

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 56

ISAIAH

CHAPTER 56

Theme: "A Call to Persevere in the LORD!"

THEME VERSES

Isaiah 56:1-2 (KJV) "Thus saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation *is* near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. **2** Blessed *is* the man *that* doeth this, and the son of man *that* layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil."

INTRODUCTION

In the face of the enemies' successes after they abused their power and bullied their way to the top, it was inevitable that God's people, who were at the receiving end of their injustices, griped and complained. It made matters worse when these evil workers were not strangers but familiar faces. It could be expected of enemies from without like the Syrians and Assyrians. They were supposed to be enemies for they were obviously not Israelites. They had their own agenda to fight all who we were not like them. But when the enemies are from within, it makes life even more intolerable.

Expectations are dashed to pieces. When leaders, who are supposed to protect and watch over the flock, attack and take advantage of their flock, it makes matters impossible to comprehend and turns life into a hopeless mess.

The feeling and strong desire to throw in the towel and give up their fight for the faith was very real. The Israelites, who held on to their faith regardless of their sufferings, needed encouragement. Isaiah turned his attention to them in this chapter. He wanted them to know that the LORD had not forgotten them. They must never give up their fight to stay faithful to the LORD even when the entire nation falls into ruination! Even in the face of the greatest trial which is to be exiled by a foreign enemy, the faithful ones in Israel must keep on obeying the WORD.

They might be surrounded by many naysayers but the Word must still stand true to their soul regardless of what their eyes might see and what their ears might hear! Their faith must stand against all these calamities and appearances of the LORD's desertion when the Temple is destroyed and the city of God destroyed. Do not sin against God and join the evil ones. This was the main thrust of Isaiah's message to his people.

Christians today must also take heed. Sayings like "you can't win them, join them" will turn many hearts away from God and cause them to do wrong. God's faithful ones must hold on to their faith. These attackers will continue to cast doubts from all

quarters to destroy the faith of God's people. Do not let them succeed. Hold on to the plough that you have laid hands on all these years by the grace of God and do not look back and take your hands off the plough.

OUTLINE

1. Obedience at all Costs! (vv.1-2);
2. The LORD will Honour in His Time (vv. 3-8);
3. Blind Watchmen Chastised (vv. 9-12).

COMMENTARY

Obedience at all Costs! — 56:1-2

Using two imperatives (keep and do), the LORD encouraged the faithful Israelites not to give up their life of holiness and righteousness. He commanded them to keep on doing what is right. Firstly, they must keep or guard their judgements. This means that they must make the right decisions when they are confronted with difficult circumstances in life. Do not follow the crowd blindly. Use the perfect Word of God to guide you in all your decisions. Counsel from others can sway. Testimonies of peers have the potential to confuse especially when they seem to work so well for them. Situational ethics is the norm today and many have made this their philosophy of life since school days.

But God's counsel is to keep God's Judgements, based upon His Holy Word! Then do justice, which means to do what is right after you

want to do what is right according to God's Word. Let this be the way to live and the basis in making all decisions. Entrust the outcome of your decisions to your Heavenly Father to rule and overrule all the affairs of men including that of His children. He will take care of all His children. But all His children must do justice according to His holy Word.

How long must believers endure this life of judgement and justice when the enemies continue to "win"? God says to His obedient children, it will not be long. His salvation is near to come. His righteousness will be revealed soon. In the case of God's people in Isaiah's time, it could refer to the return in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah if these were exilic believers. It is difficult to be certain. If these were not exilic believers then it could refer to all believers who are facing the calamities of exile, the salvation will be with reference to the LORD strengthening their faith and the hope of being with God in heaven! The righteousness of the LORD would be revealed in the last days when the prophecies of the LORD are all fulfilled. The LORD would be vindicated.

The LORD used the word "blessed" to describe those who keep His judgement and do justice. The word "blessed" refers only to spiritual blessing which means only true believers are blessed. They would obey God's Word even when others will not do so. They obey because it is right and they are righteous. One of the many commandments that the LORD highlighted here is to keep the

Sabbath holy. God's faithful people are commanded by God to guard the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Do not pollute it by breaking it. This is the day where servile work must not be done. All work done must be done unto the LORD. Keeping the Sabbath day holy is the best way to measure spirituality and faith. They must also guard their hands and prevent them from doing evil. The life of holiness is dependent on the manner in which the Sabbath day is kept. If the Sabbath day is not kept then it is not possible to live a holy life. Man will then do evil!

The application for us today is that all believers must have a biblical understanding of the Sabbath day. Then he must learn to keep it holy unto the LORD at all costs. This will in turn help him to maintain his life of holiness. The person who is holy will keep the Sabbath day holy. The one who keeps the Sabbath day holy will also be holy!

**The LORD will Honour in His Time
– 56:3-8**

Proselytes, who have embraced the LORD as Lord and Saviour, would probably faced more difficulties than the faithful Israelites. The reason is that they were once Gentiles who embraced other gods and now that they have believed in the One living and true God of Israel and Israel is being chastised by the LORD for their sin, the proselytes would surely be greatly discouraged and regretful. They might say, "Perhaps the LORD is not the one living and true God that we believe in if He could not protect His own people." Such thoughts are

common when one is down and doubtful! Even if the LORD were to help, will He help only His own and leave us proselytes out in the cold? Isaiah assures them from God's Word that the LORD will never leave them or forsake them. Isaiah was told not to let the son of the stranger who hath joined himself to the LORD say that the LORD "hath utterly separated me from His people." This means that the LORD hath not cut the proselytes off from the privileges that He bestows to Israel. Isaiah told the Gentile believers not to think that the Lord will not protect and bless them in times of crisis.

Those who have become eunuchs i.e. cannot not bear any children say that they have become a dry tree without hope and are condemned. The LORD said that these men who are rejected because of their physical shortcomings but have embraced the LORD in faith would not be cast aside. The LORD will bless them. These eunuchs are described as the ones who keep the sabbaths of the LORD and choose the things that please the LORD and have taken hold of the LORD's covenant. They are truly born again believers, even though out caste by men, they will not be cast out by God.

God will bless this group of Christian "outcast". They will be given in the House of God a place and a name that is better than that of the sons and daughters i.e. the Israelites. The LORD will give to them an everlasting name that will not be cut off. This is a most reassuring

revelation to all Gentile believers. The LORD is indeed a God who is no respecter of person when it comes to doing what is right and just!

The LORD would also bless the Gentile believers. The reasons the LORD gave for blessing the eunuchs (verse 4) are also used to bless the Gentile believers (verse 6). These Gentile believers will be brought to the LORD's holy mountain and permitted to bring their offerings directly to the LORD. The LORD will accept their offerings. The House of the LORD will be called the "House of Prayer for all people."

This is what we are experiencing today as God's children. The only requirement is that they are genuine believers. They are the ones who keep the Sabbaths, live lives that please the LORD and take hold of the LORD's covenant and will not let go of it i.e. never give up the faith. The LORD will gather the outcasts of Israel in to Himself.

Blind Watchmen Chastised – 56:9-12

Turning his attention to the enemies of the LORD who refuse to repent and turn from their sins regardless of their dire circumstances, the LORD has only warnings for them. The enemies of Israel are called beasts here and they are coming to devour the Land of Israel. They are called beasts because of their ferocious nature and they come to destroy very fiercely. But the watchmen of the LORD i.e. the Israelite leaders like kings and princes and priests and prophets are all blind.

They just do not see the danger that Israel is in. When one does not see the danger, one does not take precautions to avert the dangers and protect oneself. The LORD described the Israelites, who continue in sin as ignorant, like dumb dogs that cannot bark i.e. warn. They are sleeping, lying down and they love to slumber. The LORD is referring to their spiritual slothfulness. The Israelites are ignorant of the Truth and they definitely do not know God. They indulge in sleep all their days. They think that Israel will always be fine and well protected by the LORD. They have forgotten their spiritual responsibilities. They have forgotten their LORD God.

They are greedy dogs caring not for the people of Israel but only for themselves. They fleece the flock instead of feeding them. Life goes on in sin and more sin. They drink and get drunk and they drink some more the next day. Eating, drinking and merry making are the norms of life for the people of Israel.

What is described here in this chapter has become the norm in many churches today. Amen.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 56:1-12

TUESDAY: Isaiah 56:1-12

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 56:1-12

THURSDAY: Isaiah 56:1-12

FRIDAY: Isaiah 56:1-12

Discussion Questions

1. Do you use the Bible to help you make decisions all the time? Is this an idealistic hope that can never be a reality? What are your experiences? Do you take concrete steps to make this a reality?

2. Why is the keeping of the Sabbath holy in the life of the believer so important to God? Do you agree that if one does not keep the Sabbath day holy, one cannot live a holy life? Conversely the one who keeps the Sabbath day holy will live a holy life?

3. Do you feel like an outcast at times? If you did, what was the reason that caused you to feel this way about

yourself? Do you think there is a cast system in Singapore? What about in Pandan?

4. Is ignorance a serious tragedy in churches today? Do you think that Pandan is ignorant of the truth?

5. What does it mean to be spiritually sleeping? They love to lie down and slumber on. What does this statement mean?

6. Have you experienced pastors who cared only for themselves and not the flock? What are some of their characteristics?

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