

Hephzibah (Quality: Good)

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- [0 : 0 0] We turn this morning to the words found in the book of the prophet Isaiah in the 62nd chapter and at the fourth verse.
- The book of the prophet Isaiah chapter 62 at verse 4. Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed desolate, but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah.
- For the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. If ever a verse of scripture could be called multum in paro, that is much in little, then this verse can.
- Beside the name of the Lord Jehovah himself, there are four titles in this verse that begin with capital letters.
- Forsaken, Desolate, Hephzibah, Beulah. First two in plain English, the last two transliterated in the Hebrew in which the Old Testament was first written.
- [1 : 3 9] And all applied to the people of God in a stricken condition. And each of sufficient significance that it merits attention for itself.
- We may note in general that the second pair answers to the first pair. Forsakenness is answered by Hephzibah.
- And desolation is answered by Beulah. And in effect, taking into account the meaning of the Hebrew words, Forsakenness is replaced by betrothal, and desolation is replaced by marriage.
- Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken. Neither shall thy land any more be termed desolate, but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, for the Lord delighteth in thee, there is betrothal.
- And thy land shall be called Beulah, for thy land shall be married, there is marriage.
- [3 : 0 7] I shall focus attention this morning on the one word, Hephzibah. As it is in the Hebrew meaning, as it does in the English, the Lord delighteth in thee, or my delight is in thee.
- It's an ancient name, of course, and yet the Oxford Dictionary of Christian Names tells us that it's a name that has been in common use in Britain and America since the 17th century.
- And here in the text it's a name meaningfully given to the church of the Old Testament in her days of distress and trouble, in her days of apparent desertion.
- And Isaiah makes it perfectly clear by giving the sense in which he uses it. Jehovah delighteth in thee.
- How wrong Christian people can so often be and so often are in the matter of self-assessment.
- [4 : 2 8] And that in both directions. They may over-assess or over-estimate their Christian standing.
- Or they may under-assess and under-estimate it. Judah considered herself forsaken and desolate.

But God's prophet considered her Hephzibah, the delight of the Lord. But the contrast surely could not be greater. In self-esteem, forsaken and desolate, in God's esteem, a sin of delight to the Lord.

Now we are accustomed to the idea of what the church has in Christ in terms of fullness and abundance, even in terms of superabundance, of grace and of truth.

And yet how often we, when we are in trouble, cry, in one way or another, I am forsaken. I am alone.

[5 : 47] I am desolate. We forget both our inheritance in Christ and his inheritance in us.

There is a New Testament parallel to this. And it's in Ephesians chapter 1 where the Apostle Paul speaks of the churches and the Christians' inheritance in Christ in verse 11.

In these words he says, In whom, that is in Christ, we have obtained an inheritance. And then in verse 18 he says, Speaking of Christ's inheritance in the church, he speaks of the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

Our inheritance in him, what we get from him, his inheritance in us, what he gets from his people.

There is a certain principle of reciprocity in the relationship between the head of the church and the members of the church.

[7 : 14] And it is the latter part of that that is reflected here in the Old Testament term, Hephzibah, the Lord delighteth in thee.

You see, one day we boast and sing about the fullness we have in Jesus our head. The next day we hit trouble and we talk about being forsaken and desolate.

Oh, how much then we need to hear the voice of one who calls his own sheep by name and names his sheep. Hephzibah.

Thou art a delight unto me. Three things I want to draw out of this passage, this verse, for our attention and our consideration and I hope for our comfort this morning.

There is here in the first place a pleasant surprise. William Cooper has a hymn that sometimes a light surprises the Christian while he sings.

[8 : 32] It is the Lord who rises with healing in his wings. When comforts are declining, he grants the soul again a season of clear shining to cheer it after break.

Now that surprise is the surprise of the text. Comforts had been declining in Judah. Comforts had been declining, you got it all the way through the 61st chapter as well as in the 62nd.

And Zion in self-esteem was in a very low and far off condition. But then the Lord scattered the clouds.

Shines on her heart, gives her to feel the pleasure he takes in her and she begins to sing. Forsaken? No more. Desolate?

No more. For Jehovah, the maker of heaven and earth, the covenant God who cannot and will not forget to forsake his church and chosen, delighteth in thee.

[9 : 52] Hephzibah. Of course, there were things about Judah as there are things about us in which the Lord takes no pleasure.

Our sins, our unfaithfulness, our lack of love, and so on. And my dear friends, we deserve our desertions.

And we richly merit our punishments. And Judah in Babylon had her discipline and she deserved it.

She bemoaned it. As we bemoan the rod of our justism. And yet, there is a value in desertion and there is a blessing in buffeting.

There is that reflected in the statement of the psalmist when he said, I was brought low and he helped me.

[11 : 01] Sometimes the Lord brings us low to stop us helping ourselves. Sometimes the Lord brings us low to mock our self-confidence.

Sometimes the Lord brings us low to challenge our assumed self-sufficiency. To try our faith, to test our mettle. And promptly and sometimes bitterly we cry, I am forsaken.

I am desolate. is there someone here this morning feeling like that? Some circumstance, some providence has put you in that case.

I am speaking to Christians and I am asking is this your felt experience this morning? well, when you with your complaining, take time to listen to your covenant God and listen to him saying, thou shalt be called Heshibah.

My delight is in thee. And you will be surprised by joy. You'll be astonished that the wretch that you reckon yourself to be should be remembered at all.

[12 : 31] But you see, sometimes a light surprises the Christian. He thinks he knows it all. He thinks he's been this way before.

He thinks there's nothing to trouble him until he gets into trouble. sometimes a light surprises him. And he learns that all that change of feeling has been in him and not a shadow of change has crossed the heart or the brow of his covenant to God toward him.

Oh, my friend, can you not learn, as in those lines commonly attributed to Martin Luther, them? That feelings come, feelings go, feelings are deceiving?

My warrant is the word of God nought else is worth believing. Though all my heart should feel condemned for want of some sweet token, there is one greater than my heart whose word cannot be broken.

So I'll trust in God's unchanging word till soul and body sever, for though all things shall pass away, his word shall stand forever.

[14 : 06] yes, even when I call myself forsaken, even when I am convinced that I am desolate.

For when we cry forsaken, we assume a change in him, and he says, I, the Lord, change me. You're desolate.

However it is brought about doesn't affect me. and thou shalt be Hephzibah. My delight is in thee.

Here's a pleasant surprise. Because you see, God's people are a pleasure to him because he gave them to his son in covenant. And his son gives them back to his father in redemption.

he buys them back. The father gives them to him in decree, he gives them to his father in fact and in person.

[15 : 15] And therefore the savior says of his church, for all her failure and for all her faults, thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, Hephzibah, my delight is in thee.

And that is a pleasant surprise. As it was for weary Judah, as it is for weary churches, as it is for weary Christians in the battle of life.

A pleasant surprise. revelation. But in the second place, there is, I submit here also, a pleasant revelation. Sometimes Christians cannot delight in themselves.

And sometimes Christians ought not to delight in themselves. Sometimes it would be wrong for Christians to delight in themselves because, like Paul, in themselves they can see no good thing.

Conscience condemns, the world despises, Satan accuses. What a revelation it is then. What a revelation it is then to heart and mind to hear this word of the Lord.

[16 : 43] In spite of an accusing conscience, in spite of an accusing devil, in spite of the derision of the word, Jehovah delights in thee.

Thou shall no more be called forsaken, desolate, the Heth Sipah. Let us ask the question, in what ways does God delight in his people?

So that we may assess this pleasant revelation. To begin with, God delights in his people as the object of his love.

He set his love upon his people in eternity. He said, I have loved thee with an everlasting love. Sometimes you are displeased with someone you love, and you say so.

You let it be known. But it doesn't alter the fact that deep down and underneath your abiding attitude and relationship is exactly the same.

[17 : 59] love. Just so with the God of love. Sometimes he chastises whom he loves, and they then sometimes feel forsaken or desolate.

Yet it comes as a revelation of his love to them, that he who smites rises with healing in his wings. So you read in verse 5, Thou shalt, thou shalt be called sought out a city, not forsaken.

ye, as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

Hepzibah, the Lord delighteth in thee. Then the church exclaims in wonder, O love, that wilt not let me go.

I rest my weary song. indeed. It's a pleasant revelation that God delights in his church as the object of his love.

[19 : 24] Then again, it's a pleasant revelation that God delights in his people as he sees them in the person of his son. For that is in reality the only way in which he sees them.

he cannot delight in them otherwise. Men shall be blessed in him, in him, in Christ.

And in us alone God sees no good thing, but as he sees us in Christ he sees no bad thing in us.

And he says, thou art all fair my love. There is no spot nor wrinkle in thee. And oh how we need to remember this when we label ourselves forsaken or forgotten.

God views his church always in Christ. So that is where he has placed her.

[20 : 40] There she is perfect, she is complete, she is entire, there she wants nothing, she is justified, she is sanctified, she is glorified.

forsaken, desolate, in self-esteem, and yet accepted in the beloved.

And because accepted, delighting the heart of God. Hephzibah, Jehovah delighteth in thee.

God's delight in his people is as he sees them in Christ and that must always be a pleasant revelation to his people whose self-esteem registers them as forsaken or desolate.

Reminds them of their status. Calls them back to be what they are. Calls them to possess their possessions in Christ.

[22 : 01] But then again, God delights in his people as the workmanship of his spirit. The workmanship of the Holy Spirit.

Spirit, there are things that God has deputed to his spirit to perform. And it is the spirit who convicts of sin, who illumines the mind as to gospel truth, who leads to Christ.

Without the spirit there would be no cry for mercy and there would be no work of grace. by the work of the spirit we are quickened.

By the work of the spirit we are delivered from bondage to the devil. By the spirit we are adopted into the family of God. And by the spirit we are sealed.

why does God delight in his people? Because he delights in his own workmanship. And this is all his own workmanship performed by his spirit.

[23 : 16] When God sees the spirit's work of new creation in the erstwhile chaos of a sinful life, God's reaction to that is precisely what it was in the natural creation.

And God saw everything that he had made and behold, it was very good. Good in his history.

And of those justified by his grace and sanctified in Christ Jesus, he says, Hephzibah, even when perhaps legitimately and rightly they name themselves forsaken or desolate.

Jehovah delights in thee. Here is a very pleasant revelation. Jehovah has every ground and every reason and every cause and every argument for delighting in his own.

regardless of the feelings of his own at any particular given moment. And those grounds of his are not destroyed either by his own chastisement or by the devil's assaults or by his people's own folly.

[24 : 48] when his people choose to cry forsaken or desolate he says no such thing for he has covenanted otherwise where thou goest I will go.

I will be with thee all. A pleasant revelation when all around you tells you the Jew are forsaken.

So there is in these words a pleasant surprise and there is a pleasant revelation. And thirdly I submit there is a pleasant result.

If I know and believe that the Lord delights in me then I shall delight in him. of course I ought to delight in him for his own sake alone.

That is the ideal. But my old nature holds me back so often in that exercise that you see here I'm given a signal here I'm given an incentive indeed if I read the psalmist I find that I'm given a command in the 37th psalm delight thyself also in the law.

[26 : 27] Hephzibah the Lord delighteth himself in thee delight thyself also in the law. There is the principle of reciprocity the head and the members delighting in each other.

Awareness of his delight in me must stimulate in me a delight in him. how are you going to delight yourself in the Lord when you feel forsaken when you feel desolate there is only one way and that is to go back to Luther and place God's word above your feelings by a deliberate act of will to place your feelings however legitimate you feel them to be beneath the authority of God's word and God's word will tell you such things as this the Lord delighteth in thee I will never leave thee nor forsake thee I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward our felt forsakenness does not change

God's delight in us you see my friend where are you going to turn in your desolation if you do not turn to the Lord in what will you delight if not in him where can you find heaven on earth if you can't find it in him what alternatives are you left with in the day of your forsakenness and desert where are you going to turn if not to him and surely if you are his you know enough about him and you know that there is enough in him that when you can find nothing to delight in in world or flesh matter or anything else they are plenty to rejoice your spirit in the

Lord your God a psalmist in mourning cried out I'll send out thy light and thy truth and let them lead me let them bring me to thy holy hill delight in the Lord begins with his delight in his people the people who never delight in the Lord are the people who are not Christians but the people who ever delight in the Lord are the people who do so because he first delights in them because he sends out his light and his truth and he leads and then when his people find themselves in the holy hill of God's blessedness and glory they cannot help themselves they do not want to hold back they delight in him there is a pleasant result there is a reciprocal action does he delight in me then I will delight in him two things by way of conclusion by way of application first the words of our text do not apply to all men they do not apply to all of us here this morning because not all of us are Christians and I have no warrant to tell each single individual the Lord delighteth in thee regardless of your spiritual status these words are addressed to Judah they are addressed to the church of God they are addressed to the people of God and the

Lord knoweth them that are in he knows who are his here this morning and he knows who are not his and God takes no delight in the wicked oh you say but I'm not wicked I can't but I'm here I'm in the house of God I'm in the attitude of worship I can't be wicked well understand that it is wickedness to disbelieve the gospel message it is wickedness to spurn the gospel call and God is angry with the wicked every day so there are some of you here who have got to ask the question am I the object of God's delight or am I the object of God's anger see you to it the second thing by way of application is this the words of our text do apply to many

[32 : 16] Christians who fear that they are not Christians fear of presumption causes some who bear all the marks of God's workmanship from calling themselves what God himself calls them and for such here is comfort thou shall be called no more forsaken desolate thou shall be called Hephzibah the Lord delighteth in thee my delight is in thee thou art taken up thou art placed into Christ thou art endued with the Holy Spirit you poor faltering fearing timid Christian dare not give yourself the name that God gives you here take comfort from what God says you are an heir of God he regards you so the devil knows you so and that's why he torments you but God has the last word and the last word is

Hephzibah my delight is in thee thou shall no more be termed forsaken neither shall thy land any more be termed desolate but thou shall be termed Hephzibah thy land Beulah for the Lord delighteth in thee and thy land shall be married and thou shalt be called sought out a city not a thing Amen