

Isaiah

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Date: 08 April 1990

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[0 : 00] The fourth chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 27, verse. Thine hast thou, O Jacob, and speakest thou Israel.

Thy will is hid from the Lord, and thy judgment is passed over from thy God. The 27th verse of the fourth chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah.

Thine hast thou, O Jacob, and speakest thou Israel. Thy will is hid from the Lord, and thy judgment is passed over from thy God.

It is more effective, and has been over many years, during the days of the week, prior to the Lord's day, to see what the Lord has had me to take on this Sunday.

The second form of people of God. Now, I was reading this chapter during the week, and there was a number of verses which might be attracted to themselves.

[1 : 12] My mind went to this particular verse. Now, I would say to you this. I know we made more than the facts, because we are few. But when God is pleased and gracious to give a minister a text of which he is to preach, it is surely an evidence of the Lord's concern and interest in the work here.

If God had no interest in this place, then why should we give a word from himself to the congregation who gathered there? Now, the Lord has a remarkable way into bringing that word which is needful and necessary to our house at a particular point in its mind.

And before we go to the chapel this morning, the theme was set, rather, by some of the conversations which we shared together.

And I felt in a sense that that was not a confirmation that it was right in us that we might look together at this particular word. You see, there is a complaint to the bound here, which is implied that it needs words.

For Jacob and Israel were saying, by way of gift from the Lord, and by judgment of his my cause, his my son of my God.

[2 : 42] He was proud of his servant. He was proud of his and his son of my son of my son of my son of my son of my son of my son, and he was praying to his son of my son of mine. Now, there are many times in Scripture when they were complaining about the circumstances in which they personally came.

And I would suggest that we in our day are no different today. And that so often we too are complaining. We are wondering. We are doubting these.

God's doings with us. Now in reality, this should never be the case. We should have their confidence and their assurance of our faith that whatever circumstance may arise, that all things are working together to our good, to them that love God, and rather call the calling to His purpose.

It should not be in the nature of the grace of God in our lives that you and I shall complain one whit about the Lord's feelings with us in that context.

But we have to admit that we are no different to our enthusiasm. And despite the work of grace within our souls, despite that precious faith which God has given to us, we are those people who are often found complaining.

[4 : 07] Now we see that God's ancient people were complaining in a collective sense. Of course there are occasions in the scriptures where individuals complained.

But even in a collective sense, it reflects the feeling and the attitudes of those who constitute the believing people at that time.

There will have some sympathy with Israel in those circumstances. Remember, that's what a prophetic word. And that which is addressed here by God prophetically in this passage had not yet taken place.

But it were the events which have been foreshadowed in the providence of God. And we'll see how that God had declared that these people should be carried away into their captivity in the land of Babylon.

That there was to come a time, thank God, when there was to be a deliverance from that point. But the Lord understood and knew through a world that that remnant of the nations who remained after the invasion of the Chaldean halls and hosts.

[5 : 21] These people would not enjoy being in Babylon. They would not enjoy being in that secular society where their God was not worshipped and served.

And where many of them, doubtless, were criticized and badly treated because of their faith in the God they adored.

For they were preserved women wonderfully in that faith. And we have the record of Scripture in the sense of God's demons with them through the words of Israel and Nehemiah and characters like that.

But, dear friends, it was a trying thing to their spirits. They did not enjoy the bondage of Babylon. It caused them by distress and anxiety of heart.

And we can well understand that. And there are times today when we feel within the Church of Christ in this land that there has been such a falling away.

[6 : 29] we are almost in a spirit of bondage over these methods and required in our distress unto the Lord. And it seems at times, although it is not true, of course, but it seems at times that the heavens are at rest and that God will not hear our prayers.

It is distressing to us. We are distressed when we see the closing of this cause in advance.

And as it has been distressing to me personally in these last months, to see the cause where once we worshipped and once I have the privilege of ministering the word of God, to see it not only closed but sold, if it might become a place just for storing green rosary.

And if we remember such blessed times in that little chapel, these things do distress us and try our faith. And you know, the people of God in Babylon, they yearned once more to be back at Jerusalem, to the place where the temple was, and to see it built once more, that they were separated.

They were not at liberty to go and worship there. They were prevented for seventy long years. And at times, their despair made them despondent.

[7 : 54] When their enemies tried them, they said, How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? And there are times when we too feel so despondent, we always forget how to praise that God who has saved us by his mighty grace.

O Lord, I would be offended that you and I might not be unmindful of what the Lord has done for us. And these people who know later, I suppose, could look back and say, How wonderful it was that God had preserved them during those years, and how gloriously he had revived their cause and brought them once more to the land of promise.

But at the season of which the prophet here speaks, there is a sense of despair in their hearts. And they begin to feel that God has forgotten to be gracious, that God is unmindful of things.

We see then in the words they use here in this text, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment, that word used here means cause, my cause is passed over from my God.

Now, you may not use the same words, but do not you feel the same? You feel at times that your path is a path which you are working in, which seems to bring endless discouragement to your heart.

[9 : 27] And you wonder how God could be in all these things. But we know from Job's experience that Job declared when he was in a similar place, he knoweth the way that I take.

And beloved friends, we are thankful that in Scripture there are many passages like this, and like that I am pointed from Job, which encourages, we cling to these words of Scripture as we walk in this path here below.

It is a path which is unknown, which we have not trodden here to before, but we feel that every day, at times, seems to bring further discouragement.

But we see that these people are complaining, My way is hid from the Lord, and my cause is passed over from my God. It seems as if the cause, the work, the labor we're engaged upon is unimportant.

But God does not have any regard to it. He has turned away from us. He is interested in other things, in other people, and in other causes.

[10 : 36] Well, that is largely very much true, of course. God is interested, and God is concerned all the time, and every place, with His people, wherever they may be. But God is no less concerned with you.

God is no less concerned with this place, than any other place, where the people of God meet together. So we see that Israel complained.

And, dear friends, you and I so often are found complaining. And when we complain, we are grumbling, let it be clear, we are grumbling against God.

You know, the Israelites often did this, as we have said. And you and I are no different today. But we see God's reproof here in this text.

He poses the question, Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

[11 : 42] God says, Why are you saying this, O Jacob and Israel? And we do well to remember, when we complain, as well as when we pray, that God hears all our words.

We sometimes like to think in our cozy Christian life that God hears the words we want Him to hear. Whereas God hears every word we say. There is not a word He does not hear.

And these people, doubtless, were talking together. You can imagine the conversation taking place as they are considering their circumstances. And the Lord is listening in.

Now they were not conscious of His presence, obviously. If they had been conscious of His presence, they wouldn't have said the things they were saying. But they were not thinking about God so much as about their circumstances.

They were not remembering that God was in the midst. And so they were complaining, trying to gain a sympathetic hearing from one another. But dear friends, God was listening.

[12 : 50] Why sighest thou? And you know, it is a proper question, not only to ask Israel, but to ask you and I this morning. Why sighest thou?

Now, dear friends, what is it this morning that you have got to complain about? Is not God good and gracious to you a hell-reserving sinner?

What sighest thou? You see, there was a sense of unbelief in their hearts. They had a God-given fight, but it was being tested.

And that fight was small. My dear friends, how much of unbelief oftentimes enters into our hearts in relation to God's demons with us.

But you see, there is one thing which is gloriously true. For God says, Why sighest thou, O Jacob, and speakest of Israel my voice hid from the Lord?

[13 : 56] Now, that is a glorious impossibility. It is not possible, my dear friends, for you to walk in a way which is concealed from God, as you cannot conceal any words you speak, so you cannot hide every step you take.

Of course God knows about your circumstances. Of course God knows the path in which you walk. of course God understands the concerns which arise within your heart.

He would not be God if that were not the case. God knows everything. There is nothing which can be hidden or concealed from him.

And furthermore, one would say in the case of Israel, it was God who had brought them to Babylon in the first place. And he had brought them there for good reason.

It was because of all their sins and wickedness. God's judgment had fallen upon his people. And this remnant had been carried away and preserved in an alien land.

[15 : 08] Their times were appointed by him. Their times were in his hand. the God of courage. He is too wise to earth.

He is too good to be unkind. God is not like you and I. He does not make mistakes. But we believe that God brings us in that way which in his purpose of grace towards us he has so ordered from his throne above.

Now oftentimes you and I would like to be in a different place. We would like to be in different circumstances. We would like to be walking in a different path. But that is not possible.

For God hath appointed us to be in this place and to walk in this way. Of course it would be very pleasant would it not to be found amongst the multitudes on God's holy dam.

but all the years of my Christian experience and there are many now thank God. All those years 35 years or thereabouts I have been in and out little congregations.

[16 : 22] I can almost count on the fingers of two hands the number of times when I have been amongst larger groups of people. When it comes to the ministry that has been very exceptional.

I can remember one case many years ago where there must have been about 300 people present. I can remember a funeral here in the north of England when there must have been nearly 200. But these are exceptions.

Now in the room. But beloved friends this is the way which God hath appointed. And should I complain and should you complain? to be found amongst the remnant according to Christ we ought to be thankful that we have found the one such a number.

God knows all about our circumstances. And whilst you and I may not be able to see him at times remember this that the eye of the Lord is upon the righteous at all times.

And whether these people were in Jerusalem or whether they were in Babylon the Lord could see them. and knew all about their circumstances. But you see here how God addresses these people as he reproves them.

[17 : 36] He speaks them in these terms. Why sayest thou O Jacob and speakest O Israel now the two names which were given to one character Jacob and Israel.

You will recall that Jacob was the supplanter and he had to flee from his home in Beersheba where he lived with his father Isaac and with Rebekah and with his brother Esau the elder of the two brothers who were twins.

He fled the presence on the face of his brother Esau for he feared that Esau would carry out his threat and take away his life. And so he flees from that home and within about two days of his journey going to Laban's house he has a remarkable experience at a place called Mal it was a place which God had appointed for it was there that God met with him and God revealed himself to Jacob and gave him such wonderful promises that it be said he was not deserving of any of them but wonderful promises were about saved to Jacob on that occasion and thus it was that he met there the God of the covenant for God made a covenant with Jacob in that day and God honoured that covenant God has kept his word and history is a glorious testimony to the faithfulness of God in the promises which he made to Jacob and beloved friends he reminds these people there in their land of captivity as he uses these two names

Jacob and Israel for it was the God of the covenant who changed Jacob's name to Israel you recall that remarkable occasion when Jacob wrestled with that man to the breaking of the dam I will not let thee go except thou bless me it was that God who appeared to Jacob there upon is that God who is the God who called him by that new name and beloved friends we're thankful that God's people are new men and women in Christ Jesus whereas once they were pagan and unbelieving they are believers they bear the Christian name they have a hallmark of the divine nature upon their never dying souls they are in Christ which is far better than ever they were before oh our blessed position our blessed experience as being the objects of his love and mercy and even as Jacob was bound up in a covenant by God so these people in their day too were the beneficiaries of that glorious covenant which God had made and you and I too as

Christian people are bound up in the covenant of grace which has been ratified with the precious blood of Christ dear friends if we are the subject of God's covenant love can it be is it possible that God should ignore us should show no interest in us should not understand our circumstances and the difficulties of our path that we are in you see how gloriously impossible it all is if you and I have faith in God and yet we are complaining about our lot we deserve like Israel of old to be reprov'd because of our heart of unbelief the Lord would say to us this morning why sayest thou Jacob and why speakest of Israel my way is hid from the Lord let these thoughts be removed from your mind my dear friend it cannot be true

[21 : 48] God knows all your circumstances for doubtless he is the one who is the author he is the one who has brought you to this place and to this time and as the days and weeks shall pass you shall see the unfolding of his purpose in relation to you and to his work here so God reprov'd them and God reminds them too as we read on in this passage of scripture for he says in the 28th verse hast thou not known hast thou not heard now there are two things in our lives which where we receive instruction there are the things we know and the things we hear there is experience and there is education and God speaks to his people in this sense he reminds them he says hast thou not known now you will find frequently in the scriptures that the writers look back to

God's previous dealings with the Lord's people in another age now we are not to look back in the sense that having put our hand to the plow we want to go back we don't go back in that sense but it is always an encouragement to our faith in the present when we can look back and we can see the Lord's dealings with his people in another day and you'll find in particular the psalmist in a number of psalms he encourages his heart in the Lord as he looks back and he sees what this glorious God of his has done in other generations now we have cited Jacob who is light of all Israel for that is the name which was given to the nation they were not given the name of Abraham although the covenant was originally made with him or Isaac who was the one who continued the covenant but he was given remarkably the name of

Israel which was God's given name to Jacob oh dear friends when you consider the Lord's dealings with that man undeserving as he was you are to wonder at the grace of God and when you consider your own life for that is profitable too I said earlier on that I have been in the Christian world for many years if I am spared to say the 27th of October next year it will be 40 years since first I believed upon the rule of Jesus Christ now of course the wise would not always been smooth but we give God the glory that we can say in our own lives that we have seen the hand of God in our lives and that itself is a confirmation it is a reminder to us when we look back that God not only has been with us but that God is still with us he who never leaves us nor forsakes us so look to your own experience remember all the way which the

Lord thy God hath led thee these 40 years in the wilderness now that will be a good text for the 27th of October next year God willing to be able to look back over 40 years of walking in the Christian world what a privilege you know it makes one grieve for those who know that cross it makes one grieve for those who know nothing of this Christian life and Christian walk and Christian experience he learned Jesus took pride that God and his manifold rights might speak to multitudes of others that they might be found walking in the same way in the light of God's world but beloved friends it is not only our experience which we can look to in God's dealing with words it is what we have heard with our ears now there have been many many times have there not and I'm not exaggerating surely there have been many many times over these long years when the word of God has been preached and so often it has been to a few but there has been abundant evidence that the

Lord himself has been in the midst and has been speaking that word to us how many verses of scripture has God made a blessing to your soul during these years which are past and gone how many passages of scripture can you turn to with great affection how many words are there which you have felt that God has written upon the fleshly tables of your hearts he has caused you to hope and to believe in that word and I say to you this God has never failed you there is never a promise which God has given which he has renailed upon and which he has not kept God is not slack says Peter concerning his promises and so my dear friends you have heard the word of God as it had been preached it seemed to your soul and you have believed it you have drawn strength from it and you have gone forth with that word upon your heart but you see there are those seasons when perhaps we were a little absent minded and we forget the way which God hath brought us and thus we are found like

[27 : 48] Israel complaining about our life for you remember for God said hast thou not known and you recall and depend upon the word which God has given for he is the one who has said hast thou not heard all dear friends as this passage unfolds we see that God not only recruits them and reminds them but he reveals himself as well the God who speaks to them at this time who says to them why sayest thou Jacob and speakest of Israel my way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God he says hast thou not known hast thou not heard that the everlasting God the Lord the creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not neither is weary there is no searching of his understanding he giveth power to the faint and to them that have no might he increases strength we need at times to be reminded by God himself of who it is that we seek to profess to worship and to serve and God's revelation of himself to his people in the midst of their complaints was this that he was the everlasting

God God now their lives were temple and their lives were transient and passing from one generation to another but if the God who speaks to them and addresses them thus for they are his people they are his children according to grace this God reminds them that he is the everlasting God he is not the God who is here today and going tomorrow he is not like a man in that sense God is always present he has always been there and he will always be present God is always in the present there will never be a time when we shall venerate the memory of God for God shall live forever and beloved friends that is one of the glorious things and the wonderful realities of being a Christian that we have as our God the one who is the everlasting God and you see he reveals himself as the one who is the Lord the Lord he is the one who is the almighty

God he is the Lord of creation he is the sovereign ruler of the skies as we have been saying but he is the sovereign ruler too of your heart and life he has a sovereign right to govern me and mine and is that not the truth why should then you and I complain about our love he is that one who is not only the everlasting God the Lord but he is the creator of the ends of the earth consider the greatness of this God who speaks as he listens to the complaint of these people he is the one who is the creator of the ends of the earth now isn't this a glorious day which God has given to us everything is so clear it's lovely to behold I've had a day like this during the week it was lovely and we rejoiced in that day and you know you see the glories of God's handiwork

I've often thought you know God is the God of the covenant he made a covenant with Noah concerning the seasons in the times if you recall seed time and harvest summer and winter shall not find they haven't failed God has been the provider the creator of the ends of the earth now if God should be nigh upon his covenant and if this year when we have started to look for the appearance of the daffodils nothing happened and if we look for the leaves on the tree nothing appeared then my dear friends we will have reasoned out the credibility of the God of creation but the fact of the matter is God honors his word and his covenant the everlasting God the Lord the creator of the ends of the earth is that one who causes the seasons to appear and if God is so great to be able to do that then my dear friends I submit to you that God knows all about our circumstances and I am glad to say this morning that this

God is the one who is still upon the throne and I am glad of that for I would not serve any other master save this sovereign God beloved friends this one who speaks to this people who are ailing in their faith and in their doubts and fears and unbelief this God speaks these words to them to encourage their faith to increase their spiritual strength in the days which lie before them for he was a God who is unchanging in his nature who has spoken of his unchanging work in creation it continues week in and week out year in and year out God is unchanging and God is unchanging too in relation to his people he is an unchangeable saviour he is unchangeable in his mercy he is unchangeable in his grace he is unchangeable in his love consider my dear friends all the glorious attributes of God and none of them change there is no shadow of a change there is not a hint of a change he is gloriously the same for we read in Hebrews

[34 : 06] Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever oh we are going to change in the world and God has ordered it that way but my dear friends there is one who changes not oh I would that your faith might lay hold upon him and he is unchanging not only in his nature and his work and his dealings with his people but in his wisdom as well what wisdom shines in every line of scripture when we see starting to unfold before our eyes the mind the wisdom of our glorious creator we know that his ways are not our ways his thoughts are higher than our thoughts this glorious God who has encapsulated this work of creation who has created it for himself in his own glory is that one who has conceived it in his mind and brought it to pass in his wisdom he is too wise to worry all of these things why then should wisdom fail when it comes to his people whether they should be in

Babylon or in Charlesville or in Blackburn or in some other place heaven's wisdom is revealed my dear friends and God makes no mistakes men may set out on a certain course of action and find out they are in hell they do change but God never changes for he has an eternal nature and eternal wisdom this is the God who speaks why speakest thou Jacob my way is hid from the Lord and so to you dear friends nothing is hidden from him with whom we have to do for he is the one who sitteth upon the circle of the earth and in whose sight men are as grass others but see this the encouragement which is found here we might feel apprehended and reproved for our unbelieving hearts but see this God who reveals himself in this passage of scripture also speaks encouragement to his people for he shows his response to their seeming complaints in that he giveth power to the faint power to the faint we read in verse 29 he giveth power to the faint and to them that have no might he increases strength now you might feel yourself to be in that state this morning that might be your malady that might be your concern well here is the God who has prescribed the glorious remedy he is the one who gives to those who are faint power how many times do you and I feel faint that it is we feel that we cannot go on any further

I'm sure you've often been to that place I have often been to that place and I've felt well is it worth going am I able to go have I the ability to go and take this service or preach this sermon but dear friends we go and we go week after week week after week and still we are found going forth in the name of the Lord how is it that we are enabled to go forth when we are of such a faint heart and troubled spirit oh what in what strength do we do who enables us to go forth when it is this God who speaks the promises here the everlasting God the Lord the creator of the ends of the earth we do so when he's enabling by his grace and in his power our strength is drawn from him and my dear friends what is true of ministers and preachers is true of people in congregations all of us as

Christians must draw our sustenance day by day from the Lord he giveth more grace that is the testimony of the Lord's people he gives us that power to continue it is by the Lord's help that we have continued unto this day the fact that we are here is a testimony to the grace of God and to his faithfulness to this cause he gives us to the feeble strength you know what it is to feed people there are many times I confess that you and I have trembled to stand up in public I say that but merely because my calling I have felt over the years is to preach but it is difficult to preach at times and I listen to some of these men who have such gifts and ability and such an ability to communicate the word of God and I confess that on occasions that that sin of envy creeps into one's heart and we tremble to stand up sometimes and we think what profit can be brought forth from such a poor servant as I so I know what it is to feel feeble there have been times that I have not thought

I could get the lesson or to the service but beloved friends the testimony of this the Lord gives to those who are feeble that strength which they need to them that have no life he increases strength my grace is sufficient for them my strength is my perfect in weakness do you know something this morning about that strength which we derive from the God of the Bible who speaks to you so you have come to the house of God this morning and you have thought to yourself I have not used these words but you have thought it in your hearts you have said in as many words my way is hid from the Lord and my judgment or my cause is passed over from my God let me say this to you you are in error you are wrong that cannot be the case God knows all your circumstances and my dear friends he is that one who will give you heavenly aid to continue in heaven's way for he gives power to the faint and to them that have no might he increases strength now there's a promise if that's how you feel this morning there is a promise of

[41 : 02] God and you have every right to take the promise and plead it before the throne of grace but do not complain but seek that daily grace for daily that you might continue to walk in the wounds of God to all reasons why sayest thou Jacob and speakest of Israel my way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God but Lord bless his word that he said to the name the hymn number 300 the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us ever more Amen Let's Ham Thank you.

Thank you.