

Series: Isaiah

Title: Christ Assures the Church

Text: Isaiah 51: 1-8

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The last chapter, Christ spoke through Isaiah and Christ continues speaking in this chapter. After assuring those who go on walking in the sparks they have kindled that, of his own hand, they shall lie down in sorrow. Here he speaks to us, who by his grace believe on him. He says,

Isaiah 51: 1: Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD:

The righteousness believers follow is the LORD our Righteousness. The naturally religious man vainly follows after righteousness by the law, the sparks they have kindled.

Righteousness has been given freely to those born of God, by the obedience of Christ. Three times he commands us to, ‘Hearken.’ Each time he says, ‘Hearken to me.’ It is Christ—the LORD our Righteousness—who we hearken unto, who we follow after, the righteousness of faith.

Proposition: The Lord comforts his people, assuring us, that he shall save his people himself. The three ‘hearkens’ in our text will mark our divisions.

Divisions: 1) First, the LORD assures us that he shall call, bless and increase his church--**Isaiah 51: 1: Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit [whence] ye are digged. 2: Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah [that] bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. 3 For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.** 2) Secondly, the LORD assures us that from him, the gospel shall proceed and be effectual—**Isaiah 51: 4: Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people. 5 My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust. 6: Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.** 3) Thirdly, the LORD commands us not to fear the reproach of men—**7: Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. 8: For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.**

I. THE LORD ASSURES US THAT HE SHALL GIVE THE INCREASE IN HIS CHURCH.

It is easy for us to be discouraged when we look at ourselves. At the time the LORD sent Isaiah with this word, true Israel—the elect remnant of true believers in their midst—was reduced to a small number. They were surrounded by Babylon on every side. And so are we. But our resurrected Head has graciously fit each of us here together in his body and left us in this world to be his witnesses. Some may reproach us, saying, ‘You aren’t much of a witness.’ I beg to differ!

Witnesses of Christ

One of the ways the Lord's people are his witnesses is by our weakness. The fact that we are so defenseless and weak with no strength in ourselves is proof the power is of God and not of us. By choosing us foolish things, us weak things, us base things, brethren, we are his witnesses by the fact that the Power and Wisdom is of Christ, and not of us. So the LORD tells us to look somewhere else other than to ourselves.

Trophies of Grace

Isaiah 51: 1:...look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. 2: Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you:

Abraham is our father, the father of the faithful: "If ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed." Remember, how God promised Abraham a Seed and promised a multitude of children would be born to him through that seed. That same covenant has been made to you and I who believe right here. It is the everlasting covenant of grace. God has promised us that same Seed, who is Christ, and promised us that through that Seed, an elect seed shall be born unto us.

I am not just preaching to hear myself talk. I want to see sinners called out of darkness into his light. I expect my Savior to bless his word whether we see it or we don't—but he has promised us he will do it. So we expect it.

But the power to bring God's promise to pass was not in Abraham and Sarah—Abraham was an old, dry rock. And Sarah's womb was barren. The wisdom to bring God's promise to pass was not in Abraham and Sarah—they attempted it by their wisdom, but erred greatly.

Christ the Power and Wisdom

Christ is the Power and Wisdom of God. Look to Christ the Rock. Christ our Head does use the members of his body. Look to the apostles and the early church. Our Head framed them together in his body and used them greatly. He has called us and united us to use us the same way. But it is not by our might nor by our power "but by my Spirit saith the Lord of hosts." (Zec 4: 6)

"For I called him alone"—The Lord alone called Abraham, as well as the early church—he called them from eternity by divine election—just like he called you who believe. The Lord alone "called" Abraham out his idolatry—like he called Peter, the Eunuch, Lydia, you and me.

"And blessed him"—The Lord blessed Abraham with all spiritual blessing, blessed Abraham in his heart when he circumcised his heart through the Spirit and gave him faith, blessed him with free justification in Christ, righteousness in Christ, sanctification in Christ and blessed him with all his earthly provision as well.

"And increased him"—The Lord increased him personally in heart with Christ who was pictured in that promised son, increased him with that spiritual seed promised him, which no man can number and the Lord is still increasing Abraham each time Christ calls out another one of his lost sheep.

So our Master says to us, brethren, when we begin to feel discouraged, remember this:

Isaiah 51: 3: For the LORD shall comfort Zion: [his church] he will comfort all her waste places

By his Spirit ministering the word to our hearts, blessing us with more grace, by calling and adding to his church daily such as should be saved and by increasing us in our low state, the Lord shall comfort Zion.

Isaiah 51: 3:...and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD;

The Lord is the Husbandman, his church is a vineyard of red wine, “I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” (Is 27: 3)

Isaiah 52: 3: ...joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

II. THE LORD ASSURES US HIS GOSPEL SHALL BE PUBLISHED EFFECTUALLY

Isaiah 51: 4: Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation:

We who are his true Israel, his redeemed, assembled people are his spiritual house and his holy nation, his royal priesthood as the apostle Peter writes in 1 Peter chapter 2. Here is why he assures us, he will provide all things necessary for us.

The Gospel Shall Proceed

The Lord assures his church, the gospel shall proceed from him—“For a law shall proceed from me.” This is not the law from Mt. Sinai; this is the gospel from Mt. Zion, his church.

Isaiah 2:3: And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

The gospel shall proceed—the gospel shall be preached in all the world. And it shall proceed from Christ our Head—“from me.” The gospel is proceeding from Christ himself. God gives it to Christ our Head. Christ gives it to his ambassadors. His ambassadors preach it. Christ sends the Spirit making it effectual in the hearts of his people. So the glory goes to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Discernment Shall Be Given

Our Master also promises, “I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.” All judgment has been given to Christ as the GodMan, all power in heaven and earth has been given to Christ in glorified humanity together with his divine nature. Judgment means verdict. The message of the gospel is the verdict of God the Judge, of Christ our Judge. The verdict declared is justice is satisfied for all God’s elect by Christ and him crucified. Mercy is justly showered upon all his elect because they are righteous in Christ. God is the Justifier because God provided himself the Lamb.

Our Sovereign Head assures us he shall give spiritual discernment through his gospel, “I will make my judgment (my verdict, my gospel) to rest for a light of the people.” He gives spiritual discernment in the heart he has quickened and given faith to receive him.

He makes his verdict to be settled in the court of our conscience, “For a light of the people.” For spiritual discernment, giving us the mind of Christ, Christ our Covenant is formed in us. He is our light by which believers discern truth: does it give Christ all the glory, all preeminence, and no flesh is allowed to glory in his presence.

Faith Shall Be Given

Our gracious Head promises us that he shall give faith to his children, “My righteousness [is] near.”

Romans 10: 8: The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

Christ says, “my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people.”

Isaiah 53: 1: Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

When Christ reveals Christ, the Arm of the Lord, the gospel becomes “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed, from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” (Rom 1: 16-17) Then the believer find Christ’s arms open to receive us and keep us all our days. And this is the effectual result, “the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.”

Our gracious Head says now here is how sure you can be that my word shall not return unto me void.

Isaiah 51: 6: Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

When we are born of the Spirit of God, made new creatures, old things pass away, behold all things become new; when our High Priest writes the everlasting covenant on our hearts, “he makes the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.” Christ becomes the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. When we are born of the Spirit of God the kingdom of God is within us and we in him. So we never vanish way, we never pass away. So when our flesh and this world vanishes away we remain, our salvation remains, righteousness remains, because it is all wrought by Christ our eternal, sovereign, successful Savior--“but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.” Peter uses another text from Isaiah but the idea is the same.

1 Peter 1: 23: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 24: For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

So, brethren, because it is through his bride that Christ our Husband births his seed into newborn babes, with the incorruptible seed, the word of God by which the gospel is preached unto his people, our Lord assures his church, he shall provide for us—till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God”, till the fullness of his body is complete, till Christ fills all in all.

Who is Sufficient for These Things?

Our Prophet gathers us together to strengthen each other as he works in each of us. I need that from you because this gospel is offensive when it crosses a person’s false refuge. A drowning man is dangerous and hurtful.

Just think how offended men were when Paul preached the gospel. They were sure they were saved by the work of their hands. Then Paul comes along telling them circumcision avails nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but a man must be made a new creature. And Paul suffered dearly for that. His preachers and his witnesses in his church have suffered horrible deaths for preaching the truth of his gospel.

Why unite a people and makes us bear that suffering? It has to do with the servant not being above his Master. It has to do with suffering with Christ.

The incarnate Word came in the flesh, why didn't he just walk in and read the scriptures? Surely the incarnate Word reading the word would be enough. When he read the scriptures they did not get offended. It was when he preached the scriptures to them? But the preaching of the gospel is a humbling work: both to those who preach and to those who hear. He even uses the means to bring us to nothing. God uses preaching to unite his church because God is manifesting his manifold wisdom in heavenly places by this work he is doing in his church.

So the Master keeps giving us his word. He keeps allowing men to rise up to reproach; he allows men to walk away to keeps showing us our utter weakness. All the while he keeps putting the same gospel on your heart and you know you just have to preach it.

What the Lord does between him and those who hear is his business, you're just sent to tell the truth. But isn't our Lord gracious to give us these assuring promises.

In chapter 50, Christ showed us how when his ear was opened, he came forth doing his Father's will. He was not rebellious; he set his face like a flint. He told us; now you do the same, obey the Voice of his Servant. Then today he gives us these assurances: 1) Look to Abraham and Sarah: they had no power: Christ shall call, bless, and give the increase. 2) Never imagine the word is returning to him void. He assures us that his gospel shall be published, and it shall go forth effectually, therefore he shall keep us.

III. LASTLY, THEREFORE THE LORD GIVES US THIS COMMAND

Isaiah 51: 7: Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart *is* my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

In light of all this great assurance, now Christ says, 'Hearken to me, rather than men. Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revillings.'" One of these two things shall be the end of all who hear.

1) For those who revile: v8: **For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but**

2) For those he creates a new: v8: **my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.**

Knowing he still has some lost sheep for whom he shall do that for—and that it won't happen through a lie, only the truth—have all this full assurance from him, Christ is our Assurance and Boldness to keep on declaring the truth. Christ is our Sufficiency! Isaiah bursts into prayer.

Isaiah 51: 9: Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? 10 Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? 11 Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

Amen!