

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 51

ISAIAH

CHAPTER 51

Theme: "Fear Ye Not the Reproach of Men"

THEME VERSES

Isaiah 51:7-8 (KJV) "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart *is* my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. **8** For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation from generation to generation."

INTRODUCTION

The patience of the LORD is beyond human comprehension. It appears that no matter how persistent man's rebellion is towards God, God would patiently call His people to stop rebelling and return to Him. This wonderful attribute of the LORD is vividly portrayed here in this chapter of Isaiah. Even as the LORD in the previous chapters declared that Gentiles will, in the future, replace Israel as God's witnesses because of Israel's persistent failure to bear a

godly witness, in chapter 51 of Isaiah, the call to Israel by God comes through once more.

The LORD promised Israel that His salvation is near and is meant to be forever. Why is it so difficult for Israel to stop sinning! Is sinning against God by God's people so delightful that they would keep on sinning regardless of the manifold approaches employed by the LORD to get Israel to stop! All things of the earth that we see, feel and handle today will vanish but the salvation that the LORD alone gives is eternal.

Do not be afraid of the testing and persecutions that will surely come upon the ones who fear God. The reproaches and persecution of the evil ones will continue and will never end. As long as Satan remains on the earth as the prince of this world, the evil ones will not stop hindering the work of God. But they will be destroyed in the last day. They will not remain nor will they stand forever. But the righteousness of the LORD will remain and stand forever. This is the blessed hope of every child of God.

Awake out of her slumber is the LORD's cry to Israel. Israel must come back to the LORD. The victory that the LORD longs to give to Israel is for Israel to take. All she has to do is repent and turn away from her sins.

What the LORD reveals here to call Israel back to Himself is very appropriate for today's Christians. All those who have the fear of God in them must come back to the Lord and be not afraid of the words of man. They must return to God on God's

terms. Their sin must cease immediately. They must stop attacking God's Word by saying that it has mistakes. To say or teach that the Bible has mistakes is to sin against God and to take the side of the enemies of God. Why is there so great a delight to sin! All those who follow after righteousness and seek the LORD should stop sinning and return back to the fold of God!

OUTLINE

1. Hearken – Turn to the LORD! (vv.1-3);
2. Hearken – God's Salvation is Forever (vv. 4-6);
3. Hearken – Do Not Be Afraid of Man (vv. 7-8);
4. Awake – Israel Shall Return in Victory (vv. 9-16);
5. Awake – Jerusalem in Desolation! (vv. 17-23).

COMMENTARY

Hearken – Turn to the LORD! – 51:1-3

The call to Israel was to listen i.e. the longing of the LORD is to bless a repentant and returning Israel. Remember Israel's beginnings from the time of Abraham. How good those days were when Abraham and Sarah, Israel's founding parents, obeyed the LORD and their walk with God was amazingly wonderful and blessed of God! It was not a general call to all Israel but to a select few in Israel. They were the ones who believe in

Christ. They are called the ones "that follow after righteousness" and the ones "that seek the LORD". They will be encouraged even in the midst of the darkest hour of Israel's history, to go into exile! They will meditate upon Israel's blessed and solid beginning and how far Israel has declined in the days of Isaiah into her many sins and rebellion. Perhaps then Israel might ask herself what has happened to her and then stop sinning and turn back to the LORD.

Return to the LORD and blessings would be immediate. The wasteland would be turned into the Garden of Eden. Joy and gladness will once more fill the Land of Promise and thanksgiving and melody will be heard again. Why will Israel not recall her past and bring those days back again into her life? All she needs to do is to repent and turn back to God. The LORD will not and cannot accept sinners who keep on sinning.

Hearken – God's Salvation is Forever – 51:4-6

Listen again O Israel to the call of God for He has set a light through His holy and perfect Word for His people. The perfect Word of God and God the Person cannot be separated. It is through His revealed Word that God the Person is made known to the world. To attack His perfect Word is to attack God. To doubt His perfect Word is to doubt God. To say that the perfect Word of God has mistakes is to say that God makes mistakes! The perfect Word of God and God are so eternally intertwined that God personified His Word in the Book of Proverbs to

describe Himself! (see Proverbs 8 and 9). God's righteousness is near. It is only a prayer away. It is very reachable. God's salvation is gone forth as the world will see the salvation of Israel, His people. The arm of the LORD i.e. the power of the LORD will judge the people i.e. the whole world and not Israel otherwise the LORD would have used "His" people. The isles (plural) wait for the LORD to show forth His salvation. In the power of the LORD will they trust Him i.e. find salvation in Christ. The rest of the world will soon believe the LORD God of Israel. Why will Israel not believe!

In Isaiah 51, the LORD applies the same reasoning to assure those who are God's people that His salvation as revealed in His Word is real and will be forever. It will last longer than the heavens and the earth. The heavens might vanish away like smoke which is fleeting and the earth will wax old like a garment becoming frail and fragile and easily torn to shreds and all her inhabitants shall die in like manner but the salvation of the LORD shall be forever! The heavens and the earth seem so eternal and all the inhabitants of the earth seem so unending as one generation comes to replace the former and yet the LORD used them to demonstrate the surety of His salvation which is wrought in Christ Jesus, His only begotten Son.

**Hearken – Do Not Be Afraid of Man
– 51:7-8**

With the assurance of the LORD's salvation in his heart, the believer must not flinch in the face of the greatest persecution. Using the

word "hearken" the third time in this chapter, Isaiah challenge the ones whom he called "ye that know righteousness" and "the people in whose heart is God's law" not to be afraid. Previously, the comparison was on the longevity of heaven and earth. Here it is on the persecutors of the faith. They will be severely punished by God like moth eating up garments. Moths devour garments at will and at a fast pace. It is said that a typical domestic moth can devour 12 cm of cloth in one minute under controlled environment [http://wiki.answers.com/Q/How_fast_does_a_moth_eat_clothes]. The worm shall eat up the enemies of God's people like wool i.e. a woollen garment. These enemies of the believers would be easily devoured by God. The people of God should never be afraid of them.

The believers are called here as "ye that know righteousness". Once a person has righteousness, he has nothing to be afraid of. To possess the righteousness of God, he has to be "perfect" and has never broken any of God's laws including the Ten Commandments. The moment he breaks one, he is disqualified and the righteousness is gone from him. For him to have this righteousness, he has to accept Christ as his Lord and Saviour. This is the only way to possess the righteousness of God. They are also said to have the laws of God in their hearts. Unbelievers and non-believers do not have the law of God in their hearts at all. Only those righteous in Christ have the laws of God in their hearts as verse 7 affirms. Therefore the reproach of men i.e.

disgrace or shame and their revilings i.e. vilification must not succeed in causing God's people to sin. They must be strong in the LORD knowing that their relationship is secured for eternity. The righteousness that God gives will not be taken away for it is forever. This means that even when the believer falls into sin because he stumbles, his righteousness will not be lost. God's salvation will continue from one generation to another generation meaning that it will never end.

Man's persecutions are all temporal and can only destroy the body but can never touch the soul which is already made righteous in Christ!

Awake – Israel Shall Return in Victory – 51:9-16

Israel must return to the LORD for victory is assured in Christ. This time Isaiah did not use hearken as before but he changed it to "awake"! Israel must stop sleeping. The LORD can and will do His powerful work in bringing Israel back to her glorious days. The LORD was the One who dried up the Red Sea that allowed Israel to cross it safely. Israel will return from captivity when Israel learns her lesson by repenting of all her sins. The power of the LORD has not changed. It is still the same LORD who is able to deliver. What are the enemies of Israel compared to the great Red Sea? If the LORD could part the Red Sea allowing Israel to walk on dry land to get out of the strong arm of Pharaoh, God can easily part any enemy and bring Israel back!

The LORD will comfort Israel. Israel should not be afraid of any man, regardless of how powerful he might appear in the eyes of other man. Man may call him the most powerful man on earth, but he will die and he is like the grass of the field, here today and gone tomorrow. The temporal nature of man contrasts with the eternal God and the eternality of the salvation that He has wrought for His people; this should instill courage into the heart of God's children. They must never be afraid of what man can do.

The LORD God is the Maker of the heavens and the foundation of the earth. Israel must not forget this even as they come under the oppression and fury of their oppressors. The captives of Israel cannot wait to be freed and that they should not die in the pit or their bread should not fail. But the LORD God is the One who divides the sea! How can Israel be fearful for their physical well being when such a powerful God is on their side! God has put His words in their mouths and has covered Israel in the shadow of His hand that He may plant the heavens and lay the foundation of the earth. Israel will be restored to the Land of Promise for Israel is God's people. Israel will come home!

Awake – Jerusalem in Desolation! – 51:17-23

"Awake" is a clarion call to Jerusalem for she is in desolation and if she does not stop sleeping in sin and wickedness, she will be completely destroyed! This whole chapter is about the southern kingdom. The use of Israel in this chapter is a synonym for

Judah for Israel, which by then would have been destroyed. The oppressors in this chapter have to refer to the Babylonians. This is a reference to the Babylonian captivity. Jerusalem is in a very sad state of punishment from the LORD for the fury of the LORD was against her. There is no one who will guide her as she is all alone. The two things that have come upon her are desolation and destruction by famine and the sword. The desolation is brought on by famine and the destruction is brought on by the sword. When these two things occur, no one will be sorry for Israel. Israel deserved everything that the fury of the LORD will bring upon her as her sins are many and full.

The sons of Jerusalem i.e. inhabitants will faint and they will lie at the head i.e. top of all the streets. This refers to the corners where streets meet, these inhabitants are found fainted and laying there. They are like wild bulls caught in a net unable to escape. It is the fury of the LORD that causes them to end up in such a sad state. They are drunken but not with wine which means that they are drunken by their sins and refuse to repent. The drunk does not know and acknowledge that they are drunk.

The fury of the LORD against His people will soon be turned against the Babylonians. Israel will no longer drink the dregs of the fury of the LORD any more. Once the period of exile is over, Israel will return home. The fury of the LORD will be transferred over to the Babylonians. Amen.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 51:1-8

TUESDAY: Isaiah 51:1-16

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 51:1-23

THURSDAY: Isaiah 51:1-23

FRIDAY: Isaiah 51:1-23

Discussion Questions

- 1. What in your opinion is the greatest hindrance to repentance?

- 2. What does it mean to you to be called by God as "ye that follow after righteousness" and "ye that seek the LORD"? What is the difference between the two if any? Please explain.

3. What are you most afraid of in your life? Are you afraid of suffering for Christ? Will you go to prison for Christ?

4. What does it mean to you to be called by God as "ye that know righteousness" and "the people in whose heart is God's law"?

5. How do you feel about the sure judgement of God against the enemies of God's people today? None of them will escape His fury and wrath; will this give you some sense of calm and relief?

6. How do you know that the belief in the doctrine of the perfect Bible is of God? How does one know that the other is not of God? Is there any way to be certain?

7. What lessons have you learnt from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?
