

The Way Of Holiness

Isaiah thirty-five is a passage full of rich treasures. Hawker says, 'This chapter is as full of blessed promises to God's church, as the former was full of threatenings to God's enemies'. The prophet lifts his hearers' gaze from the wrath of God with its razor sharp judgment to the salvation of God with its blessings of grace. Isaiah lightens his message and softens the vision with encouragements for renewal, refreshment and peace. He plants the promise of spiritual fruitfulness, cultivates the prospect of holy worship and flourishing service, sweetens the air with the fragrance of praise as roses bloom in a desert breeze.

God will come and save you

The chapter is a prediction of the glory and blessedness of the Gospel church, and of the mercies supplied by the Lord Jesus Christ. The Messiah's kingdom and Christ's victories are manifested in Christ both subduing His enemies and nurturing His church. The weak, feeble and fearful people of God, long tried and tested under the heel of oppressors, are promised deliverance and salvation. When Isaiah tells us 'God ... will come and save you' we understand the Lord Jesus coming both to redeem us from our sin and fit us for His presence.

A message for the ages

Gospel preachers in Isaiah's mould repeat the gospel message of hope and confidence to God's elect in every age. When Christ comes 'the eyes of the blind shall be opened'. When grace is preached 'the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped'. When the Spirit moves in quickening power 'then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing' praises to the Lord. Such spiritual transformation excels the flowering of a desert. Hard, dry, barren and infertile hearts are ploughed, sown, watered and tended under gospel ministry. What once was the habitation of dragons is greened with reeds and rushes and made fit for saints.

Pools in the desert

We often become concerned for the state of the church, the dangers we perceive and the wickedness of the world around us. We wonder if the gospel of free grace is going to survive and if the preaching of God's sovereignty in salvation will continue. Let us not be afraid. The Lord makes dry ground become a pool in the desert. He brings forth springs of water in a thirsty land. He will raise up gospel preachers wherever He has elect to be gathered and little ones to feed. Every chosen child of God will hear the message that transforms souls.

A highway of holiness

A road is revealed, a highway of holiness. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Way. He supplies every necessary mercy for needy sinners, every grace for troubled souls, every assistance in the believer's journey to glory. These blessings are not primarily material but spiritual, blessings revealed in the gospel such as imputed righteousness, complete pardon, wisdom, redemption, liberty, holiness and peace. Not all blessings come equally at all times but as we hear the gospel, attend to the word of truth and deepen our experience of the Saviour then all these things will be added, blessing upon blessing, grace for grace.

Fools shall not err

This highway cannot be mistaken. It is exclusive to the elect of God and not one of these wayfaring travellers will err in finding it. Here the redeemed and the ransomed of the Lord travel with confidence. The unclean do not pass by this way. Nor can lions or ravenous beasts hinder the Lord's little flock. The true church travels with holiness of heart and the song of redemption on their lips, anticipating everlasting joy. Zion's pilgrims and only Zion's pilgrims populate the paths of grace.

A highway of high praises

Let us take up these positive, praiseworthy themes as God's elect who have been taught not to err from the truth but to 'rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice'. We sing the song of the redeemed in our soul. We sing in times of trouble. We sing as we cross the threshold of death and enter Christ's heavenly courts. Just like the Old Testament pilgrims who travelled to Zion to worship we have every right and justification to sing songs of praise, worship and thanksgiving to our Saviour as we ascend into His presence.

Amen

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