

THE WORK OF THE WORD
Isaiah 55:8-11

Intro: It has long been recognized that the prophecy of Isaiah has the same relationship to the other OT prophetic books that the book of Romans has to the other NT epistles. Both are foundational books. If we want to understand the NT epistles, we should start with Romans. If we want to understand the OT prophets, we should begin with Isaiah.

Those who compiled the books of the Bible recognized the special place that Isaiah and Romans have--and so Isaiah comes first in the arrangement of the prophecies of the OT; Romans comes first in the arrangement of the Epistles.

It has also been recognized that the prophecy of Isaiah can be divided generally like the Old and New Testaments. There are 66 books in the Bible, and there are 66 chapters in Isaiah. There are 39 books in the OT, and there are 39 chapters in the first part of Isaiah. There are 27 books in the NT, and there are 27 chapters in the last part of Isaiah.

That division needs at least one word of further explanation: the last 4 chapters of the first 39 are historical chapters. This includes chapters 36-39. In a sense they belong to both parts of Isaiah's prophecy because they mark the transition between the two.

If we were to pick out one dominant theme in the first 39 chapters, we would have to say that it is JUDGMENT. If we were to pick out one dominant theme in the last 27 chapters, we would have to say that it is REDEMPTION. This does not mean that there is no REDEMPTION in the first part, nor does it mean that there is no JUDGMENT in the latter part. But these words certainly describe the main subject of the two major sections of Isaiah: JUDGMENT and REDEMPTION.

And, when we think of the latter part, it is interesting that Isaiah 53 is the central chapter. There are 13 chapters leading up to Isaiah 53 (chapters 40-52), and there are 13 chapters after Isaiah 53 (chapters 54-66). Isaiah 53 is, of course, the greatest chapter in Isaiah dealing with the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we can probably say, the greatest chapter in all of the OT dealing with our Lord's sacrificial death. The chapter divisions, of course, are not inspired, but the distinctions that I have made according to the chapters do help us to get acquainted with this book and its message.

And so I have said all of this to give you a little introduc-

tion to Isaiah's prophecy.

My text for this morning is taken from the latter part, the part dealing with REDEMPTION. I want to consider with you especially verse 8-11 in Isaiah 55.

Most of you know what a red-letter NT is. It is an edition of the NT that has the words of the Lord Jesus printed in red. I have often wished that we had a red-letter OT. I realize that it would be very difficult to decide in some instances, especially in the OT prophets, where we have God speaking, and where we have the prophet speaking. We might have difficulty deciding even in this chapter if we were to look at all 13 verses. The difficulty of such a task probably is the reason why we do not have any red-letter OTs--at least I do not know of any.

But there is no question about my text in verses 8-11. THEY ARE VERY OBVIOUSLY THE WORDS SPOKEN BY GOD HIMSELF.

Now let me be perfectly clear on this point. All of the Bible is the Word of God. It was all given by Him to the writers right down to the choice of the very words that were used. That is why we call the Bible, verbally inspired. But often in the OT we have the prophets, or the other writers, quoting God directly. THAT IS WHAT WE HAVE HERE!

Let me read these verses for you with that in mind. (Read.)

By way of contrast, verses 6 and 7 were probably the word of the Lord through Isaiah's mouth, but in verses 8 through 11 he was writing words which God spoke directly to all of the people of Judah, and which He speaks directly to all of us.

So let us think about this for a moment.

I. THE NATURE OF THIS MESSAGE.

It is the Word OF GOD!

It was always the practice of the OT prophets to proclaim nothing but the Word of God.

When Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church in 1 Thess. 2:13 he said this:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing,
because, when ye received the word of God
which ye heard of us,
ye received it not as the word of men,
but as it is in truth, the word of God,
which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

We need to recognize this every time we open our Bibles. We need to say to ourselves, "This is not the word of men, but this is the very word of God." It will do something to us if we always remember this.

But let us think a little further about this: What does it mean that these verses--this prophecy of Isaiah--all of the Bible--is the word of God?

Well, according to our text, it means two things. It means that in the Bible we basically have two things:

- 1) The revelation of God's thoughts.
- 2) The revelation of God's ways.

And when you add up the significance of GOD'S THOUGHTS and GOD'S WAYS we can say that these two things combined give us THE REVELATION OF GOD HIMSELF.

But now to carry this a little farther the Lord has told us two things about His thoughts and His ways:

- 1) They are not like our thoughts and our ways.
- 2) They are higher, infinitely higher, than our thoughts and our ways. This means that they are better, infinitely better, because who of us can measure how much higher the heavens are than the earth?

Now this is where we often run into trouble, and this is the most common mistake that people make when they talk about God and His Word. We are inclined to think that God thinks like we do, and that His ways are like our ways. But they are NOT! And when a person first becomes a Christian, this is one of the first things that he ought to be told, one of the first things that he needs to learn.

Now notice how this is related to the Gospel message in verses 6 and 7. In fact, verses 8 and 9 explain why Isaiah could write what he wrote in verses 6 and 7.

Once you understand these things about the Bible, you will never again give any other book, or the words of any other person, a place equal to the words that we have in the Word of God. Let me emphasize this again: THIS BOOK IS THE WORD OF GOD! This is the foundation upon which our faith rests; this is the ground upon which we live our lives. Here we meet with God. Here we get acquainted with Him. Here we learn His thoughts, and here we learn His ways. Oh, what a wonderful Book this is! There is no book like it anywhere!

But I want to point out two other things about this Word, and they are what you would expect after you have come to understand that it is the Word of God. The first is this:

II. THE POWER OF THE WORD.

We would expect that the Word of God would be a powerful Word, would we not, because God is a powerful God. In fact, we can say more than that: HE IS AN ALL-POWERFUL GOD! HE IS OMNIPOTENT!

Let me give you some examples of this--the power of God's Word.

1) Gen. 1:3, "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." And you have this all through Genesis 1.

Along that same line, we have in Psa. 33:8, 9,

"Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast."

Here also the Psalmist was speaking of God's work in creation.

2) There was a centurion who came to the Lord Jesus on one occasion to get the Lord to heal his servant. The Lord said that He would go home with him. But the centurion did not feel that he was worthy to have the Lord come to his home, and so he said to the Lord, "I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed" (Matt. 8:8). And that is exactly what happened.

3) Heb. 4:12, "For the word of God is quick (living), and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

It is a powerful Word.

But let me point out two ways in which the Word is the most powerful--and both of these are found in the first Epistle of Peter.

A. It has power to completely change a person's heart.

Can you think of anything else that can do that--especially when you understand what that means?

The verses are the last part of 1 Pet. 1:22, and then v. 23:

. . . see that ye love one another
with a pure heart fervently:
Being born again, not of corruptible seed,
but of incorruptible, by the word of God,
which liveth and abideth for ever.

To be born again is to be regenerated, to be made a new creature, to receive eternal life. This is accomplished by, and only by, the Word of God.

Cf. also 1 Pet. 1:3.

The second thing that the Word does is:

B. To produce spiritual growth in the lives of those who know the Lord.

Note what Peter wrote in 1 Pet. 2:2, 3. (Quote.)

If we fail to proclaim the Word of God, we will never see anyone saved. People are saved through the death of Christ and by His precious blood, but the instrument that the Lord always uses that we may benefit from the sacrifice of Christ is the Word of God. And any Christian who neglects the Word of God--reading, understanding, obeying--will never grow and become stronger as a Christian.

But now there is one other point that I want to make from the words of Isaiah in Isa. 53:8, 9.

III. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN THE WORK OF THE WORD.

We have seen that this is the word OF GOD.

We have also seen that "the work of the Word" is twofold:

- 1) To save.
- 2) To sanctify.

But now the question is, Can we expect that all people who hear the Word will be saved? Or a question similar to that, Can we use the Word so that the people we tell about Christ will be saved? Or, to state it another way, Is the salvation of the lost up to us?

What did the Lord tell Isaiah, and what did Isaiah write for us to understand?

Note:

A. The illustration in v. 10.

Who makes it rain?

In our memory work at Trinity this Spring many of us are learning the Sermon on the Mount. And one of the verses we have learned says this about God, our heavenly Father:

. . . for he . . . sendeth rain on the just
and on the unjust (Matt. 5:45b).

Who makes it rain? God does.

Who determines when it will rain, and how much, and
where it will not rain? God does.

Now remember that because the Lord was using this as
an illustration to help us to understand how the Word
of God is used.

B. The application in v. 11.

Where does the Word come from? It comes out of "my
mouth," the Lord said.

And what is His promise? "It shall not return unto me
void."

How can that be when it seems that so often we preach,
or we witness, and nothing seems to happen? Often no
one is saved (as far as we can tell).

Look! Isaiah tells us two things that the Lord said:

- 1) "It shall accomplish that which I please."
- 2) "It shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

Is this always true? ALWAYS! ALWAYS! The Lord has
not left it to you and to me to determine how the Word
is going to be used; HE determines that!

You see, God has eternal purposes that He is accom-
plishing. We must not forget that. He has people He
has chosen for Himself. When Christ died on the Cross
it was not with the intention that everyone would be
saved. If that were true then we have the strange
phenomenon of an Almighty God Who is not able to do
what He wants to do because man won't let Him. Is
that a true picture of the God of the Bible? Abso-
lutely not! He is sovereign. No man can withstand
Him! His will is being done. His Word has never lost
its power. Everything is on schedule according to the
divine plan. So, when anybody trusts in the Lord
Jesus Christ for salvation, and is really saved, what
do we know? We know that God has reached him with
His Word, and that the Lord is the One Who has done a
saving work in the heart of that person. The person
himself believes, but only because God has, first of
all, done a work in that sinner's heart.

Concl: I want you to be encouraged by that, and I trust that that is the Lord's purpose in bringing me out here today. The major mistake that is being made in our generation is that we have forgotten, if we ever knew, the place that THE LORD has in using His Word, and what HE accomplishes when He uses it.

When we think about the work of the Lord, when you think of the ministry of Grace Community Church in Vernonia, don't just think in terms of Pastor Dickey, or your elders, or the number of the people in your fellowship, or even about how receptive the people of Vernonia are to you and to the Gospel. **START WITH GREAT THOUGHTS OF GOD, AND YOUR HEART WILL BE BLESSED, AND YOU WILL BE CONVINCED THAT, WHILE EVERYTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE TO YOU IN THIS WORK, NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE TO HIM!**