

**Isaiah's Book of Consolation (Isaiah 40-55)
(#17) The Third Servant Song (50:4-11)**

(The outline of Isaiah 40-55 is placed at the end of these notes.)

Let us read **Isaiah 50:1-11**.

¹“Where is the certificate of your mother’s divorce,
Whom I have put away?
Or which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you?
For your iniquities you have sold yourselves,
And for your transgressions your mother has been put away.

²Why, when I came, was there no man?
Why, when I called, was there none to answer?
Is My hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem?
Or have I no power to deliver?
Indeed with My rebuke I dry up the sea,
I make the rivers a wilderness;
Their fish stink because there is no water,
And die of thirst.

³I clothe the heavens with blackness,
And I make sackcloth their covering.”

⁴“The Lord GOD has given Me
The tongue of the learned,
That I should know how to speak
A word in season to him who is weary.
He awakens Me morning by morning,
He awakens My ear
To hear as the learned.

⁵The Lord GOD has opened My ear;
And I was not rebellious,
Nor did I turn away.

⁶I gave My back to those who struck Me,
And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard;
I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.

⁷“For the Lord GOD will help Me;
Therefore I will not be disgraced;
Therefore I have set My face like a flint,
And I know that I will not be ashamed.

⁸He is near who justifies Me;
Who will contend with Me?
Let us stand together.
Who is My adversary?
Let him come near Me.

⁹Surely the Lord GOD will help Me;
Who is he who will condemn Me?
Indeed they will all grow old like a garment;
The moth will eat them up.

¹⁰“Who among you fears the LORD?
Who obeys the voice of His Servant?
Who walks in darkness
And has no light?
Let him trust in the name of the LORD
And rely upon his God.

¹¹Look, all you who kindle a fire,
Who encircle yourselves with sparks:
Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks you have kindled—
This you shall have from My hand:
You shall lie down in torment.

Last Lord’s Day we considered the message of Isaiah 49. The message of Isaiah 49 had direct application for the Jewish people in Babylon, who, upon considering their situation and experience, thought their miserable condition would never end. It set forth the reasons that the people of God would have believed their case was hopeless, that there was no reason that God would ever bring them to experience salvation. Their situation was a dire one. They had received the just consequences of their actions from God who had judged them. They were without strength and without cause for hope. God would point them to His Servant who would come and do for them that which they could not accomplish, even their deliverance from Babylon and return to their homeland--Zion. But ultimately the message of this passage reflects a larger context than the historical captivity of the people of Judah in Babylon. The passage is applicable to the elect, those whom God has purposed to save from their sins and bring them unto Himself.

In chapter 49 we saw how God addressed different causes for His people to think that their case was hopeless, reasons that they thought their condition was past even God’s ability to redeem them. The people of God had been in the position that they thought that they had been forsaken and forgotten by God, even to a point that remedy was no longer possible (49:14-18). There was little visible evidence for hope for it seemed that they were beyond recovery for their oppressors were too great (49:19-23). Nevertheless, God promised that He would deliver His people. We read this in Isaiah 49:25-26:

²⁵But thus says the LORD:

“Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away,
And the prey of the terrible be delivered;
For I will contend with him who contends with you,
And I will save your children.

²⁶I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh,
And they shall be drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine.
All flesh shall know
That I, the LORD, am your Savior,
And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

God would take away His people, the “captives” from the forces that held them, which were “the mighty.” God would save His people and He would save them in such a way that all knew that it was He, the LORD, that had redeemed His people.

But with the reference to God in His work of redeeming His people, possible objections might be raised. “Redemption” conveys the idea of God buying back His people from slavery. But were His people in a position in which they could be “redeemed?” Could God justly enable the return of His people due to

the manner in which their misery had been brought upon them? In verses 1 through 3 of Isaiah 50 we have answered the charge that God would not be just in taking them back unto Himself. Let us read again **verse 1**:

*¹“Where is the certificate of your mother’s divorce,
Whom I have put away?
Or which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you?
For your iniquities you have sold yourselves,
And for your transgressions your mother has been put away.
And I make sackcloth their covering.”*

Two analogies are given in **verse 1**. The first is an analogy of a *divorce*. The second is that of *a child sold into slavery for a debt*. Let us consider each of these.

First, the issue of how God had dealt with Israel’s unfaithfulness to Him is addressed. Israel is set forth as an unfaithful wife to her husband, God. “Where is the certificate of your mother’s divorce, whom I have put away?” Would it be just for God to restore a wife to Him that He had formally divorced? God is showing that with respect to Judah, although having been regarded as the wife of Jehovah, He had never formally “divorced” her.

Now with respect to the northern kingdom of Israel, the ten tribes of Israel, God had formally divorced her. We read of this in **Jeremiah 3:6-10**.

The LORD said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: “Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot. ⁷And I said, after she had done all these things, ‘Return to Me.’ But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. ⁸Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. ⁹So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. ¹⁰And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense,” says the LORD.

In order to understand this metaphor, it is important that we understand the Mosaic Law’s stipulation for divorce, which is set forth in **Deuteronomy 24:1-4**.

“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, ²when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man’s wife, ³if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, ⁴then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.”

Because a divorced woman could not be justly taken back by a former husband, “Israel”. Or more properly “Judah”, which had been taken captive to Babylon, might have thought that God would not be willing or be just in receiving His people again, restoring their relationship to Him. But in verse 1 God indicated that He had not sent them away in an arbitrary fashion, nor had He given her a formal document of divorce. She had been as an unfaithful wife to Him, having abandoned Him. She had no writing of divorce by which she could justify her innocence, for there had not been one issued. And because there had not been a formal divorce in the severance of their relationship, God could justly receive her back unto Himself.

Now God was trying on the one hand to show that His people were not so far gone that He could not recover them. But on the other hand He was attempting to lead them to own their sin. They were responsible for the break in the relationship, not He. And when God indicated that He had not given a formal

written divorce to Judah but He had to Israel, the northern kingdom, He was not implying that Judah was less culpable than Israel. Actually Judah was more guilty, for Judah had witnessed what God did to Israel and yet had not repented of her sins. God had said of Judah, “Backsliding Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah” (Jer. 3:11).

The second metaphor is that Israel was as a child that had been sold in order to satisfy a debt owed, or perhaps a woman who sold herself into slavery in order to pay a debt owed. This kind of situation was common in the ancient world. We might look at **2 Kings 4:1ff** in which this situation is described:

A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD. And the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves.”

²So Elisha said to her, “What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?”

And she said, “Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil.”

³Then he said, “Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors-- empty vessels; do not gather just a few. ⁴And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones.” (2 Kings 4:1-4)

Of course we could read further of the miracle that Elisha performed to provide for this woman so that she could pay her debts.

The point of the metaphor was to show that God did not owe someone a debt so as to be forced to sell his son into bondage, the situation in which the people of Judah found themselves. No, God declared that they were responsible for having left Him so, essentially, He is free to take them back in mercy. They were not free to return, for they were in bondage; but He was free to retrieve them. Due to God’s mercy, He would be willing to do so. Due to His grace, He was able to bring them back unto Himself.

Here is an explanation of the two metaphors of **verse 1**:

Now to sum up this somewhat difficult first verse—looking at Israel’s present plight in her Captivity, as it is thinkable that this all came about because the Lord, as a hot-tempered husband, cast off his wife and finalized the transaction by a writ of divorcement? Of course not. Or is it possible that the Lord was in debt to someone and unable to pay and had to resort to the sale of the very members of his family to meet his obligations? Such an assumption is equally out of place. Israel brought all its misery upon itself. She has not been overtaken by some heavy doom. She misconstrued the Lord’s share in what had happened.¹

We then read in **verses 2 and 3** that God would of His own will and work accomplish the deliverance of His people.

***²Why, when I came, was there no man?
Why, when I called, was there none to answer?
Is My hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem?
Or have I no power to deliver?
Indeed with My rebuke I dry up the sea,
I make the rivers a wilderness;
Their fish stink because there is no water,
And die of thirst.
³I clothe the heavens with blackness,
And I make sackcloth their covering.”***

¹ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, vol. 2, chapters 40-66 (Baker Book House, 1971), pp. 190f.

In order to confront further this people with their guilt, He appeals to their conscience. God essentially said to them, “Over and over I called on you to return, but you would not?” God was free from blame with respect to their broken relationship. When He had offered a termination of their distress, they had refused Him.

God asked, “Is My hand so short that it cannot ransom? Or have I no power to deliver?” The problem did not lie in God’s inability to save them, but rather, it was due to their refusal to respond to Him.

Let us keep this truth before us as we pray for the salvation of loved ones and as we put forth effort to see the lost come to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. People remain in unbelief not due to any weakness or failure on God’s part. Rather, the guilt lies with them. They have heard and they have refused. God is just to leave them in their sins. And yet let us plead with our God to be merciful on the ones for whom we are burdened. God could save them if His put forth His effort to do so. Let us plead with Him that He would. Even as we plead with sinners to turn from their sin, let us plead to our God that He would be merciful and gracious.

The Lord next refers to His great power in having delivered Israel from Egypt long before. He does so to show that the problem of these people remaining in bondage was not due to a lack of power for God to deliver; He had done it before. He declared, “My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness; their fish stink because there is no water, and die of thirst.”

God then declared that He had clothed the skies as those who mourn over the death of their loved ones. This speaks of the occasion that God slew the first-born of Egypt in order to deliver His people from their bondage to the Egyptians.

And so, God is able to reclaim His people from their sins, in spite of all their failures and rebellions, and in spite of the power of their oppressors, God is able to effect deliverance. But how can this be done? After having covered them with shame, the Lord shows the way that He removes His people’s shame—He would deliver them through His Servant. And so we now arrive to **verses 4 through 11**, which is the **Third Servant Song**. It is through the Servant of the Lord that God would bring deliverance to His people. He can do for them that which they cannot do for themselves.

As we look at this song, we might consider the following outline:

- I. The Servant is taught by God (50:4-6)
- II. The Servant’s perseverance is seen in adversity (50:7-9)
- III. The Servant’s people are encouraged; all others are warned (50:10,11)

Let us first consider that...

I. The Servant is taught by God (50:4-6)

Here we read the words of the Servant. He describes His relationship with His God. Of course this is a beautiful prophecy of our Lord Jesus. Here He is speaking prophetically of how God His Father will assist Him in His work as His Servant.

*⁴“The Lord GOD has given Me
The tongue of the learned,
That I should know how to speak
A word in season to him who is weary.
He awakens Me morning by morning,
He awakens My ear
To hear as the learned.*

This is a wonderful prophecy of our Lord Jesus. Let us consider more precisely what is declared.

We read in verse 4 that God had sent His Servant in order to secure the deliverance of His people. He is commissioned to bear a message to His people. Although the content of the message is not clearly detailed

here, it is a message of repentance from sin, and faith in the Servant, in that He is the bearer of God's message to the people. What we will later see is that the Servant will not be received by the people, but they will reject Him, which will result in Him suffering on their behalf, thereby He would atone for their sin.

Notice that the Servant is "given" the tongue of "the learned", or that of "disciples." What is stressed is that the content of His teaching to his disciples is given to Him by God Himself. God was communicating to His people through His Servant. Jesus came and spoke the Word of God to the people of God.

We might consider several New Testament statements of this ministry of our Lord Jesus. We read in **John 8:26** of our Lord's words to His disciples, "I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him." Jesus declared in **John 15:15**, "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you." And then in **Luke 5:1ff** we read, "

So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him *to hear the word of God*, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, ²and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing *their* nets. ³Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. (Luke 5:1-3)

We read that *the Servant's message was primarily one of comfort for the "weary."* Those who had been defeated, destroyed, and enslaved due to their sin, God had a message of comfort for them, that they would be recipients of His salvation. Our Lord Jesus is moved to compassion for those who are "weary." We read in Matthew 9:36, "But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd."

Our Lord spoke of His communion with His God. Our Lord Himself was taught of the Father. Again, **verse 4b** reads,

*He awakens Me morning by morning,
He awakens My ear
To hear as the learned.*

Our Lord was wakened each morning by His Father and bid to come to the school of instruction. He learned from the Father Himself. **John Calvin** wrote of this,

"When His sleep is past, Jehovah comes to him, waking his ear and giving him the signal to attend; and then He takes him as it were to school like a pupil, and teaches him what and how he ought to preach."

So it is with all of the Lord's servants. Do you perceive ("hear") the Father wakening you each morning? Every day He bids you to come apart and learn from Him? Do you see each day as a day in which you are to be a disciple? This is a great privilege of His people. It is also a great responsibility.

We read of the Servant's responsiveness to God's instruction that He received from Him every morning. **Verse 5** reads,

*⁵The Lord GOD has opened My ear;
And I was not rebellious,
Nor did I turn away.*

The Servant of God would be fully obedient to all of God's Word to Him. Was this true of our Lord Jesus? As our Lord grew from a boy into a young man, He grew in His wisdom, in His knowledge of God's Word and ways. He was always compliant to His Father's will. He declared in **John 4:34**, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." In **John 5:30** we read His words, "I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will

of the Father who sent Me.” And then we read His words in **John 6:38**, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

The servant received news as to *the nature of his calling*. The way of His life would be one of shame, suffering, and death. We read in **verse 6**,

*‘I gave My back to those who struck Me,
And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard;
I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.*

Our Lord “did not turn back”; that is, He did not refuse His calling, nor did He fail to continue in His calling. He was an obedient servant, even unto death. We read of our Lord Jesus in **Acts 3:18**, “But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.” And also we read in **Acts 17:1** and **2** these words:

Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.”

Charles Spurgeon wrote of the willingness of our Savior to endure His suffering in a sermon he entitled, “The Shame and Spitting”:

Our blessed Redeemer gave His back to the smiters and the plowers made deep furrows there. O spectacle of misery! How can we bear to look?

Nor was that all, for Pilate’s soldiers, calling all the troop together, as if there were not enough for mockery unless all were mustered, put Him to derision by a mock enthronement and a mimic coronation. And when they had finished that, they again buffeted and smote Him and spit in His face. There was no kind of cruelty which their heartlessness could invent just then which they did not exercise upon His blessed Person. Their brutal sport had full indulgence, for their innocent Victim offered neither resistance nor remonstrance. This is His own record of His patient endurance, “I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.”

Behold your King! I bring Him forth to you, this morning, in spirit and cry, “Behold the Man!” Turn, here, all your eyes and hearts and look upon the despised and rejected of men! Gaze reverently and lovingly, with awe for His suffering and love for His Person. The sight demands adoration. I would remind you of that which Moses did when he saw the bush that burned and was not consumed—fit emblem of our Lord on fire with grief and yet not destroyed! I bid you turn aside and see this great sight, but first attend to the mandate—“Take off your shoes, for the place where you stand is holy ground.”

All round the Cross, the soil is sacred. Our suffering Lord has consecrated every place where He stood and, therefore, our hearts must be filled with reverence while we linger under the shadow of His passion.²

Now, who was causing this abuse of God’s Servant? It was the very ones to whom He came who refused to hear the message of consolation. Israel refused to hear the message of the Servant. They afflicted Him in reaction to His message. But it was in the will of God that His Servant suffer.

And so it is with all of God’s servants; it is God’s will that His people suffer in this world, during this life. We read in **1 Peter 2:21** these words, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.” Suffering is the path to glory. It works something like this: God makes His will known to His servant (Christ, or us). He then walks in that will in an obedient faith. But he suffers for doing so at the hands of others. And after having been unjustly treated, God,

² Charles Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 25 (Pilgrim Publications, 1972), pp. 422f.

because He is righteous, corrects the wrongdoing, vindicating His servant who suffered while doing His will. And it is a sad thing that many times this suffering comes by the hands of the Lord's people (so-called). Spurgeon said that he would sooner be attacked by wolves than sheep. The apostle Paul also spoke of the affliction of false brethren (cf. Gal. 2:4).

“All faithful servants of God, when they administer the doctrine (teaching) of the word, cannot escape from this condition, but must endure fights, reproaches, hatred, slanders, and various attacks from adversaries” (John Calvin).

This is the way that God works in this world among His people, His servants. For it is a servant's work to lay down his life for another. True love is not silent, when rebuke is called for. Many times the most loving thing one can do for another is to say firmly and unflinchingly, “That is wrong and contrary to God's will.” But when you purpose to be obedient to that kind of calling, you must be ready to suffer for it. You will suffer at the very hands of those you are seeking to help by your admonishment.

Now we see in Isaiah 50:6, that Jesus willingly gave himself over to His tormentors. He was willing to suffer at the hands of the ones He was attempting to redeem (cf. 1 Peter 3:1ff.). It was God's will that they be redeemed through His suffering at their hands, so He did not resist.

II. The Servant's perseverance is seen in adversity (50:7-9)

*⁷“For the Lord GOD will help Me;
Therefore I will not be disgraced;
Therefore I have set My face like a flint,
And I know that I will not be ashamed.*

*⁸He is near who justifies Me;
Who will contend with Me?
Let us stand together.
Who is My adversary?
Let him come near Me.*

*⁹Surely the Lord GOD will help Me;
Who is he who will condemn Me?*

The Lord Jesus was confident that His Father would sustain Him through His sufferings and that in His own time, His Father would vindicate His innocence and righteousness. It was this confidence that His Father would vindicate Him, that He faced His trials and suffering with faith and courage. Our Lord was assured of His final victory and of the ultimate defeat of His foes. The vindication that our Lord Jesus anticipated would occur upon His resurrection from the dead, when His Father raised Him, and enthroned Him over heaven and earth. Mankind had cast their vote in His crucifixion that they would not have Him rule over them. They said that He was worthy of death. They regarded Him as deserving of the most ignominious shame. They spit upon Him. They railed against Him. They derided Him. Nevertheless, the Father would not have it so. The Father declared even in their rebellion and defiance, “Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion” (Psa. 2:6). The Father has highly exalted Him.”

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phi. 2:9-11)

We read in Isaiah 50:8 these words of the Servant, “Therefore I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed.” He was speaking of His resolve to face suffering and death in order to be obedient to God His Father. To set His face “like a flint” speaks of His firmness, His resoluteness. He

would maintain courage and dignity in his sufferings. “He will not give his adversaries the satisfaction of seeing him flinch (or wince) when maltreated” (Leupold).

Perhaps the onset of our Lord’s final journey to Jerusalem embodies this idea of His resolve to suffer in doing the will of God. We read in **Luke 9:51** of our Lord turning and heading toward Jerusalem: “***Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.***”

Nothing would drive the Servant to despair. He knows that ultimately, though all reject him, He would be vindicated by the Lord God who had called Him to this task. So it is with us; today is the day for endurance; vindication will come tomorrow (cf. 2 Cor. 6:8).

We next read that He is assured of His enemies’ ultimate defeat (50:9b).

***Indeed they will all grow old like a garment;
The moth will eat them up.***

The Servant knows that He is going to outlast them. God has grace available to enable His servants to endure their suffering longer than their tormentors have ability to inflict suffering.

III. The Servant’s people are encouraged; all others are warned (50:10, 11)

¹⁰***“Who among you fears the LORD?
Who obeys the voice of His Servant?
Who walks in darkness
And has no light?
Let him trust in the name of the LORD
And rely upon his God.***

¹¹***Look, all you who kindle a fire,
Who encircle yourselves with sparks:
Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks you have kindled—
This you shall have from My hand:
You shall lie down in torment.***

God calls for His suffering, troubled people to place their faith in Him even in the midst of their trials. He then confronts and challenges all who would look to something other than to God for comfort and guidance. And so, verse 10 addresses the Lord’s people. Verse 11 is a word to unbelievers.

Notice what appears to be quite a paradox in these statements. The first group, those who fear the Lord, are ones “who walk in darkness.” However the ones who are in rebellion to God, they are described as ones who are warmed and enjoying the light of the fire they had made for themselves. They seem to be quite at ease. But they will encounter God’s judgment in the end. Here are **Matthew Henry’s** statements on these two verses:

I. Comfort is here spoken to disconsolate saints, and they are encouraged to trust in God’s grace (v. 10). Here observe,

1. What is always the character of a child of God. He is one that fears the Lord with a filial fear, that stands in awe of his majesty and is afraid of incurring his displeasure. This is a grace that usually appears most in good people when they walk in darkness, when other graces appear not. They then *tremble at his word* (66:2) and are *afraid of his judgments* (Psa. 119:120). He is one that obeys the voice of God’s servant, is willing to be ruled by the Lord Jesus, as God’s servant in the great work of man’s redemption, one that yields a sincere obedience to the law of Christ and cheerfully comes up to the terms of his covenant. Those that truly fear God will obey the voice of Christ.

2. What is sometimes the case of a child of God. It is supposed that though he has in his heart the fear of God, and faith in Christ, yet for a time he walks in darkness and has no light, is disquieted and has little or no comfort. Who is there that does so? This intimates that it is a case which sometimes happens among the professors of religion, yet not very often; but, whenever it happens, God takes notice of it. It is no new thing for the children and heirs of light sometimes to walk in darkness, and for a time not to have any glimpse or gleam of light. This is not meant so much of the comforts of this life (those that fear God, when they have ever so great an abundance of them, do not walk in them as their light) as of their spiritual comforts, which relate to their souls. They walk in darkness when their evidences for heaven are clouded, their joy in God is interrupted, the testimony of the Spirit is suspended, and the light of God's countenance is eclipsed. Pensive Christians are apt to be melancholy, and those who fear always are apt to fear too much.

3. What is likely to be an effectual cure in this sad case. He that is thus in the dark, (1.) *Let him trust in the name of the Lord*, in the goodness of his nature, and that which he has made known of himself, his wisdom, power, and goodness. *The name of the Lord is a strong tower*, let him run into that. Let him depend upon it that if he walk before God, which a man may do though he walk in the dark, he shall find God all-sufficient to him. (2.) *Let him stay himself upon his God*, his in covenant; let him keep hold of his covenant-relation to God, and call God *his God*, as Christ on the cross, *My God, My God*. Let him stay himself upon the promises of the covenant, and build his hopes on them. When a child of God is ready to sink he will find enough in God to stay himself upon. Let him trust in Christ, for God's *name is in him* ([Exod. xxiii. 21](#)), trust in that name of his, *The Lord our righteousness*, and stay himself upon God as his God, in and through a Mediator.

II. Conviction is here spoken to presuming sinners, and they are warned not to trust in themselves (v. 11). Observe,

1. The description given of them. They *kindle a fire*, and *walk in the light of that fire*. They depend upon their own righteousness, offer all their sacrifices, and burn all their incense, with that fire (as Nadab and Abihu) and not with the fire from heaven. In their hope of acceptance with God they have no regard to the righteousness of Christ. They refresh and please themselves with a conceit of their own merit and sufficiency, and warm themselves with that. It is both light and heat to them. They *compass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling*. As they trust in their own righteousness, and not in the righteousness of Christ, so they place their happiness in their worldly possessions and enjoyments, and not in the favour of God. Creature-comforts are as sparks, short-lived and soon gone; yet the children of this world, while they last, warm themselves by them, and walk with pride and pleasure in the light of them.

2. The doom passed upon them. They are ironically told to *walk in the light of their own fire*. "Make your best of it, while it lasts. But what will be in the end thereof, what will it come to at last? This shall you have of my hand (says Christ, for to him the judgment is committed), *you shall lie down in sorrow*, shall go to bed in the dark." (See Job 18:5, 6). *His candle shall be put out with him*. Those that make the world their comfort, and their own righteousness their confidence, will certainly meet with a fatal disappointment, which will be bitterness in the end. A godly man's way may be melancholy, but his end shall be peace and everlasting light. A wicked man's way may be pleasant, but his end and endless abode will be utter darkness.³

The English preacher of the 19th century, **J. C. Philpot**, wrote an extended "sermon" on these two verses. The title of the work on these two verses conveys this paradox:

The Heir of heaven walking in Darkness,

³ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 4, pp. 286f.

and the Heir of Hell walking in Light⁴

In this sermon Philpot sets forth *the marks of a true child of God* as well as those characteristics of superficial religionists. He describes three traits of the true Christian, the third stated in these words”

3. But there is a third mark with which the blessed Spirit in the text has stamped that heir of heaven whose character we are endeavoring to trace. “HE WALKETH IN DARKNESS, AND HATH NO LIGHT.” This may well at first sight strike us with surprise. “is it possible,” reason asks, “that one who fears God, and obeys the voice of His Servant, should be in this condition?” “Obedience brings light, disobedience is the only cause of darkness,” sounds from a thousand pulpits. “Live up to your privileges, cultivate holiness, be diligent in the performance of your duties, if you would enjoy the pleasures of a cheerful piety,” cry aloud a thousand task-masters. Without denying that disobedience produces darkness of soul, for the experience of every believer testifies that 'sin separates between him and his God (Isa. 59:2), we cannot allow that it is the only cause, or that obedience necessarily produces light. To speak so is to go point blank against the text, is to ascribe merit to the creature, is “to sacrifice to our own net, and bum incense to our own drag,” and to boast like him of old: “By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent” (Isa. 10:13). We must go higher, then, than the creature, and trace it up to the sovereign will of the Creator, even to Him who says: “I form the light and create darkness” (Isa. 45:7). Here, then, is a character whom God Himself declares to fear His great name, and to obey the voice of His Servant, and yet he is one “who walketh in darkness, and hath no light.” Two things, we find, are here said of him: 1 That he walketh in darkness. 2 That he hath no light. We will consider each separately.

Philpot went on to describe the religionist, who kindles his own fire and is warmed by it, who walks in “light”, even though he is still a child of hell. Here are Philpot’s opening words of this section of his sermon:

To some who know neither their own deceitfulness and hypocrisy, nor the awful delusions of the devil as an angel of light, I may appear harsh, bitter, severe, bigoted, narrow-minded, and to deserve every other term of reproach which self-seekers and flesh-pleasers heap upon those who fearlessly hunt out their refuge of lies. To preach the gospel in our days is to preach to PLEASE EVERYBODY AND OFFEND NOBODY, to starve the children, and feed the bastards, to beat the heir, and caress the dog, to call the children of God antinomians, and to call empty formalists decided Christians; to style opening up Satan's delusions "preaching in a bad spirit;" and wrapping up hypocrites, impostors, Pharisees, and self-deceivers in their delusions, "not preaching in the spirit of the gospel." This turning of things upside down, this calling good evil and evil good, and putting bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, may God ever keep me from, and may He enable me to speak boldly and faithfully, whether men will hear or forbear, that by manifestation of the truth I may commend myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

We must close. However, for this interested, I posted this entire sermon of Philpot on our our website, which is linked on our main page: www.TheWordofTruth.net

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever.
Amen. (Heb 13:1 NKJ)

⁴ I posted this entire sermon on our website, which is linked on our main page: www.TheWordofTruth.net

Outline of Isaiah 40-66
SECTION THREE: ORACLES OF REDEMPTION AND CONSUMMATION

- I. The Book of the Consolation of Israel (Chs. 40-55)
 - A. The Prophet is to Announce God's Coming (40:1-11)
 - B. The Creator of the Universe (40:12-31)
 - C. God Promises to Deliver His People from Babylon (41:1-29)
 - D. The First Servant Song (42:1-9)
 - E. Sing to the Lord a New Song (42:10-13)
 - F. God declares His resolve to battle on behalf of His people (42:14-17)
 - G. Israel, the Blind and Deaf Servant of God (42:18-25)
 - H. God's Commitment to Save His People by His Grace (43:1-7)
 - I. The Servant Israel is the Lord's Witness (43:8-13)
 - J. The Redemption and Restoration of Israel from Babylon (43:14-44:8)
 - K. Satire against Idolatry (44:9-20)
 - L. Israel is Forgiven and Redeemed (44:21-23)
 - M. God Commissions the Persian Emperor Cyrus to Deliver His People (44:24-45:13)
 - N. The Conversion of the Nations (45:14-25)
 - O. Worthless Idols vs. the Living God (46:1-13)
 - P. The Defeat and Humiliation of Babylon Predicted (47:1-15)
 - Q. Israel Refined and Redeemed (48:1-22)
 - R. The Second Servant Song (49:1-13)
 - S. God's Restoration of "Zion"--His People—Who are Redeemed by His Servant (49:14-26)
 - T. God Assures His People that He will Save Them unto Himself (49:14-26)
 - U. The Third Servant Song (50:1-11)