

Isaiah 51 17 to 52 3

17 Awake, awake! Stand up, O Jerusalem, You who have drunk at the hand of the LORD The cup of His fury; You have drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling, *And drained it out.*

18 *There is no one to guide her Among all the sons she has brought forth; Nor is there any who takes her by the hand Among all the sons she has brought up.*

19 These two *things* have come to you; Who will be sorry for you?-- Desolation and destruction, famine and sword-- By whom will I comfort you?

20 Your sons have fainted, They lie at the head of all the streets, Like an antelope in a net; They are full of the fury of the LORD, The rebuke of your God.

21 Therefore please hear this, you afflicted, And drunk but not with wine.

22 Thus says your Lord, The LORD and your God, *Who* pleads the cause of His people: "See, I have taken out of your hand The cup of trembling, The dregs of the cup of My fury; You shall no longer drink it.

23 But I will put it into the hand of those who afflict you, Who have said to you, 'Lie down, that we may walk over you.' And you have laid your body like the ground, And as the street, for those who walk over."

Isaiah 52:1-12 (NKJV)

1 Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion; Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city! For the uncircumcised and the unclean Shall no longer come to you.

2 Shake yourself from the dust, arise; Sit down, O Jerusalem! Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion!

3 For thus says the LORD: "You have sold yourselves for nothing, And you shall be redeemed without money."

Outline-

Our Outline for our text is Awake Awake, Awake Awake, Awake Awake, Depart, Depart

51:9-16 Awake God's comfort is invincible

51:17-23 Awake God's wrath is past

52:1-10 Awake God's salvation is spreading

52:11,12 Depart- the life of pilgrimage has begun

Isaiah's message here could pretty much be summed up in Eph 5:14 "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you"

The title for this sermon could be, "**When God releases the prisoners of sin.**"

Are the elect people of God ever disciplined by God? Can a believer continue in a known sin and get away with it? Or lets get even a little more tricky. Can a Christian continue doing something that they are doubtful about but they show no desire to find out what God actually says? Can they use ignorance as a cover?

Let's take a quick look at the New Testament to prepare us for our text.

Hebrews 12:5-11 (NKJV)

⁵ And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

⁶ For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives."

⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

⁹ Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

¹⁰ For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

¹¹ Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Now I am not trying to say that everything that happens bad to us is discipline from God. That is simply not true and scripture says so plainly. But there are times when God **does** discipline His children. In fact the reasoning is very strong here. If we **live in sin** and God **does not discipline us**, we are **not** His children. If we live in sin and God **does** discipline us, we **are** His children. God takes sin seriously. We cannot live in it. We cannot play with it. God hates it and takes it seriously.

Is there anything in your life that you are doing that you believe is wrong to do, but you keep doing it? If so you must do business with that thing. You must enter into the process of repentance until you stop denying Jesus the

Lord. If you do not, the Lord will help you stop. And he will do it the same way we help our children to stop disobeying us. Why? Because He loves us and does not want us to be lost.

Let's look at another text.

1 Corinthians 11:28-32 (NKJV)

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

30 For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

32 But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

What we see here is that there were those in the church who were sick and there were those who God killed. Why? They were not treating their fellow body members the way they should have. They were not displaying the love of Christ toward those people He died for. We see a direct example of this with Ananais and Sapphira. All they did is try to look better than they actually were in the body of Christ. They had secrets at home and they provided a united front of hypocrisy in front of the church. And God would have none of it. He would not have worldly functioning ruin the purity of His church. He would not allow the poison of what was said and done in secret to intrude into His church.

Another quick passage.

Romans 14:22-23 (NKJV)

22 Do you have faith? Have *it* to yourself before God. Happy *is* he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.*

Here we see that ignorance does not get us off the hook. Our consciences are not 100% correct. So we cannot use them as an authoritative source for right and wrong. But at the same time, until we have the information from God's word to train them correctly, until we can quote what God says in order to still and correct our consciences, we must go by them. We cannot let them **change** what God's word says. But we cannot **ignore** them at any point either. Sometimes we do things and before we do them we really wonder if we should do it. We don't have a clear word of God to confront our pang of conscience. This scripture tells us we should not go against our conscience. Going against our conscience is not acting in faith. It is doubt. And until we

can do a thing by faith, we should not do it. A rule of thumb is to tell the tale on ourselves is, can you thank God for it while you are doing it? Or would you prefer not to acknowledge God's existence while you do it?

And if we are doing something and we are uncertain about it, there is a million dollar question that needs to be answered. **Why do we not want to know what God says about this enough to search it out?** Could it possibly be because we **don't want to know** what God says. Because if we find out what He says, we will no longer be able to do it?

Now there are some issues that are hard to discern. On those a person has to make a decision of what is most faithful according to scripture and go with it. But there are some things that the least amount of study would reveal the truth. If we won't search out those things, we are already telling on ourselves. We are already revealing our tricky motives.

So God will discipline His children. And it hurts. And it is supposed to hurt. But it is, like every parent tells their children, for their own good.

Now let's get back to our text.

Isaiah 51:17-23 (NKJV)

17 Awake, awake! Stand up, O Jerusalem, You who have drunk at the hand of the LORD The cup of His fury; You have drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling, And drained it out.

The imagery here is of a woman fallen down drunk. But the drink is not wine. It is God's wrath. This woman is suffering from the consequences of her sin. She has aroused God's anger and God has displayed His anger. There is an obvious application here. **Never ever do this.** Never choose a path that will bring upon you God's anger. This reminds me of our son Jeremiah's description of how he would feel when he would see Suz doing something that was certain to bring down our wrath on her. He would think, no. Don't say that. That is going to hurt.

Jerusalem did those things and they were hurting. But there is hope here. God is telling her to get up. Stand up the way you are supposed to stand. Awake out of your stupor. The time for suffering in your sin is about over. Stand up and prepare yourself for the Lord's gracious acts.

Now what state was this imaginary woman in?

18 There is no one to guide her Among all the sons she has brought forth; Nor is there any who takes her by the hand Among all the sons she has brought up.

19 These two things have come to you; Who will be sorry for you?-- Desolation and destruction, famine and sword-- By whom will I comfort you?

20 Your sons have fainted, They lie at the head of all the streets, Like an antelope in a net; They are full of the fury of the LORD, The rebuke of your God.

Look at this. There is no human comfort available. There is no human resource that can get her out of her mess. She needs help. She is in **utter need** of help. But there is none coming from any corner. She has tasted desolation and destruction famine and sword. That is a heavy blow. That is no small thing. Now God poses a question. Who am I going to get to comfort you?

There is something we need to get before going further. Have you ever found comfort with this verse-

Romans 8:31 (NKJV)

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Isn't there great comfort there. If we are serving Christ, if we are trusting Christ, nothing can withstand God's work in our lives. No one can overpower what He has in mind for us.

But have you ever considered the opposite logic here? If God is against us, who can be for us? This is equally true. Jerusalem was suffering, not at the will of the Assyrians or Babylonians. Jerusalem was suffering by the will of God. And when that is the case there is no escape.

God points to all the likely human resources Jerusalem has and says **there are none to help you**. There are none to even show you pity or comfort. Your help will not come from those quarters.

If you are being disciplined by God, there is only one place you can go to get relief. You must go to the source of your pain. You must go to God and do serious business with Him. If you have been saying "no" to God, confess your sin and say "yes". Getting humans to side with you and empathize with your pain will only prolong your pain. In fact, to try to minister comfort to someone living in sin is to do that person the greatest disservice you could give them. As ministers we must learn to think critically. We must ask the question for the person we are ministering to, is what they are willfully doing sinful? If it is we must tell the truth about it. That is the greatest kindness we can perform, no matter how they might feel about that pronouncement. Even if they feel powerless to stop, we must tell the truth.

One of the greatest kindnesses we can perform among believers is to help them avoid the disfavor of their God. This might end your counselling session. But you will have done more good than harm. In our text Jerusalem was

looking for human comfort. But God would have none of it until the issue was dealt with.

21 Therefore please hear this, you afflicted, And drunk but not with wine.

22 Thus says your Lord, The LORD and your God, *Who* pleads the cause of His people: "See, I have taken out of your hand The cup of trembling, The dregs of the cup of My fury; You shall no longer drink it.

23 But I will put it into the hand of those who afflict you, Who have said to you, 'Lie down, that we may walk over you.' And you have laid your body like the ground, And as the street, for those who walk over."

God has a word for those who are afflicted with sin and its consequences.

This is a wonderful passage. God speaks to us, even in our rebellion. He communicates a way out, no matter what position we have placed ourselves in. And look at where the way out lies.

Notice that it is **God** that pleads the cause. It is **He** who initiates the cure. It is **He** who takes out of our hand the predicament we are in. It is **He** who takes upon Himself the wrath. The answers we most need in our lives are the ones that only **God** can orchestrate.

Now in verse 23 we see that God has not removed His wrath from everyone.

That is where those who think that God will save everyone in the end miss it.

God does not intend to save everyone. In this case He is going to pour out His fury and wrath on those who persecuted His children. This has always been in God's plans. It may not happen as quickly as we would like it. But it will happen. For example, those in the Middle East who torture and abuse and kill the followers of Christ will one day taste God's unmitigated wrath if they do not repent. That is surely coming.

OK, So God is telling these people to wake up and stand up because God is about to remove His wrath from them. What does He say next?

Isaiah 52:1-12 (NKJV)

1 Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion; Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city! For the uncircumcised and the unclean Shall no longer come to you.

While we might first think that this is only referring to the city of Jerusalem, we know better because Paul applied some of our passage to the age of the church. This is more universal than just for one city in a point of time. This is a call to the people of God.

They are called again to awake. They are going from their state of lazy sinful rest to a place of being fully alive and alert. This ought to get our attention.

Do we too not want to be fully awake and alert to the movement of God in our

lives? Do we not want to most glorify Christ, to most hear from Christ, to most be ready to move to do God's will?

Now, we must ask, who are the uncircumcised and unclean? This is either literal or figurative. The original audience probably understood it as literal. But when parts of this passage is quoted in Romans it is in the context of God's salvation of both Jew and Gentile. So we must take it as applying figuratively for us. The uncircumcised would be the uncircumcised of heart. The unclean are those who are still in their sins. And what are the beautiful garments? They are the bridal robes for the marriage feast of Christ. They are nothing short than the righteousness of Christ that we wear as a robe. We see here a picture of the kingdom of God. The only ones inside are those who have received Christ's righteousness for their own. The ones outside are those who have rejected His righteousness.

When we came to Christ, this is the kind of awaking that happened. And every time we see our sin and repent, it is more of the same. We are awaking to kingdom life. We are awaking and becoming more fully aware of why we exist and what we are to live for.

² Shake yourself from the dust, arise; Sit down, O Jerusalem! Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion!

There is so much in this verse. It is so rich. First we are to shake ourselves from the dust. This is probably the dust we are lying in. Look at your life. Have we not all chosen degrading circumstances in our lives? Have we not all tasted of some dusty dirty circumstances due to our decisions? Have we not all had times where the only direction we could go is up? Maybe not all of us have experienced things quite so dramatic, but if we could see it from God's position we might **still** see it about ourselves. We have all been in the dirt of our choosing.

But God is not content to leave us there. Oh Praise God. He tells us to put on His righteousness. He tells us to take the position in Him that we could never earn. Then he tells us to shake off the dirt we are accustomed to, maybe even the dirt we deserve. Then we are told to arise and sit down. At first this might seem like God can't make up His mind what we are supposed to do. Get up, sit down? But that is not what this means. The imagery here is one of getting up out of the dirt and sitting in a seat of significance, or influence, of dignity. And we wonder, How? How can God do such a thing with people like us. We **deserve** the dirt. We **deserve** the humiliation. But God is not content with that for His children. His righteous robe qualifies us for a better seat. This would be like a person in the Syrian conflict, one who went there by his own decision. He is an enemy of the US. One day he comes to himself and says, I

want out of here. I will stow away on a jet. I will hide in someone's luggage. And the captain goes out of his way to find the man and gives him a seat in first class. It is mind blowing grace. The woman who has been drunk on the wrath of God, and rightfully so, is now given a seat of dignity and distinction. That is the Christian life. We may not realize it. But the more we see the seriousness of our sin, the more we get the point. God's grace does not just rescue us from the bad. It issues us into the best of the best.

Then notice it says **Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion!**

When we come to Christ, we come with baggage. All of us do. And it does not leave us before we sit in the seat. Our position may have dignity, but we carry a lot of what we were with us. There is always the trailing bondage of sin. Sanctification is the process of loosing the bonds from our necks. We have been slaves to the worst of masters. We have been slaves to the abhorrent sin condition. We have patterns of thought, patterns of behavior, even patterns of craving that we must break free of. And we break free one truth at a time. One idea at a time.

Some people think that our pasts don't matter. And as far as God's judgment upon our sins, praise God, they do not. But if we want to understand the dangers we face going forward, we find their faces most clearly in our pasts. I believe that if we have not accurately repented of who we really **were**, we have not truly repented of who we really **are**. If we repented of an imaginary history we have an imaginary repentance. We are still in danger of falling into the same pattern of thinking, no matter how that might flesh itself out. It is so easy to allow our **perceptions of ourselves** and our **realities of ourselves** to be vastly different. It is easy to keep the facts and theories from colliding. True repentance brings them both together. Repentance requires reality. It cannot be done in theory. It is turning from **who we really were** to **who God really is**. That is why the truth is so important, about both our past and our present.

We need to loose ourselves from the bonds around our neck.

Now look what this says next.

³ For thus says the LORD: "You have sold yourselves for nothing, And you shall be redeemed without money."

We will end with this verse and take the rest up next week.

I had some of my favorite applications ready in this verse. But it did not mean what I thought it meant. The focus is that God gave his people into the hands of the enemies. God's people needed punished. This generation needed disciplined. They all needed to learn a lesson. So God gave them over **at no**

benefit to Himself and He will get them back **without exchanging funds**. The people to whom they were given **paid** nothing so they were **owed** nothing.

Mr. Ortland takes a different view of all this. He focuses on the Gospel salvation of God's people. And he zooms in on the redemption without money. All of us sold ourselves without a profit. We gave ourselves to sin because we were sinners. Whether it was before our proclaimed salvation date or after it, we have all chosen to sin. And what did we get for it? We got trinkets at best. Momentary pleasure. Momentary acceptance or approval. But really, at the end of the day, nothing. So how do we hope to save ourselves? There are probably none of us that **have not** tried being good to save ourselves. We even brought that into our relationship with Christ. We want to pay a price to earn something from God. It is so desperately hard to wean ourselves from that idea. Our pride just cannot let this go. We want to, in some way, **be worthy** of the love of God. We want to **see ourselves** in some way as being loveable. We want in some way for our effort to **win** something. We want to be someone who is so lovable and virtuous that we have earned the love of God. And every bit of that thinking is as evil as evil can be. We sold ourselves into sin without receiving anything of value. And God saves us without us ever giving Him anything of value.

Oh, surely that cannot be true can it? Doesn't a single thing my wonderful self can give to God earn **something**? Don't I deserve **any** credit? And the answer? Nope. It is all of God. All of it. Every single bit.

What we have seen again in the Old Testament book of Isaiah is the New Testament grace of God. We see the truth about God and the truth about ourselves. And we are called to awaken to the goodness of God. We are inspired into action by the call and character of God. If we are living in known sin, we have business to transact this week. Can we determine that we will bring it all under the scrutiny and correction of the Holy Spirit and the word of God. Can we simply ask the question of our God, God how can I be better pleasing to you? And then wait expectantly for Him to reveal it to us through His word, His Spirit, and life circumstances.

Awake Awake Awake Awake Awake Awake Depart Depart.