

Title: **THE CHARACTER AND**
BLESSEDNESS OF GOD'S ELECT

Text: Isaiah 33:15-19

Subject: *Identifying God's Elect*

Date: Sunday Evening — September 22, 2019

Readings: *Merle Hart and Rex Bartley*

Introduction:

If you will open your Bibles to the 33rd chapter of the Gospel of Isaiah, I want to talk to you about — **THE CHARACTER AND THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD'S ELECT** — **THE CHARACTER AND THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD'S ELECT** (Isaiah 33:15-19).

Proposition: In this portion of Holy Scripture God the Holy Ghost inspired his prophet Isaiah to identify God's elect by their character and assures them of their blessedness in Christ. — He tells us both how those who are born of God behave in this world and what they may confidently expect in the world to come.

(Isaiah 33:15) He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of

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oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; (16) He shall dwell on high: his place of defence *shall be* the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters *shall be* sure. (17) Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off. (18) Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the receiver? Where *is* he that counted the towers? (19) Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, *that thou canst* not understand.

GOD'S WINNOWING FAN

Providence is God's winnowing fan by which he separates chaff from wheat. When things are going well it is impossible to separate the precious from the vile, to distinguish wheat from tares, sheep from goats, true believers from mere hypocritical professors.

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In times of peace and prosperity we cannot tell which are the good fish and which are the bad. But when trying times come, when adversity comes, when the fires of persecution burn, false brethren soon show themselves. When the rains of providential judgment begin to fall, the floods of earthly care rise, and the winds of persecution blow, those houses built upon the sand will fall. At such times “*sinners in Zion are afraid*” and fearfulness takes hypocrites by surprise.

The chapter in which our text is found describes a time of great trouble in Judah.

- Sennacherib and the Assyrians had invaded the land.
- Many nations around Judah had fallen prey to the barbaric invader.
- But the Lord God promised Judah he would protect her (2 Kings 19:32-34).
- Yet, there were many in Jerusalem who did not believe God. They were terrified at the sight of Sennacherib.

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Though they were in Israel, they were not of Israel. Though they had the name of God’s people, they were not God’s people. Though they were of Abraham’s physical seed, they were not of his spiritual seed. They professed to be saints. But they were unbelievers. They claimed to worship God. But they were only base hypocrites. The sinners and the hypocrites in Zion, in the time of trial were discovered. The sinners showed their fear. The hypocrites showed their unbelief. Because they did not believe God, they began to flee, though none pursued. They trembled, though the enemy was not seen.

MAKE SURE

Let us make certain of our calling and election. — *“Make your calling and election sure”* (2 Peter 1:10). **Cast away all creature confidence and trust Christ. Trust Christ alone. Faith in Christ is the evidence of heavenly birth.** Faith in Christ is that by which we are assured that...

- God the Father chose us in eternal election.

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- God the Son redeemed us with his own precious blood.
- God the Spirit has called us from death to life (Philippians 3:3; Hebrews 11:1).

(Philippians 3:3) For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

(Hebrews 11:1) Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Do not be satisfied with being in Zion, or in the church. **Do not rest until you are sure you are in Christ.** — *“Beware ye, of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy”* (Luke 12:1).

You can be sure of this. — **If our religion is not true, it will fail in time of trouble.** The time will come when God will sweep away your refuge of lies. If your hope in God does not make you calm and peaceful in the hour of trial and the night of sorrow, of what use is it? Your religion will be of no use to

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you in times of difficulty if it is not true. — Trials do not produce anything. They only prove what we are. The trials we endure prove whether our faith is true or false. — **Our text promises safety to God’s saints. But there is no safety for the hypocrite.**

“Safety in Zion belongs to those born in her by regeneration, reared in her by sanctification, enfranchised in her by faith in the Son of God, settled in her by fixed principles, confirmed in her by obedience to her laws, and bound to her by intense love of her King and her citizens.”

— *C. H. Spurgeon*

Divisions: My text reveals two things about all who are born of God:

1. The Character of God’s Elect (v. 15).
2. The Blessedness of God’s Elect (vv. 16-19).

The promise of verses 16-19 are blessed, blessed promises. But they are promises that belongs only to those who meet the character described in verse 15. We have no right to claim the promise unless

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we meet the character of the one to whom the promise is given.

SAINTS' CHARACTER

1st — **God's elect are people who may be known by the character of their lives. And verse 15 describes the character of every true believer.** —

“He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil.”

The character of the righteous is righteousness. The character of the godly is godliness. The character of the holy is holiness. Do not judge the state and condition of your own soul, or anyone else's, by isolated acts of righteousness or wickedness. It is not by acts, but by character, the bent, direction, and tenor of a man's life that his faith must be measured.

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- **But it is not ours to judge one another. We are to examine and judge ourselves** (2 Corinthians 13:5).

(2 Corinthians 13:5) Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

- **If we will honestly judge ourselves, we will not be condemned with the world** (1 Corinthians 11:23-32).

(1 Corinthians 11:23-32) I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread: (24) And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. (25) After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in

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remembrance of me. (26) For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. (27) Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. (28) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. (29) For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. (30) For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. (31) For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. (32) But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

You can be sure of this too. — **The grace of God changes a person.** It affects what he is and what he does. It alters both his character and his conduct (Romans 6:1-23; Ephesians 4:17-25; Titus 2:11-12).

THREE CHARACTERISTICS

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In this chapter there are three things that stand out as characteristics of those who believe God. These are things you can expect from people who are born again.

1. **Confidence in God** (v. 2)

Believers are people who trust Christ, people who live by faith. Being born of God and taught of God, we live with confidence in the Lord our God.

(Isaiah 33:2) O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.

We do not talk much about it, but God’s people are all praying people. — “O LORD, be gracious unto us!” — **We know our need and feel it.** Because we are not stoics, we feel things. Because we are not fatalists, we pray. Because we know our own insufficiency, we seek God’s help.

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What we seek from God is grace, nothing but grace. The whole basis of our approach to God is grace. Knowing God, we know our need of grace and love to acknowledge it.

- Eternal, Electing Grace!
- Covenant, Redeeming Grace!
- Sovereign, Saving Grace!
- Immutable, Preserving Grace!
- Daily Inward and Providential Grace!
- Helping Grace!

Believers are a waiting people. — “*We have waited for thee.*” — Having spread our case before him, we wait. Knowing that God always does what is best, we wait for him. We bow to his will, acknowledge his wisdom, and wait for him to work.

Believers are men and women who live by faith, who live in the habit and exercise of faith in Christ. — “*Be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.*”

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True believers do not foolishly imagine that by having trusted God years ago they have obtained salvation. We look to Christ now! We believe today! We live by faith. To the believer faith is not an act of life. It is a way of life. — *“The fear of the Lord is his treasure.”*

- The Lord’s Treasure
- Our Treasure

The true believer is a person of humble, present faith and confidence in the Lord God.

“My faith has found a resting place,
Not in device, nor creed:
I trust the ever living One,
His wounds for me shall plead.”

2. **Conduct in Life** (v. 15)

(Isaiah 33:15) He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of

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blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;

Not only are God's elect people of confident faith in Christ, they are righteous, godly people. That is the character of God's saints and that is their conduct (Ephesians 4:22-30; Philippians 1:27; Hebrews 13:5; James 3:13; 1 Peter 1:15-17; 2:12-13; 3:16; 2 Peter 3:11).

Look at Isaiah's description of the believer's holy conversation. **The way we live does not gain us an entrance into heaven. Christ alone is our way of entrance.**

- His Blood!
- His Righteousness!
- His Grace!

But if you and I have been made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in glory, the grace that has saved us does affect the way we live in this world! Believers are people who...

- Walk Righteously. — We walk by faith, trusting Christ's righteousness.

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- Speak Uprightly. — We walk in the Spirit, not after the flesh but after the Spirit.
- Despise the Gain of Oppression/Ill-gotten Gain/Bribery.
- Refuse to Hear Wickedness/Violent Speech (Ephesians 4).
- Turn their Eyes from Wickedness. — Doctrinal Wickedness and Moral Wickedness.

The believer is a righteous man. Righteousness rules his heart. And righteousness rules his life. “He will not,” as Spurgeon put it, “be flattered into pride, nor bribed into deceit, nor allured into unholiness. The Holy Spirit has wrought in him a holy spirit, and integrity and uprightness preserve him.”

The believer is, by no means, a man whose life is perfect. We are full of sin. And our righteousnesses’ are but filthy rags in God’s sight. Yet, the believer is an upright and righteous man. Grace has made him so (Psalms 15:1-5; 24:3-5).

(Psalm 15:1-5) LORD, who shall abide in thy

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tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? (2) He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. (3) *He that* backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. (4) In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. *He that* sweareth to *his own* hurt, and changeth not. (5) *He that* putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these *things* shall never be moved.

(Psalm 24:3-5) Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who shall stand in his holy place? (4) He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. (5) He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

That new man in you created in righteousness and true holiness lives in righteousness and true

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holiness. Christ in you lives just the same as Christ lived outside you. That which is born of God does righteousness. That other man in you, Adam, that which is born of the devil, does nothing but sin (Romans 7:14-25; Galatians 5:19-25; 1 John 3:1-10).

(Romans 7:14-25) For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. (15) For **that which I do I allow not**: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. (16) If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good. (17) Now then **it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.** (18) For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. (19) For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. (20) **Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.** (21) I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. (22) For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: (23) But I see

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another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (24) **O wretched man that I am!** Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (25) I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

(Galatians 5:19-25) Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, (20) Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, (21) Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (23) Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (24) And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

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(25) If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

(1 John 3:1-10) Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. (2) Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (3) And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (4) Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. (5) And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. (6) **Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.** (7) Little children, let no man deceive you: **he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.** (8) **He that committeth sin is of the devil;** for the devil sinneth from the beginning.

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For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (9) **Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.** (10) **In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.**

3. Composure in Trouble (v. 22)

The true believer is characterized by confidence in God, a righteous conduct, and composure in the face of trouble. — “*For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us*” (v. 22).

“*God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and love, and a sound mind*” (2 Timothy 1:7). — When real trouble comes, the hypocrite, the mere professor of faith, is revealed by his consternation

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and confusion. The believer is the man of calm composure.

- “*For the Lord is our Judge!*” — It matters not what men say and do.
- “*The Lord is our Lawgiver!*” — His Word is our law.
- “*The Lord is our King!*” — We bow to his dominion.
- “*He will save us!*” — We trust his grace and providence.

(Philippians 4:4-7) Rejoice in the Lord always: *and* again I say, Rejoice. (5) Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand. (6) Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. (7) And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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If my faith in God does not give me composure in the midst of trouble, my faith, it seems to me, is more useless than the tranquilizers doctors prescribe for people who cannot cope with life.

These three things characterize every true believer.

- Confidence in God.
- Righteous Behavior.
- Composure in the Face of Trouble.

GREAT BLESSEDNESS

2nd — **Now, look briefly at the great blessedness promised to every believer** (vv. 16-19). The blessedness is that which believers enjoy in this world, in the face of their enemies and earthly troubles.

(Isaiah 33:16-19) He shall dwell on high: his place of defence *shall be* the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters *shall be* sure. (17) Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far

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off. (18) Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the receiver? Where *is* he that counted the towers? (19) Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, *that thou canst* not understand.

“He shall dwell on high.” — Above and beyond the reach of his enemies — Christ (Colossians 3:3; Proverbs 18:10).

“His place of defense shall be the munitions of the rocks.” — God’s Covenant! — God’s Character! — God’s Word! — God’s Promises! — God’s Providence! — Christ’s Intercession!

“Bread shall be given him.” — Daily Bread — The widow’s *“barrel of meal did not waste.”*

- Daily bread is never stale.
- Daily bread calls for daily faith.
- Daily bread calls for daily gratitude.
- Daily bread is sufficient.

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“His waters shall be sure.” — To Quench His Thirst.
— To Bathe His Soul. — To Refresh His Heart.

“Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty.” —
Christ in all the beauty of his Godhood! — In all the
beauty of his manhood! — In all the beauty of his
obedience! — In all the beauty of his suffering! — In
all the beauty of his glory!

“They shall behold the land that is very far off.” —
(1 Corinthians 2:9-10; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9;
Revelation 7, 21, 22)

“Thine heart shall meditate terror.” — Laughing and
astonished at the things that once terrified us!

**“Where is the scribe? Where is the receiver? Where
is he that counted the towers?”** — “Where is the
wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of
this world?” (1 Corinthians 1:20)

(1 Corinthians 1:30) But of him are ye in Christ
Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and

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righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

“Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand.” — The confusing babel of will-worship idolatry has been silenced by the gospel of God and the effectual teaching of his Spirit, by whom we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION

(Galatians 6:14) But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

(Philippians 3:1-3) Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed *is* not grievous, but for you *it is* safe. (2) Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. (3) For we are the

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circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Amen.