

The African Coalition, Humbled to be Blessed (Part 2)

Isaiah 19:1-25

Halifax: 4 October 2009

Introduction:

If you were here two weeks ago,

- perhaps you will remember that we began to look at what Isaiah says about Africa in his prophecies concerning the nations.
- In Isaiah's day,
 - Cush (which is present day Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia) had risen to great power under the Nubian leader Shabako.
 - Shabako had actually taken control of lower Egypt and had formed a coalition with the rest of Egypt for protection against Assyria.
 - These Africans were a mighty force to be reckoned with, and were seeking to form alliances with some of the petty Palestinian states to the North of them as a buffer against Assyria.
 - In chapter 18, which we looked at last time,
 - we saw these powerful Africans from Cush going up and down the Nile river to amass an army.
 - There was nothing wrong with what they were doing as far as civil righteousness is concerned.
 - They were forming an alliance to protect their borders from a cruel and aggressive enemy that was eager to dominate the world.
 - But there was something terribly wrong in that they were doing all this without looking to their Creator.
 - As nations so often do when they are strong and successful, they did not acknowledge the living God who had given them all their success...
 - They acted as if they did not receive all these blessings from the One who made heaven and earth and who rules over the nations and gives dominion to whichever nation He chooses.
 - They were like the people who built Babel, the city of man, many years before,
 - trying to prosper and succeed without bothering to reconcile with God or look to God for help!
 - It is the height of human arrogance to live as if your Creator and your relationship to Him is irrelevant!
 - You only live each moment because He sustains you.

But we saw in Isaiah 18 that the LORD reveals His plans concerning the mighty African coalition—remarkable plans...

- Even while they are buzzing about like insects securing their borders against Assyria,
 - The LORD is seen quietly watching them and even prospering them as they scurry about.
 - He is resting and watching from His dwelling place, sending the sunshine and the rain upon them to prosper them as they carry out that plans...
- But Isaiah tells us what the LORD's plans are...
 - Suddenly, just as they are about to achieve their designs,
 - just as the harvest that they have been working toward is about to be ready,
 - He is going to cut them down with His pruning hook (see verse 5)!
 - He is going to reduce this powerful nation, tall and smooth, this nation that treads down...
 - into branches that are cast away...
 - They will become food for scavengers, for birds and beasts who prey upon what is weak and dying.
 - And indeed, so it was, that for 700 years until the coming of Christ, Egypt was under the thumb of one super power after another—
 - Babylon, then Greece, then Rome exercised dominion over them.
 - They never again (after the 8th century BC) proved to be much of a threat to these great empires that arose.
 - God had brought them down to humble them.
- Bringing them down like this was indeed a remarkable work of God,
 - But what was even more remarkable was the reason God brought them down!
 - the purposes He had in bringing them down!
 - It was all a part of His gracious purpose to redeem them!
 - Over thousands of years,
 - He worked to humble Egypt, raising them to power and then bringing them down,
 - all that they might know that their relationship with God matters...
 - all that they might at last seek Him in Christ.
 - God does this sort of thing!
 - He sometimes takes centuries to work in a people that He has purposed at last to turn to Himself.
 - He does not just come and zap them into submission,
 - but works through a marvellous succession of providential circumstances to bring them to see things clearly!

- How gracious He is! How wise He is!
- He does the same thing in the lives of individuals.
 - Most of you who know Him today can look back and see a marvellous interplay of circumstances that He used.
 - All along the way, He did things to break you and humble you.
 - All along, He did things to show you that your relationship with Him was not right, and that it was not something you could not safely ignore.
 - At last you realised that your condition was so desperate that you needed Jesus Christ...
 - and then instead of resenting Him, you came with joy to receive sweet forgiveness and new life from Him.
- At the end of chapter 18, we have the outcome of His gracious work for these Africans!
 - The members of the African coalition are seen coming to worship the Lord and to bring offerings to Him.
 - They have heard the call of God in verse 3...
 - Jesus Christ crucified, God's banner has been lifted up in the sight of all the nations,
 - and they have come to bow down to Him and to receive His salvation!
 - All because God had prepared them for Him.

This is such a marvellous thing that Isaiah presents it to us again in greater detail in chapter 19.

- Chapter 18 is poetical and in some places rather obscure and difficult to interpret,
 - but in chapter 19, Isaiah gives us the details about how God humbled Egypt,
 - and then he lays out the blessings that the Lord pours out on them!
- Do not be confused that in chapter 18 he speaks of Ethiopia (or Cush in the original) and that in chapter 19 he speaks of Egypt.
 - Remember what I said before, when Isaiah wrote these things, they were together.
 - In chapter 19, the whole coalition is referred to as Egypt because Egypt was the more dominant nation historically.
 - But essentially, as Egypt was in coalition under one leader with the African nations just to the South of them, Egypt and Cush are one.

- And here, in chapter 19, we are given the details as to how God works His grace into Africa to bring them to Himself.

Our outline is very simple, with two main points...

I. First, we will see what our gracious LORD does to humble His elect people

- The work of humbling is described in verses 1-15.
 - This section begins with God coming on a cloud to make Egypt tremble before Him...
 - And it ends with Egypt terrified before the LORD with no fight left in them (actually in verse 16-17)

II. Second, we will see how our gracious Lord blesses His elect people

- The work of blessing is spoken of from verse 16 to verse 25...
 - This section shows Egypt beginning to fear God and then receiving all the blessings of His salvation so that at last they are one with Israel.

As we look at these two main points of this chapter, we will see how our gracious Lord works in those people that He has chosen to be His own.

- If you know Him, you will be able to look back and understand how He has worked in your life and in the life of your people to bring you to Himself...
 - And you will, I hope, be able to give thanks for your afflictions that God has used in your life to lead you to Jesus Christ.
 - I hope that you will be able to sing with David in Psalm 119:
 - Ps 119:67: Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.

Okay then, let us get started by looking at the first point.

I. First, see what our gracious LORD does to humble His elect people.

- Isaiah mentions three specific ways that God will break the pride of Egypt so that she will realise that she cannot get along without Him.
 - He will send domestic strife (v. 2-4)
 - He will send economic troubles (v. 5-10)
 - He will send confusion to Egypt's leaders (v. 11-15)
- But before we look at the details,
 - I want you to notice something striking about these troubles...

A. It is made clear to us that these troubles are sent upon Egypt by God.

1. You can see this clearly within the descriptions of the troubles...
 - a. We often think that domestic strife just happens,

- but you see in verse 2 that the LORD declares that **He** is the one who will actually “set Egyptian against Egyptian”...
 - And then in verse 4, He says,
 - Isa 19:4: “The Egyptians I will give into the hands of cruel master.”
 - When we have selfish, oppressive leaders,
 - We often think the root of our problem is that we have selfish leaders...
 - But here you see that the root of the problem is that God is displeased with us.
 - We have ignored Him and He is humbling us with oppressive leadership.
- b. Then in the third section—the section about Egypt being devoid of wisdom and about her princes making foolish decisions...
- It is not that they are stupid, but that the LORD mingles a perverse spirit in them that causes them to err in their work.
 - He causes them to act like fools, as a judgement.
 - That’s what it says in verse 14.
 - Isaiah 19:14: The LORD has mingled a perverse spirit in her midst; And they have caused Egypt to err in all her work, As a drunken man staggers in his vomit.
 - Again, the cause of this problem is God.
 - He is the one who sends confusion to humble them, just as He did at Babel when He confused their languages.

TRANS> So you see in these descriptions about Egypt’s troubles that these troubles are brought upon them God.

- This is not only brought out to us in the descriptions of the troubles...
2. It is also brought out in the introduction to this section...
- a. In verse 1, God is seen acting upon Egypt...
 - He is described in verse 1 as riding on a swift cloud and coming into Egypt in such a way that Egypt’s heart will melt.
 - In scripture, clouds are often spoken of as God’s chariots...
 - He is said to ride upon them when He executes His judgements in the earth.

- You will remember how Jesus, when He was at His trial, declared that the Jewish rulers would see Him coming in the clouds to judge in that very generation.
 - He was speaking, of course, about the judgement that fell upon Jerusalem in 70 AD.
 - That is when the leaders really got angry and accused Him of blasphemy.
 - To say that He would come in the clouds was to claim to be God.
- And so here in our text, when He is said to ride on a swift cloud,
 - It speaks of His coming in His providence to humble Egypt.
 - He will do this by bringing them into domestic strife, economic distress, and folly as a people.
- b. If you do not see that God does this sort of thing, you miss what is really going on in this world.
 - You look at what are only symptoms of a broken relationship with God as if the symptoms were the problem.
 - Sadly, that is precisely the way most people look at these problems.
 - They think, “if only we could get along, if only we could straighten out of finances, if only we could have wise leaders,
 - it would solve everything!
 - But that is not right.
 - To have all these things go well and be without God is still to have the worst problem of all.
 - In His mercy He sends these troubles to bring you to end of yourself and of your life apart from Him.
 - If His humbling work upon you does not bring you to Him, then it is nothing but a judgement that is a foretaste of the judgement to come.
 - But if it breaks you so that you fear God and eventually turn to Him—
 - If you realise that your troubles are sent by Him because of your sin and His wrath against your sin,
 - then these things have actually come upon you in mercy.
 - Then you can say, “It was good for me that I have been afflicted because now I keep your word.”

- c. You see in verse 16-17 that Egypt is, in mercy, brought by these judgements to fear the LORD.
 - It says:
 - Isa 19:16-17: “In that day Egypt will be like women, and will be afraid and fear because of the waving of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which He waves over it. And the land of Judah will be a terror to Egypt; everyone who makes mention of it will be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the LORD of hosts which He has determined against it.”
 - This may be offensive to some in our day—“afraid like women?”
 - but it ought not to be if we understand.
 - The Bible honours women, not as tough war heroes who are fearless fighters, but as those who give life, nurture life, and orchestrate beauty.
 - To be afraid “like a woman” does not mean that women are bad, but it means that the men in the society have become delicate.
 - They have lost their ability to stand up and fight and be strong.
 - When it comes to standing up to another nation, this is a terrible thing.
 - It would mean that men have so lost their nerve that they will not defend their wife and their children and their people.
 - But here in our text, this fear is actually a good kind of fear that is the beginning of wisdom.
 - It is the fear we have when we realise that we are before God and that we must answer to Him and that we have no resources to resist Him or even to negotiate with Him.
 - That is the very starting place of wisdom.
 - That fear is the very thing the Egyptians had lacked.
 - They had thought it was safe to ignore God and their need to be reconciled to Him.
 - They thought they could handle Him!
 - But through His gracious working, they have come to realise that it is futile to even try to handle Him and that ignoring Him is no solution either.
 - They have come to an end of themselves.
 - You will notice that it says that they are also afraid of Judah—
 - This is not because of Judah’s earthly power, but because God is with her.

- They will see the failure of their coalition against Assyria, but they will see God’s protection of Judah...
- And then in the years to come, they will see Judah swallowed by Babylon, but then marvellously restored by the LORD according to His promise.
- The result will be that they will fear Judah because they will see that God is indeed with her and not with them.
 - But this sentiment will not be brought to its fullest pitch until they see that God has, according to His promise, sent Jesus Christ to atone for their sins!
 - The very mention (indeed, the Hebrew suggests even the very thought of Judah)
 - will make them afraid because they will realise that they too need to be reconciled to God.

TRANS> I hope very much that all of you have been humbled like this!

- I hope you have come to realise that unless you are reconciled to God, you are utterly ruined.

B. Let us now see the specific things that God uses to cause the Egyptians to see their need of Him...

- the very same kind of things that He uses to show **us** our need of Him...
 1. First, He brings domestic strife—so that they see that they are not even able to get along with their own people!
 - a. This is described in verses 2-4...
 - “Egyptians will be against Egyptians!”
 - And you see that this will occur at ever level of society...
 - They will fight against their own brothers,
 - against their neighbours,
 - city against city,
 - and kingdom against kingdom.

TRANS> This is such a difficult thing, such a frustrating thing...

- b. They will become so frustrated in their strife that they will start to look for help in the most absurd places...
 - They will turn to their idols...
 - They will turn to the dead, to mediums and sorcerers who consult the dead.

- They will be so desperate to find answers that they will try anything.
 - A desperate people will latch onto anything!
 - And they will give themselves up (or God will give them up) to an oppressive ruler—
 - It is only a matter of time that a society that cannot get along with itself will put their hope in a leader they hope will solve all their problems and bring some sort of order out of the chaos.
- c. This sounds a lot like our society!
- Just look at all the broken marriages!
 - People can't even get along with their own spouse—with the person they pledged to love and cherish forever!
 - They can't even get along with their own children!
 - And what do we see on the increase?
 - We see people looking in absurd places for answers—
 - More and more are turning to mediums and sorcerers, trying to get some help from somewhere!
 - More and more look to government to solve all their problems...
 - They are dupes for whatever any huckster brings along.
 - But all these domestic struggles ought to show us our need of the Lord.
 - They are but a foretaste of the strife we will know in Hell when all the merciful restraint of God that holds us back will be gone...
 - And men will bite and devour one another.
 - Can't you see the wickedness that in your heart?
 - What would it be like if you were in a place where there was no restraint?
 - Can't you see your need of a Saviour?

2. Secondly, Isaiah speaks of economic distress in verses 5-10

- a. The Nile River can well be called the foundation of Egypt's economy...
- Without the Nile, Egypt was a place that was too dry to grow any crops.
 - It was impossible for the Egyptians to prosper without it.
 - The whole Egyptian society depended on this river.
 - Therefore, Isaiah describes the collapse of Egypt's economy poetically by describing the failure of the Nile...
 - He speaks of it drying up,

- of the reeds and crops that were watered by it failing,
 - of the fishermen and those who produced goods from the flax that grew mourning
 - and of the hired men being without work.
- God brings economic troubles upon a people to humble them and teach them that every good gift comes from Him.
 - He teaches them that man does not live by bread alone, but by bread that grows according to His word...
 - He speaks bread onto our tables and we need to thank Him for it and look to Him to provide.
- b. But when a people does not acknowledge God,
- He takes away their daily bread and gives them famine...
 - Not that He always does this, but when He wishes to humble a people to prepare them for future grace,
 - He sends hard times to them in this way.
 - He does this to those who have once known Him and who need to return to Him,
 - and He does this to those who have never known Him, but whom He is beginning to effectual call.
 - In this way, He teaches us that everything we have comes from Him, and that if we do not reconcile with Him,
 - everything will at last be taken away—all the good things that we enjoy in this world.
 - Let us be humble, therefore, and bring bread to our table by prayer and give thanks for it as coming from His hand.
 - We need a right relationship with God through Christ or we will at last lose everything.
3. Thirdly, Isaiah speaks of Egypt's esteemed princes becoming fools who do not know what to do and who make foolish decisions that destroy the people.
- He brings them to the point where there are no wise men to be found to lead...
 - much as we have in the political arena today!
 - We have politicians who, rather than solving problems, only exacerbate them with more and more absurd decisions.
 - They do not enforce laws that restrain the very wickedness that provokes the Lord...
 - They do things like "stimulus packages" in which they borrow money from future generations to improve the present economy,

- when wisdom would have taught them to lay up for future generations, especially with our shrinking population.
- The full extent of the folly of their policies and actions is yet to be seen!
 - But you can be sure—it will be seen in the days to come!
- Isaiah uses powerful imagery to describe the condition to which the Egyptian rulers and wise men will be brought.
 - That the LORD will cause Egypt to err in their work and to be as a drunken man who staggers in his vomit.

TRANS> This is all the LORD's doing—

- The domestic strife, the economic distress, and the demise of wisdom are all the doing of the LORD to humble a people that does not acknowledge Him.
- But be it known that the wheels of providence turn so as to bring us to the end of ourselves that we may turn to the Lord and be reconciled to Him forever.
 - Many of you had your life fall apart before you at last came to the LORD.
 - That was His grace and mercy to you.
 - Do not resent it, but give thanks for it.
- And even now, some of you who know Him find that there are many difficult things you are called to bear...
 - But understand, if you are God's child, if you are His elect, He is sending these things upon you to draw you into a closer, more dependent, more sweet relationship with Him.
 - We all, who know our dear Lord Jesus in a saving way,
 - struggle with our remaining corruption...
 - We struggle that when we seek to do good, evil is present with us.
 - We cry out with Paul, "Who will deliver me from this body of death."
 - And we receive the answer that it is the LORD.
 - He causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose...
 - And to what good does He work all things for us?
 - That we might be conformed to His image!
 - He brings hard things to chip away the pride that is in us that we might turn to Him and be filled with the fullness of the life He has for us.

- Do not despise it when He chastens you, for whom the Lord loves, He disciplines!
- If we suffer with Christ, we will be glorified with Him!

Ah yes, let us turn to our second heading today...

- Let us...

II. See how our gracious LORD blesses His elect people after He has humbled them.

- This is explained in verses 16-25!
 - You see here that Isaiah speaks of six “in that day” promises.
 - Verse 16, verse 18, verse 19, verse 21, verse 23, and verse 24 all contain the words “in that day...”
 - and all six of them go on to tell us of some great thing God will bring upon Egypt.
- Now you will say, “In what day”? To what day does Isaiah refer?
 - Well it is in the day when God has brought the domestic strife, the economic distress, and the demise of wisdom upon Egypt.
 - It is in the day that Egypt begins to fear the LORD because of these humbling providences.
 - When she finally comes to the end of herself and realises that she needs to be reconciled to God.

A. That is the first “in that day” blessing that I have already spoken about in verse 16-17.

- the day when we come to realise that we need the Lord.
- We have already looked at these verses, but I want to make sure that you understand that this is the first blessing that God brings to His elect people.
 - Wisdom begins with the fear of God...
 - With realising that if things are not right with God, nothing is really right.
 - Realising that if you are cut off from His favour, you are without any hope at all—
 - You are headed for complete disaster for all eternity because He is a holy and just God...
 - He did not send Jesus His Son to the cross for no reason!
 - It was the only way to secure or pardon.
- Even after we have become His people He teaches us more and more to fear Him that we may learn to live by grace alone.

- And when we learn that, we look to Him and we learn of Him and His blessings come to us in more and more fullness.
 - We become the beautiful new creation that He has made us to be.
 - Sometimes, we yet have many scars and bruises in this life,
 - but God is working in us as sculptor works the stone and often our beauty is hidden until the last day when He will remove the veil and all the debris and will present us as His completed work in Christ Jesus!
 - Take heart, dear Christian brother and sister!

TRANS> Now lets look at the other five “in that day promises” that follow once Egypt begins to fear the Lord.

B. In verse 18, we are told:

- Isa 19:18: In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear by the LORD of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction.
 - This is one of those verses about which many things are hard to interpret,
 - but the one thing that is clear is that there will be cities in Egypt that will turn to the living God.
 - Not only will they fear Him (as verse 16 & 17 say), but they will take Him to be their God.
 - It says here that five cities will “speak the language of Canaan.”
 - That means that they will be conversant with the things of God. They will speak the same language as God’s people who are in Canaan.
 - Oh what a splendid thing it is to have God’s word in your mouth,
 - to be able to speak about the great things that He has done with understanding...
 - To be able to converse about His grace and mercy to us in Christ.
 - When you come to the LORD, you begin to speak the language of Canaan, a language that those outside of His kingdom cannot understand.
 - What words we have to comfort one another with, even as we face death...
 - even as we have trials, we are able to tell each other that God has done it for our good and His glory and that His purposes will not fail...
 - We are able to speak of His majesty and glory and of His love in sending His Son...

- And we are able to talk of the way He has given us to walk.
- And not only do you come to speak of language of Canaan, you also come to “swear by His name...”
 - that is, you come to look to Him as the one you answer to if you do not do what you say...
 - You come to have Him as your God before whom you make all your vows, promising even to Him your allegiance and fealty.
- But why does it say that there are five cities that speak this language and one that is called the city of destruction?
 - Well, this is one of those things that the interpreters are divided on,
 - but the simplest way to look at it is that many cities will swear allegiance to the Lord,
 - but others will not—perhaps the ratio will be 5 out of 6 that will become His own.
 - the idea being that not all will confess Him, but that the great majority will do so.
 - This is what God’s humbling providences will bring to Egypt.
 - I mentioned last week that Athanasius of Egypt, looking around and seeing all the believers in his day (in the fourth century) declared, concerning these chapters in Isaiah:

“The thing is happening before our very eyes, here in Egypt; and thereby another prophecy is fulfilled, for at no other time have the Egyptians ceased from their false worship save when the LORD of all, riding as on a cloud, came down here in body and brought the error of idols to nothing and won over everybody to Himself through Himself to the Father.
 - Perhaps that was only the foreshadowing of an even greater blessing that is yet future to us when the knowledge of the LORD will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.
 - Whatever the case, it is a great blessing when our gracious Lord teaches us the language of Canaan,
 - even when trials are necessary to make that happen!
 - Parents, I would urge you—pray for your children—
 - pray that the LORD will do whatever it takes to humble them that they might speak the language of Canaan.
 - Do not let the LORD go until He blesses you!

TRANS> The third “in that day statement...”

C. The third blessing that comes to God’s elect in the day that they are humbled is found in verse 19-20:

- Isa 19:19-20: In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border. And it will be for a sign and for a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of the oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Mighty One, and He will deliver them.
- To say that there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt is simply to say that people in Egypt will become God’s worshippers through Christ.
 - Isaiah, of course, is writing to those who lived in the Old Testament period, so he speaks in the language of that dispensation.
 - He does not mean that they will actually build a physical altar, for that would have been a violation of God’s law at the time he wrote this.
 - He is saying that they will worship God as a people who are reconciled to Him through God’s appointed sacrifice.
- They will have Him as their God and will have access to Him through sacrifice, even the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
 - For you see that it says they will cry to the LORD because of oppressors, and that He will send them “a Saviour and a mighty One” who will deliver them.
 - This is access to God in prayer—prayer that brings them a Saviour!
- This is what we all need!
 - Satan is sometimes called the God of this world, and he has many agents.
 - The oppressors are plural, but the Saviour is only one.
 - This is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ...
 - the one who was promised to the whole world in Adam after the Fall as the one who would come and crush the oppressor’s head for the sake of those God called out of the world.
 - Satan and all who are in league with him will be crushed so that the nations will be free to serve God.
 - Christ delivers His people from all oppressors...
 - He delivers us from their philosophy, from their rule, from their persecution, from their power, even from death itself,

- and sets us free so that we may serve God fully and faithfully!
- Oh what miserable bondage Satan and his demons did hold the world in until Jesus came into the world and broke his sway over the nations,
 - binding him, and setting us free that we might be saved.
 - And on the last day, He will render Him completely powerless against us.

D. The fourth “in-that-day blessing” is that those God humbles in mercy will come to know Him.

- Is says:
 - Isa 19:21: Then the LORD will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day, and will make sacrifice and offering; yes, they will make a vow to the LORD and perform it.
- This is the wonderful promise of the new covenant—that “they shall all know me,” the LORD says, “from the least of them to the greatest of them.”
- How sad it is that the world by wisdom did not know God—as the nations groped about in the darkness, they remained alienated from Him.
- But when we come to know Him...
 - how holy He is, how gracious He is, how merciful He is, how faithful He is, how great His love is!!!
 - We give our lives in sacrifice for Him—joyfully worshipping Him even when the world mocks us...
 - even joyfully suffering for Him who has loved us and suffered for us.
 - We take vows as His covenant people, covenanting before God and before our brothers and sisters that we will faithfully serve Him...
 - and we pay those vows in full, even when it hurts and costs us our wife or our husband or our own parents...
 - We do this because we know Him!
 - We know who He is—how worthy He is, how holy He is, how gracious He is...
 - We walk with Him and He shows Himself to us more and more to our delight.
- And because He delights in us so much, He will not let us depart from Him...

- He will bring us hard lessons that we need if we are to know Him better and be delivered from our shallowness!
 - This is what it says in verse 22:
 - Isa 19:22: And the LORD will strike Egypt, He will strike and heal it; they will return to the LORD, and He will be entreated by them and heal them.
 - This is His Fatherly discipline—painful at times, but preserving us by His grace so that we are not drawn off to destruction by our lusts.
 - What security we have in our loving Father who comes after us!
 - He strikes, but only in order that He may heal us!
 - He graciously responds as soon as we confess our error and return to His gracious embrace!
 - He is preparing us to live with Him forever and ever...
 - He will not lose one of us that He has gathered to Himself for salvation!
 - If you know Him in a saving way, you will know Him forever.

E. The fifth blessing that comes to those who have been humbled to be blessed is found in verse 23...

- Isa 19:23: In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians.
- Who was at greater enmity with each other than Assyria and Egypt, the two great super powers of the day!
 - Yet, the gospel is so powerful that it not only reconciles men to God, but also to each other.
 - Do you remember how Isaiah described this back in chapter 2?
 - Isa 2:4: He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.
 - He gives us sweet peace!
- Our gracious Lord so changes us that we are brought together as God's servants with those we once hated!
 - He so changes us that the bitter hostility and murderous malice in us is melted away and we come with sweetness to bless those we once hated.

- It must be so when Jesus is in us, because He comes to us (when He had just cause to hate us) and has loves us so well.
 - It is impossible for us to have such love poured out upon us and then to despise those He has also loved.
 - We cannot love Him and hate our brother whom He has also reconciled.

F. And the sixth blessing is closely related to the fifth...

- When God has humbled the people He is calling to Himself, He brings them into the fellowship of those who are already His covenant people!
 - He treats the vile sinner who comes to Him in the eleventh hour just the same as those who have always been His sons and daughters.
 - It does not matter what you may have done or where you may have been,
 - the power of the cross of Jesus makes you just as much His child as only one else who is His child.
 - Yes, you should feel ashamed of what you have done and you will feel ashamed,
 - but your heavenly Father rejoices at your repentance more than the 99 who did not need repentance.
- When the Egyptian or the Assyrian comes to Christ, they just as much the Israel of God as the nation of Israel—
 - they become the sons of Abraham through faith in Jesus Christ... the true sons of Abraham... and so the sons of God.
 - See how the LORD calls the Egypt “My People” and Assyria, “The Work of My Hands” in verse 25,
 - and places them right alongside Israel, his inheritance!!
- You are given full status as a child of God.
 - Now you can sing the songs of Canaan with His people.
 - You are the Israel of God.
 - You are the prince with God who has prevailed with Him through faith in Jesus Christ and who lives under His blessing and grace and favour forever and ever.

Conclusion!

What a wonderful conclusion this is to what began with God’s humbling work!

- Please stand and let us give thanks to the LORD for what He does through Jesus Christ!