

THE GOSPEL'S FREE OFFER

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There is nowhere in the Bible a plainer expression, a clearer and stronger expression of God's free offer of salvation than in this 55th chapter of Isaiah. "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." What a wonderful expression of God's free offer of salvation is here!

G. Campbell Morgan tells of a time when he was a young man holding an evangelistic meeting in the coal mining area in Wales. A miner came to talk with him after the sermon. He was trying to drive home to the miner that all he had to do was to turn from his sin, look to Jesus Christ for salvation, and Jesus would freely pardon him and receive him. But the man just could not grasp it. The miner said, "How can that be? How can it be that He could do all that without my doing anything at all? How could He do all that for me? It just isn't possible. I don't understand it."

Morgan said he tried one thing after another to get the concept into the man's mind and finally the miner said, "Oh, I see now." He said, "When I am down in the mine, a half a mile into the interior of the earth working, and it comes time to quit, I come to the shaft and there is a skip. I get into that skip and sit down. I don't do a thing. I just go in there and sit down. That skip pulls me half a mile up out of the earth to the top and it does not cost me anything, but it cost the mining company an awful lot to build that skip and put in the engine and pull it clear up."

Isaiah 55:1 would be impossible if we did not have Isaiah 53 first. God simply cannot say, "It is all right; you spat in my face. You have broken my law, turned against me, and done everything wrong. And I just pardon you and it is over." His whole universe would be out of joint if He did that. Man receives salvation absolutely free, but it costs God an awful lot.

So we have in Isaiah 53 the picture of how Jesus Christ was despised and rejected of men. How He gave His life to pay the penalty for our sins. All that God did in order to redeem man from destruction is found there. He has paid the ransom and made it possible for us to have the wonderful offer of Isaiah 55:1.

In Isaiah 55:2 we see the folly of rejecting this offer. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." This is a great message for the one who is lost. Why do you spend your money, and your labor on that which does not give you anything permanent? It may give you a little temporary satisfaction, and then it is all over. Why don't you take that which lasts forever, that which is worthwhile because it changes your whole life. How foolish is the unbeliever to reject God's offer of salvation!

Yet, we should also apply this verse to Christians. Why do we who are Christians spend money for that which is not bread? Why do we spend so much of our time on getting things of this life that don't last? Why do we let the temporary things occupy so much of

our activities, our longings, our efforts? Why are worldly incentives so much more effective in making us work hard than the simple incentive of doing what God wants us to accomplish for Him? Why don't we put God first in all that we do?

"Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." God does not say, "Come to me and be saved today and tomorrow you go out and sin and then you come and get saved over again." He says, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you." You receive Christ into your heart and you are saved forever.

"The sure mercies of David." Here is predicted centuries ahead that David's greater Son would carry out the promises made to David -- promises making it possible for us to be saved and follow Christ, the Commander of our salvation. "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people." If we have truly believed in Christ and have entered into His everlasting covenant, we will go on to verse 5 -- "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God . . . for he hath glorified thee." You've heard it said that the church that ceases to be evangelistic will soon cease to be evangelical. If we truly believe in Christ we must be interested in reaching others for Him. We will want to get the message out to the ends of the earth. It will be part of our prayer life to want all nations to come to know our Saviour and Lord.

Returning to the Gospel call, verse 6 says, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." Who knows how long the unbeliever may have opportunity to turn to Him? Who knows how long we will have the opportunity to serve Christ? While He is near, find the opportunities that will take advantage of the preparation God has given you.

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts . . ." Repentance is necessary. Belief in Christ is not merely a free ticket. It is a free gift, but we must forsake our sinful ways. We must forsake our thoughts and turn to the Lord, or we cannot have His mercy. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD."

God is telling us here that He is different from us. Somebody mistreats you, and you want to get back at him. But, says God, you have mistreated me. You have broken my righteous law; yet I sent my Son to die on Calvary's cross for you, and I freely receive you when you forsake your evil ways and unrighteous thoughts. God has a forgiveness we could never show. Not only that but verse 10 tells that His thoughts will produce results. We have intentions and we make plans. We have ideas and we work on them and then forget them. We begin some task and never finish it. But God tells us that His word does not go out and return void. He says that what He sets out to do He will accomplish. "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud....so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it

shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

God's work does not depend on us. His word will accomplish His purpose, and if He does not do it through us, He will do it in spite of us. But oh, how wonderful it is to know that He will accomplish His purpose. How wonderful it is to know that He is willing that we should have an opportunity to be part of the instrumentality for accomplishing His purposes.

God goes on to describe the changes that are going to come about. Here is a world full of pain, a world of misery. But He says, "You will go out with you, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

Wherever the Gospel goes hearts are changed and with that conditions change. If everyone would receive the Word into their hearts this world would become a far better place in which to live. We know that. But we know that God is going to call to Himself those whom He has chosen, and it is His desire to use us as His instruments to give out His wonderful message of peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

We know that the world will not forever remain in this condition of hatred, misery, pain, and suffering as it is today. For He has promised in His Word that the time is coming when

instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come the myrtle tree. When Jesus returns from Heaven to this earth to establish His kingdom of righteousness and peace, may He find us faithful presenting His Word, standing for His truth, accomplishing His purposes. For His Word will not return unto Him void, but may we not fail in being His instruments to accomplish His purposes through us.■