

Isaiah 48:1-22

“Know Peace Or No Peace”

* I'm so glad we serve a God who makes all things new. 😊 Who is gracious, forgiving, renewing & full of mercy. So as we make our way into 2024, let's not be anchored *by*, nor tethered *to* the highs or lows of 2023. But rather, let's follow after the apostle's example who said, *“...one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*¹ Let the inspiration be sifted to the forefront of your heart to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of you...

Put your best foot forward for the glory of J.C. Get involved, Christianity isn't a spectator sport. Do the work of an evangelist, share the hope of J.C. w/those around you. Be intentional about inviting folks out to church that they might hear the gospel & be saved. Step up & step out. If you're not *servicing* in any way in the body to which God has called you... do it! Be a blessing, build up & edify others. In *servicing them*, you're *servicing the Lord* who said, *“Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”*² Believe me, your labor in the Lord... Your service toward the saints does not go unnoticed by God & great will be your reward. The author of Hebrews said that this way, *“For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”*³ So grab hold of the plow & don't look back. Full on, from the heart for J.C. *

Let's look to Isaiah 48.

Vs 1-2

Ladies and Gentlemen: I've just spent the last few minutes encouraging & exhorting you to serve God full on from the heart. I have no doubt that Isaiah would echo that same sentiment here because he's dealing w/*optics*, w/*appearances*, w/*outward show Vs inward reality*. We know it as the sin of *hypocrisy*. It's image apart from integrity.

& God is reminding them here that though man may look to the outward appearance, He searches the heart! Somewhere in there is the idea, “You may have everyone else fooled, but I know what's *really* going on!” ... That's why He addresses them as the “house of Jacob” who have “come forth from the wellspring of Judah.” *It wasn't an honorable address! The father of the nation (Jacob) was known as a deceiver, a cheater... He lived by his own wit, made his own way... until he had an encounter w/the Living God that changed him forever...*

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Php 3:13-14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 25:40). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Heb 6:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

That's when God changed his name from "Jacob" (deceiver) to "Israel" which means, "Governed by God." That's why God says, "Who are called by the *name* of Israel". – He's saying, "You have this *reputation*, but it's not *reality*. You take on the *appearance* of 'governed by God' but you're deceitful, it's not true. *You don't follow Me, you don't honor Me, you don't serve Me.* You have *Israel's* name, but *Jacob's* character."

As for Judah (historically) do some research. His reputation wasn't the best either. He was known for his cruelty, his immorality... So * God shines a light on reality. "You make mention of the God of Israel, but *not in truth or in righteousness.*" It was a timely word for the nation of Israel in *their* day, perhaps even more timely for the United States of America in *our* day!

If there's one thing the modern media culture has intoxicated & indoctrinated our nation in, it's that it's completely acceptable to have a public image (appearance) of *one thing* even though the personal reality is something altogether different. We will overlook or excuse the *truth* if we agree w/or are intrigued *by* the *image* or the *appearance*...

Even in the church. We're not in the habit of holding people's proverbial feet to the fire. If they look like a Christian (whatever that looks like to us), they go to church, sing the songs & play the part, we don't really examine much (if any) deeper than that. We're content w/looking to the outward appearance.

In thinking about this I was reminded of when Jesus drove out the money changers & the business dealers in the temple & then went out of the temple & stayed the night in Bethany (a town outside the city). But when He was returning to the city the next morning, He was hungry. & He looked & there a short distance away was a fig tree in what *appeared to be* full bloom. So He came *to it, got right up & close & personal with it. He examined what was happening "underneath the surface", dug passed the leaves (if you will) & found nothing on it. It had the appearance of life, but in truth there was no fruit... & That's the story of so many in the church today...* When Jesus saw that He said, **"Let no fruit grow on you ever again."**⁴ What's the take home? Jesus doesn't take deception lightly.

We concern ourselves w/the outside of the cup (Matt 23:25-26) when the Lord places priority on the inside of the vessel that's to be poured *into & out through*. Listen, it's one thing to *look* the part. It's another thing altogether to *be* the part.

Think in terms like this, true *Salvation* brings *Transformation*. *

⁴ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Mt 21:19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

* The grace of God that saves your soul, will change your life. If you've come to believe in Jesus & nothing about your life changed... then I submit to you, you *didn't* believe on the Lord J.C. Oh, you may believe *intellectually*. But you haven't placed your faith in Christ *personally* (for w/the *heart* one believes unto righteousness & w/the mouth confession is made unto salvation). The mouth will make known what's truly happening in your heart. That's why Jesus said it's not what goes into a man's mouth that defiles him, but what comes out. Because the mouth reveals the truth of the man... There was a phrase, T-shirt, meme, bumper sticker that got popular a year or three ago (song lyrics). "I love Jesus, but I cuss a little." It sounds cute, but it's unacceptable to the child of God...

I'm not saying that a believer may never slip or stumble in word or deed. What I'm saying is that we don't justify it or make a cute saying of it. We're *ashamed* of it, we *confess* it & *repent* of it. Too many people are content to have an *image*, a public persona. But David made the heart of God known when he said, "*Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.*"⁵ Who you are when you think no one is looking or listening, that's who you are... God would have us *look to Him & lean on Him in truth & in righteousness.* *

Vs 3-5

What's the principle in play here? ...* God is all about eliminating excuses. No one will be playing the, "I didn't know" card w/God. In the book of Romans, Paul put it this way, "*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,*"⁶ God eliminates excuses through the enormity, the variety & complexity of His *creation* (it's genuinely impossible that it could happen through random chance & the process of elimination). He eliminates excuses through the power of *predictive prophecy*.

He states things that are going to take place, that we *couldn't* know & *wouldn't* know apart from Him telling us, so that when they happen, we have to acknowledge the fact that He *alone is God*.

But what we're seeing here is the stubborn, obstinate & intentionally rebellious nature of man. Mankind doesn't *want* to be accountable *to* God or responsible *before* God. So they will look to give credit to just about *anything* else. A big bang, evolution, or in their case, "Look at what our idols have brought to pass!" Man will choose to "willfully forget", God. *

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ps 51:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ro 1:20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& To refresh your memory as to the context, He's speaking of the fact that though they'll go off into Babylonian captivity, it won't last indefinitely, He will deliver them. & He's telling them 170 (approximately) yrs in advance so that when it comes to pass they won't give the credit to their idols. They'll have to acknowledge God alone.

He's saying, "I know you, you're stubborn, stiff-necked, you've got a brow of bronze so I'm giving you irrefutable evidence!" The idea behind this, "brow of bronze" seems to go beyond simply being "hard-headed". (Though it could mean just that, I certainly don't want to read into or add anything that isn't there. But I believe we're w/in an acceptable boundary to consider what I say). It also seems to carry the idea of being "unable to blush", of not being ashamed of the things they *should be ashamed of*.

* In the book of Jeremiah, God's speaking to them of the discipline they're receiving because they're constantly cheating on Him through idolatry. (When we place something above the Lord in our hearts, He considers it spiritual adultery. We're giving our love, our priority, our loyalty to another). We read there, *"Therefore the showers have been withheld, And there has been no latter rain. You have had a harlot's forehead; You refuse to be ashamed."*⁷ It's being in that place whereby we know we're wrong, but we refuse to change. We're too stubborn, stiff-necked & obstinate. Be careful. 1st Samuel 15:23, *"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."*⁸ Holding to our own way, rather than submitting to God's word & God's way, it's idolatry. Holding our own opinion or perspective over what He has said &/or shown to be true.

Be careful when you begin to resist the conviction of the Spirit of God. It leads to callousness. You'll find yourself moving into a place where you really no longer even care what God has said, or what God thinks. Guilt/shame aren't against you, they're for you. They testify to the fact that God is trying to work in your life. The "job description" of the Spirit of God (Jn 16:8) is to convict the world of sin, righteousness & judgment. So don't harden your heart against it, open your heart to it. God's seeking to work in your life. Confess your sin, repent, turn from it & give God His way in your life. *

Vs 6-8

God says, "You knew these things, you've heard it, seen it, experienced it, yet you stubbornly cling to your own ways rather than turn from your sin & trust in Me!" He says, "I've even made you hear *new* things, I've done new works, yet you still hold to your *old* ways..."

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Je 3:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (1 Sa 15:23). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Allow me for a moment to stray from the strict *interpretation* & make for you an *application*. * It is so easy to subtly seat ourselves into becoming “old wineskins”. We can act like or acquiesce verbally to the idea of wanting to see God do something new. But when push comes to shove, we’re pretty comfortable right where we’re at. & *Comfort* is but one step away from *complacent*.

How open are you to God doing a “new thing” in your life? How does the thought of stepping up, stepping out, treading deeper waters, exploring unfamiliar territory strike you? Does it sound exciting? Does it get your heart pumping? Do you have that Jonathon & his armor bearer frame of mind? “Let’s step out & see what God wants to do!” Or do you feel more like, “Man, I’m too old for a new work.” Or recoil into, “I kind of like a steady paycheck.” Or, “Why rock the boat?” Or, “I feel like that might be annoying or embarrassing?” Do you see how we can be glued to *our* ways, rather than laying hold of *His* ways?

Listen, God loves you. He’s not trying to embarrass you, or annoy you, or whatever. But He’s not afraid to stretch you, to get you out of your comfort zone... I tell people all the time. It’s not about who you are, (“that’s just not who I am”), it’s about who is God calling you to be & are you willing to follow His lead & trust the process that He leads you to & through? *

God says, “Surely from long ago your ear was not opened.” Could he be talking about not listening? Yes. But there was also a law in ancient Israel that Jews weren’t allowed to make lifetime slaves out of other Jews. They were required to offer them freedom after they’d worked for 6 yrs. The 7th they could go free. But if the servant loved his master & didn’t want to leave his master. The master was to take him to the judges & take a awl, place his ear against the door & drive the awl through it (essentially piercing his ear). Then that servant was to serve him for life. You were a voluntary lifetime servant of your master because you loved Him so much. Your “ear had been opened”.

David seems to have been referring to this when he wrote, “*Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.*”⁹ It’s not my legalism God is after, it’s my love. He wants my loyalty, my allegiance voluntarily because I love Him so deeply. –

* Now look at this, “For I knew that you would deal *very treacherously*” (or *deceitfully, unfaithfully*) “& were called a *transgressor from the womb.*”

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ps 40:6]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Why are people so deeply sinful? Because their sinfulness is so deeply rooted... from the womb. – It can be hard for people to hear, but the Bible teaches that we’re sinners from the womb. We don’t sin, therefore become sinners. We’re sinners, therefore we sin.

I have a new granddaughter, Agnes Rose. She’s wonderful. But man can she wail & weep... when nothing is wrong 😊. She’s a little liar. A sinner. She’s manipulative, wants picked up & held & already knows (at a month old) how to get her way! We come flawed from the factory.

You don’t have to teach little kids how to lie, or manipulate, or be stingy or selfish. You have to teach them how to share, to be honest, to be kind... We inherited a sin nature in Adam. When Adam sinned, all of humanity effectively sinned in him. He couldn’t pass on what he no longer possessed. A sin nature was all he could pass on.

Some people think that’s not fair. Why should I have a sin nature because 1 man sinned? Listen, you wouldn’t have done any better, he was the best we had to offer! You don’t typically look at an Olympic athlete & say, “Man, they should’ve let me compete, I’d have brought home the gold!” No, you wouldn’t have! 😊 If our very best couldn’t do it, then there’s *no way* you could’ve.

Having said that. God in His wisdom allowed for that because if by 1 man’s disobedience all were made sinners, then by 1 Man’s obedience (namely J.C.) we could all be made righteous. So in your mind it may work against you, in truth it works for you. Because Jesus did for us what we could never for ourselves. *

Vs 9-13

*All of creation will heed the word of God, except for man. He says, “When I call to the heavens & the earth, *they* stand up together.” The idea is, “In contrast to you!” What we *deserve* is God’s wrath, what He *offers* us in J.C. is His mercy... Not because *we’re* so great, but because *He’s* so great. “For My name’s sake I will defer My anger, & for My praise I will restrain it from you.”

There’s a little bit of ambiguity around this phrase, “I have refined you, but not as silver.” He could be saying, “Silver becomes pure when the heat is put on it, but you stay polluted.” But one thing is for sure, He’s getting ready to “turn up the heat” in their lives. To test them in the “furnace of affliction.” & This is something else that bucks against a good swath of believer’s theology, that God allows trials & tribulation into the lives of His own. That He will “test them” (allow them to see what they’re made of) & refine them in the “furnace of affliction”.

Ladies and Gentlemen: it's not a popular point, but you've heard me say it from time to time. The chief aim of God in our lives isn't to make us happy. It's to make us *holy*. There will be plenty of time for happiness forever in His presence (Ps 16:11). This life is the smelting process, breaking us down, building us up, refining us, purifying us, removing the dross of sin, self-serving & stubbornness in our lives. *

Vs 14-19

There are obviously a number of things we could talk about in this section of scripture. Several of which we've spoken of in previous studies. For now, I'll just highlight a couple of things. #1 I want you to see that the Lord's dealings w/Israel (& by way of application you & me) isn't narcissistic, egotistical, or self-centered. The refining, the purifying, the rebuke, the redemption & deliverance... The "why" behind the "what" is found in Vs 14. You might underline it, "The Lord loves him." The motive behind God's interaction *with* His people is love *for* His people.

In Vs 16 we see the Messiah pleading w/His people. "Come near to Me," & we see another reference to the Triunity of God here, "The Lord God & His Spirit have sent Me."

*Vs 17, "I am the Lord your God Who teaches you to *profit*, Who leads you by the way you should go." Don't be too quick to think that this is saying God teaches you how to become rich. (Though He certainly teaches us responsibility w/our resources). God was teaching them through affliction. Even the refiner's fire, the furnace of affliction is for their "profit", for our *good*. It's Romans 8:28 (Write it down, look it up later). Everything that God allows into the equation of our lives, if received & responded to correctly (biblically) is for our eternal good & His eternal glory.

That's why He says in Vs 18, "Oh that you had heeded My commandments..." "Oh that you were *doers* of My Word!" Disobedience renders unfulfilled potential! Obedience brings *blessing*! "Peace like a river, righteousness like waves of the sea!" Not a stagnate little pool, or a drop here & there... God will keep peace pouring, flowing into your life. It will be bountiful & strong, life-giving & satisfying. – Righteousness as certain, unyielding, unending & reliable as the waves of the sea!

He says, "Your descendants would be like the grains of the sand!" ... God is telling us that peace, righteousness & (listen) *children* are a blessing from the Lord! I couldn't be more ashamed of the rate that our nation literally throws children away in the form of abortion. There are more people on the adoption waiting list in this nation than there are babies waiting to be adopted...

God is saying, “I want to bless your life. I want to give you peace, righteousness & a heritage from the Lord... but you’re unwilling to receive it as demonstrated through your disobedience to My word, your unwillingness to seek Me & walk in a true relationship with Me.” Disobedience results in unfulfilled potential. *

Vs 20-21

2 Things. #1 God again promises deliverance from Babylon, He wants them to see His hand *in* it & declare His praises through it. #2 We see the principle in play, “Where God guides God provides.” When God delivered them from Egypt, He made sure they didn’t go thirsty, their needs were met (perhaps not in the way we’d think or expect, but God provided nonetheless). He assures them He’ll provide for them again on their journey back from Babylon.

(Here’s a bonus observation) God wanted them to come out from among the Babylonians & be separate. In like manner, when God delivers you *from* the world, though we’re *in* the world we’re not to be *of* the world. Come out from among them & be separate, says the Lord. & If He’s delivered you, you do well to declare His praise.

Vs 22 Close

* Obedience to the word of God brings peace like a river. In contrast, there is no peace, says the Lord, for the wicked. Oh, they’re good at faking it, masking their inner misery. Throwing parties & trying to ignore their inward restlessness, but when you’re w/out hope being w/out God in the world, there is no peace. Peace is found in the Person of J.C. Submit your life to Him, render obedience to His word, you’ll have “peace like a river” in your soul... *

Prayer Points:

Father we thank You for the timely manner of Your word. May it find good soil in our hearts today. May we be soft as clay in Your hands. Not stiff-necked, hard-hearted & stubborn. Surely You want to do a further work, a “new thing” in our lives. May we not miss it, but be yielded to it, for the glory of Your name. Pour out Your peace & be glorified in our lives.

If you’ve not made peace *with* God then you don’t know the peace *of* God. But you can. Christ died for you, forgiveness awaits you, peace is available to you. Turn from your sin, trust in J.C. today.

(I’m going to ask you to do something “new”, stay and pray)