

A PROPHET'S PLEA

Isaiah 2:5

Intro: I do not see how anyone can read a prophecy like Isaiah's and not notice a great similarity between Isaiah's day and our own.

He said in chapter 1 that he lived and wrote during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. It is said of three of these kings that they did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. Only Ahaz was marked out as a wicked king.

However, Uzziah and Hezekiah, with all of their good points, failed later on in their lives. Those times of failure certainly were times of great disappointment and discouragement to Isaiah. Uzziah foolishly went into the temple to burn incense as only the priest could do, and God struck him with leprosy to the day of his death. Hezekiah, after seeking an extension of his own life, foolishly showed his great wealth to his Babylonian visitors, and it was Isaiah's task to tell him that the day would come when all of his treasures would be carried away to Babylon--along with the people.

Isaiah's day was not a time of miraculous events. Spiritually things were not good with the people. We can get a clear picture of the way things were as we read through Isaiah's prophecy, and that of his contemporary, Micah. But God was speaking to His people. The tragedy was that the people were not listening. And so things were going from bad to worse, and ultimately Judah did go into Babylonian captivity.

The text that I would like for us to consider tonight is a verse which really summarizes the message, not only of Isaiah, but of all of the prophets. This is what he was preaching:
 O house of Jacob,
 come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord
 (Isa. 2:5).

There is a great deal of truth in these few words, truth which we need in our day. We are not really seeking as much divine activity in our day as Isaiah saw in his day. There is a lot of human activity going on in the Lord's Name, but the more we know about the Word of God and the ways of the Lord, the more we should wonder how much of the noise we see and hear is really of the Lord, and how much of it is just a lot of excitement generated by clever men. There is such a mixture of the ways of the world with the things of God that it has become increasingly difficult for Christians who hunger to know the Lord to find a place where their souls can be fed, and where they can be built up in their faith. Perhaps as we look at this verse tonight the Lord will give us some help to strengthen us in these needy days in which we live.

We may be wondering what we can do individually, and as a church, in these days for our generation. What help can we find in the Word of God.

Notice first of all, as we look at this text, that

- I. ISAIAH ADDRESSED HIMSELF TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD: "O house of Jacob."

The Word of God seems to indicate in many places that the important thing to watch in any generation is what is going on with the people of God.

Let me give you a couple of illustrations from the OT, and then another from the NT.

Since we are thinking here about "the house of Jacob," let us go back to the record of Jacob's life in the book of Genesis. Note what Laban said to Jacob when Jacob wanted to leave Laban to return home. Cf. Gen. 30:27. Some say that the expression, "learned by experience," should be translated, divined. Keil and Delitzsch in their commentary on Genesis suggest the word, perceived. So "learned by experience" is probably a good translation after all. The point is that Laban knew that the blessing of God had been on him all of the time that Jacob was with him, and he was reluctant to let him go!

Cf. 2 Chron. 7:14 with its context.

I realize that God was dealing with Israel in a different way from that which He is doing with our country today, but there are spiritual lessons which we can learn from the OT which can be of tremendous help to us. Notice the words, "my people, which are called by my name." Could this not mean that the Lord speaking to that group within the nation who were really His people? They were the key to the prospect of restored blessing--whether you take that as applying to the whole nation or to a smaller group of His people within the nation.

There are other illustrations I could mention from the OT, but let us go on to the NT.

The Day of Pentecost will never be repeated as such. But it may be that similar blessings will come. The Day of Pentecost would have come regardless of the condition of that small group of 120 believers, but think of how they became the instruments of great blessing. Cf. Acts 2:1 and you will see why it was such a time of great blessing. Things were right in their lives, with the Lord and with each other, and so one of the greatest times of blessing

followed which the world has ever seen--blessing that was felt throughout the Empire!

Is this not the same emphasis that we get from Isa. 2:5?

Notice a second point:

II. THE WEAKNESS OF GOD'S PEOPLE: "O house of Jacob."

Anyone who reads the OT faithfully soon learns in read the OT to notice the times when God speaks of His people as from Israel as compared with the times when He speaks of them as descendants of Jacob.

What is the difference between the two--Israel and Jacob?

Basically one thing, and we learn this from Isa. 32 when the Lord met Jacob at Peniel. The difference is one of power, of strength. Israel means that Jacob was one who had power with God and men, but when he is addressed as Jacob, or his descendants are addressed as the sons of Jacob, or the "house of Jacob," we know that God is looking at them in their weakness.

We so easily forget what we are when God leaves us to ourselves and by ourselves. The reason the Lord did not want any of the Canaanites to be spared was because He knew that the Canaanites would turn them away from God, they would not turn the Canaanites toward God.

And what child of God has not lamented his weakness. We are so easily drawn into sin. We forget the Lord continually. When things do not go right, we rebel against Him. We may not have known our weakness when we first came to the Lord, but the Lord knew that He had chosen a bunch of weaklings. The history of Israel could so easily have been your history and mine.

How can we please God in days like these when we are so weak? That is what Isaiah was telling the people of God. But first notice that we are the key, and then notice that we do not have in ourselves what it takes. So we need to learn how to be strong.

III. THE PRE-EMINENT NEED: "Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord."

What is it? It is all centered in that little verb, "walk."

Charles Bridges, in his commentary on Proverbs, has this to say about Prov. 10:8, the first part: "The wise in

heart will receive commandments":

But look at the professor of religion destitute of this heart-seated wisdom. We find him a man of creeds and doctrines, not of prayer; asking curious questions, rather than listening to plain truths; wanting to know events rather than duties; occupied with other men's business, to the neglect of his own (p. 95).

It is a wonderful thing to be able to talk about the truth, but it is a better thing to talk about it and to walk in it.

That is one part of what Isaiah meant by "the light of the Lord." Cf. Psa. 119:105. And see what Isaiah said in Isa. 2:3. We can only walk in the Lord's ways when we know them, and we cannot know them unless we are taught what they are.

It may seem like a dull thing at times to attend a meeting where basically all we do is to teach the Word of God, but that is what we are supposed to be doing.

And I am particularly interested in the fact that the prophet said, "Let us walk in the light of the Lord." He was not excluding himself from such a need. He needed this just like they did—and the same applies to me. It is when we are all walking in the light of the Lord that we will see the greatest blessing. And if an awakening is to come, that is the way it will come.

But walking in the light of the Lord means another thing: It means walking in the presence of the Lord. After all, our Lord is "the light of the world" (John 8:12). We get careless about sin, about our speech, about where we go and what we do, because we are not living like David lived, setting the Lord always before us. Cf. Psa. 16:8. Do you know that little book, Practising the Presence of God, by Brother Lawrence? Don't forget that the Lord is with us all of the time. Make Him your constant Companion and your life will be much different from what it otherwise would be.

But there is still another thought in this expression, "Let us walk in the light of the Lord."

Walking in the light of the Lord means walking according to the light that He has given us in His Word. We need to think about the outcome of all things. Where is this world headed? Man would like to think that he is headed for a world in which you can have all you want, and be able to do anything that you want to do, without having to

pay the consequences. But that is not ever going to be on man's terms, and we may not be long in finding that out. Sin often looks very attractive. We may feel that we are missing a great deal in life because we are too bound to the church and to the Lord and to the Bible.

But what happens to those who disregard the message of the true Church, those who ignore God, those who have no time for the Word of God?

Read your Bible, and you will find out. But you can also see it by reading your newspaper. The farther we get from God, the greater the price we pay in broken homes, broken lives, disease, injured children, dope addicts, crimes of all kinds including graft and dishonesty in business and in government. Look at the world-wide unrest we have today--the racial hatred, the terrorism. And now we are seeing drought in our country. Who makes the sun shine, and the rain to fall? Is it not God?

Just this morning I read in Proverbs 26:2,
Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow,
So a curse without cause shall not alight.

And ultimately where does this all end? It ends in hell.

Concl: God is surely speaking today. His work in the world is not finished. His work in us is not finished. And I am persuaded that His work with us is not finished. There is yet much to be done. But we will only be a part of that work if we are listening to the prophets of the OT and the apostles of the NT.

May God enable each one of us to listen to our text, understand our text, and then do what it says to do. Let us not lament that things are so bad everywhere. Actually they are a lot worse than any of us knows. That is not our business. Our business is to "walk in the light of the Lord." If we do, the blessing of God will be with us, and we will rejoice to see His blessing in this dark hour.

Young people, do not forget this text. Write it where you can see it frequently, and then pray that your life will be devoted just to do this one thing. If it is, everything else will fall into its proper place under the blessing of God.