicine measured stress, the relative stress of various things in your life, things that could happen to you. And so, he put the amount of stress that a person could have from zero up to 200 on a scale and then listed these particular things. That is, they did this at the University of Washington. They said, if you have over 300 of these at one time, you're probably going into the hospital. The death of a spouse, 100; divorce, 73; marital separation, 65; personal injury or illness, 53; marriage, 50; fired at work, 47—more stress to get married than to get fired; marital reconciliation, getting back, 45; retirement, 45; pregnancy, 40; sexual difficulties, 39; death of a friend, 37; change to a different line of work, 36; change in responsibilities at work, 29; son or daughter leaving home, 29; wife begins or stops work, 26; change in living conditions, 25; change in work hours, 20; change in residence, 20; change in church activities, 20; change in sleeping habits, 16; vacation, 13; Christmas, 12. All of these things cause stress.

And so, I read also that a great number, as many as 75 percent, of people who are going to primary care physicians are going there because of stress-related disorders. And, they tell us now the people who go to spas are not going to spas any more to lose weight, but to relieve stress, primarily. Stress, folks, is a problem. And, when you're stressed, you're more vulnerable to satanic attacks. You're more prone to argue. You're more prone to leave alone your quiet time and to fail to seek the face of God. Now, that's the problem of stress. We call that exhaustion—exhaustion.

II. The Promise of Strength: Exhilaration

All right now, let's move on. Let's look at the promise of strength—the promise of strength. We call that exhilaration. Look, if you will, in verse 29: *“He giveth power to the faint.”* Look in verse 31: *“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.”* Now, it's not a sin to be stressed. I want to stress that. It is not a sin to be stressed. As a matter of fact, we need a certain amount of stress in our lives to keep us healthy. There needs to be a certain amount of tension in our lives. But, to remain under what we call a chronic stress syndrome is pathetic, and it is a sin to fail to come to God, and to get the help that God has for us, to find out God's purpose for our lives.

A. Strength to Fly in Times of Adversity

Now, verse 31 is the key here. Look at it: *“They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.”* Number one: *“They shall mount up with wings as eagles.”* Now, don’t just run past that. That is a very interesting verse. Think about the eagle. The eagle flies on the winds of the storm. The storm to the eagle is an opportunity. He soars on those winds of adversity. Now, we all know heartaches. We all know disappointments. We all know problems. You say, “Pastor, do you have problems?” Just two times: when I’m awake or asleep. We all have problems. I mean there’s nobody that doesn’t have them. Man that’s born of woman is full of trouble. These are storms that come to us. Now, life is not primarily a problem to be solved; it’s a mystery to be lived. We just have these problems that come to us. And, what a lesson the eagle teaches!

Perhaps Isaiah, who lived in the Middle East where there at that time were many eagles, he’d seen that eagle out there on his rocky crag on one of those many mountains that surround Jerusalem, and he’d seen the thermal drafts coming up from the hot desert floor, and he’d seen that eagle waiting for just the right wind or the right storm. And, I’ve seen eagles do this myself: spread those mighty wings, and begin to catch those updrafts and rise higher and higher and higher, actually thousands of feet, so high that ice may form on his wings. And, the very storm, the very winds, that might buffet others are the very thing that cause that eagle to soar and go higher.

Now, folks, I’ll tell you this much. When you learn the secret of this passage of Scripture, the storms that come to your life—and they will come—will only do as they do for the eagle: they’ll cause you to rise higher. You will never be closer to God than when you’re in a storm trusting Him. Now, if you’re in a storm not trusting Him, you’re in a lot of trouble. But, when you’re in the storm, spreading the wings of faith, you will rise higher and higher.

I’ll tell you something else about an eagle. When the thermal updrafts come, he stays up longer. The eagle is not there frantically flapping his wings. He is gliding upon the storm. He rides upon the storm. And, you’re going to find out that when you learn to wait upon the Lord, not only will you rise higher, and get closer to God, but you’re going to learn endurance. You’re going to learn endurance that you’ve never known. You’re going to mount up with wings like eagles. And, God’s plan for you is patience, and God’s plan for you is endurance.

I’ll tell you something else. When the eagle gets up high, he has a view of all of the landscape. Job says, in Job 39, verse 29, speaking of the eyes of the eagle, *“Her eyes behold afar off.”* The eagle has a particular lens on his eye, where he can look right into the face of the sun, but an eagle can see things incredibly.

One time I was in Alaska and had the privilege of going fishing in Alaska a number of years ago. And, we didn’t catch many fish—caught one fish about that long. And,

we'd been out all morning, and the captain of the ship said, "You want to see something?" He took that fish, and there was an eagle—it looked to me like he was only a speck about as big as half of my little fingernail—sitting on a crag over there. And, that captain of that ship said, "Watch this," and he took that fish, and went like that, and just threw it out. And, that eagle sitting way, way off—I could hardly see him—that eagle spread those wings and began to fly, and circled and circled and circled, and then swooped down, and picked up that fish. It was an awesome thing to see. It was worth the trip, but I was thinking about the vision that that bird had. Had no idea he was watching the situation, but he saw that entire situation.

And, folks, I want to tell you, when God gives you the wings of an eagle, he'll give you the eyes of an eagle. You'll be able to see things, and understand things, and storms and adversity that you never knew. When you wait upon the Lord, you will mount up with wings as an eagle.

I did a little research on eagles, and an eagle can fly at about 50 miles an hour. But, in storms, he can reach speeds of 70, 80, 90, and sometimes 100 miles an hour. This bird, incredibly, receives great strength, and God will give you that strength, if you will learn.

Now, you may like the flying lessons. You may not like the lessons. I was reading yesterday Deuteronomy chapter 32, verse 11. It says this: "*As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings...*" Now, what does that mean: as an eagle stirs her nest? Well, here the mother eagle builds that nest, and we've seen, some of us, those huge eagle nests, some of them six feet across. And, that mother eagle builds that nest out of sticks and twigs, and then she begins to feather the nest with her own feathers. And, it's like a soft mattress, and the little eaglets there are born, hatched there, and then she begins to go and find snakes and worms and all sorts of things to feed the little eaglet. And, he has this voracious appetite—and, you know, they look like they're just a little ball of fuzz—and a great, huge mouth, just like *that*. And, she's feeding these little eaglets. But, the time comes when they get rid of the fuzz, and they get feathers, and their little wings now are beginning to flap, and she wants them to fly. And, these naturalists tell us—they've watched this happen—that the mother eagle will come and begin to nudge the baby eagle to the edge of the nest. And, the nest may be up on a mountainside—I mean, thousands of feet up in the air. And, then when the little bird is there, she just flutters over it, begins to beat frantically with her wings. That's what this verse says in Deuteronomy. And, the little eaglet tumbles out, and begins to fall, and begins to scream—and down, down, down, down, down, down, down, down, down, it goes. At the last moment, mother just sweeps under that little eaglet, and he puts his little talons there into the feathers on her wing, and she bears him up, and brings him back to the

nest. And, she does this over and over again, until one day he learns that he can trust those updrafts himself, and he learns to fly.

Have you ever thought that God may be giving you flying lessons, and you say, “Well, I don’t know how to fly.” Well, God’s just shoving you out of the nest. God is just stirring the nest to help you to learn what Isaiah’s talking about, that they that wait upon the Lord shall mount up with wings as an eagle.

I was reading something about a woman named Jennifer Johnson. She had run out of gasoline in the wrong part of town at the wrong time of day. She was so infuriated with herself she just literally beat upon the steering wheel. She said, “How could I be so stupid? Here I am out of gas. I knew I should have gotten gas. She looked around maybe for a convenience store, maybe a service station, a telephone. There was nothing there. She wasn’t about to get out and walk. And, she said, “What am I going to do? Maybe I’ll just wait here. And, after a while, maybe a police car or somebody will come along to help me. God, keep me safe.” And then, as it began to get dark, she saw a man walking toward her. She says, “Oh, dear God, don’t let him see me. Maybe if I sit still, he won’t see me.” But, he came walking toward her. She bowed her head and prayed, and when she looked up, he was there just looking in the window, tapping on the glass. She was frightened to death. She began to scream in terror, but he kept knocking on the glass, trying to say something to her. But, she screamed and said to him, “Go away! Go away!” And so, he turned and went away. But then, he came back with a steel bar in his hand, and he began to break the window. And, she is screaming all the more, and she says, “Now, I’ll just blow the horn.” And, she sat down on the horn, and she began to blow the horn as loud as she could. But, he broke the window and reached in and took her by the arm and began to try to pull her out. And, she with the heel of her shoe kicked him right in the face and bloodied his nose. But, he opened the door and would not take no. He laid the steel bar aside and pulled her out of that car. And then, he released her hand, and she crouched back getting ready to fight. That’s when she heard the rumbling, roaring sound, she saw the flashing lights, and she looked up and saw that train coming that had hit her car and carried it on down the track and demolished it. Here was a man who was trying to save her life and get her off the railroad tracks, and she could not even see what was happening, because of her fear and her fright.

And, sometimes we think that the things that God is doing to us are cruel things and horrible things. But, sometimes we don’t understand that God is simply giving us flying lessons. Another song that I love:

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break*

In blessings on your head.

—WILLIAM COWPER

B. Strength to Run in Times of Urgency

Now, God gives us strength in times of adversity, that is, to spread our wings and fly like an eagle. But, God also gives us strength in times of urgency. Look at our verse again. Look at it—verse 31: *“They shall mount up with wings as eagles”*—that’s in times of adversity. *“They shall run, and not be weary”*—that’s in times of urgency. Now, there are times when we don’t have adversity; we just have urgency. I mean, there’s something that needs to be done, and it’s got to be done now.

*Be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet;
Our God is marching on.*

—JULIA W. HOWE

I remember reading in the Bible there where Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch—the Ethiopian Eunuch—was in a chariot, and God said to Philip, “Go join yourself to the chariot.” And, the Bible says, in Acts chapter 8 and verse 30, that Philip ran and joined himself to that chariot. Running speaks of joy, or it speaks of urgency. It speaks of love. It speaks of ambition. Maybe we run out of fear, but we have to run.

And, there are times when I have to get it done. I mean, there are deadlines on me. I have to preach every Sunday morning. I have to be ready. It just happens over and over again. And, folks, when you’re on the runway and about to hit the pine trees, you’ve got to take off. There are times when you just have to get it done. We all know deadlines, don’t we? We’re running to meet deadlines.

I read an article a man in the *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote. He said, “Over there in Africa somewhere, there is a gazelle. And, when that gazelle wakes up in the morning, that gazelle says, “If I cannot outrun the fastest lion here in the jungle, I will be eaten.” And, somewhere there wakes up at the same time a lion. And, that lion says to himself, “If I cannot outrun the slowest gazelle, I will starve.” And so, they both wake up running. And, folks, many of us feel the same way. We have got to get it done. “If I don’t get it done, I’ll starve.” Or, “If I don’t run, I’ll be eaten. But, I have got to run. I’ve got to have the strength. Like it or not, I have these deadlines that I face.”

C. Strength to Walk in Times of Necessity

Well, the Bible says, when we learn to wait upon the Lord, God gives us strength, not only to mount up in times of adversity, but to run in times of urgency. But now, here’s a third thing. Look: strength to fly in times of adversity—strength to run in times of urgency. But, here’s the third thing: strength to walk in times of necessity. Look at the last part: *“And they shall walk, and not faint.”* You say, “That’s anticlimactic. That’s not nearly as exciting as running.” This is not anticlimactic. This is the most important thing.

Now, folks, I'm going to tell you where you're going to fail most. You're not going to fail most in times of adversity, nor in times of urgency. You're going to fail in days of necessity. In the humdrum things—that's where most people fail; in the everyday areas of life that call for day-by-day faithfulness; in the drudgery and the monotony of life that we call walking. In the Book of Ephesians, we are told to walk—seven times—to walk in the Lord.

You know, what is your walk? I mean, what is your walk? What are you going to be faced with Monday morning? You've got to get out of bed, first of all. You've got to get the bed off your back, and then next, if you're a mother, and you have little children, you've got to dress the children, or see that they get dressed. And, then you've got to go in and fix breakfast. And then, you've got to see your husband off to work, or you've got to go off to work. And, if you're a school kid, you've got to go to school. And, you've got to do your homework. And, you ought to do your daily Bible study and your quiet time. You ought to have prayer. And, you ought to visit the sick. You've got to cut the grass. You've got to pay the bills—these ordinary, mundane things. And, you've got to do that all day, every day—good days, bad days, cold days, hot days, when you feel like it, and when you don't feel like it. Folks, that's what we call religion in shoe leather.

Now, it's one thing to soar like an eagle; it's another thing to run like an athlete. But, folks, listen. The real mark of a Christian is to learn how to walk day by day in shoe leather, to walk and not faint, to keep on keeping on. Sometimes it doesn't seem like we're getting anywhere at all, but we just have to keep on.

A snail was going up an apple tree. A worm came out of the crevice of that apple tree and said to that snail, "No need going up there. There are no apples left up there." The snail said, "There will be some when I get there." We just need to keep on keeping on, just day by day, week after week, enduring.

III. The Provision of Strength: Exchange

Now, you see, this is the promise of strength. Now, how does this become real to us? You say, "Sure, preacher, I understand. I'd like to fly like an eagle. I'd like to run like an athlete. I'd like to walk day by day. I know I need to do that. But, how do I do it? It's little good for you, pastor, to tell me that I'm stressed out. I already know that. And, why dangle all these wonderful things in front of me? I don't know how to do that. I don't know how that I can mount up with wings. I don't know how I can run, and not be weary. I don't know how I can walk, and not faint. I want to know." Well, I'm glad you've asked. Now, I want to tell you. I want to tell you right from the Word of God. Again, this is not psychology. This is not a pep talk. This is not a motivational speech. This is rock-ribbed Bible truth.

Now, look at it and let it get into your heart: *"They that wait upon the LORD shall*

renew their strength.” Exhaustion, that’s in one verse. Exhilaration, that’s in the next. But, exchange is in this verse. You say, “I don’t see exchange there.” Well, look at it again: “*They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.*” The Hebrew word *chalaph* literally means, “exchange.” “They shall *exchange* their strength.” Now, what does that mean? As I wait upon the Lord, there is an exchange that takes place. The Bible says, “God’s strength is made perfect in my weakness.” Galatians 2, verse 20: “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ [that lives] in me.*” There is an exchange. I give Him my weakness. He gives me His strength, and therefore, His strength is made perfect in my weakness. When I wait upon the Lord, God exchanges my weakness for His strength, and I exchange my weakness for His strength. There’s a transaction there. “*They that wait upon the LORD*”—literally, it says this—they “*shall [change] their strength.*”

Now, God doesn’t ask you to use your strength; God asks you to discover His strength. And, the next time you need strength or patience, don’t say, “Lord, help me to use my strength.” Say, “Thy strength, Lord; Thy love, Lord; Thy patience, Lord; Thy goodness, Lord; Thy mercy, Lord. You’re alive in me, and in me the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily. And, every demand upon my life is a demand upon the God that lives in me.” You say, “Fine. Okay. I understand that, but how can it become real in my life?”

Well now, look at this verse again: “*They that wait upon the LORD.*” That’s the clue. That’s the key. That’s the answer to the whole thing. Now, if you want to rise up and soar like an eagle, if you want to surge like an athlete, if you want to stick like a soldier, and be faithful day by day, you’ve got to learn to exchange your weakness for His strength. And, the way you do that, very clearly, very plainly, is to wait upon the Lord—to wait upon the Lord. Now, what does that mean? What does it mean to wait upon the Lord? Does that mean just sit around waiting for God to do something? No. Waiting upon the Lord is not passive. It is active. It is not just sitting there waiting for God to move. It is a very active, aggressive thing.

In the olden days, when a young man was trying to woo and win a girl, the old timers would say, “That young man is *waiting* upon that girl; he’s *waiting* upon her.” Now, that didn’t mean he was sitting around doing nothing. It meant that he was scheming every day and doing everything he could to win her hand. And, what does it mean to wait upon the Lord? I want to mention three things, and I’ll be finished—very quickly.

1. Long for the Lord

Number one: It means you’ve got to long for the Lord; you have to desire the Lord. Put in your margin Psalm 62, verse 1: “*Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.*” Say, “God, you are my hope. I wait on you. I look to you. I long for you.”

Now, let’s go back to that girl whose car was out of gas, sitting there on the railroad

track, not even knowing it. What could she have done? Could she have given her car a pep talk? Could she have said, “Well, I’ll push it out there where the other cars are, and maybe by environment, it will do better? Or could she move her car to a better neighborhood? Or could she give her car a paint job, or maybe an oil change, to change its self-image? The car won’t run without gas, and friend, you can’t operate without God.

It’s not a change of environment you need. It’s not a pep talk that you need. It is God that you need. That’s what David said. *“Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation”*—my deliverance. To long for the Lord.

2. Listen to the Lord

It also means—listen carefully—to listen to the Lord. Here’s a great verse. Put it down—Proverbs 8, verse 34: *“Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting”*—waiting—*“at the posts of my doors.”* There’s our word again. What does that mean: “waiting at the posts of His doors”? It means, each morning you wake up, you say, “Lord, what are you saying? I’m here at your door. I want to hear you, Lord. Speak to me. I am waiting for instructions from you.”

Somewhere I’ve read of a man back in the Depression who needed a job, and the telegraph company was advertising a job. Well, in those days, if anybody advertised a job, the waiting room would be full. And, this man got there, and there were people there, already there, waiting, trying to get that job as a telegraph operator. And, it seemed like they weren’t calling anybody in to interview them. The man was just sitting there waiting in the waiting room, and listening, and he heard a little noise in the background coming from the inner office—dot, dot, dash, dash, dot, dot, dash, dot—and he began to listen to the Morse code. He got up and went into the room, came back with a big smile on his face, and he’d been hired. Everybody else said, “How did you do that? How did you know to go in there?” He said, “I was listening to the message, and it said, ‘If you can hear and understand this, come in. The job is yours.’” And, everybody else is sitting out there in the waiting room, wanting to be a telegraph operator, but they weren’t listening to what was going on in the room.

And, I think, in a place like this, Brother David, there are people sitting in this auditorium, they won’t hear what God is saying. They’re not waiting upon the Lord. They don’t have their ears tuned to the Lord.

3. Live for the Lord

To wait upon the Lord means to long for the Lord. It means to listen to the Lord. Listen. It means to live for the Lord. Listen to this verse—Proverbs 27 and verse 18: *“Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof.”* If you want figs, keep a fig tree. So, he that waiteth on his master shall be honored.

Now, what does it mean to wait on your master? It means to serve. You want your Master to honor you? Then serve Him. Now, when you go into the restaurant, the

person who comes, we call him the waiter. But now, they're saying, "I am your server." Because the word *waiter* and a *server* is the same thing. To wait upon the Lord is not to sit around, but it is to serve the Lord. Now, if you wait upon the Lord, you're saying, "Lord, I report for duty. I am here for your service." That's what it means to wait upon the Lord.

Conclusion

When you long for the Lord, when you listen to the Lord, when you live for the Lord, you are waiting upon God. And, when you wait upon Him in faith, when you say, "Lord, here I am; you are my deliverance; Lord, your strength is my strength; today I'm going to live this day in your power," I am telling you, folks, as much as I'm standing here, something supernatural happens to you. God infuses you with strength. You exchange your weakness with your strength, and this problem of stress is dealt with the only way it can be dealt with. "*They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.*" And, when you do, you'll find when the storms of life come, you'll just simply rise higher. When you wait upon the Lord, when those deadlines come, God will give you supernatural strength to run. "Be jubilant, my soul. Our God is marching on." "Be jubilant, my feet." You will be able to run in those times of opportunity, and in those times of necessity, day after day after day, night and day, good days, bad days. You will find that God is there in your life giving you strength. And, don't you tell me it won't work, if you haven't tried it. Don't you tell me there's nothing to it. "*They that wait upon the LORD*"—what's that next word?—"*shall renew their strength.*" That's what God says; not what Adrian says. God says that. And, our necessity today, our opportunity today, is to learn to wait upon God, to long for Him, to listen to Him, to live for Him. That's what it means to wait upon the Lord.

How to Handle Holiday Stress

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 8, 2002

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 40:28–31

“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.”

ISAIAH 40:28

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Introduction

And now, as these young people are finding their way to their seats, would you find your way in the Word of God, in the Book of Isaiah chapter 40. In just a moment, we are going to begin reading in verse 28. I want to talk to you tonight about how to handle holiday stress. Holidays are a time that can stress you, and as a matter of fact, can steal away your joy, when they are supposed to bring happiness. We have a generation that is all stressed up and has lost its direction. As somebody said, “All stressed up and nowhere to go.” We need to understand how to live with peace and calmness in these days.

Now, what is stress? What do I have in mind when I talk about stress? Stress is the

gap between the demands that are put upon us and our ability to meet those demands. We are beleaguered with words like *should*, and *ought*, and *must*. And, we know that there are things that we are called upon to do, but we don't seem to have the strength to do them, and as a result, that causes stress. And, it is a fearful thing to Americans.

Chuck Swindoll, I read recently, said that in the United States 70 people every day take their lives—70 a day. That is three an hour; people who are taking their own lives, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Americans are saying, “I just can't take it anymore.” Now, that, friend, is stress. As a matter of fact, the suicide rate for Americans under 30 has increased 300 percent in one decade. Think about it. Those are alarming statistics. Stress.

Well, let's see what God's Word has to say about it. Isaiah chapter 40, verse 28: *“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.”* God never grows tired. God is never perplexed. That is what that means. *“He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”*

I. The Problem of Reduced Strength

I want you to notice, first of all, the problem of reduced strength—the problem of reduced strength. Now, notice what He says here in verse 30: *“Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.”* How many of you remember all of the strength that you had when you were young and vigorous and vital? Those were great days, and if you were blessed with health and vigor, you remember them with joy.

I can remember coming up as a young man very interested in athletics, and would work with the weights, and run, and just enjoy everything I could do physically to build my physique and to train my body in athletic endeavors. And then, I became a minister, but I never lost my love for athletics.

I can remember, as a young man—I started preaching when I was 19, and I left a football scholarship to take a church as a pastor—and I can remember on holidays we would have New Year's Day, or Thanksgiving Day, or some special day, and I would say to the men in the church, “Let's play touch football.” And, I would get the men out there in the church and show off, you know, and I would try to knock them down, and run around, and just show off. And, they would say, “Look at the preacher. Look at the preacher.” And, boy, I was really something. You know, I thought I was really great.

I can remember Brother Whitmire, in Merritt Island, First Baptist Church of Merritt Island, I got in a game of touch football. We were playing there on that field that is

exactly east of the church building at that time. And, we had a group of guys out there, and we were playing touch football, and Larry Freshower—do you remember Larry Freshower?—Larry Freshower had the ball. And, I said to myself, “Self, I’ll run him down.” And, I started running after Larry. I was 33 years of age. I can remember it like yesterday. Larry was not much further than you are from me. And, I said, “Well, I’ll catch him, and I’ll run him down.” And, do you know what happened? My mind made a contract my body could not keep. I said, “Legs, where are you?” What has happened? And, I ran for a little while, and I said, “Let him go”—“Let him go.” I realized that I was no longer a boy-preacher; I was a man-preacher, and I could no longer get out there and show off.

“The youths are going to faint.” I tell you, I don’t care how young you are and how strong you are. Listen to what He says: “Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.”

Now, what causes this problem of reduced strength? Let me mention several things that will. I want to mention five of them that will take the strength out of you, that will take the wind out of your sails.

A. The Demands of Service

Number one: the demands of service. When you serve the Lord, it will take strength of you. Now, there is an expenditure to serving the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is normal and natural. Jesus was in the midst of His ministry, and a woman came and touched the hem of His garment, and He said, “Who touched me? Virtue has gone out of me.” And that literally means, it may be translated, “Strength has gone out of me.” Let me give you the scripture—Mark chapter 5, verse 30: “*And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?*” Now, it pays to serve Jesus, but I want to tell you that it costs to serve Jesus. It does. There is a great expenditure of energy if you are serving the Lord Jesus Christ, even when you are in the Spirit, as the Lord Jesus Christ was in the Spirit.

“Pastor Rogers, do you ever get tired?” You’d better believe I do. I get tired in the work. I never get tired of the work. Back when we used to have three services on Sunday morning, and then again on Sunday night, friend, you could slide me under the door at the end of the day. And, sometimes I would wonder, “Am I getting ready to say it or did I just say it?” And, I wasn’t doing anything wrong. I was working, serving the Lord, but you can get tired serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Strength will go out of you. Virtue went out of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every person that you meet, if you are a minister, or a servant, a Sunday School teacher, they take a little piece of you out. And, you are giving, and giving, and giving again. And, you have to get restored; you have to get renewed.

Now, I asked one preacher, “Do you take Mondays off?” He said, “No.” “Why not?”

Isn't Sunday your hardest day? Why don't you take Monday off?" He said, "I don't want to feel that bad on my own time." The only thing worse than being mummified is *Monday-fied*. The demands of service: that takes strength out.

B. The Dissipations of Sin

The dissipations of sin: boy, that will take strength out of you. Samson was a mighty man, the heavyweight champion of the Old Testament, but he dabbled in sin, and strength went out of him, because he lost his virtue. He did not expend it as Jesus did; he just simply lost it. What do you think of when you think of Samson? Do you think of a man with a big barrel chest and bulging biceps, broad shoulders? No. Had he been a man like that, the Philistines never would have been asking, "What is the secret of his strength?" His strength was spiritual. Now, it showed up in his physical frame. But, he had an anointing; he had a supernatural strength. But, sin sapped it, and there he is, bound, and grinding at the mill.

Some of you have sin in your life, and that is the reason you are so tired and so weary. You are trying to hold in bitterness. You are trying to control a bad temper. You have your moral and physical and spiritual strength that has been sapped by sin.

C. The Devices of Satan

The demands of service. The dissipations of sin. I'll tell you something else that will take the strength out of you, and that is the devices of Satan. Did you know that Satan, day by day, beleaguers the child of God? I've said this morning, *"If you have never met the devil, it is because you and the devil have been going in the same direction ."* And, Satan doesn't fight fair. If you were in quicksand, he would pat you on the head. Satan is waiting for you to be debilitated physically to attack you even more. I was thinking of this scripture in Deuteronomy chapter 25 about Amalek who smote the children of Israel. Now, Amalek was a wicked, demon-possessed, Canaanite king, and here is what the Bible says we are to remember. Deuteronomy 25, verse 17: *"Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God."* Amalek, a wicked king, saw the children of Israel coming from Egypt into Canaan, and he circled the camp, and if he saw somebody hobbling, somebody weak, some older man, some older woman, some little child, the weak, the feeble, those were the ones that he attacks. And, friend, when you are in a weakened state, perhaps even with physical weakness, Satan is ready to pounce you. I am talking about the problem of reduced strength. And, I am saying that the demands of service; I am saying that the dissipations of sin; I am saying the devices of Satan—these things can take the strength out of you.

D. The Disability of Sickness

I will tell you something else that will do it—and it is the disability of sickness. You just get sick. And, when you get sick, you don't even feel like praying. You don't feel like doing anything. You are just there. If you have ever been there, you know what it is. You don't want to move. You don't feel spiritual. Your strength has gone of you. Sickness has taken that from you.

E. The Devastation of Sorrow

And then, on top of that, one other thing that will take the strength out of you is sorrow—sorrow—the devastation of sorrow. If you have ever had a loved one to die—and most of us have—if you have ever been in great anguish and sorrow, you know that it just absolutely pulls the strength out of you. Now, all of this is the problems of reduced strength. We all know it. These and other things can take the strength out of us.

Now, let's move to the second thing. I want you to notice also the promise of renewed strength. God gives us a promise. Look in verse 31. Look at it: *“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.”* Now, friend, that is a promise, one of the greatest promises in the Word of God. There is a change that we may expect. This word *renew* is a Hebrew word that may mean they may “exchange” their strength. That is, we exchange our weakness for His strength. And He gives us His strength in place of our weakness. There is an exchange that takes place. We renew our strength. We literally exchange our weakness for His strength. Just like you would put on garments, you can clothe yourselves with strength. You see the Christian life is an exchanged life.

We need to remember this: that if we change our strength with God, what is the exchange? Well, we exchange our strength for His weakness. You say, “Well, God doesn't have weakness.” Well, that is the point. Put down 1 Corinthians 1, verse 25: *“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”* Again, the Bible says, in Ephesians 6, verse 10, *“Finally, brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”*

I went to college at Stetson University, and believe it or not, I did go to college. There near Stetson University, in Deland, Florida, there is a spring known as Ponce de Leon Springs. It is reported that Ponce de León, the Spanish explorer, came to Florida looking for the fountain of youth. He was looking for something that would keep him perpetually young. Folklore had it that there was a spring: if you would drink of the water, the elixir of that water would keep your hair black as a raven's wing, keep your joints supple, keep your muscles taut, and keep your complexion clear. And, he sought it, but he never found it. They named the spring after him, but friend, I have been to the spring. It doesn't work—it doesn't work.

There is none for the body, but there is one for the soul. *“Though our outward man*

perish, [our] inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16). Now, how can you do this? What is the formula? We have talked about reduced strength. What about renewed strength? What is the formula? Well, it is right here in the Word of God: “They that wait upon the Lord.” So, it is all wrapped up in the phrase, “to wait upon the Lord.”

F. What Does It Mean To Wait on the Lord?

Now, what does that mean? I took time to study the Scripture and to find incidences in the Bible where waiting upon the Lord is referred to, and I want to give you five things that waiting upon the Lord means.

Now, don't just get these in your notes—though I hope you will get them in your notes—but I want you to get them in your heart, if you really believe this is the Word of God. Now, if you just believe we are here going through some exercise, and it doesn't really make much difference, then you are wasting your time. But, if you would say, what this man is saying is coming out of the Word of God. Now, if it doesn't come out of the Word of God, forget it. But, if it is a promise, if God is telling you that you can renew your strength, and it tells you how to do it, would you not be foolish not to pay attention, and to do it? All right, what does it mean therefore to wait upon the Lord?

1. To Long for Him

Number one: It means to long for the Lord. Here is your scripture. Psalm 62, verse 1: “*Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.*” Now, notice I am using the phrase “to wait on God.” Look at it again. Psalm 62, verse 1: “*Truly my soul waiteth upon God.*” When King David wrote this, he was in a time of distress. And he knew that there was only one—only one—who could satisfy his soul. And here David is longing for the Lord.

Do you long for the Lord? Do you really? Or do you just want His blessings? Is there is a thirst in your heart for God? That is what it means to wait upon the Lord. David said, “My soul longs for You, Lord. I want You. I desire You. I seek You.” The Bible says you will find Him when you search for Him and seek with all of your heart (Jeremiah 29:13). Blessed are the thirsty, for they shall be filled—those who do hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6).

Now, precious friend, I don't know how much of God that you have. Now, listen very carefully, and don't forget this. *You have all of God you want. If you don't have any more, it is because you are satisfied like you are.* Are you thirsty? A shallow thirst: a shallow satisfaction. A deep thirst: a deep satisfaction. And, I am here to tell you that the man speaking to you is convicted of his own sin that he doesn't long for God more than he does. I long to long for Him. I desire to desire Him. I want to know Him. To wait upon the Lord is to long for the Lord, to cry out for Him.

2. To Listen to Him

Secondly, to wait upon the Lord means to listen to the Lord. Put this verse down. Proverbs 8 and verse 34: *“Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting...”*—there is our word again—*“waiting at the posts of my doors”*—*“waiting at the posts of my doors.”* That means listening to the Lord early in the morning, seeking the Lord. Listen to that verse again: *“Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.”*

Do you listen to the Lord? Do you wait upon the Lord? To wait upon the Lord is to renew your strength. To wait upon the Lord is to long for the Lord and to listen to the Lord. I make a habit of lifting my hands to God in surrender and saying, “Speak, Lord. What do You want me to do? What do You want me to say? What do You want me to give? Where do You want me to go?” “General Jesus, Private Adrian is reporting for duty.” “At the posts of His door.”

Do you stand at the door waiting for your Lord to come and give you orders for the day? Don’t get the idea that waiting on the Lord is idleness. Don’t get the idea that waiting on the Lord is passivity. In olden days, when a boy was courting a girl, the old-timers would say, “He is *waiting* on that young lady.” That doesn’t mean that he was waiting for her to get ready so they could go out, though he may have been doing that. But, he is waiting on her. That means he is courting her. He is pursuing her. He is after her. To wait upon the Lord is not inactivity. It is listening to the Lord.

3. To Look to Him

Now, you want your strength renewed? Long for the Lord. Do you want your strength renewed? Listen to the Lord. Stop being so selfish. Stop being so egocentric. Tune your ear to heaven, and say, “O my God, I wait upon You; I want your strength for my weakness.” The third thing it means: Not only to long for the Lord, not only to listen to the Lord, but it means to look to the Lord. Not look *at* the Lord; look *to* the Lord.

Now, if you had a financial difficulty, and there were bills, and you could not pay them, and you had a friend that was blessed with resources, and that friend said, “Look to me; I’ll take care of it,” what does he mean by that? It doesn’t mean, “Put your eyes on me.” It means, “Look to me; depend upon me.”

Let me give you the scripture now. Here it is—Psalm 104, verse 27. God speaks of the beasts of the field when He says, *“These wait all upon thee.”* Do you see our word *wait* again? All of these verses I am giving you have the word *wait* in them. *“These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.”* The animals, they wait upon the Lord. They look up, and say, “Lord.” By instinct, they are waiting upon the Creator to take care of them. Do you want strength? Do you want to take stress out of the holidays? Then listen, friend. Long for the Lord. Listen to the Lord. Report for duty. Look to the Lord. Let your expectation be in Him. He is able to meet your every need.

God is not the God of defeat. Nowhere in the Bible is a child of God ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, living in defeat, who is filled with a victory and filled with Jesus.

We are to live victoriously. He causes us always—always—to triumph in Christ Jesus. He has given us authority over the world, the flesh, and the devil, but we must look to Him. Every need will be met by Him as we look to Him. He cannot fail. He cannot. Look to Him.

4. To Live for Him

Next, it means, friend, to live for the Lord. Listen to this scripture. Proverbs 27 and verse 18: *“Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master...”*—there is our word again—*“he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.”* How does a person wait on his master? He serves his master. You go to the restaurant, there is a person who comes up and says, “I am your waiter.” Or, they may say today, “I am your server.” But, they mean the same thing: “I am here to serve you.” Now, you want strength? You say, “Lord God, I know the problem of reduced strength. I see the promise of renewed strength. I want strength.”

Question: Why should God give you more strength to serve the devil? Is the longing of your heart to serve God? To wait upon God is to serve the Lord. God is not going to dissipate His strength by giving to you a person who is not willing to wait upon Him. Let’s sum it up. To wait upon Him means to long for the Lord: *“My soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.”* It means to listen to the Lord: *“Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.”* It means to look to the Lord. *“These all wait upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.”* It means to live for the Lord: *“So he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.”*

II. The Purpose of Released Strength

Now here, let’s go to the third and final section. I want us to think now about the purpose of released strength. We have talked about reduced strength, and renewed strength; now let’s talk about released strength. When God does renew your strength, why does He do it? Well, He tells us right here. Look, if you will now, in verse 31: *“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength;”—number one—“they shall mount up with wings as eagles;”—number two—“they shall run, and not be weary;”—number three—“and they shall walk, and not faint.”* And, God will give you strength to meet three basic areas of your life.

A. Power to Rise in Times of Adversity

First of all, He is going to give you power to rise in times of adversity. That is the analogy of the eagle. The eagle is not afraid of the storm. When the winds come, the

eagle spreads her mighty wings and rises on those thermal updrafts. And, the greater the storm, the higher and the faster that bird can fly. The eagle is the king of the birds. Did you know Benjamin Franklin wanted to make our national symbol not the eagle but the turkey? Good night! The eagle is a mighty bird. It can look into the clear sky. The eagle has a retina that can look right into the full sun. The eagle can spy things afar off, but it is meant to meet and to master the storms of life.

God is not going to keep you from the storms of life. *Christianity is not the subtraction of problems from life. It is the addition of power to meet those problems.* And, when the storms come, God is going to give you strength—actual strength—to soar above those problems, to rise on those problems. The times you will grow most are the times when you have the winds of adversity in your life.

Have you ever noticed that ducks go in flocks, and geese generally go in flocks, but eagles seem like to go it alone? They like to be in the heavenlies alone. And there are times when it is just you and God, but you mount up with wings like an eagle. The eagle actually floats on the wind. He can stay there for hours and hours and hours with his wings locked in place. Because of the updraft, he doesn't have to do this like a pelican skimming over water. He just soars, because those things that are troubles and storms to him just lift him higher and higher and higher. And, we all need that.

Now, no eagle can fly on one wing. What are the two wings? Faith and obedience. Trust and obey. When the storm comes, look to the Lord, long for the Lord, listen to the Lord, live for the Lord. Spread your wings, and see if God doesn't do something supernatural. And, don't tell me He won't. I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, He will. And, if you haven't had storms, just hang around—just hang around: they are going to come. Now, what is the purpose of released strength? Strength—there is power to rise in times of adversity.

B. Power to Run in Times of Opportunity

Number two: There is power to run in times of opportunity. Now, notice what our scripture says. It says, *“They shall mount up with wings as eagles.”* And then, it says, *“They shall run, and not be weary.”* Now, He is talking here not only about elevation, but acceleration. He is talking now not about flying, but running. There are times when you need a special surge of energy. There are times when there is a task, and you need to run. You don't live your life running. You don't live your life in the storm. But, there are times when you are going to have to have a special surge of power. You are going to have to run.

I was thinking about Philip. You have read the story of Philip in Acts chapter 8. And, Philip has been called by the Spirit out into the desert in Gaza. And, there comes an Ethiopian, the treasurer for Queen Candace. He is with his entourage. He is in his

chariot. He is reading the prophet Isaiah. And God says to Philip, “Go join yourself to the chariot.” Now, he is a man. There is a chariot being pulled by horses. The Bible says that Philip ran—he ran—and caught that opportunity on wheels (Acts 8:29–30). You know, there are a lot of reasons why he might not have run. Race might have been one of them. Philip is a Jew, I suppose. He has a Greek name. But this other man is from Ethiopia. Race might have kept him from going. Or, maybe riches. This man had a lot of money. Philip probably didn’t have much money. Or, maybe the very fact the man was reading. Philip might have said, “You know, the time is not just right.” But, God the Spirit spoke to Philip, and said, “Go.” And, the Bible says that he ran.

*Be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet;
Our God is marching on.*

—JULIA W. HOWE

And, he ran and caught Him, got in the chariot, shared Jesus with him. And, tradition tells us that that Ethiopian was the one who opened up all North Africa to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I wonder how many opportunities I have missed because I was not sensitive to the Spirit, or because I did not have enough energy, enough gumption, enough power, to do what I ought to do, because I have not been waiting upon the Lord. When you are waiting upon the Lord, and those special opportunities come along, then you can seize that moment for the day. Friend, the opportunity is great today. The time for Philip was short, but the time was ripe.

C. Power to Resolve in Times of Necessity

Now, here is a third reason that God gives you strength, and God gives you power: Not only power to rise in times of adversity, and not only power to run in times of opportunity, but power to resolve in times of necessity. Notice what He goes on to say: “*They shall walk, and not faint.*” Does that seem anticlimactic to you? Do you think it ought to be you walk, and then you run, and then you’ll fly? No. God is saving the last as the most important. Most of our lives are not taken by dealing with storms or seizing opportunities. Most of my life, and your life, tomorrow will be the day-by-day necessities. And, what we need—yes, we need power to soar, and we need power to surge, but we also need power to stick, to stay.

A boy had an old horse: a swayback nag and oat-burner. But, he loved his old horse. A man saw that old horse, and he said, “Son, can that horse run fast?” He said, “No, sir, but he can stand fast.” We need some folks who can stand fast, who can plod, who can put one foot before another.

You see, many think, you know, “Pastor Rogers, you live an exciting life. You are a pastor. You meet people. You preach sermons. You go places. You do things. I don’t

lead that kind of a life. I lead a day-to-day life. My life has drudgery. My life has monotony.” Friend, that is exactly where Jesus Christ wants to show Himself powerful to you and to me—in the ordinary things: getting breakfast, dressing the children, getting them off to school, going to work, cleaning the house, doing the homework, paying the bills, doing your Bible study, doing personal soul winning. Day after day, week after week, step after step, walking, walking, walking, walking for Jesus. That is where we need strength, isn’t it? I mean, in the regular run of life, the mundane, the daily, the plain, the unexciting; all day, every day, hot and cold, dull and bright days, good days and bad days. As your days are, so shall your strength be. We need to learn that.

Conclusion

We had a young deacon in our church who had cancer. He was dying. I visited him. I said to him, “How are you doing?” He was a young deacon, handsome, tall. “How are you doing?” I will never forget what he said. He said, “One day at a time, preacher; one day at a time.” That’s what this verse is talking about. Walking and not fainting. Keep on serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, you say God is not interested in all the little things I do. Friend, can you think of anything that is big to God? A wise man once said this: “Our sun, the mighty sun that holds that planets in orbit, also ripens a little bunch of grapes, like it had nothing else to do.” And, the great God who runs this universe, He knows when you can’t find your car keys. He knows when you spill Sunday dinner on the floor. He knows when the children are misbehaving. He knows the disappointments. He knows that tomorrow morning at 5:30 the alarm clock is going to go off, and you are going to have to roll out and go to a job that you don’t particularly like. He knows that. And, I am telling you—you listen to me, precious friend—if this is not true, then let’s just not believe it. Let’s close the Bible. Let’s sell the church. Let’s quit. If it is true, let’s practice it. *“They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.” “They [will] mount up with wings like eagles.” “They [will] run, and not be weary.” “They [will] walk, and not faint.”*

That is a great promise, isn’t it? And all is wrapped in this: you have got to wait upon the Lord. And, folks, when I point that finger at you, I have got three pointing at me. I need to practice what I am preaching.

How to Handle Stress

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 6, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 40:28–31

“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.”

ISAIAH 40:28

Outline

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Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to Isaiah chapter 40—Isaiah chapter 40—and then when you’ve found it, look up here, and let me give you a statistic that I read. And, I’m shocked at this statistic, because it says that 89% of all Americans suffer from time to time with chronic stress syndrome. Now, I said 89%. Now, whether that is exactly right or not, that anybody would say such a thing—I mean, any reputable person would say such a thing—causes us to know that most Americans are emotionally fatigued, physically drained, and spiritually defeated. And, the reason is stress. The days are too long, the nights are too short, and we feel like we are the chief rat in the rat race. Many of us feel exactly that way. There’s too much to do, and not enough time to do it.

Well, thank God—hallelujah, praise the Lord—there is hope, and hope is on the way, and it is right from the pages of God’s Word. Isaiah, the Prince of the Prophets, dipped his pen in golden glory, and wrote these words. Look in verse 28—he begins with a

question: *“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.”* What’s he saying there? He’s saying God never gives out. God never tires. God is never perplexed. And then, look at the promise in verse 29: *“He...”*—this great God—*“He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might”*—you just say, “that’s me”—*“he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.”*—just because you’re young, that doesn’t mean that you’re immune to stress, but thank God for verse 31—*“but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”*

I. The Problem of Stress

Well, let’s think, first of all, about the problem of stress. All right, the problem of stress. And, we find that in verses 28 and 29. Now, in these two verses there are two categories of people that are mentioned. One, of course, is Almighty God. He is the omnipotent, all-knowing, sovereign God. He’s mentioned there in verse 28. Look at it again. He’s called there *“the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth.”* He is

*Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great Name we praise.*

—WALTER C. SMITH

That’s what the hymnist said, and that’s who that God is. There is not another like Him. Thank God for His great strength. Now, that’s one person mentioned, but now let’s get all those on the other side, and that is the rest of us. Beginning in verse 29: *“He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.”*

Now, we’re talking about stress. What is stress? Stress is that gap that is between the demands that are placed upon us and our ability to meet those demands. The difference between those demands and our ability is what we call the stress factor. Over here on one side are the responsibilities of life, the necessities of life, the demands of life, the opportunities of life—they’re all over here. And, over here all the things we want to do, desire to do, should do, ought to do—all of those things over here. That’s one thing. But now, on the other side are all of those things that we’re so much aware of today: our inability, our weaknesses, our sinfulness, our lack of knowledge, our faults. And, we say, “I want to; I ought to; but I can’t.” Now, here are the opportunities, the necessities. Here are the weaknesses and the failures. And, in between is a gap. That gap is the stress factor. It is the chasm between the *ought to’s* and the *can’t’s* that seem

to overwhelm us.

And, all of us are vulnerable. Are you an executive? I was reading where a company brought some people in, a management consultant, because there seemed to be poor morale among the executives in this company. You know what they found out? They found out that 21 of the 22 executives in this company—21 of the 22—were suffering from distress that was so great that it was causing even illness like ulcers, high blood pressure, depression, all of it—stress. But, it's not merely executives that have stress. You can have stress if you're a laboring person, a waitress, a machine operator, maybe a miner, an inspector, a printer, woodcutter, a pastor—you can have stress. And, you don't have to be an adult to have stress. As a matter of fact, many of our kids today are very stressed. I'm talking about junior high schoolers, and we're seeing so many of our youngsters now who are being given regular prescriptions of drugs so that they can cope in school—youths.

You know, there's an interesting thing that is happening now. We used to call it the empty nest; it's now the re-feathered nest. A lot of these folks, many, some in the middle age, have gone out into life, and have not been able to bear up, to stand up, and are coming back home. They cannot deal with what is out there. And, we're supposed to have so much, so many machines that are doing all this stuff for us. You know, it used to be, I walk out of my study, and it would be dark. I walk out of my study now and turn out the lights, and a lot of little lights are blinking. *Blink, blink, blink, blink, blink*—blinking—it's the computer, and all these little lights are flashing in there. Kind of weird, isn't it? And, you know what all these things are supposed to do for me? Save me time. I have less spare time today than I've ever had in my life. Who got it? Where did it go with all these timesaving things? I don't know, but, folks, I'm telling you, it's everywhere. There are broken homes, unpaid bills, scared lives, and the walking wounded. People are stressed up, and it shows. Indigestion, upset stomachs, ulcers, shortness of breath, chest pains, headaches, muscle pain, fatigue, boredom, temper tantrums, irritability, mood swings, forgetfulness, inability to concentrate, insomnia: these are all just another way of saying *stress*.

Let me tell you another statistic that I read—startling. I don't know whether it's absolutely accurate or not, but if it's anywhere near accurate, it's startling. Seventy-five to ninety percent of all visits made to primary care physicians last year were stress-related disorders and illnesses—stress. You know why people used to go to health spas? Primarily, not to build up, but to lose weight. That's what they used to go to health spas for. But, you know what they go to health spas today for, according to those who are in that business? They go for stress reduction, to see if they can work off some of the stress. And, that's the reason, very frankly, that people get into yoga, and New Age music, and all sorts of damaging things: to be able, they think, to get rid of stress. And,

when you're stressed, it's not just that you're not enjoying life; when you are stressed, you are especially vulnerable to the attacks of the devil.

We read over there in Deuteronomy chapter 25 where there was a king named Amalek, and he just waited for Israel when Israel was going through the wilderness, and he found the weak and the worn out, those that were on the outer fringes, and those were the ones that he attacked. And, when you're stressed, you're going to have some horrendous arguments in your home over nothing—little things. You're going to be more prone to argue, irritations will become mountainous, because you are stressed. Now, that is what I want to call the very fact of stress—the awful, terrible fact of it.

II. The Provision of Sufficiency

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see. I want you to see, not only the problem of stress, but I want you to see the provision of sufficiency—that God has not left you there without sufficiency. Look, if you will now, in verse 31: *“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”* Now, this is a wonderful, wonderful promise. Friend, it is not a sin to be stressed. It is a sin for help to be available to you and you do not avail yourself of that help. This is one of the most wonderful promises in all of the Word of God that, *“they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”*

A. The Ability to Fly in the Rugged Times of Life

Now, there are three distinct promises here. And, first of all, he says there is the ability to fly in the rugged times of life—to fly in the rugged times of life. And, he uses the eagle as an example. The eagle loves the storm. When the storm comes, when the rigors of life come, when the difficulties of life come, when the adversities of life come, we need to be like the eagle. The eagle waits for the storm, and he sits there on his ledge, and when he sees that hot air being heated by the desert floor, and those thermal drafts are coming up early in the morning, he steps off of his perch, and he lifts those mighty wings of his, and begins to soar. And, the faster the winds blow, and the more convection there is in the air, he just rises higher and higher upon these. And, he just soars on the wind.

Now, all of us have known storms; all of us know adversity. We need to learn what the eagle has taught. The eagle has taught us a tremendous lesson. When the eagle begins to rise up and to fly, what he has learned is that what cause others dismay is somehow a blessing to him, because when those thermal drafts come, first of all, he can fly higher. He could not fly that high if it were not for the storm. Secondly, he can

see further. And, thirdly, he can fly faster. In the reading I did, I found out that an eagle, he's very fast; he can fly at 50 miles an hour. But, if an eagle gets in a storm, he can reach speeds of 80 to 100 miles an hour. He gets up. He has an incredible eye. He can see right into the sun because of the special lens that he has. But, there's an old eagle sitting there on the perch, and here he sees those thermal drafts coming up from the desert floor, he just steps out with grace, he just rides upon the wind. Can you imagine an eagle doing 100 an hour? Can you imagine him just looking at all the horizon all the way around him and he is just having the time of his life? Folks, when troubles come, if you do what I'm going to show you in a moment, you're going to be able to be like an eagle.

Now, by the way, you know, an eagle has to be taught this. And, you may not like the flying lessons. Put in your margin Deuteronomy chapter 32 and verse 11. It's a wonderful lesson. It says, "*As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings...*" Now, what does that mean? Put it in your margin—Deuteronomy 32, verse 11. Well, an eagle builds its nest. Now, I've seen eagle's nest—they're monstrous things—and the eagle builds the nest very strong out of branches and twigs and anything she can find, but then she takes her own feathers and lines the nest until it's fluffy soft. Those little eaglets are there in that nest, and she flies off all over to find bugs and worms, and snakes and mice, and she's just bringing them fish, she's bringing those little eaglets there, and she's feeding them. She knows which is which, and she knows the last one she fed—and you can mix them up, they say, in the nest, but she knows who they are—and she's feeding them and feeding them. And, it's wonderful. Little Mama is just bringing that stuff in there on a regular basis until one day the mother eagle decides it's time for these little guys to learn how to fly, so she gets in the nest and begins to flap her wings. It's what that Deuteronomy verse calls "fluttering over them." She flutters over them; she makes that nest a little uncomfortable. As one preacher said, "Lord, if I'm building a nest, put a thorn in it." So, she's just beginning to get all of that fluff out of the nest, and it's getting now harder, and there are more sticks in it, and she's beating them toward the edge, and they look down from that sheer cliff way down there, and she's shoving them out. And, the little eaglets, if they could talk, say, "Mama, do you really want to do this?" And, finally, she just gives him a nudge. Now, he's never flown, and he goes head over heel, just screaming down the side of the mountain. And, she swoops down, and before he hits the rocky ledge, she puts out her wings, and his little talons come and cling to her feathers, and she flies back up, and puts him on the nest again. She does this over and over again, until one day he sticks out his own wings by instinct. And, there's a draft there, there's a buoyancy there, and he begins to flap a little bit, and to find out after a while that he can fly.

Now, I think most of us think that sometimes God is cruel when God is kind. I heard a story, one of the most remarkable stories. Jennifer Johnson was driving home one evening. It was misty. It was rainy. It was twilight. It was getting dark. She was in a section of town she really didn't like to drive through, and her car stopped. She began to beat her steering wheel; she was so angry at herself. She knew she was low on gas, she had determined to get gas, she had forgotten to get gas, and there she was. She looked around, and there were warehouses and chain-linked fences, and it was a place she didn't want to be. She said, "Oh no. It's dark. Is there maybe a fast food place, maybe a drug store?" Nothing. Hardly any light. She said, "Well, sooner or later, a police car will come along—I hope." And, she began to pray that God would help her. And, she sat there. And then, her worst fears were realized. She saw coming down the middle of the street a burly man headed right toward the car. She said, "Oh, dear God. Take care of me, dear God." She said, "Maybe if I'll slump down in my seat, he won't see me." So, she just sat there. But, he came to the window and looked in and began to tap on the window, told her to roll the window down. She said, "Go away! Go away!" He was saying something, but she couldn't hear what he was saying because she was screaming so loudly. She figured, "Well, if I blow my horn, maybe he'll go away." And so, she began to blow the horn as loud as she could. She blew it and blew it and blew it, and screamed. After a while, he turned and walked away. She was frightened, trembling. She said, "Thank You, Lord." But then, after a while, her worst fears were confirmed. She saw him coming back with a steel bar. And, he walked up to the car and shouted something again. She screamed and blew the horn. He took that bar and broke the window, reached in, and unlocked the door. She crouched back to the other side, but he reached in and took her by the arm, and began to pull her out of the car. She took her foot and kicked him right in the face and bloodied his nose, but he kept pulling, and he pulled her out of the car and released her. She drew back, not knowing what to do, getting ready to fight, when she heard the noise. She saw the light. The ground beneath her began to tremble, and she looked up and saw that train coming furiously, headed right toward her car. And, it hit her car and pulled it right on down the tracks, a total wreck. The man that she was so afraid of was the one who had saved her life. She had run out of gasoline on the tracks.

You know, so many times, we look at things, and we think, "These things are the most terrible thing that has ever happened to us." I hope you never have to go through an experience like Jennifer Johnson went through, but sometimes you cannot tell what is happening by outward appearance, and so the storms of life that come to you may be the things that God is bringing to you to deliver you, and to help you, and to cause you to rise higher.

B. The Ability to Run in the Rush of Life

And so, listen. When we wait upon the Lord—when we wait upon the Lord—we’re going to be able to fly—we’re going to be able to fly—in the rigors of life. But, not only are we able to fly in the rigors of life; we’re going to be able to run in the rush of life. Ever feel like you don’t have enough time? You say, “I’ve got troubles, yeah. I’ve got the rigors. I’ve got the storms.” But, you also have the rush. These are not storms. These are just deadlines that we have to meet, things that we need to do. We need to get things done, and we don’t seem to have enough time to get it done. Now, I’ll tell you, there’s enough time in every day to do everything God wants you to do. Don’t insult God by saying you don’t have enough time. But, sometimes we have to run to get it done. Someone’s written these words:

*Be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet;
Our God is marching on.*

—JULIA W. HOWE

I remember reading there in the eighth chapter of Acts about Philip and an Ethiopian eunuch, and that Ethiopian eunuch needed the Lord. God brought Philip out there, and said, “Go join yourself to that chariot.” And, the Bible says Philip ran to get that chariot. I mean, he had to catch a chariot. He’s running to do it. Here’s an opportunity on wheels. You see, there are the rigors of life, and there’s also the rush of life. And, we need to be like the eagle in the rigors of life, and we need to be like an athlete in the very rush of life, to get it all done.

I read what a sportswriter out in Los Angeles wrote one time. He said, “Somewhere in Africa there is a gazelle, a gazelle who wakes up in the morning, and that gazelle says, ‘If I cannot run today faster than the fastest lion, I’ll be eaten.’ In that same area of Africa, a lion wakes up, and he says, ‘If I cannot run faster than the slowest gazelle, I’ll starve to death.’ So, both the gazelle and the lion wake up running.” And, I think we feel that way sometimes. We wake up running, because Satan, like a roaring lion, is on our trail.

C. The Ability to Walk in the Routine of Life

And then also, there are opportunities. Well, where are you going to get the strength to fly like an eagle? Where are you going to get the strength to run in the rush of life? But now, wait a minute. Continue to read and look: “*But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary;*”—but now, read the last one—“*and they shall walk, and not faint.*” God will give you strength to walk in the routine times of life. There are the rigors of life, and the rush of life, but you know where most of us have most trouble? In the routine of life. I mean, when the storms come, we get through it. When the opportunities are there, we

sometimes meet the deadlines. But, it's just in the routine of life that most of us fail.

This is not, by the way, anticlimactic. This is right at the very most important part, because this is where most of us live most of the time. It's one thing to soar like an eagle, it's one thing to surge like an athlete, but it's another thing just to stick, and to stay, day by day. And, we serve God by flying in the hard times, by running in the happy times, but we need to walk day by day in the regular humdrum times of life.

Do you know most of us fail here more than anyplace else? We fail in the everyday areas of life. The great need—the great need—of Adrian Rogers—and I dare say of you—is day-by-day faithfulness in the little things—to walk and not to faint. Now, this was given to the Israelites. And, you see, the Israelites were on a pilgrimage. God says, “As your days are, so shall your strength be.” That's what was given to the Israelites. The Israelites were going from Egypt; they're going into Canaan. There are no trains, no planes, no buses, no bikes, no motorcycles. They had some camels, but those were few. They had some donkeys, but those were few. You know how the children of Israel got from Egypt to Canaan? They walked—one step at a time. There were rivers. There were valleys. There were mountains. There were difficulties. Wild beasts, all kinds of things—but they had to walk. Day by day, you've got to walk. Read the Book of Ephesians. The Book of Ephesians talks about us being in the Heavens—yes, it does—but it also mentions seven times that the Christian life is a walk. We're to walk day by day.

Do you know what victory is? You say, “Victory, Adrian, is for you to preach a sermon and a lot of people get saved. Victory is for us to have a great campaign somewhere, for us to do this or that.” No, let me tell you what victory is. Victory is getting breakfast for the kids in the morning, dressing the children, getting them off to school. Victory is going to work. It's cleaning the house. It's carrying out the garbage, which I've got to do. It's daily Bible study. It's your quiet time. It's prayer. It's visiting the sick. It's being sweet to your wife. It's all day, every day, hot day, cold days, dull days, bright days, good days, bad days, walking the Christian life—that. Listen. If you can be a Christian at home, you can be a Christian anywhere. Did you know that? If you can't be a Christian at home, you're going to fail every place else—anywhere, any time.

So, what does God do for us? Well, in times of adversity, we soar like an eagle. In times of opportunity, we run like an athlete. But, in times of necessity, we just keep walking day by day in the—yes, thank God for the rigors of life, and thank God for the rush of life—but, friend, there is the routine of life—the routine of life—the day-by-day things of life that we need to learn how to have victory and get rid of this stress factor. We need to learn endurance.

I heard of a snail that stared up an apple tree. And you know how snails move—very slow. A worm came out from a crevice in that apple tree and said, “No need to go up

there. There are no apples up there.” He said, “There will be when I get there.” So, you just have to day by day by day just keep on keeping on.

III. The Promise of Strength

Now, that’s the provision. We’ve talked about the problem, and the provision. Now, let me give you the promise. Here’s the promise. And, this is the key to all of it, because you say, “Well, Adrian, it won’t work for me.” Well, wait a minute, before you say that. Look in verse 31 again. Here’s the promise: *“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.”* Now, the promise has a provision, and the provision is that you must wait upon the Lord. Now, God says, if you wait upon the Lord, you will renew your strength. Look at the word *renew*—the Hebrew word *chalaph*—and it actually means, “to change” or “exchange.” The Christian life is not only a changed life; it is an exchanged life.

What I mean by that is we give Him our weakness and He gives us His strength. That’s the reason the Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 10, *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”* And, that’s the reason the Apostle Paul said, in Galatians 2:20, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”* It is an exchanged life. It’s almost like Joe and myself, we exchange coats; he takes mine, I take his. I’m going to keep mine, Joe. All right now, that’s what it would be like. Now, how does this take place? Well, look at it now. We’re told, in order for this exchange to take place, we are to wait upon the Lord—we are to wait upon the Lord. Now, what do we mean by “wait upon the Lord”? Let me erase this from your mind once and for all. Waiting does not mean simply sitting and doing nothing.

In the old days, when a boy would be calling on a girl, hoping to make her his bride, do you know that the old-timers would say, “That young man is *waiting* on that young lady.” You ever heard that? They say, “Oh,” they say, “he’s *waiting* on her.” Well, that certainly didn’t mean he was doing nothing. He was doing everything he could do to make her his. And, when we wait upon the Lord, that does not mean inactivity.

A. What Does It Mean to Wait on the Lord?

What does it mean “to wait”? Well, let me give you about four things that it means, and we’ll be finished—what it means to wait, because this is the key to the whole thing. You’ve got the problem of stress. You’ve got the provision of sufficiency. But, there must be a promise of strength. Where do you get this strength? I mean, how can you fly like an eagle? How can you run like an athlete? How can you day by day just keep on doing it? By waiting upon the Lord. Now, if that is true—and it is true—then you need to understand what it means to wait. That’s the key to the whole thing; if you miss this, the

rest of it doesn't matter at all.

1. To Long for Him

First of all, to wait upon the Lord means that you must desire Him, that you long for Him. Let me give you this verse—Psalm 62, verse 1: *“Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.”* Now, David wrote this, and when he wrote it he was in a time of stress and distress, and he knew that only God could satisfy his deepest need. Do you feel that way today? I mean, are you waiting for God? Are you saying, “Lord, I long for You; I want You, God”? Now, if you want relief without wanting God, just forget it. You have to wait upon the Lord.

2. To Listen to Him

Number two: not only does it mean to long for Him, but it means to listen to Him. Let me give you the verse that proves that—Proverbs chapter 8 and verse 34: *“Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting”—waiting—“at the posts of my doors.”* Let me read that again: *“Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.”* Now, what does that mean? Well, here's a person who says to the Lord, “Lord, I'm hoping You're going to come out that gate soon. And, I hope You come out and You'll have some instruction for me. I am waiting, Lord, for You to speak to me.” You know what that is? You know what the Book of Proverbs is talking about here right now? It is a quiet time. That's all that is—there must be a quiet time alone with God, watching daily at His gates. *“Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily.”* Do you do a daily “at My gates,” waiting, waiting, waiting, “at the posts of My doors”? Do you do that? Listen—listen. If you don't do that, don't tell me this verse won't work. You are to wait upon the Lord. That means to long for Him. That means to listen to Him. Can God get your attention?

Have you even been in a restaurant and needed a second cup of coffee or something and tried to get a waitress's attention? That's the most amazing thing. They'll walk right past you—*psheew*. They put on a tombstone of one waitress, “God finally caught her eye.” Can God catch your eye? Can God get your attention?

I read an interesting story. In the Great Depression—many of you don't remember the Great Depression; I was born in the middle of the Great Depression—where jobs were hard to get, one man who was a telegraph operator saw an ad, and this was his skill; he was so thrilled. When he went down to apply for the job, when he got there, the waiting room was already filled with people queued up to be interviewed for that job. He thought, “Boy, there's no hope at all. They're all here ahead of me.” But, he sat there, and after a while he heard a little sound coming from the inner office—you know the things, the “dot, dot, dot, dash, dash, dash, dot, dash, dot, dot, dot, dot”—and he began to listen to that. And, after a while, he got up and he walked into the inner office, said a few words, came out with a big smile on his face, and said, “I've got the job.” They said,

“You got the job? How did you get the job? Why you? We were here first.” He said, “I was listening, and those dots and those dashes said, “If you can understand this, come into the office; you have the job.” He was listening. He was tuned in. You know, there are some people just tuned into God, and other people not tuned into God.

3. To Look to Him

Listen. What does it mean to wait upon Him? It means to long for Him. It means to listen to Him. And, I'll tell you something else. It means to look to Him. Put this verse down—Psalm 104, verse 27: *“These all wait upon thee; that thou mayest give them their food in due season,”* talking about the animals. “These all”—all of these animals—“wait upon You, Lord, that You'll feed them.” Do you believe that God is going to take care of you? I mean, are you looking to Him? Do you long for Him? Do you listen to Him? Do you look to Him, just like the animals—the birds and the beasts of the forest—look to God? God gives them their food in due season. That's what it means to wait upon Him. Do you really believe that God can meet your need? Hey, that's more than a rhetorical question. It's meant to hit you right between the eyeballs. Do believe that God can meet your needs? Do you look to Him, or are you looking somewhere else?

4. To Live for Him

Now, here's the next thing, and here's the fourth thing. Not only does it mean to long for Him, to listen to Him, to look to Him, but, friend, very frankly, it means to live for Him—it means to live for Him. Proverbs 27 and verse 18: *“Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured”*—*“he that waiteth on his master.”*

Let's go back to the waitress, or the waiter. What do they do? They're there to serve us. They say, “I am your waiter.” Does that mean they just sit here? No, it means they're there to say, “Can I help you? What would you like? Do you need a menu? You need another this or that? More bread? You know, some more iced tea? I'm here to serve you.”

Now, when you wait upon the Lord, you're here to serve the Lord. You are His waiter. You are waiting upon Him. That's what this verse means. Listen to it again: *“Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.”*

You want God to give you strength so you can fly like an eagle? You want God to exchange your weakness for His strength so you can run like an athlete? You want God to infuse you with His mighty power so day by day by day by day you can walk and not faint? Question: Why should God give you more strength to serve the devil? To wait upon God means to long for Him, to listen to Him, to look to Him, and to live for Him. And, I promise you on the authority of this book that if you will wait upon Him, God will renew your strength, and that gap that you feel over here, all the things that you need to

do, you ought to do, that you must do, and over here, your weakness, your inability, your frustration, that gap in between will be removed, as He takes your nothingness and infuses it with His almightiness, when you learn to wait upon Him.

Conclusion

Now, look at me. Don't you say that won't work, if you don't try it. Don't you say that won't work. Because if you say that won't work, you know what you're doing? You're calling God a liar. God says, *"They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength."* You know why I preached this message this morning? Because I need it so much. I am preaching to Adrian this morning. And, every time that finger points out at you, there are three pointing right back at me. So, I'll get this tape and listen to it. We all need it. And, folks, it all begins with trusting Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior.

How to Handle Stress

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 6, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 40:28–31

“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.”

ISAIAH 40:28

Outline

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- I. The Problem of Stress
- II. The Provision of Sufficiency
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 - B. Strength to Run in the Rush of Life
 - C. Strength to Walk in the Routine of Life
- III. The Promise of Strength
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Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to Isaiah chapter 40, and in a moment we're going to read a scripture where Isaiah just dipped his pen in golden glory, and wrote by inspiration some wonderful, wonderful promises. What I'm going to talk to you about today is how to handle stress. And so, it's important to you, because many of us—almost all of us—are dealing in these desperate, dangerous days with stress.

Now, a machine that runs has what they call revolutions—like your automobile engine—revolutions per minute. They call that RPM. It's just turning very fast. But, friend, it is not the RPMs that wear out the engine; it is the friction that wears out the engine. So, what I want to talk to you today about is how to handle stress.

I read a statistic that was startling. Now, whether it is true or not I don't know, but if it is true enough that somebody would even make this statement, it is startling. Eighty-nine percent of Americans suffer from time to time with Chronic Stress Syndrome—89%, Chronic Stress Syndrome. That means that most of us are emotionally depleted,

physically drained, and spiritually defeated. Most of us are that way—Chronic Stress Syndrome. The days are too long, the nights are too short, the pressure is too heavy, the body is too weak, and we feel like we are the chief rat in the rat race. And, everybody thinks that everybody else is getting along better than we are in this matter. So much to do, and not enough time to get it done.

Well, look up here, and let me tell you something. There is wonderful, glorious hope from the Word of God; not from pop psychology, not just from human encouragement, but absolute rock-ribbed Bible truth backed up by an ironclad sovereign promise that there's help for you and help for me.

Notice Isaiah chapter 40 and verse 28 begins with a question: *“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard,”*—that is, “Hey, wake up. Don’t you know this?”—*“that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not,”*—God never has fainting spells. Thank God for that—*“neither is weary?”*—God has never said one time, “You know, I am so tired.” Even when God rested after creation, He did not rest because He was tired. It was a rest like a rest in music. It’s not because the musicians are tired when they have a rest in music. It’s for another purpose. It’s for emphasis. And—*“there is no searching of his understanding.”* God never is puzzled. God never says, “What am I going to do now?” *The Holy Trinity never meets in emergency session.* And then, here is the promise. *“He giveth power to the faint;”—*that’s us—*“and to them that have no might”*—again, us—*“he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:”—*as we’re going to learn, that you don’t have to be old to live with stress. You can be very young, even in grammar school, and have stress—*“but”*—thank God for that word *but*—*“they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”*

I. The Problem of Stress

Now, think with me, first of all, about the problem of stress—the problem of stress. In this passage, He mentions two categories. He mentions Almighty God, who can do anything, who created everything, who never gets perplexed, never puzzled, never tired, never worn out. That’s on one side of the equation. And then, on the other side, He mentions people such as we are: weak, failing, stumbling human beings—fainting, falling, and failing. That’s who we are in our humanity.

Now, what is stress? Well, stress—listen. Here’s what stress is—stress is the gap between the demands placed on us and the strength we have in meeting those demands. That’s it. That’s stress. The demands made on us. Over here are the demands of life, the opportunities of life, the problems of life, the requirements of life, the necessities of life; all of these things are over here. Over here is our humanity. Over

here is our weakness, our failure, our faults, our inabilities, and we may be full of desire, and we have a lot of *ought to's* and *want to's*, but we have a lot of *can't do's* in us. And so, there's a gap between the demands, the necessities, placed upon us and our ability to meet those demands. And, that gap between those two things, that is simply stress. It's the chasm between the *ought to's* and the seeming *I can't do's* that overwhelm me and cause me to have stress. We want to. We have to. We ought to. We must. But, we can't. So, we have stress.

Hey, you could be the owner of a company and have stress. You could be high up in management and have stress. You can't shove it off on other people, as much as people in management sometimes try to do. As a matter of fact, a management consultant came into an organization because they were having morale problems. And, they took their highest executives and they found out that of this company that had twenty-two executives, twenty-one of them were suffering chronic stress that led to such things as peptic ulcers, heart palpitations, and problems, dizziness, fatigue, ulcers—twenty-one out of twenty-two. And, these are the successful people. But, you don't have to be an executive. You can be a carpenter, you can be a laborer, you can be a secretary, you can be a machinist, and have stress. Hey, folks, you can be a pastor, and have stress. By the way, I'm preaching to Adrian this morning. You can be a pastor, and have stress. And, you can be young, and have stress. The Bible says, "*Even the youths shall faint and be weary.*"

Did you know that we have a lot of boys and girls in school today under tremendous stress? And, there are more kids today with prescription drugs. We didn't have that when I was a kid. I mean, kids are having to go to the doctor and to the pharmacist to be able to cope in school; I mean, day after day after day. That's something to think about. That's something to consider. And, children today are stressed something terrible. And, many young people are going out in today's world, not able to cope with today's world. That's the reason that so many of them are turning to drugs and alcohol: because of stress. Many of them cannot even make a living in today's world.

We talk about the empty nest syndrome. Today, it is the re-feathered nest. They're coming back home to live with Mom and Dad, because there's a world out there that is bewildering, and it's a problem world, and they're not able to cope. And, stress is a major problem in America. And, we see it in broken homes, unpaid bills, scarred lives. There are the walking wounded. We have indigestion, upset stomachs, shortness of breath, chest pains, headaches, muscle pain, fatigue, boredom, temper tantrums, irritability, mood swings—all of it because of stress; forgetfulness, the inability to concentrate—stress.

Let me give you another statistic I read, before we get into the Bible answer to all of this. And, this is another one that startled me. I had to read it several times to say, is

that really true? Seventy-five to ninety percent of all visits made to primary care physicians last year were stress-related disorders. Well, you say, “I doubt whether that’s exactly right or not.” Well, if it’s enough right that somebody would even dare to make a statement like that, it tells us that we’ve got a real problem.

Do you know why people used to go to health spas? To slim down and to buff up. You know why they go to health spas primarily today? To relieve stress. That’s what they tell us. Do you know why people are into yoga and New Ageism, and New Age music, and all of that? They’re trying to deal with stress. And, by the way, when you are stressed, you’re very vulnerable to satanic attack. If you were in quicksand, the devil would pat you on the head. You’re very vulnerable.

In the Bible, when the children of Israel were coming through the wilderness, the Bible declares, in the Book of Deuteronomy, how Amalek, who was a wicked king, “smote behind most of thee.” That is, those who could not stay up, those who were crippled, those who were weak, those who were down—those are the ones the devil hits. He doesn’t fight fair. He’s a bully. He picks on the weak. And, many times we are weakened through this matter of stress. It’s a major cause of alcoholism, a major cause of drug dependency, and a major, major cause of divorce.

Did you know when you’re stressed you’re more prone to argue? Have you ever found you and your wife arguing over a little thing, and, you know, just spend a long time just arguing over something that’s kind of dumb, when you analyze it and let all the air out of it. Why is this? Because we’re stressed; we’re overly irritable, and so forth.

II. The Provision of Sufficiency

Well, what is the answer to stress? Well, we’ve talked about the problem of stress. Let’s talk, secondly—are you ready?—let’s move on; let’s talk about the provision of sufficiency. God is sufficient for every need—every genuine, legitimate need—that you meet. Notice what he says here in verse 29: *“He giveth power to the faint.”* And then, skip on down to verse 31: *“They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”* So, it’s not a sin to be stressed—it’s not a sin to be stressed. But, I’ll tell you what is a sin, dear friend. It is a sin for you not to call upon the power that God Almighty has provided for you in these times of stress. Now, God has made a wonderful, wonderful provision for you, a provision for your sufficiency, whenever you are stressed, and He puts this in three categories. First, He talks about rising up like an eagle. Do you see that? Mounting up with wings as an eagle. Then, He mentions running. And then, he mentions walking. Do you see that?

A. Strength to Fly in the Rugged Times of Life

First of all, He gives you strength to fly in the rugged times of life. Just write down, “the rugged times.” You’re going to have some rugged times. You’re going to have difficulty. Problems come. You never know what the next phone call is going to bring.

Just last night, before Joyce and I went off to sleep, the phone rang. And, I said, “Oh, no,” because I thought it may be a call that I did not want to hear about a loved one who is in the hospital. You know, you’re almost taken hostage by the phone sometime. That happens, you know. It wasn’t—thank God, it wasn’t—but you never know what the next phone call is going to bring. You never know what you’re going to meet around the next corner that you turn. We have troubles in life.

You know what an eagle has learned to do? An eagle has learned to fly on the storm. The storm that causes other people difficulty actually just liberates the eagle. The eagle will sit there at nighttime on his perch, and when the sun comes up over the canyon walls and begins to heat the desert floor, and those thermal drafts begin to come up, and maybe a thundercloud will come, a thunderhead, the old eagle sits there. And, when he can feel those drafts coming up, and that air shooting up with great force, or he sees those royal clouds coming along, no problem to the old eagle. Well, he just steps off that perch, and he spreads out those majestic wings, and he begins to soar and to circle. And, the greater the updraft and the more violent the winds, the more he likes it, because he goes higher and higher and higher and higher, and he actually rides upon the wind that causes others distress. To him, he just rises up and flies upon that wind.

I did some reading about the eagles. And, by the way, I love eagles. I think all of us have sort of a love affair with the eagles. Did you know that when those storms come, the eagle can fly higher than he would ever fly normally? Not only can he fly higher, but because he flies higher, he can see further. I’m going to tell you something else. When the storms come in your life, you’re going to rise higher than you’ve ever been; if you’ll depend upon the Lord, and you’ll see things you’ve never seen before in trouble and in difficulty. And, you’re going to see with the eye of the eagle. And, I’ll tell you something else. He will fly faster. An eagle, according to what I read, will fly about 50 miles an hour. In a storm, he can fly 90 to 100 miles an hour. Can you imagine an eagle doing 100 miles an hour? Here’s this eagle just riding on that wind. That may be a distress to other people, but not to him, because he is riding upon the storm. And, you’ll be surprised how much efficiency God will build into your life, how much power that God will build into your life, when you learn to do what this text tells us to do, and I’m going to tell you in a moment to do. But, there is power to fly in the rigors of life. Now, most of us don’t like the rigors of life, but you know, we need to learn how to fly when difficulties and calamity come.

Do you know how a mother eagle teaches a little eagle to fly, the little eaglet? A little boy was in school, and the teacher said, "What did you study today?" He said, "We studied eagles." Said, "What do you mean?" He said, "We learned that two plus two eagles four." We want to study eagles here, learn a little bit about eagles.

An eagle, a little baby eagle, has to learn how to fly. Now, Mother builds that great big nest out of sticks and twigs, and it's a monstrous thing. But then, she takes her own feathers and soft things, and fluffs the nest. And, the little eaglets are there. And then, she flies off and brings them fish and worms and mice, and feeds those little things. They just gorge themselves, and they begin to grow and grow. They think they have it made. But, one day this mother eagle comes, and you can read about this in Deuteronomy chapter 32, verse 11: "*As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings...*" What is that talking about? Well, she comes at a certain time, and she says, "This little rascal needs to fly. And, I'm tired of giving him worms and working for him. It's time he gets out on his own." So, she begins to nudge him to the edge of that nest where that great precipice is there on that steep cliff. And, she nudges him out and nudges him out.

First, he doesn't realize what's happening, but then he looks back and says, "Mama, do you really want to do this to me?" and over he goes, just tumbling and screaming; down, down, down, down, down, down, down he's going, screaming. She's watching. And, she swoops under him at the last moment, spreads her wings out, and catches him on her back. He puts his little talons in there, and she brings him back up to the nest. Whew! But, she does it again, and over and over again. Then, one time, as he's tumbling, he just instinctively puts out his wings, and he feels something. He feels that buoyancy there. And, after a while, that's the way he learns to fly. And, most of us don't like those flying lessons, amen? Most of us do not like those flying lessons. But, our Lord has to do that to teach us to fly, and teach us that underneath are the everlasting arms: "I will not leave thee nor forsake thee." And, boy, I tell you, sometimes the lessons are rough. We think God is being mighty cruel to us.

Jennifer Johnson was driving her car, and then she began to pound the steering wheel. She could not believe it. She's run out of gas. It is evening. There's a mist in the air. It's getting dark, and she's in a bad part of the town; I mean, warehouses, barbed wire, chain-link fences, no friendly faces, no neon lights. She didn't even like to drive in that area. Now, she's sitting there out of gas. She feels so angry at herself. She looks around. Maybe there's a grocery store, maybe a drugstore somewhere, a service station, where she can go make a call. Nowhere. She said, "I'm not going to walk around in this place. I'm going to sit here. After a while, perhaps a police car will come; somebody will come. I'll just sit here." And then, she looked up, and she saw what she did not want to see. Walking down the middle of the street there's a man headed

towards her car. She says, “Well, if I just slump down here, maybe he won’t see me. Maybe he’ll walk on past.” But, she looks up, and his face is in the window, tapping at the window, telling her to roll down the window. She shakes her hand. He begins to scream at her. She begins to scream back. And, she puts her hand on the horn, and blows the horn, and blows it and blows it and blows it and blows it, hoping it will frighten him away. He turned and walked away. Jennifer says, “Thank You, Lord.” But then, after a while, she sees him coming back. He has an iron bar in his hand. She blows the horn again, but he walks up to the window and with that iron bar he breaks the window, reaches in, unlocks the door, opens the door, and reaches in for her, and begins to grab her to pull her out. She goes back to the other side of the car, and with her foot she kicks him in the face, right in the nose. The blood runs down both nostrils. But, he doesn’t stop. He pulls her out of the car. She is screaming at him, pleading for mercy, pleading for help. He lets go of her. She cowers back, getting ready to fight, wondering what’s about to happen, when she hears it and sees it. She sees that flashing light, and the ground beneath her begins to tremble, and she sees the freight train coming, and realizes that her car had stopped right on the tracks. That train hits the car, rolls it up into a ball. It is totally mangled and destroyed. And, that one that she thought was her enemy was her savior, the one who was there trying to say, “Lady, you’re on the tracks. The train is coming. Get out of this car.”

Sometimes we may think that the things that happen to us are for our hurt and for our harm, but God does not willingly afflict. And, God, if He gives us the storm, will give us the flying lessons. And, sometimes we think maybe God, like a mother eagle, is cruel, but He’s not cruel. He’s not cruel. But, we need—we need, friend—to learn how to ride upon the storm. And, God gives strength to fly in the rigors of life.

B. Strength to Run in the Rush of Life

But now, secondly, not only does He give strength to fly in the rigors of life, but He gives strength to run in the rush of life, because not only do we have problems; we have deadlines. Not only do we have calamities; we have necessities, things that we must get done. And, friend, it takes speed.

Did you know that the Christian life is described as a race? It’s not a Sunday afternoon stroll. It’s a race! We’re to be spiritual athletes.

Be swift, my soul, to answer Him; be jubilant, my feet.

Our God is marching on.

—JULIA W. HOWE

I read in the Book of Acts where Philip was out in the desert, and there was an Ethiopian eunuch who was in his chariot, a rich man, and he’s traveling along in the chariot going back to Africa. He needs the gospel. God had led Philip out there. And,

the Bible says that the Spirit of the Lord said to Philip, “Go, join yourself to that chariot.” The Bible says Philip ran and joined himself to the chariot. He had to catch this opportunity on wheels. The Bible says we’re to redeem the time. These are wonderful days, pregnant with opportunity, and we’ve got to learn to redeem the time, to be swift for Jesus, to run the race with endurance. And, many times we feel that we just don’t have what it takes to stay up and to keep up. And so, our Lord has given us a provision, to fly in the rigors of life, and to run in the rush of life.

A sportscaster in Los Angeles wrote something that I copied down—I’ve never been able to forget. He said, “Somewhere in Africa each morning, a gazelle and a lion wake up. The gazelle knows that if he cannot outrun the fastest lion, he will not make it. He will be dinner. The lion knows if he cannot outrun the slowest gazelle, he will starve. So, both of them wake up running.” And, you know, we have to wake up running. There’s a race to run. And, Satan, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; and Satan is on our trail, and we can’t stop and become indolent.

Now so, God gives—God gives—strength to fly in the rigors of life. God gives strength to run in the rush of life—and it is a hectic life. By the way, where has the time gone? Did you know I’m busier now than I’ve ever been, and I’ve got more labor-saving devices than I’ve ever had. I walk out of my study and turn around, and I look, and there are little lights just blinking in there, you know. One’s on a computer, and one’s on a fax machine, and one—*beep, beep, beep, beep*. All these things are supposed to save time. Where has the time gone, if these things are saving time? There’s a disconnect there. I don’t understand, whatever it is, but I do believe *there’s enough time in every day to do gracefully everything God wants us to do*. But, that doesn’t mean that we’re to be indolent. That means sometimes spiritually we have to pick them up and put them down. We have to say, “Lord, if You’ll pick them up, I’ll put them down. Let’s do it.” There’s strength to run in the rush of life.

C. Strength to Walk in the Routine of Life

But then, here’s the third thing—and it almost seems anticlimactic. He says that we will walk and not faint. Now, well, you say, “Well, I don’t need supernatural strength to walk.” No, friend. You need more supernatural strength to walk than to fly or to run. Most of us think this is anticlimactic. It is not! What he is talking about is in the humdrum, daily things of life. And, by the way, life is very daily. Have you noticed? In the daily things of life. I mean, we all want strength to soar like an eagle and to surge like an athlete. What we need is strength to stick and to stay day by day. Most of us don’t fail in times of emergency or times of opportunity; where we fail is in the everyday, day-by-day, areas of life.

You know, in the Book of Ephesians, he talks about dwelling with our Lord in the

heavenlies. But, seven times in the Book of Ephesians, God calls the Christian life a walk. It's one thing to sit with Jesus in the heavenlies; it's another thing to walk day by day on this earth, in this life.

You know what the victorious Christian life is? It's not preaching a crusade somewhere. It's not going on a mission trip, necessarily. It's getting breakfast, getting the children bathed and ready for school, helping that three-year-old put on his shoes. A mother said, "Son, you've got the shoes on the wrong foot." He said, "No, Mama, those are my feet." Helping these little guys and these little teenagers with making sure they do their homework, doing your daily Bible study, having your quiet time, visiting the sick, cooking the meals, carrying out the garbage—which Joyce reminded me I had to do this morning. Yeah, Pastor carries out garbage. Sure he does. And, you do it; you do it all day, and you do it every day—hot days and cold days, dull days and bright days, good days and bad days.

But, the Bible says, "As your days are, so shall your strength be." God gave that verse to the Israelites who were coming out of Egypt and going into Canaan, and He says, "As your days are, so shall your strength be." And, how did they get to Canaan? They didn't have a bus. They didn't have an airplane. They didn't have a stagecoach. They walked to Canaan. And, you're going to find out that the Christian life is, by and large, not all that romantic, not all that dramatic; it is dignity and drudgery put together. And, you need strength for that; I mean, just to live tomorrow in your office, amen? You know you do. This is the walk. And, that requires patience.

A snail started up the trunk of an apple tree. You know how slow a snail moves. A worm came out of a crevice and said to the snail, "No need going up there. There are no apples up there." He said, "There will be when I get there." Friend, just day by day by day, being faithful.

III. The Promise of Strength

Now, look. What we've talked about is the problem of stress, and what we've talked about is the provision of sufficiency; but now, let's get down to the real part, and that's the promise of strength—the promise of strength. You see, God tells us that we can fly, we can run, we can walk. But, we say, "Now, wait a minute. He's describing someone else." But now, look at it one more time. Look in verse 31: "*But they that wait upon the LORD shall*"—doesn't say *may* or *ought*, but "*shall*"—"renew their strength." So, the key to all of this is a promise of strength. Now, this is a promise, an unqualified promise. And, don't say it will not work, if you haven't put it into practice; because if it doesn't work, then I'm going to tell you what is wrong. The Bible is a bundle of blunders, and God is a liar. So, be careful before you say it won't work, okay? "*They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.*"

Now, let me just take two words in there, and the word, first of all, is the word *renew*. The word *renew* is a Hebrew word, *chalaph*, and it literally means, “to change” or “exchange.” When you wait upon the Lord, you exchange your strength. It’s like you taking off your coat and giving it to someone else, and he takes his coat and gives it to you. There is an exchange. You see, God says, “My strength is made perfect in your weakness”—God’s strength.

And, God says, in the Book of Ephesians, “*Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*” And, the Apostle Paul said, in Galatians 2, verse 20, “*I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*” It is not only a changed life; it is an exchanged life. You see, that’s the reason he started out talking about the greatness of God: “Hast thou not known? Don’t you understand that God is not weary? God faints not. There’s no searching of His understanding.” And, God is saying, “I will give you My strength. I will exchange My strength for your weakness.” Now, that’s a wonderful, wonderful thing, where you have this dramatic exchange. All right now, how does it take place? By waiting upon the Lord. Now, that’s the whole key. Now, if you hear all the rest of it and say, “Well, I’d like to fly like an eagle, run like an athlete, and walk like a soldier,” all right, you’ve got to learn to wait upon the Lord.

Now, what does that mean? I’m going to tell you in a moment, but I’m going to tell you what it doesn’t mean, first of all. It does not mean inactivity. It does not mean sitting around, saying, “Well, I’m waiting on God. If He wants to do something, He can.” No, no, no, no. Listen. *In the olden days, when a boy was courting a girl, do you know what the old-timers would say? They’d say, “That young man’s waiting on that young lady.” What did he mean by that? It means he’s pursuing her—he’s pursuing her. He’s waiting on her.* I’ll guarantee you that was not inactivity. Now, he may have been waiting on her to fix her face or something, but that’s not what they meant by that. He is pursuing her. He’s waiting on her. Let me tell you four things it means to wait on the Lord, and we’ll be finished.

1. Long for Him

First of all, it means to long for the Lord. Now, I’m going to give you Scripture for each of these. Look, if you will, for example, in Psalm 62, verse 1. David is saying, “*My soul waiteth upon God; from him cometh my salvation.*” David is in distress. David has some industrial-strength problems, and he’s saying, “Oh, God, I need You. You are my hope, my salvation.” Do you believe that, sir, or do you believe that you are your salvation? Do you believe that you can read some book by some business guru or some pop psychologist? I’m telling you that you need to long for God. You need God! You need God! To wait upon God means to long for Him. That’s what David said.

2. Listen to Him

Number two: Not only does it mean to long for the Lord, but it means to listen to the

Lord. Here's a great verse. This is one for the refrigerator door—Proverbs 8, verse 34: *“Blessed is the man that heareth me,”*—now, underscore that: *“that heareth me”*—*“watching daily at my gates, waiting”*—waiting—*“at the posts of my doors”*—*“waiting at the posts of my doors.”* He who hears me, he's waiting. That is, he has reported for instruction. He's there at the gate when the Lord comes out, like a servant. “Good morning, my Master. Here I am reporting for duty. I'm at Your gates, Lord. I am listening at the posts of Your doors. As You step out the door this morning, what do You have for me this morning, as I open the door of the morning and enter into Your service? I want to hear from You.”

The reason that many of us are stressed is we're doing things God's never assigned us to do. And, the reason we're doing things God never assigned us to do is we haven't been listening to God. We have not been waiting upon the Lord.

Do you have a daily quiet time? He says, *“waiting daily at my gates.”* Do you have a time when you listen? Do you report for duty? Or are you doing things that you've assigned yourself, or others have assigned you, but you're not doing what God wants you to do?

3. Look to the Lord

Now, what does it mean? See if you can remember. First of all, to long for the Lord. Secondly, to listen to the Lord. Now, let me tell you the third thing that it means. And, oh, before I leave this thing of listening, let me tell you a story I shared with the earlier congregation. It's a wonderful story.

Back during the Great Depression—now, some of you boomers, you don't understand the Great Depression. And, the older folks do. I was born in the middle of the Great Depression. It began about 1929, and I was born a few years later than that, but the Great Depression was still on. And, you're trying to figure out my age right now. I shouldn't have said that. And so, there was a job. Jobs were very hard to get. And so, a newspaper advertised that a telegraph company needed somebody as a telegraph operator, and they communicated through the telegraph. And, this man said, “I can do that. I'm trained in that.” And, he went down to apply for the job. He was so happy. When he got there, the room, the outer office, was filled with people who had come there to try to get that one job. This man was so discouraged. He said, “They are all here before me. Someone will be hired before I get interviewed.” But, as he sat there, he heard a noise coming out of the back room, and he listened to it for a while, and he recognized it. It was the dots and the dashes of the Morse code—dot, dot, dash, dash, dot, dot, dot, dash, dot, dot, dot, dash, dash, dot, dot, so forth. He listened to that. After a while a smile came across his face. He got up and went in the inner office, came back with an even wider smile, and said, “I've got the job!” They said, “Wait a minute! How could you have the job? We were here first.” He said, “But, you weren't listening.” He

said, “In Morse code, they said, ‘If you can understand this, come inside. You’ve got the job.’” And, that’s the way they separated the people. Here was somebody just sitting there and tuned in. I wonder how many people are missing because they’re not listening to God.

What does it mean? It means to long for the Lord. It means to listen to the Lord. And—listen—it means to look to the Lord. Let me give you another place where this word wait is found—Psalm 104, verse 27, speaking of the animals, the beasts of the field: *“These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their [food] in due season.”* “The little animals, they look to the Lord by instinct. They all wait upon thee, O God. They are looking to thee.”

Do you look to the Lord? I mean, where is the source of your supply? Have you ever said, “Lord, You are indeed the strength of my life, and You are the source of my supply; You are my hope and my expectation, and I truly believe that every need will be met in You”?

Now, look, folks. They say that a college lecture is where the information in the professor’s notebook gets into the notebook of the student without really going through the head and the heart of either one of them. Are you listening? You say, “Yeah, pastor. Yeah, sure. I’m to long for the Lord. I’m to listen to the Lord. I’m to look to the Lord. Yeah, I know that.” But, are you listening? Do you long for Him? Will you have a time when you will listen to Him? Will you really look to Him? I mean, will you say it and mean it, “God, You are the source of my supply. You, my God, will supply all my need according to Your riches in glory.” It means to look to the Lord. Look to Him; not to look to anybody else, but to look to the Lord.

4. Live for Him

And, here is the clincher. Here’s the fourth thing I’m going to say. It means to live for the Lord. Let me give you the verse that points that out and makes that true—Proverbs 27 and verse 18: *“Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof; so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.”* Now, what does it mean to *wait* on your master? It means to serve him. When you go to the restaurant, you have a waitress or a waiter. They’re there to serve you. And, by the way, have you ever noticed sometime how hard it is to get their attention? You want another cup of coffee, or you dropped your fork, or you need a napkin, or you want to pay your bill. You can’t get their attention. An epitaph of a waitress’s tombstone: “God finally got her attention; God finally caught her eye.” What is it? Now, listen. They are there to serve you, to wait upon you. And, they’re there for whatever you require. You want God to give you strength to fly like an eagle? You want God to give you strength to run like an athlete? You want God to give you strength to walk like a soldier day by day? Why, why—I say, why—why should God give me more strength to serve the devil? I mean, if I don’t intend to wait upon Him, if I’m not His

waiter, if I'm not His server, if I'm not there for His glory, why should God give me strength to glorify the devil?

What does it mean to wait upon the Lord? To wait upon the Lord means to long for the Lord, to listen to the Lord, to look to the Lord, and to live for the Lord.

Conclusion

Now, don't tell me—don't tell me—this won't work, if you haven't tried it, okay? Because I'm going to tell you, if you tell me this won't work, you know what I'm going to tell you? I may not tell you in exactly these words, but since I'm talking to everybody, I'll just say, "You're lying." Now, if it's personally, I just might say, "You need to reconsider." But, folks, if you tell me this won't work, I'm going to tell you you're not telling the truth. You know why I know you're not telling the truth? Because God promised in His Word, "*They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.*"

We're running around knocking things over, all upset, frustrated, causing ourselves trouble, sickness, and giving other people trouble and sickness, because we've not learned how to wait upon the Lord. And, when we wait upon the Lord, we'll learn to fly in the rigors of life, we'll learn to run in the rush of life, and we'll learn to walk in the routine of life, day by day by day by day. So, we need to wake up tomorrow, even start this afternoon, and learn how to wait upon Him. Do you agree with that? I hope you do, because it's God's Word—it's God's Word.

The Discipline of Darkness

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 5, 1985

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 50:10

“Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.”

ISAIAH 50:10

Outline

Introduction

- I. Look to the Lord
- II. Lean on the Lord
- III. Leave It with the Lord

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take God's precious Holy Word, open if you will please to Isaiah chapter 50, and then look up here for just a moment. Isaiah chapter 50. And, if you ever paid attention to a message I want you to pay attention to this one because this message is going to deal with something that is going to happen to you if it has not already happened to you.

One of these days you are going to find yourself plunged into dark, dark, dark despair. You're going to be perplexed. You're going to have problems, and confusion, and all of your little formulas, and all of your little outlines, and all of the little things that you've counted on before are not going to work. And, you're not going to understand what God is up to. It will be so dark in your life, you won't even be able to see your hand before your face.

You can get to the wall as close as you want and you won't even be able to tell what color it is. You are going into what some of the old theologians use to call a dark night of the soul. And, you'll wonder what has happened. You wonder if God died, or if you've lost your mind, or if maybe the whole thing is just a fairy tale. Maybe there's nothing to it, you'll say what on earth happened. You'll get out all of those sermon outlines Brother Rogers preached, and none of them make sense, and nothing will work, and you will almost be at the point of despair. You'll think that God has forsaken you.

I want to speak to you today on *The Discipline of Darkness*. Take your Bibles

please and look with me in Isaiah 50, beginning in verse 10: “*Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness ...*”—underscore that—“*...that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ...*”—That is, not even a pinpoint of light, not even a ray of light and hath no light—“*...let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow*” (Isaiah 50:10–11).

I want to speak to you first of all about the possibility of darkness in the life of a Christian. The possibility of darkness in the life of a Christian. I want to say that darkness is not unusual in the life of a Christian. It is not unusual and I’m not talking about people who are living in sin. I’m talking about people who fear God. I’m not talking about people who are disobedient. I’m talking about people who obey the voice of God’s servants. And, they have no light. They walk in darkness. You read *The Biography of The Saints* and almost every one of them will tell about some dark night of the soul when they were so perplexed. And, in such despair they almost wondered if God had forsaken them. You can read it in the Bible, in the book of Job, the same thing happened to Job. Job was in darkness and Job said in Job 19: “*...he hath set darkness in my paths*” (Job 19:8). I just don’t seem to be able to understand and Job would just ask Him, “Why oh God? God, you owe me some answers.”

As a pastor so many times people come to me and they say, “Pastor, tell me why.” And, folks, I can’t tell them why because I don’t know why. You know, people feel like they can do almost anything if they can just understand why. Why is this happening? And, interesting thing, when you read the book of Job, you read it all the way through God never did tell Job. I mean, at the end, Job never did understand what it was all about. God just didn’t reveal it to him.

Read the book of Habakkuk. Habakkuk was a great prophet. He loved God. He was a man that had tremendous insights and there was a time that Habakkuk was in such darkness, he said, “Oh God, how long am I going to have to ask you and “O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear!” (Habakkuk 1:2).

Habakkuk was in darkness. Read in the New Testament about John the Baptist. Jesus said, “*...Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist...*” (Luke 7:28). John the Baptist was a mighty preacher. He stood on the banks of Jordan, and preached with a rippling brook for a choir, and a pulpit for a rock. He ate honey, but he didn’t preach it. And, yet that same John the Baptist was taken and put in prison and in a dark, dismal, damp prison. This outdoors man, rotting away there in that jail. He got into such darkness, such perplexity, such despair, that he sent some of his disciples and said, “*...Art thou he that should come?*” (Luke 7:19).

I mean, he's the one who said, "...*Behold the Lamb of God...*" (John 1:29). Said, "Go ask Him if He's really the Messiah." John couldn't understand it. "What has gone wrong? If Jesus Christ can work miracles why can't He get me out of this jail?" John had preached the victorious Christ, now here is John following Jesus in jail. Even the Apostle Paul, I suppose, the mightiest theologian, the grandest Apostle, the finest missionary that ever lived. He wrote there in the book of Corinthians that he was perplexed. Do you know what that word "perplexed" means? "I just don't understand." Didn't you always like to think of Paul as always knowing everything? I mean, you know, just, he said, "...*we are perplexed ...*" (2 Corinthians 4:8). "I am literally perplexed."

So, folks, what I'm trying to tell you is that if you get perplexed, if you get in trouble, if you get in darkness, you are in pretty good company. And, it doesn't mean that there's necessarily sin in your life because our verse of Scripture talks about someone who fears the Lord, and who is obeying the voice of God's servant, and yet he has no light and he walks in darkness. It is not unusual. I'll tell you something else, it is not unfruitful. God knows what He's doing. There's a purpose in it. The fruit of the Spirit ripens in the darkness. You're going to find out that God is up to something in your life. Did you know that there are some things that you can only see in the dark?

Now, there are some things you can only see in the light, but there are some things you can only see in the dark. You can only see the stars in the dark. We say, "The stars come out at night." Not so, they're there all the time, but you don't see them until it gets dark. You see those stars nestled in that canopy of faith, like a chandelier of diamond. And, you see the moon snuggling upon the lapel of the night like a gardenia. But, you wouldn't see all of that unless it was dark. I've never experimented to see if this is true, but I've read somewhere that if you get in a deep well and look up even in daytime, you can see the stars shining because you're in the darkness. And, if you get down deep enough and dark enough even in the daytime you can see the stars shining.

Somebody wrote a book I think, called *The View from the Bottom of the Well*. And, most of us don't want to be there so we can see if it's true, but if you look up out of a well—so they say—you can see the stars shining. What I'm saying is folks, there's some things that you can only see in the darkness.

I'm going to tell you something else. There's some things that you will see better after you've been in the darkness when you get in the light. There's something about the darkness that sharpens your spiritual eyesight.

I heard of an artist who painted a painting, a very beautiful painting. He called a friend over. He said, "I want you to see my painting." When the friend came over, he took that friend, and put that friend in a room, shut the door, pulled down the blinds, and had his friend to sit in darkness for fifteen minutes. Then he said, "Come, I want you to see my painting." He said, "Why did you have me to sit in the darkness for a quarter of

an hour?” He said, “Because you had too much of the glare of the street in your eyes.” And, he said, “Had you seen my painting with the glare of the street in your eyes, you would not have been able to appreciate the subtlety of its colors.”

I wonder if there’s some of us who have not been dazzled with so much by this world, and the glitter of this world, and the glare of this world, and the brightness of this world that sometimes God just puts in darkness and let’s us sit in darkness so when the light comes again we can appreciate the variegated colors of God’s grace.

I want to tell you something about darkness folks. It is not unusual. I want to tell you something about darkness. It is not unfruitful. I’ll tell you something else about darkness. It is not unending. You will come out of it. You will come out of it and you’ll come out of it a better person. “...weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm 30:5). The same sun that sets is the sun that rises again. And, God will indeed lighten the paths of His saints and God one of these days. And, I’m talking to somebody right now—doubtless, there’s somebody listening on television, somebody in a hospital room right now, somebody in a home that is filled with sorrow, somebody listening by radio, perhaps you’re driving through our city in an automobile, perhaps there’s somebody here in this place—and there’s such darkness in your life. I want to tell you my dear friend, you do what this verse of Scripture tells you.

In just a moment and our God, our dear Lord Jesus Christ, one of these days is going to take the shades of darkness and pin them back with a star, and open the door of the morning, and flood your world with His glory and with His life. Not now, perhaps, in the later years, perhaps in a better land, we’ll know the meaning of our tears and some day we’ll understand.

Listen folks, let me tell you something. Just because it doesn’t make sense to you now, doesn’t mean it doesn’t make sense. And, just because it doesn’t make sense to you now, doesn’t mean it will not make sense someday. I am telling you, dear friend, there’s the possibility of darkness in you and when you understand Isaiah chapter 50, verses 10 and 11. You can understand that it is not unusual, it is not unfruitful, it is not unending, second thing, not only do I want to speak to you about the possibility of darkness, but I want to speak to you about the procedures in darkness.

Now, literally, what he wrote these two verses for was to tell you what to do when darkness comes and if you’re a child of God I’m just going to assume it’s going to come to you. He tells you the procedure. By the way, the test of your character is how you behave in the dark. Hmm. That’s the test of your character, how you behave not in the light, but how you behave in the dark. What should you do when the lights go out? That’s what we’re talking about. What should you do when the lights go out?

I. Look to the Lord

Now, Isaiah tells us there are three things that you ought to do when the lights go out. All right number one, you are to look to the Lord. Now, look again in verse 10 here in this passage of Scripture. “Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?” Underscore this phrase. “Let him trust in the name of the Lord.” Let him trust in the name of the Lord. Just look to the Lord. You see, you don’t have to know why. “Why?” Is not your question. “Why?” Is God’s question. “How?” Is your question. “Why?” Is why it happened. “How?” Is how you’re going to react to it. That’s your question, you just trust God.

Warren Wiersbe said this, “We don’t live by explanation, we live by promises.” I like that. We don’t live by explanation. We live by promises. You see, God is under no obligation to explain Himself to us. And, even if He did, many times we wouldn’t be able to understand it, wouldn’t we because He says, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55:8–9). So, God doesn’t have to explain Himself to us. We do not live by explanation, we live by promises. And, so what you do, you just simply trust in the Lord. It’s just that simple, you look to Him. It doesn’t have to make sense.

Thomas Watson, an old Puritan, said, “Where reason cannot wade, faith must win.” Where reason cannot wade, then faith must win. Just trust God. I mean, just get a promise of God, and stand on it. Friend, you don’t have to understand it to stand on it. You don’t have to understand it. Just trust God. You find yourself in darkness, you don’t know what to do, trust God. Let him trust the name of the Lord. This is the highest pinnacle of faith. Faith doesn’t come when you can see away clear. Faith comes when you don’t see your way clear, when you don’t understand, where it doesn’t make sense. And, you finally come to the place that Job came to. Do you know where Job came to Bob? Of course you do. Job came to the place where he said, *“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him...”* (Job 13:15). See, look to the Lord. Just look to the Lord. Don’t look to any experience, don’t look to any explanation, we do not live on explanations, we live on promises.

So, number one, when you find yourself in a dark night of the soul, look to the Lord. Number two, oh by the way, let me say something here. What is the sign that you’re looking to the Lord? You know what it is? Do you know what the sign that you trust is? That you obey. That’s the sign that you’re trusting, that you obey. Trust and obey, for there’s no other way. When you trust the Lord, listen, so many people when they get perplexed, do you know what they do? They just stop serving God until everything gets all straightened out again. No, my friend, you just keep on serving God, keep on

praying. You say, “Well, I don’t feel like praying.” Well, pray anyway. Pray ’til you feel like it. Pray when you don’t feel like it, pray when you do feel like it, and pray until you feel like it, just keep on praying. You say, “Well, my prayers are so dry.” They don’t have to be juicy. Just pray. God doesn’t hear your prayers because of your emotions. Don’t come to God with your hands filled with the brass of your emotions. Come to Him with both hands filled with the incense of His worth and even when you don’t understand it, just keep praying. Keep giving. You say, “Well, I gave a big gift to victory in Jesus and I lost my job.” Okay, what should you do? Keep giving, keep giving. You say, “I don’t understand.” It doesn’t make any difference. If it’s right, you give, just keep on giving.

Some of you wives, you went to this women’s conference and they told you in one of these seminars somewhere that if you’ve got a mean, unsaved husband, what you’re to do is to submit to that husband. And, if you submit to that husband, God’s going to work on that husband. That husband is going to get saved and all that. And, you submit to him and he’s getting meaner than the Ayatollah Khomeini it doesn’t seem to be working. What should you do? Keep submitting. You say, “Well, I’ve been told that, that if you have trouble you just praise your way to victory. Isn’t that what you say Brother Rogers? Right? Well I’ve been praising and it’s getting worse. What should I do?

Keep praising. Friend, you keep witnessing, you keep praising, you keep praying, you keep obeying, you keep giving, you keep walking for the Lord, just trust in the Lord. It doesn’t make any difference whether you understand it or not, it doesn’t make any difference whether it makes sense to you or not, when you’re in darkness and you have no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord.

II. Lean on the Lord

Number one, then you look to the Lord. Number two, you lean on the Lord. Look again if you will in verse 10. “Let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God.” Do you see that? “And, stay upon his God.” Now, that word “stay” is an interesting word. It is the root of the word for “staff,” as in Psalm 23: “...*thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*” Now, what was a staff? A staff was something that the shepherd leaned on. It supported him. Can you imagine a shepherd in a dark valley leaning on his staff to keep him from falling? “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me*” (Psalm 23:4). A staff is something to lean on to give you comfort in a dark valley. When the Scripture says, “Let him stay upon his God” what it literally means is “let him lean upon that God for support.” Let him lean upon that God. Lean on the Lord. Look to the Lord and lean on the Lord.

You see, God puts you in darkness that you might learn to lean. God is not in the business of giving you reason, it is not reason, it is relationship. God is bringing you to

Himself. And, there are times when He'll take everything else away from you so that the only thing that you'll have is Him. God wants you to learn to lean upon Him. That's what it's all about. So, you're to lean on the Lord, not lean on some sermon, not lean on some truth, not lean on some formula, not lean on some procedure, not lean on your health, not lean on your bank account, not lean on anything, all you've got is the Lord. Listen to me, I preached a sermon about maybe a year and a half ago on this title, *Is God Enough?*, from the book of Job. And, I showed you, dear friend, from the book of Job that not only is God necessary, God is enough.

Now, we all know God is necessary, right? We all need God, but how many of us know God is enough? For example, where are you getting your joy this morning? I say, "Do you have joy?" You say, "Yes." Where do you get your joy? "Well, I'm getting my joy from the Lord." How are you so sure? Maybe you're getting your joy from your health. Well, one way we could find out would be to take away your health and see if you still had your joy, right? And, if you still had your joy, then you know that you're not getting your joy from your health. Where are you getting your joy? "Well, from the Lord."

How do you know your not getting it from your family? Take away your family and see if you still have that joy. How do you know your not getting your joy from your business, your wealth? How do you know your not getting your joy from your reputation and your friends? Listen friend, it may be that you'll never know that Jesus is enough until Jesus is all you have. See. That's what God did to Job. I mean, God just took it all away. God took away his health. God took away his wealth. God took away his family. God took it away, all of it, and yet, Job still had the Lord and he trusted in the Lord. And, he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him..." and he saw the Lord Jesus by the eye of faith.

Now, God sometimes brings us to the place where he brought Job, not only to show us that God is necessary, but that God is enough and we learn to lean on the Lord. Just simply lean on the Lord. It is not "why," it is "whom" that counts. It is not reason, it is relationship. It is not explanation, it is promises. And, we come sometimes to the place where the Lord is all that we have and we're like ol' Jacob and say, "...*I will not let thee go, except thou bless me*" (Genesis 32:26). And, if you don't get in the darkness with Jesus alone sometime, you probably don't know Him as well as you should know Him.

And, I'll tell you dear friend, the darkness may come and darkness may hide, but it can't divide. Jesus is there in the darkness standing somewhere in the shadows, you'll find Jesus and you will come to know Him, and understand Him, and trust Him not from philosophy, not some outline, not some principle, Him alone. Maybe you haven't even come to place yet where God can trust you with a dark hour of the soul. And, I'll tell you when you do, you'll come out on the other side if I understand the Bible.

III. Leave It with the Lord

Number one, listen to me, look to the Lord. Trust in Him. Number two, lean on the Lord. Number three, leave it with the Lord. Look in verse 11 now. “Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow” Leave it with the Lord. Don’t light your own fire. Don’t light your own fire. If you light your own fire, you’re going to lie down in sorrow.

Now, what happens to a lot of people, they find themselves in darkness and when they find themselves in darkness, their motto is, “Well let’s do something even if it’s wrong.” Right? And, so they launch out in the strength and the energy of the flesh not waiting upon God. And, with callous and profane hands, they take things into their hands, and they do things, and they’re acting ways that God has not told them to act. And, they do not have the witness of the Spirit, they do not have the leadership of the Spirit, and they blow the whole thing. They light their own fire.

Now, you shouldn’t do that because I want to tell you, number one, the darkness is ordained of God. You need to learn something about darkness, friend. Darkness is the absence of light. And, you see, there cannot be darkness unless the light is taken away. You can’t go into a room and turn on the dark. You can only go into a room and turn on the light, and if the light is there, you can’t flick a switch and turn on the dark. All you can do is flick the switch and turn off the light, isn’t that right?

You see, the darkness never chases the light away. The light always chases the darkness away. When night comes this evening it will not have chased the day away. The day just simply retreated, the sun went down. It is when the sun comes up that it will chase the dark away. The darkness always flees before the light. The light never flees before the darkness because the light is invincible against the darkness. Therefore, if God is light—and He is—and you are fearing Him, and obeying Him according to Isaiah 50 verse 10, and there is no light for you, it is because God has ordained there be no light for you. Not because something went wrong, it is not because the darkness overcame the light, it is because God in His sovereign plan has withdrawn the light. And, that is a plan of God because God is putting you through something that I’ve chosen to call in this message the discipline of darkness. But, if you’re not careful you’ll try to help God out and you’ll light your own fire.

I want to tell you something about lighting your own fire. man-made light is always the deceptive. It’s like looking at a sundial with a flashlight so I can tell what time it is. You see, the sundial is meant to register the time by Heaven’s light, not by some flashlight. And, a lot of folks today are just walking in the spark of the fire that they kindled. And, they go off to some worldly philosophy or some idea, some strategy, something that’s not of God because they’re in darkness. And, rather than looking to the

Lord, and rather than leaning on the Lord, they just go out and light their own fire. And, they're going to find themselves in difficulty.

You can study the Bible and find people who did that same thing, for example, Abraham. Abraham was a friend of God, a man of faith. He loved God, he feared God, obeyed God. God gave Abraham a promise and God said, "Abraham, I'm going to make a covenant with you. And, Abraham, I'm going to bless all of the world through your descendants. I'm going to give you a son while you're an old man. A son of promise, a son a covenant, blessing son, I'm going to give you." And, Abraham was in the light when God gave him that promise.

And, then God Himself put Abraham in darkness. That is, God didn't seem to be in any hurry about it. Abraham couldn't understand. "Why doesn't God do something?" Abraham was plunged into darkness and into despair. And, that darkness and that despair were of God because God was testing Abraham. God was proving Abraham and God was working on His own timetables, and remember what I said. That with God timing is more important that time. But, now Abraham decides he's going to take things in his own hands and Abraham decides he's going to light his own fire. And, so he produces a son—not with his wife Sarah—but with his handmaiden, Hagar. And, he produced an Ishmael and to this day the sons of Abraham are lying down in sorrow because of that, the works of his flesh. Rather than waiting on God he lit his own fire and made himself to lie down in sorrow. He could not trust God, he could not wait on God. He could not look to the Lord, and lean on the Lord, and leave it with the Lord.

What about Moses? God said to Moses, "Moses, I want you deliver My people from the land of bondage, from the land of Egypt. You are going to be My commander in chief and you're go obey Me." And, then Moses got a little antsy about it, got a little nervous about it, couldn't understand why God was so slow, and Moses took things into his own hands. He lit his own fire. What he did if you remember the story, he killed an Egyptian, murdered him. Moses, who was meant to be a missionary ended up a murderer, spent forty years in a back side of the desert after that, every night lying down in sorrow because he couldn't leave things with God, couldn't leave it with the Lord. He had to take it into his own hands. He had to try to make it happen before God.

You can read the same thing about Simon Peter, cut off the ear of the high priest. Jesus had told Simon Peter that He was going to the cross, He was going to suffer, He was going to bleed, die, be buried, rise again the third day. He had told people all of this, but now here's Jesus. It looks like the tide has turned. Peter can't understand everything. There the soldiers in the Garden of Gethsemane and so Peter pulls out his sword, cuts off the ear of the high priest, trying to light his own fire. What a mess he made. What a mess he made.

Friend, listen to me, when the darkness comes it is not unusual, it is not unfruitful, it

is not unending, when it comes look to the Lord, when it comes lean on the Lord, when it comes, leave it with the Lord. Have faith in God, He'll answer you. Not only is He necessary, He's enough.

Conclusion

Years ago I heard a story and I'm not certain if I have all of the details to correct, but something like this. A father and a little girl had come from the funeral home. The father had left there in the cold ground his beautiful wife. The little girl had left mommy dearest there in that cold ground. They came home that night to that empty house, so much more empty than ever before because it didn't have the heartbeat of a mother there. The little girl headed off to her bedroom and the father went to his bed, cold and empty.

And, the little girl in her lonely room said, "Daddy, daddy, can I sleep with you tonight?" The dad says, "Yes, darling. Together that little girl and her daddy got in bed, they turned out the light, the little girl said, "Daddy, it sure is dark. Daddy, I believe this is the darkest night that I've ever seen. It's so dark, Daddy." Her daddy said, "Yes, sweetheart, it's the darkest night Daddy's ever seen."

Then she said daddy, I can't even see you. Daddy, is your face toward me? He said, "Yes, precious, Daddy's face is towards you." And, she said, "Daddy, you can love through the dark, can't you Daddy?" He said, "Yes precious, Daddy can love you right through the dark. Daddy does love you and honey, go to sleep." And, with that assurance she went to sleep.

And, that big ol' man slipped out of bed, got down on his knees and he began to pray. And, he said, "Oh God, God, it's dark. I don't believe I've ever seen it so dark." And, the Father said, "Yes, son, it's dark." "Father," he said, "Is your face toward me?" And, the Father said, "Yes son, my face is toward you." He said, "Father, you can love me through the dark, can't you?" He said, "Yes, My child, I do love you no matter how dark it is, I love you." And, a big man stood up, and got back in bed, and went to sleep.

And, I want to tell some of you, and some of you who are watching on television, the most important thing for you to know is that God's face is towards you. He loves you through the dark and that darkness can hide, but it cannot divide. You look to the Lord, you lean on the Lord, you leave it with the Lord. Let's pray.

The Discipline of Darkness

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 13, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 50:10–11

“Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.”

ISAIAH 50:10

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Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and find the Book of Isaiah chapter 50—Isaiah chapter 50. Sometimes, as God’s people, we go through darkness. Sometimes we can’t see ahead. Sometimes nothing seems to make sense. Maybe we have a wayward child. Maybe there’s been a financial reversal. Maybe there’s a broken fellowship. And we just don’t seem to be able to make sense of anything. Now we listened to our preaching; we’ve studied our lessons; we have learned our little formulas; we’ve written down our promises; and, we think we have it all figured out. And just about the time we have it all figured out, we are plunged into deep, deep perplexity and despair.

I suppose a question that pastors are asked more than any other question is this: “Why?” “Pastor, tell me why should such a precious little girl die at such an early age?” “Pastor, tell me why I could not carry this baby to term?” “Pastor, tell me why my wife has treated me this way and walked away from a perfectly wonderful marriage and her children?” “Tell me, Pastor, Why? Why? Why?” Well, after preaching for a long time, I

found out that *why* is not our question. God has the answer to that. *How* is the important thing to us. How are we going to react? What do we do when the lights go out, when nothing seems to make sense? Well, you know, we feel like we could bear up under almost anything if we just knew why. But when we're suffering, and it doesn't make sense, then that's hard.

Well, our scripture today is a wonderful, wonderful scripture, and I pray God He'll write it upon your heart—Isaiah chapter 50, beginning in verse 10: *“Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant”*—now, let's just stop, right there. And we would say, if someone is fearing God and obeying God's servants, we would think they would be walking in the light, wouldn't we? We could say, “Well, the next step is that they'll be walking in the light.” But listen to it: *“Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow”* (Isaiah 50:10–11).

Now here's the question: What do you do when the lights go out? What is “The Discipline of Darkness”? Well, I want to give you some propositions.

I. Those of Greatest Devotion May Know the Deepest Darkness

Number one: Those of greatest devotion may know the deepest darkness. Now if you look at verse 10 again, you're going to find out that God is not talking to someone who has wandered far away and needs to come home, as we've just heard. We're talking about someone who fears the Lord. That doesn't mean he cringes at the idea of God. Fear is love on its knees. It is a reverential awe for Almighty God. A person who has great respect and reverence for God and who obeys the voice of God's servant when the Word of God is preached—he says, “Yes, Lord, I will obey You,” and yet, he seems to walk in darkness.

Now there's no fine print in the contract. And I want to tell you, if you're considering becoming a Christian, it is not all sweetness and light. Sometimes, I think, we over-promise in order to somehow get people to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a distorted idea that if you become a Christian, it will be all joy and all light and all sweetness, and just roses all through life. There'll be no sickness; there'll be no sorrow. We're just going to go through life in an ever-ascending scale of health and success. And then, we're going to die at a serene old age, and then have a glorious exit and go to Heaven. It would be nice if it happens that way; but, folks, it generally does not. It generally does not. There's no need to deny it. There are thousands of saints that fear God and obey God who are walking in darkness. Now as we study the Bible, we're

going to find out that was true of the Bible saints.

For example, Job. The Bible says Job was an upright, perfect man. He feared God. And yet, Job was in darkness. Put in your margin “Job 19, verse 8.” Job says: “*He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass*”—in modern English, “He’s headed me off at the pass”—“*and he hath set darkness in my paths*” (Job 19:8). Who has done that? God has done that. God set darkness in the path of good old Job. And Job said, “Lord, I just don’t understand this.”

I was reading about Habakkuk, the prophet. Habakkuk went to God and wanted to get some answers, things that he could understand. Habakkuk chapter 1 and verse 2—he says: “*O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! Even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save*” (Habakkuk 1:2). Habakkuk said, “God, I have stained heaven with my prayers. Where are you, God? God, it doesn’t make sense.”

I read in the Bible about John the Baptist. Was John the Baptist a great man? You better believe it. Jesus said there was not a greater born of woman than John the Baptist. And yet, John the Baptist got down in a dungeon, and he’s in darkness, and he can’t understand. He got so perplexed he even sent messengers to ask of Jesus, “Are You really the Messiah? Are You really, or should we look for somebody else?” Now that’s not a bad man who was saying that. That was a good man, a man who was deeply perplexed.

I read about the Apostle Paul—not a greater Christian ever lived than the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul said, in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 8: “*we are perplexed*” (2 Corinthians 4:8). You say, “Oh, Paul, come on, man. You must be backslidden.” He wasn’t backslidden. He wasn’t backslidden at all. He said: “*we are perplexed [and] troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair*” (2 Corinthians 4:8). Paul knew that darkness need not put him in despair. And I’ll tell you something else: If you’ll read outside the Bible—just read the biographers, the history of the great saints—there’s not a one of them, or hardly a one of them, that does not speak sometime of what we call the dark night of the soul, when they have gone through darkness and despair.

Now look in verse 10. We’re talking about a man who fears the Lord, who obeys God. If you’re in darkness right now, if you’re plunged into darkness, if things don’t make sense to you, that does not mean that you have sinned, or you’re out of the will of God. Remember our proposition: that those of greatest devotion may know the deepest darkness.

II. The Faith That is Born in the Light Is Often Developed in the Dark

Now let me give you another proposition: Number two: The faith that is born in the light

is often developed in the dark. May I ask you a question? When have you grown the most spiritually? When it was all sunlight and roses, or when there was darkness and difficulty and despair and heartache and tears? Are not those the times—in the darkness—that you’ve grown the most? *Faith, like film, is developed in the darkness.*

Let me tell you about three men named John, and see what happened to these men when they were in darkness. For example, one was John Milton, who was blind. John Milton, in the darkness of his blindness, wrote one of the greatest books ever written: *Paradise Lost*. Another was John Bunyan, who was put in Bedford Prison, and suffered there and languished there, in darkness and despair, in many ways. But John Bunyan, in this time of darkness, wrote *Pilgrim’s Progress*—again, a book that has blessed the world. Another man named John was on the Island of Patmos, exiled on the Island of Patmos for the testimony of Jesus Christ. That John there wrote the book of the *Revelation*. I’m telling you, folks, there’s faith that is developed in the darkness.

Now God wants to develop your faith. A wise man said, “Never doubt in the dark what you’ve learned in the light.” Your faith, born in the light, grows in the dark. Now by the way, the test of your character is what you do in the dark. The test of your character is not what you’re doing in this worship center right now, but the test of your character is what you do in the dark.

A. **Look to the Lord**

Now how does God develop our faith in darkness? Well, look again at verse 10, and it tells you to do two things, if you’re in darkness. Look right now at verse 10: “*Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?*”—Now here’s what he tells you to do—“*Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God*” (Isaiah 50:10). Number one: Look to the Lord. Trust in the Lord.

Warren Wiersbe has said, “We live by promises, not by explanations.” That is tremendous wisdom. “We live by promises, not by explanations.” Don’t demand that God explain something to you. Just stay on His word. Just because it doesn’t make sense to you, doesn’t mean it doesn’t make sense. And just because it doesn’t make sense to you now, does not mean it will not make sense to you later on.

Another great man of yesterday, Thomas Watson, said, “Where reason cannot wade, faith must swim.” Just trust God. Just keep on trusting. Just keep on obeying God. Now if you’re praying, and darkness comes, don’t stop praying. Just keep on praying, even when you don’t feel like praying. As I’ve said, “Don’t bring to God the brass of your emotions; come even in the darkness with both hands filled with the incense of His worth, and just keep on praying.”

If you’ve been witnessing, and darkness comes, and nothing seems to make sense

to you, don't stop witnessing. Just keep on witnessing. If you've been giving, you've been a tither, and now everything goes upside down, and you lose your job and everything seems to be wiped out, don't stop tithing. Just keep on tithing. If you are a wife, and you've been trying to win your unsaved husband to Jesus, and he seems to get meaner and meaner, and more and more difficulty comes, just keep on loving him. Just keep on submitting. If you've been praising God, and then everything seems to go wrong, don't stop praising. Just keep on praising. When you don't understand, and when you don't feel like it, lift your hands, by faith, and praise Him. Trust Him. Trust Him.

B. **Lean on the Lord**

Look to the Lord, and then, lean on the Lord. Look again at this verse. It says, *"let him stay upon his God"* (Isaiah 50:10). Now that word *stay* is the word that is used; it's the root of the word that is used in the twenty-third Psalm, when it says: *"Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me"* (Psalm 23:4). The staff was something the shepherd would *stay* upon, that he would lean upon. Stay upon God. When you're in the dark, you don't need an explanation; you need God. Stay upon God. Lean upon God. Listen to me. It is better to be in a dark valley, leaning on God, than on a sunlit peak without Him. Just stay upon your God. As a matter of fact, sometimes, we may not know why, in order that we might know who. Sometimes, God removes all the answers to give us Himself. There's a great gospel song; you know it: "When Answers Aren't Enough, There is Jesus."

For example, David, in Psalm 23, was talking about his theology, when he said, *"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want"* (Psalm 23:1). He's talking about God. But then, when he gets in a dark valley, he says: *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me"* (Psalm 23:4). He's not talking about God now; he's talking to God. I mean, he's having a relationship with God that he could not have had in the light. Just stay upon God. Standing somewhere in the shadows you're going to find Jesus.

This is what God taught in the book of Job. Job said, "God, You've headed me off at the pass. You've sent darkness into my path. God, You owe me some answers." Old Job says, "Boy, I wish I could see You and talk with You." It's almost like, "God, I'd like to bring You into court. Ha! Where are You, God? God, You owe me some answers." The book of Job ends with Job never understanding. You understand what happened to Job, because you've read the book of Job. But Job didn't have the book of Job, when Job was going through all that darkness. He's just stumbling. But he says: *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust him"* (Job 13:15). And Job discovered what I want you to discover: that a relationship is more important than a reason. When you don't have the reason, you just have God. You're walking in darkness. "Let him trust in the name of the

Lord, and let him lean upon his God” (Isaiah 50:10).

Now you say, “Adrian, I’m not in darkness.” Well, just hold on. Just wait a while. This is some good medicine to keep on the shelf. And there will come a time when you will find out that not only is God necessary; you’ll find that the God is enough, that God is enough.

III. Some Things Are Seen in the Dark That Cannot Be Seen in the Light

Now here’s a third proposition: Some things are seen in the dark that cannot be seen in the light. You’re going to understand some things in the darkness that you would never have understood in the light. Now you’re in verses 10 and 11. Just back up to verses 3 and 4, and notice what He says here. God says: *“I clothe the heavens with blackness”—* you see, it’s God who sends the darkness—*“I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering”—*sackcloth is just dark cloth. God said, “I’ve just pulled a veil over the sun”—*“The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary; he awakeneth morning by morning, he waketh mine ear to hear like the learned”* (Isaiah 50:3–4). What does all of that mean? You’re going to wake up, and you’re going to realize that in the darkness you were learning some things. There are some treasures of darkness.

Now when the Bible uses darkness, sometimes, the Bible uses darkness as a symbol of evil. But sometimes, the Bibles uses darkness as a symbol of perplexity. And there are treasures of darkness. If you were to go backward to Isaiah chapter 45 and verse 3, you would find out that God is speaking to a Persian king named Cyrus. And God said to Cyrus: *“I will give thee the treasures of darkness”* (Isaiah 45:3). Think of that: *“the treasures of darkness”* (Isaiah 45:3). There are some things that are seen in the dark—treasures that cannot be seen in the light.

For example, have you ever heard anybody say, “The stars are out tonight”? Friend, they’re out in the daytime. The stars do not go away in the daytime; you just don’t see them in the daytime. The only time you can see the stars is at night. And the stars are there to praise the Lord. Psalm 148 and verse 3: *“Praise ye him, sun and moon; praise him, all ye stars of light”* (Psalm 148:3). But you would never have a star to praise God, if it weren’t for darkness. Those stars that are there like a chandelier on the velvet blackness of night, those stars are there, and you could not see the stars, were it not for the darkness.

I’ve never tried it, but people tell me that if you’re in the bottom of a well at high noon, you can look up and see the stars. The view from the bottom of the well. Have you ever been down in the bottom of a well? Well, in the bottom of the well, when you’re surrounded by darkness, even at high noon, you can look up and see God’s stars. Now

in the light, we see that which is near; but, in the dark, we see that which is far away. In the light, we may see more clearly, but, in the night, we see further. There are just certain things that you see in the darkness that you can't see in the daytime. You may think your brightest thoughts in the daytime; but you will think your deepest thoughts in the nighttime. In the times of darkness, there are going to be certain treasures of darkness. There are things that are seen in the dark that you will never see in the light.

IV. It Is Better for You to Be Leaning on God in the Darkness Than Standing Alone in Your Man-Made Light

Let me give you another proposition, now: If these things are true, then, it is better for you to be leaning on God in the darkness than standing alone in man-made light. It is better for you to be leaning on God in the darkness than standing alone in man-made light. Now look in verse 11: *“Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire”*—underscore this—*“of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow”* (Isaiah 50:11).

A. Darkness Has Been Ordained of God

Now one of the great dangers of darkness is that you may be tempted to light your own fire—that you may be tempted to light your own fire. Now remember, that if this darkness comes to you, and you are fearing God, and obeying God, and then the darkness comes, that means that darkness has been ordained of God. Remember what verse 3 says (of this chapter)? God says: *“I clothe the heavens with blackness”* (Isaiah 50:3). That is, the darkness is ordained of God.

Now don't ever get the idea that darkness can chase away light. If you're in a lighted room, you can't open the door and let in the dark. No, no. The light always chases away the dark. The dark can never chase away the light. The only way, therefore, that darkness can come, is what? For light to be removed. So if the light has been removed, that means that God, in His sovereignty, has allowed you to be in the darkness, that God has a reason for you to be in the darkness. It is God who has clothed the heavens with sackcloth. It is God who has done that. And if God has done that, don't you be so foolish as to light your own fire. When you light your own fire, you're going to get into difficulty, because you're going to try to undo what God has done.

B. Man-Made Fire Is Deceptive

Now the sad thing about the man-made fire is it is deceptive. If you walk in the light of the fire—the sparks that you've kindled—you're not going to have a sure guide. It's kind of like taking a flashlight, and going out at midnight, and looking at a sundial to see what time it is. I mean, that's your own man-made light. You see, God says, “If you do this, if

you do this, when you're in darkness, if you light your own fire, "this will you have of mine hand" (Isaiah 50:11). God says, "You're going to lie down in sorrow" (Isaiah 50:11). You're asking for it. You're going to have great difficulty when you, in a time of God-ordained darkness, light your own fire.

I want to give you three examples of that. First example was Abraham. God said to Abraham, in a time of light, "I'm going to give you a son. And this son is going to bless the world. And he's going to be a son of miracle. And through this son, all of the promises, Abraham, that I've given you will be fulfilled. And you're going to have descendants like the sand of the seashore, like the stars" (Genesis 22:17).

Year after year passed, and, no son. Finally, Abraham and Sarah got together and said, "We'd better help God out." Now Sarah had an Egyptian maiden whose name was Hagar. And Sarah said to Abraham, "Why don't you have sexual relations with Hagar? Maybe she can conceive, and then you can have your son" (Genesis 16:2). Do you know what he was doing when he agreed to that? He was lighting his own fire. He's trying to help God out, because it was darkness, and he couldn't understand it. So what he did was to light his own fire, and Ishmael was born. And for centuries and millenniums past that time, the offspring of Abraham have been lying down in sorrow. Here was a man who could not trust God, but he took matters into his own hand, with no direction—no command—from God, lit his own fire, and then, he and his offspring are lying down in sorrow.

Let me give you another example: Moses. God called Moses. And God said, "Moses, I want you to lead the children of Israel out of bondage, and you're My anointed and My appointed leader." But Moses is looking around, and he doesn't seem to understand how God is going to do it. He's in a time of darkness. And then, Moses goes out and takes matters into his own hand. He saw some people in an argument. Moses steps in and kills one of those. He slays an Egyptian, and buries him in the desert sand, there (Exodus 2:12). But God's wind uncovered Moses' mistake. Moses, who set out to be a missionary, ended up a murderer. And as a result of that, Moses spent forty years on the backside of the desert, lying down in sorrow. He lit his own fire.

I think of Simon Peter. Jesus had told Simon Peter, "Simon, I'm going to the cross." Simon says, "No, Lord, this will never be." Jesus said, "Simon, Satan has desired you to sift you as wheat, but I've prayed for you that your faith fail not." "Oh, Lord, I'll go with you to prison and to death." And then, that night of dark Gethsemane, when it was dark, things didn't make sense. Here was Jesus Christ, the Messiah. They're taking Him prisoner. Nothing is making sense. And rather than believing what God had shown him in the light, in the darkness, Simon Peter draws his sword, and goes to cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, a man named Malchus (John 18:10). And as a result, you see Simon Peter off there doing what? Weeping bitterly, bitterly. He wept. Why? He tried to

light his own fire, and he's lying down in darkness, lying down in sorrow. Because of that, weeping bitterly. Now here's the proposition: It is better for you to be leaning on God in the darkness than standing alone in man-made light.

V. If Your Sun Has Set, It Will Rise Again

Now here's the next proposition I want to give you. This is the final one—number five. And here it is, friend: If your sun has set, it will rise again. If you're in darkness, friend, it will rise again. Notice Isaiah chapter 50, verse 4: *"He awakeneth morning by morning"*—God will waken you in the morning—*"The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary"* (Isaiah 50:4). Friend, when you go through darkness and come out, you'll know some things that other people won't know. *"He awakeneth morning by morning; he waketh mine ear to hear like the learned"* (Isaiah 50:4–5). In the morning, when the morning comes, when you're gone through that dark night of the soul, when you've been through anguish, I'm telling you, friend, there's a better day coming.

If you're in darkness right now, trust God. If you're in darkness right now, lean on God. If you're in darkness right now, don't light your own fire. Trust God. And I'm telling you, He'll turn every tear to a pearl. He'll turn every hurt to a *hallelujah*. He'll turn every Calvary to an Easter. Your morning will come.

Psalms 112, and verse 4: *"Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness; he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous"* (Psalm 112:4). Psalm 30, and verse 5: *"For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favor is life. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning"* (Psalm 30:5). Don't you love that? *"Weeping may endure for a night"* (Psalm 30:5).

You may lie down and wet your pillow with tears, but I'm telling you, friend, there's a better time coming. One of these days, God is going to pull back the shades of night, and pin them with a star, and open the door of the morning, and flood your world with the sunshine of His light. And you're going to see things that you've never seen before, more clearly than you've ever seen them before. When He awakes you, in the morning, you will awaken with the tongue of the learned.

There was an artist who painted a great painting. He had wanted his friend to come see his painting. So he invited his friend to come and see the painting. And so his friend came down the busy street and went in. And the artist said, "Come in here, and I want you to sit in this room, and I'm going to turn out all of the lights. And I want you to sit in the darkness for fifteen minutes before I show you my painting." The man did it. And then, he was taken out of the darkness, and brought into the gallery to look at the painting. He said, "It's beautiful, it's magnificent." He said, "Why did you want me to just come in this room and sit in the darkness?" And the artist said, "It is because you had

the glare of the street in your eyes. I wanted you to be able to appreciate the richness of my colors.” He said, “You would not have been able to do it until the glare was gone.” You know, I think, sometimes, that you and I are so dazzled by this world. I think, sometimes, that there’s so much jingle and jangle, and so much glare, that God, in His love, just lets us know something of the treasures of the darkness.

Conclusion

I’ve been preaching long enough to know there’s some people in this room, right now—you’ve got some deep, deep hurts. And you have some big, big questions. And you’re trying as best you know how to love God. You fear God, and you obey God, and nothing seems to make sense. Trust Him. Trust Him. Lean on Him. Stay upon your God.

A father and a little girl came from the funeral home. They had just put away, into the cold ground, a mother, a wife. And now this daddy and this little girl had to come home without that mother. The little girl said, “Daddy, can I sleep with you tonight?” He was glad she said that, because he did not want to be in that lonely bed by himself. She came to lie down by her daddy. He turned out the light. And she said, “Daddy, it’s dark. Daddy, it is so dark. Daddy, have you ever seen it this dark before? Daddy, it’s so dark, I can’t even see you, Daddy. Daddy, is your face toward me?” He said, “Yes, sweetheart. My face is toward you.” She said, “I’m glad to know it, Daddy. Goodnight, Daddy. I’ll see you in the morning.” And she went off to sleep. And that big man crawled out of bed, got on his knees, and spoke to his Heavenly Father and said, “Father, it is dark, so dark. Father, I’ve never seen it this dark before. Father, is Your face toward me?” And from Heaven, He said, “Yes, My son, My face is toward you.” He said, “Then, goodnight, Father; I’m going to sleep.” I’m telling you, friend: In your deepest, darkest sorrow, the eyes of your Heavenly Father are upon you. Trust Him and learn the treasures of the darkness.

And let me say one last word, and we’re going to have prayer. If you’re not a child of God, if you’re not trusting God, if you’re not staying upon God, there’s another kind of darkness. It’s called *everlasting darkness*. For those who do not know Jesus Christ, they go from this life into eternal, everlasting darkness. Without Jesus, the sun will never rise for you. So I want you to know Jesus. I want you to trust in Jesus. He is the light of the world.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you’re already saved, would you begin to pray for those around about you who may not know the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you’re not certain that you’re saved, or if you’re certain that you’re not saved, I have wonderful news. You can be saved for sure and forever by receiving Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. And I want to encourage you to pray this prayer, if you can pray it sincerely out of your heart: “Dear

God. I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You. I believe You are the Son of God. I believe You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And I now receive You as my personal Lord and Savior. I receive You by faith. I trust You, once and for all, to save me. You're now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my Friend. Begin, now, to make me the person You want me to be. I will follow You the rest of my life, not in order to be saved, but because I have been saved by a sheer gift of grace. I will follow You. And by Your grace and for Your glory, I will not be ashamed of You. Because You died for me, I will live for You. Thank You for saving me. In Your precious name I pray. Amen.”

How to Make Sense out of Suffering, Part 2

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 16, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 50:10–11

“Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.”

ISAIAH 50:10

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Possibility of Darkness
- II. The Procedure in Darkness
- III. Leave It with the Lord in Darkness

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to find, if you will, please, the book of Isaiah—a very wonderful text. It’s been a blessing to me, through the years. Isaiah chapter 50, and I want you to look at it with me tonight.

You know, today, in our message, we talked to you about suffering, and the title of the message, “How to Make Sense Out of Suffering.” And we remember we talked to you about those three words that we wanted you to remember: bondage, liberty, and hope—yesterday’s curse, tomorrow’s conquest, and today’s comfort. And, that’s a wonderful scripture.

There’s so much truth there to encourage us in time of suffering, but I want to say that there will come times in your life where even messages that deal with scriptures like that will not really be of help to you. You will come to a time of darkness, a time when you are perplexed, you cannot understand, and spiritually you will not be able to see your hand before your face, and you will say, “O God, why?” I’ve been a pastor long enough to know that there are questions that I cannot answer, and no one that I know on this earth could answer, and we would be better off not to try to answer them when people say, “Why did this happen?” I generally don’t try to get philosophical. I try to just get helpful and pray and encourage and love.

You know, I found out that human beings can bear almost anything if they see a reason for it, they see a reason for it. But if they don't see a reason, then, it gets very, very disconcerting—if they don't see a reason. But I want to remind you that why is not our question; why is God's question. How is our question. How are we going to react to these things when we are left in the dark, when the lights go out? How are we to behave? How is the question.

Now, let me give you the scripture that I want to read to you—this is Isaiah chapter 50, verses 10 and 11: “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant?” Now, if we just stopped right there, we'd say, “Well, I am. I fear the Lord, and I obey the voice of God's servant. When my pastor preaches, I listen.” That sounds fine. We sound like the individual's doing real well. But then, we come to a place where there's something that seems to be wrong. Look at it.

“Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness?” That doesn't seem to fit, does it? It seems like he would say, “Who is among you, that loves God, that fears the Lord, that obeys His servant, and walks in the light?” But it says he “walketh in darkness, and hath no light! Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.”

I. The Possibility of Darkness

Now, three things I want you to think about tonight when we think about, things that are seen only in the dark. I want you to think, first of all, about the very possibility, yes, even the probability of darkness that comes to the child of God. Contrary to popular opinion, the Christian life is not all sweetness and light. Sometimes people get the distorted idea that if we give our hearts to Jesus Christ, from that point onward, it will be joy and light and sweetness and roses, and that we're just going to move through life in an ever-ascending scale of health and success, then we're going to have a serene old age and a glorious exit right to heaven. Be nice if it worked that way, but, folks, it does not. And there's no need to deny it. There's no need to paint the clouds with sunshine and act like people—good people, God's people, people who fear the Lord and who obey the voice of His servant—don't have problems, because they do. And, if you study the Bible, you're going to find out that the greatest of saints sometimes found themselves plunged into darkness.

A classic example was Job. Job suffered in consternation, trouble, heartache, tears, pain, and he never did understand why until he got to heaven. Job said, in Job 19 verse 8, “He hath set darkness at my paths.” That is, he says, “I'm just stumbling in darkness.” Now, Job was a man that feared God. Job was a man who eschewed evil. He was a

man described here in Isaiah, and yet Job said, “God has set darkness in my paths.” You read the prophet Habakkuk. The prophet Habakkuk was deeply perplexed at certain things that happened; he did not understand. You read about John the Baptist. Jesus said, “Of woman there’s not a greater born than John the Baptist.” He was a prophet and more than a prophet. What an incredible attestation to character that Jesus gave this man John the Baptist, and yet John the Baptist got down in a dungeon, and he got in such darkness and consternation that he even began to doubt whether or not that Jesus was the Messiah.

The apostle Paul—not a greater mind, I think, has ever been produced on this earth, outside the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ was the mind of the apostle Paul—and yet you read Paul’s epistles, and you find out where Paul said he was perplexed. Now, did you think that Paul always had all the answers? He didn’t. He said he was perplexed! So if you’re perplexed, you and Paul are soul brothers. If you read the biographies of the great saints—and sometimes biographies are wonderful things to read; I wish I had time to read more biographies—but if you’ll read the biographies of great saints, you’ll sometimes understand that they went through what was called “the dark night of the soul.” And so, it’s an experience, number one, that’s not unusual.

Number two, it is an experience that is not unfruitful. Did you know that there are some things that are only seen in the dark? I don’t know whether the light people are reading something or listening to me, but if you’re handling the lights up there—I should’ve cleared this ahead of time—but I would like for you to turn out all of the lights in this sanctuary right now, if you will. Just turn them out. Just darken the lights, and just let it get very, very dark.

Now, I want you to turn around and look at the back wall. Do you see all those exit signs in here? I walked in this place the other day, and all the lights were off, and that’s the first time I’d ever seen those signs. I did not realize they were there. I should’ve known that, but I thought, Where’d all those green signs come from? They were there all the time. Thank you, and turn the lights back on. But I never noticed those signs, until I walked in this place and it was dark. There are just certain things that you don’t see until it’s dark.

For example, you don’t see the stars in the daytime. Now, do the stars come out at night? Careful how you answer. No, they don’t come out at night! They’re there all the time! I’ve never tried it; you try it and tell me if it’s true, but they say if you go down the bottom of a well and look up, you can see stars in the daytime. If you—anybody ever heard that, let me see your hand. Yeah, well, I just said it. How come you don’t... Listen. From the bottom of a well—from the bottom of a well—or in a silo, when you surround yourself in darkness, it may be high noon, but if you’re down there in the bottom of a well, and look up, you’ll see the stars at high noon. There are some things that you can

only see in darkness, and there are some things—there are some things—that you see better after the darkness.

I read of a man who was an artist, and he had painted a great picture, and he invited his friend to come over and see his masterpiece. And the friend came in, and he put the friend in a dark room, and had him sit in a dark room for fifteen minutes. He asked him why he did that. He said, “Because I wanted you to see the richness of the color of my painting.” And, he said, “I did not want you to look at my painting with the glare of the street and other things in your eyes. I wanted you to see my painting after the dark, so you could appreciate the fine coloring.” I can tell you, folks, that you will see sometimes more clearly than you’ve ever seen after a period of darkness. It is an experience that’s not unusual. It is an experience that is not unfruitful.

And, thank God, it is an experience that is not unending. If you’re in the darkness right now, that doesn’t mean that you’re going to stay in the darkness. The Bible says, in Psalm 112, verse 4, “Light arises in the darkness for the upright.” And again the Bible says, in Psalm 30, verse 5, “For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning.” So, if you’re in darkness right now, and you have a broken heart, it’ll endure for a night, but I’m telling you, friend, that one of these days God is going to flood your world with light.

I remember what David wrote there in Psalm 23. He said, “Yea, though I walk through the valley—through the valley—of the shadow of darkness, the shadow of death.” Just because you cannot see now does not mean that you will never see. Just because you cannot understand now does not mean that you will never understand.

Somebody wrote these words: “Not now, but in the coming years. It may be in the better land we will know the meaning of our tears, and there someday, someday we will understand.” And I can promise you that the Lord Jesus will pull back the shades of night, pin them with a star, open the window of your heart, and flood it with the sunshine of His light.

Now, there is the possibility of darkness. If you’re a child of God, and you just find yourself in consternation, darkness, perplexity, and you cannot tell which way to turn, what to do, and nothing seems to make sense, you’re in good company. It has happened to the best of saints. You can fear the Lord. You can obey the voice of His servant and still be in darkness, okay? That’s very important that you understand that. It does not necessarily mean that you are not right with God. Now, that’s the possibility of darkness.

II. The Procedure in Darkness

What is the procedure? What do you do? Thank God for this verse, because it tells us what to do. He says here in verse 10—look at it—three things: “Let him trust in the

name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire and compass yourself about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. And this shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.”

So, what should you do when the lights go out in your life? And, by the way, the real test of character is what you are in the dark. Well, number one, look to the Lord. Notice what it says here. If this happens, he says, trust in the name of the Lord. Trust in the name of the Lord. You do not have to understand, just trust.

Dr. Warren Wiersbe, a great, great Bible teacher, said, “We do not live by explanations; we live by promises.” So simply trust the Lord. Just because things do not make sense to you does not mean they do not make sense, and just because they do not make sense to you now does not mean they will not make sense to you someday. The old Puritan Thomas Watson said, “Where reason cannot wade faith must swim.” I like that. “Where reason cannot wade faith must swim.” So, just keep trusting and keep obeying. If you have feared the Lord, obeyed the voice of His servant, just keep doing it.

Now, don’t stop praying, even if you don’t understand, and your prayers don’t seem to get through. Your prayers don’t have to be juicy in order for you to pray. When you come to the Lord to pray, and it’s dark, and you don’t feel like praying, don’t offer to God the brass of your emotions. Come with both hands filled with the incense of Jesus’ worth, and just pray anyway.

Don’t stop witnessing. If you’re in a deep, dark valley, your heart is broken, and there’s a stygian darkness all about you, just keep on witnessing, telling people about Jesus. Even if no one seems to respond, and nobody gets saved, keep witnessing. Listen, folks, if you have an unsaved husband, and you have witnessed to him, and prayed for him, and he gets more and more cruel, just keep witnessing.

If you’ve been giving, if you’ve been a tither, and the pastor has taught that you ought to tithe and trust God with your finances, and your barns will be filled with plenty, and your presses will burst out with new wine, and you’re a tither and you have a financial upside-down, just keep tithing. Just keep tithing. Keep giving.

If you’ve been a praiser, and you’ve been praising God, and singing, as Elmer sang, “Nobody Ever Cared for Me like Jesus,” and the bottom falls out, and life caves in, keep praising. You don’t feel like praising, praise God anyhow. Just look to the Lord. That’s the first thing. If you’re in darkness, just look to the Lord. This is what he says: trust in the Lord.

But not only look to the Lord; lean on the Lord. Look at this verse again: “Let him trust in the name of the Lord—now watch this—and stay—S-T-A-Y—stay upon his God.” Now, the word stay there literally means to lean for support. It’s the word that is translated staff in Psalm 23. Staff is what the shepherd would sustain himself with. It’s what he would lean on. What he is saying is, “Look, trust in the name of the Lord, and

stay upon your God.”

You see, sometimes God will put you to a place where you won't have anything else but Him to lean on, and you're going to have to lean on God. You're not going to be able to understand. Well, that's not bad; it's good. I'm telling you, it would be better to be in a dark valley leaning on Jesus than to be on a sunlit mountaintop without the Lord Jesus. Stay upon the Lord. The relationship is more important than the reason. Now, sometimes, God will not show us why, and let me tell you why God will not show us why. God does not want to tell us why in order that we might have to know Who.

If you look at the twenty-third Psalm—and, by the way, we're talking about the shepherd's staff here, stay upon the Lord—if you look at the twenty-third Psalm, the twenty-third Psalm begins, “The Lord is my shepherd. He leadeth me.” He—the Lord; He's talking about the Lord. But when he's in the dark valley, he is not talking about the Lord; he's talking to the Lord. He is saying, “Thou art with me.” No longer He, no longer the Lord, but Thou. God will never be nearer to you than when you have found yourself plunged in darkness, and standing somewhere in the shadows you'll find Jesus. And darkness may hide, but it cannot divide. And that's what the book of Job is all about.

Now, Job was perplexed. I mean, Job's life went upside-down, inside out, everything was darkness, everything was blackness, and Job did not know why! And he says, in effect, “God, You owe me some answers!” Well, you say, “I don't know why Job couldn't figure it out. I understand what it's all about.” You know why you understand it all? You've read the book of Job. I mean, you know the story. Job had not read the book of Job. He didn't know what it was all about. We know, but he didn't know. The book ends with Job still not knowing, but Job said what? “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.” Job is just leaning upon the Lord. You see, sometimes we don't know why in order that we might know Who? The Lord. In order that we might have not a reason, but a relationship. That is more important than a reason.

III. Leave It with the Lord in Darkness

Well, here's the third thing. Now, look. He's telling you now to look to the Lord. Just simply, look to Him; trust in Him. He's telling you to lean upon the Lord. And then, here's the very important thing. He is telling you to leave it with the Lord—leave it with the Lord.

Look, if you will, in verse 11 of this chapter: “Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.” What does this mean in plain English? It means, if you're in darkness, don't light your own fire. Don't kindle a fire when you're in darkness. Listen: “Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the

sparks that you have kindled.” And this is what you’re going to have from God: you are going to lie down in sorrow.

Now, why should you not light your own fire? Because the darkness that you’re in has been ordained of God. You’re not out of the will of God. He’s not talking to a person who’s living in rebellion. He is talking to a person who fears God. He is talking here to a person who is obeying the voice of God’s servant. He is talking to a reverent, obedient, godly person. He says, when you’re in darkness, just trust in Me, lean on Me, and don’t light your own fire. Why? Because, friend, if you are walking with God, and darkness comes, it can only be because God has ordained it.

Did you know that the only way darkness can come is for light to be withdrawn? Did you know that you can walk in a room and turn on a light, but nobody can walk in a room and turn on the dark? There’s not a light switch made or a switch made that you can walk into a light room and flick that switch and it’s filled with darkness. No way. You see, the light always runs the darkness out, but the darkness can never run the light out. Isn’t that true? Where does the darkness go in your bedroom when you turn on the light? It goes under the bed. Go look—it’s under there. It cannot stay. It cannot stay in that room when you turn on the light.

Now, what I’m trying to say is this: that if therefore you are walking with God, obeying God, obeying the voice of His servant and fearing the Lord, and darkness comes, obviously, it’s because God has withdrawn the light. It’s God’s will! The darkness didn’t chase away the light. The night does not chase away the day. The day chases away the night.

Now, why should you not light your own fire then? Because manmade fire is deceptive. We have a sundial in the courtyard in front of our house, and, from time to time, I go out and get it adjusted just right, see if I can tell what time it is. I can do that in the daytime, but I cannot go out there with a flashlight at nighttime and find out what time it is by looking at the sundial with a flashlight. I can make it say any time I want with a flashlight. It just doesn’t work that way. Manmade light is very deceptive. If you kindle your own fire, if you bring your own knowledge and your own wisdom rather than trusting the Lord and obeying the Lord, you’re going to make a mess. He says, “This shall ye have of my hands; you shall lie down in sorrow.”

Well, Adrian, would you give me some examples of that? Yes, I will. Glad you asked. Let me say, first of all, Abraham is an example of this. God said to Abraham, “Abraham, I am going to make you the father of many nations. You’re an old man. Your wife is past the age of fertility, but, Abraham, you are going to have a son.” And then, this child was not born, and Abraham was getting older and older, and Sarah’s womb is getting deader than ever. He couldn’t understand it! He’s in darkness. So what does Abraham do? He takes Sarah’s maid, a woman named Hagar, and takes her and tries to father a

child with Sarah's maid Hagar. And Ishmael is born. Now, I want to tell you the sons of Abraham and Abraham himself have been lying down in sorrow as a result of a man who could not trust God. He kindled a spark of his own. He lit his own fire.

I remember reading the Bible about a man named Moses. God called Moses. He said, "You're going to deliver My people." And, Moses, to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, out of bondage into the Promised Land, got antsy. He couldn't just wait upon God. He could not just lean upon God. He could not just stay upon his God. But he took matters in his own hand. He lit his own fire. And starting out to be a missionary, he ended up a murderer, got himself in incredible difficulty, set the plan of God back by forty years, spent forty years on the back side of the desert, just putting things in his own hands.

I remember about another man named Simon Peter. Jesus is in Gethsemane. Jesus has told Simon Peter what? To watch and pray! But he's sleeping, and then come the guards into Gethsemane to take Jesus away. Simon Peter, awakening out of his stupor in the darkness of that night, seeing Malchus, the servant of the high priest, Simon Peter pulls out a sword and cuts off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest. That was a terrible thing to do. It put him in such jeopardy; he's now afraid to even say that he belongs to Jesus Christ, curses, swears, denies Jesus, goes out and weeps bitterly concerning that terrible night. What happened to this man? He lit his own fire.

Now, bottom line—here it is, folks. There will come times—and I've been there, and you'll be there sooner or later—when you can be right with God, loving God, obeying God, and saying, "God, I don't understand." You can be like Job, and say, "God, You owe me some answers." But you may not get the answers. But you still need to be like Job and say, "Though He slay me, though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

Conclusion

Now, look up here. God helping you, will you say right now, when that time comes, I'm going to keep trusting Jesus? If you will, just nod your head, because this is the time to say it. Never doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light, okay? Never doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light. You will go through that dark valley. You'll come out on the other side. Just trust in the Lord, stay upon your God, and don't light your own fire.

Let's bow in prayer. Heads are bowed. Eyes are closed. I wonder tonight in this auditorium, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, no one stirring, no one looking around, between you and me and the Lord Jesus, how many in this building tonight would say, "Pastor Rogers, I know Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. I have repented of my sin. I've trusted Jesus as my Lord and Master. God's Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I'm a child of God. And I have the sweet and blessed

assurance if I died tonight I would go straight to heaven. I am grateful for it. I have a Bible reason for knowing it. And I just will give you, as my pastor, this testimony, that I have been saved by the grace of God, it is real to me, and I know that I know that I am heaven-born and heaven-bound.” If you can give me that testimony, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, slip up your hand and hold it up. All right now, take them down.

Now, if you could not give that testimony, I want to thank you, first of all, for being honest enough to not lift your hand. I’ve asked us to do this for several reasons, to give those of you who know the Lord Jesus an opportunity just to testify to me about it, but also to cause some of us who may not be certain that we’re saved to get certain. And if you couldn’t lift your hand a moment ago, let me just talk to you out of my heart. God wants you to have that assurance. You can know that you’re saved, not because you’re a good person, not because you’ve done good deeds. No, our righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of the Lord. You can never earn salvation by being good, but you can receive Jesus, stand on His Word, and know because of the promises of God that you’re saved. You might say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, if a person can know it, I want to know it. I want to have the assurance of my salvation.” Now, if you’re here tonight and not absolutely certain that you’re saved, I’d like to pray for you, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed. This is between you and me and the Lord Jesus. No one else is looking around, but if you’d say, “Pastor Rogers, I don’t have that assurance. I need it. I want it. And in the prayer that you’re about to pray, I wish you’d remember me in prayer. Remember me in prayer.” I’ll not embarrass you. I’m not going to point you out or call you out. Nobody’s going to come talk to you. I just sincerely want to pray for you from my heart tonight. If you want that assurance of your salvation, I want to pray for you that God would help you to know, beyond the shadow of any doubt, that you’re saved, and on your way to heaven. So, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you would say, “Pastor Rogers, pray for me tonight. I want that assurance,” would you just slip up your hand? Hold it up where I may see it. Yes sir. God bless you. God bless you, ma’am. God bless you, sir. And just take them down. Just lift them up high and then take them down. Yes. Anyone else? Hold it up where I may see it. God bless you, sir. Take it down. Yes, God bless you, young man. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Anyone else? Just say, “Pray for me. I’m not, I don’t have that assurance, and I want it tonight. Pray for me.” Someone else. I’m going to pray in just a moment. Hold it up where I may see it. Yes, God bless you; I see that hand. Someone else? Anyone else? Hold it up where I may see it for a moment.

All right now, how many would say, “Pastor Rogers, I know that I’m saved, but I really believe that you were speaking about me and to me tonight about being in darkness. That’s where I am tonight, and I just wish that you’d pray specially for me, just

that God would help me even when I don't understand just to trust Him, just to lean on Him, not to light my own fire, just to stay upon Him. I need special prayer. Would you pray for me?" If you are that way, while heads are bowed, just slip up your hand and hold it up. My, my, my, a great number, a great number. That's an amazing thing. Thank you. I would've thought maybe it'd be 10 or 15. Maybe there are 200 tonight who said, "I'm just in darkness. Just pray for me, that I might stay upon my God."

Now, I wonder tonight how many would say, "Pastor Rogers, I am not a member of Bellevue Baptist Church. I am a believer in Jesus. I honestly believe I'm saved. I'm not a member here. If God wants me to be a member here, of course I want to be. Would you pray with me that as a Christian I might know and do God's will about my church membership?" Still, heads are bowed and eyes are closed. You want me to remember you in prayer about this matter that God will guide you. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, just slip up your hand and hold it up for a moment. You're not a member here. God bless you. God bless you and you. Hold it up and then take it down. Someone else? Yes, God bless you. Someone else. I'm talking now about membership, not salvation. If you need to be saved, it's not membership that you need to be concerned about. But you're not a member here. You know you're saved, and you just say, "I want God's will about my membership." Someone else.

All right now, folks, I'm not doing this just as some psychological manipulation. I want to pray for these people. And I want you to join me, as believers in Christ, for these who have said, "I want to have the assurance of my salvation," or, "I'm in darkness and I need help that I might just stay upon my God," or, "I want to know God's will about my church membership." So would you join me as I pray for these?

My God, I lift these to You. Lord, I pray for these, tonight who need to know about a church home. Now, Lord, we want those that You will give us. We want those, dear Lord, who will be blessed and used and that, Lord, will be in Your will as members of this church. And I don't know, dear Lord, exactly how You will lead them, what will happen, how You will speak to their hearts. I just ask You, Holy Spirit of God, to guide these, for You've said, Lord, as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God, the daughters of God. And now, Lord, so many who've said, "I am in darkness. I do not understand. I don't know what to do." Now, Father, help them just to obey You when You speak. But, Lord, if You don't guide them in ways that they're perplexed, just help them, Lord, to wait on You and to trust You, not to barge in and begin to manipulate things. Now, Lord, I know there are ordinary things they have to do. They have to work. They have to dress and feed. Lord, just help them to keep on doing good. But, Lord, in the thing that perplexes them, help them, Lord, just to trust in You until You see them through. God, I, I pray for each person represented by each hand here tonight.

And those of you who lifted your hand and said, “Pastor, I don’t know for certain that I’m saved,” now, here’s what I want you to do. I’m going to pray for you, and then I’m going to lead you in a prayer. And if you’re sincere, really wanting to know that you’re saved, you can be saved right now tonight! I mean, right now, if you’re sincere. I’m going to pray for you, and then I’m going to lead you in a prayer. And I want you to pray tonight and ask Christ into your heart.

Now, Father, I pray for these tonight who need to be saved, and, Lord, they’ve said, “I’m not certain that I’m saved,” or, “I’m certain I’m not saved.” I don’t know which is the case in many of them, but, Lord, You’ve seen these hands. And, Father God, I pray for these now that they might by faith trust You and You only—not to look to any kind of feeling, not to ask for any kind of signs, but just, dear Lord, to trust in You. Lord, open their hearts. Help them to understand, dear Lord, that they are in great danger and great jeopardy of eternal fire, if they refuse You, Lord, because they have transgressed Your holy commandments. They have broken Your holy law. They have offended You, O God. But, Lord, You’re merciful, and You will save them. And Jesus died for their sins. So now, precious friend, those of you who lifted your hand about salvation, this is your time. Right now, you pray this prayer after me: “Dear God...”—just pray it silently but fervently—“Dear God, I need to be saved. I want to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You, Lord Jesus.” Would you tell Him that? Tell Him right now. “I do trust You, Lord Jesus, this moment with all of my heart. Come into my heart. Come in right now. Cleanse me. Forgive me. Save me, Lord Jesus.” Pray that and mean it. “Save me, Lord Jesus.” Did you ask Him? Then, by faith, pray this way: “Thank You, Jesus, for saving me. Thank You for doing it. I just receive it by faith. And that settles it. You’re now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my Friend. And now, Lord Jesus, I will not be ashamed of You, because You died for me.”

The Greatest Story Ever Told

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 19, 1979

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 53

“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”

ISAIAH 53:2

Outline

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Introduction

Take your Bibles now and turn to the greatest chapter in the Old Testament, Isaiah chapter 53. Now as I say that, some of you may want to argue with me and say, “Now Pastor, the third chapter of Genesis, or the 23rd Psalm, or the 119th Psalm is the greatest chapter in the Bible.” And you may be right. As a matter of fact, if you want to argue with me about it, you may win. I just think that, at least to me while I’m preaching on it, Isaiah chapter 53 is the greatest chapter in the Old Testament.

I asked my wife this morning just offhandedly, I said, “Sweetheart, what’s the greatest chapter in the Old Testament?” She looked out the window for a while, and then she said, “I would say the 53rd chapter of Isaiah.” And what a wonderful, wonderful chapter it is, because it tells us of the birth, the life, the death, the resurrection, and the coming again of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! It’s the kind of a passage that we

keep coming back to over and over again. Some two years ago, as pastor and people we looked at this passage of Scripture, and I want us to look at it now again. And I want us to look at it under the title, “The Greatest Story Ever Told.”

We sing that old hymn,

*Tell me the story of Jesus,
Write on my heart every word;
Tell me the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard.*

—FANNY J. CROSBY

This is indeed the old story, the precious story, the sweetest story, the story of stories, the greatest story ever told, the story of the Lord Jesus Christ. And how sad some people who tend to be educated, how sad, that they don’t know the story of Jesus.

I want to tell you the rich man is poor, and the strong man is weak, and the educated man is ignorant, if he doesn’t know the story of Jesus. How sad, I say, for a person to be educated and to know the study of botany and the study of flowers, and not to know Jesus, Sharon’s fairest rose. How sad it is for a man to know geology and the ages of the rocks, and not to know Jesus, the Rock of Ages. Sad indeed for a man to know astronomy and how the heavens go, and not to know Jesus and how to go to heaven. Sad indeed for a person to study history, and not to see that history is His story, “for it is in Him that we live and breathe and have our being” (Acts 17:28). I say, ladies and gentlemen, that it is sad indeed for a man to think that he’s educated and not to know the story of Jesus.

H. G. Wells listed the 10 greatest men of history, and number one was Jesus Christ. But let me tell you something, friend. Jesus doesn’t belong in that list. Jesus doesn’t belong in any list. You might say Napoleon the Great, Alexander the Great, Charlemagne the Great, Caesar the Great, but don’t say Jesus the Great. He’s not Jesus the Great. He is Jesus, the one and only, and “No mortal can with Him compare among the sons of men” (Samuel Stennett). And how we need to say again, “Tell me the story of Jesus.”

And I want you to see how Isaiah, writing 700 years before the birth of Jesus—700 years—wrote such an exact description of His life, His birth, His death, His resurrection, His reign. It is marvelous. It is miraculous. What a confirmation of the inspiration of the Scripture! And what a confirmation of the deity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I. The Mystery of His Birth

First of all, I want you to notice what Isaiah wrote about the mystery of His birth. Notice in Isaiah chapter 53, the first two verses: “*Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and*

as a root out of a dry ground” (Isaiah 53:1–2).

Now notice that phrase *“as a root out of a dry ground.”* That is, out of a place of barrenness, out of a place of sterility, out of a place where you would expect no life. Life miraculously comes forth. A rose blooms in the desert. He shall come forth *“as a root out of a dry ground.”* I believe here Isaiah is speaking, the prince of the prophets is speaking, of the birth of the Prince of Peace. I believe he’s talking about the mystery of His birth. Out of a place where there seems to be no life, there comes life.

And I want to tell you this same Isaiah had already said in Isaiah chapter 7 and verse 14, *“Behold, a virgin shall conceive”* (Isaiah 7:14). You say, “Brother Rogers, I don’t understand the virgin birth.” Well, friend, don’t try to understand it; just believe it—believe it. It is the mystery of His birth. *“Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh”* (1 Timothy 3:16).

Now some people think the idea of the virgin birth is incidental. Friend, it is fundamental. You take the virgin birth away and the whole house of Christianity collapses like a house of cards. Why the virgin birth? Three reasons, three words I want you to remember. The first word is the word *indictment*. The second word is the word *instrument*. The third word is the word *illustration*.

A. It Was an Indictment

First of all, He was born of a virgin as an indictment against me and against you. When the Lord Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, that was God’s way of saying there was something wrong with our birth. Why couldn’t the Lord Jesus Christ be born as we were born? I’ll tell you why. Had He been born of earthly parents as we were born of earthly parents, He would have been a sinner as we are sinners.

You see, dear friend, Jesus was the sinless Son of God. We inherit our sin nature by Adam and from Adam. And the bloodline is given by the father, as has been proved in paternity suits and so forth. Some people mistakenly believe that the bloodline is received from the mother. But not so. Some people believe that the mother’s blood circulates through the baby’s body there in the embryo, or there in the fetus in the mother’s womb. But not so. Not one drop of blood inter-circulates between the mother and the child. The mother may indeed have one type of blood and the child have another type of blood. It is the father who determines that bloodline. And it is the father who gives the characteristic to that blood.

And who was the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? God was His Father. And that is the reason the Bible says in Acts chapter 20 that pastors are to be careful *“to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood”* (Acts 20:28). Whose blood? God’s blood: *“the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”*

I want to tell you the blood that coursed through the veins of the Lord Jesus Christ

was royal blood, sinless blood, pure blood, the blood of God. And that's the reason Peter calls it the "*precious blood*" (1 Peter 1:19). And without the virgin birth, you'd not have that.

You see, the virgin birth is an indictment against us. It is telling us that the way we were born, we were born with a sinful nature. As we said several Sundays ago, the Bible says, "*In sin did my mother conceive me*" (Psalm 51:5); "*The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies*" (Psalm 58:3).

B. It Was an Instrument

But not only is it an indictment, dear friend; it was an instrument. You see, in order for Jesus to be our substitute, He had to be a man. But in order for Him to pay for our sins, He had to be sinless. So He had to be a man, but He had to be sinless. And the answer is the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

He came as He did to be what He was. How did He come? Virgin-born. To be what He was—sinless. And He was what He was to do what He did. What did He do? He died on the cross for our sins as a sinless substitute. And my dear friend, the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ was God's instrument of our salvation. No virgin birth—no sinless Savior. No sinless Savior—no substitutionary sacrifice. No substitutionary sacrifice—no salvation. No salvation—no heaven for you, for me. So don't ever minimize the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

C. It Was an Illustration

But not only was it an indictment, and not only was it an instrument, dear friend; it was an illustration of how we can be saved. Think of that sweet little virgin girl Mary, and the angel came to her with a word of the Lord and said, "Hail, Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee" (Luke 1:28). And the angel spoke to Mary, and the angel said to Mary, "Mary, the power of God is going to overshadow you and there's going to be formed in your womb that holy child, the Savior of the World. And you'll call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sin" (Luke 1:31–35). And Mary knew the shame, the ignominy. Mary knew the misunderstanding. Mary knew the travail. Mary knew the embarrassment. Mary knew all of it. But Mary said, "*Be it unto me according to thy word*" (Luke 1:38). And oh, there is the Word of God, the will of man, and the response of the Holy Spirit.

And friend, that's the way we get saved. First of all, you see God speaks. And then, man consents. And then, the Spirit of God moves. And just as that baby was formed in Mary, Christ is formed in us, and there is a new birth. Something supernatural takes place in us. Thank God for the virgin birth. Jesus Christ came to earth that we might go to heaven. Jesus Christ was born of a virgin that I might be born again. And so Isaiah

tells us, at least alludes to the virgin birth, when he says, *“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.”* There we see the mystery of His birth.

II. The Manner of His Life

And next I want you to see the manner of His life, beginning, reading again, in verse 2, in the middle of that verse. And the Bible says, *“And when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not”* (Isaiah 53:2–3).

I want you to notice that Jesus lived an obscure life. Look again in verse 2. And the Bible says, *“And when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”* When Jesus Christ came to this earth, He laid aside all of that beauty and all of that splendor and all of that glory, and He left it in heaven. And the Bible says, *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant”* (Philippians 2:6–7).

And if you were to see the Lord Jesus Christ, you would not be dazzled by His beauty. He was not like some Greek Adonis. He was not like some god. He did not look like some pagan mythological god. Or He didn't look like He just stepped out of a beauty parlor. Sometimes these pictures of Jesus, the artist's rendition, they just don't do much for me. Some of them make Him look so weakly and so sickly and so effeminate. Some of them look like He just stepped out of a beauty salon. No, that's not the way our Lord looked.

He was raised in a carpenter's shop. He was a rugged man, spent the nights alone on the mountainsides. *“The foxes have holes, and the birds...have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head”* (Matthew 8:20). He knew what it was to live by the sunshine on the seashore. He knew what it was to spend all night on the mountainside. He knew what it was to take a whip and drive the moneychangers out of the temple. He was a man's man.

But I want to tell you something, friend: If you were to see Him, you would not pick Him out of the crowd as being the Son of God—contrary to popular opinion. *“When we see Him, there is no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty, that we should desire Him.”* His outward appearance was very ordinary. And His life was very obscure.

And why? Because God had a divine purpose. God knew human nature. God knew how easily we are bedazzled by outward appearance rather than inward reality. And that is the reason when Jesus Christ came into this world He laid aside all of the glory, all of the splendor, all of the majesty, but kept the nature of God: so that His followers

would be true followers.

Now you see, if God wanted to convince us, He wouldn't have any difficulty convincing us today that He exists. Somebody says, "If God is so great, why doesn't He do something to prove Himself?" All He'd have to do is reach down, take the roof off this auditorium, and say "Boo," and you'd say, "I believe." I mean, that's all. He wouldn't have any difficulty. If He wanted to convince you, He could. He could say, "We interrupt this sermon for an announcement," and speak from the heavens and stop the world on its axis. And we'd all say, "Yes, Lord, what do you want me to do?"

But why doesn't He do it that way? Because, dear friend, that is not the kind of fellowship that God desires. God doesn't want you to serve Him because He has frightened you, overwhelmed you, bought you, bribed you, convinced you that way. No, no. You see, listen. God made you where there is a quality in you that is to respond to Him because of who He is and not because of what He can do.

That's the reason when the Lord Jesus Christ was in this earth in His physical body He never performed miracles for publicity stunts. The devil tried to get Him to step off the pinnacle of the temple and float into the temple. He wouldn't do it (Matthew 4:5-7; Luke 4:9-12). People were saying, "Give us a sign from heaven, and we'll believe." He said, "No sign will be given to this sinful and adulterous generation" (Matthew 12:39; Matthew 16:4; Mark 8:12; Luke 11:29). They said, even when He was hanging on the cross, "Come down from the cross, and we'll believe" (Matthew 27:42). But Jesus didn't. Why? Even when He performed a miracle He would say, "Don't tell anyone about it" (Matthew 9:30; Matthew 12:16; Mark 7:36; Luke 5:14). Why? He was saying, "This is not a publicity stunt." Jesus knew the kind of fellowship that came from the miracle mongers.

Do you remember when Jesus fed the 5,000 and a great multitude went after Him? And then He turned around and started speaking to them about spiritual truth, and they left Him like rats leaving a sinking ship (John 6). Do you remember there in the second chapter of John where the Lord Jesus turned water into wine? And then the Bible says, "Many believed on Him when they saw the miracles that He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them for He knew man and needed not that any should testify what was in man" (John 2:1-12, 23-25).

What does that mean? Jesus knew that their faith was a modeling faith. Jesus knew that their faith was a shallow faith. Jesus knew that their faith was not a faith in Him loving Him for who He was. They were only following Him for what He did. And so God was very wise when He let His Son the Lord Jesus come into the world with "no form or comeliness, nor beauty that we should desire Him." But there was inherent in the Lord Jesus Christ all of the beauty, all of the nature, all of the internal glory, of God. And God so made man that the right kind of a man would respond to that Savior just like my eye

responds to light and my ear responds to sound. Oh, isn't it marvelous how God does things?

But what was our response to this manner of His life? I want you to notice what we did. The Bible says in verse 3, *"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not"* (Isaiah 53:3).

Did this world receive Him? No, indeed, it did not. He was the King of kings, and yet the kings of this earth sought to kill Him. He was the sinless One, and yet we condemned Him in our court. He had power to raise the dead, and yet we crucified Him. He laid aside His crown of gold, and we crowned Him with a crown of thorns. His hands healed fevered brows, and our hands slapped His face. He took spit and mixed it with clay of the ground and opened a blind man's eyes. We spat in His face until He could hardly see. That's what we did to Him.

And the Bible says, *"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."* And I'll tell you this is proof positive of what I've already said about human depravity, the way we treat the Lord Jesus. And I believe if Jesus Christ were to come to this world again in the flesh in this refined cultured twentieth century in which we live, He would again be crucified, put to death in some way, somehow by this generation. Oh, dear friend, the manner of His life was a strange life indeed.

III. The Meaning of His Death

But now I want you to notice the meaning of His death. Continue to read now, and I'm reading in verse 4: *"Surely he hath borne our grieves, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken"* (Isaiah 53:4–8).

What is the meaning of His death? Why did He die? His death was not incidental. His death was not accidental. His death was fundamental. He was born to die. He said, "No man taketh my life from me. I lay it down of myself" (John 10:18). Isaiah looking down through the telescope of time saw the death of the Lord Jesus, and Isaiah saw the meaning of His death.

A. He Took Our Sins

And what was the meaning of His death? Primarily substitution. Now don't forget that. Primarily substitution. The more liberal the theologians get the less they like that word *substitution*. They talk about the moral influence of the death of Christ, or that Christ died as a martyr, like some other martyr. Oh no, my dear friend. Jesus' death was not the death of a martyr. Jesus laid down His life. Jesus' death was planned before the foundation of this world. And the Bible says Christ was "slain before the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

And why did He die? He died as our substitute. I want you to look here at this verse that is so clear in verse 6. "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*" (Isaiah 53:6). What does that mean? We're like sheep. And a sheep goes astray. A sheep is—pardon me, folks, but—a very dumb animal. And that's the way the Bible describes us: like sheep. "*All we like sheep have gone astray.*" A sheep browses here, and nibbles here, and browses here, and nibbles there, and gets further and further away. And that going astray the Bible calls sin. We wander from "the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls," the Lord (1 Peter 2:25). And we sin and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Now let me illustrate what I'm talking about. I'm going to let my Bible illustrate sin. Certainly the Bible is not sinful. The Bible is good. But it tells us about sin. And it reveals to us the character and the nature of sin. I'm going to let my left hand represent a man, and I'm going to let my right hand represent the Lord Jesus Christ. And here's what the Bible says: "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.*" That makes us sinners. Our sins are upon us. And we deserve the judgment for those sins.

But then notice what the Bible says: "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way;*"—here's Jesus. He knew no sin. He was sinless. He was the Son of God. But the Bible says in verse 6—"*and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*" Jesus took our sins. "*The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*"

You see, dear friends, that is the purpose of the cross. It is one of substitution. Hear me and hear me well. If you were to go through all of the libraries of the world, look through every lexicon, every dictionary, and look through all of the literature, trying to find one word that would characterize and epitomize the nature of God, it would have to be the word *holy*. Not *love*, but *holy*. Now God is love. God is infinite love. God is matchless love. God is measureless love. God is love. But if you had to find one word that would describe God, it would be the word *holy*. And the angels around the throne said, "*Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts*" (Isaiah 6:3).

And what does that word *holy* mean? It means that God cannot overlook sin. It means that God is the complete other, God is the antithesis of sin, that God has a holy

hatred for sin. The Bible says in the Book of Habakkuk that God is “*of purer eyes than to behold...iniquity*” (Habakkuk 1:13).

Now God is holy, and man is sinful. And that means that sin is going to be judged. There is no way, any place, anywhere, any time where any sin ever went unpunished. Now just remember that. God never overlooks sin. God always judges sin, because God is a holy God.

Now the question is just simply this: Who is going to bear that punishment: you or your substitute? That’s the only question. The question is not, “Are my sins going to be punished?” That’s not up for debate, folks. Your sins must be judged. They must be. Or if they were not, God would topple from His throne of holiness.

Now the purpose of the cross is this: “Him who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21). And our iniquity was laid upon the Lord Jesus, and Jesus took those sins to the cross. And on the cross Jesus, with His rich, red, royal blood, the blood of God through the virgin birth, Jesus paid for those sins. Jesus atoned for those sins. Christ was our substitute. “*All we like sheep have gone astray...and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*” That’s the meaning of His death.

B. He Took Our Shame

My friend, He took my sins. But not only did the Lord Jesus take my sins; I want you to look it very carefully: the Lord Jesus also took my shame. Look in verse 7. “*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*”

Now what does that mean? You take a little lamb—to kill that little lamb, that little lamb will lie down and yield its neck to the knife. Its blood will be poured out without even a bleat. A sheep before a shearer will not make a sound as that sheep has the wool sheared from it. And this is the Lord Jesus Christ as He came into the judgment. And Jesus was lied about. Jesus was criticized. Jesus was framed. Jesus was blasphemed. And they said all kinds of terrible things about the Lord Jesus. And Jesus never said a word. A Negro spiritual says, “He never said a mumblin’ word.” Not a word—not a word. Why? Why?

It looks like the Lord Jesus could have said, “Now, fellows, before you crucify me, I want to get one thing straight. Just for the record: I am the Savior of the world. And I have come to this world to die for the sins of the people. And I want you to know I have worked out an arrangement with God the Father where all of the sins of all of the people are going to be laid upon me. Now I want you to know that I’m going to be a representative sinner and I’m going to have the sins of the world on me. But it’s not really my sin. I want you to know I am innocent. I’m just doing this for other people.” And

then He would have gone to the cross how? As a hero, right? And they would have said, “How wonderful! Look at it!”

But He didn't go to the cross as a hero. He went to the cross as a despicable, ignominious criminal. He went to the cross and He died a death of shame. And He could not have justified Himself without accusing me. He became my substitute, and by being my substitute, not only did He take my sin; He took my shame. Not only did He take my blame; He took my shame.

Listen, friend. The shame that sin will bring, you just don't understand. One of these days, closet doors will be opened and skeletons are going to come dancing out on parlor floors. One of these days, every sin will be revealed. And as a man comes to the judgment bar of God, and the white light of God's holiness and God's righteousness reveals not only our deeds, but our thoughts and our misdeeds and what we failed to do, and we see that foul, smelly mountain of sin, we'll say, “My God, no!” God will say, “This is the record.” And what will we say in defense? We'll not say one thing.

Do you remember the story of the parable of the man who came into the feast without a wedding garment? And he should have had a wedding garment, because one was provided; but he neglected the provision. And the ruler of the feast said, “Why did you come in here without a wedding garment?” And do you remember in that parable what the Bible said? “And the man stood speechless—speechless” (Matthew 22:12). That's why Jesus was speechless.

You know I told the early crowd, when Jesus is before Pilate, and Pilate is questioning Him and asking Him all those questions, we say, “Jesus, do something. Say something. Cast a spell on him. Turn him into a frog. Do something.” The Lord won't. He just stands there and He takes it. Because you see, dear friend, He did take our shame. And He suffered exactly what you'll suffer if you die without the Lord Jesus.

C. He Took Our Separation

He took your sins. He took your shame. And He also took your separation. I want you to notice in verse 8—look at it—Isaiah 53, verse 8. And the Bible goes on to say, “*He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living.*”

Look at that word *cut off*. It means, “to be separated.” And Jesus on the cross took separation: separation from loved ones, separation from life, but separation from God Himself. And the great agonies of the cross were not the agonies of those searing nails and that crown of thorns and that cat of nine tails that lacerated His back. Yes, those were agonies, and we'll speak of those in a moment. But I want to tell you the great suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross was that spiritual suffering, that utter despair, that blackness of midnight, as Jesus died and bowed His head on the cross

and said, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). God the Father forsook God the Son, and God the Son, the Lord Jesus, who from eternity past had always rested upon the bosom of God the Father, is now alone. He is on a bloody cross, a hellish machine, suspended between heaven and earth. And men laughing, jeering, demons mocking, God the Father turned His back on Him, and alone Jesus died—alone.

Jesus knew it was going to happen. That’s the reason Jesus in Gethsemane prayed, *“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me”* (Matthew 26:39). And the silence from heaven answered, “There is no other way.” And Jesus said, “All right then, nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.” It wasn’t physical death that Jesus was shrinking from. Jesus knew that the sins of all of the world would be poured upon Him.

You think of just the lies that will be told this day just in the city of Memphis and then multiply that by all of the sins of all of the cities of all of the days, and realize those sins were upon the Lord Jesus Christ. All of the rape, the pillage, the arson, the hate, the blasphemy, the foulness, the vulgarity, the pornography, the murder, the suicide: all upon Jesus, all of it at one time. And He drank that bitter cup. And when He did, God the Father turned His back. Because remember what we said about Jesus: He became sin. Remember what we said about God? He was “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.” You see, Jesus was cut off. And friend, you’ll be cut off too. You’ll be separated forever, and the blackness of midnight, like a wandering star out of orbit, without God, without hope, without life, without light, without music, without beauty, without little children, without laughter for eternity. Jesus took your separation as your substitute.

D. He Took Our Suffering

I want to go on and say, not only did Jesus take your sins, and Jesus take your shame, and Jesus take your separation, but my dear friend, the total of it all is that Jesus took your suffering. I want you to look, if you will, please, in verse 9. Look at it: *“He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death”* (Isaiah 53:9).

Look at that word *death*. I’m not a Hebrew scholar. But this word *death* is an intensive plural. And what does that mean? I think we could paraphrase it to say, “He died a thousand deaths”—“He died a thousand deaths.” His death was no ordinary death. You see, He was dying for the world. And He was dying for the sins of the world.

Sometimes people have a theological question, because they know that hell is for eternity, and they know that Jesus didn’t stay on the cross for eternity, so they ask this question: If Jesus really took my place, and if Jesus really took my suffering, how could Jesus suffer only a period of time when I would have to suffer for all eternity for my sins? I’ll tell you how: Jesus *being* infinite, suffered *in a* finite *period of* time *what you,*

being finite, would suffer in an infinite period of time . Jesus died a thousand deaths, a million deaths. It is an intensive plural. I want to tell you, dear friend, that just as the sin of the world was distilled upon Jesus, the ages were compressed upon Jesus. And how much Jesus suffered on that cross only the damned in hell can begin to know. You see, Jesus has an infinite capacity to suffer.

Let me illustrate. Here's a mother who, perhaps, died. And there's a three-year-old child in the family. And the father and the child go to the funeral. Now they both weep. They both are brokenhearted. But who suffers the most? The husband and the father, or the little three-year-old child? The little three-year-old child suffers, and that three-year-old child will weep, but that suffering is but a childish suffering with a childish heart. But oh, think of the grief of that father. Think what that father knows. Think what he feels. Think of his greater capacity for suffering.

Now dear friend, I want to tell you the capacity of the Lord that He has to suffer is so much greater than your capacity. I want you to see that He, being infinite, suffered in a finite period of time what you, being finite, would suffer in an infinite period of time. What I am saying is that He took your sins, He took your shame, He took your separation, He took your suffering, and you ought to love Him.

*Blessed Redeemer! Precious Redeemer!
Seems now I see Him on Calvary's tree;
Wounded and bleeding, for sinners pleading,
Blind and unheeding—dying for me.*

—AVIS M. CHRISTIANSEN

Dying for me: that's the meaning of His death.

IV. The Miracle of His Resurrection

But I want you to go on and see not only the meaning of His death, but I want you to see, bless God, the miracle of His resurrection. Read again here verse 9: *“He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.”* Isn't it marvelous how these little things are just put in there? He was buried in a common graveyard with sinners. He was not a sinner. But then the Bible says He made his grave with the rich. You remember that He was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, who was a rich man. Isn't the Bible marvelous? Seven hundred years before the time, Isaiah prophesied even the grave that He would lie in. Isaiah prophesied a virgin womb and a virgin tomb for our blessed Lord. Never a man lay in this tomb before.

But let's go on. We're not going to leave Him in that grave. *“He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,”*—that is, when that part is

over—*“he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand”* (Isaiah 53:9–10).

Now wait a minute. How can anyone have descendents if he dies before he ever gets married? And how can anyone prolong his days if he’s just been cut off? And how shall the pleasure of the Lord prosper in a dead man’s hand? Because, dear friend, He’s not going to stay dead. Isaiah saw it.

Look at it—look at it: *“He shall prolong his days.”* One translator gives it this way: “He shall live again.” Death cannot hold his prey. Jesus died, but He didn’t stay dead. And Isaiah saw it 700 years before His death: that He was going to prolong His days after the travail of His soul, after He died for sin, that Jesus was going to have many spiritual descendants, and that Jesus Christ is going to prosper in these last days. He lives! He lives!

When He was crucified, there was rumor that He’d be raised from the dead. And there was more than rumor: there was His own proclamation. And so Pilate, the Roman governor, gave these words. He said, “Put Him in that tomb,” and then Pilate said, *“Make it as sure as you can”* (Matthew 27:65). And nature made it as sure as she could, for He was put in a rockbound tomb with a big stone in front of it. The Roman government made it as sure as it could, because there was a seal put upon that stone and soldiers to guard that tomb. Unbelief made it as sure as it could, for the Sadducees mocked the idea of a resurrection. And death made it as sure as he could, for death shrieked his hoarse shriek and laugh and reached out and laid his bony hands upon the Lord Jesus and put Jesus there in that tomb. And “Low in the grave He lay, Jesus my Savior” (Robert Lowry).

And old death was sitting up there on the throne with the crown on his head. And on the third day, Jesus, quickened by the Spirit of God, moved and came forth out of those grave clothes as a butterfly would come from a chrysalis, only there was no incision there for Him to come through. Majestically, miraculously, Jesus arose. Death sitting upon the throne looked in terror as the Lord Jesus Christ arranged that face napkin there. And then the Lord Jesus reached up and pulled death from his throne and flung death on the dungeon floor. And when He did, the crown rolled from death’s head, and Jesus reached down and put His heel upon the throat and the neck of death and strangled death. And Jesus reached down and pulled the sting out of death. And Jesus again laid hold upon the crown and He put it upon His own head. And He walked out of that grave a living, risen, victorious Savior. “Up from the grave He arose” (Robert Lowry).

Thank God for our Savior who will live again. *“He shall see the travail of his soul”* (Isaiah 53:11) and *“shall prolong his days.”* And *“He ever liveth”*—glory to God—*“to make intercession for [us]”* (Hebrews 7:25). This, my friend, is the miracle of His

resurrection.

And I want to quote what someone said. And I believe it's one of the greatest statements I've ever heard in all of my life. And I want you to listen to it. Someone said this: "If Jesus Christ is still in that grave, nothing really matters. But if Jesus Christ came out of that grave, nothing but that really matters." Now you think about it. You see, He is shown *"to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead"* (Romans 1:4).

V. The Magnificence of His Reign

One last word, though, and then I must close. Not only is there, dear friend, the miracle of His resurrections, but there is the magnificence of His reign. For it's not over yet. There's still more to the story of Jesus. Isaiah is still looking down through the tunnel of time, and this is what Isaiah says again in verse 11: *"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied..."*—and I want you to know, dear friend, when God saw what Jesus did on the cross to buy my salvation and yours, He was completely satisfied. You don't need to add anything to it. It's done; it's finished. God is satisfied with it. Jesus said, "It is finished"—*"and [he] shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many..."*—how do you get justified? How do you become a Christian? By joining the church? By getting baptized? No, no. Isaiah knew better than that. By the knowledge of Jesus you're justified. To know Jesus: that's what saves you. To know Him, not know about Him; but to know Him. The knowledge of Jesus: that's what justifies many—any who will receive Him. Notice—*"by his knowledge shall my righteous servant"*—Jesus—*"justify many;"*—that is, many lost sinners—*"for he shall bear their iniquities."* And now notice the *therefore*. And I'm so glad it ends with verse 12: *"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong..."*—do you know what the spoil is? Friend, that's what's left over after the battle is finished. And he's going to—*"divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death"* (Isaiah 53:11–12).

Now what does that mean? It means that Jesus is going to reign, that Jesus is going to be victorious. And notice He's going to divide the spoil. Who is He going to divide it with? Old Tom Clayton, young Tom Lane, and Robert, and me and you. He's going to divide it with us. You say, "Why should He do that?" Well, friend, listen. Bless God, when He saved us, you know what happened to us? We became heirs of God and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17).

Now look. You know what *joint-heirs* means? Friend, think about it. Now think about it. *Joint-heirs* means share and share alike. Can you imagine the legacy that God has for His own dear Son? Can you imagine the rich reward that Jesus Christ won at the cross? Can you imagine how glorious the reign of Jesus is going to be? And the Bible

says, “*If we suffer [with him], we shall*”—what?—“*also reign with him*” (2 Timothy 2:12). The Bible says, “Blessed and holy are they which have part in the first resurrection. They shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6). Oh, the magnificence of His reign!

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

—ISAAC WATTS

Conclusion

That's the story of Jesus.

*Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;
Buried, He carried my sin far away;
Rising, He justified freely forever;
One day He's coming—O glorious day!*

—J. WILBUR CHAPMAN

*Tell me the story of Jesus,
Write on my heart every word.
Tell me the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard.*

—FANNY J. CROSBY

And I've told you that story. And I want to tell you now that you must receive Jesus. “*By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.*” This is not a bedtime lullaby to put you to sleep. This is a reveille to cause you to awaken. Do you know Jesus? Are you saved? Do you know that you know if you were to die right now you'd go to heaven? You can know it by receiving Jesus. And I'm going to ask you to receive Jesus Christ right now.

The Prince of the Prophets and the Prince of Peace

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 19, 1982

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 53

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.”

ISAIAH 53:4

Outline

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 - A. He Is Exalted as Our Resurrected Lord
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Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles now and turn to, I believe, the greatest chapter in the Old Testament—turn to Isaiah chapter 53. And this is a chapter to which we must come again and again as we minister the Word of God. It is written by the prince of the prophets, Isaiah. And it's written about the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus. And so, today, for our Christmas message, we're thinking on this subject: “The Prince of Prophets and the Prince of Peace.” What a wonderful, wonderful chapter this is!

Isaiah is writing seven hundred years before the birth of the Lord Jesus, and yet he gives the birth announcement of the Lord Jesus. Now, you talk about a birth announcement! What about one that's written seven hundred years before the baby is born? And not only did he write about His birth; he wrote about His life. How about a biography of a person written in detail centuries before the person was born? One of the

great proofs of the inspiration of the Bible is fulfilled prophecy. And I hope that our dear Jewish friends who are listening this morning can understand that Isaiah is talking about a Jewish Messiah who came—and His name is Jesus, which means “Jehovah saves.” And let’s see what the prince of prophets has to say this morning about the Prince of Peace. And, my friend, how you need to understand and know about Him! But you’ll only know about Him as God teaches you, for it says, *“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?”* (Isaiah 53:1)

Now, *“the arm of the LORD”*—that speaks of the strength of the Lord. Jesus Christ is the mighty right arm of our God. He is the power of God. But who knows it? Who are those that believe on Him? Those to whom *“the arm of the LORD”* is revealed. What I am trying to say this morning is that you can never believe on Jesus until God reveals Him to you. *“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?”* When God reveals Him, then you can believe on Him. And I’m praying God that He’ll use my message this morning to reveal Jesus Christ, God’s mighty right arm, to you today.

Friend, I don’t care what else you know: if you don’t know Jesus, you’re woefully lacking. Someone has well said a man may know biology and the study of life, but how sad if he knows biology and the study of life, and he doesn’t know Jesus Christ, who is the life! If a man know botany and the study of flowers, wonderful; but what a tragedy if he doesn’t know Jesus, the Rose of Sharon! Suppose a man knows history, and he knows all of the things that have happened through history, but he doesn’t know Jesus Christ, who is the centerpiece of history; he doesn’t know the Bible, which is His story—what a tragedy! Suppose a man is a scientist, and knows geology and the ages of the rocks, but he doesn’t know Jesus, the Rock of Ages—what a tragedy that would be!

And I’m praying God today that He will reveal to you this story of Jesus.

*Tell me the story of Jesus,
Write on my heart every word.
Tell me the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard.*

—FANNY J. CROSBY

And I want us to look at the story of Jesus. We’re going to briefly comment on every verse in this fifty-third chapter. And I want us to look at it in four headings, four divisions, four chapters, in the story of Jesus as the prince of prophets speaks of the Prince of Peace.

I. The Mystery of His Incarnation

First of all, I want you to notice, dear friend, the mystery of His incarnation—the mystery of His incarnation. And look in verse 2: *“For he”*—that is, Jesus, the Messiah—*“shall grow up before him”*—that is, before the Lord Jehovah—*“as a tender plant, and as a*

root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.” (Isaiah 53:2)

Now, notice these figures of speech. There’s One coming who is described as a tender plant, small, insignificant, fragile, coming up out of the ground, earthy. And He’s also described as a root out of dry ground, out of barren soil, out of sterile soil. You wouldn’t expect to see this plant come from such a place.

Now, what Isaiah is talking about here, I am convinced, is the virgin birth. Unless you think I’m trying to make Isaiah believe in the virgin birth when he doesn’t, I want to remind you what Isaiah’s already said in Isaiah chapter 7 and verse 14: *“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.”* (Isaiah 7:14) And I want to remind you what Isaiah has already said in Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6: *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.”* (Isaiah 9:6) When Isaiah said, *“a child is born,”* he spoke of His humanity. When Isaiah said, *“a son is given,”* he spoke of His deity, for Jesus is the eternal Son of God. And the Bible says, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”* (John 3:16) So of Mary a child is born. But that child that was born was the eternal Son of God. *“A child is born...a son is given.”* And Isaiah is saying it again and again. There’s coming One of supernatural birth.

And His earthly beginnings seem small, insignificant. When we see Him, there’s no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty that we should desire Him. It was in the wisdom of God that He was born in Bethlehem, in that obscure little village; that He was raised in Nazareth in a carpenter’s home; that He lived in poverty. We don’t read anybody in the Bible writing about His remarkable physique, or His handsomeness, or His wit, or His charm, or His wealth, or His education. When we see Him, Isaiah says, there’s no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty that we should desire Him. Like a root out of a dry ground, like a tender plant, the Lord Jesus springs up. And Isaiah here is speaking of the mystery of His incarnation—of His virgin birth.

Someone says, “Well, the virgin birth is interesting.” No, dear friend, more than interesting: it is absolutely, totally, fundamental to your salvation! Take away the virgin birth—and you go to hell. Just that plain! You say, “Why?” Well, let me tell you something, friend. If there’s no virgin birth, then there’s no deity of Christ. No virgin birth, no deity. No deity, no sinlessness. No sinlessness, no atonement. No atonement, no salvation. No salvation, you’re lost, see? Now, listen. No virgin birth, no deity. No deity, no sinlessness. No sinlessness, no atonement. No atonement, no salvation. No salvation, you are yet in your sins. So, say, “Thank God, hallelujah, for the virgin birth!” *“A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.”* (Isaiah 7:14) We’re not talking to you, friend, about things that are incidental.

A while back, some of us were on a vacation tour and a study to the Holy Land. And we happened to be in the beautiful country of Switzerland. And we were sitting in a hotel

there with some friends having a cup of tea at night. And we were discussing the things of the Lord. My wife says to me, “Adrian, you cannot whisper.” And not that I ought not to whisper; she just means physically, “When you open your mouth, the place rumbles.” And so I was talking with these friends. And after a while, there was someone beating on the wall next door as if to say “quiet down” or “get quiet.”

And so we had adjoining balconies, and I heard this person out on the balcony. I stuck my head out on the balcony and there was a lady. She looked around there. She said, “You’re talking about the virgin birth.” I said, “Yes.” She said, “That’s impossible! That’s absurd! There’s no such thing as a virgin birth!” “Oh,” I said, “yes, there is. Come on over.” And so I invited her over to our room. And she said, “Now, look, you look like a halfway intelligent man to me. Suppose I told you that I had a son and he was born of a virgin—would you believe it?” I said, “No, ma’am. I certainly wouldn’t believe if you had a son that you were a virgin. But,” I said, “I believe that Jesus was born of a virgin, without stutter, stammer, or apology.”

And let me tell you, friend, why I believe that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin. I have no difficulty believing in the virgin birth of One whose very birth was prophesied hundred of centuries before He was born—the very place of His birth, the very time of His birth, the very manner of His birth, of His life, of His death, of His burial and His resurrection foretold by the prophets centuries before it ever came to pass. That makes it easy for me to believe in the virgin birth.

When I see the perfect life of the One who was born of a virgin, it makes it easy for me to believe in the virgin birth. The Lord Jesus Christ stood before His enemies and He said this: “*Which of you convinceth me of sin?*” (John 8:46) That is, “Who is there here that can point a finger of accusation at me?” He said that to His enemies. Friend, I wouldn’t even say that to my friends. Jesus Christ stood before His enemies and said, “*Which of you convinceth me of sin?*” And His sinless life is proof of His virgin birth.

I would believe that He was born of a virgin, friend, if He could walk on the water. I would believe in the virgin birth if He could cleanse the lepers. I would believe in the virgin birth if He could open blinded eyes. I would believe in the virgin birth if the One so born could raise the dead. And that’s what Jesus did. I have no difficulty believing in the virgin birth if that One so born was put in a tomb and the Roman government could not keep His body in that tomb. And if He tore away the bars of death and rose from the dead, why should I then have difficulty believing in the virgin birth?

Friend, I’ll tell you why I believe in the virgin birth. I believe in God. And as God told Mary, “With God, nothing is impossible.” (Luke 1:37) You don’t have any difficulty believing in miracles if you believe in God. With God, all things are possible.

And so, Isaiah the prophet, looking down through the tunnel of time and the corridor of the centuries, has prophesied that this One was going to come like a root out of a dry

ground, like a tender plant springing up in obscurity. Yes, in smallness—and yet a baby born was the cradle that would one day rock the world.

II. The Mockery of His Humiliation

But now, let us go on and see what else Isaiah talks about: Not only does Isaiah talk here about the mystery of His incarnation, but in verse 3 he speaks of the mockery of His humiliation. Look in verse 3: *“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted”* (Isaiah 53:3–4)—the mockery of His humiliation. No one was ever mocked and humiliated more than the Lord of glory. They spat upon Him. They beat Him. Why, even at His birth, He had no place to be born. He was born in a stable, laid in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes. At His death, He was crucified outside the city walls. In His burial, He was buried in a borrowed tomb. Just one seamless robe. They beat upon Him. The Bible says, “They laughed Him to scorn; they spat in His face.” (Matthew 26:67–68; Mark 14:65) The mockery of His humiliation: there was no room for Him then, and there’s little room for Him now.

Did you know today, dear friend, that Jesus Christ is the point of contention? Did you know that a politician can stand up and say, “I believe in God,” and people will applaud; but if he says, “I believe in Jesus,” they’ll get angry? Did you know that? Did you know, dear friend, that you can pray in a public assembly and say anything you want, but you’re not supposed to mention the name of Jesus? Jesus is the point of offense. They don’t like that name Jesus. This world has never cared much for the one named Jesus—despised, rejected of men, a man of sorrows.

But I’m glad that the Bible calls Him a man of sorrows, because that helps us to understand something. Sometimes we get the idea that it’s somehow sinful to be sorry. But it’s not, my friend. My Lord was without sin, but He was a man of sorrows. Don’t let anybody ever give you the distorted idea that when you become a Christian, you’re going to be happy all the time. That is a distortion of Christianity.

Sometimes we have these preachers get up in the pulpit, and they paint the clouds with sunshine, and spray lavender all over the air; and we sing these little choruses, “I’m in-right, downright, upright happy all the time.” No, dear friend: you sing that, you’re lying. You’re not happy all the time. You’re not meant to be happy all the time. There are people here this morning who are not happy. There are people here this morning who have nameless diseases and named diseases that are gnawing away at them. There are people here this morning whose hearts are broken and crushed. There are people here whose husband, whose wife, has deserted them. There are people here with children who are breaking their hearts. There are people here perhaps—and listening to

me—who are not quite certain how they're going to pay the rent this month. And for them to paste a smile on their face and pretend to be happy would be mockery, and it would be silly, and it would be untrue to nature, and it would be untrue to the nature of the Bible. And rather than singing, "I'm in-right, outright, downright happy all the time," perhaps we ought to sing, "What a friend we gave in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!" For the Bible says, "*Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.*"

Hallelujah, what a Savior, who knows and who is touched with the feeling of our infirmity, for he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He knows, my friend, what you're going through right now. He feels what you feel. He knows that loneliness. Are there those who despise you? He was despised. Are you going without? He went without. The Lord Jesus Christ has a heart that beats with empathy and sympathy and love for you today. What a friend we have in Jesus! And, dear friend, He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

III. The Misery of His Condemnation

And so, the Bible speaks here of the mystery of His incarnation, the mockery of His humiliation; and then, it speaks, dear friend, of the misery of His condemnation, for this One, the Lord Jesus, was condemned as a criminal. Even though Pilate said, "*I find no fault in him,*" (John 19:6) He yet was condemned. Begin to read now in verse 5: "*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we healed.*" (Isaiah 53:5)

I want to tell you something else. Not only is the virgin birth a fundamental doctrine of Christianity, but the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross is a basic, fundamental doctrine. And you'll never understand the cross unless you understand the principle of substitution. It was a substitutionary death.

You see, God is a holy God. And God demands that sin must be punished. Sin must be atoned for. "*The wages of sin is death.*" (Romans 6:23) There's a price that must be paid. And either you pay it or you have a substitute who pays for you. Now, that substitute, in order to be your substitute, must have no sin of his own that needs to be atoned for. Therefore, you must have a sinless substitute. And in order to have a sinless substitute, you have to have one born of a virgin, because all the sons of Adam are sinners. And the purpose of the cross is a substitutionary death.

Look again at that verse that I've just read—"*He was wounded for our transgressions.*" Why don't you read that for yourself this morning and read it this way: "He was wounded for my transgressions, he was bruised for my iniquities: the chastisement of my peace was upon him, and with his stripes, hallelujah, I am healed"? Make it real, dear friend. It is a matter of substitution. Christ took your place. We were

the ones who should have been crucified.

A. He Took Our Sins

And since He was our substitute, I want you to notice what He took. Look in verse 6: *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him”*—that is, on Jesus—*“the iniquity of us all.”* (Isaiah 53:6)

Now, let my left hand represent you. Let my right hand represent the Lord Jesus Christ, sinless and pure. Now, the Bible says, concerning us, we’re like sheep. A sheep is weak. And a sheep is willful. And a sheep is wandering: *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.”* That is, we are sinners. We’re sinners by nature, by birth, by choice, by practice. And the sin is on us: *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.”* There is none that sinneth not, no not one.

Now, that’s where our sins are. Jesus, on the other hand, is sinless, perfect, without sin. Now, watch it: *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him”*—on whom? on Jesus—*“the iniquity of us all.”* (Isaiah 53:6) Our sins are laid on the Lord Jesus. And now, our sins are on Christ. If you don’t understand how that our sins were laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ, then you’ll not understand what Jesus was praying about in dark Gethsemane as Jesus said, *“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”* (Matthew 26:39) But the silence from heaven said there was no other way.

What was in that cup that Jesus was to become sin for us? The sins of the world were in that cup. And Jesus drank that bitter cup down to the dregs: all of the lies, all of the pornography, all of the rape and the crime and the strife and the hatred and all of the perversion of this world was laid upon Jesus. And Jesus literally became sin for us. And it was not just that Jesus would be separated from the Father—God knows that would be bad enough—but that He would actually become the object of the Father’s scorn and of the Father’s hatred, because God the Father hates sin. And if Jesus took our sin, and Jesus became sin, then the wrath of Almighty God would be upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And Christ is saying, *“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”* *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him”*—upon our sin-bearer, upon the Lord Jesus—*“the iniquity of us all.”*

B. He Took Our Shame

Now, as our substitute, therefore, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, He took our sins. And because He took our sins, He also took our shame. Look, if you will, in verse 7 now: *“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”* (Isaiah 53:7) Do you know what that means? It means, ladies

and gentlemen, when they condemned Him, when they tried Him, when they mocked Him, when they spat upon Him, He did not answer back. He was reviled, but He reviled not. He did not justify Himself. He did not explain what was happening. When He stands before Pilate, and Pilate adjudicates Him guilty, we feel like saying, “Jesus, say something! Jesus, do something! Don’t just take it, Jesus! Answer back! Tell them that you’re innocent! At least let them know that you’re becoming a sin-bearer, that it’s not really your sin.” But He couldn’t have done that. Had He done that, He would not have been suffering the shame that a condemned criminal should suffer. You see, when He took our sin, He took our shame. And a part of our guilt is our shame.

You see, when an unsaved man stands before God at the Final Judgment, do you know how he’s going to stand there? Speechless—speechless! He will not have one word to say in his defense. And therefore, since Jesus was our substitute, and when He took our sin, He took our shame; and Christ was speechless, and He died ignominiously in shame. Hallelujah! Had He justified Himself, I would still be condemned. But He took the full part of what I deserved.

C. He Took Our Separation

And so, Jesus, when He as my substitute took my sin, He took my shame. And then, dear friend, I want you to notice in the next verse, verse 8—He took my separation: “*He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was*”—now, notice this—“*cut off out of the land of the living*”—“*cut off out of the land of the living.*” (Isaiah 53:8) That is, He died an untimely death. He’s cut off, just like that!

Now, what does that mean? What is death in the Bible? Death is not the separation of the soul from the body. Suppose, dear friend, that I were to suddenly lie down here and get very still, and one of you doctors were to come up here and look at the vital signs. Then you might stand up and announce to the congregation, “The preacher’s dead.” But you’d be telling a lie. You’d be telling a lie. I wouldn’t be dead. I’d just move out of this old house, that’s all. Jesus said, “*Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.*” (John 11:26)

So, how can I die? I can’t die. I just move out. And while you’re around down here, I’d be kicking up gold dust on the streets of glory, amen? I wouldn’t be dead. No, of course not. But Jesus, the Bible says, was cut off from the land of the living. That tells me that Jesus suffered death, separation. Death is not the separation of the soul from the body, but the separation of the spirit from God. Jesus, the One who said, “I’ve come that you might have life,” (John 10:10) He Himself was cut off from the land of the living. Jesus walked the burning corridors of hell for us. Jesus baptized His soul in hell for us. Jesus knew what it was to be separated from God.

When it came time for David to die, David could say, “*Yea, though I walk through the*

valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." (Psalm 23:4) But I want to tell you Jesus walked that narrow valley all by Himself. And on the cross Jesus cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) He was cut off.

D. He Took Our Suffering

My friend, He took our sins. And when He took our sins, He took our shame. And when He took our shame, He took our separation. And then, He took our suffering. Look, if you will, in verse 9: "And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." (Isaiah 53:9) That word *death*, the Hebrew scholars say, is an intensive plural, and it speaks of the agony, the deepness, of His death. We might just paraphrase it to say He died a thousand deaths; but more than a thousand deaths, for He died a death for every one of us.

You know, sometimes people can't understand how Jesus there on the cross, being our substitute, could take our hell for us and yet be on the cross a limited period of time. Let me tell you how, dear friend. Jesus had a greater capacity for suffering. Now, suppose a mother of a three-year-old child died and is taken to heaven. That three-year-old child will grieve, but the child cannot grieve like the husband grieves or like the parents of that mother grieve, because the child does not have the capacity for grief. The child cannot grieve even as the father can grieve or as the parents of this one who died can grieve.

And what I'm trying to say, dear friend, is that some have a greater capacity for suffering than others. Jesus has a greater capacity for suffering. You see, on the Lord Jesus Christ at that time were the sins of all of the world for all time. The centuries were compressed upon Jesus. And then, He took the sins of the whole world. The sins of the world were distilled upon Jesus. Now, listen to me. *Jesus, being infinite, suffered in a finite period of time what you, being finite, would suffer in an infinite period of time.* This speaks of the intensity of His death. He died a thousand deaths. Only the damned in hell can begin to know what Jesus suffered on that cross. And I tell you, my vocabulary is too poor to express to you the suffering of the Lord Jesus! But I pray God the Holy Spirit He will reveal to you today that as your substitute He took your sins. And as your substitute, He took your shame. And as your substitute, He took your separation. And as your substitute, He took your suffering.

*Blessèd Redeemer! Precious Redeemer!
Seems now I see Him on Calvary's tree;
Wounded and bleeding, for sinners pleading,
Blind and unheeding—dying for me!*

—AVIS M. CHRISTIANSEN

IV. The Majesty of His Exaltation

But there's one other thing I want to mention: Not only the misery of His condemnation, but I want you to notice the mastery and the majesty of His exaltation. Continue to read here as we read in verse 9 and following: *"And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand."* (Isaiah 53:9–10)

Now, dear friend, what is the majesty of His exaltation?

A. He Is Exalted as Our Resurrected Lord

First of all, He's exalted as our resurrected Lord. Look in the middle of verse 10. It says, *"He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days."* "Now, wait a minute. Wait a minute, Mr. Rogers. You just said that He died, and now you say He's going to see all of His children, His descendants. You just said that He died, He was cut off, and yet He shall prolong His days. What does that mean?" Isaiah, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, saw not only the death, but the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus died as a young man, having not yet married; but He has a bride, which is His Church. He died as a young man, having no children; but now He has multiplied millions of spiritual children. He shall see His descendants, and God will prolong His days. One translation gives it this way: "He will live again." Jesus Christ is exalted as our resurrected Lord.

Confucius died—he's dead. Buddha died—he's dead. Mohammad died, and he's dead. Jesus died and walked out of that grave. He's alive! He is alive! Isaiah saw that before He was born.

B. He Is Exalted as Our Redeeming Lord

But not only, dear friend, is He exalted as our resurrected Lord; He is exalted as our redeeming Lord. Look in verse 11: *"He"*—that is, God the Father—*"shall see the travail of his soul,"*—the suffering of the soul of Jesus—*"and shall be satisfied:"*—that is, when Jesus Christ died on that cross, He said paid in full, and God is completely satisfied with that sacrifice—*"by his knowledge"*—by the knowledge of Jesus—*"shall my righteous servant justify many."* (Isaiah 53:11)

Do you know what that means? It means, when you know Jesus Christ, you're justified. It is the knowledge of Jesus Christ that justifies you and makes you a child of God. Do you know Him? To be justified means that your sins are gone, that there's no one who can point a finger of accusation against you. *"Who is He that condemneth?"* (Romans 8:34) It is God that justifieth. And the only way you can be justified is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank God for our redeeming Lord who has justified us!

C. He Is Exalted as Our Reigning Lord

But not only, dear friend, as our resurrected Lord, verse 10; our redeeming Lord, verse 11; but also, and finally, as our reigning Lord. Look in verse 12. God says, *“Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.”* (Isaiah 53:12) Another translation gives it this way: “Therefore I will give him the honors of one who is mighty and great.” I want to tell you, no longer is He the little baby of Bethlehem, and no longer is He the peasant of Galilee, and no longer is He the suffering servant; He is the risen Lord. And God says, “I’m going to give him that which belongs to the great.” *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him...”*—listen to me—*“given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...”*—it’s not a matter of if; it’s just a matter of when—did you know that? I want to tell you everybody in this building today is going to bow to Jesus—*“at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”* (Philippians 2:9–11)

Confucius will confess it. Buddha will confess it. Marilyn Monroe will confess it. Hugh Hefner will confess it. Johnny Carson will confess it. Indira Gandhi will confess it. Menachem Begin will confess it. Adolf Hitler will confess it. Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. He is Lord! He is Lord! Isaiah saw that so long ago.

There was a Roman emperor whose name was Julian. And Julian for a while pretended to become a Christian. And then he turned on Christ, Christianity, and the Church. And he hated Christians with a passion. They called him Julian the Apostate. One day, Julian was walking down the road, and a Christian was being beaten by a Roman soldier. And Julian curled his lips with a sneer and a scorn, and he said, “Christian, where is your carpenter now?” And this Christian who was being mercilessly beaten looked up at the emperor and said, “Oh, emperor, He is building a coffin for you.” And what a prophecy that was, for in a few months Julian was mortally wounded on the battlefield. And he reached into his chest cavity and took a handful of blood before he died and threw it into the sky, and he said, “O Galilean, thou hast conquered.”

Conclusion

And, friend, He always does. He always does.

*He cannot fail, He must prevail;
Have faith in God, have faith in God.*

—B. B. MCKINNEY

The Story of the Lord Jesus Christ

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 5, 1993

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 53

“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”

ISAIAH 53:2

Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus' Virgin Birth
- II. Jesus' Virtuous Life
- III. Jesus' Vicarious Death
- IV. Jesus' Victorious Resurrection
- V. Jesus' Visible Return

Conclusion

Introduction

Isaiah chapter 53—what we have in Isaiah chapter 53 is a biography of the Lord Jesus Christ written more than 700 years before He was born. If you had to choose the great chapters of the Bible, there's no way that you could overlook Isaiah chapter 53. Martin Luther said, it ought to be written on parchment of gold with letters of diamonds.

This is the story of Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate. And I love that song that says, Tell me the story of Jesus; write on my heart every word. Tell me the story, most precious, sweetest that ever was heard. That's what we're going to look at today, the story of the Lord Jesus Christ. And actually it's in several chapters. And I don't know who first used this outline of the life of the Lord Jesus, but I love it.

I. Jesus' Virgin Birth

The very first thing that I want you to see is what I'm going to call His virgin birth. Look in verses 1 and 2: "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Jesus is called here the arm of the Lord. "For he shall grow up before him—that is, the arm of the Lord shall grow up before the Lord—as a tender plant, and as a

root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”

This speaks of the Lord Jesus as a tender plant growing in a barren desert. It's a wonderful simile, metaphor of the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Unless you think I'm reading too much into that I remind you that Isaiah has already told us that He would be born of a virgin.

Do you remember that classic passage in Isaiah chapter 7 and verse 14: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign, behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and thou shalt call his name Immanuel." And so the Bible already tells us that He would be virgin born and then that glorious passage that Isaiah spoke of in Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6: For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. Notice, a child is born—that is His humanity. A Son is given—that is His deity.

And so, here again, Isaiah is speaking of the birth of our Lord, who left His throne in glory, stepped out of the ivory palaces, and came down into this world of woe. As I have reminded you, He did not come in a jeweled chariot accompanied by angels, robed in robes woven on looms of light. But our Lord came through the portals of a virgin's womb. Like a tender plant, sprouting up in a barren desert, there He was born in the stall among animals with flies, cow dung on the floor, the stench of the barn, wrapped in course cloth, laid in a feeding trough, surrounded by shepherds. That is the birth of the Savior. He was virgin born. Now this is not incidental, this is fundamental. Without the virgin birth, I wouldn't give half a hallelujah for your hope of heaven. There's no way that you could be saved a part from the virgin birth. Why was Jesus born of a virgin? For this reason: that He might be the God-man.

Now, Mendel was the one who described for us what we call today the law of genetics. The law of genetics tells us why Jesus Christ had to be born of a virgin. Now, what the law of genetics says is this: that, when we're born into this world, every individual is the sum total of the characteristics of both parents. That is, He is the genetic sum total. What that means in this: that all that was in your father and your mother is in you. And it also means that all that is in you was in your father and your mother. That's the law of genetics. Let me give it to you again. All that is in your father and mother is in you and all that is in you is in your father and mother. That's Mendel's law of genetics.

Now, you may have dominant or recessive characteristics, but they are there. It's good that sometimes it can be recessive, that is it might be dominant in your parents, recessive in you and dominant in your children. Therefore, you can blame the faults of your children on your parents. That's wonderful. I like that. But somehow, some way, it is there. All that was in your parents is in you, and all that is in you is in your parents. That's the law of genetics.

Now, let's think about that with the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Suppose that Jesus were not born of a virgin. Well, suppose that Joseph was His father and Mary was His mother. Then, all that was in Mary and Joseph would have been in the Lord Jesus Christ, and, you see, Jesus, then, would have been nothing more than a human, because Mary and Joseph were nothing more than humans. And, being humans, they would have been a part of Adam's fallen race, and a son of slaves cannot redeem slaves. There would have been no hope for our salvation. Jesus would have been only, merely human. He could save no one.

Well, let's suppose, on the other hand, that His father is God and somehow His mother is God. Then He would have no humanity at all because all that was in His parents would be in Him. And though He would be God, He would be remote and unable to save us, because we cannot be redeemed by God; we have to be redeemed by a man. You say, why is this? Because our inheritance was legally lost by the first man, Adam, it must be legally regained by the second man, the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, friend, God could not as God redeem us. God had to redeem us as a man.

Now, you say, God can do anything He wants to do. Well, one thing God does not want to do is to break His own law of justice and righteousness. Our position before God was legally lost. It was lost by a man. It must be legally regained. It must be regained by a man. Had both parents been human, Jesus would have been only human. Had both parents been divine, Jesus would have been only divine. But Jesus was born of a virgin.

The Father was God himself, and the mother was Mary. And so, Jesus Christ was the God-man. I've told you before He was not half God and half man. He was all God and all man: as much God, as if He were not man at all; as much man, as if He were not God at all.

There was never another like Him. Never speak lightly of the virgin birth. No virgin birth—no deity; no deity—no sinlessness; no sinlessness—no perfect sacrifice; no perfect sacrifice—no atonement; no atonement—no new birth; no new birth—no heaven for you or for me. Jesus was born of a virgin, that we might be born again. Jesus came to earth, that we might go to heaven. Jesus became a son of man, that we might become sons of God. He was the virgin born Son of God. And that is chapter one in the biography of the king.

II. Jesus' Virtuous Life

Now chapter two: not only His virgin birth, but His virtuous life. Look, as His life is described, in verses two and three: "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of

men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

Now again, look at the phrase there, tender plant. A tender plant speaks of something small. It speaks of something fragile. It speaks of something insignificant. The great God of glory humbled himself. He became without significance in the eyes of men; the infinite became an infant. A root out of dry ground speaks of His humility—His small beginning; a babe in the manger, seemingly without promise. This verse says there was no form, nor comeliness, or beauty about Him. That does not mean that He was hideous, or that He was ugly. What it does mean is that He was a man. He did not come to bedazzle people.

The wisdom of God is this: that Jesus, born of a virgin was born in a very obscure place, raised in a lowly village. His father was a carpenter. Nowhere in the Bible does the Bible speak of His physical features and His physique. He’s not described as being handsome. He’s not described as being witty, or charming, or wealthy, or having great education or social standing. There was no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty, that we should desire Him.

You know, you see pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ—sometimes, in some religious art, He has this thing that looks like a dinner plate behind His head. Have you seen that? This round thing behind His head, and it’s kind of weird, and sometimes He looks a little effeminate, or looks like maybe He just came from a beauty parlor somewhere. You’ve seen these pictures of the Lord Jesus. That’s not the Lord Jesus.

You say, oh, if I were to have seen Him, I would have known Him. No, you wouldn’t. He was a common, ordinary, nondescript human being, as He appeared. Otherwise, why did Judas have to point Him out in the Garden of Gethsemane? They could have all said, well, that’s Him. That’s the man with the dinner plate behind His head. No, Judas had to go and kiss Him, so that they would know which one the Lord Jesus was. He had a very common, ordinary life, and He was a man of sorrows, this verse tells us, of His virtuous life, and acquainted with grief.

Now, that does not mean that He did not have the beauty and character and nature of God inwardly. The Lord Jesus was like the tabernacle in the wilderness. You know, John said the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. In John chapter 1, that literally is in the Greek language, the Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us. Jesus was like the tabernacle.

Had you gone out into the desert of Sinai and seen the tabernacle that the Jews had built out there, and you had seen it from the outside, you would have said, that’s just an ordinary tent. It would look very much like a Bedouin’s tent. It was covered on the outside with the badgers’ skins—grayish brown, not beautiful at all. But had you gone inside that tent, you would have seen the gold and the shimmering light. You would

have seen the candelabra. You would have seen the scarlet, and blue, and purple. You would have seen the silver. The most exquisitely beautiful structure on the inside that the world has ever known, I suppose. And so it is with the Lord Jesus. Those who hear me preach about Him, outwardly, if you do not know Him, all you do is just simply look at Him, without being a part of Him, you'll never know the inward beauty. When we see Him, there's no form, no comeliness, nor beauty, that we should desire Him. He is called the man of sorrows. Man of sorrows—what a name for the Son of God who came, ruined sinners to reclaim. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

III. Jesus' Vicarious Death

But here's the third chapter: not only His virgin birth, not only His virtuous life, by His vicarious death. Continue to read here in verse four. And by the way, I want to remind you that this was written centuries before Jesus was born. What a wonderful confirmation of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit! How would you like to write the biography of a man 700 years before he was born?

Now, here again, listen—verse 4: "Surely he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the lord hath laid on him—that is, on Jesus—the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; for he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." I wanted to read all of that to show you, friend, something of the vicarious death of the Lord Jesus.

Why was Jesus born of a virgin? That He might die vicariously for our sins. Vicariously means, as a substitute, in our place. The purpose of the death of the Lord Jesus on that cross was substitution. Man has sinned, and that sin must be paid for. God never has, God never will, God never can, let one half of one sin go unpunished. God's chief attribute is holiness. If God were to let sin go unpunished, God would cease

to be a holy God.

And so, what did the Lord Jesus take on that cross? Well, He took our sins on that cross. Verses 5 and 6: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Now, the Bible says here He was wounded—He was wounded for our transgressions. Do you see that in verse 5? Look at it. He was wounded. Do you see it? Did you know that the word wounded there literally means pierced? He was pierced for our transgressions, as someone would be pierced by being nailed to the cross. The Lord Jesus took my sin and your sin upon himself. The Bible says that we went astray, and the Lord hath laid on him—Jesus—the iniquity of us all.

Now, let this hand represent the sinless Lord Jesus. Let this hand represent you. Over here are your sins—they're on you. But the Bible says that the Lord hath laid on Him—on Jesus—the iniquity of us all. Your sin was placed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what Gethsemane is all about.

In dark Gethsemane, Jesus Christ is there alone, praying. And while the city sleeps, and the disciples are asleep, His eyes will not close in sleep, until they close in death. And Jesus is praying in such agony that His sweat is like drops of blood oozing from the pores of His skin, as the minute capillaries break down under the great duress and stress that He is under. And His prayer is, O Father, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. And silence from heaven says, there is no other way.

And so, Jesus drank that bitter cup to the dregs. What was the cup that Jesus was talking about? It was the vicarious death on the cross. And, what was in that cup? All of the filth, all of the stench, all of the sins, all of the perversion, all of the wickedness, all of the cruelty, all of the hatred, all of the vileness of all of this world from Adam till the end of time, was in that cup.

And, the Lord Jesus Christ, who never knew sin, had to take that cup—that vile, filthy cup—and drink it. Him who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for us. The iniquity of us all was laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ. My sin, oh, the bliss of that glorious thought, my sins, not in part, but the whole, were nailed to the cross, and I bear them no more. Bless the Lord—bless the Lord—O my soul.

But not only did He take my sins, verses 5 and 6, but He took my shame, in verse 7. Look at it. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not his mouth. What a wonderful prophecy this is. It tells of the time that Matthew describes in Matthew 27, verse 12: when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then said Pilot unto him, hearest thou not how many

things they witness against thee? And He answered him never a word, in so much that the governor marveled greatly.

Had you and I been there and the chief priests and the elders had accused the Lord Jesus, we would have wanted to say, Jesus, just tell them; just tell them straight out who you are, and tell them that you're dying for our sins, not for your own. And, when Pilate, that arrogant, pussyfooting, politician, marveled that Jesus wouldn't answer him, I feel like saying, Jesus, go ahead and tell him. And, while you're at it, turn him into a frog. I mean, tell him. Tell him who you are. Don't just stand there, Jesus; say something. But He didn't answer a word. Do you know why? Because the Bible says, as a lamb before his shearers is dumb, so He opened not his mouth. Why did He open not His mouth? Because He was my substitute. And, as my substitute, He had to take everything that I would have to take. And when He took my sin, He took my shame.

You see, there's coming a time when every unsaved man will stand before God, and he will stand before God speechless. The Bible says, let every mouth be shut and all the world become guilty before God. Do you remember the man who came in without the wedding garment? The Bible says he was speechless.

When you stand before God at the judgment, if you stand there unsaved, all of your sins will be upon you, and you will have absolutely nothing to say. You see, Jesus, in order to be my substitute, had to take everything that I would take. And when He took my sin, He took my shame. And Jesus died in the eyes of those people as a criminal. They thought He was. He was despised and rejected of men. He was bearing our sin, our sorrow, but they did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted.

They said, He's getting just what He deserved. And He never justified himself. He took my shame. And I'll tell you, because He took my shame, bless God, I never want to be ashamed of Him. The Bible says, in Romans chapter 10, verse 11, And whosoever believes in Him shall not be ashamed. It means, they will never be put to shame. I'll never be put to shame. And, therefore, I want to say in Romans 1, verse 16, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation. And I want to say to every mother's child, you ought to stand up for Jesus. And I give an invitation to come down here, and say, yes. You ought to come, and say, Yes, I want everybody to know I love the Lord Jesus. He took my sin. He took my shame.

And, friend, not only did He take that, but He took your sorrow. Look, if you will, in verse 8—look at it: "He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken." Look at the word cut off. Do you know what that literally mean? It means His life was ended in the dew of His youth. He was 33. He didn't die a natural death.

The heavens are darkened at noonday. The earth quakes; the rocks break. Jesus is

hanging there upon that cross, as the flaming fingers of fire flash across the bosom of the sky, and Jesus is dying alone—alone. Never forget this: that He died alone. While the hellish crowds were there to tease and to taunt, and the Pharisees and the Sadducees were there to mock, and while the demons of hell were shouting for joy, even God the Father turned His back on God the Son, and Jesus, in loneliness, cried out on that cross: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

That's found in Psalm 22. That was written by David. But Jesus wasn't looking backward, quoting David. David was looking forward, quoting Jesus. This was a prophetic Psalm, that God the Son, rather, is forsaken by God the Father. I want you to listen to this, my friend, and understand that Jesus took your separation. Jesus, who had been for eternity in the bosom of the Father as the object of the Father's dearest love, has now become the object of both the Father's greatest wrath and the Father's greatest loathing.

When God the Father looked upon Jesus Christ on that cross, God looked upon Jesus Christ as sin, and God hates sin. Jesus took the wrath of God into His own heart. The Bible says in verse 10, "it hath pleased the Lord to bruise him..." Who crucified the Lord Jesus? God the Father crucified the Lord Jesus. Why? Because God was the executioner. The wages of sin is death. Jesus became sin. And, therefore, Jesus is put to death. Jesus endured the wrath of the Almighty. Do you understand that?

You see, Jesus died alone. While those people pointed their fingers in His face, and said, ha ha, He saved others, himself He cannot save; if He's the Son of God, let Him come down from the cross, well, you'd think God would come to His aid. But God turned His back. Why? The Bible says of our Father in heaven, He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and Jesus had become iniquity. He never sinned. He was without sin, yet He became sin. The iniquity of us all was laid upon the Lord Jesus, and He took my sin, He took my shame, and He took my separation. He was separated from God the Father on that cross. The Lord Jesus was cut off from God the Father. When David died, the sweet singer of Israel, he could say, in Psalm 23, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." But Jesus could not say that. He died alone.

And, not only did He take my sin, my shame, my separation, but He took my suffering. Look in verse 9: He made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death. Look at the word death. Look at it in verse 9. It is in the Hebrew language an intensive plural. It literally means, in His deaths—in His deaths. I suppose we could say today, like we talk about somebody who died a horrible death, we say, he died a thousand deaths, Jesus died a billion deaths.

You see, He died my death. He died your death. The iniquity of us all was laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes people ask this question, and it's a good question. If

Jesus became my substitute, and our substitute, and He paid our sin debt on the cross, then why is He not still in hell, because our sins deserved hell for all eternity? That's a good question.

I want you to learn this about the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then you'll come to love Him more. On the cross, the sins of the world were distilled, and eternity was compressed. What do I mean by that? I mean, all of the sins of all of the people were put upon one individual, and all of eternity was compressed upon one individual. You see, Jesus has greater capacity than you and I have. Jesus has a greater capacity to love, and a greater capacity to suffer.

Suppose there is a father who has a child who is four, and the mother dies in that family. Both the father and the child will sorrow. The child will cry for a while and then go pick up toys and begin to play. But the father, understanding more what has happened, will grieve with a grief that that child cannot know. Why? Because He has a greater capacity.

Now that's a weak illustration of the fact that Jesus had a greater capacity of suffering, because of who He was and because of what He was. And that's the reason that the prophet says concerning Him, there is no sorrow like my sorrow. Jesus—listen to me—Jesus, being infinite, suffered in a finite period of time what you, being finite, would suffer in an infinite period of time.

You see, no one could suffer like the Lord Jesus. Jesus baptized His soul in hell for us. Jesus walked the burning corridors of the damned for us. Jesus died alone for us. Jesus took our shame. Jesus took our suffering. Jesus took our sorrow. Jesus took our separation, and Jesus took it all in His deaths—plural. Who knows how much Jesus suffered on that cross?

Eye will never behold, ear can never hear, tongue can never tell, pen can never write, song can never describe, poet can never tell, the suffering of Jesus. Only the damned in hell can begin to know what Jesus paid on that cross. But even they don't know, because they're still paying for their sin. He paid it all, and said, it's finished—it's finished. Oh, my friend, oh, my friend, this baby of Bethlehem, He came to take my place and your place upon that cross. There's His virgin birth. There's His virtuous life. There is His vicarious death. Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe.

Now, listen. If you're not saved, I want to show you something that ought to frighten you. Look in verse 11. Verse 11 speaks of God the Father, and it says, "He—that is, God the Father—shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." What will satisfy the justice and the righteousness of Almighty God?

Now, one of these days you're going to stand before God. One of these days you're going to answer to God. Now, what is going to satisfy the demands of a righteous God? You say, God, I want you to see my church attendance; I went to Bellevue Baptist

Church. Do you think that will satisfy God? You say, God, I want you to see the offerings that I gave. Do you think that will satisfy God? God, I want you to see the good life that I lived. Do you think that will satisfy God? God says your righteousness is as filthy rags in his sight.

There is only one thing that will satisfy a holy God, and that is the sin payment made by the Lord Jesus Christ upon that cross. Look at it. The Bible says, "He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." There is no way—there is no way—that you can be saved, apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Be reasonable—be reasonable.

If there were some other way for people to be saved, wouldn't God have taken it? I mean, would God let His darling Son, the Lord Jesus, die in agony and blood upon that cross, and dip His soul in hell, if you could be saved some other way, if anything else would satisfy? That's the reason Paul, with that great logic in his mind, said, if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain, the death of Jesus was a colossal waste; and, I say a crime that God would let Jesus die that way, and yet there was some other way. I'd hate to meet that kind of a God in a dark alley. My friend, I want to tell you there is only one thing that will satisfy the righteous demands of a holy God, and that is the death of Jesus Christ upon that cross. What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Nothing. We need to understand this. His vicarious death.

IV. Jesus' Victorious Resurrection

Then, next of all—thank God for this—here's the next chapter in the biography of a king. Not only His vicarious death, but His victorious resurrection. Look, if you will, in verse 9: "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death—you know He was buried in a rich man's tomb, don't you? How exquisitely minute is this prophecy—"because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth"—that is, He was not a sinner. He'd never sinned—"yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him—watch it—He hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin—that is, when that's done.

Now watch it—he—who? Jesus—shall see his seed." His seed? That means His descendants. Why, He never got married. He's dying at 33. Yet he shall see his seed—His family—he shall prolong his days." How can He prolong His days, He's dead—"...and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." What do you mean, descendants? What do you mean, prolonged days? What do you mean, the pleasure of the Lord prospering in His hand?

I'll tell you what it means, dear friend: He came out of that grave. That's what it means. That's what it means. The Living Bible paraphrases it this way: He shall live again. He shall live again. Up from the grave He arose. That's what makes Jesus Christ

unique. There have been other religious leaders. Confucius came, lived, and died; and he's dead. Buddha came, lived, and died; and he's dead. Mohammed came, lived, and died; and he's dead. Jesus came, lived, died; and rose again; and He's shown to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. That's what makes the difference.

I read about a minister in Red Square. You know, if you've been to Red Square there in Moscow, there's the tomb of Lenin, and they have those soldiers there. I've been there. I've marched past the tomb of Lenin. I've seen him lying there in that crystal sarcophagus. They're guarding the tomb. Preacher asked him, said, why are you here? He said, we're guarding the tomb of our leader. Well, he said, there's nobody guarding the tomb of my Savior. The guard said, Why not? He said, because He's not there. He is not there. He is risen.

Hallelujah! There is, my dear friend, His victorious resurrection.

V. Jesus' Visible Return

And then, last of all, I want you to see His visible return. Look, if you will, in verse 11: He—that is, God the Father—shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied—now, watch—by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many. And I want you to know that I'm one of those many.

I, as a teenage boy, repented of my sin. I said, Lord Jesus, forgive my sin, come into my heart, and save me. And I was justified. Hallelujah! Justified by faith. Not by works that I've done, but according to His mercy He saved, He justified me. Now watch it, watch it: "for he shall bear their iniquity. Therefore, will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." Do you know what that means?

Let me paraphrase it. Therefore I will give Him the honors of one who is mighty and great. It speaks of the time when Jesus will come. The babe of Bethlehem is coming again. The Christ of Christmas is coming again. The Redeemer is coming to stand upon this earth, one more time. Please listen. The only hope for this world is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. We're seeing that now, aren't we?

Washington can't do it. The president can't do it. The Pentagon can't do it. The universities can't do it. Science cannot do it. In this hour that is dark as a midnight thundercloud, I hear the strains of that grand old hymn, Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword. His truth is marching on. He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never sound retreat. He is sifting out the hearts of men before the judgment seat. Be swift my soul to answer Him, be jubilant my feet. Our God is marching on.

Conclusion

Isaiah told us this seven hundred years before He was born. It's the biography of the King. Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me; buried, He carried my sins far away. Rising, He justified, freely forever; and; one day; He's coming; oh, glorious day! I can hardly wait. I can hardly wait for Jesus to come.

You know what I can't understand? Why people don't want to be saved. When the only thing God asks them to give up are the things that will hurt them. When God says, I love you; I want to bless you. They were having a service like this. A pastor stood and preached and asked people to come forward and give their hearts to Jesus. A little girl, who didn't understand what was going on, asked her mother, Mother, what are all those people doing? The mother said, they're going forward to give their hearts to Jesus. The little girl said, why don't we all go? That's a good question. Why don't we all go?

Father, I pray that you'll seal the message to our hearts. Thank you, Lord, for your Word, and, Father, I pray that all of those without Christ today will come to trust Him as Lord and Savior. Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want to ask how many of you today can say, Pastor Rogers, I know that I know, if I died right now, I'd go to heaven, because I've repented of my sin, I've trusted Christ as my personal Savior, and He lives in my heart, and I know, I know that when I die, I'm going to heaven? While heads are bowed, and eyes are closed, would you slip up your hand as a testimony? Thank you; take it down. Now, if those of you who could not lift your hand would give me your attention, listen to me. If you would pray a prayer like this: O God, I am a sinner, and I am lost, but, Lord, you took my sins to the cross, and there on that cross you paid my sin debt, and you paid it in full. And, Lord, you told me if I would trust you, you would save me. I do trust you, Jesus. Right now, forgive my sin, come into my heart, and save me. And, help me, Lord Jesus, never to be ashamed of you. In your name I pray. Amen.

Magnifying Jesus Through Worship and the Word

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 2, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 53:1–12

“Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

ISAIAH 53:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus: His Virgin Birth
- II. Jesus: His Virtuous Life
- III. Jesus: His Vicarious Death
 - A. Jesus Took My Sin
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 - C. Jesus Took Our Suffering
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- IV. Jesus: His Victorious Resurrection
- V. Jesus: His Visible Return

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you find Isaiah chapter 53? Isaiah chapter 53. “Magnifying Jesus through Worship and the Word.” If you want ice cream, you can go to Baskin-Robbins, and they have thirty-one different flavors. If you’re looking for a new automobile this season, the automobile dealers have produced, in concert with Detroit and other places, seven hundred and fifty-two different models. And, once you choose those models, then you have to decide on what you want as extras and what kind of color you want.

Americans—we like a choice. As a matter of fact, I was reading, in a store in New York City, one store has two thousand five hundred different kinds of light bulbs—in one store. We just like all of this infinite variety. If you go to buy a soft drink, first of all you have to decide whether you want 7 Up, Pepsi, Coca-Cola, or whatever kind you want. You decide on the brand. Then, you decide on the size. Then, you decide whether you

want it with sugar or artificial sweetener. Then, you decide whether you want it caffeinated or decaffeinated. Or, you may decide on some sort of a combination of all of these. A lot of variety—but friend, there’s only one Jesus. There is only one dear, wonderful Savior. And, this church exists not to give people a lot of choices, but to say there is but no other Savior in the whole wide world, amen?

You know, Bill Gates of Microsoft—he’s been called the “the man of the century,” and he is a multibillionaire. I mean, he owns so much money I don’t even think he knows how much money he owns. And, if you were to go on the World Wide Web, the Internet, and start looking up Bill Gates’ name, it would appear about twenty-five thousand times. But, if you were to punch in “Jesus Christ,” it would appear about one hundred and fifty thousand times.

We’re talking about Jesus—and by the way, in heaven, Jesus is the only subject of conversation. You see, all of the universe is for one purpose: to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ. And, when He was baptized, God the Father said out of the Glory, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*” (Matthew 17:5) Bellevue Baptist Church exists for the purpose of magnifying Jesus—magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word. And, that’s what we’ve been doing today: worshipping Him. And now, we come to listen to the Word of God. And, I thought, “Well, now what passage of Scripture would I get today if I just wanted to talk about Jesus? Would I go somewhere to the New Testament?” Indeed, I could. But, you know, I decided to go to the Old Testament—Isaiah chapter 53. And, we’re going to find in Isaiah chapter 53 the story of the Lord Jesus Christ. I’m talking about in the Old Testament. I’m talking about seven hundred years before Jesus Christ walked the dusty shores of Galilee. You’re going to see the biography of the King. You’re going to hear the gospel—not according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, but you’re going to hear the gospel according to Isaiah the prophet seven hundred years before He was born.

In Isaiah chapter 53, Isaiah dipped his pen in golden glory and wrote this. Martin Luther said it ought to be written on golden parchment with diamonds for letters. Perhaps the greatest chapter in all of the Word of God is Isaiah chapter 53, and I’ve chosen that chapter today for us together to center our thoughts, our hearts, our minds on that wonderful, glorious person whom I love and adore, and you do, too. His name is Jesus, and all of the Bible is about Jesus. *If you read the Bible and you don’t find Jesus, you better go back and reread it because you missed it.* It is His story. It is about Him, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, the old-time preachers used to have an outline. Now, I don’t know who first came up with this outline, but somebody came up with an outline about Jesus—His life, His ministry, His death, His resurrection. And, here’s the outline somebody came up with, and every preacher who’s ever preached the gospel knows this outline: Jesus: His

virgin birth; Jesus: His virtuous life; Jesus: His vicarious death; Jesus: His victorious resurrection; Jesus: His visible return. Isn't that a good outline of the life of Jesus? That's it—Jesus. You see His virgin birth, His virtuous life, His vicarious death, His victorious resurrection, and His visible return. Would you be surprised if you found all of that in Isaiah chapter 53? Would you be surprised if you found in the Old Testament all five of those wonderful, glorious truths concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, as we magnify Him through worship and the Word? Let's look and see if we can find them right here.

I. Jesus: His Virgin Birth

Read with me Isaiah chapter 53, and we begin in verses 1 and 2: *“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he”—Jesus—“shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.”* (Isaiah 53:1–2) What's that talking about? It's speaking here of the Lord Jesus—a little baby, a tender plant, growing up in a barren desert. This is talking about the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You say, “Isaiah didn't know anything about the virgin birth, Pastor.” Oh yes, he did. Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14 says, *“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and [be with child].”* (Isaiah 7:14) Isaiah 9:6 says, *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder.”* (Isaiah 9:6) And now, Isaiah says, “He's like a tender plant coming up in a dry, barren desert.” (Isaiah 53:2) Oh, thank God for the virgin birth. Thank God for the Lord Jesus, who left His throne of glory, came down to this world of woe through a dark Judean night, and came into this world through the portals of a virgin's womb, was born in a smelly cow barn, laid upon straw in a manger, wrapped in coarse cloth.

Why was Jesus born of a virgin? Mendel gave us the laws of genetics. We're learning more and more about genetics, but we've never gone past what Mendel taught us about genetics. Now, what is the law of genetics? Listen to me: there is nothing in you that was not in your parents. Got that? There is nothing in you that was not in your parents. Number two: Everything that was in your parents is in you. It may be dominant or it may be recessive, but it's in you. And, you came from your parents. Now, it may be recessive; it may not show up to your children. And, by the way, if your children misbehave, therefore, you possibly can blame it on your parents. I'm telling you it's there. It is there—either dominant or recessive. Everything that was in your parents is in you, and there's nothing in you that was not in your parents. That's the law of genetics.

Now, let's think a little bit about the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ and why Jesus had to be born of a virgin. For example, if Mary and Joseph were the parents of the Lord Jesus, then all that was in Mary and Joseph would have been in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, Mary and Joseph were both human; and so, the Lord Jesus would

have only been human, for humanity can only produce humanity. Now, let's think again. Suppose if Mary was divine—if Mary were Deity—and God is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, Deity plus Deity produces Deity, and all the Lord Jesus Christ would have been was divine—rather than merely human (Mary and Joseph), God and God. He would have been divine—therefore, remote and unapproachable—and could not have been our dear, wonderful Savior who was made like unto us. (Hebrews 2:17) But, if Mary is human and the Father is Almighty God, then you have, according to Mendel's law of genetics and according to divine inspiration and revelation, you have the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ. He was born of a virgin.

Now, now, it wasn't that He was half-God and half-man (He'd have been a monster), not that He was all God and no man (He could not have been our Savior), not all man and no God (He could not have been our Savior), but the God-man. There was never another like the Lord Jesus Christ. He was virgin-born.

Why was Jesus virgin-born? Had He been a son of Adam, *"in Adam all die."* (1 Corinthians 15:22) He was the Son of God; and yet, He was human. You see, no virgin birth, no deity; no deity, no sinlessness; no sinlessness, no blood atonement; no blood atonement, no new birth; no new birth, no hope of heaven. Thank God for the virgin birth, amen? He came to earth, that we might go to heaven. He was born of a virgin, that we might be born again. He became the Son of man, that we might become the sons and daughters of Almighty God. And, Isaiah speaks of this virgin birth—of the Lord Jesus Christ who stepped out of Glory and came into this world *"as a tender plant...as a root out of a dry ground."* (Isaiah 53:2)

II. Jesus: His Virtuous Life

But secondly, not only does Isaiah speak of His virgin birth; Isaiah speaks of His virtuous life. Continue to read in verses 2 and 3—the last part of verse 2: *"he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we...see him, [there's] no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."* (Isaiah 53:2–3) This speaks of His virtuous life. It speaks of the manner of His life. The Lord Jesus Christ lived an incredible life.

You would think that, if God were to come to earth, that He would have come down in robes woven on looms of light. You would have thought that the Lord Jesus would have come to this earth in a jeweled chariot. But, where was He born? He was born in Bethlehem—little Bethlehem; a little hamlet; a little small, insignificant town; the least of all the cities of Judah. You would have thought that He would have been raised in some royal court, but He was raised as a carpenter's son in another obscure, hated village: Nazareth. You would have thought that the Lord Jesus would have come with wealth,

and opulence, and power, but He walked about in sandal shoes. “[Where] foxes have holes, and...birds...have nests...the Son of man [had] not where to lay his head.” (Matthew 8:20)

You know, don’t get the idea that, if you’d have seen the Lord Jesus Christ, you would have recognized Him as deity. You would not have—not with your eyes. When we see Him, there’s “no form nor comeliness...[nor] beauty that we should desire him.” (Isaiah 53:2) That doesn’t mean that He was hideous; it just means that He did not physically stand out above other people. If Jesus Christ had physically stood out among other people, why would Judas have had to point Him out in Gethsemane? You know, sometimes we see these pictures of the Lord Jesus that, very frankly, leave me a little cold. They look like He came out of a beauty shop, you know, and a little effeminate. And then, the ones with the halo behind His head—looks like a big dinner plate back there. No, no. When we see Him, there’s “no form nor comeliness...[nor] beauty that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2)—in a very real way, a nondescript person outwardly.

You know, the Bible says, “The Word was made flesh and [tabernacled] among us.” (John 1:14) Had you seen the tabernacle in the wilderness, you would have understood why John chose that word. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” (John 1:14) Literally, it says, “and tabernacled among us.” Had you seen the tabernacle in the wilderness, it would have been covered with badger skins—badger skins—drab, brown, unattractive on the outside. But, had you gone into that tabernacle and seen the embroidery, seen the gold, seen the Shekinah glory there on the Mercy Seat, seen that candelabra, seen that beautiful building, you’d said, “This is indescribably beautiful.” But, it had to be seen from the inside, and so it is with Jesus. Isn’t that right? You know, the natural eye looks at Jesus and says, “What’s so great about Jesus?” Oh, friend, if you only knew Jesus—to be in Christ and to have Christ in you, to come into the Lord Jesus and to see the One who “was made flesh, and [then tabernacled] among us,” (John 1:14) and see the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Man of Sorrows.

*Man of Sorrows! what a name
For the Son of God, who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim.
Hallelujah! What a Savior!*

—PHILIP P. BLISS

We could talk about His life—we’d never get finished: the miracles that He did—He went about doing good—the love that He showed, the life that He lived, where He could say to His enemies, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” (John 8:46) He was not without sorrow, but He was without sin. Oh, the virtuous life of the Lord Jesus! Isaiah speaks to us about that.

III. Jesus: His Vicarious Death

But now, notice, also, Isaiah speaks not only of His virgin birth and His virtuous life, but Isaiah speaks of His vicarious death. Look, if you will now, beginning in verses 4 and read through verse 11—a longer passage: *“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him”—on Jesus—“the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.”* (Isaiah 53:4–8)

I’m going to stop reading right there, but let’s talk a little bit about His vicarious death. Do you know what the word *vicarious* means? It means “in the place of another.” You see, the purpose of the cross was substitution. Now, there are other reasons for the cross and other lessons from the cross, but I say without stutter, stammer, apology, equivocation that the major purpose of the cross was that Jesus Christ would die as our substitute. You see, sin had to be punished. My sin has to be punished, and your sin has to be punished. There’s no question about that. The only question is, who will bear the punishment? Either I will bear the punishment or I will have a substitute to bear my punishment for me. So, the Bible says that all our sins were laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Look, if you will, in the last part of verse 6: *“the LORD hath laid [upon] him the iniquity of us all.”* (Isaiah 53:6)

Now, what did Jesus do as my substitute? Listen very carefully. Here’s why we’re magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word. What did Jesus take when He went to that cross?

A. Jesus Took My Sin

He took my sin. *“The LORD hath laid [upon] him the iniquity of us all.”* (Isaiah 53:6) Paul tells us in the New Testament, “Him who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Corinthians 5:21) Now, notice in verse 5—look at it: *“he was wounded for our transgressions.”* (Isaiah 53:5) Look at the word *wounded*. Do you see it? Verse 5? Do you know what the word *wounded* means in Hebrew? “Pierced”—“pierced.” It speaks of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. He was nailed to a cross for our transgression. Now, Jesus took my sin.

Have you ever wondered about the Garden of Gethsemane? The more I study Gethsemane, the more it breaks my heart, because, you see, this was Calvary before

He was ever nailed to the cross. In Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus said to the Father, *“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”* (Matthew 26:39) What was He talking about? Not physical death—He was talking about the cup. What was in that cup? Your sin was in that cup. My sin was in that cup. Your sin, sir, was in that cup. Yours, lady, was in that cup. And, the sin of all this congregation was in that cup, and the sin of today, yesterday, tomorrow, the sin of all of the ages, of all of the people—all the rape, the arson, the pillage, the pornography, the blasphemy, the hatred, the pride, the arrogance, the vileness—it all settled in that cup. And, the Lord Jesus knew that if He drank that cup, God would have to treat Him as He would treat every sinner. Jesus knew that. Jesus knew that He who had been in the bosom of the Father would become, when He became sin, the object of the Father’s loathing. He would become our substitute. He said, *“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”* (Matthew 26:9) The silence from heaven said there was no other way. And, Jesus took that bitter cup, and Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, drank that cup. No wonder we sing:

*My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
[Were] nailed to the cross, and I bear [them] no more,
[Bless] the Lord, [bless] the Lord, O my soul!*

—HORATIO G. SPAFFORD

B. **Jesus Took Our Shame**

But, not only did He take our sins, folks (verses 5 and 6), but in verse 7, He took our shame. Look at it: *“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted”*—now, watch this—*“yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”* (Isaiah 53:7) Pilate said, “Why don’t you say something? Don’t you hear what these people are accusing you of? Why don’t you say something? If you’re the Son of God, tell us; speak.” But, He doesn’t say a word. (Matthew 27:13–14; Mark 15:4–5) Boy, when I read that, I say, “Jesus, tell ’em who you are. Do something! Don’t just stand there; don’t just take it. Why don’t you turn Pilate into a frog? You could do it if you wanted to.” Why doesn’t He do that? Because, friend, the purpose of the cross is substitution, and along with our sin comes shame.

You see, Jesus could not have justified Himself without condemning me. I mean, Jesus could not have said, “Well, I’m here, but it’s really—it’s really—not my sin I’m suffering for; it’s Adrian’s sin.” Then, He would have been the hero. But, He did not die as a hero; He died as a criminal. He died as a thief. He died as an ignoble no-good. And, the Bible said, *“We did esteem him [smitten], [stricken] of God, and afflicted,”* (Isaiah 53:4) saying, “Good enough for Him. He’s getting what He deserves.” He died in shame, hanging naked on a cross for you.

It's amazing you have to beg people to come forward sometimes to confess their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ when He did that for you. Are you ashamed of Him? The Bible says when we believe on Him, we will not be ashamed. (Romans 9:33; 10:11) The Apostle Paul said, "[I'm] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for [it's] the power of God unto salvation." (Romans 1:16) Ashamed of Jesus—and can it be? Ashamed of that One who died for us upon the cross? He took my shame, and by God's grace and for God's glory, I'll never be ashamed of Jesus Christ. I hope you're never ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ. I hope you're not ashamed to carry your Bible. I hope you're not ashamed to bow your head in a restaurant and pray. I hope you're not ashamed to witness. I hope you're not ashamed to get up in that baptistery and be baptized as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, who, upon that cross, took your sin and He took your shame.

C. **Jesus Took Our Suffering**

I'll tell you what else He took, friend: He took your suffering. Look, if you will here, in verse 8 of this same chapter: "*He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: [and] for the transgression of my people [he] was...stricken*"—"cut off"? What does that mean? It means He was crucified. Look in verse 9—"he made his grave with the wicked, and...the rich in his death." (Isaiah 53:8–9) You see the word death? Friend, that word, in the Hebrew, is an intensive plural. It means "deaths." It's plural. Why would the Lord use the plural here? Because, friend, He was dying for all of us—He's dying for all of us.

I mean, we use an idiom today like "He died a thousand deaths," only He didn't die a thousand deaths; He died billions of deaths. He paid the sin for all of the world. How much did Jesus Christ suffer for your soul? How much did Jesus Christ suffer on that cross? Only the damned in hell can begin to know the price He paid, but they will never know because they're still paying for their sins; it's not over yet. And, they're only paying for their sins, but Jesus paid it all and He paid for all on that cross.

You say, "I don't understand that. How could He, in that period of time, suffer all eternity?" I'll tell you why; I'll tell you how: you see, we, being finite, will suffer in an infinite period of time; He, being infinite, suffered in a finite period of time what we, being finite, would suffer in an infinite period of time. When the Lord Jesus died upon that cross, the prophet said concerning Him, "There's no sorrow like my sorrow." (Lamentations 1:12) Nobody knows the pain. Nobody knows how dark it was when the Lord Jesus Christ died upon that cross. The eternities were compressed upon the Lord Jesus. The sins of the world were distilled upon the Lord Jesus. And He, being infinite, suffered in a finite period of time what we, being finite, would suffer in an infinite period of time. Jesus paid it all on that cross. No wonder He shrunk back from that cross. No

wonder He said, *“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”* (Matthew 26:39) But, Jesus took my sin. Jesus took my shame. Jesus took my suffering.

D. Jesus Took Our Separation

And, Jesus took my separation. You see, the Bible says there again that *“[Jesus] was cut off [from] the land of the living.”* (Isaiah 53:8) Here’s the Lord Jesus, there, who had always been in the bosom of the Father from eternity. Now, He’s separated from God the Father. He has to cry from that cross, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) Now, He wasn’t looking back, quoting David in Psalm 22. David was looking forward when he wrote Psalm 22, quoting the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, and, the demons of hell taunted Him, and hell had a holiday. And, the rabble mocked Him; the disciples fled from Him. And, the Lord Jesus is suspended between heaven and earth, there, alone on that cross, lifted up. The sun refused to shine.

When David died—King David—David could say, *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.”* (Psalms 23:4) But, I want to tell you, Jesus walked that lonesome valley by Himself. He could not say, *“Thou art with me.”* He had to say, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) Why? I’ll tell you why: He was taking your place. And, your sin will bring separation from Almighty God for all eternity if you don’t get saved.

See, listen, this is His vicarious death. Isaiah’s talking about it: all our iniquities were laid upon Him. He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquity. (Isaiah 53:5) And, and, this is His vicarious death. He took our sin. He took our shame. He took our suffering. He took our separation. And, I love Him—I love Him; I love Him—and you need to love Him. And, this church exists for the purpose of magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word.

IV. Jesus: His Victorious Resurrection

But, it doesn’t end there. Friend, not only do we have His vicarious death, but we have His victorious resurrection. Look, if you will, in verses 9 and 10: *“And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was [there] any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: [and] when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he”—the Messiah—“shall see his seed”—His descendants—“he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”* (Isaiah 53:9–10) It doesn’t sound like a dead man now to me, does it? No.

“He made his grave with the wicked, and...the rich.” (Isaiah 53:9) You know, He was laid away in a borrowed tomb—a rich man’s tomb. No man had ever lain in that tomb.

Jesus had a virgin womb and a virgin tomb, but He came up out of that grave. Verse 10 says, “[God will] prolong his days.” (Isaiah 53:10) He is “*the Ancient of days.*” (Daniel 7:9, 13, 22) The Living Bible paraphrases it, “He shall live again.” He came out of that grave. That’s why I love the Lord Jesus. Confucius died; he’s dead. Buddha died; he is dead. Mohammad died; he is dead. Jesus died; He walked out of that grave. Give Him a hand.

A minister was visiting Moscow, Red Square, the tomb of Lenin. I’ve been there to see those soldiers goose-stepping, guarding that tomb. He asked them, “What are you doing?” They said, “We’re guarding the tomb of our hero.” This Christian said, “They don’t guard the tomb of my hero ’cause He’s not there.”

He’s risen. His victorious resurrection: Jesus came out of that grave, and I want to say, had Jesus not come out of that grave, He’d just been one more religious leader. But, He’s “[shown] to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the [grave]”—“from the dead.” (Romans 1:4)

V. Jesus: His Visible Return

Here’s the last thing—thank God for this: His visible return. Look in verses 11 and 12: “*He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied*”—oh, listen, He’s going to say, “It was worth it all” when He sees you and when He sees me saved—“*by his knowledge shall my righteous servant*”—that’s Jesus—“*justify many*”—that’s us—“*for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore*”—God the Father says—“*will I divide with him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong*”—it’s talking about Jesus, here, coming to rule and to reign. What do you do after a victory? You divide up the spoil—“*he*”—listen—“*he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*” (Isaiah 53:11–12)

Oh, friend, what’s it talking about? It’s talking about when Jesus comes again. The only hope of this world is Jesus coming again. I’ve given up trying to reform Hollywood or Washington—no, no, might as well try to run a soda shop in hell. Friend, I’m gonna tell you something: the hope of this world is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And,

*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
[He’s] trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored; He hath loosed
the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword:
[Our God] is marching on.*

—JULIA WARD HOWE

And,

*Jesus [will] reign where’er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run;*

*His kingdom [spread] from shore to shore,
'Til moon shall wax and wane no more.*

—ISAAC WATTS

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth,” (Matthew 5:5) because He’s going to *“divide the spoil with the strong.”* (Isaiah 53:12) And, *“people [who] know their God [will]...do exploits.”* (Daniel 11:32) And friend, we’re on the winning side. It’s the story that Isaiah gave in Isaiah 53. We sing it:

*Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;
Buried, He carried my sins far away;
Rising, He justified freely forever:
One day He’s coming—O glorious day*

—JOHN WILBUR CHAPMAN

when He comes.

Conclusion

Father, seal the message to our hearts. Help us, Lord Jesus, that we would exist as individuals and as a church to magnify you through worship and the Word.

And now, while heads are bowed, eyes are closed, if you’ve never received Him, the Bible says, *“By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.”* (Isaiah 53:11) He’ll save you today if you come to know Him in repentance and faith. I invite you right now to pray a prayer like this: “Lord Jesus, I need you. I want you. Thank you for dying for me. I now open my heart, and by faith, like a child, I receive you as my Lord and my Savior. Come in, Lord Jesus; take control of my life, and begin now to make me the person you want me to be. In your name I pray. Amen.”

The Biography of the King

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 9, 2001

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 53:1

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

ISAIAH 53:1

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Supernatural Birth of the King
- II. The Simple Life of the King
- III. The Substitutionary Death of the King
- IV. The Saving Resurrection of the King
- V. The Sovereign Reign of the King

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God’s Holy Word and turn to Isaiah chapter 53. In my estimation, this may be the greatest chapter in all of the Bible. Martin Luther, the great reformist, said that this chapter should have been written on a parchment of pure gold, studded and lettered in diamonds. What an incredible chapter it is, and it’s 700 years before Jesus Christ was born. And Isaiah the prophet dipped his pen in golden glory, and wrote a biography. Listen. He wrote a biography of Jesus seven centuries into the future, and if you will listen with an open heart and an open mind, you will be absolutely convinced, number one, of the inspiration of the Scriptures; number two, of the deity of Jesus Christ, and that He is the Messiah promised who came that Christmas so long ago. This is a wonderful and a glorious chapter, and so I want you to hold it open in your hands, if you have it. If not, you listen all the more carefully, and we’ll try and put some scriptures on the screen for you, as we study the Gospel according to Isaiah. Now, we know there’s a Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but friend, really, there are 66 Gospels; all of the Bible is about the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The Supernatural Birth of the King

The first thing I want you to notice—and we’re talking about the King of Kings now, and the Lord of Lords—in the biography of this king, I want you to notice the supernatural birth of the king. Look in verses 1 and 2: “Who hath believed our report, and to whom is

the arm of the Lord revealed?” Now, what do we mean by the arm of the Lord? We mean God’s mighty power, the arm of the Lord. You want to see the arm of the Lord? You want to see God’s mighty power? Well, it’s a person. “For He shall grow up before Him,”—the arm of the Lord shall grow up before the Lord. Watch this now—“as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground.”

This is something miraculous. We’re looking for something mighty and something strong, and we see coming out of dry, barren desert a little tender plant. It’s a picture of the birth of the Savior. You say, Do you think Isaiah really had that in mind? Well, just go back to Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14, and he says, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and be with child.” Go to Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given.” Isaiah knew about the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and even if he didn’t understand it all, God understood it all, and inspired Isaiah what to say.

Oh, folks, thank God for the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Never ever minimize the virgin birth. I would not give you half a hallelujah for your hope of heaven without the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? You see, listen. If He had not been born of a virgin, He could not have been sinless. Had He not been born of a virgin, He would’ve been a son of Adam like I am, like you are—and in Adam all die. And had He not been sinless, then He could not have offered a blood atonement; He could only have died for His own sin. So no virgin birth, no deity. No deity, no sinlessness. No sinlessness, no atonement. No atonement, no forgiveness. No forgiveness, no hope of heaven. Friend, you had better be grateful for the virgin birth. I’m telling you—listen—it’s not incidental; it’s fundamental. He was born of a virgin that you might be born again. He came to earth that you might go to heaven. He became the Son of Man, that you might become the sons and daughters of God.

Mendel was a man who taught us much about genetics, and, he said this: that every individual is the sum total of the characteristics, both dominant and recessive, in his immediate two progenitors. Now, what does that mean, in plain English? Well, in plain English, it means that everything that was in your mom and dad is in you. Everything within your mom and dad is in you, and furthermore, there’s nothing in you that was not in your mom and your dad. That what Mendel taught us in genetics. Now, it may be dominant or it may be recessive. That is, it may be very apparent, or it may be down there latent, so sometimes it can kind of skip a generation as far as the recessive part is; that’s the reason you can blame all of the faults of your grandchildren on your children. That will make sense to you later on, but what I’m trying to say to you—what I’m trying to say to you—is this: that everything that was in your parents is in you, and everything in you was in your parents.

Now, let’s think about the Lord Jesus Christ. Suppose that Jesus’ mother and His

father were only human. Then He's only human, and He could save none of us. He would have not been the God-man; He would not have been sinless. Well, let's suppose that His Word was fully God, and somehow over here, there's another god over here we'll call His mother. Impossible, but if God and God get together and have a child, then he's God, and he's remote, and he cannot identify with us, and we cannot identify with him. But here is Mary, fully human, and she becomes with child by the Holy Spirit of God, and that which is born is totally unique. The Bible calls Him the *monoganon*, the only begotten Son of God; never another born like the Lord Jesus Christ. And all that was in His mother is in Him, and all that was in His Father is in Him. That means He's totally man; that means He's totally God. He's not half-God and half-man, not all man and no God, not all God and no man; He is the God-man, never another like the Lord Jesus Christ. Incredible! Virgin born, that we might be saved, for without a virgin-born sinless Savior, we have no hope of salvation, as we're going to see.

One time I was witnessing to Muhammad Ali—Muhammad Ali—who'd become a Muslim, and he had his suitcase there full of Muslim materials, and I had an open Bible, and Muhammad said to me, he said, You say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God because He was born of a virgin. He said, Adam didn't have a father or mother—wouldn't that make him more a child of God than Jesus? I said, Champ, listen to me. Jesus is not the Son of God because He was born of a virgin; He was born of a virgin because He's the Son of God. He didn't have His beginning in Bethlehem; He just stepped out of heaven, and came down to earth, and became the God-man. It is an incredible thing as we see the supernatural birth of the King. Thank God for the virgin birth.

But now, wait; wait, let's continue to read. Look, if you will now, beginning in verses 2 and 3: "For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant and as a root out of dry ground, and He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see Him, there's no beauty that we should desire Him." I want you to think about the simple life of the King—the simple life of the King. He's despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Now, He's the very Son of God. You would think, when He came to this earth, He would just step out of heaven, dressed in royal robes woven on the looms of life; perhaps He would come with angels preceding Him, in a jeweled chariot and a great display of glory. He doesn't come that way. The only announcement is made to shepherds in a field, and He's born in an insignificant little village, Bethlehem, in a stable with cow dung and sheep manure on the floor, flies—zzzzz—around, laid in straw. This is the king? When we see Him, there's no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty, that we should desire Him.

II. The Simple Life of the King

Supernatural birth. A simple life. Bethlehem, Nazareth—can any good thing come out of Nazareth, that bunch of hillbillies up there? Well, what did His father do? His father was a carpenter. Well, what did He look like? He must've looked something mighty handsome, you would've known Him, No, you wouldn't. You would not have known Him. When the Bible says, “no form, nor beauty, nor comeliness,” that doesn't mean He was hideous or warped; it just means that He was nondescript. Don't get the idea that you would pick Jesus out of the crowd. Now, the artists do that, but you would never have picked Jesus out of the crowd. Judas had to point Him out—remember they were going to take Him? Judas had to say, That's the one; had to give Him a sign. The artists, you know, they paint Jesus. You see these paintings of Jesus going around with this thing behind His head, looks like a dinner plate? He didn't go around with a dinner plate behind His head. Would we see Him? There's no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty, that we should desire Him.

Ordinary, simple life, walking in sandaled feet, going about doing good. Why is that? Why did He come that way? Because God wants something out of mankind that He can receive no other way. He wants faith. He wants faith. Now, listen to me carefully. Some person might say, Well, if He is so great, why doesn't He prove Himself. If God wants us to believe in Him, why doesn't He just prove Himself to us? Friend, He could prove Himself to us, if He wanted to reach down and take the roof off this auditorium, and say, Boo! I mean, He could shake the earth to its foundations, He could do some dazzling display of glory, and we'd fall on our faces, and say, He is God—He is God. But that wouldn't be faith; that would just be a reaction to what we've seen. That's not faith. Don't ever ask God to prove Himself to you.

Why did Jesus Christ come the way He did? He laid aside all of the splendor, all of the glory, all of the majesty, that was inherently His, and came as a baby, as a root out of a dry ground; no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty, that we should desire Him; very ordinary, very nondescript; and yet there were people who believed in Him. Well, you say, they believed in Him because of the miracles that He did. No, some of those people who believed because of the miracles left Him. Why did He come the way He did? He wanted us to have faith. Now, listen. Faith is not a response to what the eye sees or the ear hears; faith is a response of the heart to the character of God. Jesus laid aside all of the splendor, but He laid aside none of the character. And when the heart is right, the heart will respond to God in faith. Like the eye responds to light when the eye is right, the ear responds to sound when the ear is right, the heart responds to Jesus when the heart is right—not because of proof. When Jesus did miracles, they were not publicity stunts. He was not trying to dazzle and bribe people. As a matter of fact, often when Jesus would do a miracle, He would say, Don't tell anybody about this. Modern

evangelists advertise miracles, and don't do them. Jesus did them, and didn't advertise them. He wants people to believe in Him.

Now, God's not going to prove Himself to you, but I'll tell you, if you'll get your heart right and you find that person called Jesus, you look at Him as revealed in the pages of the Scripture, and you're going to find your heart turning to Him. He's despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid, as it were, our faces from Him. They were looking for a dazzling Messiah. Israel rejected Him. They were looking for a miracle worker; they were looking for some political Messiah. He didn't come that way. Friend, there's the simple life of the King. It's one of the great fulfillments of Scripture. And, friend, if you want to know Him, you can know Him.

III. The Substitutionary Death of the King

Now, here's the third thing I want you to notice. I want you to notice the substitutionary death of the king. All right, let's begin in verse 4: "Surely He hath born our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem His stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." We thought, Well, God didn't spare Him because He was a sinner, but He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities. They thought He was afflicted because He was bad, and they were spared because they were good. No, He was afflicted because we were bad, and we're spared because He was good. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was on Him, and with His stripes we are healed." Now, watch this—verse 6: "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to His own way,"—now, watch—"and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Let my Bible represent sin, because it tells about sin. Let my right hand represent myself. Let my left hand represent the virgin born Son of God, absolutely, perfectly sinless. Here I am, a sinner. Here you are, a sinner. Is there anybody in this building who would have the audacity, the nerve, the unmitigated gall to stand and say, I've never sinned? Not a person, not an honest person. Here we are, all we, every one of us, like sheep, have gone astray. We've turned every one to his own way. That is, we've been selfish and proud. Here's the Lord Jesus, the solitary, sinless, pure, lovely Savior. Isaiah chapter 53, verse 6, says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Our sins were laid on the Lord Jesus Christ. He never sinned, but He became sin for us, and our sins were laid upon the Lord Jesus.

That's substitution. He took our place. He died for us. That's the Gospel according to Isaiah. And I want you to notice four things that Jesus took as our substitute. First of all, He took our sins. Our sins were laid upon Jesus. Look, if you will, the Bible says here that He was wounded for our transgressions—for whose transgressions? Why don't you

just say, For my transgressions. You know what the word wounded means in the Hebrew? Listen carefully. It means pierced—pierced. He was pierced for my transgressions, and for yours. Jesus went into dark Gethsemane, Jesus cast Himself on the ground, Jesus prayed, and He said, O God, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.

What's He talking about? A literal cup? No, He's talking about something that He must drink spiritually. There was a cup, and in that cup was the sin of the world. A little child is raped—that sin comes into that cup. A man breaks his marriage vows—the sin comes in that cup. A drunkard blasphemes God—that sin comes into that cup. A person with a twisted mind flies an airplane into a high-rise building in New York, thousands die—that sin settles in that cup. All of the sin of all of the centuries is in that cup, and that sin is going to be laid on the Lord Jesus Christ, and He says, O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Don't get the idea that Jesus just sallied forth to the cross. Jesus dreaded the cross. Jesus shrank from the cross. Does that diminish Him in your eyes? It doesn't in mine; it makes me love Him all the more. I've told you before, one night in Miami, in a hotel room, I was meditating on Gethsemane, and when I saw what Jesus did for me, about two in the morning, I shouted so loud—I'm not given to shouting, but I shouted—and I said, Boy, I'm in trouble, they're going to send a detective to this room now; they're going to think there's been a murder in this room.

What Jesus did, He is praying with such intensity that the minute capillaries in His body break, and He sweats drops of blood, because your sin, my sin, is going to be laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus knows when that happens—listen to me—when that happens, He's going to have to take my punishment. He, the darling Son of God, is going to become the object of the loathing of God, and the wrath of God, and the fires of God's wrath are going to burn themselves out on Him.

Don't you take the virgin birth lightly. Don't you take the substitutionary death of the king lightly. He took our sins. And not only did He take our sins—listen—secondly, He took our shame.

Look, if you will, in Isaiah 53, verses 7 and 8: "He was oppressed and He was afflicted; yet He opened not His mouth; He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." Now, listen. He was put to death by judicial murder. They slandered Him. He had a mock trial, everything was a travesty of justice, and there's Jesus—He doesn't say anything—He doesn't say anything. Pilate says, Don't you answer me. Don't you know I have the power to crucify you or let you go? When the chief priests and so forth questioned Him, He wouldn't say anything, except when they adjured Him by God and made Him speak.

Why was Jesus so quiet? Because not only did He take my sin, friend; He took my

shame. Do you know that when we get caught doing something wrong, we try to justify ourselves—don't we? Nod your head. We try to justify ourselves, and when we're really right and blamed for something wrong, boy, do we justify ourselves. Jesus was totally innocent, and He never spoke a word. Why was that? Why did He go like a lamb to the slaughter? Why was He dumb, that is, speechless? Because, not only was He taking my sin; He was taking my shame.

Do you know, when I stand before God as a sinner—of course I have been saved, or when anybody stands there not saved—they'll stand there speechless. The Bible talked about that man who tried to come in without a wedding garment. The Bible says he was speechless. I was guilty and nothing to say; they were coming to take me away. And when you, precious friend, outside of Christ, stand before God, every excuse will falter and fail, and every alibi will be gone, and you will have absolutely nothing to say. That Jesus could not have justified Himself without condemning me.

Jesus could not have said, Now, Mr. Pilate, I want you to know, I'm going to go ahead and let you crucify me; I'm laying down my life. I'm not really guilty. I'm not really guilty. I am dying as an innocent substitute. I'm not guilty. I'm sinless. I'm just bearing these sins. Had He done that, He would've died in dignity, but He didn't die in dignity. He died in shame. He died as an ignominious sinner. He took my shame to the cross. I love Him for that. And because Jesus Christ took my shame, I made up my mind I'm never going to be ashamed of Him, never ashamed of Him. I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it's the power of God unto salvation.

But not only did He take my sin, not only did He take my shame, but He took my separation. Look, if you will, in Isaiah 53, verse 8: "He was taken from prison and in judgment, and who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living"—cut off. That doesn't mean He was cut into; it means He was separated, just separated. Cut off from everybody. He died alone, flaming fingers of fire flashed across the angry bosom of the sky. The rabble there was taunting Him, saying, He saved others; He can't save Himself. He's the Son of God—let Him come down from the cross. The demons of hell taunted Him and mocked Him. The disciples drew away from Him, and God the Father turned His back on Him.

You say, No. Yes, the Bible says of God the Father, "Thou art of pure eyes than to behold iniquity," and at this time He was bearing the iniquity of us all, and Jesus on the cross cried out, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me? I'll tell you why, because He was bearing my separation and your separation. He was bearing on that cross what I will bear if I don't get saved, and that is eternal separation from Almighty God, and He is separated there. My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me? There He is suspended between heaven and earth on a bloody cross, cut off, separated. That's Psalm 22—you can find that in the Bible: My God, my God, why hast Thou

forsaken Me? Jesus wasn't looking back, quoting David, friend, when David wrote it; He was looking forward, quoting Jesus. I mean, that's a prophecy: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" That same David wrote, in Psalm 23, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with Me."

Jesus, when He baptized His soul in hell, could not say, Lord, are you with Me? He was not with Him; He died alone. He died alone. Does that mean anything to you? He, friend, as your substitute, He took your sin, and when He took your sin, He took your shame. And when He took your shame, He took your separation. And, friend, He took your suffering—He took your suffering. Look in verse 9: "And He made His grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death, because He had done no violence. Neither was there any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He hath put Him to grief." You say men crucified Jesus. Well, read this verse, and over it all was the hand of God, the bruising of God. He is now suffering because of sin. Nobody ever suffered like the Lord Jesus Christ suffered. There's no grief like His—none. Nobody's ever known this.

You say, Well, other people have been crucified. No, you don't understand what's happening here. I'm telling you, friend, that He is suffering, bruised from the hand of the Father in whose bosom He had rested for all eternity. The damned in hell cannot even begin to know how much Jesus suffered. They're only paying for their sin, and they're still paying; they haven't paid, and they never will pay. But in this offering Jesus paid it all; not just for one, but for all. You say, Now, wait a minute. I don't understand that. I just don't understand that. How could Jesus, there on the cross, in that period of time, pay the sin debt for all eternity, because if I die as a sinner, I will die and go to hell forever and ever and ever and ever and ever, and yet He just paid the debt just like that? How's that possible? I'll tell you how it's possible. He, being infinite, paid in a finite period of time what you, being finite, would pay in an infinite period of time. When Jesus died on that cross, the sins of the world were distilled upon Jesus, and the eternities were compressed upon Jesus. No one can ever describe how much He suffered.

Now, there's no form of death more painful than crucifixion, but He goes far beyond crucifixion. Jesus is a substitute. He took your place. Why? Because a holy God cannot overlook sin. Sin must be paid for. Somehow, somewhere, sin must be paid for, and Jesus, as my substitute, took my sin, He took my shame, He took my separation, He took my sorrows and my sufferings, and Jesus paid it all. I want to tell you something: all to Him I owe—all to Him I owe. What a darling Savior! What a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful Savior that Isaiah spoke about 700 years before He was born.

IV. The Saving Resurrection of the King

Now, next, I want you to see the saving resurrection of the King, because He didn't stay

in that grave. Look, if you will now, in verses 9 and 10 of this same chapter. Listen. He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death. And, by the way, the word death there is a plural intensive; it means His deaths. We would speak today of a person who died in great pain; we'd say he died a thousand deaths. "In His death, because He'd done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth, yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He had put Him to grief." Now, watch this: "When thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, when thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He, that is, the one who was dead, shall see a seed." What does that mean—His descendants? He shall prolong His days. Wait a minute. I thought He was dead, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. How can a dead man do God's pleasure? No, what does this dead man have? He has descendants. He has days of duration. He has deeds. He's serving God. How can a dead man have descendants? How can a dead man serve God? Well, here He is: His soul is an offering for sin, and yet now He goes on to have a huge family. Now, He goes on to do the pleasure of the Lord. Now, He prolongs His days; He lives. The Living Bible takes this, and paraphrases this verse: "He shall live again."

They put Him in that tomb. Pilate said, Make it as sure as you can. Roman government made it as sure as it could; they put a seal on the tomb and soldiers to guard it. Nature made it as sure as it could, because it put a big stone in front of a rock-hewn tomb. Unbelief made it as sure as it could, because they mocked the idea of the resurrection. But He walked out of that grave—He walked out of that grave. He shall live again. He shall prolong His days. Isaiah is talking about a man dead, and now He's living. Dead, and now He's doing the pleasure of Almighty God. Dead, and now He has a great family. Don't you just love the Bible? Don't you? I mean, think about this. Folks, this is written 700 years before Jesus.

You know why I love Jesus? Friend, Confucius died—he's dead. Buddha died—he's dead. Mohammed died—he's dead. Jesus lives—He's alive. We serve a risen, living, victorious Savior.

V. The Sovereign Reign of the King

Last of all, I want you to see the sovereign reign of the king, because He's a king. And notice, beginning in verse 11: "He shall see the travail of His soul,"—talking now about Jesus—"and shall be satisfied,"—it's worth it all to Jesus; He's satisfied—"by His knowledge"—by the knowledge of my righteous servant, God says—"by His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He hath poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressions—transgressors. He bears the sin of many and made intercession for the

transgressors.” Now, you see the mighty arm of the Lord—you see now the mighty arm of the Lord. “By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.” Doesn’t mean what He knows; it means when you know Him.

Conclusion

Do you know Him? I don’t mean, do you know about Him, by His knowledge, by the knowledge of Jesus? Paul said, “Oh, that I may know Him.” Do you know Him? Are you saved? This looks forward to His coming, to rule and to reign. These few verses—I must just wrap it up—but let me tell you, in this night, in this day, as dark as a night, a midnight of inky blankness, the only hope is the coming of Jesus Christ. And He’s coming soon. Do you know Him?

Would you like to be justified? The Bible says that through the death of Jesus God’s justice is satisfied, and man becomes justified. What does justification mean? It just simply means that God looks upon me—now, watch it. Go back again; watch it. Here’s our sin. “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way.” Verse 6: “The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Now, where does that leave me? Completely sinless. Why? Because my sin is on Him. I am now justified, and justified means just as if I’d never sinned.

They were in a revival meeting. A little girl was there with her parents, and the invitation was given, and people got up out of their seats, and started coming forward. The little girl said to her mother, Mother, why are all those people going down there? And she said, Well, they’re going to give their hearts to Jesus Christ. And that little girl said, Why don’t we all go? That’s a good question, isn’t it?

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. How many today would say, Pastor Rogers, I know Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, I have a knowledge of Him, I have received Him as my Lord and Savior, and I know that I know if I died today I would go straight to heaven, and I’m infinitely glad, and I’m not ashamed? If you feel that way, would you lift your hand? Hold it up. Thank you. Now take them down.

Now, if you couldn’t lift your hand, let me lead you in a prayer, and in this prayer you can pray and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart, and I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, He will save you this morning, and keep you forever. Would you pray this prayer? Dear God—just speak to Him—I’m a sinner—say that for yourself, if you know it to be true—I’m a sinner. I’m lost. I’m destined for hell, but I want to be saved. Jesus, you died to save me. You became my substitute. You took my sin, my shame, my separation, my suffering. Thank you, Jesus. My sin was laid upon you, and now I receive you as my Lord and Savior. Come into my life. Take control of my life. Forgive me of my sin, and save me, Lord Jesus. And, Lord Jesus, because you took my

shame, I'll never be ashamed of you. Give me the strength and the courage to make this public. In your name I pray. Amen.

The Healing of Body, Soul, and Mind

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 25, 1986

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 53:1–6

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

ISAIAH 53:5

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Isaiah chapter 53 has been called the gospel of the Old Testament. It is the Gospel according to Isaiah, and I want us to share together the first six verses of Isaiah chapter 53, as we think, tonight, of the healing of the body, soul, and mind: *“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?”* (Isaiah 53:1). *“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him”*—and incidentally and parenthetically, let me say that so many of the effeminate pictures of the Lord Jesus do not match with this description of Him, given by divine inspiration. Jesus was not a beautiful picture outwardly. He was, according to this passage of Scripture, rather nondescript—*“there is no beauty that we should desire in*

him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:1–6). Now, may God bless this reading of His Word, as we think about the healing stripes of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The Cause of Sickness

Before man sinned, there was no sickness. All sickness is directly or indirectly the result of sin. All pain, all death, all sickness, and all sorrow is directly or indirectly the result of sin. Now, after man sinned, God redeemed Adam and Eve. God, by promise and prophesy of the blood, brought Adam and Eve back to Himself. You will remember that God made us coats of skin and clothed Adam and Eve, picturing the righteousness that we receive through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. But, God said to Adam and Eve: *“cursed is the ground for thy sake”* (Genesis 3:17). God then placed a curse upon nature and upon man. Though man had the salvation of God, and though there came cleansing to Adam and Eve, still, the curse was there; and people today, because of that curse, know sickness—even those who are saved, like Adam and Eve. They still know the curse, and we still bear the curse. You read the eighth chapter of Romans, and the Apostle Paul speaks there, in the eighth chapter of Romans, about those of us who are redeemed and have the Holy Spirit of God within us, groaning in agony and prayer. He says we also are groaning and all creation travails together because of the curse that is put upon this creation in which we live (Romans 8:22). And, if you’re born of woman, then you’re going to be full of trouble. The Bible says this, and I don’t know anybody who got here any other way than being born of woman. We just have trouble; we have sorrow; and we have sickness.

Now, let me ask some questions about sickness. Are people sick because of personal sin? Some people are. Some people are definitely sick because of their sin. For example, very clearly, in 1 John 5:16, the Bible says: *“There is a sin unto death.”* Did you know that you, as a Christian, can get so willful, so obstinate, and so rebellious against God that He will take you home early? He’ll say the party is over. You’re not going to stay down here and disgrace Me. And, somebody says, “Can a Christian live that way and still go to Heaven?” Friend, if he lives that way, he may get to Heaven a lot quicker. God will get him to Heaven sooner than he realized. *“There is a sin unto death,”* and the Bible says: *“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he*

shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death” (1 John 5:16).

There are times when a Christian crosses the deadline, and he dies prematurely.

I think the apostle Paul was speaking of this same thing when he said in 1 Corinthians, chapter 11 and verse 30, talking about the irreverent way that some people took the Lord’s Supper, and since we’re going to take the Lord’s Supper here, in a little bit, it would behoove us to pay close attention to this. Paul talked about how some had selfishly and carelessly taken the Lord’s Supper. They were not thinking of other people. They were making a drunken feast out of it, rather than an agape feast; and then, the apostle Paul said: *“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep”* (1 Corinthians 11:30). Now, what he meant by some sleep is this: Folks, he didn’t mean just, “Now I lay me down to sleep.” Sleep is the name of the death—not of the unsaved, but of the saved—those who sleep in Christ.

Now, the Bible doesn’t call it “sleep for the unsaved.” He’s talking about saved people. He’s talking about people who die and go to Heaven prematurely. Are some Christians sick because of their sin? Absolutely. And, people who are saved or lost are often sick because of the way they live and the things they do. People who drink alcohol, for example, get sick, and they get sick because they have sinned against God by the abuse of alcohol. They take this embalming fluid by the six-pack into their bodies and wonder why they’re sick. It affects every part of their body. They end up with white livers, red eyes, dark brown breath, a yellow streak, and a blue outlook. It affects the entire body. And so, it’s thus a result of imbibing poison into your body. Do you know what “to be drunk” is called? It’s called *intoxicated*. Do you know what a *toxin* is? It is a poison. People take poison into their system. That’s the reason why some people, when they get drunk, regurgitate it—because it’s a poison. The body—the stomach—says, “This is a poison,” and tries to expel it. Those people have more sense in their stomach than they have in their head, when they regurgitate and get rid of that poison. This is the same about cigarette smoking. Cigarette smoking harms the temple of God. Now, there are people who smoke cigarettes. And, I don’t suppose, since I’ve been your pastor, that I’ve ever preached a whole sermon just on cigarette smoking. But folks, I don’t like it. I don’t want you to do it. As a matter of fact, I don’t want you to even stand around the doors of this church smoking before you come in here. It kind of makes it look like a pool hall to me. If you have to do it, go off somewhere and do it. Now, I’m not really talking down to you and being hard on you. I love you. I just don’t want you to have lung cancer. I know what dear ol’ Dr. Havner said about smoking. He said, “I’m not going to waste a whole sermon on smoking,” but he said, “I’ll tell you what to do with your tobacco.” He said, “You just leave it on the steps of the church,” and he said, “and when you come back out,” he said, “I’ll guarantee you, it will be still be there, because neither hog nor dog will bother it.” Amen?

Now, you know what the Baptist sin is? The Baptist sin is not primarily drinking or smoking, but it's overeating, isn't it? That's the one we think, *Well, ha, boy, we can do that*. Somebody said that "we live off of what we eat, and the doctor lives off the other half." Folks, it is a sin—it is a sin—to overeat. We laugh and giggle about it, but it's a sin. The Bible says that if you're a man given to gluttony, put a knife to your throat (Proverbs 23:2). Dwight L. Moody was an evangelist, and he had a preacher friend who was sick. Somebody asked him to pray for his preacher friend, and do you know what Moody said? He said, "I'll not do it. I'll not pray for him," said he, "He does the work of ten men and eats everything in sight. I'll not pray for God to cancel out the way he lives, until he repents, until he gets right. Why should I pray and ask God to give him a license to go on sinning, to go on glutting his body?" Many of us are sick because of overindulgence in the matter of food.

Some of us are sick because of the matter of worry. We don't trust the Lord, and worry is a sin. Did you know that? It's a sin. Oh, it's kind of a respectable sin, but if you think about what worry is—it's just the opposite of faith, isn't it? And, without faith, it is impossible to please God. Faith is worry turned inside out, and worry is faith turned inside out. And, worry will do the same thing to you that sand will do to machinery. And so, sometimes, people are sick because of their personal sin. It may be the judgment of God upon the way that they have sinned, or it simply may be the kickback of what they do. It may be just the law of sowing and reaping. That's the reason why some people are sick. Now, let me say again, that some people are sick because of the direct attack of the devil. Did you know the devil can make you sick? Let me give you some Scripture. You may not have noticed these Scriptures. In Job 2:7 the Bible says: "*So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.*" Satan smote Job with boils, and the boils that Satan put upon Job were the handicraft of Hell.

In Luke 13, there's the story of a woman who had a bent back. She walked everywhere like this—bent over. And, Jesus said of that woman, there in Luke chapter 11, that "*Satan hath bound [her]*" (Luke 13:16). She had a sickness that was put on her by the devil. And then, again, in Acts 10:38, it speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible says: "*Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil.*" Now, my friend, when you have the knowledge of God that your sickness is of the devil, then you can rebuke it in the name of Jesus and command it to leave you. You can take authority over that sickness. And, what some people call "submitting to the will of God" is really only giving in to the devil. Now, you have to have discernment to know whether or not that sickness is of the devil. I believe that God the Holy Spirit, when we abide in Him, He abides in us. He will give us that discernment that this is from the devil, and that we do not have to

receive it, and we do not have to take it.

Now sickness, even in the saint, is a result of his own personal sin. Sometimes sickness comes when Satan himself has oppressed us and put some sickness upon us. Then, there are other sicknesses, and this is a part of the mystery of sickness that God allows and God even uses as a part of His discipline. I'm going to get to that a little later, so let me just put that up in brackets and leave it right now. I've been talking primarily about the cause of sickness.

II. The Cure for Sickness

Now, let me say, concerning the cure for sickness. Does Jesus heal? Let me say it big, and tall, and high as this ceiling: Yes, yes, He heals. He is the Lord, our healer. He says, in Psalm 103:3: The Lord thy God "*who healeth all thy diseases,*" and I believe, dear friend, that God heals, as you've heard me pray on Wednesday night. He heals in a number of ways.

A. God Heals Instantaneously

Number one: He heals instantaneously, by miracle. I believe He has healed me that way, instantaneously—just like that—as a result of prayer. By miracle, Jesus heals; that's the way He healed in Bible times, and He says, "I'm the Lord thy God; I change not." He heals instantaneously, miraculously. And, by the way folks, we Baptists talk about believing the Bible. Let's believe it all. Somebody said, "It's all right to pray for folks to be healed in a Baptist church; it's just not all right for them to get healed," amen? I mean, if we start praying for folks, and they get healed, then somebody will say, "Oh, they're having healing services down there." Would to God, we saw more of the supernatural power of God to touch and heal the lives of people. That's all right, folks. God heals miraculously; God heals supernaturally. Thank God for that; thank God for that.

We have a pastor in our city—an associate pastor. His name is A. C. Ford, and he has a wife named Marilyn. Marilyn, when she was a young girl, had an eye disease. She had muscular deterioration of her eyes. The doctor says, "I'll explain it to you Marilyn: Your eyes are like a mirror with all of the quicksilver scratched off of the back. There's nothing to catch the image and reflect it. You are consigned to blindness for the rest of your life." She went to Tennessee Temple University over there to study, to serve the Lord. She was a musician. She had to walk with a cane. She had to have people to lead her around in other places. She had to listen with a tape recorder, and she wasn't able to write like the other students, but she had to listen and get her lessons. She met young A. C. Ford over there, and he married this blind girl. They were pastor and wife over here in Arkansas. On a particular occasion, they had been out making a late night

visit—a call. They had been on a trip somewhere. They came in after midnight. He was reading, and she was getting ready for bed. He was reading some spiritual journal. They had asked God many times to heal her blindness, but A.C. felt a faith growing in his heart. He said it was there, that night, as he was thinking about how it would be so much better if she could work with him in the ministry. He said to her, “Marilyn, God can heal you. God can heal you. I know that God can heal you, and I’m going to ask Him to do it right now.” And, he got down on his knees and said, “Lord...” (She is still in bed.) He says, “Lord, I ask you, in Jesus’ name, to heal Marilyn—to give her sight in her eyes.” And, instantaneously, she said, “A.C., I can see.” He said, “What?” She said, “I can see you, A. C.” And, she said, “You need a shave.” He got so excited that he went and got a newspaper. He said, “Read the headlines.” She said, “A.C., I can read the fine print.” She read it to him. They got so excited. They said, “We didn’t know what to do. We wanted to run outside, and up and down the streets, and wake the city, and tell them that God had performed a miracle.” They said, “We were so excited that we were afraid to go to sleep—that when we woke up, we were afraid that it might not be so, that it was only a dream.” But, if you doubt what I am telling you, then go over here to Broadmoor Baptist Church tonight and find Marilyn Ford. She will give you the testimony recorded in her lovely book, *These Blind Eyes Now See*.

Now, the devil counterfeits every good thing, and I have nothing but the utmost contempt for religious racketeers who are going up and down this land profiteering on the sickness and the illness of people. I believe, with all of the emphasis, unction, and emotion of my soul, that the hottest part of Hell is reserved for these people who make merchandise of peoples sickness. But, having said that, I do believe that God heals instantaneously.

B. God Heals in Time

I also believe that God heals in time, and this is still the healing of God. The Bible speaks of Peter’s wife’s mother who had a fever, and the Bible says that Jesus healed her and that she recovered. There was a recovery period. Evidently, from the language, she was not healed instantaneously, but she was healed of the Lord. And, the Bible says that they shall lay hands upon the sick, and they shall recover. That’s the healing of God, too. Sometimes that is not instantaneous healing, but it is the way that God made us—the way that God created us. I thank God for that kind of healing. God heals instantaneously, and God heals in time.

C. God Heals Using Medicine

And then, I want to say, dear friend, that God heals using medicine. Thank God for medicine. Thank God for doctors! Thank God for the Christian physicians in this church that God has given a ministry of healing. Luke was spoken of as “the beloved

physician,” and I believe that Dr. Luke was one who kept Paul going and preaching as long as he did. It was our Lord Himself—none other than Jesus Himself—who said: *“They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick”* (Luke 5:31). And, in the Bible, as we study in the Bible, we find records of people who were healed by the use and means of medicine. For example, in 2 Kings 20:7, there was a king who was sick—King Hezekiah. And, here is what God said through Isaiah: *“And Isaiah said, ‘Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered.’”* Now, here is a pulpous of figs—a home remedy—put upon a boil, to draw and extract the poison, and he recovered. And, I think of young Timothy, who had a weak stomach—Timothy, who had indigestion problems—and the Apostle Paul said, in 1 Timothy 5:23: *“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.”* That is, now that the water there with its high alkaline content, it needed that wine to help settle the stomach of this young man. God expects us to use what means we have, and certainly, God has given us means for healing. And so, God heals instantaneously by miracles. God heals in time. God uses doctors, and God uses medicine.

D. **God Always Heals His Children in Eternity**

But now, let me say something else: Not only does God heal instantaneously and miraculously, not only does God heal in time, not only does God use medicine, and not only does God use doctors, but also, God always heals His children. He always heals His children, and that, my friend, is in eternity.

Now, with His stripes we are healed—no ifs, ands, or buts about it. But, the Bible speaks of the redemption of the body. Our bodies are not yet redeemed. The redemption of the body, which is in the purchase of Jesus at Calvary, is going to come at the rapture. And, the redemption of the Church and the resurrection of the Christian dead will come at that time when we’re made like unto Him. There is no sickness in His body, and there will be no sickness in our resurrected body. But now, I want to say this: that not every saint will be healed in this lifetime, either by miracle or by medicine. Every saint will not be healed in this lifetime instantaneously, or in time, by doctors with medicine, or without medicine. Not every saint is going to be healed.

Now, let me show you, that you may be sick and be absolutely right with God. Look, if you will, in 2 Corinthians 12 here, for just a moment. Now, this is a very familiar passage of Scripture, and it deals with the Apostle Paul—2 Corinthians 12:7: *“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.”* Now, here Satan was used, but God was using Satan, and it’s a different course here; it’s a different thing. This was given to Paul; it was a gift of God. Now, notice, it gets very deep here—very mysterious. And, the Apostle Paul says: *“For*

this thing I besought the Lord thrice”—that means three times—*“that it might depart from me.”* Now, that means that Paul prayed, and he didn’t have faith. That wasn’t Paul’s fault. You have never ever prayed for faith for anything that you’ve not received. If you say, “I prayed and trusted God, and I didn’t receive what I ask God for,” then you might have had positive thinking, and you might have had concentrated wishes, but you did not have faith. Friend, the Bible says: *“the prayer of faith shall save the sick”* (James 5:15). And: *“What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them”* (Mark 11:24). Paul prayed, but his prayer was not a prayer of faith. That doesn’t mean that he was out of the will of God; he was seeking the will of God.

You see, Paul didn’t always know what he ought to pray for. Now, a lot of times, I don’t know what I ought to pray for. A lot of times, you don’t know what you ought to pray for. Isn’t that right? Confess it. You don’t know, and the Bible says, in Romans 8: *“for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us”* (Romans 8:24). And so, here is Paul; he doesn’t know exactly what to ask God, so he asked God one time, and he doesn’t get any answer. So, he asked God again, and he doesn’t get any answer. And, he asked God again, “O Lord, heal me, and *‘for this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me’*—now, the third time, here is Paul patiently and consistently bombarding Heaven—*“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Corinthians 12:8–9). Now, notice what Paul said: *“therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities”* (2 Corinthians 12:9). Do you know what that word *infirmities* means? Sickness. *“In reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong”* (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Now, let me just show you some Scripture here while we are looking at it. Well, I’m trying to convince you here, and it’s like trying to change a tire on a rolling truck—Ha! Let me just now show you that Scripture here. You just bear with me for a moment, and maybe it will come out later. We’ll see how much time we have. Paul, a man of God, the great mighty apostle, was sick. Let me just make that point. And, according to this, it was not because there was sin in his life and not because he was out of the will of God. He just had a thorn in the flesh.

Now, let me show you another Scripture. Turn to 2 Timothy chapter 4, if you will, for a moment. And, the problem is not that I’m preaching too long—you’re just not listening fast enough. All right now, 2 Timothy 4:20: *“Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.”* Now, Paul left a valued colleague, somebody that he wanted, and somebody that he needed, but he had to leave him behind. He was too sick to travel. Now, I remind you of this: that the great Apostle Paul had power to heal

the sick. Paul had the gifts of healing. As a matter of fact, Paul had so much power that sometimes even aprons from his body would heal people. And yet, here was a man that Paul had to leave behind sick, because even the mighty Apostle Paul could not heal a brother if it were not God's will for that one to be healed. Trophimus, a valued servant of the Lord, was left behind sick.

Again, I remind you of the Scripture 1 Timothy 5:23, where the Apostle Paul told Timothy: *"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."* Water was strong in alkaline content over there. Timothy was often sick, so Paul here prescribes for him wine, and evidently, Timothy did not get well, because it was a chronic illness. Timothy was a man of God, but he had a nervous stomach. I want you to turn to 2 Kings chapter 13. I want you to see something—2 Kings 14. In my estimation, one of the greatest men who ever lived was the prophet Elisha, and if you study the ministry of Elisha, then you're going to find out that he had a miracle ministry. He was one who could raise the dead, and yet notice: *"Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness"* (2 Kings 13:14). I guess, he was sick of his sickness. What else could he be sick of? All right, *"Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof"* (2 Kings 13:14). Oh, what a respect the king had for this great man of God. Now, I want to ask you a question: Did Elisha die because he was out of communion with God? If you'll read this story in its context, then you'll find out that he had just made a remarkable prophesy on his death bed: that God was using him mightily, mightily.

I had an evangelist call me on the phone, and he said, "Adrian," he said, "God has just revealed to me some things about healing." He said, "I'm transferring the emphasis of my ministry to healing." He said, "I want you to come and talk with me about it." I said, "I don't have time to go talk with you about it, friend. I love you, and I thank God for all of the people that are healed. I just want to give you a word of advice: If you put your emphasis upon healing, rather than the salvation of souls, then it's going to be a wrong emphasis. Jesus Christ did not come primarily to heal. He came primarily to save, and the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which is lost." And, I said, "I'm going to tell you something else: If you ever stand up in the pulpit before a congregation and say, 'It's always God's will to heal everybody,' then I'd say that's the cruelest thing that you could possibly say. There'll be people out there with withered limbs. There'll be people out there with deaf ears, and there'll be people out there in wheelchairs, and when you say that, they will say, 'Well then, what's wrong with me? I must not have faith, or I must be out of the will of God, or there must be something wrong with me.' Either they're going to say, 'There's something wrong with me where I can't trust God, or what you're preaching is a lie,' and they're going to be discouraged." And, I said, "My

friend,” to this evangelist friend, I said, “don’t ever say that.” He said, “God wants everybody healed.” I said, “They all will be healed ultimately, but we’ll wait till the redemption of the body, but,” I said, “my friend,” (to this preacher), “you’re sick right now.” He said, “No, I’m not.” I said, “Yes, you are.” I said, “Go look in the mirror. Do you see any wrinkles there that you didn’t see ten years ago? Are you using glasses? You’re sick.” I said, “You’ve got a terminal illness, and so does everybody in this building. You’ve got a terminal illness, and it’s going to get you. I mean, it’s just a matter of time that illness is going to get you. This is not the way that God created you. You’re not in the image of God. You are in the image of Adam. You don’t think God is in this shape do you? Adam brought forth a son after his likeness and in his image, and in Adam, all die; in Christ, all shall be made alive, but when? The last trump the dead in Christ shall rise first. But, up until this time, we share the ole’ carcass of Adam, and we’re going to have this sickness. And, dear friend, let me say that some of God’s choicest of saints have suffered.”

III. Why Some Suffer

A. Power May Come Through Sickness

Now, let me tell you some reasons why, very briefly. Number one: Power may come through sickness. Now, notice what the Apostle Paul said, again, and this is a key passage over here in 2 Corinthians chapter 12. Go back to it, for just a moment, and let me show you something. I want to read again, beginning in verse 9; now, Paul says: *“My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me”* (2 Corinthians 12:9). Now, here’s what the Apostle Paul said: Paul didn’t say, “What can’t be cured must be endured.” He said, “What can’t be cured will be enjoyed.” *“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me”* (2 Corinthians 12:9). The Apostle Paul made a discovery that the weaker he became in the flesh the more powerful he became in the Spirit. Now, these words “that the power of Christ may rest upon me” literally means “to spread a tabernacle over me.” There was a baptism of power. There was a tent of power over the weak flesh of Paul.

Now, Paul had a tendency, or he could have had a tendency, to trust in his own flesh. You’re in 2 Corinthians, but go back to 2 Corinthians chapter 1, and look in verse 9. 2 Corinthians 1:9—here’s a key verse. Paul said: *“But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.”* Do you see that? I had the sentence of death in me; I had death working in me. Why did God not allow me to be big, and brawny, and strapping, and healthy—why? So that I might not trust in myself, but that I might trust in God. God wanted His strength, and not

Paul's strength. And, I want to tell you, my dear friend, that sometimes, our place of strength is our place of weakness, and conversely, our place of weakness, is God's place of strength.

When I was in England, I preached at Kezvik in Northern England at a Bible conference. It was there and then that I rented a car, and I drove on through Scotland. I wanted to see Edinburgh Castle in Scotland. I went to see this magnificent castle—Joyce and myself. Ha—by the way, I couldn't find a parking place, and a dear Scottish woman came out. And, I said, "Where shall I park?" She said, "Park here." I said, "Is that a meter? Do I have to put money in?" She said, "I'll put money in for you." She said, "But never again make a wisecrack about the Scotch being cheap." And, she put money into that meter for me. We went up to see Edinburgh Castle—that beautiful castle there—but you know, they protected that castle on every side except on one side. On one side is a great cliff that goes up, and they knew that no enemy could take it there. But, dear friend, on that impregnable rock side is where the castle was and where it was taken. Not at its place of weakness, but at its place of strength. Do you know what the trouble is with many of us when we have a place of strength? We don't pray about that. We say, "I can handle that," right? And, therefore, that strength becomes weakness. You see, the weakness becomes strength. We say, "Oh God, I can't do it unless you help me." So, Paul said now, "I will glory in my infirmities." I want to tell you, dear friend, that sometimes, power comes through weakness.

B. Productivity May Come Through Sickness

I want to tell you something else. Sometimes productivity comes through weakness and suffering. You know, if you'll just study the world and study the history of the Christian Church—just study it, and you will see that our world has been tremendously blessed by suffering and sick saints.

Brother Jim, how much do we owe to Fannie Crosby? Blind Fannie Crosby was blinded as a little girl, but because of her mind that could so concentrate, and so contemplate, and so consider the things of Christ, thank God for this woman, who was blinded at six months and never saw again, until her eyes were opened to Heaven's brightness. She said, "I'm so glad that I'm blind," and she said, "I don't want to be healed until the rapture, because," she said, "the first face I will see will be the face of Jesus"—the face of Jesus. Think about it.

Now, go back to 2 Corinthians 1:6, again. Notice what Paul says here; look at it: "*And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation.*" Isn't that beautiful? "My affliction is not only for my strength, but my affliction is for your consolation and salvation." The Apostle Paul was a mightier evangelist and a better pastor because he knew weakness in a broken heart. And, your affliction is for your consolation and salvation, which is

effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings, which we also suffer; or, whether we are comforted, it is for your consolation and your salvation. What a wonderful thing—that God makes us productive through suffering.

Do you remember over there in John chapter 15? Jesus said: *“I am the vine, ye are the branches”* (John 15:5). And then, He said: *“every branch that beareth fruit,”* he does what? *“He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit”* (John 15:2). Do you know what the word *purge* means? It means “to prune.” Now, if a vine could talk, and somebody came with pruning shears, do you know what it would say? “Hey, lay off,” isn’t that right? “Hey, don’t do that, that hurts”—ha hah—“don’t prune me.” But, the gardener has something in mind, and it is fruit, so *“he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”*

There was a caretaker of a large orchard, and there was one apple tree in that orchard that was just groaning with apples. I mean, it was just weighted down. There were so many apples that he had to put sticks under the limbs to bear the limbs up, and somebody said to him, “Why does this tree bear more fruit than the others?” He said, “Would you look down there at the trunk?” And, the trunk of that tree had been deliberately split open. He said, “I don’t understand it, but,” he said, “sometimes a tree—a fruit tree—will not bear fruit profusely until you wound it”—until you wound it. That’s interesting.

We had in our yard, when I was a boy, an avocado tree. My dad planted it. It grew to be a great avocado tree. Do you know what an avocado pear is? You poor benighted souls—you probably don’t even know. Some of you don’t even know what a mango is, bless your hearts. And, we had an avocado tree there, and my dad planted it. We’d always go out and look for the fruit, and there was no fruit there. Somebody told my dad—he said, “Listen, A.D, if you will drive nails into the trunk of that tree, then it’ll bear fruit.” That sounded almost like witchcraft to me. My dad wanted fruit on that tree. He went out, got some long nails, and drove them into the trunk of that tree. And, it began to bear fruit only after it was wounded—after it was wounded. *“Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it might bring forth more fruit.”*

John Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* through his blindness. John Bunyan, in Bedford Jail, wrote *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Luther was imprisoned in Wortburg Castle and translated the entire New Testament into the German language. Robert Louis Stevenson, tubercular, suffering with sciatica, one arm in a sling, and sentenced to absolute silence and darkness produced *A Child’s Garden of Verses*. Paul, in a Roman prison, in a weak body, and chained to a guard twenty-four hours a day proclaimed the gospel. Productivity.

C. Purity May Come Through Sickness

I want to say another thing: Not only power, and not only productivity, but purity also

often comes through sickness. God is more interested in having you holy than He is in having you healthy. I want you to remember this, and the Bible says it here in 1 Peter 5:10: *“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”* After you’ve suffered awhile comes purity. Do you know what Job, who was afflicted so much, said? Job said, in Job 23:10: *“when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”* Now, what he means by “tried is as gold” is to try to purify it in the furnace so that all of the dross is burned away. Do you know what the psalmist said in Psalm 119:57? *“Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.”* Purity sometimes comes through suffering.

D. Praise May Come Through Sickness

I want to say another thing, friend: Praise often comes through suffering. Go back, if you will, to 1 Corinthians now, and look with me in chapter 1 and verse 27—1 Corinthians 1:27: *“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.”* When God looks around for his servants to bring praise to Him, God doesn’t necessarily bring the great strapping, hulking all-American. God takes the weak things. And, this word, *weak*—this Greek word means “that which is physically weak, even anemic,” and the Bible says that God does this that we might glory in the Lord. Look, if you will, in 1 Corinthians 1:29. God does it *“that no flesh should glory in his presence.”* Look if you will in 1 Corinthians 1:31: *“That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”* Jesus said, in John, chapter 11, and verse 4: *“This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby”* (John 11:4). I want to tell you, dear friend, that even the way you die can glorify God. Your death can bring glory to God. In John 21:19, Jesus was speaking of the death of Peter, and it says this: *“This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.”* I want to tell you of the saints who can suffer and still praise God—who can shut the mouth of the devil like nobody else.

The devil came to God and said, “Why, no wonder Job served you—you bought him off. He doesn’t really love you. He just loves you for what you’re doing for him.” God says, “You don’t know Job. You don’t know Job.” The devil said, “I know him.” He said, “Let him get sick; he’ll curse you to your face. God said, “Not my servant, Job.”

Conclusion

Dear friend, let me tell you something. It’s wonderful to have faith to be healed. And I believe that God does sometimes give faith for healing in His sovereign wisdom and

grace. But in my estimation, the greatest display of God's grace and your faith is not "do you have faith enough to be healed?" but do you have faith enough not to be healed and to still praise Him. That's faith. "Though He slay me, yet will I praise Him."

I believe there's healing in the atonement. And I want to tell you dear friend one of these days I will be perfectly whole because I'm going to be like Jesus. And I can say with the psalmist, "I'll be satisfied when I awaken in Thy likeness."

Forgive Us Our Christmases

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 23, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 53:3

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

ISAIAH 53:3

Outline

Introduction

- I. There Is No Room for Jesus in Government
- II. There Is No Room for Jesus in Education
- III. There Is No Room for Jesus in Religion
- IV. There Is No Room for Jesus in Christmas Celebrations

Conclusion

Introduction

“Forgive us our Christmases”—now, I believe that that’s exactly what some of us need to pray. As a matter of fact, the title of the message tonight is borrowed from that little girl: “Forgive Us Our Christmases”—that is, when we have no room for the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, there was no room for the Lord Jesus, the Bible tells us clearly and plainly in Luke 2:7: *“there was no room for [Him] in the inn.”* (Luke 2:7) And, ever since that time, this world has had no room for the Lord Jesus Christ. It was not by chance—not by chance—that there was no room for Him in the inn. Although humans were involved in it, the providence of God saw to it that there was no room for Him in the inn, because it pictures and typifies something that all of us need to learn: it shadowed and foreshadowed a lifelong rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isaiah prophesied of the Lord Jesus Christ in Isaiah 53:3, and this is what Isaiah had to say about the coming King of kings and Lord of lords: *“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”* (Isaiah 53:3) What was Isaiah saying? Isaiah was saying what we found when Jesus found no room in the inn—that Jesus Christ has been and will always be upon this earth until He comes as King of kings and Lord and lords, despised and rejected. There’s no room for Him.

The Lord Jesus was born in a barn, in a smelly stable. The Lord Jesus, when He died, was not even allowed to die inside the city of Jerusalem; He had to die outside the

city out on a garbage heap. He was crucified between two thieves. And, when He was buried, He was buried in a borrowed tomb. He came into this world a naked baby, as I said this morning; He died a naked man. Now, don't get your idea—don't get the idea—in your head that since that time this world has become more cultured and there's more room for the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, you will find in America today there is more antipathy and more hatred of Christ than perhaps ever before in the history of this nation. And, this vile world that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ the first time still has the same proclivities in it that would crucify Him again if it could.

I. There Is No Room for Jesus in Government

There's no room for the Lord Jesus in the governments of this world. The United States of America is very careful today to let it be known that we really don't have room for the Lord Jesus in our governmental affairs. Now, we tolerate Jesus, as He was tolerated out in the stable in that day so long ago. But, there are those who will not even tolerate the Lord Jesus. Herod, of course, tried to kill the Lord Jesus and sought to kill Him when He first came. And, even the people—His own brethren, the Jews—they had no room for the Lord Jesus. When Jesus was before Pilate, Pilate asked the Jewish rulers, *“Shall I crucify your King?”* (John 19:15) Do you know what they answered? Now, these are Jews that were talking. They said, *“We have no king but Caesar.”* (John 19:15) Now, can you imagine that? They chose the cruel yoke of Rome in order to murder Jesus. They had room for Caesar—murderous Caesar—but they had no room for the loving Son of God. The only place in Jerusalem they could find room for Him was on a cross between two thieves.

And, the governments of this world have not changed. Psalms 2:2–3 say this: *“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.”* (Psalms 2:2–3) There is no room for the Lord Jesus Christ in the governments of this world—no room for Him.

As a matter of fact, I was interested to read a Russian version of the story that I preached on this morning. Remember, if you were here this morning, the story—the incredible journey—of those wise men? Just how wise were they? Out of Hungary is a communist version of that same story. It said a poor married couple lived in dire poverty. The rich capitalists would not help them. Their child was born in a stable and covered with rags. Then kind shepherds from Russia came and brought gifts. In our country, poverty and misery are unknown. They said that Joseph asked them how they found the stable, and they replied that a red star had guided them all the way on their journey. Then, in warm clothes and with good food they all set out for the Soviet paradise where there would be no more hunger or cold or sorrow. No room for the Lord Jesus in the

governments of this world.

II. There Is No Room for Jesus in Education

There's no room for the Lord Jesus in the great institutions of higher learning. And, it breaks my heart to say this, but in our schools—and now, God help us, even in the high school and grade schools—there's room for evolution, there's room for humanism, there is room for Bible criticism, there is room for blasphemy, but there is no room for the Lord Jesus Christ. And, rather than developing character, we're developing characters.

Now, I know that we cannot turn our classrooms and public schools into Sunday School classes. But, if you'll go back and read the history of this nation, you'll find out that America was founded and built on a Judeo-Christian ethic and that the early founders of our nation were not ashamed to speak of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm amazed and appalled today that there are some who would not want to coach—to lead—a team in prayer or to speak of the Lord Jesus Christ. Where is our freedom of speech? And, where is our right and freedom of religion? And, godly people seem to have their hands tied.

Now, we want education, but we don't want Christ. And, I want to tell you that *all education without a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is but splendid ignorance*. And, *you educate people without Christ and what you educate is a clever devil*. Now, I'm not saying that people without Christ are devils, but what I am saying is this: that there is a devilish wisdom that permeates all of society because people do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. There's no room for Him in government. There's no room for the Lord Jesus Christ in education.

III. There Is No Room for Jesus in Religion

There's no room for the Lord Jesus Christ, believe it or not, in much of the religion of this world. Did you know that there's a lot of sentimental talk and a lot of religious jargon but really no room for the Lord Jesus Christ?

One of the saddest things in all of the Bible is Revelation 3:20. Now, we use Revelation 3:20 as an evangelist text, where Jesus says, *“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man [will] hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”* (Revelation 3:20) But that, ladies and gentlemen, is not primarily an evangelist text. If you were to read that text, Revelation 3:20, in its context, you would find that the Lord Jesus has been speaking to the church at Laodicea—the church that was neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm (Revelation 3:16) *“because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”* (Revelation 3:17) Here was a church that seemed outwardly to have it all, and

they had everything but Jesus—and they didn't have Jesus. And, here was the very church supposed to have been built upon the Lord Jesus Christ preaching the Lord Jesus, and Jesus is saying to that church, "I am on the outside knocking, trying to get in. Behold, I stand at the door of your church and knock, and if anyone will open the door, I will come in." (Revelation 3:20) How sad to think that the Lord Jesus is excluded and left outside the door. There's no room for the Lord Jesus Christ in the many cults that are springing up across America.

IV. There Is No Room for Jesus in Christmas Celebrations

The sad thing is that there's no room for the Lord Jesus Christ even in Christmas celebrations. How many people will really honor the King of kings this Christmas? I was reading *U.S. News and World Report* this past week, and a very prominent insurance company took a full-page beautiful ad. And, the title of that ad was, "A Christmas Prayer." I read that prayer. That prayer was full of many beautiful, wonderful platitudes. Somebody with the gift of writing had woven many wonderful words together. There were all sorts of nice, cozy thoughts in that prayer. And, I read it through, and read it through, and read it through, and then it hit me like a bolt of lightning: Jesus Christ was not mentioned one time in that prayer. They called it "A Christmas Prayer," but it was an amazement to me that it was a Christmas prayer without the Christ of Christmas.

Now, what is going to prevail in Memphis, Tennessee, this Christmas? Adultery will prevail. Drunkenness will prevail. And, do you know what people will say to excuse their drunkenness? They'll say, "Well, after all, it's Christmas." And, people will get drunk who ordinarily would not get drunk. Do you know who the biggest profiteers will be this Christmas? The distilleries. Now, it used to be that they were a little timid about advertising and using the word *Christmas* in their advertising. No longer are they timid about that. And, of course, there's also now a big commerce in obscene Christmas cards. Do you know what will happen in the average church? There will be a letdown in attendance. There will be a diminishing of offerings, and evangelism will hit the bottom in the Christmas season. I mean, that Christ Himself—there will be no room for Him in Christmas.

Now, as I said before, that doesn't mean that people will not get excited about the sweet little Jesus boy, and the baby in the manger, and all of that. Why, you'll find a nativity scene in a barroom. People don't mind having a nativity scene; the giddy crowd doesn't worry about a nativity scene. As I said before, anybody can be sentimental about a baby, but they don't understand the cross and the crown. They dance. A giddy crowd will dance around the cradle, but they don't understand that Christ is Lord of lords and King of kings. And, I have observed that the same crowds that throng the churches on Christmas Eve jam the nightclubs on New Year's Eve. And, they're going to move

from worshipping to whooping, and they'll move from "Silent Night" to "Auld Lang Syne"—and just that quick. And, that same crowd with tears in their eyes singing, "Silent night, holy night" will be in a drunken brawl and orgy to bring in the New Year. How sad it is when we move that quickly in one week—from Bethlehem to Babel just in a week!

There's no room for the Lord Jesus Christ—no room for Christ in the governments of this world. No room for Christ in the institutions of higher learning. No room for Christ in the liberal churches of this world. No room for the Lord Jesus Christ even in the celebration of His birth. Do you know who the heroes of Christmas are today? Tiny Tim, Rudolph, some jolly old red-nosed fictitious character named Santa. As a matter of fact, you can take the same letters in Santa and just rearrange them a little bit and spell "Satan." It's an amazement. I'm not saying that Santa is Satan, but I'm saying what a shame that so many of our children are deceived and hoodwinked and they don't know about Bethlehem's babe, the virgin-born Son of God. He's left out. The Lord Jesus Christ is left out of this celebration of Christmas. And, what a shame it's going to be!

Conclusion

Now, if you want the Lord Jesus this Christmas season, you may have Him. And, if you're tired of all of the hustle and bustle, all of the noise and clamor, the jingle of the cash register bells, and all of that, let me tell you where you're going to find the Lord Jesus: you'll find Him where you'll always find Him—outside, excluded, in the manger. Now, you've got to come out of the inn to find Jesus. The inn will be crowded, but you won't find Him there. If you want to find the Lord Jesus, come out of the inn and go out to the barn, out to the stable, look in the manger, and there you'll find the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, "Must I do that?" Well, that's not so bad. That's good, because I want to say that His presence is going to change that barn to a palace, and that manger will become a throne. You see, if you want to find Jesus this Christmas season, don't ask the crowd. "[He's] *despised and rejected of men.*" (Isaiah 53:3) They don't know where to find Him.

But, here's where you'll find Him: Hebrews 13:12–14—listen to it: "*Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered [outside] the gate*"—that is, out of the city, out there on the garbage heap, that's where Jesus suffered. You say, "Well, what does that have to do with me?" Well, let's continue to read—"*Let us go forth therefore unto him [outside] the camp*"—Do you see that? He suffered on the outside. There was no room for the Lord Jesus—no room in the city of Jerusalem. He died out there on the garbage heap in the graveyard between two thieves. And, the Bible says, "Now let's go on out there with Him. Let's—"*bearing his reproach. For here [we] have...no continuing city, but we seek one to come.*" (Hebrews 13:12–14)

There's no room for the Lord Jesus in the affairs of this world. Dear friend, if this

world had no room for Jesus, I have no room for this world. *A worldly Christian is a contradiction in terms. You might as well speak of a "heavenly devil."* The Bible says that we're to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, [we're to] rather [rebuke] them." (1 John 1:6) I want to tell you, this world is against our Lord and His Christ. And, if you think that you can have Christ with one hand and the world with the other hand, you don't know the Bible. Listen again to what the Bible says: "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered [outside] the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him [outside] the camp, bearing his reproach. For here [we] have...no continuing city, but we seek one to come." (Hebrews 13:12-14)

Friend, His day is coming. When He comes again, He's not going to come as a little baby with dimpled feet lying on the straw. When He comes again, He's coming as King of kings and Lords of lords with those nail-pierced feet that will touch that Mount of Olives. And, when He does, it will split in two and Christ will reign—King of kings and Lord of lords. I'm going outside the gate with Him. No room for Him in the inn. There's room—plenty of room—out in the barn. He'll turn that barn to a palace and that manger to a throne.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, some of us have been praised and loved, stroked by this world that would sing its lullabies to us. Some of us have almost been chloroformed by the spirit of this age. We've lost our pilgrim character. We've tried to fit in. We've tried to be accepted. We've tried to get along with everybody. Lord, just help us to learn anew and afresh that the world of government, education, liberal religion, holiday celebrations has never had any real room for you, Lord Jesus. And, Lord Jesus, you're "*despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.*" (Isaiah 53:3) And, Lord Jesus, tonight, anew and afresh, we take our stand. Lord Jesus, we turn our backs on this world that turned its back on you. And, Lord Jesus, we pledge you tonight, anew and afresh, our love. Thank you, precious Savior, that you died for us. Lord, we know that, while this world hated you, you loved this world and died for it. Lord, as we saw the candles lighted tonight, O God, give us that passion and that zeal, that while we're not of the world, that we're in the world, telling the world about the Savior. For we pray in Jesus's name. Amen.

Who Crucified Jesus?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 14, 2004

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 53:3–6

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

ISAIAH 53:6

Outline

Introduction

- I. Self-Righteous Religion Crucified Jesus
- II. Hard-Hearted Hypocrisy Crucified Jesus
- III. Cowardly Compromise Crucified Jesus
- IV. Thoughtless Conformity Crucified Jesus
- V. Hard-Hearted Cruelty Crucified Jesus
- VI. Casual Indifference Crucified Jesus
- VII. Cynical Skepticism Crucified Jesus

Conclusion

Introduction

As I listen to that, I could not help but believe that God was speaking to someone or some ones today, and He's telling you today, this morning, now to come home, and with arms wide open He will welcome you.

Take God's Word and find Isaiah chapter 53. We're in a series of Bible studies morning and evening entitled, "His Passion; Our Purpose." We've been thinking about the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ, the film by Mel Gibson that has caused really a firestorm. There's been much discussion. There has been animosity, finger pointing, accusations about the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Personally, I believe the film has done so much good to move the church from cultural Christianity with its cult of conformity and comfort back to the vital aspects of the cross and what the cross means and the Scripture that Jim Whitmire gave to us, "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of Christ our Lord." The preaching of the cross is to those who perish foolishness, but unto those of us who are saved it is the power of God.

I'm grateful that we are re-discovering Calvary. The cross is something more than a beautiful ornament to wear around your neck. The cross is something more than an insignia upon a church steeple. The cross is the turning point of all history. The cross is

God's testimony to the sinfulness of human nature. The cross is the mightiest demonstration of the unfathomable love of God. And the cross is the only hope for a dying and rotting society. And so, we're going to think about the cross today.

I read one review of the film, and someone said, "It is but pornographic violence," and they said, it is so brutal that it ought not to be shown. I want to remind you that crucifixion is not nice, not meant to be nice. It is meant to be devastatingly awful. Someone says, "But it goes on and on and on." Friend, the suffering of Christ in the film was about 80 minutes. Jesus hung on the cross for six hours—for six hours. If anything, the entire matter is understated. The question is being asked, and the title of my message this morning is this: Who crucified Jesus?

Find Isaiah chapter 53 and look with me in verses 5 and 6: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he—Jesus—was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Now, the question has been discussed over and over again, who crucified Jesus? Well, let's ask and answer that question if we can. First of all, did the Jews crucify Jesus? Before you say that the Jews crucified Jesus, I want to remind you that His early disciples were Jews. The apostles were Jews. Peter, James, and John were Jews. A Jew preached that great sermon on Pentecost. A Jew, the apostle Paul, was the mightiest missionary that ever lived. The forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ was a Jew. The early church was made up of Jews. There was not a Gentile in the bunch. Now, indeed, some Jews participated in the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but, friend, only ignorance would blame the Jews as the singular people who are responsible for the crucifixion. Now, one segment of the Jewish community at that time clamored for the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, look up here and I want to tell you something. I would hate for Christianity to be judged by one segment of Christianity. I, indeed, would. We have more than our share of moral scandals in the church. Little would it behoove us to be pointing fingers at anyone else. And I want to say this also to any Jewish friends that are listening. Any anti-Semitism in the world does not originate from the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, but from the wicked hearts of sinful men. Anti-Semitism, like all racism, is a distortion of the truth and it needs to be condemned in all of its forms. For the past 2,000 years, Jews have suffered unmentionable persecution. It is a crime, and it seems to be cancer that never seems to heal. The cross does not teach anti-Semitism. The cross teaches love. The cross teaches reconciliation. The cross teaches mercy. No Christian can ever hate anyone for whom Jesus died. Congregation, that's a good place for an amen. All right. And I'll tell you something else. Speaking of good places, this is a good place and this is a good time to

bless God's chosen people, for God said to Abraham, concerning the Jews, "I will bless those that bless you, and I will curse those that curse you." Did the Jews crucify Jesus? One segment of the Jewish community was there at the cross.

Did the Romans crucify Jesus? Well, the Romans were the actual executioners. The soldiers, as you saw in the film, were brutal. But, in a sense, they were only pawns. They were obeying orders, orders that came from higher up. Jesus was crucified with Roman authority, but can we blame the Romans altogether?

Can we blame Pilate, that compromising, pussyfooting politician? Can we blame Pilate who tried to wash his lily-white hands and protest his innocence? Was Pilate alone guilty of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ?

So you already know the answer. Not the Jews alone. Not the Romans alone. Not the soldiers alone. Not Pilate alone. The answer is, Who crucified Jesus? He died for the sins of all mankind.

I read to you the scripture again—Isaiah 53, verse 5: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." Our sins were the nails that held Him to the cross, and our hard hearts the hammers that drove those nails, yours and mine. He died for our sins.

Mel Gibson, who is, I'm told, a great actor—I don't watch those films; I don't know—but Mel Gibson put himself into the crucifixion scene. He's there. You'll never see his face. All you will see is his hand holding the hammer driving the spikes. What was Mel Gibson saying when he put his own hand there? He's saying, "My sins nailed Jesus Christ to the cross."

"I saw one hanging on a tree in agony and blood, He fixed his languid eyes on me as near the cross I stood; surely never till my latest breath can I forget that look. It seemed to charge me with His death, though not a word He spoke. My conscience felt and owned the guilt and plunged me into despair. I saw my sins His blood has split and helped to nail Him there."

But now, wait a moment. Let's see if we can get more specific. Let's talk not about who crucified Christ as much as what crucified Christ. What hellish inclinations are in human nature, in toto, that caused Jesus to be crucified?

I want you to leave Isaiah chapter 53 and I want you to turn to the Book of Matthew, and let's go to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ—Matthew chapter 27. Take your Bibles and turn to it, because you're going to find out that in Matthew chapter 27 God has arranged it that a cross-section of humanity is there. We're going to see attitudes that crucified Him. We going to see, literally, not who crucified Jesus, but what crucified Jesus. We're going to find the sin that lurks in your heart and my heart that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. And, as we look at this 27th chapter—listen—as we look at this 27th chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew and see the crowd at the cross, we're going

to call the roll. And at this roll call at the cross, if you're listening, you will hear your name. I want to mention seven things that crucified Jesus. I want you to write them down.

I. Self-Righteous Religion Crucified Jesus

First of all, self-righteous religion crucified Jesus—self-righteous religion crucified Jesus. Matthew 27, 1 and 2: “When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:” Now, these were the religious leaders. “And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the governor.” These were religious leaders. Many of them were what we would call Pharisees. Do you know who the Pharisees were? They were the most religious of the religious. They kept the Sabbath with such punctiliousness and care that they would not even eat an egg that had been laid on Saturday. If they had a flea, they would not kill that flea on Saturday lest they be accused of hunting on the Sabbath. I'm not making this up. If they got a tack in the sole of their shoe, they could not take it out on the Sabbath lest they be accused of working on the Sabbath. This was a religious crowd, but they still nailed Jesus up on the cross.

Do you know there are many people who are trudging to churches today in America religious but lost, going through ritual and form and baptism and songs and gifts and offerings? Some people are going to go to hell with a chest full of Sunday school attendance pins, who have never received the Lord Jesus Christ. They have religion, but they don't have righteousness. They have culture, but they don't have Christ.

Have you ever gone to an old-fashioned sawmill and watched a saw square up a log? That log is put on the cradle and that is run through the mill. And that saw goes zzzzzzzzz, cuts off one side. And then they turn it, and it runs through again, and cuts off the other side. And then, again and again. And then that that had been sort of a crooked tree trunk now is perfectly square, perfectly straight. But if you'll go down to the end and look at the end of that log, the heart is still crooked. That's a Pharisee. Lops this off. Lops that off. Lops this off. Lops that off. Look how straight, how good I am! Friend, God looks at the heart. God looks at the heart. Religion has never saved anybody. Most of the people in America need to turn from religion to Jesus Christ. Self-righteous religion crucified Jesus. If religion could have saved, Jesus never would have died. What else crucified Jesus?

II. Hard-Hearted Hypocrisy Crucified Jesus

Hard-hearted hypocrisy crucified Jesus. Look now in verses 3 through 5: “Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have

sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went away and hanged himself.”

Now, if you know anything about the Bible, you know that Judas was one of the twelve disciples who betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ unto death, and he did it for thirty pieces of silver. Why did he do it? No ifs, ands, and buts about it, he was a first-class hypocrite. Judas never lost his salvation; he never had it. The Bible says Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not. Judas was a hypocrite.

Now, I want to say to you—listen to me—there are some of you who are going to miss heaven because of a hypocrite. You’re going to see some hypocrite and you’re going to characterize Christianity by some hypocrite. Friend, don’t you understand that there always have been hypocrites. There always will be hypocrites in every area of life. Some lawyers are shysters, some doctors are quacks, some money is counterfeit. By the way, why do people counterfeit money? Because it proves the validity and the worth of the real. Men don’t counterfeit gum wrappers. Every counterfeit Christian is but a testimony to the worth and the validity of the real. Don’t you let some hypocrite like Judas keep you out of heaven. You may have stayed up late one night and watched the film called, “Elmer Gantry,” and tried to say, “Well, that’s what all preachers are like. That’s what all Christians are like.” That’s a lie out of hell. There are hypocrites. There always have been. There always will be. Every now and then, somebody will come to me and say, “Pastor, did you know there are hypocrites in the church?” Ohhhhhh? Hey, I wasn’t born yesterday. I want to tell you something. There were eleven other disciples who did not stop serving Jesus because of Judas. You say, “Well, I don’t want to be in the church with the hypocrites.” Well, friend, if you refuse Jesus, you’ll be in hell forever with every one of them. Don’t you let some hypocrite keep you from Jesus Christ. Hypocrisy crucified the Lord Jesus Christ for thirty pieces of silver. Judas betrayed Jesus. Now, he’s eaten up with guilt and remorse. No genuine repentance, just remorse and guilt. He flings down the thirty pieces of silver. He’s haunted, tormented by his conscience, by remorse. He goes out somewhere. He finds a limb out over some precipice. With trembling fingers, he forms a hangman’s noose, puts it around his neck, and steps out over that precipice trying to escape the hell within him. He steps into the hell before him and he dies. And that body hangs there until it begins to swell and putrefy, and flies cover his tongue, and the birds come and pick out his eyes, perhaps, and it hangs there like an overripe melon. And somebody comes along—the stench is unbearable—with a sword and cuts it down. And the Bible says he falls to the rocks and his bowels gush out. You say, “Pastor, that’s not pretty.” I didn’t mean it to be pretty. Sin is not pretty. Hypocrisy is awful, terrible. “Judas, where are your friends now? Judas, where is your silver now?” Hypocrisy crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. Self-righteous

religion did it. Hypocrisy, hard-hearted hypocrisy, crucified the Lord Jesus.

III. Cowardly Compromise Crucified Jesus

Thirdly, I want to tell you what else crucified Jesus: cowardly compromise—cowardly compromise. Look now in verse 11: “And Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him...”—the governor now is Pilate—“and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing”—and, by the way, I’m going to be preaching next Sunday, and I don’t want you to miss it, on why Jesus didn’t say anything—The Silence of the Lamb—“he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearst thou not how many things they witness against thee?” Now, look, if you will, skip down to verse 24: “When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but rather that a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying—listen to this now—I am innocent of this just person—I’m innocent of the blood of this just person—See ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.”

I said a while ago that Pilate was a fence-straddling politician. Jesus, to Pilate, was an uncomfortable fact. He had Jesus on his hands; the inevitable, unavoidable Jesus was on his hands. He had to do something with Jesus. Now, don’t make Pilate some sort of a hero. Pilate sinned because he was a coward. God had spoken to him. Pilate was a wise man in the flesh. He knew human nature. Look, if you will, in verse 18. The Bible says that Pilate knew that for envy they had delivered Jesus. He knew that for envy they had delivered Him. You see, the voice of reason had spoken to Pilate.

But not only did the voice of reason speak to Pilate; the voice of revelation spoke to Pilate. Pilate’s own wife had warned him, because God had sent her a dream. Look in verse 19: “And when he was set at the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.” Now, yet Pilate, who has the voice of reason, then he also had the voice of conscience. Look, if you will, in verses 22 and 23: “Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done?” Pilate, in his conscience, knew that Jesus was innocent. Reason, revelation, conscience had all spoken to Pilate. And yet, when you got to the bottom line, there were those who said to Pilate, “Now, Pilate, if you don’t play ball with us, if you don’t adjudicate Jesus worthy of death, then you’re going to be held guilty of sedition against Caesar, because this man says he’s a king. And whoever says he’s a king is the enemy of Caesar. And, Pilate, we’ll be sure that the news gets to Rome that you lined up with somebody who was

claiming to be an alternative king to Caesar.” And Pilate has to make up his mind. Pilate knows what he is doing is wrong, but he is a coward. He has a soft job. And what butters his bread determines his conduct. And he’s like so many people today who are compromising, and they say, “Well, a man’s got to live.” No, he doesn’t. He has to die, and he has to face God. Pilate tried to make no decision at all, but history shows that indecision is the worse decision. Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me.” And you, my friend, cannot sit in this auditorium, or listen through television, or any other way, and refuse to make a decision because of what it might cost you, without peril to your soul. The things that Pilate sought he lost. The robe that adorned his back soon adorned somebody else’s back. The gavel that he held in his politician’s hands was soon held by another hand. The position that he coveted he lost. History tells us he died of suicide because he was a coward. He would not take a stand for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I’m going to give an invitation to some of you today to come and give your heart to Jesus, but the devil will intimidate you with fear. Revelation 21:8 speaks of those who are going to die and go to hell, and number one on the list is the fearful—the fearful. The fear of man bringeth a snare. Coward! Pilate was a coward.

What crucified Jesus? Well, self-righteous religion crucified Jesus. What crucified Jesus? Hard-hearted hypocrisy crucified Jesus. What crucified Jesus? Cowardly compromise crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. Don’t be a coward.

IV. Thoughtless Conformity Crucified Jesus

Number four: Thoughtless conformity crucified Jesus. Look, if you will now, in verse 20: “But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.” On that day Pilate, trying to escape, gave the people a choice. He said, “Look, here’s Barabbas, a notorious criminal, a murderer, a seditionist. Over here is Jesus Christ. And I’m going to release one of them. Which one do you want me to release?” And the Bible says that the people chose Barabbas, and said crucify Jesus. Had you been there that day and asked these people, “Why did you do that, why did you choose Barabbas over the Lord Jesus Christ, why are you doing this, they would have said, “Well, our leaders say that’s what we ought to do. Our leaders are persuading us that He ought to be crucified. And, after all, it’s always good to go along with the crowd.” Well, friend, I want to tell you the crowd is most always wrong. These people were just conformed to the crowd. Now, you can say, “Well, they didn’t know better.” Well, friend, ignorance is not innocence. They could have known better. They should have known better. Others knew better. The biggest cult in America is the cult of conformity. Jesus will reveal Himself to you. I don’t care what anyone else says. You can read all of the newspapers. You can listen to all the liberals. You can listen to all of

the naysayers. You can let other people persuade you. Or you can say, “Oh, God, show me about Jesus Christ.” Friend, careless conformity crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. The crowd, mostly, is going to hell. Broad is the way that leads to destruction.

V. Hard-Hearted Cruelty Crucified Jesus

Number five, I’ll tell you what else crucified the Lord Jesus: Hard-hearted cruelty crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, notice, if you will, in verse 27: “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had plaited a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand; and, and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed”—and, by the way, when the Bible says reed, don’t get the idea that this is just a stalk from a tree. It means a bamboo club—“and smote him on the head. And after that they mocked him and took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.”

You cannot believe the cruelty unless you read it in the Scriptures. Some can understand a little more when they see the film of the Passion of our Christ. These men who brutalized Jesus, who mocked Him, who beat Him, who whipped Him, who scourged Him, who finally nailed Him to the cross were hard-hearted. The milk of human kindness had curdled in these people. They were brutal. As I’ve said before, probably psychopathic, who took pleasure in giving pain. Hard-hearted. And we live in a world like that today. I’m amazed at those who literally hate the Lord Jesus Christ and who rejoice in the crucifixion.

A man who’s known for his commentary and reflection on society—Andy Rooney, many of you may have watched him on television—when asked if he was going to see the film, he said, “I wouldn’t waste \$9 for a few laughs”—a few laughs. Seeing Jesus die in agony and blood. May God have mercy upon a heart that is so hard that it is not moved by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. I want to ask you a question today: Are you a soldier at the cross or a soldier of the cross? You’re one or the other. Hard-hearted cruelty crucified Jesus. What else crucified Jesus?

VI. Casual Indifference Crucified Jesus

Number six: Casual indifference crucified Jesus. You may have been making a little list and saying, “That’s not it, I’m not that one. I’m not that one. I’m not that one.” Well, now here’s another group. Look, if you will, in Matthew 27, verse 36: “And sitting down they watched him there.” Now, who is that? These are the people who will go see the film and eat popcorn and get up and say, “Well, I thought it was a pretty good film—I thought it was a pretty good film.” “Sitting down they watched him there.” This speaks of the

general crowd. They're not outwardly fighting Jesus. They're onlookers. They're looking at Jesus, not looking unto Jesus. Oh, they may have had some sentimental thought. In the other Gospel, Luke says they smote their chest. "Oh, look at that." But they never lined up with Jesus. You see, it takes more than a sentimental gesture to save a soul. It takes more than a crocodile tear at His suffering to save a soul. Here are these people who are simply observing.

You know what happens on Sunday morning? People will come to church, listen to a preacher preach, try to understand it, maybe make a few notes, but it never changes their life. They have no more inclination to obey than they would to be changed by something they saw last night on television. "Sitting down they watched him there." Church attendance, a Sunday morning form of culture and entertainment, complacency crucified Jesus. How sad it would be—how sad it would be—for you to come this morning, hear this music on the cross, to hear the Word of God from this blessed book, and just simply say, "Oh, yes, that is sad indeed."

VII. Cynical Skepticism Crucified Jesus

Let me tell you, seventhly, what crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. We're talking about who crucified Jesus, and we're talking about what was in the ones who caused it. Cynical skepticism crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, notice, in verses 39 and following: "And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ha, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and the elders, said, Ha, He saved others; himself he cannot save, He cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, who were crucified with him, cast the same into his teeth."

Now, what you have here is skepticism, and our world is full of skepticism. First of all, they misquoted His words, saying, "destroy this temple and in three days I'll raise it up." He was speaking of the temple of His body. Number two: they mocked His deity—"if you are the Son of God." Number three: they minimized His death. "Come down from the cross and save thyself." They were cynics. A cynic is somebody who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. Cynicism is perhaps the worst of all of these things that I've mentioned. They're skeptics—cynical skepticism. Listen, friend. A man is not a sinner because he's a skeptic—now, listen carefully—he is a skeptic because he's a sinner. Cynicism, skepticism, comes out of the heart. You say, "Well, I have intellectual problems." No, you don't. You have dirty, rotten sin. Beware, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief. You say, "Well, I can't believe." No, no, no.

You will not believe. You say, "Well, I know an intellectual who doesn't believe the Bible." I know some intellectuals who do. You say, "Well, I know some foolish people who believe the Bible." I know some foolish people who don't. It has nothing to do with it. Friend, what we believe is not contrary to reason; it is beyond reason. Why is it that someone like the mighty apostle Paul would believe in Jesus Christ? Because He's real. Friend, don't you let your skepticism take you to hell.

These are attitudes that crucify. This is what nailed Jesus to the cross. It's right there in the 27th chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew.

Conclusion

Now, let me just wrap it up. In spite of all of this, in spite of all these attitudes, God allowed His darling Son to die in agony and blood, and the Bible says in Romans chapter 8 and verse 32 that God spared not His own Son. Friend, what was this? This is judgment at its surest. Now, put on, as my teacher used to say, your thinking cap. God spared not His own Son. Now, when the sin of the world was upon the Lord Jesus Christ, God did not spare Jesus. Are you listening? If, when Jesus Christ was bearing my sin, God did not spare Him, what makes you think that God will spare you if you reject Jesus? This is justice at its surest.

Number two: This is love at its greatest. If there were ever a promise that God would have reneged on, if there were ever a promise that God would say, "I've changed My mind," it would be this one, to let Jesus die. And if God kept that promise, friend, you can bank on it, He'll keep every other promise. God spared not His own Son.

And this is grace at its fullest. God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up freely for us all. How shall we not also with him, also freely give us all things? Friend, if God would give Jesus, there is nothing else He would withhold, would you agree to that? Nothing else He would withhold. If somehow you were to talk me into delivering my son up to you to be crucified, then you would say, "Can I have his football and his bicycle," I'd say, "Of course, of course." If I were to give you Steve, you can have the rest. Friend, with Jesus you get it all.

Who crucified Jesus? We did. What crucified Jesus? Self-righteous religion. Hard-hearted hypocrisy. All of these other things. But, friend, the Bible teaches, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

Aren't you glad for the cross? Aren't you glad for Jesus? Aren't you glad that salvation is a gift? None deserve it. None can earn it. Any can receive it. And Jesus says, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I'll give you rest." Bow your heads in prayer.

Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Do you know Jesus? I'm not asking, Do you

know about Him? I'm not even asking, Does the crucifixion move you emotionally? I'm not asking for a sentimental tear. I'm asking you to do the only reasonable thing that you can possibly do, and that is to turn from your own selfish lifestyle and enthrone the Lord Jesus, who loves you enough to die for you. Would you like to be saved? Would you? Then let's get it settled this morning. I'm going to lead you in a prayer, and I want you to pray and ask Christ into your heart. Are you ready to pray? Pray this way: Dear God, I know that You love me. I know that You want to save me. Jesus, thank You for dying for me. Thank You that You paid my sin debt with Your blood on the cross. Thank You, Jesus. And now, Lord Jesus, You offered to save me and promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You. I believe You're the Son of God. And now by faith I receive You into my life as my Lord and Savior. Save me, Lord Jesus. Pray that prayer, Save me, Lord Jesus. Save me. Pray it. Save me, Jesus. Did you ask Him? Now, don't wait for a feeling. Don't look for a sign. Did you ask Him? If you did, pray this way: Thank You for doing it. Thank You for doing it. I receive it by faith, and that settles it. You cannot lie. You're now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my Friend forever. Now, Lord Jesus, I'm weak; You're strong. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be, and help me never to be ashamed of You. Give me the strength to make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, I'm going to ask you to do something very wonderful this morning. If you prayed that prayer, I want you to do something that will help settle it and seal it in your heart and give Him glory. I'm going to ask you when we sing an invitational hymn to leave your seat and come forward in this place. Standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front will be a friend to welcome you when you come. And up in the balcony, if you're in the balcony on that side under the banner there in that corner that says Redeemer, will be friend to welcome you, a minister of the church. And over here on this side, where it says Messiah, will be another minister to welcome you. And we're going to sing, "Lord, I believe; Lord, I receive; Lord, I confess You now." And don't be ashamed of Jesus. Don't be a coward. Don't be a mere onlooker. Don't be religious and lost. Don't be a hypocrite. Don't be hard-hearted. Don't be skeptical. Come to Jesus. Come to Jesus. And if you truly prayed with me, show you mean it by coming forward. Of if you need some more help, you come. "Well, Pastor, I've never done that before. What would I say when I go down there?" Just say, "I'm trusting Jesus," and we'll take a Bible, give you some Scripture to stand on, answer any questions, and seal it in prayer. It'll be the greatest. You'll be so thrilled that you did it. And, oh, our hearts will rejoice. Oh, we will. These people are praying for you and love you.

Others of you here today are already saved and you know it, but you need a church home. This is where God speaks to your heart. I invite you to come forward at the same time and say to one of the ministers, "I want to place my membership here." He'll tell

you how you may become a member. I'm hoping many of you will do that. And maybe some of you who saw these baptized this morning, like you saw young Matthew up there baptized, or Mr. Rogers, and you say, "You know, I need to be baptized like that," you need to come and say, "I want to make an appointment for my baptism." We'll be glad to talk with you about that if you've not been baptized by immersion as a believer in Christ.

Some are coming, saying, "I'm trusting Jesus"; others, saying, "I want to place my membership here"; others, "I want to make an appointment for my baptism."

If you're with a friend that needs to make a decision, you can volunteer to come forward with your friend. How beautiful to see one friend bring another friend to Jesus.

Respectfully, I'm going to ask that no one leave during the invitation. We're to be in a spirit of prayer. Of course, you may leave during the middle of the sermon if it's an emergency.

Now, let's pray one more time. Oh, Father, bring those to You this morning who need to come, and help us to obey You, and bless this invitation, we pray. Let's stand together right now. You step out and come.

Who Crucified Jesus

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 14, 2004

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 53:3–6

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

ISAIAH 53:6

Outline

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Introduction

What a message from the heart of God!

Find in God’s holy Word Isaiah chapter 53. We’re talking about the Passion of the Christ—His passion and our purpose. Beyond the shadow of any doubt, the dirtiest deed that was ever done was the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. There are some who have criticized and castigated the film because of its brutality, because of its blood, its gore. One man said, “It is 80 minutes celebrating violence.” He called it pornographic. Friend, I want to remind you that Jesus was not on the cross for 80 minutes. He was on the cross for six full hours. If anything, the film understates His suffering.

Isaiah 53, verses 3 and following: “He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from him. He was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely, he that borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised—literally crushed—for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.”

Now, since the film, there’s been quite a bit of discussion and some finger pointing

over the issue, who crucified the Lord Jesus Christ? Who did the dirtiest deed ever done? And I want to speak today on this subject, “Who Crucified Jesus?” I ask the question, did the Jews crucify Jesus? Indeed, some Jewish people were complicit in the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But I also remind you that His early disciples were Jews. Peter, James, and John were Jews. The apostle Peter, who preached that mighty sermon on Pentecost, was a Jew. The apostle Paul, the greatest missionary and Christian who ever lived, I believe, was a Jew. John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ, was a Jew. The early church was made up of Jews. There was not a Gentile in the bunch until God opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. It is true that some Jews were there in His crucifixion, but only ignorance would blame the Jews as a people for the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, let me say this about anti-Semitism. If it’s in the world today—and it is in the world today, and the Jewish people have suffered unmentionably, agonizingly, awfully, indescribably for these 2,000 years that we call the Christian Era—but I want to say, friend, none of that came from the cross of Jesus Christ. It would be foolish to blame the cross. The cross teaches love. The cross teaches forgiveness. The cross teaches reconciliation. Any hate, any anti-Semitism, that may arise, does not arise from the cross, but from the wicked hearts of men. And anti-Semitism, like all racism, is a distortion of the truth, and needs to be condemned in all of its forms, beyond the shadow of any doubt. If you’re looking for something to do, if this film moves you to do something, it ought to move you to love the Jews more than ever, and to express that love, and to believe what God has said in His Word concerning Israel through Abraham: “Those that bless you, I will bless; and those that curse you, I will curse.” And I want to say something to the church. Little does it behoove us to point fingers at our Jewish friends. The church has enough scandals of its own. And sometimes we have to hang our head in shame because of the scandals in some segments of Christianity. The Jews do not need be castigated and blamed for some segments of Judaism any more than the church needs to be castigated and blamed for some segments of Christianity. It’s a good time to bless and pray for our friends who are Jewish people. Did the Jews crucify Jesus? Some were there that day. Well, you say, “Then the Romans crucified Jesus.” Well, it is true that Pilate, the Roman governor, allowed His crucifixion, and through compromise, as we’re going to see, was a part of it. And it was true that the soldiers were the ones who drove those nails in His hands, who held the lash. That is true. But the soldiers, for the most part, were only carrying out the orders of those above them. Did the Romans crucify Jesus? Some did. Therefore, can we blame Rome? No. You know, as I know, that the Bible teaches that He died for our sins. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we’ve turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him—on

Jesus—what?—the iniquity of us all.” Our sins—the nails that held Him to the cross. Our hard hearts were the hammers that drove those nails. The one sitting to your right, the one to your left, before you, behind you, and you, friend, we’re all—we’re all—guilty in that sense of the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You say, “Well, I didn’t hold the hammer. I didn’t drive the nails.” No, that’s not the point. He died for our sins. It was our sins that nailed Him to the cross. To that degree, we are guilty.

Mel Gibson, the actor, did not play in the film, except for one part. You may or may not know this. But there is a close-up in the film of someone driving the spike into the hand of Jesus Christ. Mel Gibson arranged that his was the arm—the forearm and the hand—that held the hammer. What was he saying? He was saying, “I am guilty of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.” And God help us, so are we all.

But I want to move the subject this morning not from who but to what crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. I want us to find those hellish inclinations that are in every human heart that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we’re reading in the Old Testament, Isaiah chapter 53. But let’s turn to the New Testament and see what Isaiah was prophesying. Turn, if you will, to Matthew chapter 27. And there we’re going to see a panorama of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

God arranged in the crucifixion of Christ that there would be a cross-section of Christianity. As we call the roll at the cross, listen and you’ll hear your name called. As we study there, we’re going to find not only who but what crucified Christ. What was there in your heart, my heart, the heart of society, that hounded Jesus to the cross? Listen as the roll is called. I want to mention seven things that crucified Jesus. Are you ready? Write them down.

I. Self-Righteous Religion Crucified Jesus

First of all, self-righteous religion crucified Jesus Christ. Write it down: Self-righteous religion. Look, if you will, in Matthew 27, verses 1 and 2: “And when the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.” These are religious leaders. Many of them, doubtless, were Pharisees. Who were the Pharisees? They were the strictest of the strict. They were so strict, for example, in the Sabbath keeping, they would not eat an egg that was laid on Saturday. If a flea were to get on them on the Sabbath, they would not remove it lest they be accused of hunting on the Sabbath. If a nail got in their shoe, they could not remove it on the Sabbath lest they do work on the Sabbath. Now, these are not biblical laws. These are just the ways that they began to refine and hone God’s law concerning the Sabbath, and they made their hundreds of rules concerning the Sabbath. They were very, very religious.

Have you ever thought what a church full of religious Pharisees would be like? They

would attend more faithful than most of you. They would all tithe. They would all work in the church. And they would all die and go to hell because they never, ever repented of sin and self-righteousness. I've often told you that the worst form of badness is human goodness when that human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth.

You go to the sawmill and you see a crooked log, it's put on the cradle and run through the mill. That spinning saw goes zzzzzzzzzz, lops off one side. The log is turned. It runs through again, zzzzzzzz—another side is lopped off. Again it's turned. The saw does its work again and it's run through. And now, as you size it down, it is perfectly straight and square, sharp corners. What a nice log it is. But go look at the end, and you'll see the heart that's still crooked. That's what self-righteousness is. Self-righteousness deals with the externals, but it never deals with the heart. What does that mean to us? There are many religious people today who would trudge to church, they'll pay their tithe, they'll sing their songs, they will kneel and pray, and go through the rituals. There are many who are going to go to hell surrounded with baptismal certificates, attendance in Sunday school medals, receipts for church offerings, but have never met the Lord Jesus Christ. Religion never saved anybody. Self-righteousness never saved anybody. No one can behave themselves to heaven. If self-righteousness could save, then tell me why did Jesus die? Jesus died to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. And there at the cross were these religionists, these self-righteous people, who never received the Lord Jesus. Now, listen. I don't care how religious you are, what church you may belong to, if you have never repented of your sin and trusted Christ, you're ignorant of two things. You don't know how holy God is, and you don't know how sinful you are. Religion does not save. Most people need to turn from religion to Jesus Christ.

II. Hard-Hearted Hypocrisy Crucified Jesus

A second crowd was there at the cross: not only self-righteous religion that crucified Jesus, but hard-hearted hypocrisy crucified Jesus. Now, look at what the Scripture says about the man named Judas who sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went out and hanged himself."

Now, Judas was a hypocrite, a gold-plated hypocrite. Now, we might say silver-plated. He sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. He loved silver more than the Savior. His heart was eaten up with greed. And for thirty pieces of silver Judas betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ. There's no doubt about it, he was a hypocrite. Did you know there

are people who don't come to church because of hypocrites? Every now and then, somebody will say to me, "Pastor Rogers, did you know there are some hypocrites in your church?" Ohhhhhh? You couldn't be in the ministry without knowing there are hypocrites. There always have been. There always will be. There are hypocrites in every area of life. In medicine, there are some doctors who are quacks. In law, there are some lawyers who are shysters. In business, there's some money that's counterfeit. I want to ask you a question. How many believe there is counterfeit money out there somewhere? Let me see your hand. All right now, if that is true, what you need to do is to burn every dollar you have. Get rid of it because of that counterfeit money. Does that make sense? Of course not! The counterfeit is only an affirmation of the real. Men tend to counterfeit that which is good. Men don't counterfeit gum wrappers. They counterfeit twenty or fifty dollar bills, or whatever. You see, every counterfeit is a testimony to the valid and the real. Don't let some hypocrite keep you from Jesus. The other eleven disciples did not quit because of hypocrites.

I said I've been a pastor long enough to know there are hypocrites. I'll tell you what else I've been. I've been a pastor long enough to know that the greatest, grandest, most wonderful people on the face of God's green earth know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. I know that, you see. I wouldn't let some hypocrite keep me from heaven. Why let a hypocrite keep you from heaven? Friend, if you let a hypocrite keep you away from Christ and the church—you think about it—you'll spend all eternity in hell with every one of them. That's ridiculous.

Judas was a hypocrite. Jesus wasn't surprised. The Bible says that Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not. The Bible says Judas went out and hanged himself. He never really repented. He was filled with remorse, however. And so he threw the money down, wrapped his cloak around him, went out into the darkness, eaten up with guilt and remorse, finally tormented with the hell within him. He found some limb perhaps out over some scraggly limb out over a cliff, fastens a hangman's noose, puts it around his neck, and in order to escape the hell within him, steps into the hell before him. He ends his life with suicide. For days, that body swings at the end of that rope, his soul already in hell. Finally, the body begins to bloat and swell as the gases rise and the skin cracks. The birds perhaps come and pluck out the eyes, flies cover his swollen tongue, the skin begins to crack. Somebody comes and sees him hanging there. The stench is unbearable. He cuts it down. It falls on the rocks and breaks asunder like an overripe melon, and his bowels, the Bible says, gushed out. You say, "Pastor, Pastor, that's not beautiful." No, it's not beautiful. I didn't mean for it to be beautiful. "Judas, where are you friends now? Judas, where's your silver now?" Jesus said it would have been better of Judas that he'd never been born. Friend, if you are not born twice, the day will come when you'll wish you'd never been born at all. Judas was

a hypocrite. Hard-hearted hypocrisy crucified Jesus.

Are you saved? I'm not asking, Are you religious? Are you saved? Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?

III. Cowardly Compromise Crucified Jesus

I'll tell you a third thing that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ—and it's right here in the Scripture: cowardly compromise crucified Jesus. Look, if you will, in verses 11 through 13—we're in Matthew 27: "And Jesus stood before the governor—and he's talking now about Pilate—and the governor asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. And when he was accused of the chief priests and the elders, he answered nothing" ...—and, by the way, next Sunday morning I'm going to preach on the Silence of the Lamb—"he answered nothing—or Sunday after next, rather—Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?" And then notice verse 24: "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but rather that a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person. See ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified."

Now, Pilate had Jesus on his hands. He really wished he did not have Jesus, because he had to do something with Jesus Christ. The question in Pilate's mind was, What shall I do with Jesus, which is called the Christ? Jesus was inescapable and unavoidable, and he had to make up his mind. Now, he was a fence-straddler. He was a typical politician. So he tried to dodge the issue. But God arranged it where he spoke to Pilate. Pilate had the voice of reason. Pilate was not a fool. This same chapter says that Pilate knew it was for envy that they delivered Jesus. He knew they were jealous of Jesus. He knew this. He knew men.

And not only did he hear the voice of reason, but he heard the voice of revelation. God sent to his wife a dream. And his wife came to him and said, "Now, Pilate, don't you have anything to do with the death of this just man. I've suffered many things in a dream because of him." And God spoke to him through this revelation in this dream.

But not only did he have the voice of reason and the voice of revelation; he had the voice of conscience within him. Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent. He said, "I have nothing to do with the death of this just man." So Pilate, trying to excuse himself, took a basin of water and washed his lily-white hands, and held them up, and said, "I'm innocent." You see, what they had done was this: they put Pilate in a corner. They said, "Pilate, if you don't adjudicate Jesus worthy of death, if you don't allow him to be crucified, we're going to Caesar. And we're going to tell Caesar that you are in cahoots

with a man who claims to be a king, a rival king to Caesar. And any man who claims to be king is the enemy of Caesar. Now, Pilate, make up your mind. Do you want to keep your job? Do you want to remain here with this cushy, soft job that you have? Now, you better play ball with us.” And what Pilate does is this: out of fear, he compromises. What buttered his bread determined his conduct. You say, “Well, a man’s got to live.” No, he has to die. And after this, he has to face the judgment. But Pilate is afraid. He is really, in all of his pomp and all of his circumstances and all of his braggadocio, he is a coward. He does not stand for the truth, and he assumes that he will be neutral. He says, “I will not make a decision. You decide.” But his indecision was the worse decision and his decision not to decide was a decision. Matthew 12:30—Jesus said, “He who is not with me is against me.” You can’t be neutral concerning Jesus Christ. Nobody in this place can be neutral. And cowardliness may try to make you neutral. You may be thinking right now, What would it cost if I gave my heart to Jesus Christ?

I led a psychiatrist to Christ one time. I said, “What would it cost you if you give your heart to Christ?” He said, “My peers would laugh at me.” I said, “Are you willing to pay that price?” Are you willing to pay the price?

Pilate was not willing to pay the price. Pilate made a bad choice. It wasn’t long till those robes that adorned his back adorned someone else’s back. It was not long until the gavel that he held in his hand was fondled by another hand. It was not long until the position that he held was held by somebody else. And if history is correct, Pilate died in exile, suicide. He was a coward. The Bible says, “The fear of man bringeth a snare.” Revelation chapter 21, verse 8, speaks of those who will die and go to hell. And in that roll call of the damned the fearful are number one on the list, the fearful and the unbelieving and the abominable. Number one is fearful. Don’t let the devil intimidate you. Don’t be a coward. Don’t compromise when the voice of reason, and the voice of revelation, and the voice of conscience, speaks to you and tells you about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Self-righteous religion crucified Jesus. Hard-hearted hypocrisy crucified Jesus. Cowardly compromise crucified the Lord Jesus.

IV. Thoughtless Conformity Crucified Jesus

Let me give you another thing that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ—and it was thoughtless conformity. Thoughtless conformity crucified Jesus. Look now in verse 20: “But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas and destroy Jesus.” Now, Pilate had given the people a choice. He said, “Do you want Barabbas, this notorious criminal. Do you want him to be released, or do you want Jesus to be released?” Now, Pilate thought, surely they would choose Barabbas to be crucified and Jesus to be released. But the people said, “Release Barabbas.” “What,

Barabbas? Well, what should I do with Jesus?” “Let Him be crucified.” Now, had you been there that day, you would say to these people, “Why are you doing this? This is insane. Jesus goes about healing. Barabbas goes about killing. You want a murderer in your midst? You’d rather have a murderer than have Jesus?” Do you think that’s farfetched? Friend, people would rather have a lot of things that’ll hurt them than Jesus. They’d rather have gambling. They’d rather have booze. They’d rather have drugs. They’d rather have prostitution. And they say, “Release these things to us and crucify Jesus.” But if you were to ask these people, why are you doing this? “Well, our leaders say we ought to do it. I mean, it’s the thing to do. I mean, everybody is doing it.” Conformity. You know, the biggest religion in America is the cult of conformity. Everybody’s doing it, doing it, doing it. Friend, the crowd is almost always wrong. Broad is the way that leads to destruction. Narrow is the way that leads to life. Will you think for yourself? Are you going to let God speak to you? You see, these people did not know, but the point is they could have known and they should have known. There were others that knew. God has no favorites. Do you want to know? Then God will speak to you. I beg you, don’t go with the crowd. You college kids, you high-schoolers, you business people, open your eyes, open your heart. You say, “Well, Pastor, you’re trying to persuade me.” Yes, I am. I understand that. And that’s going to be your choice. You’re going to have to say, “God, is what that man’s saying true, or is what the crowd is saying true?” But I’m telling you that compromise and conformity crucified the Lord Jesus. Thoughtless conformity crucified the Lord Jesus. He will reveal Himself to you, if you want Him to.

V. Hardened Cruelty Crucified Jesus

Now, number five: Hardened cruelty crucified Jesus. Think about those soldiers who brutalized Him. Look, if you will, in verse 27: “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had plaited a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand; and, they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed and smote him on the head. And after that they mocked him and took the robe from off him, or took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.”

He was brutalized by these people. They even played games at the foot of His cross. While He is suffering and dying, they are gambling at the foot of the cross. They laugh. They mock. All sensitivity is gone. In these men the milk of human kindness has curdled.

We live in a world like that—the brutality, the terrorism, the rape, the arson, the

murders, the pillage, the brutality. The hard heart of men is unbelievable, even to the cross.

I sat in the film and watched somebody eating popcorn watching Jesus die, and I just thought, there's something that's just not right about that, something just not right about that, that the people can watch this. Matter of fact, I've seen the film more times than I want to see it. I don't want to see it any more. It's not a form of entertainment to me, but it's something we need to be aware of, the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Andy Rooney, television commentator, was asked, "Are you going to see the film?" He said, "No, I wouldn't waste nine bucks on a few laughs." That's hard-heartedness. That's cruelty. I would like to say this is not in the world. But it is in the world today. Hardened cruelty crucified Jesus Christ. And you're going to have to ask yourself this question this morning: Are you a soldier at the cross or a soldier of the cross?

VI. Casual Indifference Crucified Jesus

Next, number six: Casual indifference crucified Jesus—indifference. Look in verse 36: "And sitting down they watched him there." There they are, the crowd just watching Jesus die like perhaps some who will listen to this message today. You'll hear it. You may even say, "Now, what was the fifth point again?" But it doesn't move your heart. A casual indifference. Luke tells us that the crowd sitting there smote their breasts. But, friend, it will take more than a pious gesture. It'll take more than a sympathetic tear. I'm not asking, Are you moved in sorrow about the cross? I'm asking, Have you taken Christ as your Lord and Savior? Have you? You say, "Well, I'm really kind of sorry for the cross." That's not the point. It's not enough for you to tip the hat to Jesus. You have to bow the knee to Jesus. It's not enough for you to say, "His suffering moves me." It ought to. But there was a crowd sitting down. They watched Him there. Now, that's just indifference.

VII. Cynical Skepticism Crucified Jesus

Last of all—and this is perhaps the most dangerous of all: cynical skepticism crucified Jesus. The skeptics were there in that day, just as they are in our day and in our age. Look in verse 39: "And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and the elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same into

his teeth.”

Now, I want you to notice the skepticism of these people. They misquoted His words: “destroy this temple and in three days I’ll raise it up.” He was speaking of the temple of His body, not the literal temple. What they did, they mocked His deity: “if you are the Son of God…” What they did was to minimize His death: “Come down from the cross.” They were cynics, wiseacres, skeptics. There are some in every crowd. There may be some here this morning. May God have mercy on you. These cynics, these skeptics, they know the price of everything, the value of nothing. They look down their intellectual nose at those of us who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Come up here close and I want to tell you something. A man is not a sinner because he’s a skeptic; he is a skeptic because he’s a sinner. Unbelief doesn’t come out of the head. It may show up in the head, but it comes out of the heart. The Bible says, “Beware lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” You say, “Well, I have intellectual problems.” No, you have dirty, rotten sin. You say, “Well, I know some intellectuals who don’t believe.” I know some intellectuals who do. You say, “Well, I know some foolish people who believe.” I know some foolish people who don’t. What we believe is not contrary to reason; it is beyond reason. God will reveal it to you. Faith is rooted in reason. Faith goes beyond reason. Faith becomes its own best reason. If you want to know, you can know. John 7:17, Jesus said, “My doctrine is not mine, but His who sent me. And if any man will do His will, he shall know the doctrine, whether it be of God.” Mr. Skeptic, you can know Jesus Christ. You can know whether this thing is true. Don’t let your skepticism lead you to hell. There are atheists in the world today, but there are no atheists in hell. All atheists in hell are now believers. They believe.

Conclusion

These things crucified the Son of God, and they are in human hearts. One or more of these things, perhaps all of these, are in your heart.

Now, I thank God that Jesus died on the cross. He didn’t have to die. He was not a martyr, not a victim. This is not an accident. “No man taketh my life from me,” He said, “I lay it down of myself.” And God the Father could have stopped the crucifixion had He wanted. But the Bible says in Romans 8 and verse 32 that He spared not His own Son. If you have a Bible and you want to open it to Romans 8, verse 32, find that phrase, “He spared not His own Son,” and I want you to think about it. Think about what that means. If God spared not the Lord Jesus Christ, what does that mean? It speaks of the justice of Almighty God. Listen, precious friend; listen. Jesus Christ took the sin of the world upon Himself, and God did not spare Him. Now, are you a thinking person? Are you? Nod your head. Say, “Yes, Pastor, I’m a thinking person.” Now, listen. If there were ever a time when God would have been tempted to be lenient about sin, it would have been

when Christ was bearing that sin. If there were any time when God said, “Well, this time I’m just going to overlook it, because it’s on Jesus.” Now, think with me. If God did not spare Jesus when our sin was upon Him, do you think God is going to spare you unless you receive Christ? Your sin will be pardoned in Christ, or punished in hell, but it will never be overlooked. You see, justice had surest. You see love at its highest. God spared not His own Son. If there were ever a time—ever a time—when God was going to go back on a promise, it would have been the one to send Jesus. Friend, if God kept that promise, you can be sure that all the promises are yea and amen in Jesus. God spared not His own Son. It is grace at its fullest. God spared not His own Son, but freely offered Him up for us all. How shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? If God gave us Jesus, there’s nothing He will withhold. If I were to give you my son, I’d surely give you his football. If God gave Jesus, in Christ what do we have?

Friend, Christ died on a cross. You are faced with a cross of Jesus Christ, and it’s time for decision.

Bow your head in prayer.

Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Now, if you are already a child of God, you need to renew your vows to Jesus. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. And if you’re not yet saved, I want you to give your heart to Christ today, because for the very sins that nailed Him to the cross He died to pay that sin debt in full with His blood. Do you want to be saved? Do you? Well, then, I want to guide you in a prayer, and I want you to pray this prayer after me. Dear God. Just pray it silently but fervently. I know that You love me and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me. You shed Your blood on the cross for me. Thank You for doing that. Now, Lord Jesus, I turn from my sin to You. I receive You into my life as my personal Lord and Savior, and I give my life back to You. Save me, Lord Jesus. Cleanse me. Forgive me. And begin now to make me the person You want me to be. I’m giving You my life. I’m trusting You today as my Savior and Lord and Master. And, Lord Jesus, You’ll have to help me because I’m weak, but You’re strong. And I’m trusting You to make me the person You want me to be. And help me, Lord Jesus, never, ever to be ashamed of You. Thank You for doing it. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. Did you pray that prayer? You did? You asked Christ to save you. You were sincere. Then you might be asking, “Pastor Rogers, did He do it?” Well, the Bible says, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of Lord shall be saved.” Of course, that implies that you mean it. Well, you say, “How can I know if I mean it?” Are you willing to make it public? I’m going to extend to you today an invitation to make public what you’ve just said in your heart. We call this a gospel invitation. And here’s how it works.

We’re going to sing a song. The words of the song say, “Lord, I believe; Lord, I

receive—now listen to this—Lord, I confess You now.” That’s the order. You believe, you receive, you confess. Now, to confess doesn’t mean to come and make a speech, but it means, openly and publicly, to acknowledge that you know Christ. Of course, you could make a speech, but that’s not the point. It means not to be ashamed of Christ. So what we’re going to do, we’re going to have a minister to stand at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front to welcome those of you who’ll be coming forward. What a blessing that will be. And for those of you in the balcony, we’re going to have a dear man of God stand under the banner over here that says Redeemer on this side, the one that says Messiah on this side, to welcome those of you in the balcony. And when we begin to sing, if you prayed that prayer with me, or you still want to and need a little more help, I want you just to leave your seat and come forward. It’ll be the greatest thing you could ever do, to acknowledge Christ as your personal Savior. “Pastor, what will I say when I go down there?” Well, say this, or something like this: “I’m trusting Jesus.” Understand that? “I’m trusting Jesus.” Say that to him when you come. “What will he do?” Well, he’ll rejoice. We’ll all rejoice. Then we’ll give you some Scripture to stand on, answer any questions we can answer, and have a prayer of thanksgiving with you to seal it all. It’ll take just a few moments. You’ll be so glad you did. If I could do it for you, I would, but I can’t.

Now, there are others of you here today who need a church home. With arms wide open we want to welcome you into the Bellevue fellowship if you believe as we believe. You know you’re saved, and you want to be a part of this family of faith. I’m going to ask you at the same time these others are coming to acknowledge Christ, I’m going to ask you to come. As a matter of fact, you come first, if you will. Lead the way. “Pastor, what would I say when I go down there?” You just say, “I want to place my membership here,” and we’ll tell you how you may become a member of this wonderful fellowship. You’ll be happy, and so will we.

Then there may be others who might want to come and say, ‘You know, when I watched these being baptized this morning, I realized I’ve never been baptized that way, and I want to make an appointment for my baptism.’ You come and we’ll talk to you about that.

But, friend, don’t leave during the invitation unless it is an emergency. And if you’re with a friend that needs to make a decision, you might volunteer to come forward with your friend. How beautiful that is to see one friend bring another friend to Jesus Christ. All of us will be in a spirit of prayer.

Now, listen. As soon as we begin to sing, don’t look around to see what anyone else is going to do. You come immediately and say yes to Christ.

Let’s stand together. Bow your heads in prayer. Stand. Heads bowed. Let’s ask God to bless the invitation. And you ask God to help you to obey.

Father God, I pray that during this invitation men, women, boys, and girls will do what You would have them to do. Spirit of the living God, work in every heart. In Jesus' name. Amen.

You step out and come right now.

The Purpose of His Passion

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 7, 2004

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 53:4–6

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

ISAIAH 53:5

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Substitutionary Purpose of the Cross
- II. The Suffering Passion of the Cross
- III. The Settled Provision of the Cross
- IV. The Saving Power of the Cross

Conclusion

Introduction

Amen. Well, what a wonderful song service to prepare our hearts for the study of God’s Word.

We’re going to go to Isaiah chapter 53, and then we’re going to move to the New Testament to see what the prophet was talking about. Turn to Isaiah chapter 53, and in a moment we’re going to look at verses 5 and 6. You’ll notice this is also in the front of your bulletin this morning. Seven hundred years—seven hundred years—before Jesus Christ in the flesh walked the dusty shores of Galilee, seven hundred years before that, the prophet Isaiah dipped his pen in golden glory and wrote some amazing words that have an effect on us here in the 21st Century.

Isaiah chapter 53, verse 4: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Now, with that in your mind, I want you to fast-forward in the Bible all the way to the Book of 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 18, and I want us to look at this verse that basks in the light of the prophecy of Isaiah so long ago. First Peter chapter 3, verse 18: “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to

God.” There it is, folks: “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.” “All we like sheep have gone astray; we’ve turned every one to his own way, and the LORD hath laid on him—on Jesus—the iniquity of us all.”

There’s enough gospel dynamite in those verses, if ignited by the spark of faith, to blow the sin, the hatred, the discouragement, the confusion out of any heart and give a hope that is steadfast and sure.

We’re talking this morning on “The Purpose of His Passion.” Why did Jesus Christ die upon that cross? The greatest tragedy the world ever knew took place on an ugly hill just outside the ancient city of Jerusalem where the Son of God hung upon a cross, where darkness veiled the glowing face of the sun, when there was an earthquake and the earth shook and trembled and the rocks split, where Satan and the dark forces of hell were battering against the very gates of glory. Jesus, in agony and blood, was dying. Now, the question comes—why? Why the cross? Why did Jesus have to die? After all, isn’t God a God of love? And, after all, isn’t God all powerful? Now, if a loving God wanted to forgive sin, why couldn’t God just say, “Are you sorry for your sin? Okay, I forgive you.” Question: Why did Jesus have to die? What was the purpose of His passion? You’re going to learn that Calvary was not only the earth’s greatest tragedy, but it was God’s greatest triumph. There was a purpose in all of this. God had a reason for it. As a matter of fact, a reason that was so deep and so great that your destiny and my destiny is wrapped up in it. One more time I turn your attention to 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 18: “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.”

I. The Substitutionary Purpose of the Cross

Now, I want to lay several thoughts on your heart this morning. The first is this: the substitutionary purpose of the cross. Get it down. If you don’t understand that the purpose of the cross was a substitution for us, then you’ll miss the whole thing. “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.” That is, He, the just one, took our place; we, the unjust. He died for us. He died instead of us. Jesus Christ did not die as a martyr. He was not a helpless victim. He said, “No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself.” Nor did Jesus Christ die as an example, though it was the greatest example of sacrifice the world has ever known. That was not the major purpose of His death. Jesus, upon that cross, died as a substitute.

Now, look at what Peter said. God is just. “The just”—what does that mean? He is perfectly, totally, completely righteous and holy. He is just. Now, being just, He cannot overlook sin. If you were to go through all of the dictionaries and the lectionaries of the world to find one word that would describe God, what do you think that word would be? Most people would say, “Well, that word would be love.” Well, He is love. He is infinite love; matchless love; indescribable, fathomless love. He is love, amazing love. But if

you were to find one word—and, of course, no one word, nor all the words can describe God—but if you had to be reduced to one word, it would be the word holy—holy. God is holy. “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD God of hosts.” God is holy. Now, what does that mean? It means that God is the complete other, the complete antithesis of sin. God, being so holy, His holiness burns against sin. His holiness says that sin is a clenched fist in His face. Sin is a repudiation of all that God is. God is holy. He is the just One.

We are the unjust. If you were to take one word that would describe man by nature, just one word, it would have to be the word sin—sin. We are the unjust. The just for the unjust. So here’s a holy God and here is sinful man. Man is the complete other, the antithesis of God. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” The glory of God is His holiness. Our condition is that we have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Now, as you read the newspaper today, or any day, you’ll read about murder, you’ll read about rape, you’ll read about homosexual marriage, you will read about corporate scandal, you will read about insider trading, you will read about terrorism. You will read about all of these things, but I doubt in today’s newspaper you’ll find the word sin used one time. You won’t find the word sin used. No. We don’t like the idea of sin. Man may be ill, but he’s not evil. Man may be weak, but he’s not wicked. We don’t like the word sin. But, friend, the problem is sin—S-I-N. “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

So here is the problem. God is holy. He’s the just. We are unholy. We are the unjust. Now, God has a problem—if we could speak respectfully about God having a problem. How could God, a holy God, punish sin and love the sinner at the same time? That’s the problem. Well, the problem is solved by Calvary. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Here the Doctor not only makes a house call—leaves heaven and comes to earth—but the Doctor Himself makes the patient well by taking the patient’s sickness. He dies, the just for the unjust. Here this time the Judge not only adjudicates the criminal guilty, but then the Judge steps from behind the bench and goes out and stands in the place of the accused and takes the punishment upon Himself—the just for the unjust. You’ll never understand the cross until you understand the principle of substitution. Jesus Christ died for us.

Now, God cannot just overlook sin. If God were to just simply overlook sin, God would not be just. I’ve told you before, they say in a court of law, when a guilty man is acquitted, the judge is condemned. If God were to just say, “My love allows that sin to go unpunished,” then God, though some might call Him loving, would be unjust. God would be unholy. He would topple from His throne of holiness. God Himself would have broken His own law that says, “The wages of sin is death; the soul that sinneth, it will surely die.” No. God must be just. God cannot merely overlook sin. But God is a God of

infinite love. So God allowed His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to take that sin upon Himself and go to the cross. Therefore, the cross is not an accident. It is not an incident. It is not an afterthought. The Bible teaches that the cross was in the heart and mind of God before the world was ever framed. Put in your margin Revelation chapter 13 and verse 8. The Bible speaks there of Jesus as the Lamb slain before the foundation of the earth. Before God framed this universe, before God flung out the sun, moon, and stars, scooped out the oceans and heaped up the mountains, before you were ever born, God saw the cross. Jesus Christ was born in the shadow of a cross. If you open this book, the Bible, and begin in the very first book of the Bible, you're going to find there is the cross. It's pictured, prophesied, and portrayed.

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden and they tried to hide their shame with fig leaves, what did God do? God clothed them with coats of skin, animal skin. Well, when you slay an animal, when you skin an animal, there is shed blood. That's not incidental. That's put there in the Garden of Eden to teach us that we need a covering for our shame, and that covering cannot come apart from shed blood. Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 22 tells us, without shedding of blood is no remission.

There is a river of blood that begins in the Book of Genesis. We see that Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. The two sons came to make a sacrifice to God. One son was a keeper of the flock; the other son was a farmer. Cain tried to offer to God fruits and vegetables, the fruit of the ground, but God said, "Cursed is the ground." And here he is offering to God the works of his own hands. It may have been beautiful. It may have looked like a county fair—fruits and flowers and vegetables. But the Bible says God had no respect for that offering. Then this time, Abel, the other son, took the firstlings of the flock, a lamb, and slew the lamb and offered that to God. And the Bible says God had respect to Abel's offering. Why was this? Without shedding of blood is no remission.

God destroyed the world with a flood. God saved Noah and seven others with him, and they came out of the ark. What's the first thing that Noah did when he came out of that ark into a new world? He offered a blood sacrifice upon an altar. Why? The red river is flowing. Without shedding of blood is no remission.

God takes the first Hebrew. His name is Abraham. And God calls Abraham out of paganism. And God reveals Himself to Abraham, and God says, "Abraham, I'm going to give you a son. Through that son, all the nations of the world will be blessed." Abraham said, "I'm too old to have a son. My wife, her womb is dead." God said, "He's a son of miracle. I'm going to give you a miracle son." Abraham loved that son, whose name is laughter, Isaac. And then, when he was a young, strapping boy, God said to Abraham, "Abraham, Abraham. Take Isaac. Take him to a place I will show you, a very certain place, and offer him up there a burnt sacrifice. Shed his blood." Abraham can't believe

it. But he knows if God wants him to do this, he must believe, because God will raise him from the dead because God has made a promise. No wonder Abraham is called the Father of the Faithful. Abraham took Isaac to Mount Moriah, which, as we're going to see later on, became Mount Calvary. And when Abraham is about to plunge the knife into the quivering bosom of his own dear son, he hears a voice from heaven, saying, "Abraham, hold your hand. Don't kill the lad. Don't do it. Look over here, Abraham." And Abraham sees over here a ram with his horns caught in a thicket, a ram, if you will, crowned with thorns. And God says, "Abraham, offer that ram in the place of your son." Isaac is unbound. The ram is slain. What is this? Again, he is talking about sacrifice, and He's showing Abraham without shedding of blood is no remission. And so, here an innocent animal dies in the place of Isaac.

This red river of blood continues to flow into Egypt. The people of Abraham have become a nation. They're slaves in Egypt. God is going to deliver them from Egypt. And they're getting ready to go and make an exodus out of Egypt, and God says to Moses, "Moses, tell the people to take a lamb, and kill that lamb, and put the blood of that lamb upon the doorposts of their house because, Abraham, this night in the land of Egypt my death angel, my angel of vengeance, is going to come through the land, and he's going to be looking for houses that have the blood on the doorposts. And Moses said, "The angel is going to see the blood, and God says, if he sees the blood, he will pass over that house." Hence, the Jews have a feast called Passover, because "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." An innocent lamb is killed. The blood is put upon the doorposts of the house. Now, had they put diamonds and rubies, it would have done no good. Had they put poetry and sentiment rather than sacrifice, it would have done no good. Had they taken a live, spotless lamb and tied a live lamb there at the doorposts, it would have done no good. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

People talk about Jesus as the example. No, friend, He is the Savior. Salvation does not come by learning lessons from the death of Christ, but by receiving; not by learning lessons from the life of Christ, but by receiving life from the death of Christ. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

This red river of blood is flowing through the Bible. The Jews continue every Passover to make a sacrifice of a spotless lamb. That river of blood begins to widen, and you have all of the Levitical laws and all of the sacrifices there in the Book of Leviticus. Every smoking altar is telling us the story, "without shedding of blood is no remission of sins."

One day, John the Baptist, standing by Jordan baptizing people, looked up and saw the very Son of God coming, the Lord Jesus Christ, and John said, "Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," pointing to Jesus Christ, who was the fulfillment of all of these types and shadows.

Hebrews chapter 10, verse 1, tells us that all of these sacrifices in the Old Testament, beginning with the coats of skin for Adam and Eve and going all the way through, all of them were only a shadow.

Now, what is a shadow? A shadow is an outline that has no detail and no color. All of these were shadows pointing toward reality. You see, my body is casting a shadow upon this stage. Now, it's not the shadow that really matters; it's the body that counts. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. All of these things were just getting people ready for Jesus to come.

I've told you before about the Russian psychologist whose name as Pavlov. He did some experiments based on a principle that he called "Conditioned Response." Now, what Pavlov did was this: Pavlov put some dogs in his kennel and he trained them to respond a certain way. He would ring a bell and then feed the dogs. The next day, ring the bell and feed the dogs. Over and over and over—the bell, the food; the bell, the food. After a while, all Pavlov had to do was to ring the bell, and the dogs would begin to salivate and drool because they knew that food was coming.

Now, what were all these Old Testament sacrifices? They were God's conditioned response. What God was doing was conditioning His people for Calvary. What He was showing them by the shed blood of these innocent animals is, "without shedding of blood is no remission. The wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth, it must surely die." Sin means death. Sin means death. Sin means death. It is a conditioned response in the Old Testament till one of these days the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the fulfillment of all of this, came, and John said, "Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." And He died, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. That's what it is all about, my friend, that there is the substitutionary purpose of the gospel. And so, the Lord Jesus Christ hung His head and died there on the day when the Passover lambs were being slain, on Passover. Jesus died because He was the fulfillment. There on that same limestone ridge where those priests were putting to death those little, innocent lambs, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, was there, or there on that same limestone ridge, Mount Moriah, where so long ago God told Abraham, "God will provide himself a lamb." And Jesus said, "Abraham saw my day, and was glad." That's what Abraham saw on Mount Moriah so long ago—Jesus dying in agony and blood. And when Jesus Christ died upon that cross, He said, "It's done. It's finished."

Now, I want to say to all you Levitical priests out there on Mount Moriah now, "Your work is over. You put away your knives. Go home. We don't need any more lambs. We don't need any more sacrifice. The Lamb has died and has paid in full."

II. The Suffering Passion of the Cross

Now, here's the second thing. We're talking, first of all, about the substitutionary purpose of the cross. Second thing I want you to see is the suffering passion of the cross—the suffering passion of the cross. Our text says, “Christ also hath once suffered, once suffered, once suffered.” Jesus suffered. In the words of another, “Tongue cannot tell, throat cannot sing, hand cannot paint the tragedy that was enacted on that hill called Calvary. Only the damned in hell can begin to know the sufferings of the Lord Jesus upon that cross.” Sin brings suffering as night follows day.

I want you to think of the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ upon that cross. Think, first of all, of the emotional suffering of Jesus. Think of dark Gethsemane. Think of Jesus there in agony in Gethsemane. I'm going to give you some Scriptures. You don't have time to turn to them, but I want you to write them down.

Luke 22, verses 40 and 41: “And when he was at that place, he said unto them, Pray ye that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled, and prayed.” This place where Jesus is praying is called Gethsemane. The word Gethsemane literally means olive press. And you're going to see that it speaks symbolically of pressure, because Jesus Christ here is going through extreme emotional pressure. Jesus has been with the disciples on Mount Zion for what we call the Last Supper. And now Jesus leaves Mount Zion and He goes across the city of Jerusalem, and He goes down into a valley, the Valley of Kidron, that separates Mount Zion and the Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives. As He crosses that Brook Kidron, scholars tell us that most likely it was flowing red with blood because it was there into which the extraneous blood of the sacrifices was drained. And when He crossed that crimson stream, doubtless, it spoke to Him about His only blood that was going to be poured out very soon. He went up into a little secret place there where He prayed, there beneath the old olive trees, and He began to pray. And I want you to see what He is praying. He is praying, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” He spoke of a cup. It was not a literal cup. It is a metaphor. He had an experience that He had to partake of, and it was called the cup. Now, what was in that cup? What was it that the Lord Jesus Christ was shrinking back from? What was it that Jesus was asking the Father to take from Him? Listen. The pollution of sin was in that cup. Put down 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 21: “For he—God—hath made him—Jesus—to be sin for us, who knew no sin.” He is the sinless, spotless, stainless Lamb of God, but He is going to be made the sin. All of the sin of the world is going to be distilled upon the Lord Jesus Christ. He has this cup to drink. Blasphemy settled in that cup. Rape and adultery and sexual perversion settled in that cup. Child abuse and wife beating settled in that cup. Hitler's gas ovens settled in that cup. The murder of innocent children by abortion settled in that cup. Drug abuse settled in that cup. Satanic worship and murder settled in

that cup. Pride, lust, envy, and self-righteousness settled in that cup. And Jesus would bear all of that. Think of your sin, my sin alone. That's in that cup. Compound that by the sin of all of the people in this city, and then by all of the people in all of the cities, then by that by all of the people in all of the cities in all of the world. And then compound that by all of the people who've ever lived and who ever will live. All of that sin was in that cup. The pollution of sin was in that cup. That filthy sin Jesus would put to His sinless lips.

Not only the pollution of sin, but the punishment of sin was in that cup. The Bible says in Isaiah chapter 53, verse 10: "It pleased the LORD to bruise him." Some translations give it, "to crush him." Romans chapter 8, verse 32, speaks of God the Father, and it says, "He spared not his own Son." God the Father held back nothing. When Jesus Christ was to be our substitute, He took the full force of the Father's wrath. Listen to me, precious friend. The fires of God's wrath burn themselves out on the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary. No one ever suffered like the Lord Jesus. He, the Son of God, who had been in the bosom of the Father for all eternity, now is not only abandoned by the Father, but has become the object of the Father's loathing and wrath. All of the sin of the world was distilled into that cup.

People say, "How could Jesus in that period of time suffer an eternity of hell?" The reason is this: He, being infinite, suffered in a finite period of time what we, being finite, would suffer in an infinite period of time. The eternities were compressed upon Jesus. The sins of the world were distilled upon Jesus. You cannot begin to imagine the emotional suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. No wonder He lay there prostrate on the ground with red blood and black dirt on His face, saying, "Father, if there be some other way, please let this cup pass from me." And the silence from heaven said, "There is no other way." And the dear Savior said, "Then not my will, but thine be done." The Bible says in Luke 22, verse 44: "And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly." The word agony speaks of a contest. In the Greek language, the *agonia* was a wrestling match. Jesus is in agony. He is wrestling. What is He wrestling with? Not with God the Father. He wants the will of God the Father. Who is He wrestling with? Not with Satan. Satan has nothing in Him. Who is He wrestling with? With His own humanity. Friend, don't get the idea that Jesus just strolled to the cross and said, "I'm God. This doesn't bother me." You will never, no never, no never, never, ever understand the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ upon that cross. "Christ also hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust." He saw you. He saw me. He saw our need and He said, "No price is too great to pay." There was the emotional suffering.

There was the physical suffering upon that cross. If you saw the film, you saw the scourging of the Lord Jesus Christ. John 19, verse 1: "Then Pilate, therefore, took Jesus, and scourged him." A scourging was a terrible thing. A man's wrists are tied to a

column. Two volunteers, probably psychopaths who volunteered for the job, demented people who took pleasure in causing pain, began to scourge the Lord Jesus Christ, to whip Him. One would start at the nape of the neck and work downward; the other would start at the ankles and work upward. They used rods, and then they used something called a flagellum, which we call a cat-of-nine-tails, a sturdy handle with leather throngs and bits of bone and glass and lead in there that would tear away the flesh. These were experienced soldiers. These were artists. They knew how to lay the veins bare. They knew how to tear away the flesh without disemboweling the person. It was not meant to put him to death, but to beat him so near to death that he could never walk away. No one ever walked away. Some crawled away. Most were dragged away. And, after the scourging, then He's taken there to the dungeon where the soldiers abuse Him, put a crown of thorns upon His head, beat Him with bamboo clubs, blindfold Him, strike Him with their fists, jerk the beard from His face, spit in His face, and mock Him. He's already been given false trials, six of them, every one of them a mockery of justice. And then they lead Him out along the Way of Sorrows to Calvary, and they nail Him on the cross.

A crucifixion was meant to cause the person to flirt with death, to extend death as long as they could. They would put searing nails through the separated metacarpal trying to find the median nerve, because if they could touch that nerve, that would cause fiery pain to shoot up the body. They would dislocate the arms so as to stretch them out. Can you imagine what it would be to have your shoulders dislocated? Then that individual is nailed to the cross, and then also tied most of the time to the cross to keep the flesh from tearing. And then the feet. The knees are bent and the feet are nailed to a post and a protrusion so that you can push with your feet. The idea is this: the individual has his arms extended at 90 degrees. When that cross is dropped into the hole, the arms go up to 65 degrees. The weight comes down upon the chest. The victim cannot breathe. He's suffocating. So he must push with his legs in order to breathe. When he does, the pain comes up the legs and the nails that are holding him to the cross cause excruciating pain. Again, when he's relaxed, the suffocation begins, and the pain shoots through the median nerves there, and this individual is there with nausea and pain and shock and loss of blood, and all of these, every nerve—every nerve—is a pathway for the feet of pain.

You've heard the word excruciating. Excruciate means out of the cross. *Cruc* is cross. *Excruciating*—out of the cross. The Latin word *excructiatus* is put into English, which means out of the cross. Jesus is dying in agony and blood.

III. The Settled Provision of the Cross

I've talked to you—listen—I've talked to you about the substitutionary purpose. I've

talked to you, friend, about the suffering passion. Now, what about the settled provision of the cross? Look at our text again. Look at it. “Christ also hath once suffered.” Once suffered—not twice. One time. Hallelujah, it’ll never happen again. When He died upon that cross, He said, “It is finished.” And what that means is, it is paid in full.

In Rome, if a man were put in prison for a crime, they would take a certificate of debt and nail it to his prison door. “This is what he has done. This is his crime. This is the penalty.” After he pays society his debt, they take that writing that is against him and they bring it to the judge. The judge says, “Has he done his time? Has he paid his price?” Yes. Then the judge writes across that thing, “Tetelestai,” paid in full, finished, and gives it to the man. And the man, if he’s ever arrested again for the crime, says, “Now, wait a minute—wait a minute. You can’t condemn me. That crime has been paid for.” Now, what Jesus said on the cross when He hung His head and died is, “Tetelestai.” It is finished. It is paid in full. And, friend, when the devil comes to taunt you, since Jesus died for you, you can say, “See that? That is my bill of deliverance. My price has been paid.” “He hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”

IV. The Saving Power of the Cross

Now, that brings me to the final point, and that is the saving power of the cross. Look at it again: “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God”—bring us to God. The Greek word there for bring is *prosago*, and what it means is to take someone and bring them to another person. It was often used when a person would bring a man, a woman, into the throne room. I’ve had a privilege, not that I deserve it, but to be in the Oval Office. Well, I’ll tell you this much. If you get invited to the Oval Office, I’ll tell you what will happen. You will not just go walk in. Someone will bring you in. Someone will meet you, and take you, and bring you in. You don’t just walk in. And I’ll tell you, when you come into heaven’s throne room, there’s one who will take you by the hand and bring you in. His name is Jesus. That He might bring us to God, and by the blood of His cross He hath reconciled God and man.

A man imagined himself dying and wanting into heaven, but he’s watching others as they’re trying to get into heaven. One man knocks on heaven’s door and the voice within said, “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” The man said, “I’m a moral man.” “What is the password?” He said, “Honesty.” The voice within said, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity; I never knew you.” Another knocked. “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” He said, “I am a humanitarian.” “What is the password?” “Charity, love for the poor.” The voice within said, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity; I never knew you.” Another knocked. “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” “I am a religious man.”

“What is the password?” “Church attendance, offerings, baptism, ritual.” The voice within said, “Depart from me, you that work iniquity; I never knew you.” At last, one came and knocked. The voice within said, “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” The man said, “In my hand no price I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.” And the voice within said, “Open wide the gate and let him in, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

Conclusion

“Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” That’s what it’s all about.

Bow your heads in prayer. Now, Jesus, this morning, wants to take you by the hand and bring you to God. And the way He will do that is through the sacrifice of Calvary. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Would you liked to be saved? Would you? I mean, today, now, right now, forever and ever and ever, would you like to become a child of God—heaven-born and heaven-bound? Then I invite you to pray this way: Lord Jesus, You are the just, and I am the unjust. But, Lord, You suffered, bled, and died to bring me to God. I open my heart. I receive You by faith as my Lord and Savior. Save me today, Lord Jesus. I want to be Your child. I want to be in the family of God. I want You to live in my life, and let me live my life through You and for You, and then I want to be received into heaven. Save me, Jesus. Pray that, friend. Save me, Lord Jesus. Did you ask Him? Then pray this way: Thank You for doing it, and begin now to make me the person You want me to be. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer, here’s what you ought to do. You need to make it public. Now, we’re going to give you an opportunity to do that. I’m going to ask, respectfully, that no one leave, no one stir, that you be in a spirit of prayer. Standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across this front will be someone to welcome those of you who will be coming forward from the ground floor. Those of you in the balcony, there’ll be a friend under that banner that says Redeemer on that side and the one that says Messiah on this side, for those of you on either side. You be making your way there. And if you prayed that prayer, or you need some more help praying that prayer, it doesn’t make any difference, I want you to leave your seat and come forward and tell the minister that you’re giving your heart to Jesus.

The Purpose of His Passion

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 7, 2004

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 53:4–6

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

ISAIAH 53:5

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Substitutionary Purpose of the Cross
- II. The Suffering Passion of the Cross
- III. The Settled Provision of the Cross
- IV. The Saving Power of the Cross

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, amen. Praise the Lord. Thank you, Joyce. Thank you, choir. Thank you, Jim Whitmire. Thank you, Jesus.

Find the Word of God. Isaiah chapter 53. We'll start there and then move quickly to the New Testament. Seven hundred years—seven hundred years before Jesus Christ was born Isaiah, the prince of prophets, dipped his pen into golden glory and gave the Gospel according to Isaiah. I want to reach into that chapter and read with you three verses.

Isaiah 53, verse 4, speaking of Jesus: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the LORD hath laid on him—that is, on Jesus—the iniquity of us all.” What an incredible passage of Scripture in the Old Testament, I say, centuries before Jesus Christ walked the dusty shores of Galilee in the flesh.

But now I want you to see on the other side of Calvary what another said about the Lord Jesus Christ. And I would like for you to turn this time to the New Testament—1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 18. I don't know of a verse that puts it more clearly and more clearly delineates what Isaiah said so long ago than 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 18. Listen

to it: “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”

Now, if you take Isaiah chapter 53, verse 6, and 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 18, and put them together, I want to tell you there is enough gospel dynamite in those two verses to blow all of the sin, all of the hatred, all of the fear, all of the disappointment, all of the confusion out of any heart, if it is ignited with a spark of faith. And, God being my helper, I want to put that spark of faith through the Holy Spirit into your heart today so that you can understand the cross of Jesus Christ.

The title of the message is “The Purpose of His Passion.” Why did Jesus die? People say, “If God is so loving, and God wants to forgive us, why doesn’t He just forgive? I mean, He’s all-powerful, He’s all-loving, and could not God just look down to humanity and say, ‘Are you sorry for your sins, truly sorry? Then I forgive.’” Why was it necessary for the cross? Why did Jesus die upon that cross? Good question. Good answer.

I. The Substitutionary Purpose of the Cross

I want to turn your attention again to 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 18, and I want you to notice what I’m going to call the substitutionary purpose of the cross. The emphasis is on the word substitutionary. Look at that Scripture. The Bible says, “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.” Jesus Christ did not die as a martyr. Jesus Christ did not die as an accident. Jesus Christ did not die as an example. He died as a substitute for you and for me. If you don’t understand that, you will not understand the cross. “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him—look now—the iniquity of us all.” My sin, your sin, our sin was placed upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, notice how Peter said it. God is just and we’re unjust. Christ died, the just for the unjust. Jesus Christ was the only sinless person who ever lived upon this earth. He was absolutely, totally just. He and the Father are one in their holiness and justice and righteousness. And that’s one of the reasons for the cross.

If you were to go through all of the lexicons of the world, all of the dictionaries of the world, and find one word that would delineate, describe God, what would that word be? Would it be grace? Wonderful word. Would it be love? Incredible word. Thank God all of the words in the world cannot describe Him. But if you had to find one word that would most delineate and epitomize who God is, it would be the word holy—holy. God is holy. What does that mean? It means He is the complete other. He is the antithesis of sin. “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD God almighty.” God cannot, God never has, God never will, overlook sin. If God were to overlook sin, God would cease to be a holy God. Could a judge in a courtroom say to a criminal, “I’m a loving judge; therefore, go free”? We’ve

often told you, when a guilty man is acquitted, the judge is condemned. If a judge fails to uphold the law, that judge ceases to be just. He ceases to be righteous. If God were to overlook sin, if God were to refuse to punish sin, God would topple from His throne of holiness. And so, we see the just. That is Almighty God.

And then, the unjust—who is the unjust? That’s us. We’re sinners. You know we’re sinners. Is there anybody here who would have the unmitigated gall or audacity to stand up and say, “I’ve never sinned?” Of course not! The Bible says, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” The Bible says, “There is none righteous, no, not one.” We’re all sinners. We’re sinners by birth, sinners by choice, sinners by nature, sinners in practice. We have sinned and we deserve the punishment of our sin. “And the wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth, it shall surely diet one.

Now, here’s the equation. Over here is God’s, justice. Over here is our sinfulness. “Christ also hath once suffered for sins.” Do you see that in verse 18—“for sins”?

Now, you pick up today’s newspaper. You know what you’ll read about in today’s newspaper? Well, you’ll read about murder. You’ll read about terrorism. You will read about bribery. You will read about insider trading. You will read about homosexual marriages. You will read about child abuse. You will read about all of these things, but the newspaper will never mention the word sin—never mention the word sin. You see, we don’t like the word sin, do we? No, we call it maladjustment. We call it mistakes. We call it psychological, sociological problems. We say that man is weak. We don’t like to say he’s wicked. We say he’s ill. We don’t like to say he’s evil. But, ladies and gentlemen, you’ll never hear this in the universities, but the problem is sin. The problem is sin! The just for the unjust.

So here’s a holy God, and here’s sinful mankind. Now, God, being holy, must punish sin. But God, being infinite, fathomless love—as we heard this morning—amazing love, loves the sinner and He hates the sin. So God moved in mercy by the pitiful plight of mankind said, “I will do this. I will punish the sin, but I myself will bear the sin. I will be both just and the justifier of him that believes in me, and I will do it by taking human flesh, coming to this earth, becoming a man, taking the sin of the world upon myself, carrying that sin to the cross, paying the sin debt in full, and, therefore, the just for the unjust. Jesus will bring us to God. Now, that’s what the cross is all about.

The cross was not an accident. It was planned before the foundation of the world. Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 8: “the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.” Before God swung this planet into space and scooped out the oceans and heaped up the mountains and flung out the sun, moon, and the stars, God had Calvary in His mind, and He had you upon His heart. And when you open the Bible, you begin to see what I call a red river of blood.

Adam and Eve sinned against God. And what did God do for Adam and Eve, who

tried to cover the shame with fig leaves? God clothed them with the skins of an animal. Now, how do you get the skin of an animal? Blood is shed. What is God teaching so long ago in the Garden of Eden as He gave them a covering for their shame? What the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 9, verse 22: “without shedding of blood is no remission.”

Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. The two sons came to make an offering. Cain was a farmer, a tiller of the ground. He offered to God fruits and vegetables, the fruit of the ground, flowers, fruit, vegetables. But the Bible said God had no respect for Cain’s offering. It represented the sweat of his brow. It represented the works of his hands. But Abel, who was a keeper of sheep, took a precious, spotless lamb and offered a blood sacrifice. And the Bible said God accepted that sacrifice. What is God teaching? Without shedding of blood is no remission of sins.

God destroyed the world with a flood. After Noah came out of the ark into a new world, what was the first thing that Noah did? He offered to God a blood sacrifice, even in this new world. Why? Because men were still sinners by nature, practice, and choice. What’s God teaching? Without shedding of blood is no remission.

God calls the first man, the first Jew, the first Hebrew. His name was Abraham. Called him from a pagan land. Called him to Canaan. Taught him to walk by faith. God said, “Abraham, Abraham, I’m going to give you a son. And through this son all of the world will be blessed.” Abraham loved his son Isaac, who was a son of miracle birth. But then one day God said to Abraham, “Abraham, take your son to a place I will show you and offer him there a burnt sacrifice.” Can you imagine this, the son that God had given him by a divine miracle, and now put him to death? Abraham had such faith, he said, “God, if you’ve told me to do this, you’ll just have to raise him from the dead.” And Abraham started up Mount Moriah, where later the temple would be built, and where later Jesus would be crucified, up Mount Moriah. Isaac is bound. The knife is about ready to fall, when a voice says, “Abraham, don’t hurt the lad. I know now that you trust me.” You see, it really wasn’t Isaac that God wanted; it was Abraham. “Abraham, you can’t love anything more than you love me.” And the Bible says Abraham looked up and there was a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. I like to think of that as a sacrifice crowned with thorns. And God said to Abraham, “Abraham, sacrifice the ram in the place of your son.” What is that? A substitute, one in the place of another; the innocent animal in the place of Isaac. What is God teaching? Out of Abraham’s loins came a mighty nation, the nation of Israel.

They were slaves down in the land of Egypt. God is going to deliver them from Pharaoh and from Egypt. It represents the world, the flesh, and the devil. But God says, “On the night that I’m going to take you out of Egypt, I want every family of faith to do this: I want you to take a spotless lamb and I want you to shed the blood of that lamb. Put the blood of that lamb on the doorpost, because my death angel is going to come

through the land this night, and he's going to be looking for the shed blood. And if he comes to a house where there's no shed blood on the doorpost, the firstborn in that house will die." But God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." That's where we get the term Passover. And the death angel came, and if there was blood upon the doorpost, the death angel passed over. What is God teaching? God is teaching the lesson, without shedding of blood is no remission. Had they put rubies and diamonds on the emeralds on the door, it would have done no good. Had they written poetry and put it upon the door, it would have done no good. We're not saved by sentiment; we're saved by sacrifice. Had they taken a live, spotless lamb and put a live, spotless lamb before the door, it would have done no good. People say, "Well, Jesus Christ is my example." You're not saved by His example. Salvation does not come by learning lessons from the life of Christ, but receiving life from the death of Christ. Without shedding of blood is no remission. What is God teaching? He's teaching His people a lesson.

Then the Jews began this Levitical system of sacrifices when they got into the land of Canaan, and there are thousands and thousands of smoking Jewish altars where the blood of beasts was shed. What is God teaching His people? Without shedding of blood is no remission. But the Bible tells us in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 1, that all of these offerings were only shadows of good things to come.

Now, what is a shadow? A shadow is an outline that has no detail and it has no color. All of these Old Testament sacrifices were shadows of something to come. That something to come was someone, who was the Lord Jesus Christ. And John the Baptist, baptizing out near Jordan, saw one coming and John pointed to Him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." That was the Lord Jesus Christ. All of these other things pointed to Him.

I've told you of Pavlov, the Russian psychologist, who worked with animals in a thing that he called "Conditioned Response." Pavlov took some dogs in his kennel, and he trained them to respond a certain way when a bell would ring. He would ring a bell and feed the dogs. The next day, ring the bell and feed and dogs. The next day, the bell, the food; the bell, the food; the bell, the food. Finally, he could ring a bell, and the dogs would begin to drool and salivate because they knew that the bell meant food.

What is God doing? He is conditioning His people with conditioned response. Every time blood was shed, what was God teaching? That sin means death. "The wages of sin is death." "The soul that sinneth, it must surely die." There is the law the Bible calls of sin and death. That is a law in God's moral universe: sin and death. Getting people ready for the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I say, was in the heart and mind of God before the world ever began. That's the purpose of the cross—the just for the unjust. What happened is this: that Jesus Christ took all of the sin of all of the world

upon Himself and carried that sin to the cross. The Bible teaches that He hath laid, God hath laid on Him—on Jesus—the iniquity of us all. And that, friend, is the substitutionary purpose of the cross. Do you understand that?

II. The Suffering Passion of the Cross

Now, here's the second thing. I want you to see not only the substitutionary purpose of the cross, but I would like for you to see what I am going to call the suffering passion of the cross. Look, if you will, in God's Word here as we open the Bible to 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 18. The Bible says, "Christ also hath once suffered." Underscore that word suffered. If you saw the film "The Passion of the Christ," you will have a faint understanding of what that suffering was all about. That was a film. That was Hollywood. That was man taking the Scriptures and trying as best he or she or they could to tell us. But in the words of another, "Tongue cannot tell, throat cannot sing, hand cannot paint the tragedy that was enacted on that hill called Calvary. Only the damned in hell...—listen to this—only the damned in hell can begin to know the sufferings of the Lord Jesus on the cross." What a great statement. "Only the damned in hell can begin to know the sufferings of the Lord Jesus on the cross."

Think of the anticipatory sufferings. Every time Jesus saw a rose bush as a lad, it must have reminded Him of that crown of thorns. Every time in Joseph's carpenter shop when there were shavings on the floor, it must have reminded Him of that cross upon which He would die. Every time Jesus drove a nail, it must have reminded Him of those nails that would have been driven into his quivering palms. He anticipated Calvary. The Bible says of Him in the Psalms, "I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up."

Think of the emotional sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ in dark Gethsemane. Jesus, the night before He was betrayed, before His false trials and crucifixion, was with His disciples in an upper room. They had a meal together. We call it the Last Supper. And then Jesus left Mount Zion and Jesus went through the old city of Jerusalem, down a valley, across a brook called the Brook Kidron, and up the slopes of the Mount of Olives. They call it the Mount of Olives because olive trees were on this mountain. The name of the place to which Jesus went was Gethsemane. That means olive press. And it typifies, it pictures, the pressure that was on the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus there in Gethsemane prayed in such agony that the Bible says that the perspiration, the blood upon His brow, was sweats of blood. I've talked with my doctor about this, and he told me about a medical condition that happens when a person is under such great, extreme pressure that he or she could literally have the minute capillaries to break and sweat blood. Jesus is on His face, black dirt and red blood, and the Bible says that He was in agony.

The word agony comes from a Greek word, *agonia*, which means a contest, an

athletic contest, a wrestling. Jesus is wrestling. Who is He wrestling with? He's not wrestling with God the Father. He wants the will of God the Father. He is not wrestling with the devil. Away with him. Who is Jesus wrestling with? He is wrestling with His own humanity. Friend, don't get the idea that Jesus just waltzed to the cross and said, "I'm God. This won't bother me." Friend, He suffered. He suffered the pangs of hell upon that cross. The Bible says He was exceeding sorrowful. He said, "My soul is sorrowful unto death." Oh, the anticipatory sufferings of Jesus. Oh, the mental anguish of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why the suffering? What was it that Jesus shrank back from? What was it that Jesus is dreading? First of all, He is dreading the pollution of sin. The Bible says, "Him, who knew no sin, God hath made to be sin for us." All of the sin of all of the world would be placed upon the Lord Jesus. Not that He would become a sinner—He never sinned—but He would be made sin. God would have to treat Him as He would treat any sinner or all sinners or the worst of sinners.

Jesus said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Was there a literal cup there? No. That's a metaphor. What does it mean? "Lord, let this experience pass. I don't want this. I don't want to drink this cup." What was in that cup? Blasphemy was in that cup. What was in that cup? Rape was in that cup. What was in that cup? Murder was in that cup. What was in that cup? Sexual perversion was in that cup. What was in that cup? Hitler's gas ovens were in that cup. What was in that cup? Pride, envy, lust, self-righteousness were in that cup. It was all in that cup. Whose sin? Your sin, my sin, their sin, our sin, the sin of all of the centuries past, the sin of all the days to come—it was all in that cup, and Jesus is to drink that cup. He is to put that cup of filth to His lips and drink it. "Him, who knew no sin, God hath made to be sin for us."

But not only was there the emotional suffering of the cross, friend, there was the physical suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is taken and given six false trials, terrible trials, horrible carriage of injustice. And finally He loses an election to a common criminal, where the people say, "Give us Barabbas, a murderer, and crucify the Lord Jesus Christ."

Jesus is abused by scourging. What is scourging? Scourging was a form of punishment that the Romans had to frighten the populace. A man would be tied, stripped, and then tied to a post. And then two men; they called them lictors, two men, who were probably psychopathic volunteers, who enjoyed inflicting pain, would begin to flay the body of that individual tied to that post with rods and with something called a flagellum, flagrum, or a cat-of-nine-tails, a sturdy handle with nine thongs. And in those thongs of leather would be bits of bone and lead and glass designed to tear the flesh away as they wrap around the human body. These men were experienced. They knew how to expose the nerves without disemboweling the individual. And a man who is scourged never walks away. Some may crawl away. Most are dragged away. They are

beat within an inch of their lives.

Then they took the Lord Jesus Christ, the soldiers, and they put a robe on Him, a scarlet robe. They put upon the Lord Jesus a crown of thorns and with bamboo clubs they beat those into His head. They blindfolded Him and with their brutal fists they hit Him. I can imagine His teeth are loosened. He's bleeding. They snatch His beard from His cheeks. They spit in His face, and they strike Him with the palms of their hands, slap Him in the face, and say, "If you're a prophet, tell us who it is that struck you?" Friend, He could tell them the name of their great grandfather if He wanted to. He knew who they were. But He didn't answer a word. And I'm going to speak about that later on in another message.

And, finally, after they've abused Him, He's a mangled, piece of flesh with ribbons of flesh hanging down. They put a splintery cross on His back and He goes up Calvary. He stumbles and falls and a whip cracks. He stumbles and falls, a whip cracks. Finally, somebody has to carry His cross till He comes to that place and He stretches out on that hellish machine called a cross. He could not be forced to die. He said, "No man takes my life from me. I lay it down of myself." He could have called ten thousand angels, twelve legions of angels, even more aptly put, but He laid down His life. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay die his life for his friends. But God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And there in agony and blood, unmentionable physical suffering, He died.

The Romans devised crucifixion for one purpose—listen to me: to strike fear in the hearts of the populace. They were to say, "Don't you dare get out of line. Whoever you are, look at that. You don't want to buy one of those. You don't want to buy a crucifixion." The crucifixion was devised to make a man flirt with death, the most painful death that they could imagine. But Jesus is there on the cross.

But think not only of the anticipatory sufferings, the emotional sufferings, the physical suffering. Those pale beyond the spiritual sufferings. On that cross, Jesus suffered spiritually, which is the separation from God. Sin separates from God. And not only did He take our sins, not only did He take our suffering, not only did He take our shame, but He took our separation. He separated from God the Father, and on the cross He cries out, "My God, my God, why hath thou forsaken me?" This time He doesn't call Him Father, but My God. Forsaken of God the Father. Why? Because God now is treating Him as He would have to treat me, and there can be no mercy. The Bible says in Romans chapter 8 that "God spared not His own Son." Isaiah chapter 53: "It has pleased the Lord to bruise Him." And there alone, alone, absolutely alone on that cross He died. When David died, he could say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I'll fear no evil, for thou art with me." Jesus could not say, "Thou art with me." Friend, He did that for you. That is the spiritual suffering. Jesus baptized His

soul in hell for you. He, being infinite, suffered in a finite period of time what you, being finite, would suffer in an infinite period of time. I want to tell you that the centuries were distilled upon the Lord Jesus Christ, compounded upon Jesus. The sins of the world distilled upon the Lord Jesus Christ. That, friend, is the suffering passion of the cross.

III. The Settled Provision of the Cross

Now, here's the next thing I want you to notice very quickly. I want you to notice, friend, the settled provision of the cross. First Peter 3, verse 18: "For Christ also hath once suffered"—once suffered. Don't miss that word once. That means it is done. It is finished. The Bible says, "For by one offering He hath sanctified forever them that are saved." By one offering. Never, ever, ever again will the Lord Jesus Christ face the cross. It is done. When He bowed His head upon that cross, He said "Tetelestai" in the Greek language. It literally means, paid in full. It's translated in our Bible, "It is finished," but it literally means, paid in full.

In Bible times, in the days of Rome, if a man were adjudicated guilty in a court, he would be put into a jail cell for his term, and they would write about him an indictment and the adjudication, what he's guilty of. And they would call it a certificate of debt. And they would nail it actually nail it to his prison door. You could go up and down the prisons and look at the prison doors. And here's a certain criminal, and here's what he's done, and here's the price he'd have to pay: how many years he would do in prison, what his fine would be, whatever. That's his certificate of debt. After the man had done his time, after the man had paid the penalty, that certificate of debt would be taken by the jailor to the judge. The judge says, "Has he paid his fine? Has he done his time? Yes, he has. The judge would write across that, "Paid in Full," put a seal on it, roll it up, and give it to the man. That man could carry that rolled up thing with him, that document. If he's ever arrested for the same crime again, they could not bring him into double jeopardy. He could bring that out and say, "There it is. Look. I paid for it. Paid in full." Now, the word paid in full in the Greek language, *tetelestai*, is the same word that Jesus uttered from the cross when He said, "It is done. It is paid in full." And, friend, He took the certificate of debt that was against you and me and all of the rest of it, and stamped it with His crimson blood, paid in full, and the devil can never, ever torment you again about that sin. It is done. It is paid in full. "He hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God." Once suffered. And it is settled. It is the settled provision of the cross.

IV. The Saving Power of the Cross

Now, last of all, I want you to think about the saving power of the cross. Look at it: "He—Jesus—the just for the unjust, hath once suffered for sins—now, listen to this—that He

might bring us to God”—bring us to God. The Greek word for that is *prosago*. And it doesn't mean an ordinary bringing. It means to take a person to another person. It was often used of people who would be brought into the throne room of a king.

Now, I've had the privilege of going into the Oval Office. If you're ever invited, I'll tell you one thing before you ever get there, you will not just walk into the White House and stroll into the Oval Office. You don't do that. Somebody will meet you, somebody will check you out to see who you are, why you're there, whether you've been invited, and that individual will take you and bring you into the presence of the President. You don't just saunter in. There's somebody who will bring you in. That's the word that is used here. He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”

Oh, friend, listen. Sin has separated us from Him. But Jesus, by the blood of His cross, took sinful man with one hand and holy God with the other hand, and Jesus reconciled God and man. He brings us to God. There's not a way that you can come to God apart from the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. You dare not even try to come into His presence without the Lord Jesus Christ, your intercessor, your mediator, taking you and bringing you to God. He is the one who will bring you to God. How else are you going to get into heaven's throne, apart from the shed blood of Jesus Christ?

A man imagined that he was standing outside the gates of heaven. People were knocking at the door of heaven, wanting entrance. One man knocked, and a voice inside said, “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” The man on the outside said, “I am a moral man.” “What is the password into heaven?” He said, “The password is honesty.” The voice within said, “Depart from me, you that work iniquity; I never knew you.” Another knocked. “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” The man said, “I am a humanitarian.” “What is the password into heaven?” “Charity, love, good deeds.” The voice within said, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity; I never knew you.” Another knocked. “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven?” “I am a religious man.” “What is the password?” “Church attendance, offerings, baptism, ritual.” The voice within said, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity; I never knew you.” At last, one came and knocked. “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” This one said, “In my hand no price I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.” And the voice within said, “Open wide the gate and let him in, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

Conclusion

Friend, apart from the cross, you don't have half a hallelujah's hope of going to heaven. But Jesus, the Son of God, died for you. “All we like sheep have gone astray.” “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” And He took that sin to the cross, and He once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

Bow your heads in prayer.

And if you're not saved, this is your time to be saved. It would be tragic for anybody to go to hell from any place, but doubly tragic for you to sit in a service like this and hear the gospel and not be saved. Are you ready to be saved? Do you want to be saved; I mean, now, right this moment. Yes? I mean, forever. Yes? Become a child of God now—do you want that? Do you? I invite you pray like this: O God, I am a helpless, hopeless sinner apart from the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus, thank You that You died for me, the just for the unjust, that you might bring me to God. I now open my heart. I receive You by faith as my Lord and Savior. I receive Your shed blood as an atonement for my sins, and I take You as my Lord and Savior and Master. Forgive my sins and save me, Lord Jesus. Friend, pray that from your heart. Did you ask Him? Then pray this way: Thank You for doing it. I receive it by faith, and that settles it. You're now my Lord and my Master, my Savior and my Friend. And not only do I receive You, but I give myself back to You to follow You the rest of my life, and I will never be ashamed of You. Give me the courage to make it public today. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. If, today, you prayed that prayer and you meant business, I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. You say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, I asked Jesus Christ to save me, but I have no desire to make it public." Then you need to put a big question mark after whether you're sincere, for the Bible says when we believe on Him, we'll not be ashamed. And our Lord said, "If you're ashamed of me and of my word before this sinful and adulterous generation, I'll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels." But Jesus said, "If you'll confess me before men, I'll confess you before my Father." Obviously, walking a church aisle doesn't save you. It's Jesus that saves. But if you're ashamed of Him, He's ashamed of you. Do you love Him enough and trust Him enough to confess Him? That shows that your faith is real. And so, what we're going to do, we're going to ask a minister of our church to stand at the head of each of these aisles. All the way across the front there'll be someone there to welcome those who will be coming forward. For those of you in the balcony, there'll be someone standing on this side under the banner there in the corner that says Messiah. Those of you on this side, there'll be someone standing under that banner that says Redeemer. And we're going to stand and sing, and here's what we're going to sing. Listen to it. Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me. O Lamb of God, I come to thee; I come. And, as we sing that, you step out and come down any of these aisles. "Well, Pastor, I've never done that. What do you say when you go down there? I've never done that. What would I do? What would I say?" Say this, if you can say it and mean it: "I'm trusting Jesus." What will happen? We'll rejoice, we'll give you some Scripture to stand on, and we'll seal it in prayer, and you

can leave this place today twice-born, heaven-born and heaven-bound.

Others of you today have already been saved. You know it. You need to make it public. You need to make an appointment for your baptism. You come. Say, "I want to make an appointment for my baptism."

Others of you, saved and baptized, may have a membership elsewhere. You need a church home. I want you to come and say, "I want to place my membership here."

Remember the song, "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all"? That's for you today. And, as we sing, you do what God would have you to do. Don't look around to see what anyone else is going to do. You come, if no one else comes. You be the first one, if you can. And, if you're with a friend today, and you feel your friend would like to make a decision, you may volunteer to come forward with your friend. How beautiful to see one friend bring another friend to Jesus.

Respectively, I'm going to ask that no one leave during the invitation, that we all be in a spirit of prayer, and let's believe God for victory.

Bow your heads in prayer. God, bless now in this invitational time. And, Lord, anoint it. O God, turn away all the powers of darkness and bring precious souls to Jesus, in whose name we pray.

The Silence of the Lamb

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 18, 1992

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 53:4–7

*“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth:
he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her
shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”*

ISAIAH 53:7

Outline

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- I. The Silence of the Sacrificial Lamb
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Conclusion

Introduction

Take God’s Word and find Isaiah chapter 53, and the Gospel in the Old Testament is found in Isaiah chapter 53. I understand there’s a modern film with this title: “The Silence of Lambs.” I’ve not seen it. I don’t intend to see it. I understand that it is a brutal film and unworthy for a Christian to see, I believe. But I want to speak to you tonight, not on the silence of lambs, but on The Silence of the Lamb—the Lamb of God.

Isaiah chapter 53, beginning in verse 4: “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”

Now, Isaiah chapter 53 is a prophecy. It is a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as you read Isaiah chapter 53, you can tell that it is a picture plain, clear, of the things that Jesus Christ would do and say in order to redeem us. And yet this particular part of this prophecy, specially verse 7, is an amazing and strange prophecy. What it says is this, that when Jesus Christ would be crucified,

that He would make no personal defense of Himself. He would offer no excuse for

the fact that He was dying for sinners. He would make no protest and make no effort at all to avoid the cross, and it's a wonderful truth and a blessed truth, and as I have meditated on it lately, I can tell you that it has warmed and stirred my heart and given me a new resolve to stand up for Jesus.

I appreciate the song that we sang tonight, "Stand Up and Bless the Lord." I appreciate all of these songs that have told us to be militant and to be courageous, and I believe when we finish the message tonight, you'll understand why I have said what I've said, that this truth has encouraged me to be a bold and courageous witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The Silence of the Sacrificial Lamb

Now, first of all I want you to think of the silence of the sacrificial Lamb. I want you to see the fulfillment of this passage of Scripture. Turn with me please to Matthew chapter 26 in the New Testament, and you're going to see how Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled. Matthew chapter 26, and I begin in verse 59. We're going to do a little Bible study, so get your Bible out tonight. We're going to look at a number of verses, and you're going to see how this Scripture is fulfilled that says, 'The Lord Jesus, as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.' Matthew chapter 26, verse 59: "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; but found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet they found none. At last came two false witnesses, and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witnesses, which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace."

Then I want you to look in chapter 27, if you will. Begin about verse 12 in chapter 27: "And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word: insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly." Jesus wouldn't say a word to Pilate!

And then turn if you will to the Gospel of Mark chapter 14, and look at verse 57. "And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither did, so their witness agree together. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? What it is which these witness against thee? But he held his peace, and answered nothing." Then I want you to look, if you will, in Mark chapter 15. Just turn the page, and look in verse 3: "And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? Behold how many things

they witness against thee. But Jesus answered nothing: so that Pilate marvelled.”

And then look, if you will, in the Gospel of Luke chapter 23, and pick up the same thought. This is a constant theme in this thing. Luke chapter 23—now Jesus is before King Herod—and verse 8: “And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned him in many words: but he answered him nothing.” Nothing!

Now turn to John chapter 19, and look at the same thing. In John chapter 9 and verse 8: “When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; and went into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou?” In other words, Where did you come from? But Jesus gave him no answer.”

Now these Scriptures, along with others, tell us that as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so the Lord Jesus Christ opened not His mouth. I want to tell you one of the greatest tendencies of human nature is to justify ourselves, isn't it? I mean, to defend ourselves. It's the tendency of our flesh to make an excuse even when we know we're wrong, much less when we know we're right. Have you ever been accused of something that you were not guilty of? What does your flesh want to do? What do you want to do? What is the natural tendency? It is always to justify yourself. And as I read these Scriptures, when they are lying about Jesus, they are, false witnesses are paid to witness against Him, I feel like saying, “Jesus, why don't You do something? Why don't You say something? Why don't You let them know just who You are and what is happening?” As a matter of fact, when Herod comes, I feel like saying, “Jesus, why don't You turn him into a frog? You, ha, you can do whatever You want; why don't You do something?” But Jesus did not open His mouth, and why? Why was Jesus so silent? Why wouldn't Jesus justify Himself? Why didn't Jesus just say, “Well now, look. I'll tell you I am really innocent. I have not sinned, and the reason that I am dying on the cross, and I will die, but the reason I am dying is I am a substitute. I am taking the sinners place, and therefore I'm not really guilty, but the sins of the world have been laid on Me; and since the sins of the world are laid on Me, and since I am the sacrificial Lamb, that's why I'm dying on the cross, and I just want everybody to understand it. I just want everybody to understand I'm not dying for my sins; I'm dying for their sins.” Why didn't Jesus say that? Why was Jesus silent?

Well, go back again now to Isaiah chapter 53, and you're going to see why Jesus was so silent and why Jesus would not say a word—just right back to the passage where we were, and look, if you will again, in verses 4 through 7. “Surely He hath borne our griefs.” Now if you want to make it more personal, just take the word 'our' out and put the word 'my' in there. “Surely he hath borne my griefs and carried my sorrows, yet I did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for my

transgressions. He was bruised for my iniquities. The chastisement of my peace was upon Him, and with His stripes I am healed. I like a sheep went astray. I have gone to my own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him my iniquity.'

Now Jesus died, my dear friend, in your place. He was your substitute. He was dying for you. Look, if you will, in verse 7. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." Why? Why? Because, my dear friend, He was your substitute, and as your substitute, He had to take your sin. And when He took your sin, He was guilty in the sight of God—not guilty actually, but in the sight of God He was guilty because He took your sin. Go on down to chapter 53 and verse 10. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him: he hath put him to grief." Who crucified the Lord Jesus?

Well, in the truest sense of the word, God Almighty crucified the Lord Jesus. God the Father bruised Him. Why? Because He was the sinless substitute. He took my sin; He took your sin. And taking my sin, He took my shame; and by taking my shame, He could not open His mouth.

Put in the margin 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21—the Bible says, "For he—that is, God—hath made him—Jesus—to be sin for us, who knew no sin." God made Him to be sin. He knew no sin! But God allowed Him to take our sins in order that we might "become the righteousness of God in him."

Therefore, my friend, listen carefully. When Jesus took my sin, Jesus took my shame. And if I stand before God unredeemed, I will have nothing to say, I will stand there speechless, I will be guilty, as I preached this morning, without any excuse, without any alibi. My mouth will be stopped; and therefore the Lord Jesus as my substitute could not speak.

You see, Jesus could not prove Himself innocent without leaving me still guilty. He could not prove Himself innocent and die the shameful death that He came to die. Had Jesus Christ proved Himself innocent, had Jesus Christ declared His innocence, as if Jesus Christ had declared His sinlessness, at that moment He would no longer be the perfect sacrifice. He had to die as a sinner. God had to count Him a sinner in order that He might count me righteous, and had Jesus justified Himself, He would've condemned me.

Jesus held back any words that would have relieved Him of the blame and of the shame of sin. He was not a sinner, but He fully took my place; and taking my place, He not only carried my sin, but He carried my shame. And again I want to say if Jesus had justified Himself, He would have left me guilty. Jesus, as a lamb before his shearers is dumb—that is, silent—He opened not His mouth. He died willingly, voluntarily, and vicariously.

I think one of the grandest Scriptures in the Bible is found in John 10, verses 17 and 18, where Jesus said, “No man takes My life from Me. I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment I have received of my Father.” I’ve told you before that Jesus Christ was the only man who ever chose to die. A suicide does not choose to die; he only chooses to die sooner than he would’ve died. All of us have the sentence of death in us. Every one of us has a terminal disease, and we’re marching steadily to the grave. And that heartbeat within your chest is a funeral march to the grave, because we have the sentence of death on us.

But Jesus was sinless, and Jesus did not have the sentence of death. There was no reason for Jesus to die, and Jesus would not have died unless He laid down His life. He said, “I have the power to lay down My life, and I have the power to take it up again.” He was the only man who chose to die. And when Jesus died, Jesus did not die as a powerless victim. Jesus had the power to preserve His life, and don’t think that, they killed Him against His will.

I love the story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane praying, and Judas comes into the Garden of Gethsemane to betray the Lord Jesus, and he plants that slimy kiss on the brow or on the hand of Jesus and says, “Hail, Master.” And Jesus turns to those soldiers. The Bible says that they’re armed with swords and spears and staves, and Jesus says to them, “Who are you looking for?” And when He says that, the Bible says they fell on the ground as dead men. Just His words knocked them flat.

And then Jesus allowed them to regain their strength, and Jesus allowed them to fetter Him and to carry Him off, when, my dear friend, with the breath of His mouth He spoke them into existence, and with the breath of His mouth He could speak them into oblivion. And the Lord Jesus Christ who withered the fig tree could have withered the arm of that man who held a hammer, driving those nails into His quivering palms. He did not die as a martyr. He did not die as a helpless victim.

I love also Matthew chapter 26, verse 53. Jesus said, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” A legion of angels is, a thousand. Jesus could have called 12,000 angels. Some believe that He could have called 144,000 angels. We don’t know how many angels He could’ve called, but let’s say it’s 144,000. I read in the Bible where one angel killed 185,000 Assyrians. Just put the multiplication together, and you can figure out how many angels Jesus had at His fingertips to come.

Jesus did not die as a martyr, as a helpless victim. Jesus died silently. Jesus died willingly. Jesus died vicariously. They had accused Jesus of blasphemy. They accused Him of lying. They accused Him of sedition. They accused Him of being in league with Satan. They accused Him of other vile things—of being a drunkard and a winebibber, a

glutton. But Jesus never defended Himself. There was the silence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The Silence of the Speechless Sinner

Now that brings me to something else, and I mentioned this, this morning. Not only was there the silence of the Savior, but, my dear friend, if you don't get saved, there's going to be your silence. You are going to be speechless as the Lord Jesus was speechless. You see, the man who refuses Christ is going to find himself speechless when he stands before a holy God. I want you to turn to Romans chapter 3 here for a moment, and look here in Romans chapter 3, and you're going to find out that God brings fourteen indictments against the human race. Begin at verse 10. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit: the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes."

Now watch this. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law"—now watch it—"...that every mouth may be stopped, that all the world may become guilty before God." God says that He gave His law to shut your mouth. "Whatever the law says, it saith to them that are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. "

You see, there's something about sin that shuts the sinner's mouth. Wicked men want to justify themselves. We always want to give some excuse for our sin. The Bible tells about a lawyer who came to Jesus, and the Bible says he was willing to justify himself. Since the Garden of Eden, man has always wanted to justify himself. When God said to Adam, "Adam, where art thou? And have you done what you ought not to do?" And Adam said, "Well, the woman that Thou gayest me, she beguiled me, and, she, gave me the fruit." And the woman said, "Well, the serpent beguiled me." And all of these excuses will falter and fail before God.

Turn to Matthew chapter 22 here for a moment. Let me show you again what I'm talking about—Matthew chapter 22, the story of the wedding feast. Begin in verse 11. "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless." Speechless. You see, when God says to the world, "You're guilty," the world has no way to answer. We try to justify ourselves, but God says, "Shut your mouth. Don't speak. Every mouth needs to be stopped."

Here is a man who tried to come to the wedding without a wedding garment. The wedding garments were provided by the kings of that day, and he refused the wedding garment and tried to come in dressed in his own self-righteous rags, rather than saying, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness, dressed in, His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.”

You see, Jesus was speechless. Jesus did not justify Himself, because had Jesus justified Himself, He could not have been my substitute, because, dear friend, I can’t justify myself. My mouth will be stopped if I stand before God as an unredeemed sinner. So therefore if Jesus’ mouth was not stopped, Jesus could not have been my substitute. Again I want to tell you, dear friend, that Jesus took not only my blame, He took my shame. And being my substitute, when my sins were upon Him, He stood in the same position that I will stand in if I don’t get saved, and that is to let every mouth be stopped and that all the world plead guilty before a righteous and a holy God.

Now there’s the silence of the Lamb. There’s the silence of the unredeemed sinner. But let me show you something else here that’s a great blessing. Go back to Isaiah chapter 53 one more time, and I want you to see the silence of God toward those who have been redeemed. Begin here in verse 11 and look at it again. Remember verse 10 says, “It pleased the Lord to bruise Him.” That is, that, that God put His wrath upon the Lord Jesus Christ. But now look in verse 11. “He shall see—that is, God the Father—shall see the travail of his soul”—that is, He will see the price, the suffering, that Jesus paid—“...and shall be satisfied.”

III. The Silence of the Satisfied God

The silence of the sacrificial Lamb, the silence of the speechless sinner, and now, the silence of the satisfied God. You see, God will never ever raise a word of condemnation against me. God will never speak in condemnation to a forgiven sinner. God Himself is silent when it comes to my sins, and God will never ever take upon His lips one word of condemnation to me, because Jesus took my sin.

Romans chapter 4, verses 5 through 8, some of the greatest verses in all of the Bible on justification—listen to them: “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” I’m not saved by joining a church, by giving, my money, by living a good life, by keeping the Ten Commandments, by obeying the Golden Rule, or by doing anything. “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.”

You know what the word impute means? It means to put that on your account. God just simply writes down the word, the name, the attribute, righteous on my account. God

imputes righteousness to me. God just says, “He is righteous,” by an act of His sovereign will. “Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Oh, friend, if you understand what you receive because Jesus was silent.

Let me tell you what you receive. First of all, it says, “Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven.” I mean, dear friend, to have God’s forgiveness is wonderful. That means you will not be punished, you will not go to hell, you will not suffer for your sin because your sin is forgiven. But it’s more than forgiven.

Then he says, “Blessed is the man whose sins are covered. You see, not only does God forgive me, but God covers my sin. God blots out my sin. A Sunday School teacher asked the class, “Is there anything God cannot do?” Ha, a little girl said, “Yes, teacher, there’s one thing God cannot do. God cannot see my sin through the blood of Jesus Christ.” And that’s so true! Our, our iniquities are forgiven. Our sin is covered.

You say, “Can it get better than that?” Yes. Yes. “Blessed is the man to whom God will not impute sin.” “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven. Blessed are they whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom God will not impute sin.” What does that mean? Even if I sin—and I do sin, I fail God—but God does not impute that sin to me. God doesn’t put that sin on my account.

Some people say, “Well, you know, Pastor, what if, what if when you die you’ve got some sin on your record, can you still go to heaven?” That’s, that’s the dumbest question. Are you counting on your good works to get you to heaven? If you are, you’re not gonna make it. I’ve said many times from this pulpit I wouldn’t trust the best fifteen minutes I ever lived to get me to heaven, much less some bad ones that I’ve had.

“Well,” you say, “don’t you sin?” Yes. “What does God do when you sin?” Well, God chastises me. But, friend, He never imputes that sin to me. He never imputes that to me. “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Ha. If God put one half of one sin on my record, I’d go to hell, because God’s a holy God. But God won’t impute sin to me. God will chastise me. There’ll be a rift in fellowship, but God will not impute sin to me. God has imputed righteousness to me. God has covered my sin, and, “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

Why? Why? Because Jesus was silent. Jesus took all my sin upon Himself. Jesus didn’t justify Himself, and Jesus took the position that I will have to take if I don’t get saved, because one day I will be silent, every mouth will be stopped, and I, like that man without the wedding garment, will be speechless, just as Jesus was speechless on my behalf.

But, my dear friend, because Jesus was speechless on my behalf, I don’t have to be speechless; because my sin is covered, and God will not impute sin to me, and therefore God is speechless, because God will never say, “Adrian, you’re guilty.” And if

anybody tries to say that I am guilty, God will defend me.

Let me give you some verses to, to show you that God will defend you. Romans 8, verse 33—just turn to it here in the New Testament, and look at it. It's so wonderful. Romans 8, beginning in verse 33: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" That is, who's going to speak against one of God's children? "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." And I love Isaiah 54, verse 17: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from me, saith the Lord."

You see, one word of condemnation, if one word of condemnation ever came from God, I'd be cast into hell forever, but God will not impute sin to me. God is silent when it comes to my sin. God will never bring up my sin. God will never mention my sin in condemnation; He won't do it.

Jesus was silent. Jesus was speechless, because that's exactly what I would've been, because the sinner is guilty and his mouth is stopped before God. But because Jesus took my place, now God is silent concerning my sin, and God will never allow my sin to be judged from His lips, nor will He ever allow anybody else to lay any charge on my account.

Thank God for that. There's an old gospel song that says, "I was guilty with nothing to say. They were coming to take me away. Then a voice from heaven was heard that said, 'Let him go, and take Me instead.' I should have been crucified. I should have suffered and died. I should have hung on that cross in disgrace, but Jesus, God's Son, took my place."

Conclusion

Now having said that, there are three things that God spoke to my heart about. Very briefly, number one is this: if Jesus Christ took my shame and was silent, then I'm going to love Him and speak for Him the rest of my life. If He was silent and took my shame, I'm going to be courageous and witness for Him. And as He was silent, I am going to be a bold witness.

Secondly, if Jesus Christ took all of that abuse and He took all of that suffering, He took all of that false accusation, then I'm going to glory in the Lord Jesus Christ, and His suffering will be my glory, and His shame will be my boast. And I'm going to boast in the Lord, and, and be proud in the right sense. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And thirdly, if Jesus Christ took my guilt, and He did, I am going to stand in His righteousness, and I'm going to rejoice in His righteousness, and I'm never going to let

the devil or anybody else accuse me, for, “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

Bow your heads in prayer. Would you thank God for the silence of the Lamb? That Jesus Christ loved you enough, not only did He die for you, but He died in such shame that He wouldn't even justify Himself before God. And would you say to Him, “Lord Jesus, if You died for me, I will live for You. Lord, if You took my shame there so long ago, I'll bear Your shame today, and, Lord, I'll never be ashamed of You. I'll live for You and I'll speak for You, because You were silent on my behalf.”

Father, bring the message to our hearts, and help us never to be ashamed of Jesus, who took our shame, our blame, our sin, our sorrow, to the cross. In His dear name I pray. Amen.

Lengthening and Strengthening

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 7, 2004

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 54

“Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.”

ISAIAH 54:2

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Children That God Desires
- II. The Covering That God Designs
- III. The Conviction That God Demands

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, amen. What a wonderful song service this morning. I stand in awe of what these are able to do.

Would you take God’s precious holy Word and turn to Isaiah chapter 54. And when you’ve found it, look up here.

Now, Isaiah chapter 54 deals with our theme of “Lengthening and Strengthening.” It deals with tents and tent cords and stakes that are driven down into the ground.

When Joyce and I were in college together, we got married and we bought a little house trailer for \$1,200. It was 25 feet long and about 8 feet wide, as I can remember. Here was the little settee. And then you stepped back a little bit, and here was the table that you could pull down to eat on. And then here was the refrigerator and the stove. And then here was the bedroom. That was it. There was no bath in it. And that’s what we lived in for a while, while I was going to college and trying to get an education, which, evidently, didn’t work; but anyway, we lived in that little trailer.

And we decided we needed to enlarge it. And so we formed outside kind of a cabana. There was a side here, and a side here, and a side here with a screen on it, but we needed to cover it. So I built an awning and stretched it from the high part of the roof of that trailer out to the outer edge of this outside place, this cabana. Actually, God had given us a baby boy, and we needed to enlarge the place of our habitation. So I put that out there and we enjoyed it. We’d go out there sometime and sit in the breeze and when it was too hot on the inside.

And one night, it rained a stump-floating rain; I mean, it just rained. And we were inside. Joyce and I were in bed and we heard this awful noise. I didn't know what it was. It sounded like maybe an automobile had struck us, or maybe thunder was inside the house. I didn't know what it was. I said, "Joyce, did you hear that?" She said, "I did." I said, "I'd better go out." And when I opened the door, I couldn't open the door. And I saw that awning was so full of water, it looked like an upside-down swimming pool. And I couldn't even open the door because of it, but I pushed part of it up and got out there, and the sides of our cabana were all caved in. The noise we heard was the cracking of the wood as it all caved in. And this great big pool of water was there. And I said, "Joyce, we've got to do something here. We're going to lose everything." So I said, "Let's see if we can shove the water off." Didn't work. Each time I put my hand up there on the awning, it would begin to leak and the water would run down my elbows and run down underneath my arms and down into my pajamas, and I said, "Joyce, you push. I'll push." And we both were soaking wet. And, after a while, we got to giggling. It was so funny. You know, you push up here, and the water goes over there. You push up here, and the water goes over there. Finally, somehow, we were able to get the water out of that thing. And you know what happened? I'll tell you what happened. It was my fault. You see, that thing extended out with cords, cords, and then stakes in the ground to hold the cords. Well, I only had stakes about like that, and I had little short cords that came down like this, rather than going out further. And I learned a lesson right there. If you want your tent to stay up, you had better lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.

Now, with that in mind, look at the Word of God here. Isaiah chapter 54: "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear—that is, a mother without child, I'm going to give you a song now—break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not prevail, didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare not—now, listen to this—lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes."

What a wonderful passage of Scripture this is that sets the tone for Love Offering. By God's grace, I want to lay three thoughts on your heart that come out of this passage of Scripture.

I. The Children That God Desires

First of all, I want you to see what I'm going to call the children that God desires—the children that God desires. Notice what God is saying here: ""Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not prevail, didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the

married wife, saith the LORD.”

Now, obviously, this is a passage to Israel. It’s talking to Israel about a time when Israel will come to the Lord Jesus Christ and there’ll be a great revival. And Israel, that had been barren, is going to bring forth many, many children; that is, sons of daughters of God. What a day that will be. Now, that’s the primary reference, but underneath it is a reference that can apply to all of us, and it is this, pure, plain, and simple: God wants more children in His family. Could you agree with that? God wants more children in His family. And God desires children. This is the reason that Jesus suffered, bled, and died. You read in Hebrews chapter 2 where the Bible says, “For this cause, Jesus suffered, bled, and died that he might bring many sons into glory.” The Bible says in John 1:11 and 12, speaking of Jesus, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not, but as many as received him, to them gave he the power to be the children of God.” God wants children in His forever family. And if you have a heart that beats like the heart of God, you want to see souls saved and come to Christ.

Now, if your life is barren, I’d like for you to put a song in it. You know, in the Bible, barrenness in a woman, that is, the inability to bear a child, was a reproach, and it was a mark of sadness. Biblical women were not like some women today who don’t want a children because of inconvenience. My heart goes out to those of you who do want a child and God has not yet allowed you to conceive. But in the Bible, barrenness was a sign of reproach.

Rachel—do you remember in the Bible where Rachel prayed, and Rachel said, “O God, give me children or I die.” And God heard her prayer. God opened her womb, and Rachel became the mother of Joseph, who has so blessed the world. And who knows what your child may do, in the physical realm?

But God is talking about more than physical children. God, in this passage, is talking about spiritual children. And if your life is barren, would you pray, “O God, O God, give me children, lest I die.” Would you say, “O God, give me a passion that I might not go to heaven empty-handed, but with some spiritual children to take with me.”

Put this verse down in your margin—1 Corinthians 4, verse 15. Paul says, “For though we have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” Paul said to the Corinthians church, “You’re my spiritual children. You are my spiritual children. I have begotten you through Christ Jesus. That is the gospel that I preached unto you. That’s what brought you to God.”

I heard one day about a man who was a motivational speaker, and he had a big white chart about this big. And in the center of that chart was a black dot. The rest of it was all white. And so, he asked people, “What do you see here?” They looked at it and studied it and studied it, said, “Well, I see a black dot. “What do you see?” “I see a black

dot.” “What do you see? “I see a black dot.” “What do you see? “A black dot.” And the instructor said, “Isn’t it strange that all you saw was the black dot and none of you saw the white all around it.”

Now, you know, sometimes we just have that black dot of self-concern, don’t we? We’re thinking about us. God bless me. God bless mine. God help me. God, heal me. God, give me a job. Jesus said, “Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; they are white already unto harvest.” That means the grain is over-ripe, falling to the ground, when it becomes white unto harvest.

God desires spiritual children. God wants you to be saved. God wants you in His forever family; God does. Jesus suffered, bled, and died that you might be saved. And God wants you to be a winner of souls. If you believe that, say amen. God wants you to be a winner of souls.

A church exists by evangelism like a fire exists by burning. And we, dear friend, will evangelize or we’ll fossilize. We will glow and grow, or we will dry and die. God desires children. That’s the thing that this verse shows us: the children God desires. That’s what it speaks to me about.

II. The Covering That God Designs

Now, here’s the second thing I want you to notice: not only the children that God desires, but the covering that God designs. Now, when you have a family, you’ve got to have a covering for your family. Now, what He’s talking about here is a Bedouin tent.

I’ve been in a Bedouin tent. I was in Israel, and our guide was a friend of those Bedouins. And we were down by Jericho, down by the Dead Sea. He said, “Pastor, I want to take you into this tent.” So we went there, and there were chickens and dogs and sheep and goats all around, and this tent was there. Pretty large tent, much larger than our house trailer was, I can tell you that much. And they thought of me as some sort of a chieftain or something because I was leading the group, and so I was given the place of honor. We went in that tent, and on the inside of the tent were goats and chickens and children. And there was a fire. It was in the summertime, but there was a fire burning in there. And there was some coffee. I tell you, it was about viscosity 30 weight. And they said, “Now, this coffee is for you,” and they poured it in a little cup about that big. And I said, “O, Lord, I don’t want to drink this. I don’t know whether this cup has been washed in a thousand years. I don’t know who’s been drinking out of it. I don’t,” but I said, “Lord, here we go!” I said, “You’ve got to protect me. I’ve got to drink what’s set before me.” And so, I drank it, and it tasted, it’s hard to say—part of it tasted like coffee, and the other part tasted like perfume. It was strange, but I drank it. Those Bedouin tents, they would travel from place to place, and the Bedouins would take up their stakes, fold up their cords, roll up their tents, and travel on to another place for

their flocks to graze and herd. That's what God is talking about here when He is saying, "Enlarge the place of your habitation."

I want you to imagine a Bedouin mother who says to her Bedouin father, "Caleb!" "Yes." "Caleb, guess what? God is giving us another child" "What?" "That's right—another child. And, Caleb, this tent is too small. We've got to enlarge our tent. We can't put this baby outside in the wind and the rain, and we can't put our other children outside in the wind and the rain. We have got to enlarge this tent." Now, you see, this is the covering that God designed. God wants His forever family to have shelter.

Now, God is not talking about a literal tent here. He's not talking about a church going into a building program, though that's a good idea many times. But what He is talking about is care and nurture and covering. That's what the tent symbolizes here. I mean, God was talking to Israel about how Israel was going to blossom and bloom and fill the earth with fruitfulness. It'd have to be a mighty big tent to cover that. No, He's using here an illustration, that when the family gets bigger, the tent has to get larger. God wants a covering.

Now, how does that apply to us? Well, friend, God wants us to be soul winners, and God wants us to care and nurture those that He has given us, those who come into God's forever family.

Now, here's what this verse says to me. This verse says to me that God is a big God, and God is a God who doesn't champion smallness. God wants big people who will think big thoughts. God says, "Enlarge the place of your habitation." And then God says, "Spare not! Don't be indolent, lackadaisical, about it. Enlarge and spare not." Do it with every inch, every ounce, every nerve, every fiber, of your being.

Some of us sit here on Sunday morning, thinking we've done God a service by getting here. And we need a vision, a vision to enlarge our tent. Not a physical building, but our care and our nurture for those that God has given to us. We need to learn to think big—to think big. God, forgive our small thinking. God speaks of enlargement. So many people think of self-satisfaction.

Now, friend, when I'm talking about being a big man, a big woman, I'm not talking about being big physically. We can't help the size of our physical stature. I've known men like Stephen Olford. He might have weighed 140 pounds; he had a heart of about 20 tons. He loved God—loved God. He was a big man.

Now, there is a smallness in the heart and minds of many people. There's a smallness in the mentality of some of you. Some of you are saying, "Our church is big enough." Do you know what you say when you say that? The rest of them can go to hell. That's what you're saying. Now, if we reach our community, and the communities of this world, we're going to have to have a lot of Bellevues. We're going to have to grow. What is your mentality? Do you think small, or do you think big? God speaks of

enlargement, and God says to do it with all your might. That's what our Love Offering is all about.

Now, how can you tell whether one is a little person? Well, first of all, he has little concepts of God. Remember that man who hid his talent in the ground? The lord, the master, gave one man so many talents, another man so many talents, and He gave one man one talent. That one man said, "Well, I don't want to lose this talent." So he dug a hole, put it in the ground. Rather than investing it, rather than using for the glory of his master, he just hid it. And when his master came and asked for an accounting, he said, "Well, look," he said, "I knew that you were an austere man. I knew that you were a hard man; so you gave me this talent—lest I lose it, I put it in the ground." Do you know what he was doing? He was blaming his smallness on God. That's what he was doing. He was saying, "God, You are an excuse for this. Lord, You don't have any vision. You don't have any plan, and so I'm going to be like You." He was a small man because he had a small God.

You want me to tell you whether or not your God is a big God or a small God, the God of enlargement or the God of the status-quo? Well, faith—faith. Where's your faith? Big men have big faith in a big God. One of these days, we're going to wake up and understand just how powerful faith is. Not faith in itself—that's positive thinking, but the God of faith.

Archimedes, the great mathematician and physicist, said, "You give me a place to put my lever and I can move the world"—"You give me a place to put my lever and I can move the world." That is, if you give me a fulcrum, a balance point, and a place to stand, I can move the world. Now, friend, I want to tell you that fulcrum is the Word of God. That lever is faith. And with it we can move heaven and earth together.

Do you believe that God can do great things? Do you believe God can do much greater things than He's doing in this church? Do you? Well, let's personalize it a little bit. Do you believe that God can do greater things in your life? Do you? Now, if you don't, your small faith is an insult to our great God.

I'll tell you something else that reveals how you think of God. Your giving—your giving—tells me how big your God is. If you serve a great God, you're going to want to give great gifts to our great God. Never has anybody on the face of this earth given under the inspiration of the Spirit, and been able to out-give God. You shovel out, and God shovels in. And God has a bigger shovel than you do.

I'll tell you another thing that determines how big God is in your life—and it's worry. Do you worry? Do you know what worry says? God, this problem is too big for You. This problem is too big for You. You're not big enough to handle my problems.

Martin Luther, the one who wrote that great hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is our God," was mighty in the Scriptures, mighty in prayer, and mighty in faith. But what you may

not know about Martin Luther was that he had times of deep despondency. He would get in to a blue funk is what he called it. And sometimes he didn't want to talk to anybody. He didn't want to see anybody. He didn't want to read. He didn't want to study. He was in despondency, and it was somehow wrapped up in concern and worry about the situation. People tried to encourage the great Martin Luther, but he just sat there in the basement under his house with his head down.

His wife, Katherine, decided she'd shock him. And she put on a black dress, black gloves, black hat, like they would wear to funerals in that day, and she walked in before him. And he looked up, and he said, "Katrinka, who is dead?" She said, "Oh, Martin, haven't you heard? God is dead. God is." He said, "Katrinka, that's blasphemy!" She said, "Aye, husband, it is blasphemy, and it's blasphemous for you to live like God is dead." Amen? Martin Luther straightened up and he realized that he was having little thoughts toward a big God.

Now, some of you have some real industrial-strength problems. But I want you to know, beyond the shadow of any doubt, that God is bigger. Do you believe that? Listen. Don't worry, when you can put your faith in God. Your ambitions show how big God is. What is your ambition? What are your goals in life? To sit, draw your breath, and draw your salary, and fight to live while you live to fight? What are your ambitions? Dr. Robert G. Lee, former pastor of this church, had a sermon called, "Chasing Fleas." How many of you have been around here long enough to remember hearing Dr. Lee preach that? Yeah, "Chasing Fleas."

He said, "David was being chased by Saul, and David said to Saul, "What are you doing? Here you are, King, with all this out here trying to find one man in the wilderness. You're chasing fleas." Saul was a tall man physically, but he was a little man spiritually, because he had small ambitions.

What are your ambitions? What do you really want to do? What do you really want to be? What is the desire of your heart? Now, you can't be everything you want to be. I hear people say, "You can be whatever you want to be." That's ridiculous. I can't be an NBA basketball star like Pau Gasol. I can't do that because I'm not tall enough. That's the only reason. I've got a lot of skill. But now, listen; listen, folks. What do you want to be? What are you asking God for? What are the desires of your life? Do you have any? If you don't have great ambitions, there's something wrong.

When I was a teen, God called me to preach. I prayed to God, and I said, "O God, O God, I want You to use me. I want to be a man of God."

Now, what is a mark of smallness? Do you have small thoughts of God? And then you have small thoughts of others. That's another mark of smallness, when you don't want to enlarge. You can't reach out, you can't think of other people, as you ought to.

Jesus told a parable about a man who was forgiven an enormous debt, and Jesus

was speaking in hyperbole because the debt the man was forgiven was worth more than the taxes of that country for a year. And then that man, who was forgiven an enormous debt, found a man who owed him a little bit, took him by the neck, and began to shake him, and say, “Pay me what you owe me.” Now, see, God is the one who forgives the enormous debt. We’re the ones, sometimes, who are so small. We have such a small idea of God that we don’t know how to forgive other people.

We have people in our churches—little people, little people—bantam Baptists, maybe there are a few midget Methodists here this morning, acting like babies, pouting, offended, imagining things, quarreling, unforgiving.

And I’ll tell you another mark of whether or not you are a small person or a big person, and that is whether or not you have courage in the face of opposition. Now, listen to me, folks. If God be for us, who can be against us? The Bible says, “In nothing be terrified by your adversaries.” I didn’t say that; God said it. If you do not have courage, it is because you’re a small person that believes in a small God. For greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. You can tell the size of a man, a woman, a boy or girl by what it takes to stop them.

You couldn’t stop Paul. You put a jail in front of him, he’d go through the jail and come out the other side with a convert under one arm and the jail doors under the other. Paul knew what it was to face opposition. He was the one who said, “In nothing—in nothing, in nothing—be terrified.”

Some get their feelings hurt, and that stops them. They don’t come to church anymore. Others let criticism stop them. I can tell you how to escape criticism: say nothing, do nothing, and be nothing. Some let some strong enemy stop them. When the children of Israel were going into the Promised Land, they sent out twelve spies. Ten of them came back and said, “We can’t take this land because there are giants in this land. It’s impossible.” But Caleb and Joshua said, “Let us go up at once, for we’re able to possess the land.” Now, the first ten spies said, “We were like grasshoppers in our sight, and in theirs also.” They had a grasshopper complex. Do you know the difference between Caleb and Joshua and those ten grasshoppers? Those ten grasshoppers were thinking, Look how much bigger they are than we are. Caleb and Joshua were thinking, Look how much smaller they are than God is. Now, we need a big God. All I’m saying is, friend, that when God wants us to spread our tent, God wants us to think big. Do you agree with that? God says—listen—“Enlarge.” God says, “Spare not.” God says, “Stretch forth.” There’s no way to read this apart from the fact that we don’t need to be intimidated by the things of this world.

III. The Conviction That God Demands

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to think about that comes out of this text to me,

and that is not only the children that God desires, and the covering that God designs, but the conviction that God demands. Now, what is He talking about when He's talking about stakes? He's talking about convictions that hold the whole thing up. You see, if you get your tent bigger and you don't get your stakes deeper, the whole thing is going to come down. It's going to tumble in on your head. That's what happens to many churches. That could happen to this church. This church could grow in size and not in conviction, and one day in a thunderstorm the whole thing will fall in because we did not drive our stakes deep into the ground. We need some convictions. We need some convictions about the Word of God. We need some convictions about the Holy Spirit of God and spiritual anointing. We need some convictions about soul winning. We need some convictions about holiness. Oh, may God give us—give to me, give to you—some stakes of conviction that we would drive deep, deep, deep, deep, deep into the ground, because if we don't—listen now—if we don't, the whole enterprise will cave in.

One man asked another pastor, he said, "How big is your church field?" "Oh," he said, "it's about ten miles wide and a half inch deep."

You know, we have sacrificed width and breath for depth. And you cannot grow bigger without going deeper. Do you agree? Now, I don't want Bellevue to stop growing. I don't want us to stop our ministry. But God forbid that we don't have any convictions. I don't know who your next pastor's going to be, but don't you call a man without some convictions. I mean, you need a man who will not stutter or stammer or apologize or equivocate, none whatsoever, when it comes to these great convictions. We need, as a church, to drive our stakes deep into the ground.

Dr. J. B. Gambrell, who was a great preacher of yesteryear, told a story that I love. He talked about what he called the neighborhood dog. He said, "The neighborhood dog doesn't belong to anybody. He just roams around. He has no collar on him. He has no master. So he'd just as soon stay at this house or at that house. When he's barking, he's not barking to defend anything; he's just barking to get the other dogs barking. He's the neighborhood dog." And he said, "He doesn't get in fights because he has nothing to fight for. He's just the neighborhood dog." And he said, "I've met a lot of people just like that neighborhood dog. They don't really belong to any church with all of their heart. If there's a meeting over here with big crowds, they'll go over here. If there's one over here, they'll go there. And they'll say, 'Well, all churches are basically alike.' And the reason for that is they don't value any of them. You can't count on these people, these neighborhood dogs. They don't want to join a church. They don't want to get behind. These kind of people, friend, will erect no tents. You can't count on them. But I believe God can count on you.

And we're coming to Love Offering Sunday. I hope you're aware of that. Next Sunday is Love Offering. The theme of our Love Offering is to "Strengthen our Stakes,"

to “Lengthen our Cords.” You see this little tent over here? That’s what that’s an illustration of.

Now, we’re going to come Sunday morning and we’re going to bring a big offering to a big God—a big offering to a big God for a big cause. You say, “Well, Pastor, you’re always asking for money.” Number one: that’s not true. I don’t preach enough about it.

One man made his boys work on Saturday while the others were playing baseball. The boys had to work in the cornfield. A man said to him, “Why do you make those boys work so hard. You don’t need all that corn.” He said, “I’m not raising corn; I’m raising boys.”

God doesn’t need your money. But God wants to teach you something. And God could do it all without you. God’s not walking around up in heaven, saying, “What am I going to do? I don’t have enough money to do what I want to do.” But Love Offering is a privilege.

Conclusion

I’m going to give you a little litany and then I’m finished this morning. I’ve said this for many years. Now, you listen to me carefully. If I say anything that is untrue right now, I want you to stand up and challenge me. Will you do that? Just stand up. And I’m sincere. I’ll recognize you.

Number one: God knows what the need is. Any challengers? Of course not!

Next: God knows what part of that need He wants to meet through me and through you. Any challengers? No.

Next: what God wants me to give, or what God wants you to give, God will reveal it to me and to you, if we ask Him. Not a challenger yet.

Next: what God lays on my heart to give, what God shows me to give, I’m able to give. Can anybody argue with that?

Next, if it is what God tells me to give, I will have to depend on God to give it.

Next, listen to me. When I give that way—when I give that way—I get the joy; God gets the glory. God’s work is done.

Now, our Love Offering this year has some wonderful causes. But beyond those causes is the glory of God and the joy of giving.

There are the children that God wants. God desires children. There’s the covering that God designs. There is the conviction that God demands.

Now, we’re going to come Sunday for our Love Offering. And I wasn’t born yesterday. I know that some of you will stay away next Sunday because it’s Love Offering Sunday. Have a good time! What you do not joyfully and willingly give, God neither needs nor wants. Say amen. The rest of us are going to be here. We’re going to have Love Offering, whether you like it or not. We’re not going to put any pressure on

anybody. If you find somebody putting pressure on you, you come and tell me, and I'll tell Jesus on them. But we're going to let God put all the pressure He wants. God knows what the need is. God knows what part of that need He wants to meet through me and through you. And He'll show me if I'll ask Him.

Bow your heads in prayer.

Eyes are closed. Now, let's go back to the original thing, the children that God desires. You're one of those children that God desires. If you're not already in His family, the Lord wants you to be saved. He really does. And, friend, He will save you today if you'll trust Him. Would you pray this prayer: Dear God, I need You. I love You. I want You. My life is empty. I need You. Jesus, You died to save me, and you promised to save me, if I would trust You. Thank You, Jesus, that You paid for my sin with Your precious blood on the cross. Thank You for Calvary. Thank You for dying in my place. I believe You're the Son of God. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And now, this morning, with all of my heart, I receive You. I receive You now as my Lord and Savior. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Save me. Pray it. Save me, Lord Jesus. Did you pray it? Then pray this way: Thank You for doing it. I receive it by faith, and that settles it. That settles it. I'm not looking for a feeling or asking for a sign. I stand on Your Word. That settles it. You're now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my Friend. And, Lord Jesus, give me the courage to make it public. In Your holy name. Amen.

Now, look up here—look up here. If you prayed that prayer this morning, here's what I'm going to ask you to do. I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and make your way down one of these aisles. Standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front will be a minister, a man of God, to receive you, to welcome you.

You say, "Pastor, what would I say when I go down there?" Just say, "I'm trusting Jesus." Now, the faith that will not lead to confession will not lead to heaven. Walking an aisle doesn't save you, but what it indicates saves you, that you're not ashamed of Jesus. You're trusting Jesus. Just say, "I'm trusting Jesus."

"Well, Pastor, what will happen then?" Well, we'll rejoice, and in a quieter place we'll give you some Scripture to stand upon. And we will answer questions from the Bible if you have them, and we'll seal it with you in prayer. And I want you to come as soon as we stand and sing here in just a moment.

There are others of you who need a church home. You're saved and you know it, but you're not yet a member of Bellevue Baptist Church. If this is where God speaks to your heart, and you know you're saved, I invite you to come forward and say, "Pastor," or say to the minister, "I want to place my membership here." And we'll receive you and tell you how you may become a member of this wonderful church.

Now, one thing about it, if you come on the Sunday I preached on giving, I believe you mean business. And I want you to come and say, "I want to place my membership

here.”

Now, if you're in the balcony, there'll be somebody over here under this banner that says Redeemer to welcome those of you who'll come from that side, and over here under that banner that says Messiah, somebody to welcome those of you from this side. Let's stand together. Step out and come.

Lengthening and Strengthening

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 7, 2004

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 54

“Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.”

ISAIAH 54:2

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Children that God Desires
 - II. The Covering that God Designs
 - III. The Conviction that God Desires
- Conclusion

Introduction

It was wonderful music this morning, and how grateful I am for the Lord that we sing to and about and these who lead us in this worship. Now, they don't worship for us, but they encourage us to worship.

Take God's Word, would you please, and turn to Isaiah chapter 54. I want to talk to you about our Love Offering. The theme of our Love Offering this year is “Lengthen and Strengthen.” Now, what does that refer to? Well, it refers to a tent. And in order to enlarge the tent, you have to lengthen the cords and strengthen the stakes or else the entire tent will cave in on your head.

When Joyce and I were in college, we'd recently been married, and we bought a little house trailer for \$1,200. It was 25 feet long, about 8 feet wide, and we lived in that. On this end of the trailer was a couch. It could fold out and make a bed. Take a few steps, and here was a cupboard with a table that folded down where you could eat. Take a few more steps, and here was a little kitchenette. And then, the bedroom. The bed filled the room almost. That's where we lived. You notice I didn't say there was any bath in there. But, we had a great time living there, and God blessed us. But we needed to enlarge the place of our habitation. So we were able to acquire what I would call a cabana. It had some wood walls around it, some screens, but it didn't have a ceiling on it. It didn't have a roof on it. So I decided I would buy an awning and put an awning over that. And I found a place where I could order an awning about the right side—green with white stripes on it. We fastened it to the trailer, fastened it out over the edge of the

cabana. And then I took some cords and some stakes and staked it out. And it looked so nice. We would go out there and sit, and we needed a little more room because God had given us a child. And so, that was really nice.

But upon a time, we had a stump-floating rain; I mean, it rained and it was in the middle of the night, and I heard a cracking noise, a sound. I thought, maybe an automobile has run into our trailer. I didn't know what it was. I said, "Joyce, what was that?" She said, "I don't know." I said, "I'm going to get up and look." And I tried to open the door and I couldn't even open the door. There was something up against it. Finally, I saw what it was. That awning was filled with water. It was like a swimming pool, and it was bulging down, that old bloated awning, all the way sagging down. I pushed the awning up and got the door open, and I said, "Joyce, we're going to lose the whole cabana if we don't get this water off of here. Come and help me." And so I put my hands up to push, thinking I could push it out, but it just went over here. And I said, "Joyce, let's push together." But we weren't able to do it. And every place you put your hand on that awning, it began to leak, and the water would run down your elbow, under your arms, down into your pajamas pants, and onto the ground. And, after a while, we got to laughing, because it was absolutely ridiculous us trying to push that water out of that awning. Somehow, we did manage to get it up. I went out the next morning to look what caused that. All the stakes had come out of the ground. Now, I had put some stakes in the ground, and had some cords tied to those stakes, but the stakes were only about that big and the cords were only about, oh, I don't know, maybe, ten feet long. And I learned something about that. If you want your tent to stay up, if you don't want it to come down on your head, you have to lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes, which I did, and it never came down again.

Now, that's what our verse is about. Look at it here in Isaiah chapter 54: "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear, break forth into singing, and cry aloud, that thou didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare not; lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes." That's where we got the theme for this year's Love Offering, out of these wonderful verses from Isaiah. What our Lord is telling us is that He wants us to be in a tent enlargement program. And I want us to break this verse down into three parts.

I. The Children That God Desires

And, first of all, I want us to think about the children that God desires—the children that God desires. Just write it down: God wants children in His forever family. Now, this verse reply applies, primarily, to Israel. It's talking about a time when Israel, that had been spiritually barren, would bring forth fruit to God, and Israel would populate the

world with those believers in Christ. And I believe that's going to happen. You read Revelation chapter 7, 144,000 Jewish evangelists are going to bring many, many souls to Jesus Christ. That's the primary application. But there is a principle that's taught here that applies to us today, and will always apply, and that is this: that God wants more children in His family. I hope you believe that, and I hope you understand that. And the way for children to get in God's family is for them to be born again. And so, I want us to think about our responsibility and our joy of bringing children to the Lord.

Now, in the Bible times, if a woman was barren, that is, if she could not conceive, that was a reproach and a sign of great sadness—unlike some women today who can have children but would rather have a career or do other things. No. If you're married, the normal plan is for you to have children. Now, I realize there are some of you who would give anything if you could conceive and bear a child. You're like Rachel in the Bible. Rachel said, "O God, give me children or I die." And God heard her prayer. And she brought forth Joseph, who would one day deliver Israel. And you need to pray for a child, and maybe God will use your child in a very wonderful way.

But if you are barren spiritually, what God is talking about here is spiritual children, children born into His forever family. Now, if you don't have any spiritual children, then you ought to cry out to God. Say, "O God, give me a burden for souls. Give me some spiritual children that I can meet in heaven."

Notice what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4, verse 15: "For though we have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." Are you a spiritual father to someone? Are you a spiritual mother to someone? Now, listen, folks. God desires more children. And if you're not saved, God wants you to be one of them. John 1:11 and 12 says about Jesus, "He came unto his own and his own received him not. But to as many as received him, gave them the right—the power, the authority—to become the children of God." Look up here and let me tell you something. If you're not saved, or you do not have the assurance of your salvation, this is why Jesus suffered, bled, and died. The chapter prior to this is Isaiah chapter 53. And in Isaiah chapter 53, the Bible says that the Lord Jesus will see His children, His descendants, after His death, burial, and resurrection. God is in the business of gathering children to Himself.

You read in Hebrews chapter 2 where the Bible says, "For this reason Jesus suffered, bled, and died, that He might bring many sons into glory." God wants more children. God wants a big, big family. And when you bring somebody to Christ, there's no greater joy. He says in this verse, "Sing—sing because you are barren and now you're bringing forth children."

You know, I get more joy out of leading a person to Christ than I did when I got saved, because I know more about what is happening to them than I knew what was

happening to me when I got saved. What a joy to lead souls to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we need to be concerned about the unsaved. You say, “Well, Pastor, you’re just concerned about numbers.” Well, God’s got a book in the Bible called the Book of Numbers. And if you’re not concerned about numbers, numbers make no difference to you, I want you to meet me down here after the service. I want to trade some of my one-dollar bills for some of your ten-dollar bills. No. Numbers are important because every number is a precious soul.

There was a motivational speaker who got a white chart about so big. Right in the center of that chart was a big black circle, a black dot. And he held it up before his sales force and said to each one of them, “What do you see?” One said, “A black dot.” To another, “What do you see?” He said, “A black dot.” To another, “What do you see?” “A black dot.” “A black dot.” “A black dot.” And then he said, “Isn’t it strange that all of you saw the black dot, but none of you saw the white all around it?”

Now, friend, that black dot represents self-concern. O God, bless me. Bless my family. Heal me. God, give me a job. God, help them through this sorrow, and so forth. And we can pray that way, but we need also to see the white all around. Jesus said, “Lift up your eyes; look on the fields, for they are white already unto harvest.” Your son, your daughter, your mother, your father, your friend, your family, your neighbor needs Jesus. Do you believe that? They need Jesus. You know what gives God joy? When a newborn babe comes into the family. God desires children. And a church that’s not evangelistic is not worth the property that it’s built on. A church exists by evangelism like a fire exists by burning. We will grow and glow, or we will dry and die. We will evangelize or we will fossilize. This church cannot just simply sit on her laurels.

Now, friend, if we are not concerned about lost souls, if we say, “Well, Bellevue is big enough,” you know what we’re saying? The rest of the world can go to hell. That’s what we’re saying. Now, you say, “Well, we need to help others to grow.” We do that, but we cannot stop reaching souls for Jesus Christ just because we’re helping others. If we reach this world, this city, for Jesus Christ, we’re going to have to have a lot of Bellevues. We cannot get too big, because we’re going to tell you that God says we are to enlarge the place of our habitation. God desires children. Now, that’s the first thing I want you to see: the children God desires.

II. The Covering That God Designs

Here’s the second thing: the covering that God designs. God knows, when the children come and are born, then they have to have a covering. They have to have a tent. They have to have a place to live. And so, He says in verse 2, “Enlarge the place of thy tent.”

He’s talking here to Bedouins, these people who were nomadic. That is, they would travel. They’d take up the tent pegs and move on over here for their flocks and their

sheep. And, they would move.

I've seen those Bedouin tents all over Israel when we visited Israel. One time, I was invited inside of a Bedouin tent. Mostly, we would go by on the bus and look at them, but our guide knew this particular family, so he said, "Let's go here and stop and visit with these people." So when we went there, there was this big tent, and I was invited inside the tent. And they treated me like a chieftain or something because I was leading the group, so they gave me the place of honor. Inside that tent were dogs. Inside that tent were goats. Inside that tent were sheep and chickens and people. I mean, it was just a big tent and the sides were up. You could come and go. In the center of that tent was a fire burning. And I sat down on a Persian rug in front of that fire. And it was the summertime. It had a fire inside the tent. And there was a coffee pot on the fire. They didn't know I was coming, but the coffee was there. And they said, "Here, this is for you." And they poured some coffee in a little cup, a very small little cup. I understood why when I took the first sip. It had a viscosity of about 30 weight. And I thought, dear Lord, has this cup ever been washed in a thousand years? What is in this cup? You know, I tell people, "Jim, when we go to the Holy Land, don't eat anything or drink anything on the street because we don't have resistance for what they have resistance for. I said, "Now, Lord, I'm a guest here. Here goes." And I drank that coffee. It was bitter and sweet at the same time. In a way, it smelled like perfume to me. But I drank that coffee.

Now, what He's talking about here are children. When you have children, you've got to have a Bedouin tent that is bigger than the last one was. And I can just imagine a woman of that day saying to her husband, "Caleb, guess what? "Well, what?" "We're going to have another child." He says, "Another one?" "Yes, Caleb, another child." He says, "Well, that's wonderful." She says, "But, Caleb, we've got to have a bigger tent. This tent is not big enough for all of our children. You're going to have to enlarge this tent. You're going to have to make it bigger because we can't just take these children and chunk them in the back yard. "You don't put a newborn baby in a deep freeze, either. They have to have care and nurture.

So, when God says to enlarge the place of thy habitation, He's not talking about a literal tent. This is all figurative. He's talking about millions of people who will come to Christ through the testimony of Israel. Well, you can't build a tent that big. You have to understand what He's talking about. He's talking about a covering for God's people. He's talking about care and nurture and taking care of God's people.

You see, it's not enough for us to get people saved. We must give them covering. We must give them care. We must have a tabernacle, a tent for them to dwell in. And that's what He's talking about here when He says that we are to enlarge the place of our covering.

Now, let me just stop here for a moment and think about the word enlarge. Say it—enlarge. All right, think about the word spare not, two words. Say, spare not. Now, think about the word lengthen. Say, lengthen. Now, put those together—enlarge, spare not, lengthen. Now, you know what all of those things tell us? That God is a big God, and God wants us to think big and not small.

There are a lot of people who just simply think small. They're small people. I don't mean they're small physically. You can be small physically and have a heart as big as this auditorium. Stephen Olford was not a hulk of a giant, but what a heart he had. He might have weighed 140 pounds, but he weighed about 2,000 pounds when he was in the pulpit because he had a big vision, a big mind. But there are people who are little. We have some bantam Baptists and some little Lutherans and some midget Methodists and some pee wee Presbyterians. They're just small—small in heart. They cannot see. They cannot want to grow. They cannot look beyond their horizon.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, how can you tell whether or not a person is a small person in the sight of God?

Number one: A small person has small thoughts about God. A small person doesn't have a big God. God is a big God. Little men believe in a little God. Remember that man who hid his talent in the ground when he should have invested it? When his lord came and remonstrated with him, he said, "Well, look. I knew that you were a hard man, that you reaped where you didn't sow. And that's the reason I hid it." Now, if you'll think about that talent, when Jesus rebuked the man in the parable, why did that man hide his talent in the ground? For the same reason that some of us are hiding our talent in the ground. He believed that God was a little God, and so he acted like his God was a little God. He's saying, "God is so mean, God is so selfish, that I'm going to be like God." Friend, listen. We have a big God. He wants us to do big things. The Bible says the people who know their God shall do exploits.

Now, let's find out how you have a little spirit, little thoughts toward God. Really, your faith will show what kind of a God you believe in. Little people have little faith in a little God. Big people have big faith in a mighty God. Faith is so powerful.

Archimedes, the philosopher and the mathematician, said, "If you'll give me a fulcrum and a lever, I will move the world—just give me a lever and give me a fulcrum." What is a fulcrum? It's something that the lever rests upon. Now, look up here and let me share something. The Word of God is that fulcrum. Faith is that lever. And with faith, we can move the world, and heaven also. We need a great faith because we serve a great God. And if you have little faith, it's because you have a little God. Little people don't trust God as they ought to trust God.

Now, your giving also is going to show the size of your God. Now, if you just tip God, offer God an unworthy sacrifice, it shows that you love your money more than you love

your God, because your God is not big enough.

He put ten dollars in the plate and sung with might and main,
“When we asunder part, it gives us inward pain.”

People who are just stingy. Church, you cannot out-give God. Now, I don't mean that you can give in order to get rich. If that's the reason you give, you give for the wrong reason. But if you give what God the Holy Spirit lays upon your heart, if you give what the Bible teaches, I will guarantee you, the Bible says, “Give and it shall be given unto you.” You shovel out, and God shovels in, but God has a bigger shovel. God is a big God. And your giving is going to measure what you think of God.

And your tendency to worry shows that you have a small God. Do you know what worry is? Worry is a way of saying, “God, You're not big enough for this problem.” Amen? That's what worry is. You're saying, “Now, God, this problem is bigger than You are.” There's no such thing. God is bigger than your worry.

Martin Luther, the great reformer who wrote the song, one of my favorites, “A Mighty Fortress is our God,” that was a great man: great in intellect, great in spiritual power, great in Bible knowledge. But sometimes Martin Luther would have periods of despondency. He would get depressed. And, from reading about him, unless somebody told us that, we would not know that. But sometimes Martin Luther would get in his basement study, shut everybody out, pull down the blinds, and just sit there and brood. He'd just close down shop. People would try to pick up his spirit. People would try to encourage him, but he'd just sit there.

One day, his wife, whose name was Katherine, decided she would cure him. And she put on a black dress, and black hat, black gloves, like a person would wear to a funeral, and she appeared before him. He looked up and said, “Katrinka, who is dead?” She said, “Husband, haven't you heard? God is dead.” He said, “Katrinka, that is blasphemy!” She said, “Aye, husband, it is; and it is blasphemous for you to live like God is dead.” Amen?

Now, when you worry, when you get despondent, it just may be a sign that your God is not big enough. You think this problem is too big for God.

Now, the way you react to obstacles can tell whether or not your God is a big God. You see, there are no problems too big to solve; just people too small to solve them. You can tell the size of a man by what it takes to stop him.

They tried to head Paul off. They had built a prison in front of him. He's goes through that prison and comes out on the other side with the jail doors under one arms and a convert under the other. He said, “I've learned that in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” He said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Now, listen to me. The devil has no power, the flesh has no temptation, the world has no allurements that you cannot be victorious over. Now, you can be small and you

can say, “These obstacles keep me from God,” but they’re not obstacles, not when you see them correctly.

We call this property we’re on our Canaan, because we named it after the Bible saints who claimed Canaan. But Joshua sent out twelve spies. Ten of them came back and said, “We can’t take the land. It is beautiful with corn and wine, oil and pomegranates, and honey and milk. But we can’t take the land because there are giants in the land—giants, great giants. And when we saw them, we felt like grasshoppers. We were grasshoppers in their sight, and we were, in our own sight.” But Caleb and Joshua said, “Let us go up at once, for we are well able to possess it.” Thank God for the Calebs, and thank God for the Joshuas.

What was the difference between Caleb and Joshua and those other people? Very simple: those other people, those ten grasshoppers, those ten spies, were looking at those giants and thinking, how much bigger than us are those giants. Caleb and Joshua looked at the same giants and said, “Look how much smaller they are than God is.” God has victory for you.

Now, it doesn’t mean it’s going to be all honey and no bees. They didn’t go into Canaan in a rocking chair. But what he is saying is this: that, “No weapon that is formed against thee shall stand, and every tongue that is raised against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is for me, saith the Lord.” That’s the last verse in this chapter that we’re looking at.

Now, if you cower before your enemies, if you have the spirit of cowardliness, it means simply this: that your God is too small. If you have small ambitions, it means your God is too small. Do you think that God is finished with you now? No, friend. Listen. God has a great future for you, and cowardliness is just simply a way of saying, “I don’t believe God can give me the victory.” Greater is He that is in you than he that is the world. Ambitions, small ambitions, show a small God.

Well, we’ve got to move on, but are you thinking with me? First of all, just think about the children God desires. And then, think about the covering that God has designed. When God gives us these newborn babes, God wants us to enlarge the place of our inhabitation. Now, that doesn’t stand for a literal tent, but it stands for programs, it stands for care, it stands for discipleship, it stands for love; that when God gives us these children, God expects us to take care of them. Do you believe that?

Did you see these 140 kids up here with these violins? Aren’t you glad that we had a tent that they could come under? Aren’t you glad that they could come with this musical program? You know, the devil is a musician. You read in Ezekiel 28, the Bible says he has tabrets, or pipes, within him. When he would speak, it would be like a grand pipe organ. And the devil, his name Lucifer means light bearer. And the devil has taken light and music and sound and Hollywood and all of these things to siphon off God’s

children. We need to put a tent over them. We need to protect them. A part of our Love Offering is to do just that. We're going to enlarge our children's ministry. Not enlarge the building; enlarge the ministry. And that's a part of what the Love Offering is for. It's going to be—believe me, folks—it's going to be all glorious.

We're going to buy, God willing, some beautiful new buses so our children will be safe, and our seniors will be safe, when they go from here to take the gospel across America, and to be disciplined and cared for.

And God helping us, we're going to think big enough to reach out here and miles away to buy another site to build another church, in God's timing. But we want to get the property now while it's possible to get it. Can you imagine how difficult it would be to get this property we're on now if we had waited till this time? I mean, we wouldn't have gotten it unless God just gave us a truckload of gold.

We have to look to the future. We have to believe about the future. We have to enlarge the place of our habitation. There's a covering that God desires. Now, church, we can't be lackadaisical about it. We cannot be indifferent about it. God says, "Spare not." God says, "Enlarge." God says, "Stretch forth." That's the spirit of the Bible. Again, I remind you that the Bible says, "The people who know their God shall do exploits."

III. The Conviction That God Desires

Now, let's move finally and quickly to the third thing that I want to lay on your heart about this passage of Scripture—and that is the conviction that God desires—the conviction that God desires. Now, listen. When you enlarge your tent, you have to deepen your stakes. Now, if you don't, your tent's going to fall down like our awning cabana. You just wait till a storm comes along. I'm concerned about Bellevue Baptist Church, that if we get bigger without getting deeper, it's just a matter of time till the thing falls down on our heads. You see, it's not just nickels and noses. We have got to have some rock-ribbed convictions. Now, I'm praying that God will give us another pastor, and one of the things I want for that pastor is some convictions. I mean, some convictions where he will not stutter or stammer, that he will not be afraid. If God be for him, who can be against him?

Let me mention some convictions I want us to have. We need to build deeper in holiness. We need to put the stake of holiness down. God wants us to be a holy people. Are you concerned about holiness?

We need to put down deep into the ground Bible knowledge. This must always be a Bible church. Pop psychology and entertainment and music and all of these things can never take the place of the Word of God. And this pulpit must be central, preaching the Word of God.

We need to put down the stakes of Spirit-anointing. What good is the Word of God

without the Spirit of God? We need to pray, “O God, help us to be a Spirit-filled church.” When people come into this place, they can sense the anointing of Almighty God.

We need to put down the stake of faithfulness. You know, there are certain people who just travel from one church to another. J. B. Gambrell, a pastor of yesterday and a great man of God, said, “Some people are like the neighborhood dog. The neighborhood dog doesn’t belong to anybody. He doesn’t have a collar. He doesn’t have a home. He just goes from one house to another house. He doesn’t bark to keep strangers away from any particular house. He will not get in any fights, because nothing is worth fighting over. He’s just the neighborhood dog.” Dr. Gambrell said, “I’ve known a lot of church members just like that dog. They’re first cousin to that dog. They don’t belong anywhere. They don’t wear any collar. They’re not a part of any particular program. If there’s a crowd over here, a church over here, they’ll go over here. And they’ll go over here. And they’ll say, “Well, one church is just as good as another.” You know the thing with that is that they don’t believe any church is worth getting in and getting serviced, or serving and being a part of it.”

Now, don’t be like that neighborhood dog. You need to find a church. And this is your church, Bellevue. You need to get into this church and say, “It is my church.” And what we need to do is to drive deep the stake of faithfulness.

You know, we’re developing some people now who say, “Well, I don’t feel like going to church this morning,” or, “we’re going to the lake,” or, “we’re going here or there,” and so they miss church. Now, there is a legitimate vacation, but, friend, you are not to take the time we’re to be gathered together in the name of Jesus trivially. You need to be faithful. God, give us faithful members. This church has been built on the faithfulness of her members. And so, we need to go deeper in faithfulness.

We need to go deeper in stewardship, in giving. I read somewhere that if the average church had every member on welfare—if my memory’s correct—and they all tithed, the offerings would be doubled. You can’t out-give God. You say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, you preach on money all the time.” Well, number one: I don’t do it. I don’t preach on money as much as I ought to. And number two: it’s not money that God needs. God wants you. God wants your heart. That’s the reason He’s teaching us to give, to tithe, and to give beyond the tithe.

I read somewhere about a farmer who had two boys. While the other boys were out playing and fishing, playing baseball, this farmer had his boys in the field plowing corn. Somebody said to the farmer, “Look. Don’t work those boys so hard. You don’t need all that corn.” The farmer said, “Mister, I’m not raising corn; I’m raising boys.”

You think God is raising money? Look. God says, “If I were hungry, would I ask you?” Listen. The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof. What God is trying to do, wanting to do, is to enlarge our stewardship, our faithfulness. And, as I’ve said before, if

we would just bring money to the Love Offering and put it in a furnace and burn it up, you'd still get the blessing by giving. You say, "Pastor, are you going to do that with our money?" No, I'm not going to burn it up. We're going to spend it for great things. But, you know, in the Bible, in the Old Testament, they would bring what they called a burnt offering. It served no utilitarian purpose, none whatsoever, except to give God the glory. Can you understand that—that we give for the glory of God? God is growing people. Stewardship is the way that men get money and God gets and grows men.

Conclusion

Now, let me come to the bottom line. And I say this to you every year. Soon I hope you'll memorize it. I'm going to give you some facts very quickly. And if anybody doesn't agree with these, I want you to stand up and shout out and say, "I don't agree." I mean that. And you have the privilege to do it. All right now, listen. You ready? Okay now, listen.

Number one: God knows what the need is. Do you disagree with that? God knows what the need is. Okay?

Number two: God knows what part of that need He wants to meet through me. Do you agree with that? Sure! I mean, how could you disagree?

Number three: God will reveal what He wants me to do if I will go to Him sincerely and ask Him. Do you agree to that? I mean, would God want you to do something He wouldn't let you know what it is?

Next, what God reveals to me to do, I can do by His grace. Would God ask you to do something you cannot do? Of course not! The Lord said of Mary of Bethany, "She hath done what she could." God is not asking what you cannot do; He's asking what you can do. What God lays upon your heart, you can do.

Next, when I do what God lays upon my heart, I must trust God to enable me to do it. Now, if I give just out of my own ingenuity and out of my surplus, then I don't have to trust God. Get it? Okay.

Now, when I trust God, when I give what God lays on my heart, then I get the joy, and God gets the glory. That's what it's all about.

This church has a great tradition of Love Offering. So many of the blessings that we enjoy are the fruit of our annual Love Offering. Now, I'm aware of the fact that there are some who just don't like offerings. Well, I'm sorry that you feel that way. I'm aware of the fact that this coming Sunday there may be some people who will deliberately stay away because it's going to be Love Offering Sunday. Well, I'm sorry you feel that way, but we're going to have a Love Offering anyway. You don't mind if the rest of us want to give? You say, "Well, Pastor, you're trying to put pressure on me." Not at all! I want God to put all the pressure He wants, but I'm not trying to put any pressure on you. I want

God to do it. If you find somebody in this church putting pressure on you about the Love Offering, you come tell me, and I'll tell Jesus on him. I just want you to say, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" And, friend, if you do what God tells you to do, as best you know, no matter how much is given, big or little, next Sunday, you will have victory, amen? I want next Sunday to be a victory time for you. Love Offering here at Bellevue is one of the most glorious times we know in all of the year. If you've never been through a Love Offering, you will understand that it is all glorious. Now, you can give much if God lays it on your heart. You can give little if that's all God encourages you to give. But just do what God would tell you to do. And I hope at the close of the day we'll say, "All glory to the Lamb."

I want to sum it up. There are the children that God desires. He wants more children in His family. There is the covering that God designs. God wants us to have a program to take care of these children. And there is the conviction that God demands. We have to put our stakes in the ground deeply. Say amen.

All right now, here's what we're going to do. We're going to have a gospel invitation. If you want the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, I want to invite you to leave your seat and come forward. You say, "Pastor, what would I say when I go down there?" Just say, "I want to be saved." We'll take a Bible and guide you in this decision. You know that you're a sinner. You believe that Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross for you. You believe that God raised Him from the dead. You put your faith where God has put your sins—on the Lord Jesus Christ—and God will save you.

Now, when we stand and sing, if you're willing to give your heart to Jesus Christ today—and I hope that many of you are—you just leave your seat and come down one of these aisles. A minister will be standing here at the head of each of these aisles to welcome. "Pastor, what should I say?" Just say, "I'm trusting Jesus." And we'll take a Bible and guide you in this decision very quietly, very courteously, and seal it with you in prayer. Now, if you're in the balcony, you can move over here to my right and your left beneath this banner over here that says Redeemer. And over here underneath this banner that says Messiah somebody is waiting to receive you.

Now, there are others of you who need a church home, and you say, "You know, I want to be a part of this program. I want to be a part of reaching souls for Jesus. I want to be a part of enlarging our care. I want to be a part of driving down stakes deep. I want to be a part." Well, I invite you to come this morning, and you say—if you're already saved and you need a church home—you come and you say to the minister, "I want to place my membership here." And he'll tell you and show you how you may become a member of this church.

Now, respectfully, I'm going to ask that no one leave during the invitation. Hopefully, we'll all be in a spirit of prayer. If you're with a friend who needs to make a decision, you

may volunteer to come forward with your friend. How beautiful it is to see one friend bring another friend to Jesus Christ.

Let's stand for prayer. Stand right now and bow your heads in prayer. Father God, O Father, speak to every heart. Draw the lost to Jesus. And, Lord, give us, in service and fellowship, those that You want to be a part of our fellowship. In Your wonderful name we pray. Amen. Now, you step out and come right now.

A Nation in Crisis

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 30, 1998

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 59:1–4

“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”

ISAIAH 59:2

Outline

Introduction

I. A Diet of Deception

II. A Web of Wickedness

III. A Trashing of Truth

Conclusion

Introduction

Be finding in your Bibles the book of Isaiah chapter 59, and when you've found it, would you look up here? And may I tell you, as you're finding it, that our beloved United States of America is in a crisis. And the title of the message today, A Nation in Crisis. One by one, the lights of decency and the lights of hope are being blown out in America. And it seems that Americans are content to have scoundrels in leadership, so long as they give us prosperity. But one day, calamity will come; one day, we will face perhaps international terrorism, perhaps unparalleled economic reversal, perhaps natural disasters over which we have no control whatsoever, and then we will fill our churches, and we will turn our eyes upward, and we will dial 9-1-1, but there'll be no answer. The line will be dead. First Samuel chapter 8, verse 18, says, "And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which you have chosen you, and the Lord will not hear you in that day." You'll cry out; you'll say, O God, have mercy. You'll pray, and your prayers won't be answered. Why is that?

Well, look in Isaiah chapter 59, verse 1: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that it cannot hear. God is not palsied and God is not deaf, but,"—verse 2—"your iniquities have separated between you and your God and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity. Your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice nor any pleadeth for truth, they trust in vanity and speak lies. They conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity." Now,

what is Isaiah saying to a sinful nation of that day? God is well able to hear your prayers. It's not that He cannot hear your prayers; it is that He will not hear your prayers, because your sin has created a barrier between you and a holy God. And Isaiah tells us what the sin of that day was, and how it tracks and parallels the sin of our day.

First of all, look in verse 2: they had bloody hands—bloody hands. America is swimming in an ocean of blood; a modern holocaust has stained and flooded America. The blood of some 30 million pre-born babies cries out from the ground against us since 1972, that horrendous Roe v. Wade ruling, when nine men, dressed in black robes said that a little pre-born babies can be treated as a piece of protoplasm. And we in America are now killing babies at the rate of 4,000 a day. Notice what Isaiah said: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God. Your sins have hid his face from you." Verse 3: "Your hands are defiled with blood." When you ask a politician about abortion, he'll dodge the issue. He'll tell you, that's a moral decision, it is a religious decision; that's not a proper forum for politics, and that needs to be studied in the church between the priest, the rabbi, the pastor. It is a personal decision, not a political decision. But if the priest, the rabbi, or the pastor speaks about it, they'll rise up, and say, Why doesn't he stay out of politics? And, meanwhile, the babies die. And, we are swimming in an ocean of blood, and the violence of our day has surpassed the days of Noah, the days of Lot. King Herod is in the background today. One man has wisely said, Today we're living in the day where twelve-year-olds are having babies, fifteen-year-olds are killing each other, seventeen-year-olds are dying of AIDS, and eighteen-year-olds are graduating from high school with a diploma they can't read. That's where we are in America today—bloody hands.

But then, he goes on to say, not only bloody hands, but lying lips. Again, look, if you will, in verse 3: "Your lips have spoken lies; your tongue hath muttered perverseness." I've been watching the news programs lately, and we've been talking about lies in high places and low places, and the going merchandise among those news programs is, Well, everybody lies—everybody lies. What's so rare about lies? Everybody lies. U.S. News & World Report, in a report, said this—quote: Governmental officials dissemble, scientists falsify research, workers alter career credentials to get jobs—and then the magazine asks, What's going on here? The answer, a growing number of social critics fear, is an alarming decline in basic honesty.

Bloody hands, lying lips; number three, wicked hearts. Look, if you will, in verse 4: "None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth. They trust in vanity and speak lies. They conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity." It's terrible to raise teenagers today, because we have a day of moral ambivalence. We have a day of ethical fogginess. What are we being told today? We're being told that adultery is really no big deal. Everybody does that. Friend, I want to tell you, if a man will not keep a sacred vow

before Almighty God to his wife, I wouldn't trust him to keep any promise anywhere anytime. We're being told today that private morality can be disconnected from public service. That's not what God's Word says. Ecclesiastes chapter 10, verse 1, says this: "The dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor. So doth a little folly in him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor." Dead flies in the ointment, friend—something stinks in America.

Theodore Roosevelt, a man of yesteryear, won his first major election back in 1898. He was elected governor of New York. About that time, Theodore Roosevelt wrote something that's so pertinent to our day and our age I want you to listen to it. Sounds like it was written for today. But listen to it. He says, No community is healthy where it is ever necessary to distinguish one politician among his fellows because he is honest. Honesty is not so much a credit as an absolute prerequisite to efficient service to the public. Unless a man is honest, we have no right to keep him in public life. It matters not how brilliant his capacity. It hardly matters how great his powers of doing great service on certain lines may be. Now, what Teddy Roosevelt said was, if he's not honest, then he's just simply disqualified. Again, Teddy Roosevelt said this—and I quote: If a man lies under oath or procures the lie of another under oath, if he perjures himself or suborns perjury, he is guilty under the statute law. Under the higher law, under the great law of morality and righteousness, he is precisely as guilty if, instead of lying in a court, he lies in the newspaper or on the stump, and in all probability, the evil effects of his conduct are infinitely more widespread and more pernicious. The difference between perjury and mendacity is not in the least one of morals or ethics; it is simply one of legal forums. Now, what he is saying is the same thing that Jesus said when He said, "When you speak, let your yea be yea and your nay, nay." It doesn't matter whether you're under oath or whether you're not under oath.

We're being told today that somehow public approval validates wrong behavior. This same Isaiah, whose book we're reading, said, in Isaiah chapter 5, verse 20, "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." We're being told that if a man is approved by society that that is good. It is not good, no matter how many times we take a poll. We're being told that a lie about adultery is permissible, and that a lie while under oath is not acceptable. And Jesus said, Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay.

Now, what has brought about this condition? Why is it that Isaiah's people came to a place where they would look up to God and say, God have mercy on us, and God said, No, I'm not going to hear your prayer? What brought about bloody hands, lying lips, and wicked hearts? Three things. I want you to see them right here in this text.

I. A Diet of Deception

Number one, the people had been feeding on a diet of deception. Look in verse 5: "They hatch vipers' eggs—they hatch vipers' eggs—and weave the spider's web. He that eateth of their eggs dies, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper." Now, if you'll look at verse 5, and link verse 5 to verse 4, you're going to find out that those viper's eggs, those snake eggs that he's talking about, that are hatched in hell's incubators, they are devilish lies and philosophies that are being hatched, were hatched in Isaiah's day, and also being hatched in our day. Lying, poisonous philosophies that are being swallowed down by adults, and by youth alike. Our world, our nation, is on a snake egg diet, a diet of deception. The incubators that hatch those eggs are materialism, humanism, New Ageism, liberalism; they've hatched these out. The old granddaddy serpent who has spawned and fertilized these eggs is Satan himself, because he is a liar and a father of all lies. There are certain philosophical underpinnings that are so incipient in American life today that they are poisoning our educational, our philosophical, our religious, and political outlook, and our young people are going to public schools, and each morning they're served a snake-egg omelet. They swallow these things down.

You see, dramatic changes have taken place in America and in twenty years, twenty years that most of us have lived through, there has been a complete reversal. From 1962 to 1982, let me tell you what happened in twenty years. In 1962, the Supreme Court ruled that voluntary prayer in public schools is unconstitutional. Now, they tell us that our children must be in the public schools, but they say, You cannot have voluntary prayer. We'll put you there, but you cannot pray. That's 1962. Then, in 1963, the same court dismantled classroom Bible reading—no room for the Bible in our halls of education. Then, in 1980, the posting of the Ten Commandments was declared unconstitutional. Now, when kids are bringing kids to school, we cannot post on the walls of our schoolrooms, "Thou shalt not kill." In 1982, the court prohibited the teaching of biblical creation. In twenty years, God has been expelled from our public schools, and been told not to return. Now, abortion, infanticide, euthanasia all become possible in a world where you believe that man is the creation of some blind, evolutionary force, that he's not created in the image of God, but he's evolved from some primordial ooze.

So what do we have today? What is it like? Well, today, children, if they go to school, must receive parental permission before a school-based clinic can prescribe an aspirin—an aspirin. But still, in America, a little teenage girl can be given an abortion—abortion guidance counsel, and the abortion itself—without the parents even knowing that this is taking place. That is in America. School-based clinics dispense birth control devices and parental counseling without notification or approval. What is happening in America is that our kids are being served snake eggs everyday. Prayer is out;

policemen are in. Bibles are out; values clarification is in. The Ten Commandments, yes, they're out, but rape and armed robbery, gang warfare, murder and cheating are in. Creation instruction is out; evolution and blind chance is in. Corporal punishment is out; disrespect and rebellion are in. Traditional values are out; unwed motherhood is in. Abstinence is out; condoms and abortion are in. Learning is out, and social engineering is in. History is out; revisionism is in. Is it any wonder that the suicide rate of our teenagers is soaring, runaway, statistics are soaring, promiscuity problems, violent crime? Our kids are not being raised in a society, in a school, that says that they have rights that are given to them, unalienable rights given by Almighty God, but they are told that the universe itself existing—not creating, not created—and the wisdom that built this great nation is being laughed at.

But here's the sad thing. Look, if you will, in verse 5: "They hatched vipers' eggs, they weaved the spider's web. He that eateth their eggs dieth,"—now watch that—"and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper." When you come against these things, and try to stamp them out, all you do is create more snakes. To stamp out these snake eggs is not the answer.

II. A Web of Wickedness

Now, not only is there a diet of deception, but that is compounded by a second thing in America that makes our nation a nation in crisis. Not only a diet of deception, but a web of wickedness—a web of wickedness. Look again in verse 5, if you will. He says here in verse 5, "They weave the spider's web." I got down my encyclopedia and read something about spiders. I don't know whether you have a love affair with spiders or not. I don't. But spiders weave a web, almost invisible, very sticky. And the purpose of that web is to catch an unsuspecting insect who will fly into that web, become entangled in that web, where the spider can come out and wrap him out in more strands of that web; then the spider injects poison into the body of that insect, and then the spider sucks that insect dry.

Now, Satan has woven some webs, and he is poisoning and sucking dry the generation of young people today. Satan has a network—are you listening to me?—a web of evil that is absolutely terrifying, and our young people can hardly see the web. They don't understand it. There's pornography, for example, the web of pornography. Pastor Rogers, does pornography lead to degeneracy? Pornography is degeneracy. That's what it is. Our kids today can get on the internet and watch unspeakable, unmentionable things, even in school, as they can access these things. At home, they can pick up the phone, dial-a-porn, and listen to lesbian sexual activities, sodomy, rape, incest, bestiality, or sex with other children. There are more adult bookstores in America today than there are McDonald's restaurants. Pornography is a multi-billion dollar

industry. That is a web, and so many kids and adults alike are being caught in it.

Satan has his web of drugs and alcohol, a deadly trap. America is filled today with walking dead whose lives have been sucked dry by the spiders of alcohol and drug abuse. I read recently where students spend 5.5 billion dollars—students spend 5.5 billion dollars—on alcohol, more than they spend on non-alcoholic drinks like Pepsi or Coke or 7-Up, and books put together—on alcoholic beverages. Now, these Madison Avenue people come into the living room through their beer ads, and through their sports ads, and they'll have these boys, as I've said before, out there on the bass boat somewhere hoisting a six-pack, and one of them smiles, and says to the other one, It doesn't get any better than this. Boy, they're right—it always gets worse; doesn't get any better than this. And we have a generation of walking dead who have been sucked dry, embalmed by alcohol.

There's a sticky web of immorality. Young people are being told today there are no fixed standards of right or wrong, and the media, or entertainment, that has created the myth that marital sex, pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex, homosexuality are on the same level as chastity, monogamy, and heterosexuality. And in our so-called sex education classes in many of our schools, they have a three-fold goal, and that is to teach children how to fornicate without guilt, without catching a disease, and without conceiving a baby. That's called sex education today. How would you like your child to go to school and hear what some are being taught? Here's what they're being taught. Here's the textbook. Quote: Premarital sexual intercourse is both acceptable for men and women if they are involved in a stable, loving relationship. It has been suggested by some marriage counseling authorities that all couples should live together before they're married. How would you like that for education? Or listen to this: Often promiscuity is labeled as bad by persons who do not accept this type of behavior; as with other patterns of sexual behavior, one should not pin a good or bad on a practice. Here's another: Morality is individual; it's what you think it is. Your conception of what is right or wrong morally is an individual decision.

May God have mercy upon us when, when these tell us we cannot pray, we cannot read God's Word, we cannot post the Ten Commandments, but we can denigrate God's Word and God's law, and kids today talk about going all the way. My God, that's the one thing they don't do. They haven't gone all the way. They go a little further when they catch a disease along the way. A little further when a baby is conceived and they have to tell a father or mother. A little further if they decide to murder that baby. But they really haven't gone all the way until they stand before a holy God who says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." A holy God who says, "Flee fornication."

III. A Trashing of Truth

Friend, we are in a terrible situation. What has brought about this crisis in America? Number one, a diet of deception. Number two, a web of wickedness. Number three, the trashing of truth—the trashing of truth. Fast forward to verse 12: "For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, our sins testify against us, for our transgressions are with us. And as for our iniquities, we know them. In transgressing and lying against the Lord and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood." Now, watch this: "And judgment is turned away backward and justice standeth afar off." Why has judgment been turned away backward? Why does justice wait in the wings? Here it is: "For truth is fallen in the street and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey." That is, when you stand up and speak against it, you become the bad guy. Really, today—listen—I haven't been preaching this many years as not to know that I am the heavy today, I am the bad guy today, I'm making myself a prey when I say this is wrong, when I speak against these things. When you call for justice, when you call for truth, you become the guy in the black hat. That's the state to which we have come today. But notice what he says—he says there's a traffic jam. Justice, equity cannot come through the streets because truth is fallen, and all of the traffic is backed up, because truth is fallen in the streets.

Well, what caused truth to fall? Notice truth is not dead. There is a traffic jam. Judgment, justice, and equity cannot enter. It's not that truth is non-existence; you can't ever murder truth. It is not that truth is dead; truth will not die. But truth has stumbled; truth is lying prostrate on the ground. Why? Well, she's been knocked down in America by doctors of philosophy, she's been tripped up in America by dishonest politicians, and she's been chloroformed by liberal preachers, and she's lying there in the street. May I say with all of the unction, function, and emotion of my soul—God help me to say it—the job in America today is to put truth back on her feet. That is the job in America: to put truth back on her feet. And I really believe there's not a lot wrong in America that could not be put right quickly, dramatically, if across America, in the pulpits of America, from sea to shining sea, this Sunday, and every Sunday, a generation of preachers would open the book of truth, and preach, Thus saith the Lord God Almighty, without fear or failure.

We're in a situation today that's in a crisis. Why did God write a Bible? He calls that Bible the Word of truth. Why did God send the Holy Spirit? He calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of truth. How does God describe himself? He describes himself as the truth. Who is Jesus? Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the light." What is the church? The church is called the pillar and the ground of truth. Apostle John said, "I have no greater joy than to know that my children walk in the truth." We can get facts from the internet.

There's a difference between facts and truth. Knowledge may double; truth will never double. There is eternal truth. Truth is what food is to your body, light is to your eyes, and melody is to your ears.

Now, you know what most of us want to do? Most of us want to be stamping out snake eggs. Most of us want to be sweeping down spiders' webs, but friend, you stamp out a snake egg, just more snakes. You sweep down a spider's web—you've done it before—it's back the next morning, is it not? We need something that will slay the snake and destroy the spider. And that is truth. That is truth. Only truth—only truth, only truth—can keep this daddy serpent from spawning those eggs. Only truth can keep that spider from weaving those sticky webs. We need to lift up truth in America today, to put truth on her feet. And I want to call upon you and every believer to rededicate himself to the truth. Parents, teach your children to live the truth, to love the truth, to tell the truth, to know the truth, to believe the truth. Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy word; thy word is truth."

Conclusion

Let me give you a proverb here, and I'm almost finished—Proverb 23, verse 23: "Buy the truth and sell it not." Buy the truth and sell it not. There is a prize to possess—it is truth. There is a price to pay—you must buy the truth. You must study it, pore over it, live it, know it. And you must preserve the truth. Don't let anybody take the truth from you. That truth is in God's Word. The early Christians did not argue over the Bible. They loved it, they believed it, they expounded it, they poured it forth as white-hot lava.

Now, one by one, person by person, family by family, city by city, church by church, we've got to take America back. We've got to take America back. My heart is broken over snake eggs, spider webs, and traffic jams. What about you? I'm not talking about the person sitting next to you. What about you? Are you right with God? Do you think it's somebody else's problem? What about your home? What about your business relationships? Have you been feeding on snake eggs? Some right now are wrapped up in spiders' webs. There's only one thing that will set you free. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free." I want to tell you the truth is today that God loves you. The truth is today that Jesus Christ died for you. He carried your sins to the cross and with His blood He paid your sin debt. The truth is that He walked out of that grave, and He has ascended to high hills of glory. The truth is that one day, soon and very soon, I hope, He's coming again. And the truth is, if you will believe on Him and trust Him, He will save you. I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, not only will He save you, but, praise His holy name, He will satisfy you. What you're longing for you'll never find until you find it in the Lord Jesus. And not only will He save you, and satisfy you; He'll sanctify you. He'll begin to make you more and more and more and

more and more like Him. Now, when you come to Jesus, you're not going to sprout wings and get a halo right away; you'll have to grow. But this saving Jesus is the satisfying, sanctifying Jesus. And I'll tell you something else: He'll secure you, He'll keep you, He'll keep you. It's not a matter of your holding onto Him; He'll hold you, if you truly give Him your heart and your life. You know, if I could give my heart to Jesus for you today, I would, but I cannot. I've preached as best I know how. But the Lord sent me here today to tell you that He loves you, and He invites you to give your heart, your home, to Him once and for all, now and forever.

Just say, Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Forgive my sin, and cleanse me, and save me, Lord Jesus. If you can't remember all of that, just say, Lord Jesus, save me, and mean all of that. We're going to sing an invitational hymn in just a moment. The ministers of our church are going to stand here at the head of each of these aisles; a minister will be here at the head of each of these aisles. There'll be a minister under those banners in the corners of the balcony, for those of you in the balcony, and when we sing, Lord, I believe, Lord, I receive, Lord, I confess you now, I want you to do that. I want you to believe, I want you to receive, and I want you to confess Him by leaving your seat and coming forward.

You say, Pastor, in front of all those people? Yes indeed, in front of all of these people, wishing that the whole world could know that you're giving your heart to Jesus. What will I say when I go down there, Pastor? Just tell the minister that you're trusting Jesus. We want to give you some Scripture to stand on, answer any questions we can answer, seal this decision in prayer, and I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, if you trust Jesus Christ, trust Him enough to confess Him as your Lord and Savior, yield your life to Him, He will save you, and He will keep you saved. Just come and say, I'm trusting Jesus.

Others of you need a church home. I'm going to invite you to come, say, I want to place my membership here. Now, not everybody will want to be a member of Bellevue. Very frankly, some will say, I don't want to be a member of a church that preached like you preached this morning. I realize that. There's coming a division in America today. But if you say, Yes, I want to line up with this kind of a message, and I want to be a part of this kind of a fellowship, I want to make this church my place of blessing and my base of service, I invite you to come down one of these aisles, and say, I want to place my membership here.

Some are coming, saying, I'm trusting Jesus. Others are coming, saying, I want to place my membership here. Maybe you're here today with a broken heart. You just need to pray. If you want to come and kneel at one of these kneeling benches without saying a word, just do it. If you want somebody to pray alongside of you, just lift your hand, and one of our workers will drop down and pray for you, right alongside of you,

and just pray for whatever that burden is on your heart.
Some are coming, saying, I'm trusting Jesus. Others coming, saying, I want to place my membership here. Others, perhaps you just want to come kneel and pray. Let's stand together as we sing. Lord, I believe...

Snake Eggs, Spider Webs, and Traffic Jams

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 7, 1988

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 59:1–5, 14

“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.”

ISAIAH 59:1

Outline

Introduction

I. Snake Eggs

II. Spiders Webs

III. Traffic Jams

Conclusion

Introduction

Isaiah, chapter 59, and we’re going to read in a moment, the first four verses. The title of the message, as I’ve already told you, is snake eggs, spider’s webs and traffic jams. That might sound like a frivolous subject, but I can assure you today that I’m deadly serious about what I’m talking about, and there’s nothing frivolous about my message.

As a matter of fact the message that I have for you today is a very heavy message. And I deliver it with a broken heart, because I must confess with this broken heart, that America is in trouble. And I sincerely believe unless something radical and dramatic happens, our days, as the home of the free and the land of the brave are numbered. One by one, we’re seeing the lights of hope and freedom blown out and extinguished in America. And like Israel of old, we pray for our nation, but our prayers don’t seem to be heard. And why is that?

Isaiah 59:1, “Behold the Lord’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save...” now that means that God is not old and palsied, “...neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear...” God is not deaf, “...but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not here...”

Now God says that there is a barrier between his ancient people Israel, and this God of glory, and it is not that God cannot hear, but that God will not hear. And I believe as I

read this passage that the same barrier has come between a Holy God and the United States of America.

Notice what was wrong in that day and in this day. Verse 3, "...for your hands are defiled with blood..." I think today about the slaughter of the innocence. I think of twenty million little pre-born babies, who since *Rowe vs. Wade*, that infamous decision, has stained the soil and flooded America with that blood. And I think of our fingers dripping with blood. Not only for what we've done, but ladies and gentlemen for what we have allowed to be done in America.

I think of the horrible liquor traffic that has turned our highways into slaughter pits. I think of the drug epidemic, that's sucking the life out of so many young people. And I realize that our hands are stained with blood, and then he goes on to say, not only bloody hands, but lying lips. "...Your lips have spoken lies..."

I was reading recently in the *US News and World Report*, an article, that it was entitled this, "A Nation of Liars?" And the article went on to say that our nation has become a nation built on falsehood. And I quote, "...government dissemble, scientists falsify research, workers alter career credentials to get jobs. What's going on here? The answer: a growing number of social critics fear is alarming decline in basic honesty..." then for about five pages this news article went on to show that we have become a land of liars.

But notice, not only are our hands defiled with blood, not only have our lips spoken lies, but our tongues have muttered perverseness. Verse 3, we're living in a time of perverse judgment. "...None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth, they trust in vanity, they speak lies, they conceive mischief, and they bring forth Iniquity..."

How many of you were alive in 1962. Let me see your hands. 1962. Let me tell you what happened in twenty years, from 1962 to 1982. Right before our very eyes, in so called God blessed America, in 1962 supreme court justice Hugo Black ruled that voluntary prayer in public schools, open, vocal, voluntary prayer was no longer constitutional. That is it was unconstitutional. That a freeborn American could not join in with other freeborn Americans on public school grounds and pray openly vocally in the United States of America. That was 1962.

1963 the Schempp decision, Justice Thomas Clark set in motion the dismantling of classroom Bible reading. No longer could we as students begin our classroom activity by reading from the Word of God. The thoughts of the Bible are woven into the warp and woof of our history and into our Constitution. No longer can young people even learn the source through the public reading of God's Word.

Then in 1980, it was ruled that the posting of the Ten Commandments was unconstitutional. The Ten Commandments are now taken from the walls. No longer in so-called God blessed America, for we put on our money "In God We Trust," where we

pledge “One Nation Under God” in our Pledge to Allegiance, can the Ten Commandments be posted on classroom walls. Unconstitutional.

Then in 1982, just twenty short years, the courts prohibited the teaching of creation, in public schools. You can teach evolution; you can read Marx. You can read you can read racy novels, you can you can study everything else, but my dear friend one thing you may not do, you may not pray. You may not read the Bible. You may not post the Ten Commandments, you may not teach that boys and girls, men and women, life as we know it was created. You cannot even teach that as one alternative view.

In only twenty years, God has been expelled from our public schools, and told not to return. What has been the result? I'll tell you what the result is. Today, if a child goes to school and gets sick, he may need parental advise and consent, before he can be given an aspirin in a school base clinic. But that same child, that same young lady, may have an abortion without even parental notification, by the aid of High school counselors. In many places across our land free birth control devices and abortion counseling are given to students in public schools without public not without parental notification or approval.

Something has happened in America that has changed our country from what it once was. As a matter of fact the United States Department of Education funded a study headed by Dr. Paul C. Vitz. And Dr. Vitz was a professor of psychology, is a professor of psychology at New York University.

They released their study to the public. It was the study of the textbooks that are being studied in our schools, primarily in the elementary schools. Textbooks used by millions across America. And I want you to hear what Dr. Vitz, the professor at New York University, professor of psychology, said about the textbooks. He, with his committee released this report. Now, I want you to listen to this.

Now, I'm quoting now “those responsible for these books appear to have deep seated fear of any form of active contemporary Christianity, especially serious committed pro-destinism” that is people like you, “...this fear has led the authors to deny and repress the importance of this kind of religion in American life.

The nature of the bias is clear. Religion, traditional family values, conservative, political and economical positions have been reliably excluded from children's textbooks. The exclusion is particularly disturbing because it is found in a system paid for by tax payers, and one that claims more over to be committed to impartial knowledge and accuracy...” that is all of these people who are spouting about free dissemination of truth, and these who seem to be against censorship have censored from the text books of these children the actual history of our land.

He says and I go on to quote, “...textbooks are so written to present a systematic denial of the history, heritage, beliefs and values of a very large segment of the

American people. They have stripped and denuded the textbooks of the elementary children from the religious culture and heritage and background that we have had as a Judeo-Christian nation.

While that has been taken out, homosexuality and promiscuity and socialism has been put in as acceptable lifestyles..." how has all of this happened? What happened? Well, Isaiah said what happened in his day and since there's nothing new under the sun we can see what has happened in our day.

I. Snake Eggs

I read now in verse 5, "they hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web. He that eateth of their eggs dieth. And that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper..." now what is a cockatrice'? Cockatrice' is an adder, a viper, a poisonous snake. And what Isaiah said had happened to the people of his day. They had been eating, swallowing poison eggs, snake eggs.

Now what does he mean by that? These are deadly philosophies, hatched by the grand daddy serpent himself, in the very incubators of Hell; ideas, philosophies that have been spawned by the devil, swallowed by a nation, that have separated that nation from God.

Now, I want us to look into Satan's incubator in the last century. And I want to show you what has happened to the hearts and minds of our young people and why we got into the problem that we have gotten into. Let me show dear friend what has happened. Let's have a little history lesson.

Back in the 19th century there were five men, who have greatly influenced our life. The first of these I want to mention is George Frederick Hegel, and he had what we call Hegelian philosophy. Now who is Hegel? And what did he teach?

Well, Hegel had this idea of history. It's called a dialectical idea. That is that there are no absolutes. Nothing that you can say that this is absolutely true, or absolutely right, or absolutely wrong. He said there maybe something called over here a thesis that is there is an idea. We'll call it a thesis.

And then he says over here is the opposite idea. Somebody says, I don't agree with that idea, this is an antithesis; an anti-thesis, an antithesis. So here's an idea and the opposite idea. A thesis, called the true and then somebody comes up here with an antithesis, and says I challenge that truth.

And then there's a war between these two, and then he says there comes a new synthesis. That both meet in the middle and you have a new synthesis. That synthesis then moves over here and becomes the thesis.

And then there comes another antithesis, and then there comes a new synthesis, and that's the way history goes. And he said that there these are all just ideas that have

come into the hearts and minds of men, and therefore Hegelian philosophy says there's nothing that you can say is absolutely right; nothing you can say is absolutely wrong; there are no moral absolutes.

Well, if there are no moral absolutes, certainly you couldn't have God. Not the God of the Bible. So, in the last century there came along another man. This man's name was, he was a German philosopher, named Ludwig Feuerbach. And Feuerbach said, Well, where does the idea of God come from? We know there is no God. Well, man needs a God, man wants God, he has these inner desires for a God, so he creates God in his imagination. And so all God is a projection of the inner desire of people who are wanting something fixed, something solid, something substantial in life. And so he just simply creates this idea of God, and I quote from this infidel philosopher who said quote, "...Christianity has in fact long vanished, not only from reason, but from the life of mankind. It is nothing more than a fixed idea..."

All right, there was another man who picked up these two ideas of Hegel and Feuerbach. And he put them together and he thought about them. His name was Karl Marx. He was the founder and father of communism. He applied their thoughts and their ideas to social history.

And he wrote in 1848 a document called "the Communist Manifesto" and he thought this dialectic as a material dialectic, and he came up with dialectical materialism. He says, let's just apply these ideas now to the social order and to the economic order.

And so what he had the idea was that he was going to bring in a godless millennium through a classless society. He would obliterate all classes just homogenize humanity. When he was asked his life's goal he said and I quote, "...it is to dethrone God and destroy capitalism..." and he went on to give that other famous quote, when he said, "...it is not religion that creates man, but man that creates religion..." he got that from Feuerbach.

And then he went on to say, "...it, religion, is the opiate, or the dope, the narcotic of the people..." well, and so the idea of communism, socialism godless communism was born. But the Devil had a few more eggs that he put in the incubator. He's not finished yet, as he wants to poison the hearts and minds of today's youth.

So, he raised up another man who's name was Charles Darwin. And Charles Darwin, as you know, is the father of evolution, who wrote *The Origin of Species* in 1859 and *The Descent of Man* in 1871. His idea, as you know, is all life just happened. That it evolves from some primitive protozoa, from some primordial ooze. That it just happened, man is the result and all life, human and animal, is the result of random choice, and random selection and that it just happened that billions and billions of years would turn frogs into princes.

And it sounds kind of ludicrous, but it's being taught to your children. They don't get

the other side. All they get is this theory of evolution, and they tell us as I told you a few Sundays ago, they're looking for the missing link. Which is a lie, the whole chain is missing, and they know it. But they have forced that upon the minds of our children. That has come from that Darwinian philosophy.

And, but the devil's not finished yet, he has another egg, that he put in the incubator, and that is being swallowed and that was another man, who's name was Sigmund Freud. The Father of modern psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud lived in 1856 to 1939, right over into the time some of us lived.

Now, he tried to figure all of this out and he said well now Feuerbach believes that we create God and that's true, but how do we get our idea of God? Well, he said, we get our idea of God from our father and so our idea of God is just a projection of our father image, and that's what we project into life, and If we think of our father as being tyrannical then we think of God as being tyrannical.

Or if we think of our father as being indulgent we think of God as being indulgent. And then he said that man is motivated chiefly by pleasure, and then he brought the focus in a little bit more erotic pleasure. That everything begins and ends with sex. And that if man is repressed by society in the expression of his sexual desires or fantasies, then that results in unhappiness. And if you continue to repress him like that, then he may get neurotic or psychotic. And so that's the basis of his thinking and that is the under pinning, under lying idea that has come from the extreme permissiveness that we have in society today. Do not repress—just let people express themselves.

And the idea is, whatever's natural is beautiful, and whatever's beautiful must be right, and if it feels good do it. And that has been encapsulated in much less elegant and philosophical terms and as Sigmund Freud would have it, but it has permeated our society.

Now, Satan has taken these five eggs, made an omelet and they're serving them to your children everyday, everyday. Your children are swallowing these eggs, and they're poisoned eggs and you see, if you take these ideas and extrapolate them out, it's very obvious to see what has happened, the spiritual and moral death that results.

For example, only a hundred short years from this came along a man named Adolph Hitler. Adolph Hitler began to read and imbibe and to eat of these poison eggs. And in 1924 he wrote his bible of Nazism, *Mein Kampf*. And here's what Adolph Hitler had to say in *Mein Kampf*, he said and I quote, "...no more than nature desires the mating of weaker with stronger individuals, even less does she desire the blending of a higher and lower race. Since if she did..." and by the way, he had the idea of the Aryan Race and the Jewish race, he said "Since, if she did her whole work of higher breeding over, perhaps hundreds of thousands of years might be ruined with one blow..."

And then he went on to conclude, "...all great cultures of the past perish only

because of the originally created race, died from blood poisoning. The man who creates the culture must be preserved. This preservation is bound up with a rigid law of necessity and the right to victory of the best and strongest in this world..." now, Darwin called that the "Survival of the Fittest."

Uh, that's the same thing that came into Hitler's mind, the best and the strongest. And then he went on to say, those who want to live, let them fight, and those who do not want to fight in this world of eternal struggle do not deserve to live, even if this is hard, this is how it is..." so said, Adolph Hitler. Result, six million Jews in the gas chamber, the survival of the fittest. Might makes right, there is no God, there is no fixed standard of right, there is no fixed standard of wrong.

How has this affected the American educational system? Well, there came along a man named John Dewey, who was taking his PhD at Johns Hopkins University, and John Dewey, was what we call the Father of progressive education. He ate this omelet, he believed it.

As a matter of fact, he was one of the signer's, original signers of the original Humanist Manifesto. You know there was a Humanist Manifesto I and a Humanist manifesto II, signed by leading educators and philosophers and teachers and politicians, and some, God help them clergy, so called clergy. And one of the statements and foundational planks in the humanist manifesto is this, and I quote, "...the universe is self existing and not created. Man is a part of nature, and has emerged as the result of a continuous process..." that is evolution, Darwin, that there is no God, that that we just simply happened...

Now, incidentally, not only was he a signer of the humanist manifesto, but John Dewey who's had so much influence on American education, was one of the founders and a supporter of the ACLU and John Dewey's philosophies in the early twenties in America went right into the teaching colleges of America. And when it did, objective truth fixed truth went out the window. And so you see that everywhere in America.

For example, in the forties in America, and in the fifties, the Supreme Court threw out the idea of a fixed standard of right and wrong and no longer would interpret and apply the laws according to the intention of the writers of constitution, what we'd call with an intentionalist view.

But, they began to interpret with of this new and modern philosophy. When sympathy with Dewey's philosophy and accepted the worldview of no absolutes. And then, so you can understand why all the absolute Ideas of belief in a God, belief in prayer, belief in the Bible, belief in the Ten Commandments, all of these things became the primary targets. They had to go because they stood in the way of this new philosophy.

And that is the reason you'll have teachers today, if they, if you talk about morals, as

I'm going to show you in moment, they will say, well there are no real absolutes. They will not tell their students that premarital sex or extra marital sex is morally wrong. Because moral absolutes are passé' they're gone.

Now, what has happened in America is this. If you can remember, if you're my age, or in that category, you can remember when there was a fixed standard of right and wrong.

As a matter of fact, for 1500 years of history right was thought of as right and wrong was thought of as wrong, and there we didn't equivocate about that and when our founding fathers came in 1776 and signed the Declaration of Independence on July the 4th, they began with these words, "...we hold these truths to be self evident..." that is we don't quibble about this. That all men are endowed by their what, what's that next Word? "...Creator..." did you hear that? Creator! Creator! All men are endowed by their Creator, with certain inalienable, what's the next word? Rights, rights! Rights were right, we don't quibble about this. There was a fixed standard.

Today, young people go to school, they don't believe, they're not taught about a Creator. They're not taught about inalienable rights. They're talking they're taught about a self existing non-created world, and the wisdom upon which our nation was founded has gone out the window, and the foundations have been ripped away, and no wonder the kids are turning to drugs, promiscuity, immorality and suicide.

II. Spiders Webs

Now, that's bad. But it's only step one. Step one is what I want to call snake eggs. Step two, spider's webs. Look again if you will in verse 5, "...they hatch thrice eggs, they weave the spider's web..." now the spider's web is a deadly trap.

Last Friday I got down my Compton's encyclopedia and did some reading about spiders. Spiders are not all that attractive. As a matter of fact, snakes aren't either, for that matter.

I was driving around out east the other day and I saw a big snake about as long as my leg in the road. And he was still alive and he was sunning himself, so I stopped out to get a look at him. And another man...I didn't know what kind he was and I was trying to figure him out. And another man stopped. He was in a pick up truck. He didn't know who I was I'm sure.

He said, what is that? I said, well, it's a snake. Is he alive? He said, well, let's kill the blankity blank. Laughter! And I said, you think we ought to? He said, yeah, let's kill the blankity blank! and so he got a shovel out of his truck. He said, here you kill him, I'm afraid of him. And so I cut off his tail right between his ears, and we got rid of him.

That man had no love for that snake at all. And I really couldn't say I had a lot of compassion on him myself. But you're gonna find out that the couple things people don't

really like, one is snakes, and the other is spiders.

I read in Compton's all spiders all spiders are miniature beasts of prey, but they capture their victims in different ways. Now, I want you to notice, God said that this is the way that the devil operates. Listen, he called the devil like a spider. Some lie in hiding and rush out at a passing insect. The wolf spider chases his prey. The jumping spider stalks and makes a pounce like a cat. Many roam about and cease what ever they meet. Brightly colored little crab spiders hide in flowers, and cease the insects that come for nectar. The garden house and grass spiders trap their victims with their web. Now you can see how clever Satan is.

First of all, he poisons the minds with these snake eggs, and then he builds these sticky traps across the path of these young people. And incidentally the article went on to say what the spider does with his victim once he has immobilized his victim. He then injects poison into the victim and then sucks the juice out of that insect. He leaves the shell, but he sucks the juice out.

He has a stomach that just pumps that insect empty, and just sucks the life out. Does that remind you of the devil? Does it remind you of a generation today? Do you see what's happening to our generation today with these spider's webs.

I don't have time to mention all the spider's webs that I might mention, but think for example of the stick web of pornography. If anybody ever got caught in a web that that is a sticky web, and is so easy to get caught in, it is the web of pornography.

Did you realize that explicit film showing sexual perversion and promiscuity are being shown on cable the television and perhaps the largest form of rental tapes are these pornographic films. And if you think that little children are not watching, then you're wrong. Many of them come home from school and watch them, they put them in the tape players, the tape decks, as a matter of fact 30% of the rapists who were interviewed in prison said they first were announced and they first saw hard core porn when they were between the ages of six and ten years of age little children. They call it adult entertainment, but it inevitably ends up in the hands of children.

I think about dial-a-porn. I was in Washington and talked with the president, President Ronald Reagan, and the Attorney General Ed Meese about this. You know, Ed Meese presented the commission on pornography and they studied and found out that there's a horrible thing in America called dial-a-porn where children may dial long distance and acts are described and acted in the ears of these children, as though it were happening.

That might include lesbian sexual activity, sodomy, rape, incest, bestiality. And these children listening, as an adult is plying their minds. As a matter of fact, there's one of the most staggering things. They looked at one of these outfits, one of these dial-a-porn outfits, and found out that it had received in one day 800,000 phone calls. One day,

800,000 phone calls. That's a web my dear friend.

I was hurt, grieved, chagrined to find out there are more so called adult bookstores in America than there are MacDonald's restaurants. In America, you see, and this is a sticky web, a sticky web. Why not have nothing wrong, nothing right. No God, do as we want.

Then there's the deadly trap of drugs. America is filled with an army of walking dead who've had the life sucked out of them as poison as been pumped into them. What a spider's web the devil has woven.

And then there's the web of amoral education. I didn't say immoral—amoral—even more dangerous. If it were immoral it would be easier to fight. How would you feel if your child in public high school were using a textbook that taught this, I'm quoting, "...pre-marital sexual intercourse as acceptable for both men and women if they are involved in a stable loving relationship? It has been suggested by some marriage counseling authorities that all couples should live together before they are married..." how would you like that to be taught to your children? That is "try before you buy."

Again, and I'm quoting, "often promiscuity is labeled as bad by persons who do not accept this kind of behavior. With other patterns of sexual behavior, one should not pin a good or bad label on a practice..." don't say this is good or this is bad. On again, "morality is individual. It is what you think it is. Your conception of what is right or wrong morally is an individual decision..." that is young people, it is up to you to decide whether sodomy is right or wrong. It's up to you to decide whether fornication is right or wrong. Well, what do you think somebody with a carnal nature is going to decide?

Of course, this is this is a deadly trap. It is a trap of an amoral, valueless educational system because we've booted God out and we have no fixed standards of right or wrong.

III. Traffic Jams

Now, here's the here's the greater problem though. It is not primarily my dear friend, the snake eggs. It is not primarily the spider's web, the primary problem is the traffic jam. If you'll go to verse 14, I want you to look at this. "And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off:" Haven't you wanted some judgment in America? Haven't you wanted some justice in America? "...For truth is fallen in the street and equity cannot enter..." do you see it? Truth is fallen in the street!

When I was a boy I was standing in a crowd of people near a street, I hear a sickening thud. I turned around and there was a man who'd been hit by an automobile. The man was down, the crowd gathered around the man and all of the traffic backed up and could not come through. That's what God is talking about here, that truth is fallen in the street. And because truth is fallen in the street, there's a traffic jam. And judgment

goes back, justice stands afar off, equity cannot enter.

There is a traffic jam in America that is keeping these values that we need from getting through. And what it is this; that truth has fallen. How did truth fall? Well, she was knocked down by ungodly philosophers, she was tripped by dishonest politicians. She's been chloroformed by some who call themselves preachers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I wish I had more time to tell you about this truth. My dear friend, what is the job of this preacher? What is the job of this church? What is your duty as a parent? What is our duty as Christian citizens? I'll tell you what it is, it's to lift up truth, to lift up truth. If there were ever a need in America, it is to lift up truth. You try to stamp out snake eggs, and they just break out into another snake. But my dear Friend, we need to lift up truth.

And who is truth? I didn't say what is truth. Look in verse twenty, "...and the redeemer shall come to Zion..." Jesus is the truth. He said, "...I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me..." other teachers point to truth, Jesus is the truth.

That's the Man of truth, and then I want to show you my dear friend the Spirit of truth. Look in verse twenty-one, "... As for me this is my covenant with them sayeth the Lord, my Spirit that is upon thee..." He is the Spirit of truth. Jesus said when He is come, the Holy Spirit, He will guide you into all truth. I've told you before, that I can preach truth, but only He can impart truth.

Now wait a minute, the man of truth is Jesus. The Spirit of truth is the Holy Spirit, now what about the Word of truth? Continue to read verse 21, "...my Spirit that is upon Thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, sayeth the Lord henceforth and forever..." that my dear friend is a Word that God put in Isaiah's mouth, it is the Word of God.

Conclusion

Now, let me tell you how you lift up truth. You take the book of truth and the Spirit of truth, and present the man of truth and without that there is no truth and what we need to do as a church and what we need to do as people, is to take up the truth, that has fallen, trampled, chloroformed, and lift up the truth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. My dear friend, our children are perishing for lack of truth. And I'll tell you they're being poisoned by snake eggs, they're being tramped by spider's webs, and they need the truth. God help us to preach it, live it, obey it till Jesus comes.

Revival Is When God Shows Up

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 26, 2004

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 64

“Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence.”

ISAIAH 64:1

Outline

Introduction

I. The Presence That Produces Revival

II. The Problems That Prevent Revival

III. The Prayer That Precedes Revival

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, would you take God's Word and turn to Isaiah chapter 64. And when you have found it, look up here. The title of the message this morning is this: "Revival is When God Shows Up!" When God shows up, that is revival.

Our homes need revival. Our churches need revival. This nation and this world need revival. But there's no military power that can bring revival. There's no economic upturn that can bring revival. And listen to me. There is no election that can bring revival. Revival is the sovereign work of Almighty God.

The setting of this passage of Scripture is this: God's people had been carried away into captivity and God's work was in disrepair. God's people were dispirited, and they're so much like the modern church today. The modern church today has been carried away into captivity by the world and the flesh and the devil. I look around. Many Christians are discouraged. Many have no hope for revival. They don't even believe that revival is possible. And I want to tell you, revival is not only possible, it is inevitable when God's people get right with God.

Now, why is there no revival? Listen very carefully. We can't say there is no revival because of the disunity of God's people. We can't say that. We can't say there's no revival because we've not been evangelistic. We can't say that. We can't say there's no revival because God's people have been worldly and compromised. We can't say that. We cannot say there is no revival because of liberalism in the churches. Friend, if we get all of these matters changed, it still would not be revival. These things that I've

mentioned to you are not the reason that there is no revival. Listen carefully now. They are the result of no revival.

What is revival? Revival—listen—is when God comes down. Look in chapter 64: “Oh, that thou, Almighty God, wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down.” That’s what revival is. It is a meeting with Almighty God. Most of us are seeking for God to do something. We want it for our church’s sake. We want it for our family’s sake. We want it for the nation’s sake. But we’re seeking God’s hand and not seeking God’s face. Our heart needs to yearn for God. We need to say, “Oh, God, will You come down?”

Now, I want to tell you, God loves to come down. He came down in the Lord Jesus Christ and was born on Christmas morning, stepped out of heaven, came down to this world of woe that He might save us. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down and baptized that infant church with wonderful, wonderful power. Friend, as we study the Word of God, we find out that Jesus is coming down again at His Second Coming. I can hardly wait. How about you? He is coming down again. And, friend, I want to tell you that if you’ll study the Bible, you’ll find out that God has come down, God has touched down, many times in the Bible, and we find Bible revival. And then, in modern history, if you’ll study the record of the church, you will find, from time to time, in place to place, God has come down.

Now, I want God to come down upon our church. I want God to come down upon my life. I want God to come down upon my family. We need to seek God. Now, many of us don’t believe this is possible, and I’ll tell you one of the problems. We think that God moves in convoy, that everything slows down to the slowest ship. That is not true. I mean, don’t get the idea that America has to be changed before we can have revival. Don’t even get the idea that Bellevue has to change before we have revival. You, my friend, can have revival. You can have personal revival. You can have revival in your Sunday school class. Brother Jim, we can have revival in the choir. We can have revival in the orchestra. We can have revival in your family. We don’t slow down to the slowest ship. We can have revival whenever and wherever we want. You can be a one-man revival.

I knew a man who was a one-man revival. His name was Charlie Fisher. His son was an associate with Billy Graham. Charlie Fisher was an old-time Wesleyan preacher. He loved God. He was on fire for Christ. He came to our church in Fort Pierce and he heard me preach. And he said, “I want to be a member of this church,” but he said, “I don’t believe what you believe.”

I said, “Well, why would you want to be a member if you don’t believe what I believe?”

“Uncle Charlie”—everybody called him Uncle Charlie—I said, “What is it that I

believe that you don't believe?"

"Well," he said, "you believe in a sinning religion."

I said, "I don't."

He said, "Well, you tell people that they can get saved and then they can live any way they want and go to heaven."

I said, "You've missed it, Uncle Charlie. I don't believe that," and I sat down and talked to him about what I really believed about the eternal security of the believer.

He said, "Well, I believe that." He said, "I'd like to join your church."

I said, "Well, Uncle Charlie, you've got to be baptized." Now, remember, he was a Wesleyan Methodist. I said, "You've got to be baptized."

He said, "You mean you want to baptize me after all these years?"

I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "Okay." So I took him down in that baptistry. I wasn't prepared for what was going to happen. When I put him under the water, he came up out of the water and lifted both hands to heaven and said, "Glory to God! I have been buried in the likeness of His death! I have been raised in the likeness of His resurrection!" Well, he was on fire for God. I'd never seen a man just like that. He was bold as a lion. Everywhere he went there seemed to be revival. What I'm trying to say is he was a one-man revival.

I remember on an occasion he got a movie projector and went down to Avenue D on Saturday night in Fort Pierce, Florida. Now, Avenue D was the Beale Street of Fort Pierce. And he went down there on a Saturday night where there was drunkenness and fighting and all of this. This man, this one-man revival, walked into a bar room, a tavern, and said to the owner, "I've got a film that I need to show. I don't have a place to plug in my projector. Can I plug it in here?"

And the owner said, "Well, I guess so."

He said, "Now, it's a religious film."

The owner said, "Well, okay."

So he got up and he said, "Everybody get quiet. Listen to me. We're going to have a film. And it is a religious film, so there can be no drinking and no smoking while this film is being shown. They put down their beer, put out their cigarettes, and he turned on the projector. It was a film on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It got very quiet in there. Then Uncle Charlie said, "All right, we're going to pray. Everybody bow your heads." They bowed their heads just like here at Bellevue. Now, this is not fiction; this literally happened. He said, "Now, those of you who tonight, right now, will give your heart to Jesus Christ, lift your hand." A number of them lifted their hand, and among those that lifted their hand was the owner of that tavern, of that nightclub, or whatever it was. It was a woman. He went to her and said, "I saw you lifted your hand. Did you mean it?"

She said, "Yes, sir, I did."

He said, "You know, you've got to get rid of this business, don't you?"

She said, "What?"

He said, "You can't be a Christian and run this business. You've got to get rid of it."

She said, "Well, all right, I will." And she did! I went to see her and talk with her, this woman who was transformed there by the boldness of a man who would seek God's face. He was a one-man revival.

You can be a one-man revival. You can have a Sunday School revival. You can have a choir revival. You can have a church revival. You can have a family revival. But what is revival? Revival is when God comes down.

You can have church revival. I remember at Fellsmere, Florida, the first church I pastored. We had about 50 members. And it was my college church out in a little town called Fellsmere, Florida. Roughly, there were 500 people in that little town and four churches, working on those 500 hundred people. I pastored the First Baptist Church of Fellsmere: First Baptist, last Baptist, and only Baptist in that little town. But I remember we were seeking God for revival. We had a prayer meeting over at Neil Shearer's house, and the people began to pray. I looked down. On the floor, spread out like that with her face on the floor, was Mrs. Minsing, and she's crying out to God, crying out to God, crying out to God for revival. We prayed for revival. We had a revival meeting. That year, our church doubled in size. People came from everywhere seeking God, and it was a mighty time of revival.

We had revival in this church back in 1972. This church was seeking a new pastor, like we're doing right now, and by God's grace I was invited to come and be the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church. But I came to a church that was already in the spirit of revival. The people had been praying and seeking the face of God and saying, "O God, send us the man of God that we ought to have." The Pulpit Committee was on fire for Jesus Christ. They prayed, and many of them said, "We had revival in our Pulpit Committee," as they prayed and sought the face of Almighty God.

I remember the first service I was here God came down. Many of you were here. God came down. It wasn't the preacher. They didn't know me. I was Adrian Who. They didn't know me. I mean, from the time the choir began to sing "Sanctus," and when Tommy Lane got up and we sang, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty," and then hiked it up another pitch and they sang it again, God came down. God came down. I could feel the manifest presence of God in that place, and it wasn't just simply what I felt. Others felt it. The church immediately began to grow and to blossom, and souls were saved in every service, and people were crowding the altar, and the church blossomed in revival. And we are living, friend, we are living in the result of that revival today. All of the blessings that we have upon our church today, I believe, found their fruitfulness and their beginning in that revival, at least partly so.

I. The Presence That Produces Revival

Now, what is revival? All right now, listen. Keep your Bibles open. You're in Isaiah chapter 64. And I want you to notice the presence that produces revival. What is the presence that produces revival? It is God Himself. Now, let me tell you what will happen when God comes down.

First of all, mountains will melt. Look in verse 1: "Oh, that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down in thy presence." And then at verse 2: "As when the melting fire burneth..." That is, God's fire is going to come and it's going to melt the mountains. What do we mean by that? Mountains of pride and bigotry and indifference—all of these things that seem to be the obstacles to God's work—they'll melt away. There is nothing that can stop the revival fire of Almighty God—absolutely, totally nothing! Don't you insult God by saying there are too many mountains, too many obstacles. I'm telling you, when God comes down, mountains will melt.

But not only will mountains melt, sinners will shake. Look, if you will again, in verses 2 and 3: "And as when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries—now, this is not to the church, but to the adversaries—that the nations may tremble at they presence! When thou didst terrible things—that means awesome things—which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence." Now, what I'm trying to pick out of that is this part that says, "the nations will tremble."

Did you know when we have genuine revival and when mountains begin to melt, sinners begin to shake. When they see something that they cannot explain, that brings Holy Spirit conviction. If we have revival in America, the late night comedians will not make fun of holy things and mock the things of God. And the lasciviousness of this world will at least shake in the presence of Almighty God. And the unsaved will cry out to God for mercy as sinners shake.

I'll tell you what else will happen. Not only will mountains melt, not only will sinners shake, but the righteous will rejoice when we have revival. Look again in verses 4 and 5: "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness."

God wants to meet with you. God wants to come down. And when He does, you will rejoice. You'll have joy unspeakable and full of glory. Church will not be a bore to you. I remember when Zig Ziglar was here. He asked a question: "How many of you have ever been in a boring worship service?" A lot of you lifted your hand. He said, "No, you haven't. You've been in a boring church service. You cannot have a boring worship service. If you're worshipping God, there's nothing boring about that." God's people have

joy unspeakable and full of glory, and the righteous rejoice when we have revival. And, friend, I long to see that. I want my children to see that. I want God to meet with His people and know this incredible joy.

II. The Problems That Prevent Revival

Now, here's the second thing I want you to notice: not only the presence, but I want you to notice the problems. What are the problems that prevent revival? Well, we're corrupted by our sins. Look, if you will, in Isaiah 64, verse 6: "But we are all as an unclean thing...—that's all—all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Now, what is this verse saying? He says that our righteousness in His sight is like a filthy rag. I've read that the filthy rag really refers to the clothing that the leper would wear that was infectious. And we dress up in our self-righteousness and we come to church, and we look around in haughtiness and pride. But God says that your righteousness and my righteousness, my self-righteousness, is a filthy rag in the sight of Almighty God. We try to cover ourselves with the very thing that defiles us and condemns us.

Not only does he say our righteousness is like a filthy rag; he says our faithfulness is like a fading leaf. Look at it: "and we all do fade as a leaf." What does that mean? Well, we know here that fall is beginning. And you see the leaves—they begin to turn yellow and brown and they fade and they fall. And they'll be on the trees looking so good, but the wind comes and they're on the ground! I've seen that happen so many times. I've seen people dressed up in their own self-righteousness, the filthy rags of their own self-righteousness. They are doing good, but you let the wind blow, you let them have some family problems, you let them have some financial reverse, you let them have some difficulty, something they cannot explain nor understand, and they are blown away—blown away! I've seen them, many of them.

Now, not only are we corrupted by our sins, but the sad thing is we are complacent in our sins. Look in verse 7: "There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee." Have you stirred yourself up to take hold of God, or are you simply a Sunday morning bench warmer, believing that you've done God a favor by getting here this morning? Is there in your heart a yearning, burning, longing for revival? Are you willing to stir your self up? If you get serious, God will send revival.

Dr. R. A. Torrey lived in another generation. You can buy anything that Dr. Torrey wrote and be blessed by it. Here's what he said to the saints who've been chloroformed by the spirit of the age. Listen. He said, and this was more than half a century ago. Dr. Torrey said, "I have a theory, and I believe it to be true, that there is not a church, chapel, or mission on earth where you cannot have revival, provided there is a little

nucleus—that is, a small group, a little nucleus—of faithful people who will hold to God until He comes—talking about Him coming down.” And then, here’s what he says: “First, let a few Christians—they need not be many—get thoroughly right with God themselves.” Now, he’s talking to you right now. “A few Christians—there need not be many—who will get thoroughly right with God themselves. This is the prime essential. If this is not done, the rest, I’m sorry to say, cannot be done, and it will come to nothing. Second: Let them bind themselves together to pray for revival until God opens the heavens and comes down.” That’s what we’re talking about here in Isaiah chapter 64. Get right with God. Band together and begin to pray. And then, Dr. Torrey said, “Third, let them put themselves at the disposal of God to use them as He sees fit in winning others to Christ.” Then Dr. Torrey said, “That’s all. This is sure to bring revival in any church or community. I have given this prescription around the world. It has been taken by many churches and many communities, and in no instance has it ever failed, and it cannot fail!” You say, “Well, that’s so simple.” That’s true. It’s simply, get right with God. Pray. Put yourself at God’s disposal. But what is the problem? The church is complacent. There’s none, “that stirreth up himself.”

What kind of a desire do you have today for revival in your life, in your home, in your class, in this church, in this nation? Oh, friend, stir yourself up! Do what Dr. Torrey says and get right with God. One of these days, if we don’t do it, we’ll wish that we had.

Now, I want to tell you we not only are condemned by our sins, and our sins have us in complacency, but we are consumed by our sins—consumed by our sins. Look in chapter 64, verse 7: “There is none that calleth upon thee, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee—now, listen—for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.” We’re consumed in our sins. What does that mean? Our sins are eating us alive. God turns His face away from us. We have no protection. We can sing, “God Bless America,” but it’s hollow because God has taken down the hedge of protection.

III. The Prayer That Precedes Revival

Now, thirdly, I want you to notice the prayer that precedes revival. How can we have revival? How do we seek God’s face?

Well, first of all, there is the prayer that recognizes God’s sovereignty. We have to believe that God is God. Look in verse 8: “But now, O LORD, thou art our father; and we’re the clay. Thou art our potter, and we are the work of thy hand.” That is, “Lord, You’re King, You’re sovereign. I’m like clay. You’re like a potter. Mold me and make me after thy will. You are King!” God doesn’t want a place in your life. God doesn’t want prominence in your life. He demands and deserves pre-eminence. Are you willing—now, answer this not out loud, but listen to me—are you willing to say, “God, mold me

and make me after thy will”? Are you? What if God told you to sell your house and give it to missions? What if God said, “I want you as a missionary in Iraq?” What if God says to you, “I want you to do this thing or that thing?” Are you willing? Are you willing? Have you recognized the sovereignty of God?

But not only is it prayer that recognizes God’s sovereignty. Oh, I thank God for this. It is prayer that remembers God’s mercy. Look, if you will, in verse 9: “Be not wroth—very sore—O LORD, neither remember iniquity forever; behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people.” What he is saying is, “Oh, God, oh, God, have mercy, have mercy. Don’t keep your anger forever. Lord, we need You. We want You. We must have You.”

Now, listen. God wants to extend mercy. God had much rather forgive sin than to punish sin. Do you believe that? God doesn’t hold a grudge. God wants to forgive sin. But God cannot put away our sin by forgiving it unless we put it away by forsaking it. May I say that again? God cannot put away our sin by forgiving it unless we put it away by forsaking it. The problem with so many of our prayers is we’re not willing to repent. We want God’s mercy, but we seek no repentance. And prayer without repentance is a religious farce, some sort of a smokescreen.

And then, friend, it is prayer that respects God’s glory. Look, if you will now, in Isaiah 64, verses 10 through 12: “Thy holy cities are a wilderness; Zion is a wilderness; Jerusalem is a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire, and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O LORD? Wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?” What he is saying, “O God, we remember the glory. We remember when You spoke to us from Your sacred temple. Our fathers have told us about it. What a glorious time it was! O God, we want Your glory again! O God, do it again! O God, show thy face, show thy glory!”

Conclusion

That’s what revival is. It is when God comes down. Don’t you want to see that? Now, maybe you don’t. Maybe you don’t want to see it. Maybe you haven’t been willing to stir yourself up. Maybe you are dressed in the rags of your self-righteousness today, the filthy rags. Maybe you’re a dying leaf and don’t even know it. Maybe you’re quite satisfied with where you are in your complacency. But, my brother and my sister, if you will seek God, I’m telling you that God wants to come down. He is waiting to come down. He is leaning over the battlements of heaven. We don’t have to persuade God to send revival—only permit Him to do so. Do you respect God’s sovereignty? Do you? Do you want God’s glory? Do you? Or, is this going to be just one more sermon? Are you going to meet me later on and say, “Pastor, that was a pretty good sermon, as one man

said, 'a nice little talk.' ”

Now, don't try to remember what I have said this morning. I want to ask you to ask yourself, "What has God said to me? What does God want me to do?"

Now, may I speak a word to those of you who've never yet been saved? You need Jesus. You die without Him, you'll be everlastingly condemned in a place the Bible calls hell. If you want to be saved, God will save you today. Again, you don't have to beg God to save you. You have to be sincere. But it's not your tears that save you. It's not your emotion that saves you. It is God that saves you. Jesus Christ hung naked and bloody on a cross for you. He paid in full your sin debt. And if you will turn from your sin to Jesus Christ, He will save you instantly. He'll be with you continually. Bless God, He will keep you eternally if you will only trust Him. Now, you say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, I'm going to do that, but I want to wait a little while. I don't want to do it today. I'll do it tomorrow." Well, the Bible says, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." You say, "Well, I've got some things I want to do. I've got some sin I want to indulge in, and then I'll get saved." Friend, that is dangerous. Tomorrow you'll have more sin to repent of and less time to repent in, and you will miss today. People say, "Get right with God; you may die!" Let me tell you something, friend. "Get right with God; you may live!" I mean, you can live today with our Lord. God can come down in your life. You can have joy unspeakable and full of glory. If I could do it for you, I would, but I can't. Our quartet sang, "Jesus Saves," and He does! He saves anyone, everyone, who will call upon Him, for the Bible says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, that one will be saved."

Now, bow your heads in prayer.

If you know that you're saved, I mean, absolutely know, you're certain of it, then would you begin to thank God for your salvation, and pray for those who are around about you. Pray for the person to your right, the person to your left, the person sitting in front of you, and the person behind you. Just pray and say, "Lord, if that person is not saved, help them today to be saved." Now, I believe if we do that, most everybody in this place is being prayed for. Pray that God will open their hearts and give them the courage to say yes to Jesus Christ.

Now, while others are praying for you, precious, precious, precious friend, if you're not certain that you're saved, let me guide you in a little prayer, where you can pray and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart and save you. I invite you to pray this way. Don't just repeat words, but pray this way: Dear God, I know that You love me. I know that You want to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Your Son. I believe He paid my sin debt on the cross with His shed blood. I believe God has raised Him from the dead and He's able to give new life to me. Right now, this morning, where I am, this moment, now, O

God, I trust You to save me. I don't ask for a sign. I don't wait for a feeling. I stand on Your Word. You promised and You cannot lie. Come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me. I turn from my sin. I turn to You, Lord Jesus. Did you pray that way? Then I want you to pray this: Lord, thank You for doing it. I receive it by faith. You said You would, and that settles it. Thank You, Lord Jesus. Now, Jesus, You're my commander-in-chief. You're my Lord and my Master. Give me the courage to make it public this morning and not to be ashamed of You. In Your holy name. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer today, and oh, thank God that you did, we're going to sing what we call an invitational hymn. And I'm going to ask the ministers of this church to stand at the head of each of these aisles to welcome those of you who will be coming forward. Our deacons will come forward to pray and to help. And if you're in the balcony, a friend will be standing there to welcome you, a minister. On the right hand side, it says Redeemer; on the left hand side up here at the banner that says Messiah, a friend will be waiting to receive you. You just make your way that way.

"Pastor, what would I say when I go down there? I don't know what to say. I've never done that." Why don't you just say, "I have trusted Jesus"? Now, perhaps you still have doubts and you don't understand. Just say, "I want to be saved. I need some help." We can't save you, but we know the One who can, and we have an open Bible, and we'll share with you. Many times, a pastor is not as clear as he thinks he is. And sometimes one-on-one you need somebody to help you. We're here to help you. We love you. So, in a moment, when we stand and sing—listen—I want you to leave your seat and come forward. This may be the first time you've ever been here; you may have been here for years. But today is your day! You may be a member of this church, but you've never been truly saved. I want you to come to Jesus, okay?

Now, secondly, there are those of you who need a church home. Now, church membership is not incidental; it is fundamental. God's plan is for every New Testament Christian to be a member of a local New Testament church. First of all, you need that for service. You say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, I'm saved. Isn't that enough?" No! You need to be a part of God's church. How do you think this church carries on its ministry? By strangers? By visitors? No! By members who say, "I want to be a part. I want to help. I want to give glory to God." Not only do you need the church for service, you need the church for discipline and instruction. You need to be under the authority of a man of God and a New Testament church. You need the church for fellowship. You need to be a part, not just simply saying, "That church, or that pastor," but "My church, my pastor." Not, "What they're doing," but "what we're doing." And I'm going to ask you this morning, if you know that you're saved, if you know it, and need a church home, in the name of Jesus—in the name of Jesus—step out and say to the minister, "I want to place my membership here."

Some are coming, saying, “I’m trusting Jesus.” Others are coming, saying, “I want to place my membership here.” Let’s stand with our heads bowed, Join me in prayer now one more time. O heavenly Father, heavenly Father, bless these precious souls who need to openly confess Jesus, and these who need to associate themselves with the family of God. Help them to do it. In the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

Now, as the choir sings, you pray. I want you, whoever you are, wherever you are, to step out and come right now. Would you do it?

Revival Is When God Shows Up

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 26, 2004

Main Scripture Text: Isaiah 64

“Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence.”

ISAIAH 64:1

Outline

Introduction

I. The Presence That Produces Revival

II. The Problems That Prevent Revival

III. The Prayer That Precedes Revival

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Introduction

Would you take God's Word and turn to Isaiah chapter 64. It's a little past halfway in the Bible. And open it and keep your Bibles there before you. But if you did not bring a Bible, or don't have one, we're going to put the Scriptures on the screen for you.

Now, we've been talking about, praying for, looking for, hoping for believing God for revival. And how is revival going to come? Now, we're praying about the coming election, but no president can bring revival. We are praying for victory in Iraq and other places, but no military victory can bring revival. We're praying for those who are impoverished and those who are financially distressed to have their needs met, but if that were true, that is still not revival.

What is revival? Are you listening? Revival is the manifest presence of God. Look in chapter 64, verse 1: "Oh, that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down." That's the prayer for revival. "O God, open the heavens. O God, come down." Then you ask people why we don't have revival, they say, "Well, it's the disunity of God's people." No, that's not why we fail to have revival. Somebody says, "Well, it's because we've not been evangelistic enough." Well, we ought to be, but that's not why we don't have revival. Somebody says, "Well, we've been living in worldliness and compromise." God forbid, but that's not why we don't have revival. Somebody else says, "Well, there's liberalism in the churches." God have mercy, but that's not why we don't have revival. Those things are the result of no revival. Revival is when God shows up, when God steps out of heaven down here with His manifest presence.

Now, this chapter, chapter 64, was written to a people who were discouraged. Well, what had happened is they'd been carried away into captivity, and because of this they knew that God's work was in disrepair. They remembered the former glory days and they prayed, "O God." Isaiah prayed, "God, God, God, please step out of heaven, and O God, come down." Did you know God is the God that comes down? How we ought to thank God for that.

He came down that first Christmas morning and was born of a virgin, made Himself flesh, that He might die for us. What love that God came down. On the Day of Pentecost, God came down in mighty power, revival power. That was a revival when the Holy Spirit of God came down, and that early church was baptized with power. God came down. I'll tell you something else, and I know you rejoice with me, there's coming a time when Jesus is going to come down again. There is coming the Second Coming of our sovereign King, Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is going to step out of heaven and come down to this earth.

If you study the Bible, study the record of revival, you'll find out that God has come down in revival with His manifest presence, and there are Bible stories after Bible stories of how God came down and met with human beings and manifested His presence. If you study the history of the world, from time to time and in place to place, God has come down. God has stepped out of heaven and God has met His people, and there has been genuine revival. You say, "What about us, Pastor? Have we seen revival? Why don't all these people get right with God?" Now, listen. I want to tell you something. God does not move in convoy. There's never a time when an entire church gets right with God. There's never a time when an entire city gets right with God. There's never a time when an entire nation gets right with God, not that I read about. Revival is a sovereign work of God, sometimes in the life of one person. The question is: Are you a one-person revival? Are you? You ought to be.

I was thinking back about one-person revivals that I've known. One was a man named Uncle Charlie Fisher. Uncle Charlie Fisher was a short man, wiry. Spry is the word for Uncle Charlie. He had a son, Lee Fisher. Lee Fisher was part of the Billy Graham team and helped Billy Graham with his sermons, and a great musician. But Uncle Charlie was an old-time Wesleyan Methodist preacher. And he started coming to our church down there in Fort Pierce, Florida. And he came to me one day, and he said, "I like the way you preach. I like this church. I would like to be a member of it," but he said, "I can't join."

I said, "Why not?"

He said, "Well, you believe in a sinning religion."

I said, "Uncle Charlie, why do you say that?"

"Oh," he said, "you Baptists. You believe that just anybody gets saved, then lives like

the devil, and they're going to heaven."

I said, "Uncle Charlie, we don't believe that. That's the caricature of what we believe." And I explained to him about eternal security.

And he said, "Okay, then, I want to be a member."

I said, "Well, no. Uncle Charlie, we're going to have to baptize you."

He said, "After all these years I've been serving Lord, you want to baptize me?"

I said, "Yes, sir, we really would like to if you're going to be a member of this church."

He said, "Very well. I'll be baptized." He talked that way, very short and very abrupt. He said, "I'll be baptized."

And so I got in the water there to baptize Uncle Charlie. I wasn't prepared for what was going to happen. As I put him under the water and brought him up, he stood up, he lifted both hands to heaven, and said, "Glory to God! Buried in the likeness of His death, raised in the likeness of His resurrection!" Well, I knew we had a one-man revival on our hands.

Let me tell you about this man. Extraordinary things he did. One time, he got a movie projector and went down to Avenue D in Fort Pierce on Saturday night. Now, that's the kind of part of our Beale Street, and there's drunkenness and there were fights down there, perhaps worse than Beale Street, and it was just a den of iniquity on Saturday night. Uncle Charlie got his projector and got a film on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, went down there to that street teeming with people, and he went into a tavern, a bar room, and said, "Look. I've got a movie I need to show, but I need some electrical current. Can I plug my projector in here?" Now, this is inside the bar, inside the tavern. The lady said, "Yes, you can do this." She was the owner of the tavern. And so he plugged in the movie projector, found a wall to project it on, then he got up and said, "Everybody, listen to me. We're going to show a film, and it is a religious film, so there can be no drinking and no smoking while this film is going on." Believe it or not, they put aside their beer, they put out their cigarettes, and he showed on the wall there a depiction of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the Final Judgment. And then he said, "Bow your heads. We're going to pray." And he prayed for those who were unsaved. And he said, "If you will today, right now, with all of your heart, receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, lift your hand up." Many in that bar room lifted up their hand. And Uncle Charlie looked over and the woman who had owned the tavern had lifted her hand. So when the service was over, he went to her and he said, "Madam, I see you lifted your hand. Were you sincere? Did you mean it? Are you giving your heart to Jesus Christ?"

She said, "Yes, I am."

He said, "You know you'll have to get rid of this business, don't you? You can't be a

Christian and run this business.”

She said, “Well, if that is true, I’ll get rid of this business.” And she did. I talked with her personally, transformed by this one-man revival. I used to pray with Uncle Charlie and see him. He would get happy in the Lord and just begin to giggle with a holy giggle. He was just a man of God, a one-man revival.

And, you know, I’ve seen churches have revival. When I was a boy preacher, 19 years of age, I was pastoring the First Baptist Church of Fellsmere. Now, don’t let that impress you. Fellsmere was about 500 people. There were four churches, and the First Baptist Church was the first Baptist, last Baptist, and only Baptist in that town—a very humble little church: no running water, no regular pews. We’d sit on a 2-by-8 and lean back on a 2-by-8 put together with iron brackets. But we decided we wanted to have revival, and we got together to pray. We met Neil Shearer’s house for one of these prayer meetings. And in that prayer meeting I felt the manifest presence of God. I looked over and I saw Mrs. Minsing down on her face weeping before God and saying, “O God, O God, send revival.” The Spirit of God began to move in that little church that had about 50 members. Soon the membership had doubled, and there was a mighty moving of the Spirit of God in that little church. I was a boy preacher. First time I’d ever seen anything like that. But God came down.

We had revival here in Bellevue in 1972. You were looking for a pastor, just like we’re going to be doing. And the Pulpit Committee, mighty people of God, began to pray and seek the face of God. And they said to the congregation, “Pray—pray—because this is too important for us to make a mistake. Pray that we’ll have God’s man.” And Bellevue Church was soaked and saturated in prayer. The Pulpit Committee had their own revival. Many of them have said to me, “I had a personal revival when I was serving on this Pulpit Committee.” When I came to preach here the first time, before I opened my mouth, God came down. When the choir began to sing the call to worship, which that morning was “Santus,” you could feel the manifest presence of God. And it was not just autosuggestion. Other people have said the same without being prompted to say it. God was present. Tommy Lane was then our Minister of Music, led us in singing, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty,” and we sang, and then he kicked it up a notch and sang another part of that same song. I don’t understand music enough to explain what happened, but, friend, I know something happened in my heart. It wasn’t because of me. I’d not said a word. They didn’t know who I was. Adrian who? I’d not preached. It was the manifest presence of God. It was revival that was the culmination of prayer.

I began to preach in this blessed church, and every Sunday there would be scores coming forward giving their hearts to Jesus Christ, surrendering their lives to Jesus Christ. And, friend, today, in this building right now, we are living in the afterglow of that revival.

I thank God for the spirit of revival that has permeated our church for 30-something years. But we're not satisfied. We are a long way from what we ought to be. But what I'm trying to say, God doesn't send revival in convoy. If you want revival, get your heart right, get your family right. Have revival in your family. Have revival in the choir. Have revival in the deacons. Just get together and have revival. But if nobody else does, you don't slow down to the slowest ship. And don't look around at others and blame them for no revival if you yourself are not a living, breathing revival.

I. The Presence That Produces Revival

Now, let me tell you what revival will be and what revival is like. Number one: the presence that produces revival. What is the presence that produces revival? It's the presence of God. Look in 64, verse 1: "Oh, that thou wouldst rend the heavens—that is, open the heavens—that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains may flow down in thy presence."

Let me tell you what happens when revival comes and when God manifests His presence. Number one: Mountains will melt—mountains will melt. Now, look, if you will, at the last part of verse 1: "that the mountains might flow down at thy presence." Look, if you will, in verse 2: "As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil." That is, when God steps out of heaven, mountains melt. What kind of mountains are we talking about? Mountains of pride, mountains of selfishness, mountains of unbelief, mountains of indifference—they melt before God. That is, a mountain is no problem to God. The mountains will melt. Don't you insult God by saying because of all of these mountains we can't have revival. There is no sin so firmly entrenched, there is no power of Satan, there is no lust of this world that can stop Almighty God. There are no mountains that God cannot move. Do you believe that? Listen. When we have revival, when God shows up, mountains will melt.

And not only will mountains melt, but sinners will shake. Look again in 64, verses 2 and 3: "As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known—listen, not to the church—to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence! When thou didst terrible things—that means terrifying things—which we look not for, for thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence." When the mountains are removed, sinners shake; I mean, they're terrified when they see in your life and in my life the manifest presence of God. Now, they're not terrified by these buildings. They're not terrified by the singing of the choir, "Jesus Saves," and these wonderful songs that we've sung. "I Love to Tell the Story"—that doesn't terrify the unsaved. But you let God show up, you let God begin to move in mighty power, something that cannot be explained by some program personality individual, and it is the manifest presence of God, and you won't have these silly

comedians on late night television mocking holy things. You know, when the church doesn't have revival, we're like salt without any tang, without any zest, without any savor, good for nothing, but to be cast out. They could take that dead, unsalty salt. They couldn't throw it in the wells. It would poison the water. They couldn't put it in the fields. It would kill the crops. But one thing they could do with it. They could put it on the roadways where it would harden almost like pavement. That's what Jesus said. "If the salt has lost its savor, it is good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under the feet of men." Aren't you tired of this world walking on God's church? Aren't you tired of Christians living in disgrace, just hanging on, praying, "Lord, come rescue us, your precious, little children?" I'm telling you, when revival comes, the unsaved will cry out to God for mercy and multiplied thousands, even millions, will be swept into the kingdom of God.

Mountains will melt. Sinners will shake. And the righteous will rejoice. Look in verses 4 and 5: "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." Oh, listen. He's saying He's able to do, as Jim Whitmire said, "exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think." The New American Standard says, He will do awesome things that we did not expect. God is going to do inexplicable things. And when He does, the righteous rejoice. When there is revival, there is joy unspeakable and full of glory. Do you have it? Are you full of joy right now? If not, you need revival. Listen, friend. Mountains will melt. Sinners will shake. The righteous will rejoice when revival comes.

II. The Problems That Prevent Revival

Now, let me ask another question: friend, what are the problems that prevent revival? What are they? Well, number one: we're corrupted by our sins. Look in chapter 64 and verse 6: "But we are all as an unclean thing—underscore that—and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we do fade as a leaf—underscore that—and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Now, God speaks of the self-righteousness of people who don't think they need revival. And, by the way, I'm speaking to some people today who think you don't need revival. You're looking around and saying, "I hope some of those old sinners will have revival." You may be the one who needs revival more than any other because of your self-righteousness. He says our righteousness is as a filthy rag in His sight. We strut around in the thing that condemns us, our filthy rags. This word filthy rag, scholars tells us, refers to the clothing of a leper, or the bandage of a leper, infectious. And we say, "Oh, I hope those other sinners will get right with God. Thank God I'm not one of them."

But not only do we have our rags of filth, and our righteousnesses as our filthy rags,

but He says also, “we fade like a leaf and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

This time of the year we look around and we see the leaves beginning to fade. They’re no longer green. They’re becoming yellow and then other colors. But what does that mean? The leaf is fading. The leaf is about to fall. And everything will look so wonderful. And then one day the wind will come and blow, and down come the leaves. I’ve seen that happen so many times. I’ve seen people with superficial religion fade like a leaf. They may look beautiful, like the fall season, but you let the wind of adversity blow, you let them have trouble, let them lose a child, let their business got upside down, let something happen that they cannot understand, let the winds blow, and they’ll blow away because they have no stability. They have been wrapping themselves in their self-righteous rags. That’s why we don’t have revival. Number one: we are corrupt in our sins.

Number two: We are complacent in our sins. It’s bad enough that we’re corrupt in our sins, but we’re complacent. Look in verse 7: “There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.” Now, friend, the situation is desperate, but the saints are not. Who is it that stirs himself up to take hold of God? Have you done that? I mean, do you really care? Are you desperate for God, or have you been chloroformed by the spirit of this age?

There was a great Bible scholar that I have read after and do when I get a chance. His name is Dr. R. A. Torrey. Dr. Torrey lived more than half a century ago, but he talked about how to have revival, and I’ve copied down what Dr. Torrey said. and I want you to listen to it. He said, “I have a theory, and I believe it to be true, that there is not a church, chapel, or mission on earth where you cannot have revival, provided there is a little nucleus of faithful people who will hold onto God until He comes.” He continues, “I can give a prescription that will bring a revival to any church or community of any city on earth.” Well, that’s a big promise, isn’t it? So what is the prescription? Here it is: “First, let a few Christians—they need not be many—get thoroughly right with God themselves. This is the prime essential. If this is not done, the rest, I’m sorry to say, will come to nothing.” Now, would you be one of those few Christians, get thoroughly right with God? “And then, second, let them bind themselves to pray for revival until God opens the heavens and comes down.” That’s what we’re talking about. “O God, come down.” And then Dr. Torrey continues, “Third, let them put themselves at the disposal of God to use them as He sees fit in winning others to Christ. That is all. This is sure to bring revival in any church or community. I have given this prescription around the world. It has been taken by many churches and many communities, and in no incident has it ever failed, and it cannot fail!” Revival. Isn’t that simple? Get right with God, pray, and present yourself to God in witness and testimony, and say, “Here I am, Lord; use

me.”

Now, our problem is this: we’re corrupted by our sins, we’re complacent in our sins, and, therefore, we’re consumed by our sins. Look, if you will, in 64, verse 7: “And there is none that calleth upon thee, that stirreth up himself to take hole of thee, for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.” Consumed by our sins, by the judgment of God. Do you know what’s wrong in America today? God has taken down the hedge. I’m not afraid of Al Quada. I’m not afraid of the liberals, what they may do to us. What bothers me is what God may do to us, that God may consume us because of our sin, because of our filthy rags of self-righteousness, what God might do. Ladies and gentlemen, you listen to me. Not only is God our only hope; God is our biggest threat. Now, you don’t believe that, but I’m telling you it’s true. We are ripe for the judgment of Almighty God to be consumed by our sins.

III. The Prayer That Precedes Revival

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to think about this morning. I want you to think about the prayer that precedes revival. What kind of prayer causes revival, or causes God to step out of heaven? Number one: It is prayer that recognizes God’s sovereignty. Look in verse 8: “But now, O LORD, thou art our father; and we are the clay, and thou art the potter, and we all are the work of thine hand.” What’s he saying? He’s saying, “God, You have everything in Your hand. You have my life in Your hand. You’re my Father. You’re the potter. I am nothing but clay. God, I recognize Your sovereignty. I recognize Your power. I recognize, Lord, that I’m nothing but clay. So, Lord, mold me and make me after thy will.” Have you done that? If you don’t do that, if you’re not surrendered to God, don’t expect revival. Prayer is when you say, “Lord, here I am. Whatever you want of me, I will do.” Can you say that? Suppose God said to you, “I want you to sell your house and give it to missions. Suppose God were to say to you, “I want you to be a missionary in Iraq.” “Whatever, Lord, I will do it. Speak, Lord, and I’ll say yes, Lord, yes to Your will and to Your way.”

Now, this kind of prayer recognizes God’s sovereignty, and it is prayer that remembers God’s mercy. Look in verse 9: “Be not wroth—very sore—O LORD, neither remember iniquity forever; behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people.” What he is saying is, “Dear God, O God, don’t give us what we deserve. Dear God, show mercy. Have mercy. Forgive us and cleanse us.” And, friend, He wants to do that. You don’t have to persuade God to send revival; merely permit Him to do so. When you make yourself clay in his hands, and then when you cry out to Him for mercy—now, listen very carefully—God wants to forgive our sins, but God cannot put away our sin by forgiving it unless we put it away by forsaking it. God cannot put away your sin by forgiving it unless you put it away by forsaking it. “Let the wicked forsake his way.” Deal

with it.

Thirdly, it's a prayer that respects God's glory. Look in 64, verses 10: "For thy holy cities are a wilderness; Zion is a wilderness; Jerusalem is a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned with fire, and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O LORD? Wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?" What's he saying? "O God, bring back the glory. Bring back the glory, Lord, that we used to know. God, when Your presence, Your Shekinah glory, filled the temple; God, when You were with Your people."

Conclusion

Now, why do we have revival? Not for our family's sake. Oh, they'll be blessed. Not for our church's sake. It'll be blessed. Not for our nation's sake. We'll be blessed. Not for America's sake. But for God's sake! When you, dear friend, seek the presence of God, turn from your sin, and have a desire more than anything else that God will be glorified, that's revival. And what Isaiah is saying, "Lord, it happened before. Do it again. Do it again, Lord, do it again!" And God's people said, Amen.

Now, bow your heads. I told you there are two ways to listen to a sermon: to listen to what the pastor says, and then to listen to what God said to you. God said something to you this morning if you were listening. Think of what it is, and humbly, not arrogantly, but humbly, say, "I'll say yes, Lord, yes to Your will and to Your way. And, Lord, whether You send revival anywhere else, Lord, send revival in my own heart."

Now, while heads are still bowed and eyes are still closed, let me speak a word to those of you who do not have the absolute assurance of your salvation. Remember, the quartet sang, "Jesus Saves." And He does! But you must receive Him personally. If I could do it for you, I would, but I cannot. If you want to be saved, you can be. There are not enough angels in heaven or demons in hell to keep you from being if you want to be, "For whosoever will may come." Jesus wants to save you. God has promised to save you if you will trust Him. And if you would really like to be saved, I'm going to pray for you in a moment. And those of you who know that you're saved, who know it, would you begin to pray for those around you. Pray for the one on either side, the one behind you, and the one in front of you. Hopefully, everybody here will be being prayed for. Pray! Say, "Lord, open their hearts. Help them to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ." And now, precious friend, if you want Jesus, I invite you to pray this way. Now, just repeating words doesn't, doesn't save you. Jesus saves. So pray this way: Dear God, I know that You love me. I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me. Thank You that with Your shed blood You paid my sin debt on the cross. Thank You for Calvary. Thank You for dying for me. Thank You, Lord. And now, Lord, come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Lord. Pray it from your heart. Save me, Lord.

Did you ask Him? Were you sincere? Then pray this way: Thank You for doing it. I don't look for a feeling. I don't ask for a sign. I stand upon Your Word, and You cannot lie. Thank You for saving me. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be, because I'm weak and You're strong. And help me, Lord Jesus, never to be ashamed of You. Give me the courage and the obedience to make this public. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. In a moment, if you prayed that prayer, I'm going to ask you to do something to help settle it and seal it in your heart and mind, and that is to come forward openly and publicly and unashamedly. And your coming forward will be your way of saying, 'Yes, today I have trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord.' And when we sing, you step out and come. Standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front will be a minister of our church, a man of God, to welcome and receive you. "Well, Pastor, I've never done that before. What should I say when I go down there?" Well, just say, "I have trusted Jesus," or, "I need to trust Jesus. I need a little more help." We have an open Bible. We'll guide you in this decision. But I'm telling you, on the authority of the Word of God, that God will save you today. And if He has saved you, make it public. Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of me before men, I'll be ashamed of you before my Father, which is in heaven." You say, "Well, there are so many people here." Friend, Jesus hung naked on a cross for you. You say, "Well, I'll do it tomorrow." The Bible says, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." And so, if you still need to be saved, there's time for you. Just come on forward, and we'll take a Bible and lead you in this decision, even if you didn't pray with me a few minutes ago. Now, if you wait till tomorrow, tomorrow may not get here. And if it does, you'll only have more sin to repent of and less time to repent in. People say, "Well, get right with God; you may die." Friend, get right with God; you may live!" You may have the joy of the Lord and the peace that passes understanding right now. I wouldn't go without Jesus 24 hours for all the gold, silver, rubies, and diamonds in this world. Now, when we sing in just a moment, the minister will be here at the front. Our deacons will be coming forward to pray for you if you want prayer. And you just come. Now, if you're in the balcony, there'll be a friend waiting to receive you over there under that banner that says Redeemer in that corner, and under this banner over here that says Messiah, to welcome those of you in the balcony.

Now, let me say another word. There are those of you here today who are saved and you know it, but you need a church home. And God's plan is that every New Testament Christian be a member of a local New Testament church. If not Bellevue, one somewhere, but you need to belong. You need to belong for service, so you don't say, "what they're doing," but "what we're doing." You need to belong for fellowship. "I'm a part of the family of God." You need to belong for testimony, for obedience to God. So

when we stand and sing, if you need a church home, in the name of Jesus we welcome you. You step out today and say to the minister, “I want to place my membership here,” and he’ll tell you how you may become a member of this church.

Some are coming, saying, “I’m trusting Jesus,” or, “I need to trust Jesus.” Others are coming, saying, “I want to place my membership here.” Let’s stand together. Bow your heads in prayer. Join me in praying for these who need to make decisions.

O Father, we pray sincerely in the name of Jesus, dear, dear, Lord, that You would help people—children, adults, older, people who may be here for the first time, or people who have been here for a long time, maybe even member of the church—to do what You would have them to do this morning. Please, God, open hearts and give victory in the name of Jesus. Amen.