

The Gospel Call

Book of Isaiah

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Bible Text: Isaiah 55:1-9

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Let's take our Bibles and look together in Isaiah chapter 55. Last time we opened this portion a couple of weeks ago we looked primarily at verse one, the market place of free grace was how I introduced it. I want to read down to verse nine today from verse one, from verse one down to verse nine and speak with you on the gospel call.

Ho, every one 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. 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. 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. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. 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, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.¹

The editors of this Bible put as a title of this chapter, "The Great Invitation," but I have to take exception with that. What we have here and what I have just read for you is not an invitation as you would say an open invitation, alle, alle, in free, anybody come. It is rather a summons and it is addressed to a specific people. Right from the get go we read:

"Ho, everyone that thirsteth."²

¹ Isaiah 55:1-9.

² Isaiah 55:1.

You and I know that there are many that we encounter in this world that are not hungering and thirsting after righteousness, that is, after that righteousness which our Lord Jesus Christ came and established and God the Father approved in raising him from the dead and thereby imputed or put to the account of every one that he has purposed to save that righteousness. These are the ones who are being summoned here. These are the ones that are being called and everything down through here, the way these words are written, are in the form of a command.

You know, imagine if you address your children and said, “Ho! I need you to come here.” And they said, “Well, since that is not a command and that is an invitation, I think I will just probably just keep doing what I am doing.” How long do you think they would get away from it? If they are your child, you are coming. You know, this is not... I am not inviting you. I am telling you to come.

And the gospel is such a command. You can see even in verse four in speaking of Christ when Isaiah was directed to write:

“Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.”³

The Lord is the captain of our salvation if we are his people. There is still a school of thought—and that is all it is and it is false—but there is a school of thought that somehow you can come to Christ and receive him as Savior, but never really ever bow to him as Lord. It is religion’s way of trying to make room for a bunch of people that have made a profession that really aren’t the Lord’s. So they have been told to walk an aisle, say a prayer, bow their head, repeat after some religious leader. But ... and then hold to that even though their hearts are just as rebellious against Christ as it ever was. This Bible knows no such doctrine. You don’t come to Christ as you would to a smorgasbord. I guess they don’t even call those smorgasbords anymore. It is buffets. I am kind of dating myself, I think. But you get to pick. You know, if you don’t want the veggies, you don’t have to eat them. Just go for the meat.

But with Christ that is now how you come. You know, if a sinner comes to Christ he has been drawn by that Spirit and that sinner will bow to the Lord Jesus Christ as prophet, priest and king, not pick and choose. And he is all.

And so that is the command that we see here. It is what the apostle Paul in writing called the law of faith. Now those of us that believe the Scriptures as God has taught us about the grace of God we are often accused of being what they say Antinomian. It just is a word that means against the law. And the truth is we do have a law. We do have a rule. But it is not our obedience. That is not our rule. That is not what gives us acceptance before God. It is Christ’s obedience. And that is what the law of faith teaches, that Christ accomplished all that was necessary, that Christ paid the debt. Christ fulfilled the

³ Isaiah 55:4.

precepts of the law and it is thereby his obedience that we are justified before God. That is the law of faith.

We talk about the law of gravity. If you want to test it afterward, we can all go get out up on the roof and jump and see what will happen. We will prove it. It is a law. I would like to see how long any of us stays up in the air. I would probably be the first to the ground, as big as I am. Just that is the law. It is a law of gravity.

Here is a law of faith. If you look in Romans chapter three and verse 27. In the verses previous Paul has written these inspired words that:

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”⁴

That is how we are justified.

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.⁵

It is not our believing that justifies us, but he is the justifier of those that believe in him. If we have been given faith to trust Christ, it has been because our sin has already been put away. Christ has paid the debt. But here is the question, verse 27.

“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works?”⁶

No. If you believe in the law of works that it is somehow something that you do in order to find acceptance with God, then you would have room to boast if you could actually accomplish it. But the reality is you can't. So by what law then are sinners justified before God? It says:

“...by the law of faith.”⁷

That is that rule. That is that truth. I believe that the word faith here is objective. It is the revealed body of truth concerning Christ and his death which is our foundation, which is our hope that when he died he put away our sin. And so that is the law we adhere to. It is a rule.

If someone were to come in here and try to preach up works, we would stand up and say, “By the law of faith we have no such custom. We don't believe that here. That is not our custom.”

⁴ Romans 3:24.

⁵ Romans 3:25-26.

⁶ Romans 3:27.

⁷ Ibid.

And the law of faith declares Christ to be the Redeemer, the Savior, Christ to be our obedience before God.

Over in Romans chapter 16 and verse 26—and the reason I am going through these verses is to show you the connection between the New Testament and the Old. It is one message, one gospel. Here is a command given in Isaiah, but it is the same thing that Paul declared. It is the same thing that I declare unto you.

Here in Romans 16 you can see in verse 25:

“Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began...”⁸

And brother Bob in his prayer couldn't have prayed anything more plainly than what was about to say. He didn't know. He didn't see my notes, but he in his prayer addressed the God, the Savior of the Jew and the Gentile, sinners throughout the world. That was the mystery that was kept secret since the world began. God first began to work through that Jewish nation, but it wasn't just for the Jew. It included Gentiles. It included sinners from every tribe, nation and tongue for whom Christ would die. And now it is being fully manifest, verse 26.

But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.⁹

How do I know one is chosen of the Lord? How do I know that Christ has paid the debt of a particular sinner? The spirit grants this obedience to faith. It is not a personal obedience. It is not a trust in one's own righteousness. Far from it. But it is a looking to and a resting in exclusively and solitarily in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished.

If you look over in Galatians chapter three... because if the message here is:

“Ho, every one that thirsteth...”¹⁰

And you notice down through here it says:

“Incline your ear, and come unto me.”¹¹

⁸ Romans 16:25.

⁹ Romans 16:26-27.

¹⁰ Isaiah 55:1.

¹¹ Isaiah 55:3.

Obedience to the faith supposes a hearing. Isn't that the one thing your children tell you? Oh, I didn't hear you. That is a good excuse. I didn't hear you. Selective hearing.

Where there is an obedience to the faith there has been a hearing that has been granted. And here in Galatians chapter three in verse two Paul uses that very expression. What is the obedience of the faith? Well, it is a hearing of the faith. Do you see this?

“O foolish Galatians...”¹²

Verse one. These are ones to whom the gospel had been preached, but there were some who were being persuaded by other preachers to go back to the law, go back to some sort of personal obedience, conditional preaching. It is popular today. They speak of grace on the one hand, but on the other hand here is a list of things you have got to do to receive it. So he calls them foolish. Any that reason that way.

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth.”¹³

In other words look to Christ alone.

“...before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?”¹⁴

That is the one message that the true sheep of God respond to, Christ and him crucified. That is their need. Ok? But he says in verse two.

“This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”¹⁵

Which is it? It can't be both. Well, the answer is by the hearing of faith. Hearing of that body of truth in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ in his death that caused you to bow to him alone and to own his work of righteousness alone that he accomplished for sinners. You see it again in verse five.

“He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you...”¹⁶

Speaking there of the apostles.

“...doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”¹⁷

All this is vital and I could stand up here and declare unto you all day long to incline your ear and to come to Christ and to behold his person, to seek the Lord. But unless the Lord

¹² Galatians 3:1.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Galatians 3:2.

¹⁶ Galatians 3:5.

¹⁷ Ibid.

grants you that hearing it would be like me standing out in the cemetery and over those tombstones declaring to dead sinners to hear and to come. They don't unless the Lord grants them a hearing.

So that being established, come back here to Isaiah 55 where here we see these same commands of the gospel in my text. I started off by saying there were eight, but the more I read I kept counting, well, that could be nine, that could be 10. So I am just not going to say any number. You can go back through and count them. There are just an infinite number of commands. But beginning with the word ho in verse one, this is expressive of calling or of a summons but to a very specific title of sinner. Is it open and public? Yes. Just as right now many are hearing my voice. But it is addressed to the thirsty. So I have to ask you. Has the Lord given you a hunger and a thirst after Christ? After that work of righteousness that he came and fulfilled on behalf of sinners.

You know, there is a difference between having an appetite and truly being hungry. And I am not sure what the contrast is. We can say sometimes I am getting thirsty and so we grab something, but there is a difference between getting thirsty and truly dying of thirst to where it becomes a life and death matter. And I believe the sense here is, "Ho, every one that is dying of thirst." You have been made to see that apart from the Lord Jesus Christ being for you that fountain of life, that water of life, you will perish.

This is the word that is addressed to these. It is those who by the Spirit of God have been made to hunger and thirst after righteousness, God's righteousness. Thirsty, not in a natural sense and much less in a sinful sense, but in a spiritual one. In other words, ask yourself. Do I see the vital need of my soul for that forgiveness of sin that was wrought by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ? How vital is it? Is it so vital that you can go nowhere but to him? See, it is not just a matter of drinking out of any pool or of any cistern, but of coming to the water of life. How thirsty are you after that righteousness that could only be accomplished through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ? To be able to say if Christ is not my justification I have no justification before God. My mouth is stopped.

How thirsty are you to know him? Because when it says here:

"Ho, every one that thirsteth..."¹⁸

It is in the present tense, a continual thirst. Have you ever had days like that? You can't ever drink enough water? It just seems like, you know, what did I eat or what is causing it? Most of the time it is because we eat too much pizza, too salty. And so you just keep drinking, drinking, drinking, trying to quench it. But imagine being in a wilderness. Imagine being in a situation where you have to ration your water.

I read this recently and I have seen it in my experience in some of these other countries in the world where they have to walk so far to get water that one goes along to carry the water that is necessary for both of them to drink on the way back to make sure they don't

¹⁸ Isaiah 55:1.

die before they get back and the other carries the water that will be used to help bathe or cook. So they keep the two separate.

You know, we just take a lot of these things for granted where we just go turn on the faucet and there comes the water or, you know, if they are working on the pipe down the street and they tell us it is going to be eight hours now water we are all bent out of shape. You know, we can't live. Should we close the office? You know, let's see if we can't get a hotel room. Eight ours. When there are some that live in this situation day to day. Their first task is... that is their only task. They get up early in the morning before the sun gets too hot, go out ad get the necessary water and then come back, bring it back.

There is a thirst. There is a continual thirst and I believe that is a good description of the ... it is like the psalmist said, the panting after God as a hart pants after the water brook. He is talking about a deer that is being chased by a hunter and runs for its life and it becomes so thirsty that it seeks out that water brook. Oh, to have such a thirst after Christ, more knowledge of him. Am I self satisfied in what I think I know or is there that constant thirst of knowing him, being found in him, having communion with him, whether I have communion with anybody else in this world or not. My fellowship with God is in Christ. Such a thirst. Or, as Peter described it, thirsting after the milk of the Word and having that desire for him.

All right so let's just go down through here and to look at a few of these commands in the time that remains. The first one we see which we are used to hearing, but, again, I wonder how much we hear? Come.

I fear that just like a train that goes by down here, after a while we get so used to it that we don't hear it. I had someone recently tell me, is your church building near a train track? And I said, "Yes, it is." And they said, "Well, every once in a while when you are preaching I can hear a train."

I don't hear it. You know, it has gotten to where, ok, I know it is down there, but we just don't hear it. We get used to it. But to someone else they hear it. I fear that we become so fat and sassy in hearing the gospel, we really don't hear it. We hear the word to come and in our minds we think, well, when I am ready. But the way this is written is with an urgency. You know, if you were really, truly in need and dying of thirst and you had someone say, "Come to the waters. Where you are going in that direction is not it. It is over here." You would thank him. You would say, "You are a blessing of the Lord, because I am that needy sinner."

And that is the word that is used here twice.

"...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."¹⁹

Do you think that the Spirit directed Isaiah to just write this three times in this verse and

¹⁹ Ibid.

just as a filler? I don't believe so. It is interesting, because in the original, even though here it is translated come, the command is go you walk to the waters, obviously being led to the waters by the great shepherd of the sheep.

Look at Psalm 23. I believe it is mentioned this many times for emphasis. And how we need to be reminded of our need. You know, Peter wrote of that. We don't just come to Christ one time. You know, it is like a wife complaining that the husband never tells her that he loves her and he responds, "Well, I told you that when we got married," just one time. It is done. Well, she needs to hear it. I love you. We need to hear it again and again. And that is what this is. Come to the waters.

Psalm 23.

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."²⁰

I will not lack is what that means where the Lord is my shepherd.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters."²¹

A sheep is made of such a nature that if the waters are rushing they can't drink. And I will say there is a lot of turbulence in the waters or the cisterns that men have hewn out in their messages. A sheep can't drink it. The sheep needs calm waters. A thirsty person needs water that is prepared, pure and given to drink and to drink of it. And that is the sense here. Come ye to the waters. This is not rushing waters. These are not turbulent waters. These are calm waters. And the calm waters describe Christ. Christ said, "Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." There is no better rest for me the sinner than to hear of a Christ who has finished the work, is there? How about you? That is the calm water of the gospel, the still waters, the fact that Christ is finished the work.

So these are the waters to which we are drawn by the Spirit of God. We come being drawn.

Secondly, coming back here to Isaiah 55 and verse one there is that word buy. A command. It is not an invitation.

"...buy and eat; ye, come buy wine and milk without money and without price."²²

You know this same word in the original that you use buy, depending on how the word is put together it can mean either buy or sell. But I believe you can see the sense here and that is when the command is given to buy it is translated 15 times in our King James as buy and it is translated six times as sell. The point is whatever it takes, our take of this grace, as a needy sinner. Don't go to any other market place. This is ... this is a place

²⁰ Psalm 23:1

²¹ Psalm 23:2.

²² Isaiah 55:1.

where those that are commanded to come and drawn to come find all that is necessary for their soul's need in salvation already procured, not just secured, but procured. He hath obtained an eternal redemption for us.

I don't know about you, but that is good news to this sinner. Christ is the one that is that meat. Christ is the one that is that drink. So buy without money and without price.

Down in verse two the question is asked:

“Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?”²³

Again, in terms of works religion all of those works that men strive to do are going to be burnt up with them in eternal condemnation unless the Lord has been pleased to pay that sinner's debt and convert him, turn him in this life. But you can stand in most congregations today and ask this question. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? Programs. Preachers on the radio telling people if they don't give then they are going got have to shut down. Probably a good thing they did shut down. But there is just enough people out there willing to keep them going if they can just prod enough, push enough.

Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? Christ isn't being preached there. It is a ministry that a man has begun and wants to keep going. I have always said if the Lord has ordered it, he will take care of it. We don't have to pump men to give. We ... our responsibility is simply to declare Christ in all of his freeness, in all of his fullness. And he will do his work.

“...and your labour for that which satisfieth not?”²⁴

If you really believe that your salvation can be accomplished by your repentance even or your faith my question is: How much is enough? You could get down on your knees right now and beg God to forgive you based on your repentance, but when you got up there would b that niggling little thought in your mind of, well, did I repent enough? Here. Let me go down one more time.

And preachers like to have people running. They like to have something happening. They are making it happen. They will fill a whole stadium full of people that are just waiting for the preacher to say, “Come out from your seat and come down front and shake the preacher's hand.” Give him something to do. But if that is what their salvation is based upon, it won't satisfy. That is why they have to keep coming back to the preacher for him to bolster them up, give them some assurance. There is nothing there. It is vain. It is empty. Anything that we do as far as works go to try to establish a righteousness before God is nothing but husks, corn husks that are empty and vain.

²³ Isaiah 55:2.

²⁴ Ibid.

So the question is asked legitimately to cause us to think. It is like that prodigal son. When he had come to the end of himself spent his inheritance on something that could not satisfy. It says he came to his senses. You know, it is the Lord that brings you to your senses and causes you to see that to Christ I must go or die.

And so here in verse two again we have the word hearken. In other words, and look at it. It is not alone.

“...hearken diligently unto me.”²⁵

This is an urgent matter. I remember reading that in *Pilgrim's Progress* as the Lord began to deal with him and draw him away, separate him out and his family was concerned that he was losing his mind. And finally he had to just plug his hears from the cries of his family and run to the wicket gate. There was a separating out.

There are some that will hear, shrug their shoulders and think it is like when the Lord dealt with Saul on the road to Damascus. Some heard something that they thought was like thunder. So they heard something but then they went about their way. But Saul, he heard the Lord saying to him:

“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”²⁶

There was a particular word addressed to him and he hearkened diligently. The Lord turned his heart.

“...hearken diligently unto me.”²⁷

Who is speaking? It is the Lord. You can come to a doctrine and get it all straight in your mind, but that is not necessarily coming to Christ. You can come to a ceremony, a baptism. You can be dunked in the water, because you want to make some sort of open profession. But unless the Lord has given you life, you go in a dead sinner, you come out a dead sinner. There is no life in that water. The life is in the water of life. And so:

“... hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”²⁸

You know, who has a thirst? Who has a hunger? Not a dead body. If it is dead there is no hunger. There is no thirst. So here the command is literally to taste and see that the Lord is good. When it says:

“...let your soul delight itself in fatness.”²⁹

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Acts 9:4, 22:7, 26:14.

²⁷ Isaiah 55:2.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

That word to delight is something that is delicious. It is like when you take a bite of food that is just extra ordinary and all the sudden all of your senses come alive and you think, wow, what is this? And, you know, I have eaten meat before, but never like this. I have eaten a dessert before, but never like this. There is something to it that draws you. That is the word here.

But notice. It is not a physical sensation.

“...let your soul delight itself in fatness.”³⁰

This is a heart work. I could put together a message and come up with the greatest illustrations to make it plain, but that goes from this mouth to your head and that is it. You could walk out of here and say, “Boy, that was a pretty good message.”

Well, what about the heart? You know, a heart that is arrested by the Spirit of God and made to delight in the Lord, that is what is being described here, an exquisite delight. It is an interesting word. It is almost to the point of giddiness, like the man that couldn't shut up that the Lord healed. He went and told everybody even though the Lord told him to be quiet. That is a rejoicing to make merry in the goodness and here it says in the facts of the Lord's house.

I trust that is what we are doing right now, attending to his Word. Why do we come? Is it just a perfunctory thing that we do because it is Sunday? Let's get up and put on our Sunday go to meeting clothes and come and come and put in our time and go back or is there a true feast? Is there a true delight in hearing of Christ and him crucified? I pray there is, that each of us would come with that desire, God given. Give me Christ or I die. I am that needy sinner. I need to hear of him again and again and again, just as I get hungry again and again and again. I get thirsty again and again. I need to hear of Christ.

Look in Psalm 36 and verse eight and we will have to draw the line here, because our time is fleeting. But Psalm 36 and verse eight. We will start up in verse seven.

“How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.”³¹

You know, when this Scripture here says they delight itself in fatness, one could say that this would be a reference to those thanksgiving sacrifices of which when they were offered the Lord had the people come and partake. Most of the time it was just offered unto the Lord, completely consumed. But there were those thank offerings of which the Lord said portions of the fatness of those sacrifices was to be eaten by those that brought them. That is a partaking in, a fellowshiping in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I believe that is what is described here in Psalm 36 and 37.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Psalm 36:7.

“...therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.”³²

What was the psalmist referring to the shadow of thy wings? I believe it was the mercy seat where the two cherubim faced each other and where it pleased God to show mercy when that blood was brought in and sprinkled once a year on the mercy seat. The light from that tabernacle cast a shadow. The shekinah glory was there. It cast a shadow on those wings. It represented the very presence of God in that place where he is pleased to show mercy. That is in Christ.

And here in verse eight it says:

“They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house.”³³

He is talking about the sacrifices.

I trust that you have got your Bible open right now, but I trust that we all are sitting here by God’s grace looking for one thing, the sacrifice, the Lamb. What did you do today for worship? We partook of the Lamb. We ate the fatness of the Lamb. That describes is all sufficiency, his glory, the perfection of his work in what he accomplished for sinners. That is our delight. If you look in Psalm 65 and verse four, well Psalm 36:8, I didn’t read the whole thing.

“...and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.”³⁴

That is where God’s pleasure is. It is in his Son. But Psalm 65:4. This will be the last reference and then I will be done. Psalm 65 and verse four.

Do you really consider yourself blessed to even have a thirst, to have a hunger? I trust so. To delight in the fatness of this... the Lamb of God? Psalm 65.

“Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.”³⁵

How is it that God in his holiness can show goodness unto sinners such as we are? In one way, through the sacrifice of his Son. And that is that one in whom our soul delights.

“Whom have I in heaven but thee?”³⁶

Is that your state before the Lord? I pray so. If not, may he be gracious and grant us this hunger, this thirst, this desire, this taste for Christ and him alone.

³² Ibid.

³³ Psalm 36:8.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Psalm 65:4.

³⁶ Psalm 73:25.