

Isaiah 51:1-23

"Listen Up!"

By way of reminder let's turn our attention back to the 10th Vs of the 50th Ch.

Vs 10

I wish I could tell you that as a believer, you will never be faced w/discouragement. That you'll always see things clearly, that you'll never wonder about the "why" behind the "what" that may be happening in your life. But that would be untrue. The fact of the matter is that even as believers, there are times when we're just "in the dark". (Not in the sense that we're not saved. But in the sense that we won't always have insight or understanding into every circumstance that befalls us). & It's in those times when we're "in the dark" that discouragement can find us.

& It can come from any # of places. Perhaps something you've hoped for just isn't going to happen. A situation that needed to happen speedily is moving slowly. Perhaps people who you thought were your friends have turned against you, or others just seem out to get you... Whatever the reason may be, discouragement or depression, "dark times" have found you... This is the context that Ch 51 of the book of Isaiah speaks into.

Vs 1-3

Obviously when it comes to our present section of scripture (& really *any* section of scripture) there is *interpretation* & there is *application*. Pertaining to the interpretation God is speaking to the nation of Israel. Pertaining to application, I trust you see it's for every believer ("you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the Lord").

3x's in this Ch God gives the exhortation, "Listen to Me." & I've been pointing this out over & over again throughout our previous passages. *God is constantly calling His people to "*listen*" to Him.

Allow me (here in Vs 1) to approach it from a little different angle. If God is calling us to "*listen*" to *Him*. That means He's "*speaking*" to *us*. When it comes to God's direction & God's correction in our lives; it's not a question of whether He's *speaking*. The question is simply whether we're *listening*.

God was speaking to His people, but His people were having trouble *listening*. & This is not uncommon for the people of God. – How many of you have tried to instruct your child or children on an issue, but you can tell they're not really paying attention? So you have to keep calling them back to attention, "Hey, listen to me!" That's essentially what God is doing here w/His people. He's speaking, they're not listening.

& I want *you* to know, God is speaking today. The question is, are you going to listen?

He may be trying to speak something to your heart through His word. Through my voice, or perhaps the still small voice of His Spirit ministering something directly to the recesses of your heart. But will you *hear* it? Are you *listening*? *

I know that for me. I'm getting to an age where if there's too much going on, too many people talking simultaneously, I can have trouble discerning a direct conversation unless I'm dialed in & focused ☺. I have to be *intentional* about listening. The same thing could be said about many people *spiritually*. Are you in a place where God *could* speak to you? Or are you distracted emotionally, mentally, or spiritually because you're worried about something, or you're still thinking through that argument or whatever the case may be? Let me encourage you, set those things aside for a while & say, "Speak Lord, Your servant is listening."

God says to them, "I know you're *discouraged presently*, but remember what I've done for you *previously*, consider our *history*..." The principle in place is this, God's past *faithfulness* should increase our present *faith*. He specializes in doing great things in the lives of the downtrodden. If we will listen to & heed His word, He will do a wonderful work in us, through us, & for us...

*But I want to talk about *discouragement* for a minute here because it's one of the fiery darts of the wicked one by which he will seek to disrupt & destroy your walk w/God. God is here seeking to give us some tools to overcome it, but I don't want to diminish the difficulties that are part & parcel w/it.

One commentator said this, "Once a Christian gets eaten up with discouragement and unbelief it takes a great deal to shake him out of it. Those two emotions are the masterstrokes of Satan. So long as the child of God maintains an attitude of praise and trust in the Lord, then he is invincible. Once the devil gets him discouraged, that poor man is really going to take a knocking!" (Redpath)

He's not wrong. Over the years I've seen it again & again. Once a child of God gets shaken, or seems to settle into some overtone of unbelief, (for whatever reason), it can seem almost *impossible* to bring them back to a place of confidence in their Creator. It's not uncommon that they choose to go the other direction believing the problem is w/God rather than in themselves. Or they'll choose to abandon God altogether... But I'm so grateful that our Savior is the Good Shepherd, who will leave the 99 to seek after the 1. God loves you so much, & you may be struggling to see Him, to understand or rationalize some things. But He sees *you* & He *pursues* you...

It's common that we'll quote Rev 3:20, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*"¹ We'll use it in an evangelical application. Appealing to the unbeliever to open their heart & let Christ in. But its *interpretation* belongs to the church. Jesus finds Himself in some situations on the outside, wanting His rightful place on the inside of our hearts & lives... So He'll knock, He'll seek, He'll ask & plead.

Interesting isn't it? We're often told that when it comes to pursuing our relationship w/God we should ask, seek, knock (Matt 7:7-11). We should be persistent in pursuing Him (& we should). But let's not think for a second that it's all a one-sided effort. As though we need to seek God but He just sits there passively while we pursue Him. Not at all! God will *reason w/us, remind us, seek after & restore us!* For which we give Him praise! *

God says, "You're struggling presently, remember from where I called you initially." Abraham & Sarah were in a desperate, discouraged, hopeless place. They were past the age of childbearing, had no children of their own. Sarah was barren. – But God made Abraham a promise. That He would make a great nation of him, that kings would come from his loins & that his descendants would be like the stars of heaven & the grains of sand on the earth in number.

& Here's the thing. Abraham didn't need to understand how God *could* do it, only believe that He *would* do it. He placed his faith in the promise of the Word of God & God did the work.

That's what's happening here. Isaiah was looking to a time when the people of the nation would be discouraged. Decades into Babylonian captivity. Small in number, no rational way out. But God had made them a promise, just like He made Abraham a promise. & Even as Abraham believed God & saw God do the work, they were to believe God & they'd watch God do the work.

* Listen, we serve a God who delights to make a way when there is no way. So, if you're discouraged today, remember where you were when God called you. The situation He lifted you from. You were sinking in the miry hopeless pit of sin & shame, depression or despair. You weren't in a good place. But you believed in the Lord J.C. & you were saved. He lifted your head & overwhelmed you w/His love. Now listen, J.C. is the same yesterday, today & forever. He hasn't changed. He's still there, still faithful, you believed Him then, believe Him now. Comfort is coming your way. *

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Re 3:20]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

(Vs 3). “For the Lord will comfort Zion...make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord. Joy & gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving & the voice of melody.” Certainly, there would be comfort & joy in the day that they would be delivered from Babylon. But that would merely be the *foreshadow* of what’s *fulfilled* in this Vs. This (no doubt) looks forward to the renewal & restoration of the earth during the millennial reign of Christ.

& Again, by way of application. We serve the God of all comfort, who comforts us (2 Cor 1:3-4) in all our tribulation... The Bible is not ambiguous about the fact that in this world we *will have tribulation*. But God promises *consolation* as well. & Much like for the Israelites, when they returned from Babylon, they were comforted, they were joyful. But it was just a foretaste of what’s to come, of what’s to be fulfilled... When God fills your heart w/gladness, when He comforts you, restores you, renews your soul (& you’re so grateful, [He’s brought you back from that place of discouragement] you praise Him, you worship Him) it’s just a foretaste of what’s to come... Family, comfort is coming your way.

Leave Isaiah 51, turn quickly to **Revelation 21** (Vs1-6).

You don’t have to understand how God *could* do it. Just believe that God *will* do it, & your eyes will see it... God is not a man that He should lie. These words are *true & faithful*.

Vs 4-6

Again, the exhortation to “Listen”. God wants us to hear what He has to say. Initially (in Vs 1) He says, “Look back *historically*”. Here He says, “Look ahead *prophetically*, & understand that justice is coming to the world, vindication & salvation are on the way.” & Note the emphasis upon the word “My”. “My people, My nation, My justice, My righteousness, My salvation & My arms.”

What’s coming down the prophetic pipeline has nothing to do w/*us* & how good we are (or the nation of Israel & how great *they* are). The reasons behind the purposes & plans of God are in *Him*. They’re the result of His goodness, His Love, His grace & mercy. God does for His people what they could never *deserve in* themselves & never *do for* themselves.

& Of course we have in Vs 5 a veiled reference to J.C., the finished work of the cross & the fact that God so loved the *world*. “My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth...” The plan of God’s salvation Israel nationally, but ultimately for all of humanity through J.C. (My righteousness) was already long in motion...

Peter tells us that it was set in motion before the foundation of the world. & Though God wanted to proclaim the good news *through* Israel, it was never meant to be limited to Israel. “The coastlands (gentile nations, far reaches of the earth) will wait upon Me & on My arm (My strength, My sufficiency) they will trust.”

& Unlike this place (this planet) which is transitory & *temporary*, God salvation will carry on *eternally*... He says,* “Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look on the earth beneath. The heavens will vanish away like smoke, & the earth will grow old like a garment, & those who dwell in it will die in like manner; by My *salvation* will be *forever*, & My righteousness will not be abolished.” (Praise the Lord...)

Ladies and Gentlemen: Heaven & earth will pass away. Peter put it this way, “*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,*”² Kinda puts things in their proper perspective doesn’t it?

Everything about this world (including every life on it) is on borrowed time. – The sun that gives you light/warmth loses about 4.7 million *tons* of mass every second to produce the sunshine you so richly enjoy. Now, don’t let that panic you. It’ll still sustain life at that rate for around 5 billion years 😊. But my point is that it’s measurable, the natural resources on this planet, the sun that provides light & life... none of them can go on indefinitely. It’s all temporary. Which is why you & I need our sights set on *eternity*.

What is your life? It’s even a vapor that appears for a little time & then vanishes away. Therefore where should your priority be? *The heavens will vanish away like smoke, the earth will grow old like a garment, & we who dwell in it will die, in like manner... The world is winding down, the sun is burning up, but we can build our lives upon the immutable, eternal Word of God.* *

You don’t need to worry that in 120 billion years, God will have a change of heart & mind. Decide He’s done w/all this & eliminate our existence or toss us all in hell. His righteousness will not be abolished & His salvation will be... *forever*.

Vs 7-8

Look back *historically*, look ahead *prophetically*, look w/in yourself *presently/personally*. What do you find? *Fear* or *faith*?

² [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (2 Pe 3:10-11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

* There are people who will come into your life who hate you, who oppress you, spite you or make fun of you. (For the nation of Israel, this was speaking of the Babylonians at that time. Their oppressors.) God says, “Those who hate you, who hurl insults at you, they’re worm food. Don’t be afraid.”

I would say, beyond that, today believers are afraid in large part to even make known the fact that they’re believers for fear of humiliation, fear of mockery, being seen as the person who causes the problems. Standing for things like 2 genders, marriage being between a man & a woman, you’re pro-Israel, you stand against abortion. You believe in the authority & absolute truth of scripture... & when people find that out, you’re worried how they might see you, how they might treat you, think/speak of you... Hear the word of the Lord to you, “Do no fear the reproach of men, nor be afraid of their insults.”

Jesus said that like this, *“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”*³ You can fear God or you can fear man, but you can’t do both...

The oppression, insults & mockery of man is temporary, the salvation of God is forever... be strong in the Lord & in the power of His might. Don’t be ashamed (embarrassed) of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto *your* salvation, & for everyone who believes. *

Vs 9-11

“God we see how You’ve worked previously, we’re asking You to do it again *presently*.” Here, the nation is recalling God’s mighty works in the nation of Egypt in delivering His people. (Rahab & the serpent are references to Egypt & the pharaoh, Is 30:7 & Ezek 29:3)

The idea is, “You’ve done it before, do it again & we will return to Jerusalem w/singing. Our enemies defeated, every obstacle out of the way, sorrow & sighing will flee away & joy, everlasting gladness will be upon us.” (& We can’t wait).

Vs 12-16

The principle comes into focus for us again in Vs 12-13, how easy it is for us to forget God & fear man. But God says, “I am the One who comforts you.” The idea being, if the strength of God is on your side, why should we fear man? The power & greatness of God is our *comfort*. The book of Hebrews has it like this, *“For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we may boldly say: ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’”*⁴

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Mt 10:28]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Heb 13:5-6]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“& I have put (Vs 16) My words in your mouth, I have covered you w/the shadow of My hand...” Why? “That I may plant the heaven, lay the foundation of the earth, & say to Zion, ‘You are My people.’” God wants to use you to build up & build into His kingdom. God wants to use *you* to lead others to *Him*.

Vs 17-23

It’s interesting how we like to project the state of our own being upon God. Back in Vs 9 it was the people of God crying out, “Awake, awake, put on strength O arm of the Lord!” Yet the scriptures declare, *“Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep.”*⁵ However, it’s all too common for the *people* of God to slumber & drift off to sleep spiritually. That’s why we read in the book of Romans, *“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.”*⁶ God says, “Look, I’m not the One who is asleep here! *You’re* the ones in need of a wakeup call!” God is trying to snap them back into spiritual sobriety!

– The Bible teaches us that God holds a cup (metaphorically speaking) in His hand. It’s the wine cup of His wrath, His righteous judgment. & When a people fill it up w/the measure of their sins, He will press it to their lips & force them to drink it down to the dregs (the bitter sediment that settles to the bottom). **CLOSE**

Not only had they gone into captivity, but desolation/destruction, famine & the sword. This was the righteous cup of God’s wrath poured out as the result of their sins against Him. This is why He says that they’re “drunk but not w/wine”. They’re reeling to & fro as the result of God’s wrath, staggering under the weight of it. & *There were none who could help them, none to lead them out of their condition... which is why Vs 22 shines like a beacon of light out of the darkness... “Thus says the Lord, the Lord & your God who pleads the cause of His people...”*

Not only would God (purely out of His grace & mercy) deliver them nationally. But ultimately this looks forward to what He would do for all of humanity in the cross of J.C. Perhaps you recall the scene in your mind’s eye, there was your Lord & mine, crying out in the Garden of Gethsemane, the cross awaiting Him the next morning... *“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”*⁷

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ps 121:4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ro 13:11–12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 26:39). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

This cup of the righteous wrath of God against the sins of the world... Jesus drank it down to the dregs for you & for me... The Lord... (who is our God) pled the cause of His people. So that in Christ, God has taken out of our hand the cup of trembling, the dregs of the cup of His fury & we shall no longer drink it... You have been redeemed by the blood of J.C.

God will deal w/the enemies of Israel. He will deal w/the enemies of the cross of J.C. As for you & me, we need to set our sights on the eternal... This world is passing away, & the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever...

Prayer Points:

Thank You Lord for pleading the cause of Your people. For standing in the gap on our behalf, for interceding, making a way where there was no way. Thank you for the promise of Your word, that Your salvation will be forever & Your righteousness will not be abolished. Thank You for the comfort of your great power & might, that You will never leave us nor forsake us... fill us w/Your Spirit, be glorified in our lives.

Jesus drank the cup of the fury of God's wrath against our sin. In Him, everlasting life can be yours. You can take your chances before God, or you can believe on the Lord J.C. & be saved. He's made a way where we could never make a way, enter into the grace & the mercy, the salvation of God through faith in Him today.