

Series: Isaiah  
Title: Hear God Speak  
Text: Isaiah 57: 15-18  
Date: February 22, 2015  
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“Hear God Speak.” That is not only the title of the message; that is what I beseech you to do this morning. Our text is God speaking. He gives you and me the privilege to listen in. So “Hear God Speak.” I pray he give you grace to do so savingly.

God is Holy—“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place.” (Is 57: 15) God is righteous and holy. “The stars are not pure in his sight.” (Job 25: 5) God can only dwell with those who are as righteous and holy as he

Therefore, God only dwells with the contrite and humble—“I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” (Is 57: 15)

Yet, by nature, not one of us has a broken and contrite spirit. The number one reason sinners will not bow and seek mercy from God in Christ is because we think *we* are the high and lofty one. By nature, every one of us is proud. Any outward show of humility by us is pride and self-righteousness. God will not dwell with one who thinks he is good, righteous and holy.

Therefore, in order for God to dwell in the heart of his child, he must make us contrite and humble. Will you “Hear God Speak”? Give me your undivided attention. More importantly, give your undivided attention to God and “Hear God Speak!”

## **GOD WILL NOT CONTEND FOREVER**

First, God declares that he will not contend with sinners, forever—“For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth:...” (Is 57: 16)

God does contend with those he saves. Before God saves, he will get you lost; before converting, he convicts; before lifting up, he brings down. One, God contends with you in your conscience. By nature we sleep and are indifferent. But God wakes up his child. He creates conflict in your heart. God aggravates the enmity within you. Two, God contends with you by his word. He makes you hear his scriptures, makes you hear his law and strips us of our fig leaves. Three, God contends with us in providence. He will hedge you in on every side, block your vain way and force you to confront yourself and God.

Here is God contending with Gomer: Hosea 2:6: Behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. 7: And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find *them*...9: [I will] take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax *given* to cover her nakedness. 10: And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. 11: I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts. 12: And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These *are* my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. 13: And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.

When God contends, God makes you know he has a controversy with you. He describes it here as being “wroth”, as “smiting”, as “I hid me.” From our view, he makes us feel God is angry with us. And it is profitable, to bring us low. Christ describes it as an invasion and conquest. “When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.” (Lu 11: 21-22)

Believer, God contends with us also. When we stray from him, when our hearts grow cold toward him or when the world steals our affection, God contends with us. Our faithful Father contends with us using the same means. Worse, he says, “I hid my face.” It is awful when we cannot feel his presence. At times, he hinders us from the privileges he gives us in this place, because we neglected them!

Perhaps, someone here is experiencing this. There is a struggle within, where there was indifference. Your sin did not bother you, now you tremble. You were confident of your fig leaves, now you hiding from God. Be thankful. There is hope when God contends with a sinner.

But God says, “I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me.” (Is 57: 16) God would crush us if he really showed his fierce anger. But God knows we are but dust.

Psalm 103: 10: He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11: For as the heaven is high above the earth, *so* great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12: As far as the east is from the west, *so* far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13: Like as a father pitieth *his* children, *so* the LORD pitieth them that fear him. 14: For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust.

God’s fury was poured out on Christ in place of those that fear him therefore when God contends, he reserves mercy for his child. “He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.” (Is 27: 8) You say, “But the lost sinner has not feared him?” No, but God speaks of those he contends with, as they shall be when he gets done with them. God only contends in grace with those he shall save by his grace! Listen.

Lamentations 3: 19: Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. 20: My soul hath *them* still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. 21: This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. 22: *It is of* the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23: *They are* new every morning: great *is* thy faithfulness... 31: For the Lord will not cast off for ever: 32: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

Another reason God will not contend forever is because in electing, redeeming grace, regenerating grace, God made the soul he contends with—“the spirit should fail before me and the souls *which* I have made.” (Is 57: 16) God purpose in contending with his child is not to crush and destroy us, but to make us contrite, to humble us, to get our undivided attention, that he might revive us by his Spirit.

## **CONTENTION ALONE WILL NO TURN US**

Secondly, God ends his contention because contention alone will not turn us—“For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart.” (Is 57: 17)

In the midst of that statement, God declares the reason he contends with his elect—“For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth...” It is because of “the iniquity of our covetousness”—the idols in our hearts, “the stumblingblock of iniquity before our face” is why God contends with us. (Eze 14)

You see, sinner, God contends with us to convince us of our sin – (Eze 14: 3-4; Jer. 17:9; Matt. 15:19) He said, “I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols.” God contends with us to convince us of righteousness--of our total absence of righteousness and of God’s requirement of perfect righteousness! God contends with us to convince us of judgment. The judgment of God against you for your sin--we must confess—“Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.” (Ps 51: 4)

But God also declares how hard our hearts are by nature. Though God contends with us, God says, “he went on forwardly in the way of his heart.” Our sin-nature—our sinful heart, our flesh—is so deceitful, stubborn and rebellious, even when God contends with us, we try to ignore God and go on in our rebellion. But notice, this verse begins with the word “for”—it means the hardness of our hearts is one reason why God will not contend with his child forever, not only because our spirits would fail, but because our sinful hearts are so hard.

Isaiah 1:5: Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6: From the sole of the foot even unto the head *there is* no soundness in it; *but* wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

God contends with us, to hedge us up, to put down our old man of flesh and get our attention inwardly. But it is God’s goodness that leads his child to repentance.

## **GRACE LEADS TO REPENTANCE**

So lastly, God will not contend forever because it is his grace by which he leads us to repent and believe on Christ. Here is God’s grace, “I have seen his ways.” (Is 57: 8) He has seen our sins. He has seen us go on forwardly in our ways. Yet he still says, “And I will heal him!” Oh, the good news of the gospel of grace! Due to God choosing us by grace, with no regard to our ways, our ways cannot turn God from exercising grace in us.

Here is effectual, irresistible grace, “And I will heal him!” (Is 57: 17) God will not only contend with, and subdue, our fleshly man of sin; God will create a new man within; God will give us a new spirit entirely.

Here is the revelation of grace, “I will lead him, also!” (Is 57: 17) God drives when he contends; but when he revives he leads straight to Christ: revealing Christ’s is the fulfillment of righteousness; revealing our judgment was settled in Christ’s substitutionary death (John 12:31); revealing God is just and the Justifier of his child, he made us righteous in him; revealing our sins are forgiven through faith, not by our works (Rom. 3:24-26); revealing salvation is by his free grace given us in Christ; revealing God has given to us eternal life and this life is in his Son. (1 Jn 5: 11)

Listen carefully. If God is contending with you, here is why—you think your works can save you; you think you merit God’s acceptance; you think your will can save you; you think the way you have chosen is right. But God will never accept you by your works, your worth, your will or your way! Never! God saves by his work in Christ, by Christ’s merit, by God’s will, by God grace alone, through faith alone. (Eph. 2:8-9; II Tim. 1:9).

Would you like to know when his contention with you will end? It will end the moment you behold Christ and surrender to God, confessing and believing on God in his sovereign right to show mercy to whom he will and pass by whom he will. (Rom. 9:16); the moment you believe God say, “My grace is sufficient for thee:

for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Cor 12: 9); the moment you renounce your works, worth, will, way and cast all your care on Christ Jesus the Lord and follow him! (Read Is 55: 1-3)

The moment God brings us to forsake all for Christ, here is his promise of grace—“I will restore comforts to him...” (Is 57: 18) Notice, “comforts” is plural. He makes the believer know we are freely, forever forgiven; made the Righteousness of God in Christ; reconciled to God; that you have sonship with God our Father; acceptance and assurance; unchangeable security; protection and provision; eternal inheritance reserved for you; the peace of God. What blessings we have because God said, “I will restore comforts to him.”

Sinner, you have no idea, how many people mourn for you, begging God to save you by his grace! Well, here’s one more promise of grace: not only does God restore comforts to the child he saves, he restores comforts to those who have been mourning for God to save you, “[God says, I will restore comforts] to his mourners.” (Is 57: 18)

Oh, how God restored comforts to that mourning father, Jarius, when he got word, God raised his daughter. He did the same for the Canaanite woman. He restored comforts to Martha and Mary at Lazarus’ resurrection. Sinner, your parents, your preacher, these men who teach and all who have borne witness to you mourn for you to be saved. God promises, “I will restore comforts to his mourners.”

Now do you “Hear God Speak?” Will you renounce you and your works and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? That is the issue! “HEAR GOD SPEAK!” “Whoso *is* wise, and will observe these *things*, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.” (Ps 107: 43)

**Amen!**