

Series: Isaiah
Title: Building a New Road
Text: Isaiah 57: 13-15
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Isaiah 57: 13:...but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; 14: And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people. 15: For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Like Israel, God finds his people in Babylon by finding us in this world. He finds us in our vain, broad way—the way of destruction, the way that ends in death. But God will put all his elect in the narrow way—the way that leads from here to his heavenly Jerusalem, his holy Mt Zion.

BREAKING UP OUR WAY

First, God must break up our way and remove our stumblingblock of iniquity—“And shall say, [or it shall be said] Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people.” (Is 57: 14)

Our way by nature is pride and covetousness—the stumblingblock of iniquity. We walk in the zeal of our flesh by nature, having our idols under every green tree (Is 57: 5-6) Our way is the way of exalting ourselves (Is 57: 7) By nature we walk love the way of spiritual adultery, the way of hiding the truth behind the door post so we could open our bed to every false religion and climb into their bed (Is 57: 8) In our dead, sin-nature the way that seems right to us is the way of using political wisdom; increasing our perfumes: our means, our methods, our marketing gimmicks. (Is 57: 9) The way of vain religion is to get as many people as possible on the road with them but the road is a false way which does not lead to God’s holy, heavenly Jerusalem.

By nature, our way is the way of unbelief. While in this way of unbelief we have our variety of excuses. Most think they are too righteous to need Christ. A sinner will say, “I am not holy, but I am not totally depraved.” Another uses the excuse, “I do not think I am one of God’s elect.” There are those who say, “If I believe on Christ, I will have to give up my life.” Some use the excuse, “If I believe on Christ, I will have trouble in my family.” Many say, “I think religious folks are hypocrites.” Most are. But there is a lot of counterfeit money in circulation; will you stop receiving money because some is counterfeit?

Other stumblingblocks are false preachers, false brethren. Christ said, “Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.” (Lu 11: 52)

I grew up on the Iron Mountain Road: 4 miles north and south of my house was a treacherous road. Every year 3-4 people died in car crashes. Finally, the state decided to do something about it. In order to prepare the way, they first had to break up the old road: straighten the curves, flatten the hills, build up the valleys.

Likewise, the first thing God does is cross the path of his child with the gospel and breaks up our broad way— “And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people.” Christ sends his preacher with this charge:

Isaiah 40: 3: The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4: Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: 5: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see *it* together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

Sinner, God has sent me to declare to you that your natural way is worthless.

Isaiah 40: 6: The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh *is* grass, and all the goodliness thereof *is* as the flower of the field: 7: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people *is* grass.

If you do not believe on Christ, if you trust in your way, will and works; if you are separated from God's gospel; if you are being led astray by false men and lies; if you are hiding behind all your excuses, then God says to you, "I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee. When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them." (Is 57: 12-13) May God speak and break up your way. It is painful but so needful!

GOD IS HOLY

The reason God must break up our way is because God is holy, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." (Is 57: 15)

Try to think of the highest, most powerful, most just, most admired king that ever lived among men. If he called you to come to his kingdom, would you go? If he called you to his table, would you consider that the rarest privilege? If he called you near personally, to tell you the most secret of mysteries the world has ever known, would you listen?

God is the High and Lofty One—the Most High. He inhabits eternity. God lives for ever. His dominion is an everlasting dominion; his kingdom from generation to generation. His name is Holy! There is none holy as the LORD. There is none beside him. There is no rock like our God. (1 Sam 2: 2) He is glorious in holiness. God is fearful in praises, doing wonders. (Ex 15: 11) Holy and reverend is his name! (Ps 111: 9) God says, "I dwell in the high and holy place" "Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" (Is 66: 1) "The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens." (Ps 113:4)

Yet, you and I are dust and ashes! (Gen 18: 27) We are the "un" of everything God is: unholy, unjust, unrighteous, and unworthy. We are transgressors against God; we are trespassers on God's property; we are abusers of God's creation; we are robbers of God's glory; we are haters of God's goodness; we are an abomination to God.

Still, in pure sovereign and free grace, the most High calls sinners like us into his kingdom, to his table, and speaks the greatest mystery of all to us personally. Will you go to his kingdom? Do you consider it the rarest privilege? Will you listen to God himself speak to you?

By nature, you won't! By nature, we are proud, covetous for God's glory, and unbelieving. By nature, we believe on false, flimsy, finite puffs of air which cannot save. So God must break us, cast us down, break up our way, make us so contrite so that we can't so much as lift up our eyes to heaven.

In scripture, Egypt, the horse and the chariot are types of our covetousness, pride and unbelief. There were no horses or chariots in Israel because Israel was a type of God's kingdom where everyone depends upon God. But the natural children of Israel were just like sinners today. They looked to earthly things as being strong rather than God. God said,

Isaiah 31: 1: Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because *they are* many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!..3: Now the Egyptians *are* men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together.

Why are sinners sitting right here this morning making the same mistake the natural sons of Israel made? It is because sinners sitting right here are just as proud as they were then.

If you were travelling from Babylon to Jerusalem, the kings highway, which led into Jerusalem, was so full of stones that horses or chariots could not enter Jerusalem on that highway. The strong horsemen had to come down off his horse; the privileged came down out from his chariot; and lowly servants went before them taking up the stones so they would not stumble as they entered Jerusalem.

All of that was arranged by this High and Lofty One, whose name is Holy! It is to show us the reason he breaks up the sinners way and breaks the heart of the sinner is to bring us down—off our high horse, out of our chariot—to make us contrite before him—because the high and holy God, who inhabits eternity, graciously says, “I dwell with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit,...

I am that lowly servant going before you this morning, trying to take up the stumblingblock of your iniquity, so that you might enter heavenly Jerusalem on the Kings Highway. If he makes these words effectual in your heart, he will break you to the point you think your spirit will fail and your soul will perish. But when you are contrite, this Holy God does something else.

GIVING A NEW SPIRIT

When God makes his child to be his dwelling place, God not only breaks the fleshly heart, breaks up our fleshly way, but God gives us a new spirit—“I dwell with him also...to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” (Is 57: 14)

When the Spirit of God has broken the spirit of the proud man, he revives the new spirit, the humble spirit he put within us; when he has broken our proud fleshly heart then he revives the new contrite heart he puts within, “That the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.” (Jer 42: 3) “To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” (Lu 1: 79)

The year they worked on the road in front of my house, after they broke up the old road, they began laying the foundation for the new road. After God breaks up our way, he revives us by showing us the new way, Christ the Way, the Kings High-Way into heavenly Jerusalem.

Isaiah 35: 3: Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. 4, Say to them *that are* of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. 5: Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6: Then shall the lame *man* leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. 7: And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where

each lay, *shall be* grass with reeds and rushes. 8: And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but *it shall be* for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err *therein*. 9: No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk *there*: 10: And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

GOD'S WORD WHY

We will look more at this next time, Lord willing For now let's read the rest of the chapter and make a few brief comments as to why God deals with his child this way. God says, "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls *which* I have made." (Is 57: 16)

While God is breaking up our way and our fleshly heart, we think he will contend with us forever. It feels like he is dealing with us in fierce anger and will always be angry. But truth is, he has not dealt with us nearly as strongly as he could have or as we deserved. The reason is because he laid our iniquity on his Son. Christ bore the full blow of God's fierce anger in the room and stead of all God's elect. And because Christ redeemed us from all iniquity and perfected us forever, God has not dealt with us in fierce anger, nor smote us as we deserve. It is only to turn us from our iniquity to Christ the Way that God might heal us and cause us to praise God with our lips from a true heart.

God says, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to *him that is* far off, and to *him that is* near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him." (Is 57: 17-19:

Psalm 103: 10: He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11: For as the heaven is high above the earth, *so* great is his mercy toward them that fear him. 12: As far as the east is from the west, *so* far hath he removed our transgressions from us. 13: Like as a father pitieth *his* children, *so* the LORD pitieth them that fear him. 14: For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust."

SOVEREIGN GRACE

Lastly, let's hear God declare what all men are and do if God does not work this grace in our hearts, "But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. *There is* no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." (Is 57: 20-21)

This is what all men are and what we were when God found us. But by God's sovereign effectual grace, he worked grace in our hearts to bring us to rest in Christ alone. Thank God for his sovereign grace!

When I go home, I turn on that new highway and it is so smooth. There are no dangerous curves, no blind hills, no deep valleys. And when I turn on that highway I do not stop till I arrive at my father's house. So it is with us who are in Christ the Way. God will see to it that we arrive safely at heavenly Jerusalem in heavenly Mt. Zion and not one of his children shall be lost.

Amen!