

Isaiah 50 - 51 • The Servant of the Lord

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It's a common thing when we go through hard times, difficult seasons of life to kind of feel like the Lord has forgotten about us. The Lord has abandoned us. And I think that as we get into these opening verses of chapter 50, you're going to see that Israel had been feeling that same way.

You know that the people of God were being judged for their sin. But Isaiah is speaking to the nation of Israel and this, these are incredible passages. But He's (through Isaiah) speaking to them prior to His pouring out of His judgment upon them. But He's already speaking about the end of that judgment prophetically looking toward the future.

In fact He's speaking so succinctly about that time after their judgment then, I'm talking about their exile in the Babylonian kingdom, so succinctly that there are many people, and they're usually liberal Bible scholars and students, who have concluded that, well, there must have been a second Isaiah. There must have been a later writing that would claim to be Isaiah, but was hundreds of years later. And so, because he just, he talks too clearly about the things that happened and how it would take place and so forth.

But throughout the course of Isaiah, and particularly the last several chapters we've looked at, God says that this is what I do. I speak the end from the beginning. And I do that to prove to you that I am who I say I am. And that I have the ability to know the future and speak to you about it beforehand.

Knowing that Israel during their time of captivity, and just before their release, is going to be very downtrodden from the standpoint of feeling like God has abandoned us. He begins to speak to the people, saying in verse 1 of chapter 50,

"Thus says the Lord, "Where is your mother's certificate of divorce, with which I sent her away? (Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?) Behold, for your iniquities you were sold, and for your transgressions your mother was sent away." (ESV)

Now stop there for just a bit. Let's just find out what he's saying in this first verse.

God is confronting their feeling. And again, when we're going through a time of difficulty and trial, the feeling that we get is that God has abandoned us. The feeling that we get is that God has divorced us, if you will.

And so God says, can you produce the divorce certificate by any chance? Did you happen to have a copy of that on file that you could show me; that you could prove to me that is exactly what happened? And of course they couldn't. And they couldn't because God didn't divorce these people. And then He asked them a second question which is, which of my creditors, is it to whom I have sold you? And again, the people were feeling like they've been sold into their difficulties.

You guys know what it means to sell someone, right, when they have debt. It was a common thing back in those days. If you were in debt, there was no filing bankruptcy in those days. If you were in debt, you're the person to whom you, that, who lended you the money had the right to sell you to pay off some of that debt. It might only be pennies on the dollar, but he figured, hey, I'll get what I can. He can sell you to someone and, to supposedly pay off that debt, or at least some of it. And so the people apparently were feeling like God had sold them into slavery because of their sin. And that it was a debt sort of a situation. And that wasn't the case either.

And did you notice at the end of that verse, He begins to speak about what really happened. God says, "*Behold, for your iniquities you were sold; and for your transgressions your mother was sent away.*" But what he's saying there, and it's a little bit difficult to understand as it translates over to English.

But what He's saying is, it wasn't me who sold you and it wasn't me who sent you away. It was your own sin that did that. And you're looking at me and you're saying, God has divorced us. God has abandoned us. God has sold us into slavery. And they were forgetting that it was their own role of sin that played into that whole situation.

And we do that today. It happens all the time. When I get notes from people, or hear, talk to people, or whatever, and they're going through a hard time if they feel distant from the Lord. When people feel distant from the Lord, they assume it's the Lord. And they'll say, well, why, I've been praying and I feel like I'm just, I'm talking to the ceiling. I don't feel the Lord's presence. Why has He... And then they begin to just make assumptions that really come in the form of

accusations. And it's so interesting how we forget the role that our own sin plays in our, in the interruption of our relationship with God, right? We forget that.

Well, actually, the Lord is going to speak more about this later on in the Book of Isaiah. But in the way of giving you a preview of things to come. There's a great answer to this question in Isaiah 59. Let me put it on the screen for you. It goes like this,

Isaiah 59:1-2 (ESV)

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

Okay? That's what's going on. And that's what God wanted them to know. You accuse God and you say, He refuses to listen, or you say, He has abandoned me, or, He has cut me loose, and I don't know why. And God reminds them there in chapter 59. He says, "*your own iniquities have made a separation.*"

Do you guys know that sin always separates us from God? It, it always has, and it always will. Now the neat thing about Christians, being a Christian, and what I mean by that is someone who is trusting in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, is that your sins can no longer separate from you from God eternally. And that's wonderful news. Okay. It's not through your sin that you're going to keep yourself, or your lack of sin, that you are going to keep yourself saved. Okay.

Your sin can still separate you relationally from God, from the standpoint of the intimacy of a close fellowship and a close relationship. That can still be very much the case. And when we're feeling that distance from the Lord, maybe it's we've been hanging out too long without confessing our sin. Maybe there's something in our heart that we're just not listening to the Lord about. Maybe He's been convicting us of something and we're just not paying attention.

I've brought up the example many times for you guys that, even in a marriage situation, when you have an argument with your spouse, when there's some kind of a violation of your marital relationship. Even if it's an emotional violation where you speak harshly, or the woman says something disrespectful, or the man says something that's unloving. There's going to be a separation in that

relationship until it's reconciled. There's going to be a wedge that comes in between a man and a woman in a marriage relationship.

It happens in other relationships as well. And we can't just expect them to just be better without taking care of what caused the breach in the first place. And that's kind of what God is saying in this passage. Your sins have separated you. There's a need for us to come to the Lord and confess that sin and say, I'm sorry.

Just as there's a need for me to go to my wife when I've said something I shouldn't have said that has caused a rift between, in our relationship. Sue, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. I shouldn't have barked at you. I apologize. That was really dumb of me. I... would you forgive me, please? And when I go to her and I do that, and she says, I forgive you, I understand... whatever, that can be healed. Now we can begin that process of restoring the relationship. It's the same thing with God. It's the same thing so we need to remember how that works.

Now, next, the Lord goes on to ask a question. He says in verse 2,

"Why, when I came, was there no man; why, when I called, was there no one to answer? Is my hand shortened, (And that's a way of saying, am I weak?) that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?" God is asking why there was no response to His coming or His calls.

God is repeatedly calling his people. God speaks through the prophets. He speaks in our covenant relationship, God speaks to individual hearts through His Holy Spirit. And He's constantly calling. He's constantly drawing. He's constantly ministering to people's hearts.

And here He speaks to the Israelites. And He says, so why was there no response when I called? Why was there no man there that was waiting for me in a sense. In other words, did you not believe that I had the ability to save you? Am I a weak God? Was it because I have no power? Is that why there was no one there?

And then He reminds them this. I'm still in verse 2. *"Behold, by my rebuke I dry up the sea. I make the rivers a desert; their fish stink for lack of water and die of thirst.*

³ *I clothe the heavens with blackness and make sackcloth their covering."*

And what God is saying is, so if I can do those things certainly I can work on your behalf. Why then did you not trust me and turn to me? Am I not the God who created the universe?

Have you ever kind of done that mental weird thing in your brain when you're praying, where you somehow think that your issue is beyond His ability or somehow it's like out of His reach? Have you ever prayed about something and just felt like, well, that was too big.

I mean, I... sometimes when I hear people praying, it blows me away because I think, Wow they've got faith! They're praying for like all the Christians in the world or something like that. And I have a hard time praying sometimes with faith sometimes just for the people that I know who are believers. But they're just making these, they have these big, huge lassos, with their prayer around the world. And, just... But they serve a big God. They serve a powerful God. And they have that in their heart that God is able to do what I'm asking right now. God is able.

And sometimes we get ourselves in this weird sort of a mindset that we better keep our prayer requests maybe kind of toned down a little bit, because, we don't want to overwork the guy or something. I don't know what we're thinking. Sometimes we're just not thinking, period.

But, so God asked the question here, am I weak? Is that the problem? I mean, I'm the God "*...who clothe the heavens with blackness.*" Sometimes it's good to go back and look at the, in the Bible, and read the creation story. How God spoke things into being, one by one, day after day. (Genesis chapter 1) And then say, alright! Now close my Bible. I'm going to pray to that guy right there that did all that. That called things into being. I'm going to...

Or go through and pray, or rather, read in your Bible about some of the incredible miracles, like God parting the Red Sea; (Exodus 14: 21-29) or causing the walls of Jericho to fall down at the shout of the people of Israel, (Joshua 6:20) or something like that. And then close your Bible and say, now that is the God to whom I'm going to address my prayer. We need to remember. We need to remember. Remember His power.

Now, I need to tell you that beginning in verse 4, things are going to change up just a little bit. Because we're going to begin to hear the voice of one who is different. And He doesn't identify himself right away. But as we get into this chapter further, and frankly into the following chapters, we're going to find out that the person who is speaking is the servant of the Lord. And this is going to

have a, it's going to build up to a crescendo, alright, later on here in the Book of Isaiah.

And we believe that this servant of the Lord, is none other than the promised Messiah. Who of course, the Jews only knew as Messiah. But you and I know as Jesus of Nazareth, alright. So this servant who does not yet identify Himself, begins by saying,

"⁴ The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens my ear (to those, or excuse me) to hear as those who are taught, (or who are instructed)

⁵ The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward."

These are really incredible verses and I want you to take note of them. As the servant of the Lord speaks, He begins to talk about the fact that He's been given the tongue of one who has been instructed. And He says also, the Lord has awakened my ear to hear as one who has been instructed or taught, and He has opened my ear.

And then He begins to talk about His own response. He says, " I was not rebellious to what the Lord taught. I didn't turn backward." He says, "*I turned not backward.*" And that's another way of saying I didn't turn my back on the instruction of the Lord.

Have you ever done that? Have you ever seen somebody do that? Have you ever done it yourself? I have. I've turned my back on the instruction of the Lord and I've watched other people do it. And it's heartbreaking. And sometimes they do it through trying to rationalize somehow, that can't really be what the Bible is saying. And sometimes they just admit what it's saying, but they say, I don't want any part of it. And they turn their back on it.

But the servant of the Lord is saying here, I did not do that. I didn't turn my back on the instruction of the Lord. And we're going to see how this plays in the coming verses.

But can I just focus for just a moment with you on verse 4 - where He talks about the fact that he's been given an instructed tongue. I just think this is really interesting. Look at that verse again. "*The Lord God, (He says,) has given me the tongue of those who are taught,...*" or the, or an instructed tongue, if you

will. But I want you to see why. Why? "...that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary." Isn't that beautiful? Now that's one of the ministries of the servant of the Lord, who is of course going to be fulfilled perfectly in the person of Messiah.

But the reason I want to emphasize this a little bit it's because you see, Jesus came, and I hope you know this, Jesus came as our example. He came to live the life as literally a Son of God. He was, of course, the Son of God. But the point is, He came to exemplify what it is to live under the lordship of God Almighty. And to receive from him the blessings of the things that He gives us so that we might bless others.

My point is this, God will now, He will give us the same thing if we will listen and respond to His instruction. He will give us words that will sustain the weary. If we will speak the Word of God, if we will... If we will speak the Word of God to people and stop giving our own opinions.

I get notes fairly regularly, people saying, pastor Paul, I would like to have your opinion on such and such. And I write them back and I say, I have no opinion. Because years ago when I was a younger man, I think I must have been giving my opinions an awful lot. Because the Lord spoke to me one time in prayer. And He said, son, I love you, but your opinion isn't worth a plug nickel. So just give them My word. And you... And He told me this, He said, you have nothing to add to My word.

And that wasn't a slap in the face. That was simply My Heavenly Father kind of being my spiritual chiropractor and giving me a little adjustment so I'd get back on track, right? And stop giving opinions, well, I think... Who cares!

What does God's Word say? Because here's the point, God's Word is living and active, sharper than any double edged sword, and it gets to the root of what's going on in somebody's life in ways that your opinions can't even break through. (Hebrews 4:12) And that Word can sustain the weary.

And it's just incredible how that happens, and I've watched it happen. I've had people come up to me many times after just sharing the Word of God. Just doing a teaching just like this, and just saying, I walked in here just spiritually burdened. And I heard the Word of the Lord, and I know that God has answered and given me direction. And I feel so much lighter and so much more able to go forward and walk with the Lord in faith because of spending time in His word. And just hearing the ministry of the Word taught has just refreshed me! That's such a beautiful thing to see happen in people's lives.

And it's something that we can do. Whether we're talking to people one on one; whether you're doing a Bible study; whether you're teaching a group of people; or whatever the case might be, He has given us, if we will be instructed, we can speak with an instructed tongue. And that is just simply hiding the Word of God in our hearts, and speaking it at the right time so that it might sustain the weary.

Next, the servant prophetically goes on to speak of the abuse that He receives from the sons of men. And here we get just a little bit of a description of the sufferings of Jesus. He says in verse 6:

"I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting,

⁷ But the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, (and that is an old Biblical term that describes, making a determination and being unwavering, okay; to say, I am going to, I am going to go this way. That is to set your face like flint, okay. So He said, and so, because of that, He says,) and I know that I will not be put to shame."

Verse 8, He goes on to say,

"He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me. Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me.

⁹ Behold, the Lord God helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; (Those people that rise up and make accusations. He says,) the moth will eat them up." But He says, the Lord is my counselor. Literally my advocate.

And now look what He goes on to say. This is really incredible in verse 10. He says,

"Who among you fears the Lord (That's a great question, "Who among you fears the Lord?") and obeys the voice of his servant?"

Do you know... Hey, let me just stop for a moment. If you're ever talking to somebody and you're counseling them and they're asking you for your counsel. And they're maybe asking for counsel about someone else in their life. And I get this all the time. Pastor Paul, what should I do? My husband, my cousin, this person I work with... And they want to know and they want advice. And they rarely, if ever, will tell me if that other person is a believer. Because that makes

a big difference on the kind of counsel you give them, whether they're dealing with a believer or an unbeliever.

But here's what I found. You can't ask people, are they a Christian. You just, you can't ask that. Because there are so many wacky ideas about what it means to be a Christian, that people will instantly say, oh yeah, he's a Christian, when he's not even close. I mean, you know what I mean. But they'll say, oh yeah, he's a Christian. And what that means is he went to church with me once. And he, or they'll, or I'll say, is he a Christian? If I do ask that question, is he a Christian, I'll get answers like, well he believes in God. And then I got to come back and go, yeah, right, so do the demons. They believe in God, too.

So, what's a better way, what's a better way to ask somebody about another person that they're dealing with, for you to be able to give good counsel? How about... Do they fear the Lord and obey His voice? Isn't that a good... Isn't that a good question to ask? Well, let me see; a question about your husband. You haven't told me anything about your husband.

Does he fear the Lord and obey the sound of His voice? And then see what they say. They'll probably say something like, what do you mean? Well, just think about it for a minute. Do they fear God and do they obey His voice? Because most people will say, no, where they will say, yeah, he's a Christian. So this is just a... it's a great, it's a great question. Who among you, *"Who among you (really truly) fears the Lord and obeys the voice of his servant."* Notice that.

Now this is interesting because we just catapulted the servant into a different realm here in the prophecies of Isaiah. Now He has a voice to be obeyed, right? And so it goes on to say,

"Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God."

Who is the one who fears God? Who is the one who obeys the voice of his servant? *"Let him who walks in darkness and has no light (just begin to trust in the Lord) trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God."*

I read this verse and I thought, I just, I instantly thought about John chapter 8, verse 12. Let me put it on the screen for you.

John 8:12 (ESV)

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

This is the Servant of the Lord speaking during His earthly ministry. In Isaiah we hear it 700 years before He was even born upon the earth. So are you walking in the light of the Lord? John, the apostle talks about walking in the light. He says, if we walk in the light as He is in the light... (1 John 1:7) and so forth.

Walking in the light. I think some people misunderstand what walking in the light means. I've asked people in the past, what does it mean to walk in the light? And they'll say, well, probably just to walk in holiness. No, that's actually not it. To walk in the light is to walk in the understanding that I'm a sinner and I need a savior. If somebody understands: (A) they're a sinner; (B) they need a savior. They're walking in the light.

If they say, well, I don't sin, I don't need... what do I need a savior for? That person's walking in darkness. They can't see their hand in front of their face. It's a cool deal. But here's the converse. Look at verse 11,

"Behold, all you who kindle a fire, (and that means kindle your own fire) who equip yourselves with burning torches! (And that means devising a means of your own illumination, your own light. Look what He goes on to say. He says,) Walk by the light of your fire, and by the torches that you have kindled! This you have from my hand: you shall lie down in torment."

Isn't that crazy? God is talking about His servant and coming to Him that we might walk in the light. But He says, if you insist on devising your own light or having your own light, it's going to end in torment. Because you have no light in you. And yet you deceive yourself into saying, I have the light. I see. I see perfectly. He says, you say you see, but you're blind.

Chapter 51 is a series of exhortations from the Lord to His chosen people, Israel. Calling Israel to listen. And in the course of this and the next chapter, you're going to see 3 calls to listen and 3 calls to wake up. And to recognize certain things, not the least of which is who He is.

But you're going to see also in this chapter, some of... there's some conversation back and forth between God and Israel. Pretty interesting. He says, "*Listen...*" (now that's the first one)

"¹ Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. (And he's going to explain what He means by that in the very next verse. He says,)

"² Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, that I might bless him and multiply him."

Let me stop you there for just a moment. There are several passages in the Bible where the righteous will say, is there no one left upon the earth that is truly walking with God, (Romans 3:10) and that's a paraphrase. You hear that in the Psalms. Sometimes David lamented that, there was no one to be found who was truly righteous. (Psalms 14:1-3)

And there are times in our history, and we may feel that way here in America right now. Like the real true believers in the Lord are few and far between. And sometimes we hear all these other voices speaking things that are so contrary to God's Word. And it's so easy for us to come back and say, where are the believers? Where are the people that are walking in the light of God's understanding. And who fear the Lord and want what's good in our country and in the world. And, where are they, sort a thing.

And I think the Jews were going through that same sort of a thing. There were so few people who really, truly pursued righteousness and wanted to walk with God. And so God speaks to them here. And He says, "*Listen...*" You who really, truly are pursuing righteousness; who are really seeking the Lord. He says, "*look to the rock from which you were hewn, and... the quarry from which you were dug.*" He's talking about Abraham and Sarah.

He's like, you know what? That was one guy and one woman. And I brought a whole nation out of them. You think I can't do that again? You think I'm somehow limited? You think that somehow your small numbers are going to play into the fact that I can't really accomplish my plan or my redemptive program can't go forth because there's just not enough people. We got to drum up some more volunteers here so we can get this thing, this program off the ground! As if the Lord is limited by the number of people. And so He calls them to look. It's good to know that God doesn't need an enormous group of people to accomplish His will.

He says in verse 3,

"For the Lord comforts Zion; he comforts all her waste places (And that's not maybe what it sounds like to you in the English. He means those areas that have been laid waste, those ruins; the places that have been ruined by attacking nations. He comforts all those) and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song." (And so He says,)

⁴ Give attention to me, my people, and give ear to me, my nation; for a law will go out from me, and I will set my justice for a light to the peoples.

⁵ My righteousness draws near, my salvation has gone out, and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands (and that's a reference to Gentile nations) hope for me, and for my arm (and that arm, remember, in the Bible, arm always means strength. My arm and for my strength) they wait. (And so He says,)

⁶ Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look to the earth beneath; for the heavens vanish like smoke, (and) the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die in like manner; but my salvation will be forever, and my righteousness (will never, righteousness) will never be dismayed."

Now this is really interesting. Because in these verses, God is giving this little distilled version of his plan of redemption. I mean, it's all here. The whole, the rest of the Bible takes it and pulls it apart and helps us to see it in more detail. But he's giving it to us in a microscopic view here.

And He's telling Israel, listen, your day of comfort is coming. You may feel like everything is just... the bottom has fallen out. But your day of comfort is coming. I am going to comfort. In fact, He says, you know what? You know, your wilderness places, your desert areas, they're going to be like the Garden of Eden. In fact, the Garden of Eden is going to have nothing, or those places are going to have nothing on the Garden of Eden. Maybe I said that backwards, but you know what I mean.

He says that there will be incredible gladness that will be found in the land of Israel. There will be incredible thanksgiving. There will be song.

And then He talks about the fact, in verse 4, that *"a law will go out from me."* And this is speaking about the Millennial Kingdom, you guys. When Jesus will establish his throne in Jerusalem and the law will go forth from Jerusalem. And the nations will stream to that area to listen to the word of the Lord.

He says, but *"I will set my justice for a light to the peoples."* Isn't that great? Well, we love justice and we hate injustice. But we see probably more injustice than we see of justice. And we just think, well, we live in a fallen world, and men, are corrupt, or can be corrupted, and so, there you go.

Can you imagine what the world is going to be like when Jesus has established His throne in Israel and is ruling from there around the globe? And it says, it will be established in justice. He says, I will set my justice as a light for all peoples, for all nations. The justice of the Lord will be their justice. Can you imagine what that's going to be like? I mean, it's just blows your mind. And so He tells them to give attention to this.

Notice that He says then in verse 6, *"Lift up your eyes to the heavens (again) and look at the earth beneath;"* They're all going to go away. That's what he's saying in that verse. They're all going to go away. And the earth wears out like a garment. Just like a shirt that you really like, but you really shouldn't wear in public anymore because it just looks really bad and it's falling apart. That's like the earth and those who dwell in it are wearing out too.

But He says, my salvation, now that's lasting. That's lasting. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 24? Let me put that on the screen for you.

Matthew 24:35 (ESV)

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

And My words is another way of saying, my salvation. Because that's the point of His words. Heaven and earth, this earth that we're living on right now is going to pass away. But God's Word is not going to pass away.

And so He says again, verse 7,

"Listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings.

⁸ For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool, but my righteousness will be forever, and my salvation to all generations."

He's going to talk more about this in a little bit, and we'll see this. But now He's beginning to speak to them about the difficulties of groups like the Babylonians, of course, and the Persians who are going to rule over them for a period of 70 years. And He's saying, don't be dismayed because they're not going to last forever.

And however this election goes in November, whatever, whoever goes into the presidency, don't be dismayed. Because it's...God's plan is going forward. And there's no human being on earth who can thwart it in any way, shape, or form, okay? So, this word is just as applicable to God's people today. Don't be dismayed. Don't be dismayed when men seem to be succeeding in their ways.

And so He goes on; in verse 9, He says,

"Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm (O strength) of the Lord; (Now the faithful are calling upon God to move on their behalf. Notice them praying "Awake, (they say to God,) awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, (And Rahab is a poetic name for Egypt, okay? He goes on to say,) who pierced the dragon? (That's just another poetic reference to defeating Pharaoh and his armies. He says... They are saying to the Lord,)

¹⁰ Was it not you who dried up the sea, (speaking of the Red Sea,) the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?

And then they express their faith in this following statement.

"¹¹ And the ransomed of the Lord (that means those who have been purchased back) shall return and come to Zion (And they're going to come) with singing; (too) everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

I didn't understand sighing in the Bible until I got probably into my 50s. Now that I'm in my 60s, I understand it intimately. Then hold... this thing about sighing, you just... Sometimes Sue will even... I'm not even aware of it. She'll just say, you're sighing. I know. I know... Ahhhh! (pastor Paul sighs deeply)

That's just life. You sigh at things. You sigh at people, you sigh at problems. Sometimes you sigh because your body isn't working the way it's supposed to. Trying to get out of bed and it's not working, and I'm just, "Ahhhhh!" Oh, I love

the fact that sighing is going to flee away. I'm going to get that 23 year old body. Anyway...They're giving this expression.

Now, the Lord speaks in verse 12,

"I, I am he who comforts you; (You are, excuse me) who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, of the son of man who is made like grass,

¹³ and have forgotten the Lord, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and you fear continually all the day because of the wrath of the oppressor, when he sets himself to destroy? And where is the wrath of the oppressor?"

This is such a great reminder, just again, that no man can thwart the plan of God and His purpose for our lives. And this is just a reminder of these verses. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid.

Verse 14, He says,

"He who is bowed down (your Bible may say "the captive exile") shall speedily be released; he shall not die and go down to the pit, neither shall his bread be lacking."

God promises to deliver and to provide the proper provision for his people who are returning from the exile.

Verse 15,

"I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar- the LORD of hosts is his name.

¹⁶ And I have put my words in your mouth and covered you in the shadow of my hand, establishing the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, 'You are my people.'"

"I am the LORD..." He says,

¹⁷ Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath," Notice that they were telling the Lord to wake just a moment ago. And to show forth his strength of deliverance. Now the Lord says, wake yourself and stand up, you who have

drunk from the hand of the Lord. And what's He talking about? He explains it; the cup of His wrath.

(You) *"who ...drunk to the dregs the bowl, the cup of staggering.*

¹⁸ *There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne; there is none to take her by the hand among all the sons she has brought up.*

¹⁹ *These two things have happened to you- (And) who will console you?- devastation and destruction, famine and sword; who will comfort you?*

²⁰ *Your sons have fainted; they lie at the head of every street like an antelope in a net; they are full of the wrath of the Lord, the rebuke of your God.*

²¹ *Therefore hear this, you who are afflicted, who are drunk, but not with wine:*

²² *Thus says (the) LORD, the LORD, your God who pleads the cause of his people: "Behold, I have taken (from you) from your hand the cup of staggering; the bowl of my wrath you shall drink no more;*

²³ *and I will put it into the hand of your tormentors, (You who, or,) who have said to you, 'Bow down, that we may pass over'; and you have made your back like the ground ...like the street for them to pass over."*

He's talking about how the people of Israel had just submitted to the Babylonian captivity and they allowed themselves to be their backs to be walked over. But it was because they were drinking the cup of the wrath of God. But God is saying, I've taken that away, that cup of wrath is no longer in your hand. You shall no longer drink it. And I'm in fact, going to take it out of your hand and put it into the hand of your tormentors. I'm going to put it into the hand of those who said to you, bow down or lay down on the ground so that we can walk over your back. And He says, and you did it.

What's incredible about some of these chapters in Isaiah is that they all have a context. And what I mean by that is, God is speaking here about real life, historical events. He's talking about the people of Israel. He's talking about how it applies to the fact that they were taken captive by the Babylonian Empire, which of course hasn't happened yet. These are prophetic statements.

But He's talking about how they're going to be returned. How they're going to be brought back to their land. They're going to be restored. And He says, I'm taking the cup out of your hand.

But what's interesting about these verses is that, and this is true of frankly anything in the old Testament, even though it has a context, the Lord can still use these verses to speak to you in your life in some personal way. And that's not to say that they apply to you necessarily, always and forever.

I mean, you read anything in the Old Testament, that whole idea of flipping through the Bible, with your eyes shut and just putting down a verse, reading it and going, that's the verse for me. No, that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about when the Holy Spirit, when you're just reading through the Bible, and the Holy Spirit speaks to you and says, now pay attention. This is for you.

And it's like, well, wait a minute, Lord, I understand the historical context of what's going on here. I understand in Isaiah chapter 51 You're talking about the Israelites. And You're talking about their captivity in Babylon, and how they're going to be released, and how You're going to release them from... Why are You telling me that this is for me? Because the Lord can do that with any part of His word. Do you understand that?

When you're reading through your Bible, through the Psalms, through the prophecies, through anything, the Lord can speak to you. And you should be waiting, you should be listening for the Lord to tap you on the shoulder and say, pay attention, son or daughter, this is for you.

And there may be that time that comes when the Lord would have you to just underline a verse and just say, I know the context that I originally gave that verse for, but I'm telling you this applies to you too, right here, right now, your life. And you just know that it's yours. You know that you know.

And the reason I share that is because this happened to me in this very chapter. And there was an area of sin in my life that I was having a very difficult time getting a handle on as a young man, as a young believer. I started walking with the Lord in earnest when I was about 25, 24, 25 years old. I guess I was 24. And which I consider to be a pretty young man. But, and I was struggling. I was struggling to leave some old sinful habits. Because habits are very hard to break. This is going to sound really deep, but it's because they're habitual. You can write that one down; tell them Paul said it. Yeah, difficult, I was really struggling.

And I was, I was praying about it and the Lord had been... I knew that the Lord had been working in my life. And I was just... We were living up in Washington, Sue and I. And I was reading through Isaiah and chapter 51. And I

got to those last verses of the chapter and I, where the Lord says, "*Therefore, hear this, you who are afflicted, but who are drunk, but not with wine.*"

I tell you this, not to show any kind of valor on my part, but I've never in my life been drunk. I've never once been drunk in my life. Not because... it's not because I was a good person. I just really didn't like the idea of how people kind of acted when they were drunk. I saw a lot of people who were drunk and didn't like it so I just never, I never drank.

And so the Lord used this verse to speak to me, but He said, you've had a drunkenness. You've been drunk with other things, son. You don't think that just because you never drank alcohol or never got drunk that you've never been inebriated because you have been. You've been inebriated with your own flesh. You've been captive to your own flesh just as a man can be captive to the bottle. And so He spoke to me that night, and He said, so I'm speaking to you, son; you who have been drunk, "*but not with wine.*"

And He began to speak in these verses about how He had taken out of my hand that cup that made me stagger. And the Lord... And I knew what the Lord meant. I just knew it was without words. The Lord didn't speak audibly to me. I just, I knew. I knew that the Lord was removing that area of sin in my life. And He said, and I'm, and you will drink it no more. And I remember at the time just being so humbled. Just so incredibly humbled. It's like, Oh, Lord, thank you! Because He just stopped my Bible reading and said, I've got a message for you. It's right here in these verses.

The reason I share that with you is just so that you will be watching, be listening. How many times does the Lord say in these verses, "*Listen,... Listen,...Listen,...*" How often are we just reading?

You and I go, well, I'm reading through the Bible this year. I've got to go through in a year, so I'm reading chapter 51 today. And I'm just going to get through this and I'm in a hurry. I really need to get moving here. Okay, let me barrel through this here today.

Instead of just really listening to the Holy Spirit. What do You have to say to me today? I believe, as sure as I'm standing here, that the Lord wants to speak a whole lot more than we're willing to listen, if we would but pay attention.