

Isaiah

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[0 : 00] For the Lord's help I shall speak from words you find in Isaiah chapter 59. Isaiah chapter 59 verse 20.

And the Redeemer shall come to Zion. And unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob saith the Lord.

Amen. You may, as we read through this chapter, have felt somewhat as I did when I read through these verses again today.

The whole of the earlier part of the chapter filled me with a sense of sadness. It seemed to outline the burden that I already felt on my own spirit.

The chapter begins with a precious assurance. The Lord's hand is not shortened as it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear.

[1 : 23] We know in our hearts, don't we, that God does not change. We are persuaded, many of us, if not all of us, persuaded that the God who has heard our prayers still hears them.

That he will hear the cry of the destitute and not despise that cry. We know this is true. The Lord's hand is not shortened. We know he has the same power today as he had in former days.

We know he has the same power today as he had when he liberated Israel from Egypt. We know he has the same power today as he had when he inspired Isaiah to write these precious words.

But then immediately the prophet goes on to say but, but.

And he speaks as it were for the Lord. He personates the Lord himself. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God.

[2 : 34] And from that verse onward, there is this long, sad, dark, deepening catalogue of the misery and the wretchedness and the iniquity and the transgression and the injustice of these people.

And how many of us could read through this chapter and altogether escape as you read through these verses?

Well, it's a mercy if our hands are not defiled with blood. But it would be a lie to say that our fingers weren't marked with iniquity. It's a mercy if our lips have not spoken lies.

Some of us don't even say that. As we look back, we shame over the past. But even if we could escape that, how many of us could say that our tongue had never muttered perverseness?

Well, we go on through the chapter. It would take me too long to go through each verse.

[3 : 56] The picture is exactly the same. As though the Holy Spirit moves the prophet to draw more and more dark lines in transgressing and lying against the Lord and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

And then a picture generally of the situation. Truth failing. Truth failing. And I read through the chapter and felt, yes, it is a picture of our own nation.

But I don't think that that is what is really signified in the chapter. There are many features of the chapter which are obvious in our own national life.

The miserable wretchedness of sin that we see all about us. But it's far, far more personal than that. And of course, Isaiah was sent by the Lord to minister to Israel, to the people who bore God's name.

But when we get closer to the end of the chapter, I feel the Lord knew that this dear man Isaiah, being of the tender spirit that he was, could not bear more than the Lord had already placed on him.

[5 : 38] The picture so dark. And then God reveals to him the way he is looking at the mountain. The Lord saw it.

In verse 15 we read, The Lord saw it. He saw in the midst of all this wretchedness, that there were those in desperate need.

In fact, in the same 15th verse we read, He that departeth from evil, maketh himself a prey. Or, as the margin has it, is accounted mad.

He makes himself a marked man. He's one that people notice. And noticing, they treat him in a way which is most distressing.

He that departeth from evil, maketh himself a prey. And the Lord saw it. And displeased him.

[6 : 47] There was no judgment. In the midst of all this sorrow, and wretchedness, and misery and sin, there were those who were grieved.

There were those still who were burdened. They don't escape, obviously don't escape all the accusations of the chapter. But, you see, they depart from evil.

They don't escape, you see. There's already an implied accusation in that word. They have been involved in it. But something has happened. And they depart from evil.

They find the way very, very difficult. And the Lord saw it. And it displeased him. But there was no judgment.

That is, there was no, no one to vindicate this person who is departing from evil and suffering the consequences. And God saw that there was no man.

[7 : 56] That is, there was no one to come near to this person who is departing from evil and encourage him and strengthen him and help him. And, and God wondered that there was no intercessor.

of course, Isaiah is using human expressions and experiences to depict God.

It's not that God wonders with any kind of surprise like we do because we didn't expect something to happen. no, it is a way of telling us the deep concern that God has about this matter.

He looks with the deepest concern on this matter. He wondered that there was no intercessor. Therefore, his arm brought salvation unto him and his righteousness it sustained him.

For he put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation upon his head. And he put on garments of vengeance for clothing and was clad with zeal as a cloak.

[9 : 13] And the whole of the later part of this chapter is really a most remarkable prophecy of the coming of the Lord Jesus. It's a prophecy of God's own anointed Son, the Messiah coming as a Savior and as a mighty conqueror as a ruler as a king according to their deeds accordingly he will repay but he comes also as a judge fury to his adversaries recompense to his enemies to the islands he will repay recompense.

And you realise of course that in these Old Testament prophecies the prophets were given a view of the person and work of Jesus Christ which encompassed as it were the whole of the Lord's work.

Sometimes they speak of his birth sometimes of his life sometimes of his work sometimes of his death sometimes of his resurrection sometimes sometimes of his second coming sometimes of the final judgment and sometimes these features are blended together because they're all part you see of the work of the same person.

So it is here we have as it were in just a few words the whole picture of the person and work and triumph and glory of Jesus Christ.

So shall they so shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west and his glory from the rising of the sun. There is the prophecy concerning the spread of God's truth the spread of the influence and power of Jesus Christ through the earth.

[11 : 14] But then we read in the 19th verse when the enemy shall come in like a flood the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him and the Redeemer shall come to Zion and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob saith the Lord.

There are three ways it seems to me in which we might look at these words. First of all very briefly they are a most wonderful prophecy of the literal coming of Jesus Christ the Redeemer.

Think of that for a moment. 400 years after the Old Testament was concluded after the Lord had as it were for the last time appeared to his people in inspiring the prophets to speak with infallible authority.

For those long centuries God is comparatively silent. Certainly silent so far as any recorded inspired record in the scripture is concerned.

Not silent in the hearts of his people no. But for the most part that seems to be a period of silence on God's part.

[12 : 54] And certainly the period prior to the Lord's appearing was a very dark sad time in the history of the people of Israel.

True religion had been sadly distorted and almost lost. It seems as though from what we read of the scribes and the Pharisees and religious leaders of Christ's day there was just the outline of shall we say an orthodox legalism but very very little real spiritual life.

And the enemy had come in like a flower deceiving the minds of the people deluding those even who were interested in religion and were devoted to their religion the enemy had come in like a flower.

And what did God do? He saw all this the Lord saw it and it displeased him. He saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor.

And the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. And how remarkably the Spirit of the Lord came upon men and women just prior to the Saviour's birth.

[14 : 31] Zacharias and Elizabeth John the Baptist and so we might go on one after another people amazingly blessed Mary preeminently so wondrously blessed by the power of the Spirit of the Living God the Spirit of the Lord came and worked a mighty work first in the hearts of very few gradually more and more added to the number of those upon whom the Spirit came then at the time of Pentecost the mighty outpouring of the Spirit's blessing God but particularly prior to the Saviour's birth the Redeemer shall come to Zion the Redeemer shall come to Zion and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob saith the

Lord so it was quite literally and quite clearly in the life and ministry of Jesus there were those who knew and felt in the most personal way his power they knew he was their Redeemer those wonderful words that God the Father showed to Peter expressed this very thing in Peter's own soul thou art the Christ the Son of the living God blessed art thou Simon Barjane for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee but my Father which is in heaven and how did the Father reveal that to Peter why friends by the power of the Spirit the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against the enemy the

Redeemer came to Zion and unto them that turned from transgression in Jacob Jesus began his ministry as John began his ministry with the very same word repent repent repent ye and believe the gospel what does repent mean exactly the same as this turn from transgression that's what repent mean turn from transgression turn from unbelief turn from sin turn from transgression why did people turn from transgression when John preached when Jesus preached when Peter preached why friends because the spirit of the

Lord had come because the spirit of the Lord had been at work secretly unknown but at work the redeemer shall come to Zion as for me this is my covenant with them saith the Lord my spirit that is upon thee and my word which I have put in thy mouth now what does this refer to I know it's not the text but I must just complete the chapter as for me this is my covenant with them saith the Lord now that's the Lord speaking of his people his covenant people and then he says my spirit that is upon thee who why the redeemer Jesus anointed with the spirit yes beyond all our understanding beyond the blessing that has ever come upon any other man my spirit that is upon thee not upon them but upon thee upon him first and my words which

I have put in thy mouth what did Jesus say I came not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me he is the living word that's his very name my words which I put in thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth nor out of the mouth of thy seed and the seed historically what is why friends this is God's family these are those who are partakers of the same life this is these are those of whom Jesus can speak and say he's not ashamed to call them brethren and God can look upon them and call them his sons and his daughters and the words the words of Jesus are found in the hearts of the people and shall not depart out of thy mouth nor out of the mouth of thy seed nor out of the mouth of thy seed seed saith the

[20 : 06] Lord from henceforth and forever a precious assurance of the abiding nature of the truth of the gospel in the hearts of that great number which no man can number out of every generation right down to the end of time well that very briefly in one way we can see being a prophecy of what God purposed and what has indeed happened the next thing I want to speak a little about is this point that the redeemer shall come to Zion and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob said the Lord and that's a very personal matter just as Jesus certainly came in the flesh is most surely the redeemer so there are those who personally know this

I read this chapter through I can't convey really this evening how these words struck struck me in this 20th verse but it was somewhat like this my very heart responded to these words and I felt in my very soul that's just what I need just what I need I want it to be as real and as personal as that this is just the one I need the redeemer shall come to Zion it's a promise and friends surely a believer's heart responds and a poor troubled sinner's heart responds a person who might not yet be able to say I'm a believer but the poor troubled heart says that's what

I want I want the redeemer to come to me the redeemer shall come to Zion and blessed be God he shall come why do you want to redeem why do I want to redeem what is it in this precious name and title of Jesus Christ that is so attractive that makes us feel that this is just what we need well friends there are two things which I feel explain this first there is power and secondly there is the price there is the power of the redeemer and then there is the price he is willing to pay and you see a sinner a poor utterly helpless and wretched sinner needs both he needs both the power of the saviour and he needs the precious saviour to pay the price for sin firstly then the power the redeemer shall come to

Zion what a description we have in these earlier verses of his power and of his authority he puts on righteousness as a breastplate and helmet of salvation upon his head and the garments of vengeance for clothing and is clad with zeal as a cloak a glorious declaration of his own personal power now friends he has the power that God has because he is God and the response of the poor helpless soul is just like that Lord nothing but divine power is sufficient for me nothing can deal with my case but one who has the power that God has who has the authority that God has you see the word redeemer does have this double sentence a redeemer has to redeem people who are in a hopeless situation he has to redeem people who are so weak and helpless and so oppressed they can't free themselves they're slaves the redeemer has to come with authority to set them free how are we held in the bondage of slavery what kind of bondage and slavery is this friend what do you want to be freed from what is it that makes you feel that only

God can deal with your case why friends don't you want to be free from the power of sin don't you feel that you need protection from the power of the enemy when the enemy comes in like a flood when that vicious tempting evil spirit comes against you when your spirit is plagued with all manner of vile suggestion when you find your sinful nature is ready to agree ah then when the enemy comes in like a flood we need divine power we need the power of the redeemer and we need the power of the blessed spirit of God we need the power of the blessed spirit of God to show us what the redeemer has done and who he is the redeemer shall come to

[26 : 24] Zion there's someone here tonight and I can't help but feel there's some purpose in this verse being impressed like it was upon me perhaps it was just for me I don't know but maybe for someone else is there someone here tonight saying just that Lord I've come along to this place tonight so utterly helpless and feeling so utterly and completely weak that nothing but divine power will do for me but you see divine power itself would be frightening but divine power seen in the person of the redeemer is something so attractive doesn't doesn't your heart reach out sometime to this thought that with

Jesus there is all power in heaven that is he has authority in heaven at the right hand of the father and on earth where we are in our need this is the redeemer the redeemer with his power and the redeemer shall come to Zion and that brings me to the second point you see not only are we helpless and wretched not only held in bondage and slavery not only needing deliverance but needing redemption in its second sense you see the debt is so great the debt is so great remember the servant in one of the Lord's parables the parable of the unmerciful servant I won't go right through the parable but just take this to illustrate the point there was a man and the

Lord began to take account of his servants and he came to this man and he owed him ten thousand times millions and millions of pounds that would be worth nowadays a debt he could never have paid not if he and his wife and his children had all been sold to slavery never could that debt have been paid and neither can yours and neither can mine no the soul that sin it shall die and we haven't sinned just once have we that would be bad enough but over and over again and a nature that is sinful and defiled through and through and what do we say about that Lord have mercy and I will pay have patience with me and I will pay thee all is that how we speak to the Lord why friends

I think by now you know better than that you don't say that day you just say Lord I can't pay a penny of the day and never till my dying day shall I be able to make any payment at all the redeemer shall come to Zion and what does he do he pays the price he lays down his own life he bears the burden of their sin he suffers the just for the unjust to bring us to God those words of a hymn often echo in my heart my breaches of the law are his and his obedience mine that's redemption friends the redeemer shall come to Zion and there's only going to be relief for your troubled heart there this is the only way the burden can ever be taken from our soul the redeemer must come and he does come he does come the spirit of the lord moves in the heart of that sinner and the lord himself appears because the spirit of the lord has opened his eyes to see

Jesus the redeemer comes does he come to you him or are you one of those this evening waiting for him to come saying do come lord do save do help me do deliver me why friends here's the word of promise the redeemer shall come and I'm sure he shall come to those who pray because he even comes to those who don't before they call I will answer he says so I'm certain sure he will come to those who pray the redeemer shall come to Zion and unto them a turn from transgression of Jacob what a strange confused muddled life seems to be sometime as we look back and especially when God begins his work we don't know he's begun if anyone was to ask had asked us had asked me let's be personal if anyone had asked me in those days whether the lord was at work in my soul whether the holy spirit was dealing with me

[32 : 43] I should have said I don't know I don't know but if they'd gone on asking questions I could have answered some of them if they'd said to me are you afraid of dying I would have said yes if they'd said to me are you afraid of meeting God when he returns a second time I would have said surely I am if they'd said to me are you satisfied with the life that you're living I would have said no I'm not if they said to me do you love the lord I would have said no but it troubles me because I don't and so we might go on you see we don't understand do we and perhaps someone here tonight says I don't understand what's happening how often it is like you don't understand what's happening but you know there are those who can look back from further on shall we say in the pathway of experience and they can say to you that the spirit of the lord shall lift up a standard the spirit of the lord works mysteriously you won't perhaps understand what's happening but he knows what he's doing and he's preparing preparing your heart he's working in such a way in your life that you're going to be brought to this point now none but Christ can satisfy he's working so to disturb you and so to distress you so to stir up things in your life that there's only one thing that will ever bring peace into your soul again and that is the peace which comes from Jesus from the redeemer the redeemer shall come to Zion and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob you say well

I can lay no great claims to great spiritual experiences as yet I feel I'm a sinner I feel I'm dark and distressed and confused but there's something else I know if you were to ask me and that is that there's been a difference a change you know there was a day when I was so bewildered and confused about these matters I didn't know where I was until I heard a sermon on the second chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians and as I went away and thought about what I'd heard I felt for the first time in my life I could say as before the Lord well I don't know very much Lord but I do know this that I'm not in the state I used to be in you hath he quickened who were dead well I didn't feel I could lay claim to life but I knew I wasn't dead

I know it's a paradox perhaps some of you don't understand what I've just said but you see there was a turning a turning from transgression if you were to ask me about election and whether I felt I was one of the Lord's chosen whether I belonged to Jacob or Israel or Zion those questions would have been far beyond me but there's a turning you see a turning from transgression there was something I wanted whereas before I wanted what everybody else wanted I wanted the world I wanted its happiness I wanted its pleasures they never satisfied but I wanted them but now I wanted something else you say something like this

I thirst but not as once I did that they delights of earth to share thy wounds Emmanuel all forbid that I should see my pleasures there they turn from transgression and Jacob and is there as it were in the distance perhaps dimly but there before you a hope you you have heard enough of the redeemer so that your heart has responded to this precious gospel you hear words like those of Paul to the Corinthians he has made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption and there's something deep in your soul that says

Lord I don't even understand what all those words mean but I know enough to feel that that would satisfy me I don't friends I don't to this day understand what all those words mean in all the depth of their meaning but I know enough to feel this that that does satisfy me he has made unto us wisdom and I feel so ignorant and righteousness and I'm so unrighteous and sanctification and I'm so unholy and redemption and I'm lost the Redeemer shall come to Zion and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob saith the Lord well friends there's much much much more but just one last and third point

[39 : 27] I can't help feeling that these words have a reference at least this is how the word rested on my own spirit these words have a reference to the Lord's church in a collective sense the Redeemer shall come to Zion we see the Lord came in the flesh and then fulfilling his promise he came into the hearts of believers he came in a very gracious way at the day of Pentecost amongst those early believers that formed the first Christian church in Jerusalem lo he says I am with you with the disciples and with those who follow I am with you always he came in that way friends a true church today a true church here or in any other place like this is made up of people to whom the

Redeemer has come but we don't just look back do we surely not we don't just look back individually don't we look at ourselves as it were together don't we say now what we need together is for the Redeemer to come to Zion friend I don't know really what your condition is spiritually obviously not but I believe I could say this without being wrong but this is what you need isn't it the Redeemer shall come to Zion you want the personal powerful gracious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in such a way that you know him verily to be the living God with you amongst you the

Redeemer shall come to Zion times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord that's what the Acts of the Apostles speaks about and that's what we need isn't it a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord we want the Redeemer to come again and you know those who long for that blessing here are those who can understand John's feelings as we come to the end of the book of Revelation he echoes I believe the heart's sincerest desire when he says even so come Lord Jesus friends as I travel up and down I was saying at tea time I've been at home through the winter months mainly as I begin in the spring time to travel up and down again immediately

I'm impressed by this and burdened by this what we desperately need is the very thing that this verse speaks of the Redeemer shall come to Zion friends we desperately lack the mighty outpouring of the power of a risen Saviour the Redeemer we want him to come again in that very office as the Redeemer the one who has power we certainly need him as the one who comes to deal with our sins the sins that have been added and added and added the Redeemer shall come to Zion and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob saith the Lord friend my heart yearns for this for me for my people for you for many that

I preach to indeed all well there's strong encouragement this is my covenant says the Lord have you been tempted like I have just lately I hardly dare say it because I don't want to sow seeds of trouble in anybody's heart but it might be a help you're tempted that you never were in the covenant tempted that God has forsaken you does the enemy come in like a flood and say God hath forsaken him persecute and take him for there is none to deliver him as for me this is my covenant with them saith the Lord and I think that's a wonderful verse it's my covenant with them but it's his covenant with his own dear son it's the same covenant because his own dear son and the elect the whole church are one my spirit that is upon thee and my word which

[45 : 03] I have put in thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth nor out of the mouth of thy seed his word of promise his word of reassurance his word of mercy his word of grace the very word you would expect and have heard from the lips of the redeemer the redeemer shall come to Zion well friends all I can say is this I hope you'll go home and pray plead this promise with him I'm sure it's the answer I'm sure it is for him I'm sure it's the answer to our present situation and need because I'm sure it's the answer to mine the redeemer shall come to Zion wrestle with him in prayer as you feel it as a personal need as you feel it collectively your need as a church redeemer shall come may the

Lord have his blessing amen amen