

Peace As A River

Key themes in this chapter are sovereign grace for undeserving sinners and the blessings of divine peace and provision that flow to God's people in Jesus Christ. The Lord addresses the nation of Israel calling them, 'house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel'. These were men and women with a blessed pedigree, yet they were obstinate, rebellious and proud. God calls them treacherous sinners and 'transgressors from the womb'.

Hypocrites in Zion

The nations of Israel and Judah were outwardly blessed by God with inheritances and promises granted to their forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Yet, despite enjoying these blessings, asserting a right to them; even adopting the language of Zion and claiming a place in the holy city, the heart of the people was not right with the Lord, nor their souls pure in His sight.

Blessings don't soften hearts

The lesson here is that no amount of outward blessing will soften a sinner's hard heart. The Children of Israel had every conceivable advantage given to them over many years but their rebellious nature remained unchanged. This is the depraved state of all fallen men and women. No matter how patiently and mercifully the Lord deals with mankind, short of sovereign, efficacious grace and a new creation, we remain unmoved and unaffected. There is no good thing in us to enable us to respond as we should.

Grace is for sinners

How do we measure the nature and extent of God's grace? It is His goodness when our opposition is greatest. It is His patience and mercy notwithstanding our constant rebellion. It is unconditional love when our minds are enmity towards Him. Remember, grace is for sinners, not the righteous! The Lord Jesus died for us when we were still enemies. He suffered, 'the just for the unjust to bring us to God'. It was while we were yet sinners Christ gave Himself for us and when we were without strength, Christ suffered and died for the ungodly.

For God's own sake

The Lord has Isaiah tell the Jews that the coming deliverance by Cyrus from their Babylonian captivity is not anything they deserve, but for the sake of His own glory. He will not have His honour impugned by those who deny His love and mercy. He will quash any suggestion He has not the power to deliver His people, or that other gods are mightier than He. So, too, let us learn for our own comfort and re-assurance, we are eternally safe and secure in Christ for God's own sake and the glory of Jesus' name.

Christ the first and last

Isaiah began by pointing out the people's sin but now the covenant promise of the Lord is again in view. Christ is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of all things. He has set apart a people for the glory of His own divine Name. In the Gospel these blessed and chosen people are powerfully summoned to assemble before their King. They readily comply. The same creative word of power as laid the foundation of the earth and upholds the expanse of the heavens is what calls them to Christ. For the love of the Son and the glory of His Name the Lord will redeem and deliver His people.

Our great Redeemer

The Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, is announced in v.17 as the Lord, the Redeemer. It is He, the holy One of Israel, who first justifies His chosen people with divine righteousness then teaches them spiritual wisdom and gives faith to trust Him in the Gospel. Christ promises to profit His ransomed people under the Gospel. He is Himself the Way of life who leads and guides the redeemed to walk in the way they should go.

Free in Christ

In type the Jews returned from the captivity of Babylon. Under the Gospel the redeemed of the Lord go forth from the bondage of sin and the captivity of Satan. The Jews lost sight of the peace God promised to their forebears but in Christ the redeemed find peace like a river; full-flowing, plenteous, continuous and refreshing, and righteousness as deep and wide as the sea.

A voice of singing

The song of the elect is the song of the redeemed. The Holy One has redeemed His people and led us forth from captivity in a gushing torrent of bountiful supply. Out of the Rock that is Christ flows cleansing blood, transforming grace, perfect righteousness, full and free salvation and every good and perfect gift. That is something worth singing about.

Amen

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