

-{1}. **Isaiah 48:17-22.** **Sadness of Sin**

A. Introduction

1. it is an old story, but maybe worthy of one more repetition
 - a. the wife was after her husband to go to church, but he always had a reason not to go: there were chores to be done; he was worn out from the week's work; and so on. One day she was sick abed, however, and persuaded him to go in her place. So he went. She awaited his report when he got home but he was silent; as usual. She asked:
 - (A) how was the service?
 - (B) fine
 - (C) did you hear the pastor's message?
 - (D) yup
 - (E) what was it about?
 - (F) sin
 - (G) what did he have to say about sin?
 - (H) he were agin it.
 - b. that is, in a way, the truth underlying our text today: God is against sin; why? Because it has spoiled the relationship He desires with the mankind he has created
2. There are many poignant cries to be found in Scripture
 - a. on a human level, probably none more than that of King David over Absalom: – *'The king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And thus he said as he walked, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"'*(2 Samuel 18:33)
 - b. but there are also a number of such poignant cries on the divine level; cries from the very heart of God
 - c. the very first is found in Genesis 3:9, *'Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"'* – sin had entered Paradise, coming between God and man
 - d. or Psalm 81:13-14: *'Oh that My people would listen to Me, That Israel would walk in My ways! I would*

quickly subdue their enemies And turn My hand against their adversaries.'

e. and in Hosea 11:8, as Israel's sins causes God's to punish her: 'How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart is turned over within Me, All My compassions are kindled.'

f. these are cries expressing the compassion of God over a people separated by sin from Himself, for which reason He sent His Son into the world to redeem mankind from the sin that enslaved it; and that Son, Jesus, cried out as He approached the holy city: 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!'

3. that is the sadness of sin – and today's passage echoes it once again – but it provides an answer for it; because God cares

B. Context and Content

1. Isaiah in these chapters, 40 through 48

a. has been speaking to the people of Judah, telling them that on account of their sin, that they will be going into exile in the land of Babylon

b. but also encouraging them, that this will not be the end of them, but that God will deliver them from Babylon

c. to this end, God will raise up a servant – he even gives his name, Cyrus – who will come from the north-east and destroy Babylon's power, freeing the Jews to return to their own land; to rebuild the temple and walls of the city

d. God will do this in order to show – not only to the Jews but to all the nations round about – all of them idolaters – that He, Yahweh, the God of Israel, alone is God

2. behind this message of Babylon and God's servant Cyrus

a. there lies in these chapters, never far away

b. the message of God's greater Servant, Messiah; Christ

c. as will be preceded and announced by the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare' – John the

Baptist

- d. so that now in these closing verses of chapters 40 to 48
- e. the servant Cyrus drifts into the background
- f. and the bondage in Babylon into the past
- g. to be heard of no further in this book
- h. as the focus turns to God's Suffering Servant, Jesus who is the Christ, the promised Messiah

3. this is a passage about Jesus Christ and His salvation

- a. as well as reflecting how the Jews historically had rejected God, it is prophetic of how they would in the future reject God in the flesh: 'He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.' (John 1:11)
- b. while what is said speaks in terms of the relationship between God and His OT people, Judah
- c. it bears in those terms, God's desired relationship with man which is to be found through Jesus Christ in His NT people, the church
- d. let us look briefly at this passage under the following outline:
 - (A) God's Concerned Cry, verses 17-19
 - (B) Man's Required Response, verses 20-22

C. God's Concerned Cry. 48:17-19

1. the Titles of God describe Jesus the Saviour, verse 17

- a. 'Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit, Who leads you in the way you should go.'
- b. this Jesus Christ is 'your Redeemer'
 - (A) the Redeemer paying the price to release people from a greater bondage than that of Egypt, or Babylon; rather from the bondage of sin; paying for it not with silver and gold, but by His own death in our place
 - (B) turn for a moment to Psalm 40:6: 'Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired; My ears You have opened; Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required.' – the OT sacrificial system could never deal with the bondage of sin; as a type it pointed to Christ

- (C) who was promised and prophesied; Psalm 40:7. 'Then I said, "Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me."' and in the councils of eternity, the Son continues to speak to the Father, saying, Psalm 40:8a, 'I delight to do Your will, O my God; ...'
 - c. this Jesus Christ is 'the Holy One of Israel'
 - (A) delighting to do the will of His Father; 'My food,' said Jesus, 'is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.' (John 4:34)
 - (B) saying in Psalm 40:8b, 'Your Law is within my heart.'
 - (C) so Jesus by His nature and works; as the Mediator and Sanctifier, was holy without spot or stain
 - d. this Jesus Christ is 'the Lord your God'
 - (A) and the only one able to be Redeemer
 - (B) that is worthy of the accolade of Thomas, His disciple, whose confession to Him was, 'My Lord and my God'
 - e. this Jesus Christ 'teaches you to profit' or to your benefit
 - (A) through His ministry while on earth, and,
 - (B) in heaven through the ministry of the Spirit He has sent
 - (C) Jesus Christ is pre-eminently the teacher; 'Come to Me,' He invites, 'all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and LEARN from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and **you will find rest for your souls**. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.' (Matthew 11:28-30)
 - f. this Jesus Christ 'leads you in the way you should go'
 - (A) He is our Captain; our Forerunner
 - (B) the path He leads us in has heaven as its destination
2. God's profit and loss statement, Isaiah 48, verses 18-19
- a. 'If only you had paid attention to My commandments! Then your well-being would have been like a river, And your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Your descendants would have been like the sand, And your offspring like its grains; Their name would never be cut off or destroyed from My presence.'
 - b. here we have expressed God's desired profit or benefit for His OT people; instead sin ruled them, resulting in loss

- c. the Law and commandments of God, are described in two quite opposite ways in the Bible; seemingly contradictory
- d. OT saints, speak of them in love, as in Psalm 119:14-16, 'I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts And regard Your ways. I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.'
- e. Paul describes it in these words, 'So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.' (Romans 7:12)
- f. but, on the other hand, as a means of meriting salvation, of right standing before God, the law is useless: 'because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.' (Romans 3:20)
- g. it is, then, by paying attention to God's commandments, that we can have knowledge of our sin; 'the Law,' say Paul, 'has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.' (Galatians 3:24)
- h. so by not paying attention to the Law's message, mankind in general and, here the Jews in particular, have turned from God, and when He came in the flesh, the profit they would have had in accepting Him was turned into loss
- i. well-being ... like the river – Shalom, peace, wellness of a person's whole being in relationship to his Creator is to be like the river (the article is definite in Hebrew), referring to one of the great river of the mid-East, the Euphrates – a river never drying up and in which one can be covered
- j. righteousness like waves of the sea – waves in Hebrew is from a verb, to roll, so that as the waves roll forever on the sea, thus the rectitude that in Christ covers the sinful one over and over again, preserving him acceptable to God
- k. well-being, or peace, and righteousness are salvation
- l. in Jesus Christ God has provided this great profit; but to disregard this is to bring great loss, that of one's own soul – that is the great sadness of sin.

D. Man's Required Response. 48:20-22

- 1. the chapter concludes with these three verses: 'Go forth from Babylon! Flee from the Chaldeans! Declare with the sound of joyful shouting, proclaim this, Send it out to the end of the earth; Say, "The LORD has

redeemed His servant Jacob." They did not thirst when He led them through the deserts. He made the water flow out of the rock for them; He split the rock and the water gushed forth. "There is no peace for the wicked," says the LORD.'

- a. God has done His part; He has provided redemption – to the Jews it was by Cyrus; to all the world, by Jesus Christ
 - b. the order is to 'go forth ... flee' – only about 50,000 left Babylon to return to their own land – the world empire was just too enticing – business too good – for the rest
 - c. to many, the things of this world are just too enticing, and the command 'go forth ... flee' falls upon deaf ears
2. For those who obeyed God in leaving Egypt, ... Babylon, ... the world – God has and will provide and sustain all along the way; as He did in the wilderness, so also in your life and mine. O believer, don't let yourself be caught by this world's allure.
3. for those who obey, life; otherwise, "'There is no peace for the wicked," says the Lord.'. O unbeliever, reject Christ no longer.

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| ASV | American Standard Version of 1901 |
| AV | Authorized (King James) Version |
| ERV | The Revised Version of 1885 |
| NAS | New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation |
| NIV | New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society |
| NKJV | New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers |
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| NRSV | New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A. |
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