

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ISAIAH
Isa. 53:6

Intro: Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, for many years the pastor of the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia once wrote: "I believe that the only way to understand any given passage in the Word of God is to take the whole Bible and place the point of it, like an inverted pyramid on that passage, so that the weight of the entire Word rests upon a single verse, or, indeed, a single word" (Man's Ruin, pp. iii, iv).

By this I am sure that he meant that no verse in the Bible stands by itself. To prove this we need but to take some of the verses which are the most common and try to see exactly what they say.

Take, e.g., John 3:16, or 2 Cor. 5:21, or Eph. 2:8, 9--and many others. Each one is designed to give some particular emphasis to the doctrine of salvation, but we need all of them to tell the whole story.

The same is true of any doctrine that we might want to study. Heresy which comes out of the Bible always is the result of someone's failure to observe this basic principle.

This is also true of Isa. 53:6.

If you want to know what man must do in order to be saved, you will not find it here--although you will find it in other parts of Isaiah.

What contribution to the whole truth of salvation does Isaiah make in this passage? Or, to state it another way, when we take Isa. 53:6, what, can we say, is the Gospel according to Isaiah?

I. He gives us THREE EXPRESSIONS WHICH DESCRIBE MAN'S NEED FOR SALVATION.

A. "All we like sheep have gone astray."

We find this again in Psa. 119:176, the last verse, and in 1 Pet. 2:25. It is a very familiar figure of speech in both the OT and the NT. Cf. Matt. 9:36; Ezek. 34:5, 6, 11-31.

It likens men to animals which are known for their helplessness. He is speaking here of a flock of sheep. To go astray means to miss one's aim or to fail in one's efforts. It comes very close to the NT word for sin, missing the mark!

Isaiah seems to be trying to tell us that there is a tendency for men to travel together, even in sin, and that we often submit to the pressure and even feel comfortable about the fact that everyone is doing it.

Just this morning I was reading an article in which the author was commenting on the Babylonian captivity, and how secure the people must have felt that God did not punish them over a period of 490 years. Part of that secure feeling arose from the fact that they were doing it together.

Even today we often hear it said, "Everybody's doing it!" And this is giving as a satisfactory excuse for you to do it. BUT THIS MAY BE JUST THE REASON WHY IT IS NOT A GOOD IDEA TO DO IT--especially in the light of what Isaiah tells us.

How often this was true in the Scriptures. Cf. Exod. 32:1.

We are like sheep in this regard. We feel safe with the crowd, but each step may be taking us farther and farther from the shepherd, and right into the hands of those who would destroy us--WHILE ALL OF THE TIME WE ARE VIOLATING WHAT WE KNOW TO BE RIGHT!

But there is a second expression.

B. "We have turned every one to his own way."

First, Isaiah has told us that, like sheep, we will follow the crowd.

But now, so that we will not blame the crowd for the things we do, nor feel that others are to blame for our sins, he adds, "We have turned every one to his own way."

This indicates a personal, individual attempt to turn away from what we know in our hearts to be right in order to go our "own way." Here Isaiah is talking about the way we live individually. This, too, comes very close to another NT word: our walk.

It is as though Isaiah is answering those who would say, "But if others had not influenced me, I would have done differently." Isaiah says, "No." If a

person goes along with the crowd, he shows himself a sinner. BUT IF HE ACTS ALONE, YOU WILL FIND THE SAME SINFUL TENDENCIES. It makes no difference at all!

But now for the third expression.

- C. "The iniquity of us all." It is spoken of sin as one massive heap of ways in which man has distorted, has perverted, himself by doing that which in violation of the will of God.

Man himself has felt the effect of his sin. He is not what God wants him to be, BUT HE IS NOT EVEN WHAT HE WANTS TO BE. Man is not happy. He does not have peace. He keeps groping and looking and hoping, but all that he really wants seeks to escape him. Those who have popularity, fortune, and apparently all that anyone could possibly want, often speak of the utter misery which they have in their hearts.

Isaiah cannot tell us all that he wants to about sin, but how wonderful it would be if we could only take this to heart. And remember that he is writing to a nation which had every opportunity for things to be different and yet in practice they were no different from the heathen Gentiles.

But let us go from this to ask

II. HOW EXTENSIVE IS THIS MORAL CONDITION?

Isaiah says, "All we like sheep have gone astray."

He certainly means every Jew, but the context shows us that he means every Gentile as well.

Remember what we saw last Sunday night in Psa. 14?
"There is none that doeth good . . . They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Paul agrees. Cf. Rom. 3:23. And note also Rom. 3:19, "Now we know that whatever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."

Surely, in view of all of this, Isaiah has something to say about the remedy. Does he? Yes!

III. THE REMEDY.

"The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all."

The first thing that should impress us in this statement is that man does not have the power to settle this question for himself. "Our hope is in the Lord," as the words of the hymn tell us.

Who is "the Lord"? It is JEHOVAH, the God who never changes. The Great I Am. And the One whose purposes never change, whose love never changes. Man can do what he will, God remains ever the same!

This is the best news that can reach the ears of any person who begins to get concerned about hissin! All of the rottenness on earth has not changed God in the least. The amazing thing is that this is so!

But what has He done?

He has taken "the iniquity" of the whole world and has placed it on the person described here as "him." Right away we should be asking, "WHO IS HE?" This is of the utmost importance, is it not?

He is the One referred to in Isa. 52:13, "my servant," the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

All of the world's iniquity, its transgression, its guilt, and its punishment, has fallen on Christ. God the Father placed it there.

Listen to how Peter speaks of Him in 1 Pet. 2:24. "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed." He has Isa. 53 in mind.

Will you not agree that your case, and mine, were hopeless if God had to do this? And can you ever doubt the love of God since this is true?

But, you say, how can you know that this includes you?
Let us see

IV. HOW EXTENSIVE THE REMEDY IS.

Will you notice that the verse ends as it began. The

same is true in the Hebrew.

Even reason itself tells us that whoever is included in the first "all" is included also in the second "all."

But, someone says, you do not know what I have done. I can answer, "I do not need to know." We are dealing here with the revelation of God (1) concerning man's need, and (2) concerning the remedy which God has provided. If God had wanted to make an exceptions, He had the perfect right to do so. BUT YOU CAN SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES THROUGH AND FIND THAT THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS The second "all" includes us all.

Conclusion: But Isaiah does not tell us here what we need to do, if anything. That is the reason I said at the beginning that one verse does not tell us all that is involved in the Gospel. But, if you keep reading in Isaiah, you will come to the 55th chapter, verses 6 and 7--and there is your answer.

Our Lord stated it very simply in John 3:16.

So did Paul in Eph. 2:8, 9.

If you acknowledge your sin, and realize that Jesus Christ died for you, then there is only one thing that remains. You simply need to receive Christ as your Saviour. Cf. John 1:12, 13; 5:24.