

Experiencing the Lord going before us (Quality: Good)

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[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's help, I direct your attention this morning to the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 45, reading verses 2 and 3. The prophecy of Isaiah chapter 45, reading verses 2 and 3.

I will go before thee, and make thee crooked places straight. I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron.

And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

I will go before thee, and make thee crooked places straight. I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron.

And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, will call thee by thy name, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

[1 : 21] As I have travelled in the States on this visit, I have been followed by three words, and I have been constrained to preach from them in each place I have come to.

The words have been, my presence shall go with thee. My grace is sufficient for thee, and I will go before thee.

Again and again, they have rested upon my spirit, and they rest again this morning.

This beautiful word of God, spoken regarding Sarah. The blessed nature of the truth which lie here, I will go before thee.

And the word that lies at the end of these two verses, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

[2 : 40] What blessed truths they are, that our God should go before us, and establish in our heart, this divine knowledge, that thou mayest know.

Your desire then to seek the Lord's help in opening up this word, a very remarkable prophecy regarding Cyrus, who was named several hundred years in prophecy before he was born.

The hand of God, the here, manifest in his life, in order that he might be an instrument in God's hands for the good of his people Israel.

We have no evidence whatsoever that there was any work of grace in Cyrus' heart. And that we leave.

But when we come to look at the word of God that was spoken regarding him, we see that it is closely related here in the prophecy of Isaiah to other passages of Scripture which relate to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[4 : 00] And when we come to look at the verses we read in the 40th chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made straight, and shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

And these words are related concerning John the Baptist and the coming of Christ. And we see here in the truth that lies before us that whilst these words relate to the instrument of God in his hand, Cyrus, they relate to the work of God regarding his dear people who are a figure, blessed figure, of the true Israel of God.

As the Lord said regarding his dear servant Nathaniel, behold, an Israelite indeed. And we see here spiritual truth lying in this precious word.

I will go I will go before thee. It has fastened itself in our heart and we have seen a glorious beauty in it.

The remarkable nature of the simplicity of truth that lies here. The figure that comes immediately to mind is that of the shepherd.

[5 : 43] and leading his sheep and going before them and the mighty work of God in his church in the hearts of his dear people is to bring them to follow him.

Oh, in their fallen nature, their ruined nature, their disobedient nature, their defiant nature, their rebellious nature, their unconverted nature, their ungodly nature, have never followed him.

And yet, deeper and deeper there lies in this truth the blessed nature of the work of Christ that whilst his people born in sin and shaped in iniquity, dead in trespasses and sins, will never follow him.

he has gone before them, remarkably gone before them, to Calvary's cross, to shed his precious blood there.

And we see the working together of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit here, the glorious trinity that lies in these words in the gap for his dear people, going before them in eternal purposes of love and mercy.

[7 : 19] And then, as the apostle says, God commended his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, ungodly sinners, unconverted sinners, Christ died for us.

And we see in the fulfillment of that eternal covenant, Christ, coming here into this world to die for his dear church throughout all ages.

And we see his mighty work conqueror his cross, I'll go before thee. And I feel like this, you know. As we look at this word, I will go before thee.

It is replete with his suffering sorrow. He did not go before us and it cost him nothing. When he went before his dear church, it cost him solemn suffering and the pathway of death.

And always we look at the words of truth to make the crooked straits, the valleys, the mountains to be made low.

[8 : 46] As we read in the case of John the Baptist as he heralded Christ, there was a work to be accomplished. these mountains of rebellion, these mountains of unregeneracy, these valleys of unbelief, they are to be brought low.

The Lord is to make the mountains as char, and they are mountains to his dear people in exercise of soul. Shall I ever reach heaven? Shall I ever be saved?

and you know, we read here of the sacred certainty of the work of Christ in his suffering sorrows and in his redeeming love I'll go before thee.

You know, little can we comprehend of the vast nature of the truth that lies here, but I believe from time to time the dear Lord sees fit to open as it were to his dear church a window, to see as it were through the lattice somewhat of his suffering sorrows for them.

I believe this, that if we are to catch a glimpse of what he suffered for us, then we must walk in paths of crucifying sorrows ourselves.

[10 : 31] And when we look at the work of God in bringing his dear church down in chastening, and solemn is that chastisement, we will never be able to understand it, we shall not in others, certainly.

We may catch a glimpse of the needs be of his chastening in our life to deal with our solemn sins and rebellions. We can only speak so far as the Lord has revealed it in our own heart, but it is in those paths that he comes and grants the measure of that sweet fellowship with him in his suffering, a few precious moments and seconds to catch a glimpse of the deep truths that lie here in his suffering sorrows, I'll go before thee.

As we spoke the other night of that little word are. This is peculiarly personal. It speaks to each member of his church individually.

He has suffered for them. Peter says of that who his own self bore our sins.

It is so peculiarly personal in the hearts of his dear people if they are to have fellowship with him here in this blessed truth.

[12 : 12] I will go before thee. My mind goes on in this respect. Parents, native place and time all appointed were by him.

The step of a good man are ordered. He is the apple of God's eye.

As the Lord told Jeremiah, before I formed in the womb, I knew thee. watched over, directed and laid mysteriously, brought one of a city, two of a family, laid beneath the sound of the gospel, taught by the Spirit.

Oh, Marky, I'll go before thee. the very precious work of Christ on Calvary's cross sends forth the Spirit of Truth into the hearts of his dear children.

That sacred wind that blows, that mysteriously under the divine leadings of God gives life, hunger, thirst, seeking, trace it in the case of Nicodemus.

[13 : 58] We know nothing of his background, his parents, but the hour came ordained of God when he should find Christ at night and come under his teaching.

He did not understand. art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things. I'll go before thee.

I'll teach thee, I'll open thine eyes, I'll plant a seed, a kernel of divine life in your soul that will never die. Ye must be born again.

And we trace that glorious work in that dear man's heart secretly, silently, and the world knew, the godless, parisaical, professing world said, art thou one of them?

I'll go before thee. Oh dear friends, what a blessed truth lies here. The Lord's work is effectual, it's divine, it's glorious.

[15 : 09] He says, they shall come from the north, and the south, and the east, and the west will I gather them.

Loved with an everlasting love to grace and glory he ordained. I will, beautiful word, those whom thou have given me be with me where I am.

he seeks them from the four corners of the earth. Beautifully the scriptures speak of them. They came to him from every quarter, every nation, kindred and tongue are here.

He has gone before them. He has loved them with an everlasting love. That beautiful promise that was given to Jeremiah, yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.

And therefore, as the reason, with loving kindness, have I drawn thee. I do ask you here this morning, what do you know of this precious work of God's Spirit drawn thee.

[16 : 42] Lydia, dear child of God, loved with an everlasting love, the Lord directed his servant, the apostle Paul, away from Bithynia, into Macedonia, to Philippi, to her, blessed direction.

And there, she was ready, at the wall of prayer, seeking. And the Lord sent one, just as he did Philip to the unit, in the desert.

And God today is no different. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever.

The principles he works upon are no different. I will go before thee. And he does.

He goes before his dear people in everlasting purposes, in love and mercy, to bring them beneath the sound of his gospel.

[18 : 02] He leads them in paths that they have not known. And he brings them to himself. I will go before thee.

And we would speak here a little, our mind goes to it. When the Lord has sacred purposes for his dear church, he guides them in life's pathway.

He provides for them. And you know, I say this to some of you dear young people here this morning. Life is a solemn pathway to all.

we only pass this way once. We are fast hastening to eternity. All around us are the signs of it.

In affliction, in the tombs that lie about us, we are warned that this place is not our rest. But the solemn question is this, shall I walk through this life and he go before me?

[19 : 27] Shall I look to him and ask his divine direction in every step of my life? Shall I seek his face as the dear Welsh Tim Wright did, dear William Williams, when he said, guide me, O thou great Jehovah, in every single step of the way, in every major step of life, into the unknown future, where I shall be, which ministry I shall sit under, where my home shall be, who shall be a partner to share with me the pathway, a help me sent from God.

Oh, I do say it to you young people, the beautiful example in scripture of Isaac and Rebecca.

God went before that servant, and provided for Isaac.

They weren't without their troubles in life, Isaac and Rebecca, but this they did have, the seal of God's spirit on their marriage unit. Settled in heaven, oh, the state of this nation today, in the divorced and broken homes and our own landed home.

Oh, to have the sweet, blessed approbation in these solemn issues of life, that God has gone before us. And your dear one may have gone to glory now, but you can look back and you know that he went before you.

[21 : 37] And you know you had that blessed seal in your heart, that it was of God. You weren't free from sorrow. God doesn't promise his people freedom from sorrow.

I went to a wedding in Holland some years ago, and the godly Dutch minister preached on Isaac and Rebecca. and he said to the young couple, you may think this is a happy day today, but he said, mark it.

Esau was a sorrow, and Jacob was a sorrow, and though the hand of their God was in their marriage, and he had gone before them, it didn't free them from a bitter cup.

But oh, to have sealed in our hearts, the divine approbation in our life, that we are where the Lord would have us to be, under the ministry he would have us to be, he's gone before us and led us.

That in our partner in life, the Lord's hand and blessing is upon us. to have that precious seal, that we're in the right place, and even to this, the right home and the right house, guided and directed of God.

[23 : 09] Oh, to have this sacred seal, it lies in our text, I'll go before thee. precious mercy, if we are so brought to feel our ignorance, our lack of wisdom, our inability to cope alone, our foolishness and our folly, that we are brought to look upward to God and to cry to him to guide us in all things, that he would richly supply our every need out of his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

And then I tell you this, when the storms and waves and tempests of life sweep over us, as they do, and they have swept over me in my life, often solemnly, awfully unexpectedly, they have come into life pathway then, to have his presence and not to have that solemn feeling that we have walked in powers of disobedience, in powers of defiance, in powers of ungodliness, and when the sorrows sweep over us, we have to feel like David did, in all the sorrows that attended his latter day, that he brought them all on himself.

And when in his family there was such bitter cut, he could see that that sword had never left his house, and it was the chastisement of sin, and he said so sweetly in his sanctified affection, though my house, be not so with God, and there was a reason for it.

All I do say to you, seek divine direction, seek this great shepherd, seek the pathway that David speaks of here in the 23rd Psalm, the Lord is my shepherd.

And the beauty of this word, I'll go before you, he leadeth me. It is a lovely word, and it is a path to be walked out in experience, to know the blessed nature of that 23rd Psalm, and the truth that lies here, he maketh me to lie down in green pastures, spiritually, pastures, not pastures of our own choosing, or our own preparing.

[26 : 08] And when he comes to make his dear people lie down, I'll go before you, I'll go before you. It's what the shepherd did.

He led his sheep to green pastures, and the Lord does lead his dear people loved with and everlasting love to the green pastures of his word, and his ministry.

And we read here, he leadeth me beside the still waters, glorious figure, you know. There are waters of peace, the waters of quietness.

The sheep will never drink from running water, only from those pools in the mountains where the water is still before it goes down the rocky slopes to fresh, quiet pools.

And the Lord brings his people taught by his Spirit, I'll go before thee. And when they're made willing in the day of his power, when their hearts are touched by his Spirit, and when they're subdued, and when they long to be laid and provided for, and when they're willing to look upward and follow him, then he leads them beside still waters.

[27 : 41] And what does it speak of? It speaks of this, they carry in their heart the peace, the glorious peace of his divine approbation.

And all this is what we need in life's pathway. We need to feel the, what I believe it is Ezra spoke of in the solemn unrest in which they built the walls of Jerusalem.

He felt the good hand of his God upon him. That was a still water. The blessed approbation of God, the answer of good conscience in his heart, that he was walking in order footsteps, and he was following his God in peaceful paths, although all around him was hatred, unrest, war, enmity, jealousy.

But in his soul there was still water. He leads me. Beside the still water, I will go before thee.

It includes every aspect of your life, spiritual, temporal, eternal. The Lord has gone before his dear church that he might supply her every need.

[29 : 14] And he leads his dear people in power of his own choosing. Look into your life. I know there are some of you here this morning who have led a long life.

Can you trace out a good hand of your God? dear Jacob when he came to the end of that long journey and raised his hand in that cross-handed blessing over Ephraim and Manasseh, he could truly say the Lord that led me all my life long.

The Lord that fed me. Then he went on speaking eternally the Lord that redeemed me. of all evil. Oh, the wanderings of dear Jacob's heart, the solemn paths of disobedience, the darkness he'd come into.

Did he feel when Joseph was torn from him that the Lord was leading him? Did he feel when he said all these things are against me the Lord was leading him?

He was he could look back on it. He couldn't trace it at the time, but he could look back and he could see the hand of his God upon him.

[30 : 49] He understood later. And you have that beautiful word when he understood, it is enough. to know.

And dear Joseph, he couldn't see it, that the Lord had led him twenty years in sorrow and darkness, suffering, chains.

Until the time that his word came, that is to fruition, the word of the Lord tried him. But mark this, the Lord went before Jacob, he went before Joseph.

And I ask you here this morning, trace out life's pathway. Has he gone before you? Can you trace the protecting hand of your God?

I'll go before him. I tell you one incident in my life, when I was doing my national service in Germany. we were taken out into severe conditions of deep snow to practice living in Arctic conditions in the most bitter winter in Germany.

[32 : 10] And we had to camp in snow. And eventually, after several days, and we couldn't drive a tent peg into the ground, we had to find sand pits to put our tents up in.

We were given six board suites, and told to get back to our barracks, 15 or 20 miles away. And we set out with our stem guns on our shoulders, in blinding snow and sunlight like this.

marching in a couple of feet of snow, and our eyes down. And we went, walking and marching and singing together.

And do you know, suddenly, as we marched through this deep snow, there was an enormous explosion near us. And we were showered with what we thought was an explosion from a shell, falling all around us.

we feared we had entered the firing ranges of the artillery. And we turned away to our left.

[33 : 24] And as we turned away, we realised that we were on the edge of a quarry, 800 feet deep. An enormous quarry.

The fence, the barbed wire fence, was only two or three inches from the snow, and we hadn't seen it because of the snow. And we were about to walk over the edge.

But for that blast, in that precise moment as we marched our heads down, we would have all gone over the edge. And when I look back, to see the preserving hand of my God in my life, and it's not the only time, I have had and do look back, to the protecting hand of my God that kept me from being cast into a never-ending eternity, I will go before me.

His divine protection over his dear people in such hours that spares their life, watches over them and keeps them.

Often when they were not even looking to him or thinking about him, and yet they look back on him. And you know Joseph, look back, when his brethren and his father bowed before him, the dear man of God, turn aside and wept.

[34 : 56] Why? I believe this. He could see the good hand of his guard going before him all those years. He had such a sight.

It was not you. It was the Lord. It explained everything in his soul. There was peace in his heart.

Now he understood. When he attempted to put his hand to get the butler to remember him, he couldn't possibly remember him. It wasn't the Lord's time. Yet he longed to see the end of his trial.

When the time came, he wept and wept to the praise of the glory of God. I'll go before thee. I cannot express sufficiently the everlasting love of God that attends the footsteps of his dear church from the womb to the tomb.

And when we come to look at this now, we come to the valley of the shadow of death. I'll go before thee. The sacred and glorious humanity of Christ as he went down into that solemn valley of the shadow of death for his dear church.

[36 : 22] There lies before each one of us that valley we are going to pass through. And here we have this beautiful world.

We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmity. He walked that path into that valley of the shadow of death.

He said Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. It included that valley.

It included the mighty work of redemption in the bearing of the sins of his dear church and his body on the tree. But it included that valley for his dear church.

I'll go before thee. I feel like this, you know. There's not a footstep. His dear church is called to walk. Tempted he was in all points like as we are.

[37 : 35] Yet without fear. There is no path that you can come into. All points. Let us not diminish it.

I've looked at it in wonder and wonder at times. The fiery darks of the wicked one are very vicious night and day.

Did Christ walk that way? Yes. Tempted in all parts like as we are. And down into the valley of the shadow of death he came to die for his dear church.

I will go before thee. He's gone. And I tell you this. In that solemn valley and how many of his dear people as the scriptures reveal through fear of death have all their lifetime been subject to bond.

Bunyan has a beautiful account. I lectured on it this year in Holland to a large body of Dutch students. The last pages of the second part of the Pilgrim's Progress which describes Christiana and all her companions and describes how they passed through the valley of the shadow of death.

[39 : 02] And it's very remarkable. I say to you, read it. Oh, the varying experiences. I believe it was fearful of whom Bunyan says, when he went through the waters, they were never more shallow than at that time.

And yet all his life he had feared those waters. We have been a witness to some of God's dear children who have passed that valley.

Our dear brother John Rayner, we witnessed the glorious presence of his God as he passed that valley in the sweet joy of his Lord.

At peace, I'll go before you. O the Lord passed that way for his dear children. He is sovereign as his dear people go into those waters.

Pilgrim, Christiana's husband sank as he entered those waters. But we have that beautiful account how the evangelist said to him, look back.

[40 : 17] He was able to look back and he had something sacred to look back to, doubting castle and many other precious deliverances.

He could see behind him and thus he took courage and so he passed over. I will go before you and make the crooked places straight and the rough places plain.

I will break in pieces the gates of brass and cut in sun to the bars of iron. I will give thee the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places that thou mayest know that I the Lord which call thee by thy name am the God of Israel.

And you know the outcome of this blessed work of God I'll go before thee is that we grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

We grow in the sweet experimental knowledge of his faithfulness as I have come here in this time of tension I have walked in the sweet present experimental realization of his presence as I have flown here in this country I have walked in the sweetness of that truth my grace is sufficient for thee.

[42 : 00] I have realized in a way I have never realized before to the same extent those blessed arms underneath all to be brought more and more and I've said in preaching prior to coming and while I've been here three men in the fire could never walk with Christ in the way they did unless they'd gone into the fire.

And I've said the fire was heated seven times hotter oh how precious was the presence of their God going with them I'll go before them into the fire they were sent cast all the solemnity of what must have appeared to them instant and then in the great trial of their faith they had the most precious experience of one walking in the fire with them and even Nebuchadnezzar as he looked on could say like under the son of man but the men in the fire came forth without so much as the smell of burning and then how precious was that experience they took it with them individually for life never to be forgotten that their God as Daniel said my God has sent his angel and has shut the lion's mask

I will go before thee oh may these words rest in your heart my presence shall go with thee my grace is sufficient for thee I will go before thee I wonder what gates of brass lie before you here is a precious word of promise I will go before thee I will break in pieces the gates of brass and that beautiful word which is in this prophecy the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed but the covenant of my peace my kindness will I not take from thee neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed says the

Lord that hath mercy upon me of this