

**Isaiah's Book of Consolation (Isaiah 40-55)**  
**(#2) The Promise of God's Comfort through the Coming of God (Isa. 40:1-11) (cont.)**

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Outline of Isaiah 40-66

**SECTION THREE: ORACLES OF REDEMPTION AND CONSUMMATION**

- I. The Book of the Consolation of Israel (Chs. 40-55)
  - A. 40:1-11 The Prophet is to Announce God's Coming

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Today we will continue our consideration of the prophecy of Isaiah 40:1-11, which we began last Lord's Day. We were able to address verses 1-5, I believe. Today, Lord willing, we will consider verses 6 through 11.

In the passage before us, Isaiah 40:1-11, our Lord has provided for us a beautiful prophecy of the salvation that He brings to His people through Jesus Christ. The original context of the passage was God's promise of forgiveness of sins and restoration to Himself that He gave to returning Jewish Exiles from the Babylonian captivity of the 6<sup>th</sup> c BC. God had brought His judgment upon Israel. This people had sinned against all of God's kindness and blessing that He had so graciously bestowed upon them. Their sin brought forth His judgment. They had no rights, no claims upon God. Nevertheless God purposed to save them according to His grace. Before us is a message of God bringing peace to His people, for He would act on their behalf. He would bring them salvation.

We read first of God's...

**I. Promise of Comfort (40:1, 2)**

Again we read of God's instruction to Isaiah:

"Comfort, yes, comfort My people!"  
Says your God.  
<sup>2</sup>"Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her,  
That her warfare is ended,  
That her iniquity is pardoned;  
For she has received from the LORD's hand  
Double for all her sins."

We then read of the...

**II. Preparation for God's Comfort (40:3-8)**

In order for the consolation to come from God to His people, they would need to be prepared. Two voices are heard with view to this preparation. The first may be termed,

**A. A Voice of Preparation (40:3-5)**

<sup>3</sup>The voice of one crying in the wilderness:  
"Prepare the way of the LORD;

Make straight in the desert  
A highway for our God.  
<sup>4</sup>Every valley shall be exalted  
And every mountain and hill brought low;  
The crooked places shall be made straight  
And the rough places smooth;  
<sup>5</sup>The glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
And all flesh shall see it together;  
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

The second voice is...

### **B. A Voice of Proclamation (40:6-8)**

<sup>6</sup>The voice said, “Cry out!”  
And he said, “What shall I cry?”

“All flesh is grass,  
And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.  
<sup>7</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades,  
Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it;  
Surely the people are grass.  
<sup>8</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades,  
But the word of our God stands forever.”

<sup>9</sup>O Zion,  
You who bring good tidings,  
Get up into the high mountain;  
O Jerusalem,  
You who bring good tidings,  
Lift up your voice with strength,  
Lift it up, be not afraid;  
Say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!”

<sup>10</sup>Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong hand,  
And His arm shall rule for Him;  
Behold, His reward is with Him,  
And His work before Him.

<sup>11</sup>He will feed His flock like a shepherd;  
He will gather the lambs with His arm,  
And carry them in His bosom,  
And gently lead those who are with young.

Now verse 3 referred to a “voice.” This was a prophecy of John the Baptist, as we saw last Lord’s Day. In verse 6 we read of another “voice.” “The voice said, ‘Cry out.’” This is the voice of God telling His prophet to proclaim a message on His behalf to His people.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The footnote in *The Reformation Study Bible* says that this was the voice of an angel: “An angelic voice addresses Isaiah” citing Isaiah 6:6-9 as a reference. R. C. Sproul, *The Reformation Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), p. 1091. Why this is asserted is not explained. It would seem to me that as important a messenger and message this is, that it would be God commissioning His prophet and giving him the content of the message He would have them proclaim.

He gave the command, “Cry out.” Here we see the authority of God that stands behind His spokesmen. First, God calls forth one to be His “voice.” Second, God commands His prophet to speak on His behalf. And third, God gives His prophet the message that He would have His people hear through His prophet.

This exchange between the “voice” of His prophet and God Himself as another “voice,” shows forth the authority of God behind the voice of His prophets. Here are the comments of **John Calvin** on this verse:

He now describes a different “voice” from that of which he formerly spoke; for hitherto he had spoken about the “voice” of the prophets, but now he means the “voice” of God himself commanding the prophets to *cry*. Although the voice of the prophets is also the voice of God, whose instruments they are, (for they do not speak of themselves) (cf. 2 Peter 1:20, 21) yet this distinction is necessary, that we may know when the Lord commands, and when the prophets and ministers execute his commandments. There is also a beautiful comparison between the two “voices,” that we may receive with as much reverence what the prophets utter as if God himself thundered from heaven; for they speak only by his mouth, and repeat as ambassadors what he has commissioned them to declare.<sup>2</sup>

In order to show that the prophet is dependent on God to give him his message and to show the prophet’s submission to his calling and his attentiveness to God’s leading, the prophet responds in **verse 6**, “And he said, ‘What shall I cry?’” This question also serves to accentuate the importance of the content of the message that the prophet was to proclaim to the people of God.

What is the message God would have him proclaim? It is contained in **verse 6b-8**:

“All flesh is grass,  
And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.  
<sup>7</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades,  
Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it;  
Surely the people are grass.  
<sup>8</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades,  
But the word of our God stands forever.”

This description of the content of the prophet’s message is contained in 7 lines in poetic format. The first 6 lines speak of the frailty, weakness, and hopelessness of man under God’s judgment. The seventh, the last line, declares that sinful man’s only hope is in God’s commitment that He has purposed to save him from his sins. Let us consider this message that the prophet, that being John the Baptist, and by extension all of God’s spokesmen, are to proclaim to the people of God.

We first read of the metaphor of people as weak and vulnerable, as fleeting and transitory, as grass and flowers that wilt under the hot wind of the dessert that blows upon them.

“All flesh is grass,  
And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.  
<sup>7</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades,  
Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it;

In Judea the prevailing winds blow from the west off the Mediterranean Sea, bringing moisture and mild temperatures that enable the grass to grow green and the flowers bloom. But from time to time the wind shifts and comes upon the land from the east, off the hot and dry Transjordan region and the vast Sahara desert beyond. It is known as the Sirocco Wind and can reach hurricane speeds. I had a good friend who lived and served in Israel for many years. He told me that you could go to bed in the evening, the sirocco wind could blow in that night, and the next day the air was void of any moisture and the ground was parched dry, that the grass would turn brown and the flowers would wilt in that one night. Here in verse 7 the withering of the grass and the wilting of the flower is due to the judgment of God upon the people.

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<sup>2</sup> *Calvin’s Old Testament Commentaries*, Isaiah, PDF file, p. 128.

The Scriptures refer to this east wind in several places. Consider the following references, first, **Psalm 113:13ff**:

- <sup>13</sup>As a father pities his children,  
So the LORD pities those who fear Him.  
<sup>14</sup>For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.
- <sup>15</sup>*As for man, his days are like grass;  
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.*  
<sup>16</sup>*For the wind passes over it, and it is gone,  
And its place remembers it no more.*  
<sup>17</sup>But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting  
On those who fear Him,  
And His righteousness to children's children,  
<sup>18</sup>To such as keep His covenant,  
And to those who remember His commandments to do them.
- <sup>19</sup>The LORD has established His throne in heaven,  
And His kingdom rules over all. (Psa. 103:13-19)

Here we see that the imagery of the grass and flower is that of weakness and helplessness, and that the people are vulnerable and susceptible to God's judgment. It also illustrates how dependent people are upon the mercy and grace of God for life.

We read in **Jeremiah 11** of God's intention to bring judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem. God likens Himself as coming upon them (by means of the Babylonian armies) as a great dry wind from the east. Here the Sirocco Wind is an emblem for the judgment of God upon the people.

- <sup>12</sup>Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD!  
Surely You have greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem,  
Saying, 'You shall have peace,'  
Whereas the sword reaches to the heart."
- <sup>11</sup>*At that time it will be said  
To this people and to Jerusalem,  
"A dry wind of the desolate heights blows in the wilderness  
Toward the daughter of My people—  
Not to fan or to cleanse—  
<sup>12</sup>A wind too strong for these will come for Me;  
Now I will also speak judgment against them."*

- <sup>13</sup>"Behold, he shall come up like clouds,  
And his chariots like a whirlwind.  
His horses are swifter than eagles.  
Woe to us, for we are plundered!"
- <sup>14</sup>O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness,  
That you may be saved.  
How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?

We also read in **Ezekiel 17:9** and **10** of God's prophecy against Judah. Here Judah is described by the metaphor of a vine. Rather than looking to God for its health and vitality, the vine first looked for help from Babylon, stretching its roots toward the east for sustenance. But then when Babylon failed to provide for the vine,

the vine—Judah-- turned and grew toward Egypt, hoping that it would obtain protection from that country from its enemies. But God informed Judah that only He could protect His people and enable them to prosper. But because Judah looked to Egypt rather than to its God for help, God gave this message to His prophet to deliver to Judah regarding His “vine”:

<sup>9</sup>“Say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD:

“Will it thrive?

Will he not pull up its roots,

Cut off its fruit,

And leave it to wither?

All of its spring leaves will wither,

And no great power or many people

Will be needed to pluck it up by its roots.

<sup>10</sup>Behold, it is planted,

Will it thrive?

***Will it not utterly wither when the east wind touches it?***

***It will wither in the garden terrace where it grew.””***

Returning to Isaiah 40 we read that after God gave His metaphor of His intention to humble His people, He explained the metaphor in **Isaiah 40:7** and **8**:

Surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades,

God had judged the nation of Judah severely for its sins. God had brought His judgment on the land and its people. It had stripped them of all their self-righteousness, all of their presumption, all of their claims of favor from God. It was God’s Word that had brought judgment. His convicting, judging Word is likened to the hot desert wind, common to the land of Israel, that saps the life out of every living thing. As the eastern *sirocco wind* off the desert could come and cause all vegetation to wither, so God sent His Word, which was initially a decree of judgment, devastating the land and sending His people into captivity in Babylon. He had withered them, showing that there was nothing they had apart from Himself, nothing in this life, which they could consider to be lasting. In Isaiah 40, the prophet speaks of the power of the Word of God to humble man, to cause him to wilt and shrivel in his own estimation so that he might look alone to God who can save him.

God tells His prophet that he was to teach His people, showing them, convincing them, that they had no ability of themselves to live before Him. They were weak and ephemeral, who could not bear up under His judgment. They were doomed to die, to have their life extinguished from them. What hope had they? Only in this simple word of hope in that God promised to bring them salvation. In contrast to the hopelessness of them surviving for long under the judgment of God, we read of the message of hope that the prophet was to proclaim to the people: ***“But the word of our God stands forever.”*** God Himself had promised that He would bring salvation to His people. But in order to be prepared to receive this message of good news of their salvation, they would first need to see themselves as weak, helpless, and without hope under God’s judgment. Only then would they look in faith and receive the blessing of God’s salvation freely bestowed upon them.

...although man is smoke and vanity, and all his excellence is deceitful and fading, yet believers have the best reason for glorying, because they seek salvation not from themselves; and that, although they are strangers on the earth (Hebrews 11:13), yet they possess heavenly happiness, because God unites himself to them by his word; for by renouncing ourselves we are led to desire the grace of God. The Prophet knew, indeed, what he ought to say; but by this question he intended to make a stronger impression on their minds, in order to show that he and all the other servants of God are constrained by necessity to utter this sentiment, and that they cannot begin to teach in any other manner, though they should put a hundred questions and inquiries; as indeed they will gain nothing by choosing to adopt any other method.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 128.

These words of Isaiah are quoted by Peter in his first epistle. Peter applied this passage to believers in Jesus Christ. We read in **1 Peter 1:22-25** these words:

<sup>22</sup> Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, <sup>23</sup> having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, <sup>24</sup>because

“All flesh is as grass,  
And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.  
The grass withers,  
And its flower falls away,  
<sup>25</sup>But the word of the LORD endures forever.”

Now this is the word, which by the gospel was preached to you. (1 Pet. 1:22-25)

Here we read of a call to holy living because of our new birth by the Word of God (**1:22-25**). First, Peter declared that all true Christians have purified themselves by obeying the Truth. Peter assumed that this is so. “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth.” The often-stated principle is implied here: ***A true Christian is one who has in faith responded to the Word of God in action, not just in word.*** If one really *believes* the truth he will *obey* the truth. In doing so he will turn (repent) from sin and begin to order His life according to the truth of God’s Word, the Bible. There is no such thing in the New Testament as a true Christian whose life is characterized by disobedience to the Word of God. And yet, although the Christian has already “purified” himself of many things, there is much more that needs to be done.

Secondly, Peter states that ***all true Christians have sincere love for other true Christians.*** He described them as having a “sincere love of the brethren.” Again, Peter assumes this is so. Now, the Christian in one sense owes “love” to all men, whether Christian or not (or he should). This may be described as a general desire for their good. It may be described as *goodwill toward men* and it should be seen in our action toward them. We are even to love our enemies, as the Lord Jesus commanded us. Essentially the idea is this: we should have a sincere desire to “promote another’s true welfare.” And yet, although a Christian owes love to all men, he has, nevertheless, ***a love for Christians, which is of a purer kind and of a more intimate degree.*** He has a “sincere love” for the brethren (1:22). This is a product of the Holy Spirit, so much so that Paul could write to the Christians at Thessalonica: “But concerning love of the brethren you have no need to have any one write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another” (1 Thess. 4:9). A person, who does not possess “sincere love” for other Christians, does not know God.

Nevertheless, ***true Christians need to love one another more deeply.*** This is the command of Peter in **verse 22**. Although we love, we need to love more. Later Peter stated how this may be done in practical ways; here, he simply states the command, “Love one another deeply.” What is being stressed here is that we should purpose to love each other with constancy and with intensity. This is something that we all need to work on, do we not?

The next three verses give further reasons why this command should be obeyed. It is fitting to do so when you consider ***the manner in which you were born again (1:23).*** The command to love one another deeply should be obeyed when one considers that you have been born again by the imperishable, living, “seed” of God.

The question may be asked, ***What is this incorruptible seed to which Peter refers?*** It is not the “Word”; rather, it is the principle of spiritual life, or grace, that is imparted and sustained by means of the eternal Word of God. The Word mentioned here is the ***instrument*** by which God imparts this “seed” to His people. Each of us has been born again having been recipients of the Truth, the eternal Word of God. God the Father has caused us to be born again.

How does this verse relate to loving the brethren fervently? Essentially this way: In contrast to earthly life that is weak and temporal, our life that God has given us is eternal. ***Because we have this common family life of eternal duration, having been wrought and being sustained by the imperishable “seed”, we should love one another deeply.*** The point is this; we have a family connection with one another. And this connection of family is much closer and of a purer kind than blood relation of earthly brothers and sisters. Whereas they were born of “seed” bringing about an earthly connection that will cease with death, children of God were born of “seed”

which brought about a family connection that will never dissolve. Because the “seed” which resulted in your “second birth” is eternal, the family connections that it produced are also eternal, therefore we should love the brethren “deeply.” We will be dwelling in eternity together, as brothers and sisters in Christ. We should love one another because of this connection.

It is fitting to obey this command when you consider **the eternal nature of the Word of God (1:24, 25a)**. These verses are the quotation of **Isaiah 40:6-8**. We have seen that Isaiah 40 is a passage that holds forth the promise of salvation for certain Jewish exiles that had been taken were captive in Babylon, but at the same time it looks forward to the salvation that we have through Jesus Christ in this church age. God had judged the nation of Judah severely for its sins. But in addition, Isaiah declared that God in His mercy and grace would send forth His Word again, but this time it would not be to judge, but to redeem His captive people. And so the prophet foretells of John the Baptist’s ministry and then of the coming of the Lord Jesus to His people, bringing salvation to them. Here in our New Testament passage, Peter is speaking to “strangers” or “exiles” as well, but they are identified as Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, who are strangers in this fallen world. We *have been the recipients* of God’s life-giving grace through His Word.

Peter emphasizes as did Isaiah, **(1) the fragile and temporary nature of life apart from God**. All men are frail, and the best that they can accomplish and the best they can become is fragile. All will soon fade and perish. How easily and quickly can all come to nothing that a man is and has. As fast as grass can shrivel and flowers wilt, a man can deteriorate and perish.

But in contrast, Peter also emphasizes **(2) the enduring nature of the Word of God through which the Father gives eternal life**. This is set in contrast to the life that an earthly father imparts to his children, which is but temporal. The Word of God is truth and it is eternal and therefore what it produces and sustains is also eternal. “Till mind ceases to be mind, truth to be truth, God to be God, it must continue, binding believers in a holy, happy relation to God as their Father and to one another as brethren, to all eternity” (John Brown).

In addition, Peter reasons that it is fitting to obey this command when you consider **it was this Word that was preached to you (1:25b)**. What a great privilege it is to have the imperishable, living, and enduring Word of God preached! It is the means by which God accomplishes His purposes. A work of God takes place in the hearts of God’s chosen people, a work that is mysterious in nature and is hidden from any possibility of physical scrutiny. The Spirit of God causes people to be born again through this proclaimed Word, which results in bringing each of His people into eternal relation with Himself and with all others who have been similarly blessed.

Now, returning to Isaiah 40, we read of the “Promise of Comfort” in 40:1 and 2, and then we read of the “Preparation for God’s Comfort” in 40:3-8. We next read of the one who brings God’s comfort...

### **III. The Prince of Comfort (40:9-11)**

The direct speech or voice of God concluded with verse 8.<sup>4</sup> With verse 9 the prophet Isaiah speaks. He directs his comments to “Zion” or “Jerusalem” (v. 9), which are metaphors for the surviving remnant, that is, the elect whom God purposed to save from their sins. But the use of these terms may also suggest that the exiles, who would be the recipients of salvation, are ones who had returned to their homeland.

The people of God are entrusted with a message to proclaim to the people. They are ones who proclaim the “gospel”, the “good tidings.” They are to proclaim loudly and boldly, with great confidence, announcing that God is in their midst. He who had forsaken them, leaving them to encounter His judgment, is now in their midst. God Himself is with them, among them, ruling over them as their king. He is defending them and blessing them. He will care for His people as a shepherd cares for his flock. It is a serene scene of peace, security, and abundant provision. In **verse 9** we first read of...

#### **a. The Presentation of the Prince (40:9)**

<sup>9</sup>O Zion,

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<sup>4</sup> The NKJV has quotation marks including verses 6b through 8, suggesting that this was the content of the message that God gave to His prophet to declare to His people. In verses 9 through 11 the prophet is speaking, telling about God.

You who bring good tidings,  
Get up into the high mountain;  
O Jerusalem,  
You who bring good tidings,  
Lift up your voice with strength,  
Lift it up, be not afraid;  
Say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"

The news of God's victory in saving His people is to be declared far and wide. The people of God are to climb on top of a high mountain so that the message of "good tidings" may be proclaimed widely. We then read in **verse 10**...

**b. The Power of the Prince (40:10)**

<sup>10</sup>Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong hand,  
And His arm shall rule for Him;  
Behold, His reward is with Him,  
And His work before Him.

It is God alone and God Himself that achieves the state of peace for His people. He has no assistance from another. His own arm brought deliverance for His people. He accomplishes for His own what they could not do for themselves.

God Himself is present in their midst. It is a cause of great joy for all of His people. We had read earlier in Isaiah 40:3-5 that a highway was to be prepared so that the king could come to His land and visit His people. Isaiah declared in verse 9 that the King had arrived and had brought salvation to His people. God is presented as

a conquering hero, or a "mighty one." The same thought is expressed by the statement "his arm rules for him." That is to say: His strength prevails and gains the victory. But the statement now following adds a very significant thought. The "reward" or "recompense" that this conquering hero brings with him is nothing other than his people, whom he has regained as his own and delivered from the power of the enemy.<sup>5</sup>

And then thirdly, we read of...

**c. The Presence of the Prince (40:11)**

<sup>11</sup>He will feed His flock like a shepherd;  
He will gather the lambs with His arm,  
And carry them in His bosom,  
And gently lead those who are with young.

Of course we see the Lord Jesus clearly portrayed here. He described Himself in similar terms, perhaps echoing the prophecy of Him recorded here in Isaiah 40. Our Lord Jesus is the Good Shepherd, who gives Himself for His sheep.

**What are the lessons that we may take to heart from our passage?**

1. Let us see that the first task of the messenger of the Word of God is to humble people, show them their helplessness and hopelessness, that unless God is merciful and gracious, they will suffer under the wrath of God. The chief aim and design of the Word of God preached and taught is to show man his own sinfulness, his guilt before God in that he is undeserving of God's favor, and his helplessness to bring about any change in his relationship with God. In short, we are to proclaim loudly and frequently the biblical doctrine of the total depravity of man. That is what is reflected before us.

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<sup>5</sup> H. C. Leupold, *Isaiah*, vol 2, chapters 40-66 (Baker Book House, 1971), p. 28.

This doctrine may be at the head of the list for good reason, for if one gets this matter right, the rest will follow easily. On the other hand, if one is wrong here, he will be wrong on what follows. **J. C. Ryle** wrote,

There are very few errors and false doctrines of which the beginning may not be traced up to unsound views about the corruption of human nature. Wrong views of the disease will always bring with them wrong views of the remedy. Wrong views of the corruption of human nature will always carry with them wrong views of the grand antidote and cure of that corruption.

If the disease can be diagnosed to be a terminal matter, then the number of possible treatments becomes very few. Get this first matter right, and the other four points will come along easily.

This is a matter that perhaps needs proclaimed above all others. But it is not. Man's condition is not commonly described as hopelessly lost, but rather he is only damaged a bit. He does not need redemption, but rather understanding and some assistance. It is no wonder that Christianity is so powerless in our land when the pastor of the largest evangelical church (i.e. Joel Osteen), so called, refuses to mention the word "sin." In contrast to his approach, listen to the words of Charles Spurgeon

The withholding of the doctrine of the total depravity of man has wrought serious mischief to many who have listened to a certain kind of preaching. These people do not get a true healing because they do not know the disease under which they are suffering; they are never truly clothed because nothing is done towards stripping them. In many ministries, there is not enough of probing the heart and arousing the conscience by the revelation of man's alienation from God, and by the declaration of the selfishness and the wickedness of such a state. Men need to be told that, except divine grace shall bring them out of their enmity to God, they must eternally perish; and they must be reminded of the sovereignty of God, that He is not obliged to bring them out of this state, that He would be right and just if He left them in such a condition, that they have no merit to plead before Him, and no claims upon Him, but that if they are to be saved, it must be by grace, and by grace alone. The preacher's work is to throw sinners down in utter helplessness, that they may be compelled to look up to Him who alone can help them.<sup>6</sup>

Now, does the Bible support the Arminian position that man is not totally fallen into sin, but that he has only been damaged somewhat with respect to his nature? Or does the Bible present a sad and serious picture of the condition of man, that he is hopelessly lost and undone, unable to raise himself from his condition unless Christ sets him free? I think the answer is obvious to anyone who knows his Bible to any degree.

2. Let us see how dependent we are on God Himself to come to our rescue, who speaks to us and enables us to put our faith in Him through His Word that is proclaimed to us.

3. Let us do what we may do to receive spiritual benefit from the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures. Let us hear some words of application from **Thomas Watson (17<sup>th</sup> c.)** in this regard:

**A. Take heed, as you love your souls, that the Word becomes not ineffectual to you.** There are some to whom the Word preached is ineffectual. When men harden their hearts willfully, God hardens them judicially. The Word is ineffectual to them.

1. Such as reject the Word; who, instead of judging themselves, judge the Word.
2. Such as live in contradiction to the Word (Isa. 30:9).
3. Such as are more hardened by the Word. "They made their hearts as adamant than stone" (Zech. 7:12).

**B. Consider three things:**

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<sup>6</sup> Charles Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner* (Eerdmans, 1963), p. 24.

1. If the Word preached does us no good, there is no other way by which we can be saved. This is God's main way of saving His people. As Jesus taught, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

2. To come to the Word, and not be savingly wrought upon, is that which the devil is pleased with. He cares not though you hear frequently, if it be not effectually. He is not an enemy to hearing, but to profiting from the Word.

3. If the Word preached be not effectual to men's conversion, it will be effectual to their condemnation. The Word will be effectual one way or the other. If it does not make the heart better, it will make your guilt heavier. We pity those who have not the Word preached to them. ***But it will be worse for them that have had the Word preached in their hearing, but it did not profit them.*** Dreadful is their case that go loaded with sermons to hell. But I will conclude with the apostle, I am "persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation" (Heb. 6:9).

### C. How may we *hear* the Word that it may be effectual in saving us?

1. **Give great attention to the Word preached.** Let nothing pass without taking special notice of it. "All the people were very attentive to hear him" (Luke 19:48). We are to be as Lydia, oh whom it was written, "Lydia, a seller of purple, which worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14). Give attention to the Word, as to a matter of life and death. For this purpose have a care to banish vain impertinent thoughts, which will distract you, and take you off from hearing attentively and rightly. Banish dullness in your thinking.

2. **If you would have the Word effectually preached to you, come with a holy appetite to the Word.** The thirsting soul is the thriving soul. Come with hungerings of soul after the Word, and desire it, that it may not only please you, but profit you.

3. **If you would have the preaching of the Word effectual, come to it with tenderness upon your heart.** If we preach to hard hearts, it is like shooting arrows against a bronze wall, the Word does not enter. It is the melted wax that receives the seal; it is the melted heart that is impressed with the Word.

4. **If you would have the Word effectual, receive it with meekness.** "Receive with meekness the engrafted Word" (James 1:21). Meekness is a submissive frame of heart to the Word--a willingness to hear the counsels and reproofs of the Word. Proud men, and guilty, cannot endure to hear of their faults. Lay aside your pride and stubbornness, receive the Word in meekness.

5. **Mingle the Word preached with faith.** "The Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith" (Heb. 4:2). When you hear a promise spoken, apply it. When you hear Christ preached, apply Him to yourselves.

6. **Be not only attentive in hearing, but retentive after hearing.** "We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb. 2:1). If the ground not retain the seed sown in it, there can be no good crop.

7. **Reduce your hearing to practice.** Live on the sermons you hear. Say as the psalmist, "I have done Thy commandments" (Psa. 119:166). Be filled with the fruits of righteousness (Phil. 1:11). The hearing that will never save the soul is that which does not reform the life.

8. **Beg of God that He will accompany His Word with His presence and blessing.** The Holy Spirit must make all effectual. "While Peter spoke, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard" (Acts 10:44).

9. **If you would hear the Word effectually to your salvation, make it familiar with you.** Think and talk about what you heard after you have come home. "My tongue shall speak of Thy Word" (Psa. 119:172). One reason why some people get no more good by what they hear, is that they never speak to one another of what they have heard; as if it were a shame to speak of matters of salvation. "They that feared the Lord spoke often to one another...and a book of remembrance was written" (Mal. 3:16).