

Isaiah 56:1-12

“Salvation Is Coming”

Isaiah 55 ends on a glorious high note of fruitfulness & restoration. Yet there are some things that the nation of Israel will need to pass through before it comes to that point. Meanwhile God would have them take heart, be a light in this dark world & shine bright...

I trust that you can already make an application for our own time, our own day & age. There is a glorious future that awaits you. *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”*¹ In Christ, eternal bliss awaits you (ultimately). But that doesn't mean that presently, while we're waiting, this life will be void of troubles, incredibly trying times & difficult days... How then (in the midst of otherwise dark days) would God have us to conduct ourselves (in the waiting)? Let's turn our attention to Vs 1 of Ch 56.

Vs 1-2

Ladies and Gentlemen: there are some incredibly important principles embedded right here w/in these 1st 2 Vs of Isaiah Ch 56. Principles for practical living & the ready result in the day of waiting. God gives 2 positive imperatives & 2 negative instructions. Or another way to understand that, 2 things we *are* to do & 2 things we're *not* to do.

& To create some context for you, this prophetic word was written to God's discouraged people. A people who would be in exile in Babylon. Who saw no real need to repent or walk in righteousness, to keep on serving the Lord or sacrificing to the Lord so long as things seemed bleak. They were downhearted concerning their current situation. You know, “Why should I honor God? After all, I'm in a foreign land, I'm being held captive against my will, I'm surrounded by pagans, people who are debased & living in moral depravity... what's the point in serving & sacrificing in an environment like this?” & God is seeking to shake them into spiritual sobriety. Splash a little cold water in their faces (metaphorically speaking) telling them to keep justice & do righteousness in *anticipation* of what was soon to come!

He says, “My salvation is about to come, & My righteousness to be revealed!” The idea is, “God is getting ready to move, you need to get your life right!” But I trust that many (if not all of us) can relate to the idea here. There are times when it seems your prayers aren't really being responded to, things are honestly dry (spiritually) & things are just difficult. It's easy want to give up on serving or sacrificing so much unto the Lord...

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Je 29:11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Yet God says, “Keep justice, do righteousness” notice “for My salvation is *about* to come, & My righteousness *to be* revealed.” – I think many of us would prefer to 1st see God’s righteousness revealed, to say, “God, *You* send your salvation (deliver me from this dark, depressing place) *then* I’ll keep justice & do righteousness.”

But God says, “No, you are to *keep* justice, & *do* righteousness in *anticipation* of My salvation (My deliverance that’s to come).” Btw, those are the 2 positive imperatives, the “behavioral patterns” that God desires to see exhibited in His people (we’ll talk a bit more about that in a minute).

But it’s kind of like that mentality, “God, bless my finances & I’ll give to You.” Yet God says, “Be a giver right now in *anticipation* that I’ll honor that & bless your obedience in that.”

Here’s what I’m wanting you to see. It’s not uncommon for God to call His people to righteousness in *anticipation* rather than after the *realization* of His works. In fact, the Bible teaches that if you wait, it’s too late. Turn to **Matthew 25**

Vs 1-13

* What’s happening here? Jesus is teaching a parable based on a principle. What’s the principle? Preparing (having your life in order) in *anticipation* of the promise of His return. 10 virgins. 5 wise, 5 foolish. 5 are represented as having *prepared*, 5 represented as having *procrastinated*. 5 believed the promise of His return, prepared their lives (lived their lives) accordingly & went to be w/the Lord, 5 didn’t see the point & didn’t make the cut... If you wait, it’s too late.

We’re to lead lives in *anticipation* of the coming *salvation* of the Lord. While we’re here, look back at Vs 42 of Ch 24.

Vs 42-44

If you wait, it’s too late. *Get your life ready now for what’s coming. Look at Vs 45.

Vs 45-51

Are you sensing a theme begin to develop here? * We don’t wait for God to do something then correlate the way we live our lives w/that. We trust in the word of God & adjust our lives according to His promise in anticipation of it coming to pass!

Our take home is this, the time to fear God & lead a righteous life is now because the window in which we will enter eternity is but a breath away. It’s right around the corner. When you die, it’s too late. In the event of the rapture, you’ve missed the train. The time to give your life *to* Christ & live your life *for* Christ is now!

& True repentance will be reflected in the way we lead our lives. Having said all of that I should say this. Salvation isn't dependent upon everything looking as it should *outwardly*. The religious leaders of Jesus' day were all about that. Their actions were right, their motives were wrong. Right action, wrong reason. Things need to be right *inwardly* (in the heart).

The way these things connect is that if things are as they should be in our heart, that will be reflected in the way we lead our lives. Keeping justice, doing righteousness. God's coming *salvation* should serve as *motivation* to lead righteous lives (write it down, read it later 1 Jn 3:2-3). *

Justice & righteousness, the moral fiber of integrity, we're to do right *by man & before God*. If you're someone who is opposed to that. You'd prefer to be corrupt, to cheat people & be deceitful. Then you object to the way that God wants you to live. But *understand that it's only those who want to live *corrupt lives* who object to the way God would have us to live. & Honestly, there's no shortage of people who would prefer to live corrupt lives.

& That's what Jesus was talking about when He said that He didn't come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. & He said, "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." He said, *"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."*²

There are oceans of people who prefer the darkness to the light. Their deeds are evil, they don't like the commandments of God. The ordered instructions on living a righteous life... Be fair, be just, do the right thing, they don't want to. So they won't come to the light.*

You & me, we are to *keep* justice & *do* righteousness. Isaiah says, "Blessed is the man who does this, who lays hold on it." The word, "Blessed" means, "Oh how happy." ... It's weird to me that some people think *holiness* is akin to *somberness* or *solemnness*. That if you smile or enjoy life there must be sin involved or at least some kind of carnality. At the very least you're suspect. But happiness is intrinsic in following *after* the Lord & yielding obedience *to* the Lord... It's good for your soul to lead a life pleasing to the Lord!

² [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Jn 3:19-20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

To the positive, “Keep justice, & do righteousness”. To the negative, “keep from defiling the Sabbath, keep your hand from doing evil”.

If you were with me last week (Easter service), we spoke for just a minute about the Sabbath. For the N.T. believer there is no injunction to keep the Sabbath. Christ is our perpetual Sabbath. He finished the work, it’s His work upon the cross that commends us to God. We rest in Him. For you & me, an application might be, don’t try to commend yourself to God through some set of do’s & don’ts, rules regulations or legal stipulations. That would “defile” (if you will) the work of J.C. on your behalf. Rest in Him.

But we serve a Covenant God. God has always made His covenants w/man & He always gives a sign that accommodates the covenant. – After global flood of Genesis 7-8, God made a covenant w/Noah (& every subsequent generation descending after him) to never flood the earth again to destroy every living creature as He’d done. & The sign of the covenant between Him & all the earth would be the rainbow set & seen in the cloud.

When God called out Abraham, He told Him that in *him* (in/through Abraham) all the families of the earth would be blessed. He was telling him that J.C. would come through his lineage. & The sign of the covenant was that of circumcision. The Messiah would be a Man who walked after the Spirit, not after the flesh. & They were to be a people who walked after the Spirit, not the flesh. Paul elaborates on this Romans Ch 2-4.

God also made a covenant w/the nation of Israel. He would be their God; they would be His people. The sign of the covenant was... the Sabbath day. You can read about it more in Ex 31:12-17 Again, it was for Israel, not the church.

God has made a covenant w/you & me (w/the church). The sign of the covenant is the elements of communion. The broken bread & the cup. When Jesus was eating His Last Supper w/His disciples, after He took, blessed, broke the bread & gave it to His disciples He said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” Then He took the cup, gave thanks, gave it to them & said, “*Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*”³ So throughout history, whenever God would make a covenant, He would give a sign to accommodate the covenant. The sign of His covenant w/Israel was the Sabbath.

Even though they would be in Babylon (not Israel), God tells them to continue to honor the Sabbath, & to keep their hands from doing evil.

³ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Mt 26:27-28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 3-8

Here *God is dealing with feelings verses facts. I love that because people are prone to give weight to how they feel. But the Bible says, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked;"*⁴ So here, God is saying, "Don't buy the lie regarding how you feel, trust in the truth of My Word."

"Don't let the person who has joined himself to My people say, 'the Lord has utterly separated me from His people.'" Why? Because it isn't true. – Allow me to use a present day illustration. You give your life to J.C., you start going to church & you begin to get this feeling, "Nobody likes me at that church." So you have this jaded lens you're viewing everyone through. Someone comes up to you, warmly greets you, spends time in conversation w/you. They walk away & all you can think is, "Man, what a phony, they were so totally fake." On the other hand, no one says anything & so you think, "I knew it! They're all cold, hard-hearted jerks!" It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. You put people in a position whereby they can't win!

But God is saying, "Look, when you belong to Me, you're part of the family! You belong! Don't buy the lie that tells you you're an outcast! You're not rejected, you're accepted!" Jump in be a part, serve the Lord, sacrifice to the Lord, allow God to make you joyful in His house of prayer! (Btw, the end of Vs 7 was quoted by Jesus when He overturned the tables of the moneychangers in the temple). Trust the facts of His word, not the deceitful notions of your feelings.* In the NT vernacular, John said that like this, *"For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart,"*⁵

"Nor let the eunuch say, 'Here I am, a dry tree". A eunuch was a man who remained single for 1 of 3 reasons. Either he was made a eunuch (through castration) by a king so that he could be trusted to oversee his harem or some other duty w/in the government w/out distraction. He may've been born in such a way from the womb. Or he might make himself a eunuch so he could serve the Lord w/out the distractions of sexual desire.

If you're single, you are way more flexible & ready to go anywhere or do anything at any time in order to serve the Lord. If you're married & have a family you're not as free, you have other responsibilities to consider. Paul addresses that in 1 Cor 7. There's blessing & costs to count on either side. One cost to count on choosing to remain single is not having any offspring. Your line ends with you. & Societally we see that as a sad kind of thing...

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Je 17:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Jn 3:20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But God is saying here, “Listen, if you remain single for My sake & you lead a life truly set apart to Me, I’m going to give you an everlasting inheritance that’s *better* than that of sons & daughters. Better than any honor you could receive among men. It’ll *never* come to an end.”

Let me throw this in there for any of you who are single. Don’t make it your life goal to find a spouse. Make it your life goal to serve the Lord (seek 1st the kingdom of God & His righteousness) & let the Lord bring that person who’s to be your spouse (just like He did for Adam) into your life. He is well able to *prepare* & bring the right *person* across your path. –

There is a takeaway here for all of us embedded in Vs 4. It’s 4 words, “Choose what pleases Me.” Each day we’re confronted w/choices that we act upon based on what we call our “will”. What will you choose? Choose this day whom you will serve. As for me & my house... we will serve the Lord.

So, trust the facts of God’s word. Not your feelings. Whosoever will may come. God will *receive* you & God will *reward* you.

Vs 9-12

Beginning in Vs 9, God shifts gears. He goes from the *reward* for those who trust in Him to the *repercussions* of those responsible *for* yet neglecting the spiritual wellbeing of the people. Those who are in the *place* of serving *Him*, but in truth only serve *themselves*. People who use positions of power for personal gain.

When He speaks of the beasts of the field coming to devour (back in Vs 9) most commentators agree (& I lean this way as well, especially when you cross reference this passage w/Jeremiah 12) that it’s reference to the foreign nations that He’s going to use to judge (devour) the nation of Judah.

*God simply lambasts & lays into those who are in the position of the spiritual leadership of the nation. He calls them, “blind watchmen”. The watchmen were those men in the towers on the walls who were to warn the people of approaching danger. But God says that these men are blind, they’re in the place of watching out for wellbeing of the nation, but they’re blind! What good is a blind security guard? Someone who can’t see the enemy or imminent danger approaching?

He says they’re like dumb dogs who can’t bark! Imagine a watchdog who sleeps or ignores, or simply won’t bark when someone is breaking into the house! What good is it? God calls these “spiritual leaders” blind, useless, lazy, greedy & self-serving!

A good shepherd watches over & protects the flock; the hireling simply sees the flock as a means for personal gain. Doesn't really care about their wellbeing. These guys weren't fulfilling their purpose. I get the impression that for them, ministry was more of a career choice than a calling. Not really caring about the people of God, more just about what's in it for them. Not willing to ruffle feathers or warn the people... it's not worth the trouble, the backlash.

Again I say that each of us are personally responsible to be salt & light in this morally deprived culture to which we've been called. But consider for a moment the liberalism in our nation. The celebration of degradation & deprivation... you tell me, has the church done its work? Have pastors stood strong & held the line concerning the truth of the Word of God? Or have we been afraid to step on toes, worried about offending people & not wanting to make waves or create enemies?

A blind watchman, a dumb dog who can't bark, who sleeps rather than warns is a man who won't faithfully discharge & give out the word of God. He lies down & sleeps, would rather have the praise that comes from man rather than the praise that comes from God... Leads a life of compromise & surrenders his authority.

Listen to me, *integrity brings authority*. These guys lacked integrity. No one would listen to them even if they tried to warn the people. Just like when Lot tried to warn Sodom, tried to warn his family. His life was so filled w/compromise his words held no authority. No one would respond to his warning... **Close**

Vs 11 sums up the motive & the mentality of these men, "They all look to their own way... for his own gain."* It's not only *what* you do, it's *why* you do it. Ministry is about what we can do for others... not what we can get out of it for ourselves. These guys shut their eyes to danger, won't make waves. & What's worse, they're not simply passively ignorant, they're actively wicked.

(Vs 12) * Judgment is coming, we're just gonna party our problems away & pretend it's all good. How many people take this position today... They think they can turn a blind eye to reality, party their problems away & they're totally unprepared for judgment.

But it doesn't have to be that way. God calls us to repent. To turn from our sin, to come out from among them & be separate... This world is ripe for judgment, & God will judge the world in righteousness... But grace is available. Jesus bore the judgment of God on our behalf, & we can have peace w/God through His cross. Forgiveness of sin, newness of life is found in J.C. *

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for the promises & *the warnings* of Your word. Help us to lead lives set apart to You, well pleasing to You, that honor & glorify You. We want to be faithful to You, salt & light in a dark, decaying world. May we keep justice & do righteousness, for surely Your salvation is coming soon.

God loves you enough to warn you of His righteous judgment & urge you to repent. He gave His only begotten, beloved Son to bear the full weight of His wrath that we might be reconciled to God through faith in Him. Don't fight *against* the Lord, surrender *to* the Lord & find new life today.