

Title: Beholding God Take His Own

Text: Is 57: 1-2

Date: Sept 3, 2023

Place: SGBC, NJ

Isaiah 57: 1: The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth *it* to heart: and merciful men *are* taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil *to come*. 2: He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, *each one walking in his uprightness*.

At 7:45, Friday morning August 25, I was with a believer as their spirit departed their body. When I arrived home late Saturday night my mother sent a text thanking me for being there these past few weeks. She wrote, "Your father was with you when you took your first breath and you were with him when he took his last."

I did not preach my father's funeral. One reason is that his pastor gave me the privilege of baptizing my father. And I thought it better that his pastor have the privilege of preaching his funeral. The second reason is that, knowing the gospel would be preached, I thought it more needful that I be by my mother's side. But had I preached my dad's funeral this would have been the text and the message. If the Lord bless it to our hearts, it will prepare us to remember our Lord at his table this morning.

Subject: Beholding God Take His Own

Proposition: In this passage our merciful God declares that which comforts the hearts of his saints when one of our dear brethren are taken to glory by God.

THEY ARE RIGHTEOUS

Isaiah 57: 1: The righteous perisheth,..

When a child of God departs this life, the comfort for us who remain, is God's description of his saints. They are righteous. Those God the Father chose in Christ before the foundation of the world have been made righteous by the obedience of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first Adam was Head of all his children who would be born of him. All Adam's children were in Adam. When Adam disobeyed, we all disobeyed. We did not choose to accept what Adam did in order to be made sinners. When born of Adam by our first birth, we were conceived as sinners in our nature. And because Adam made us sinners by his disobedience, God imputed sin to us. God ordained that! He purposed for Adam to be our head to be a figure of Christ Jesus, the last Adam.

Romans 5:19: For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

The last Adam, the Son of God, Christ Jesus is Head of all who shall be born of him. When the Son of God took flesh like unto his brethren, all God's elect were in Christ Jesus. In the womb of the virgin, when the Lord Jesus was holy in the womb of the virgin, all God's elect were holy in Christ Jesus. When the Lord Jesus obeyed God in perfect righteousness throughout his life all God's elect obeyed God in perfect righteousness.

When the Lord Jesus was made sin for us and suffered the justice of God on the cross, the sinner in all God's elect died under the justice of God.

Romans 6: 6: Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7: For he that is dead is freed [justified] from sin" (Rom 6: 6-7).

God's justice demands only one death. When the criminal dies under the death penalty, the law requires no more. God's justice was satisfied toward his elect when Christ died on the cross. Then when the Lord Jesus arose from the grave to newness of life and sat down at God's right hand, all God's elect arose to newness of life and sat down at God's right hand.

Ephesians 2: 6: [God] hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus: 7: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

What good news! For God's elect, before God, our body of sin was destroyed in Christ crucified and all that remains is our new man made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. That is how God sees his elect. He sees us righteous as God is righteous. But only in the Lord Jesus Christ our Righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5: 21: For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

The same as we did not choose to be made sinners by Adam, God's elect did not choose to be made righteous by Christ. When born-again of the Holy Spirit, we did not choose to live. Christ became our Life within us and we lived. A new man was created within us by God the Spirit in Christ's righteousness and true holiness.

With that new spirit came God-given faith and all our choices were gone. We saw things in Christ's Light. Our new man was created holy by Christ our Holiness formed in us so that in our new man is no guile. That is why, for the first time, we owned ourselves to be the sinner. For the first time, we owned our very nature sin. For the first time, we confessed sin is mixed with all we do. In our new man is no guile so that by God-given faith, for the first time, we confessed that Christ alone is our Righteousness. By the power of God in the new birth, and by our own weakness and sin since that day, the Spirit has taught us that Christ is the Power by whom we are kept separated, partaking of Christ's holiness and his righteousness. This is what Christ declares his people shall say.

Isaiah 45: 24: Surely, shall *one* say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength:

In my Cambridge King James translation the margin has Christ speaking, saying, "Surely, he shall say OF ME, 'In the LORD is ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS AND STRENGTH.'

Isaiah 45: 24:...to HIM SHALL *men* come

Christ declares that all God's elect shall be drawn to Christ by the Spirit and each one he sanctifies shall continue to be drawn to Christ by the Spirit of God. So Christ says, "*Surely, he shall of ME, 'In the LORD is all righteousness and strength.'*"

Isaiah 45: 24...and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.

Indeed, since the day of our new birth, our aim has been to walk in righteousness and holiness. But beholding our sin, God makes his saints say with the apostle Paul

Philippians 3: 8:...for [Christ] I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, 9: And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

In the four days I spent at my father's bedside, beholding his total inability to even open his eyes, beholding a machine making him breath, I kept thinking this is what our sinful flesh has been all along. This is the pinnacle of our sin-nature. But God's description of his saints who have been given faith to believe on the Lord Jesus is that we are made the righteous of God in Christ by the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ alone. He is our hope. And knowing Christ has made us the righteousness of God in him is our comfort concerning our departed brethren.

THEY ARE MERCIFUL

Isaiah 57: 1...and merciful men *are* taken away

God not only describes his saints as righteous but God declares his saints are merciful. Knowing God has delivered us by mercy, and knowing that God continues to deliver us by mercy, God's saints are merciful. This is a comfort because Christ promised the merciful shall obtain mercy (Mt 5: 7). But we cannot even put confidence in being merciful. Christ is the Perfection of Mercy. It is Christ alone that keeps us merciful. He does it by showing us new mercies every day in the face of our sin.

Brother Ravi brought that Christ-honoring message to you last Sunday on our Lord's parable of the publican.

Luke 18:13: And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

In our experience of God's grace, that is where every child of God began. And beholding our sin that is where we have been every day since. Eyes down, smiting upon our breast, begging, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Beholding we deserve none of God's favor, time and again, we cry with David, the man after God's own heart,

Psalm 6: 1: O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. 2: Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I *am* weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed. 3: My soul is also sore vexed:...4: Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake.

Psalm 51: 1: Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

When God afflicted Job, he said, "To him that is afflicted pity *should be shewed* from his friend..." (Job 6: 14). Christ is that Friend that sticks closer than a brother. When our Lord Jesus suffered on the cross, he said, "Reproach hath broken my heart." Our suffered reproach from those who nailed him to the cross then sat and watched him. He said, "I looked for some to take pity but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none" (Ps 69: 20). Therefore, being touched with the feeling of our infirmities, when we are afflicted and brought to beg for mercy from God, Christ our High Priest and our Advocate intercedes with the Father for his mercy-begging friends.

Therefore, for the sake of Christ our Righteousness, from the first hour unto this day, each of God's saints have experienced God's faithfulness to his covenant who promised us, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb 8: 12). Oh what abounding, plenteous mercy we have received from God every day.

Every time God's child comes to the throne of grace confessing our sins, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." His mercies are new every morning because "[when] any [of his saints] sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn 1: 9; 2: 1-2).

Therefore, having been saved from the first hour to the last by the tender mercies of our God, every child of God confesses, "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not" (Lam 3: 22). Christ makes his child merciful because we know what it is to be saved on a daily basis by the tender mercies of our God for the sake of Christ Jesus. And Christ promised "the merciful shall receive mercy." So when a believer departs this life this is our comfort, God "*delighteth in mercy.*"

Micah 7: 18: Who *is* a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth *in* mercy.

GOD DID IT

Isaiah 57: 1:...merciful men *are* taken away,...the righteous is taken away from the evil

When one of God's saints departs this life, we have the comfort of knowing God did it. God took his own. It is God who takes his child from this life. God ordained the day, the time, the place and the means that each of his saints shall depart this world.

As I stood there that Friday morning looking at my dad's lifeless body, I thought, seventy-five times he saw 7:45 am August 25 come and go. A few of those, I picture him anxious to get off work so he could drive down from Camden to Eldorado to take that pretty Watson girl out on a date. He never knew in his seventy-sixth year, 7:45 August 25, 2023, was the hour God appointed to call him home.

For some of God's saints the day is at a young age. For some the day God has appointed for us to die is middle-age. For others, the day is in older age. Some at home. Some in a hospital. Some by disease. Some by other means. But those things are not what is important. Here is what matters: that we die "in faith" in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 20:6: Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection [the new birth]: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Death for the believer is, itself, mercy from God--"*the righteous is taken away from the evil.*" God takes the righteous from the evil of our own bodies of death, from the evil of wicked men, from the evil of this world, and from the evil to come. Child of God, how many times have you groaned within yourself to be delivered from all this evil?

2 Corinthians 5:1: For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2: For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 3: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 4: For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. 5: Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. 6: Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) 8: We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

Revelation 7: 16: They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17: For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Revelation 21:4...and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Brethren, we use the expression, "He passed away." But God's child really does not pass away. For God's child, "*the former things are passed away.*" In mercy, God takes his child away from the evil. What a reason to rejoice when God takes home one of his own!

WHERE THEY ARE NOW

Our comfort for our departed brethren is found in hearing God declare what happens to his child when he departs this life. In verse 2, he gives three things.

"He shall enter into peace."

I have been trying to imagine what that will be like. A brand-new world of peace with the Father of peace, with the Spirit of peace, with Christ Jesus the Prince of peace, with the angels of peace, with the children of peace. Peace will be knowing every word of this book in perfection. Peace will be knowing God our Father and his Son as he knows us and dwelling with him forever.

Revelation 21: 3: And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God....7: He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

Peace will be a total absence of pride and envy. Pride and envy keeps us from serving one another perfectly and keeps us from letting others serve us. The God of glory, God our Savior, Christ Jesus our King, said of his people that they shall sit at my table, in my kingdom, and I will come forth and serve them (Lu 12: 37; 22: 29-30). Every child of God in glory will delight to serve one another. We will even delight to be served by one another. There will be a total absence of pride and envy. There will be nothing contrary to peace: no sin within, no temptation without, no sorrow, no sighing, no sickness, no strife and no death! Only perfect peace with the Prince of peace!

"They shall rest in their beds."

When he speaks of the righteous perishing, remember, Christ promised God's saints shall never perish nor shall any be plucked from his hand. When he speaks of perishing, he speaks of our bodies. But they merely rest in their beds.

My dad's body is resting in its bed in a cemetery about three miles from his house. My grandfather's body rests in his bed nearby. On my grandfather's gravestone is one word: "Waiting." The bodies of God's saints waiting, resting in our beds, for when Christ returns. The dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who remain shall be caught up together with them in the air. We shall be raised with a perfect, glorified body (1 Thess 4: 16-18). The apostle Paul said, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." This sure hope is our comfort when brethren depart or when it comes time for our bodies to rest in our beds.

"Each one walking in his uprightness."

When God's saint takes his last breath, immediately, we are with the Lord walking in the perfect uprightness Christ has made us with Christ who is our Uprightness, forever! John saw those whose robes were washed white in the blood of Christ the Lamb. What were they doing?

Revelation 7: 15: Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

LAY THIS TO HEART

Our text says when God saints are taken from the evil **"no man layeth it to heart"..."none considering."**

I witnessed this this past week. The same day we buried my father, my mother took her brother to the doctor. He has been diagnosed with colon cancer, bleeding internally and soon will die. I would not say this had he not told me with his own mouth. By his own confession, he has no hope and no interest of hearing the gospel. He said to me, "When I die, I will bust hell wide open!"

My uncle saw my father dying for months. God gave my dad dying grace. In those months when I spoke with him on the phone and in the week I spent with him at his home before he went back to the hospital the last time, I never heard my dad complain one time. The four days I was with him in the hospital he could not speak. But when they began easing him off the machine and meds to see if his heart could pump on its own then he spoke. The only thing he asked was to be taken off life support.

Within a day of my father's funeral, my uncle was taken for emergency surgery to the same ICU in Little Rock. He cursed God, cursed the doctors, cursed the nurses, checked himself out of the hospital and we have no idea how he got home but he came out to be alone. He saw the righteous taken and never laid it to heart.

Jeremiah 12:5: If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and *if* in the land of peace, *wherein* thou trustedst, *they wearied thee*, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

Will you lay this to heart? This is certain. God shall make his children lay it to heart. Seek Christ while he may be found. Cast all your care on Christ today. Put no trust in your flesh. If you had told my father there was just one thing that he had to do to be saved in those days when he lie there in that bed, he could not even open his eyes. That is how unprofitable this sinful flesh is all our days. Christ said, "The flesh profits nothing" (Jn 6:63). Believe on Christ alone!

John 11:25: Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

Those born of God, now and forever, give God our Father and his Son the Lamb, all the glory for salvation for salvation is of the Lord.

Revelation 7:9: After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 10: And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. 11: And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, 12: Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.