

13.03.2021 WAGING LOVE

If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday. Isaiah 58:10

Last week we studied Messiah's sacrifice for His people in Isaiah 52:13- 53:12. Isaiah follows this up in chapter 54, telling us that God has done all this to restore us to Himself and he gives us promises of what that restoration will be like.

This week, we study Isaiah 55 – the Messiah's invitation to the world to accept His free gift of salvation. Finally, we study Isaiah 58 – once we have accepted God's salvation, we must not return to our old way of life; our sin and transgression. We must not become self-righteous. We must not become hypocrites; knowing and professing correct doctrine but refusing to live righteously. We can live righteously only as we become true Sabbath-keepers – denying self and trusting/ resting wholly in Christ to live out His life within us by the power of the Holy Spirit. Above all, the love of God manifested to us must be manifested *by* us to a suffering world.

Buy Something Free: Isaiah 55:1-7

"Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance.

Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure mercies of David." Isaiah 55:1-3

*Everyone who thirsts...*all mankind is thirsty and hungry for the water of Life, for the salvation found only in Christ.

The word "buy" means to exchange something that you have for something that you want. That's the basic meaning. In the days of the Bible, they would often exchange goods instead of money.

So we are asked to buy water, food, wine and milk – all that is required for our spiritual life.

"You are not permitted to drink freely of water, and then to purchase wine. You are not invited to come and eat freely that which is good, and then to spend your labour for that which is fat. No, the richest dainties of God's house are as free as the bread he gives to hungry souls." CH Spurgeon

Without money and without price... Salvation is a free gift. It was very costly to God, but it is free to mankind.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8, 9

Though salvation is free... '*without money and without price*' there is something we have to exchange for Christ's righteousness. It is very difficult for man to give up his own righteousness, even though it is like filthy rags. So God says to mankind, "*Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you—the sure mercies of David.*"

"But what do we give up, when we give all? A sin-polluted heart, for Jesus to purify, to cleanse by His own blood, and to save by His matchless love. And yet men think it hard to give up all! I am ashamed to hear it spoken of, ashamed to write it." SC 46

Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ. Philippians 3:8

High Thoughts and Ways: Isaiah 55:6-13

Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. Isaiah 55:6-7

Again, God extends His invitation to mankind. Forsake your wickedness and unrighteousness and I will have mercy and abundantly pardon.

This is an extremely important passage. It tells us that God's justice is primarily 'Restorative' not 'Retributive'.

To all who accept His invitation and come to Him in repentance, penitence and confession, God will begin a work of healing and restoration in their hearts. He will restore them to His likeness and conform them to His image (Romans 8:28-30).

How different is man's idea of justice. He always seeks retribution. So God says to us: 'You think of retribution; I desire restoration.'

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says 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

'But forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He "will abundantly pardon," He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: "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 55:7-9. God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10. And again he says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:12.' *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing p 114*

Fast Friends/ Fast Fight: Isaiah 58:1-12

The Hebrews (and God's people in every age) have had a problem. They deny 'Orthopraxy' for 'Orthodoxy'.

Orthodoxy means 'right thinking' or 'right beliefs'.

Orthopraxy means 'right practising' or 'right actions'.

This was the problem in Isaiah's time; it was the problem in Jesus' time and it is a problem today.

The passage below tells us that God was tired of the Hebrews' orthodoxy because it was not associated with orthopraxy, right actions.

"Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." 58:1

The word 'trumpet' here in the Hebrew refers to the trumpet of the Day of Atonement. We who are living in the antitypical Day of Atonement should take particular notice.

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God. For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people... It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your Sabbath." Leviticus 23:26-32

These requirements of God should be of utmost importance to us believers in the antitypical Day of Atonement.

The 2 requirements are:

1. Deny yourselves; 'afflict your souls'.
2. Do no work – it is a Sabbath of solemn rest.

In the light of the gospel, we know that we must acknowledge that 'no good' dwells in us – we *of ourselves* have nothing we can offer to God that is of any worth to Him. Everything that is of our flesh is worth nothing (John 6:63); even our own righteousness is as filthy rags before God (Isaiah 64:6).

The Israelites are perplexed. Why is God so annoyed with them? Why does God want to proclaim His people's sins and transgressions? They have followed the rules and the laws, including the Mosaic laws of the Day of Atonement – a day of fasting and afflicting themselves before God.

Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching God. 'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?' 58:2, 3

God answers them – they have been keeping the letter of the law but not the spirit. They are guilty of orthodoxy without orthopraxy.

In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exploit all your labourers. Indeed you fast for strife and debate, and to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as you do this day, to make your voice heard on high. Is it a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? 58:3-5

Then God tells them He wants both orthodoxy and orthopraxy (right doctrine and right actions). He goes on to explain what right actions should follow from right doctrine.

"Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?... If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness..." 58:6, 7, 9

When God asks us to do anything He follows it up with abundant promises.

If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday. The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. Those from among you shall build the old waste places; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of Streets to Dwell In. 58:10-12

A Time for Us: Isaiah 58:13, 14

And then Isaiah links the passage to the Sabbath. We need to understand this in the context of what Jesus said to the Pharisees when they were furious with Him for healing on the Sabbath. But Jesus said, 'It is right to do good on the Sabbath' Matthew 12:12. Jesus said that the true practice of keeping the Sabbath was to do right actions on the Sabbath (orthodoxy and orthopraxy).

And so God tells us through Isaiah that true Sabbath-keeping is associated with regard for the poor, the oppressed, the disenfranchised and the needy.

"If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honourable, and shall honour Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken." 58:13, 14

'In this chapter God exposed the emptiness of two religious rituals as practiced in Isaiah's day: fasting and Sabbath keeping. Both of these are expressions of *not doing* things. In fasting, you *don't eat*. In Sabbath keeping, you *don't work*. An important aspect of this chapter is showing us that what we *don't do* isn't enough to make us right before God. Our walk with God shouldn't only be defined by what we *don't do*. What do we *do for* the Lord?' D. Guzik

Does His love compel us to love Him wholeheartedly and extend that love to our fellow human beings?

'Freely you have received; freely give'. Matthew 10:8

Additional Note:

God's Retributive Justice

When we study God's retributive punishment, there is temporal (temporary, relating to this life only) punishment and the punishment of the wages of sin, which has eternal consequences i.e. eternal death.

Examples of temporal punishments or judgments are the Flood, destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the rebellions of the Israelites, the generation that left Egypt did not enter Canaan (except for Joshua and Caleb), destruction of Israel's enemies, King David etc. (see Genesis 6:5-8:13:13:19:24, 25, Numbers 14: 16:1-33,21, 2 Samuel 12:13, 14, 2 Chronicles 36:18 for a few examples). We must recognise that temporal punishment for sin does not automatically mean that these people have also lost eternal life. We know that many who were punished for their misdeeds will be in heaven.

In contrast, the final retributive punishment of God; the punishment for sin *'the wages of sin is death'* Romans 6:23, will be seen at the end of Time. God punished sin in the Person of His Son, Christ Jesus at Calvary. All who reject Jesus will bear the punishment of their own sin, since they refused to accept the sacrifice of the Burden-Bearer on their behalf.
