

The Messiah Declares His Mission

Last Lord's Day we considered the message of Isaiah 60, in which we read of a prophecy of God's announcement to "Zion" that His long-anticipated salvation has come to it. Although they had formerly been in a state of ruin and rejection by God, the time of her restoration was now announced. They could expect before long to receive God's favor upon them. The glory of God would be shown to and upon Zion, the city of God in which His people dwell. The people of God were to arise in anticipation of its arrival. It is as though they were to rise ready for the "new day" that was dawning upon them. The people of God were soon to enter the promised new age of the Messiah. We took the position that the prophecy anticipated this church age, in which the long-anticipated Kingdom of God was inaugurated, the kingdom of which we Christians are citizens, the kingdom over which the Lord Jesus presently reigns.

We now arrive to Isaiah 61, in which we have set forth the ministry of the Messiah, who would restore His people to God's favor and bestow upon them richly the wonderful blessings of life within His kingdom, even the Kingdom of God. Let us read the chapter in its entirety and then we will examine it more closely.

¹The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me,
because the LORD has anointed Me
to bring good news to the poor;
He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
³to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.
⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

⁵Strangers shall stand and tend your flocks;
foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers;
⁶but you shall be called the priests of the LORD;
they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God;
you shall eat the wealth of the nations,
and in their glory you shall boast.
⁷Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion;
instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot;
therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion;
they shall have everlasting joy.

⁸For I the LORD love justice;
I hate robbery and wrong;

I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
⁹Their offspring shall be known among the nations,
and their descendants in the midst of the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge them,
that they are an offspring the LORD has blessed.

¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the LORD;
My soul shall exult in my God,
for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
He has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to sprout up before all the nations.

We may consider the following outline to assist us in our understanding of this passage:

1. The purposes of the Messiah's mission (61:1-3)
2. God's purpose of dealing graciously with "Israel" (61:4-9)
3. "Jerusalem" accepts the promises, and glories in Jehovah (61:10-11)

I. The purposes of the Messiah's mission (61:1-3)

Our passage begins with a prophecy of the Messiah announcing and describing His mission. **Verse 1** reads:

*¹The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me,
because the LORD has anointed Me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;*

This is the Servant of the Lord speaking, the promised Messiah of Israel. Back in the Book of Consolation (Isaiah 40-55), in the First Servant Song of Isaiah (Isa. 42:1-9), God (the Father) had declared that He would empower His Servant with the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 42:1 reads,

“Behold! My Servant whom I uphold,
My Elect One in whom My soul delights!
I have put My Spirit upon Him;
He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.

And now here, in Isaiah 61:1, the Servant speaks prophetically, declaring that the Holy Spirit was upon Him, for the “Lord God” had anointed Him.¹ And so, in Isaiah 42:1, God said that He would put His Spirit upon His Servant, here in Isaiah 61:1 the Servant speaks of having had the Spirit placed upon Him.

The Holy Spirit is upon the Servant, equipping and empowering Him for the task to which He is called. He was anointed by God, in other words called and empowered for His task. What was He to do? He was to bring “good news” to the afflicted, to “bandage” brokenhearted people, release captives and prisoners.

This verse, of course, was the passage that the Lord Jesus read when He spoke in the synagogue of Nazareth, recorded in Luke 4:18ff. We cited this last Lord’s Day. There we read of how the Lord brought the matter forward. After reading Isaiah 61:1 and part of verse 2, we read what occurred:

²⁰“Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹And He began to say to them, *‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’* ²²So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” (Luke 4:20-22)

And so, we have the Lord Jesus declaring that the prophecy of Isaiah regarding the coming Kingdom promised to “Zion” was beginning to be “fulfilled” at the onset of His ministry.

The Isaiah 61 passage would have perhaps been seen originally as a word to captives in Babylon to be released so as to allow their return to their land. But that the Lord proclaimed these words as being fulfilled in the “day” that Jesus came among them, shows that this “salvation” is spiritual in nature. The ones who are the recipients of His message are those who had been afflicted for their sins, and broken-hearted over them. They were ones who mourned respecting themselves. They had been “captive” in their sins and unable to release themselves. The Servant would declare their release as an act of divine power.

Now after the Servant declared that the “LORD God” had anointed Him with the Holy Spirit, the Servant set forth a number of clauses that express the purposes for which God had empowered Him. In verse 1 we have four clauses that set forth His mission.

1. He was to bring good news to the poor;
2. He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted,
3. to proclaim liberty to the captives,
4. and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

And then we read further in **verse 2** three other purposes for which the Lord God had commissioned His Servant:

5. to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor,
6. and the day of vengeance of our God;
7. to comfort all who mourn;

And then we read in **verse 3** a few more statements regarding His mission. The Servant was anointed with the Holy Spirit in order...

8. to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,

¹ Here, by the way, we have two verses, Isaiah 42:1 and 61:1, in which the three Persons of the Blessed Holy Trinity are displayed for us. In Isaiah 61:1 the “LORD God” is God the Father, the “Spirit” is the Holy Spirit, and “r.

the planting of the LORD,
9. that He may be glorified.

We should consider a few words of explanation of some of these words and phrases. The Servant first declared that He would “bring good news to the poor.” This “good news” is none other than the gospel. The gospel was the announcement of God bringing salvation to the “poor.” The “poor” should be understood both literally and metaphorically. The Lord Jesus did primarily minister to those in poverty. The Gospel of Luke conveys that emphasis.² But our Lord also preached the gospel to those who were “poor in spirit”, that is, those who were burdened and troubled by their sins. Our Lord taught in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3).

He said secondly that the Lord God had “sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted.” To “bind up” is a manner in which Isaiah conveyed the idea of bringing healing to one who had been wounded. The two other uses of the expression in Isaiah suggest that those whom the Lord would or could “bind up” were ones whom He had afflicted as punishment for their sins.³

He would also “proclaim liberty to the captives” would have had particular meaning to those who had been in captivity in the Babylonian Exile, who were still waiting for their full deliverance. The next clause would similarly express this idea, that He would enable “the opening of the prison to those who are bound.”⁴

The fifth purpose for which our Lord was anointed with the Spirit was so that He might “proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor.” The New King James Version translates the phrase, “To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.” The “year of the Lord’s favor”, or the expression, the “favorable year of the Lord”, or the “acceptable year of the Lord” is a reference to the Old Testament observance and celebration of the Year of Jubilee.⁵ Israel was to observe every 50th year as the year of the Jubilee. On this day the Jewish people who had to have sold their property or who had sold themselves due to debt, would have their property returned, their freedom restored, and their debts cleared. Our Lord Jesus declared one day, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). The actual time of release began with the proclamation of Jesus’ death and resurrection. This gospel age is the season in which we enjoy this time of release from our sins.

But not only was He to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, but He would also announce “the day of vengeance of our God.” Note that it is a “year” of release, but a “day” of vengeance. When we read in Luke’s Gospel of our Lord Jesus reading these words of Isaiah’s prophecy, He closed the book⁶ before he read these words, “*And the day of vengeance of our God.*” This has led most to view this verse as applying to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. For example, in the footnote of the ESV Study Bible we read this footnote: “Jesus did not include **and the day of vengeance of our God** because the display of His wrath awaits Christ’s second coming (cf. Isa. 5:25-39; 63:1-6; Acts 17:31; Rev. 6:15-17).” This is a common explanation for the reason that our Lord stopped at this point in His reading. However, this is speculation, and frankly, not very sound speculation. For although certainly the Lord’s vengeance will be manifest at His Second Coming, so also will be His salvation. We read in **Hebrews 9:27f**:

²⁷And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. *To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.*

And although salvation was certainly the primary message that our Lord Jesus declared during His ministry at His first coming, *He also proclaimed a “day of vengeance.”* This was declared in a prophecy pronounced in the birth narrative of Luke. We read of the older Simeon who saw the infant Jesus in the temple.

² Luke also emphasized the role of women as well as the poor.

³ Cf. Isa. 1:6 and 3:7.

⁴ Did Charles Wesley have these phrases in His mind when he wrote the hymn, “And Can It Be?”

⁵ cf. Lev. 25:9f.

⁶ or, rather, rolled up the scroll.

²⁵And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

²⁹“Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;

³⁰For my eyes have seen Your salvation

³¹Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

³²A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel.”

³³And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is destined *for the fall* and rising *of many in Israel*, and for a sign which will be spoken against ³⁵“(yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” (Luke 2:25-35)

And further, the Lord Jesus did indeed declare a day of vengeance for those who refused to respond to Him and obey His words. He pronounced upon Jerusalem,

“...on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. ³⁶Assuredly, I say to you, *all these things will come upon this generation*. ³⁷O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! ³⁸See! *Your house is left to you desolate*.” (Matt. 23:35-38)

And our Lord Jesus instructed His own disciples about the days of vengeance that would come upon Jerusalem within a generation of time. He declared these words:

²⁰“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that *its desolation is near*. ²¹Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. ²²*For these are the days of vengeance*, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. ²³But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. ²⁴And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:20-24)

This took place when the Romans destroyed Judea and Jerusalem in AD 70.

The last phrase of **verse 2** declares that the Lord God had anointed His Servant with the Holy Spirit in order that He would “*comfort all who mourn*.” The Lord Jesus spoke of those who mourned and promised them that they enjoyed the condition of “blessedness” before God. He declared, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4).⁷ And so, the Lord Jesus pronounced vengeance upon them who had rejected Him as their Messiah and who had caused the “affliction” and “imprisonment” of His

⁷ If one were to argue that the Lord Jesus stopped reading before the phrase, “and the day of vengeance of our God”, because that will occur only later at His Second Coming, then one might also conclude that this phrase, “to comfort all who mourn”, which follows, would also not be realized until the Second Coming. Few would argue this, but the same logic to postpone the first event to the Second Coming requires the postponing of the second event also until the Second Coming.

people. This coupled with the fact that the next clause speaks of what He certainly did and does—he comforts mourning ones—seems to show that this entire verse can be seen as applying to His first coming and the wrath of God which He declared would come upon them who refused to respond to Him.

In **verse 3** we have the final two purpose clauses that describe the mission of the Messiah who was anointed by the Lord God. The eighth in the list seems to be rather an expansion of the last, in that it summarizes the work of His salvation of His people, it includes a number of clauses. Restoration is promised to those who mourn in Zion. These are the chosen people of God who are lamenting their sad condition of having been under the wrath of God for their sins. Again it reads that the Messiah would...

to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD,

The first expression, “to grant those who mourn in Zion”, is a reference to the collective chosen people of God. They had mourned using the ancient sign of mourning as casting ashes on their heads and lamenting in a loud voice. Here we see that they are given a garland to replace their ashes. They are preparing themselves for a festive celebration. They were garlands, anoint themselves with oil, and wearing festive clothes.

The first clause is followed by a hyphen, which means that all of the subsequent clauses describe the blessings that the Messiah would secure on behalf of His people to bestow freely upon them. The first few clauses depict “those who mourn in Zion” as being lavishly dressed in celebrative garments suited for joyful celebration rather than mourning. **Matthew Henry** described the Messiah’s work:

He was to be a comforter, and so he is as preacher, healer, and deliverer; he is sent to *comfort all who mourn*, and who, mourning, seek to him, and not to the world, for comfort. Christ not only provides comfort for them, and proclaims it, but he applies it to them; he does by his Spirit comfort them. There is enough in him to *comfort all who mourn*, whatever their sore or sorrow is; but this comfort is sure to those who *mourn in Zion*, who sorrow *after a godly sort*, according to God, for his residence is in Zion,—who *mourn because of Zion's* calamities and desolations, and mingle their tears by a holy sympathy with those of all God's suffering people, though they themselves are not in trouble; such tears God has *a bottle* for (Psa. 56:8), such mourners he has comfort in store for. As *blessings out of Zion* are spiritual blessings, so *mourners in Zion* are holy mourners, such as carry their sorrows to the throne of grace (for in Zion was the mercy-seat) and pour them out as Hannah did before the Lord. To such as these Christ has appointed by his gospel, and will give by his Spirit (v. 3), those consolations which will not only support them under their sorrows, but turn them into songs of praise. He will give them, (1) *Beauty for ashes*. Whereas they lay in ashes, as was usual in times of great mourning, they shall not only be raised out of their dust, but made to look pleasant. Note, the holy cheerfulness of Christians is their beauty and a great ornament to their profession. Here is an elegant *paronomasia*⁸ in the original: He will give them *pheer* (Hebrew)—*beauty*, for *epher* (Hebrew)—*ashes*; he will turn their sorrow into joy as quickly and as easily as you can transpose a letter; for he speaks, and it is done. (2.) *The oil of joy*, which *make the face to shine*, instead of *mourning*, which *disfigures the countenance* and makes it unlovely. This *oil of joy* the saints have from that *oil of gladness* with which Christ himself was *anointed above his fellows*, Heb. 1:9. (3.) *The garments of praise*, such beautiful garments as were worn on thanksgiving-days, instead of the *spirit of heaviness*, *dimness*, or *contraction*—open joys for secret mournings. The *spirit of heaviness* they keep to themselves (*Zion's mourners weep in secret*); but the joy they are

⁸ This is a literary device in which the use of a word in different senses or the use of words similar in sound to achieve a specific effect.

recompensed with they are clothed with as with a garment in the eye of others. Observe, where God gives the oil of joy he gives the garment of praise.⁹

The Messiah also declared that these ones who had formerly mourned over their sins and for God's judgment upon them, who are now dressed for celebration, are described as established by God Himself. He declared of His people, "that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD." God works salvation on behalf of His people so that it is known by them, even by others, that He has delivered them and that He has established them before Him. On the expression, "trees of righteousness", **John Calvin** wrote these words:

By these words he points out the restoration of the people, as if he had said, "Whereas they had formerly been rooted out and resembled a dry stock, they shall be planted and settled." Thus he reminds them that they ought to contemplate the divine power, so that, though they are slain and dead, still they may confidently hope that they shall be restored so as to take root and to receive strength and increase. From this ought to be drawn a universal doctrine, namely, that there is no other way in which we are restored to life than when we are planted by the Lord. We are indeed called his "planting," because he elected us from the beginning (Ephesians 1:4). But there is also another kind of "planting" which follows the former, namely, the Calling, by which we are ingrafted through faith into Christ's body. The Lord does this by the agency and ministry of the Gospel; but it must be wholly ascribed to him, for "it is he alone that giveth the increase" (1 Cor. 3:7). We must always bear in mind the emblematical meaning of the first deliverance as illustrating the spiritual kingdom of Christ.

He gives the appellation of "trees of righteousness" to those in whom the justice of God or good order shines forth. Yet let us know that the Lord adopts us on this condition, that we shall become new creatures, and that true righteousness shall reign in us. And hence it follows that we are by nature depraved and corrupted, and cannot yield fruit in any other way than by being changed and planted by the Lord.¹⁰

The final purpose clause in which the Messiah prophetically declared the purpose for the Lord God having anointed Him with the Holy Spirit, was "that that He may be glorified." God alone is the reason and the cause for the salvation of His people. He does it in a manner so that no one can assume glory, or credit, for the blessing of salvation He imparts to them. The **Apostle Paul** set this truth forth in this way:

²⁶For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. ²⁷But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹that no flesh should glory in His presence. ³⁰But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption-- ³¹that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD." (1 Cor. 1:26-31)

The people of the Messiah shall be established and unmoved, being in God's favor. They would be as steady as oaks, fixed in their righteousness. There is security alluded to here. All to the end that God might be glorified.

II. God's purpose of dealing graciously with "Israel" (61:4-9)

God declared through His prophet of His intention to restore "Zion." We read in **verse 4**:

⁹ *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, on Isaiah 61.

¹⁰ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 8 (Baker Book House), pp. 307f.

***⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.***

We should understand the rebuilding project here to be metaphorical; it speaks of God restoring the people of God to Himself, causing the number of souls to increase within His kingdom, rather than assuming He is speaking of merely the physical rebuilding of the physical city of Jerusalem. God assures complete restoration. The former conditions which were due to God's judgment upon them are reversed, and they have a rebuilding program.

This was seen when the exiles returned from Babylon, but it looked forward to the time of the coming of Christ. This is the result of the Gospel that is proclaimed in verse 1. God restores the devastation which sin brought upon His redeemed people.

Again, we might ask, did this ever literally occur? No but does it need to do so? Is it not the kind of imagery that would have conveyed to the people of the glorious restoration which would be theirs when salvation would come to them? Of course these things will be realized fully in the new heavens and earth, but spiritual restoration occurs now when people come to Christ.

In **verse 5** we read that

***⁵Strangers shall stand and tend your flocks;
foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers;***

Those formerly hostile to them are now cooperating with them, even tending their flocks. These would be Gentiles who are standing shoulder to shoulder with Jews who have experienced salvation. "Israel", those redeemed and restored by the Messiah have God's purpose for His nation realized. They would bear witness to God's saving glory to the world. All nations would come to be experienced by the descendants of Abraham.

In **verse 6** we read of the wide extent of their influence for the kingdom of God:

***⁶but you shall be called the priests of the LORD;
they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God;
you shall eat the wealth of the nations,
and in their glory you shall boast.***

Priests, who are in close relationship with the Lord, have fellowship with Him, and represent others before Him. This was the original design of God for the Jewish people, that through them Gentiles might come to know Him. We read what God had declared to Moses to announce to Israel in **Exodus 19:6**, "And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." In this way they would perform a priestly function. Here the ones who are converted are seen as ones who seek the benefit and welfare of others, even among the "nations", that is, the Gentiles. As a result they receive benefit from them who they assist.

In **verse 7** we read of the desire of the Gentile nations to embrace and become a part of the Kingdom of God over which the Messiah would reign.

***⁷Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion;
instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot;
therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion;
they shall have everlasting joy.***

Great blessing is now theirs, and it is eternal in nature. They had been banished from the land due to their sin. Their shame was open and seen before all. But now that time is past. Full restoration removes the

former humiliation. Their joy is everlasting. Their relationship with God through the Messiah is an everlasting relationship.

We then read in **verse 8** of God's commitment to His people who are redeemed by His Servant.

***⁸For I the LORD love justice;
I hate robbery and wrong;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.***

Here the Lord God, rather than His Servant, now speaks. God is just; He gives to them what they deserved and what He had promised He would give. He punished them for their sins. He judges hypocrisy in religion. But thankfully He is true to give what He has promised. He executes judgment upon the wicked, but bestows salvation on the repentant. Salvation is not because they merit recompense, but because He deemed that they would be recipients of His salvation. But He does reward faithfulness, even though it is not a payment for deeds, but rather His "recompense" is the gracious bestowal of blessing in the presence of obedience and fidelity.

The last clause speaks of the "everlasting covenant" that God establishes with His people. The only everlasting covenant that will be enjoyed is the one in Christ Jesus. The writer to the Hebrews described this everlasting covenant in its doxology.

²⁰Now 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, ²¹make 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. 13:20f)

The descendants of these redeemed in Zion will also be blessed of the Lord. We read in **verse 9**:

***⁹Their offspring shall be known among the nations,
and their descendants in the midst of the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge them,
that they are an offspring the LORD has blessed.***

God would show that they are the objects of His favor by the blessing He shows to them and their children. Gentiles would recognize (do recognize) that it was the Jews for whom God had designs. And His blessing has come upon us through them. We read of this in Romans 11:11ff in which he wrote of the blessing of salvation that God brought to a remnant of Jews, would be bestowed also on Gentile believers:

¹¹ I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. ¹²Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! ¹³For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. ¹⁵For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? ¹⁶For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. ¹⁷And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, ¹⁸do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. (Rom. 11:11-18)

III. "Jerusalem" accepts the promises, and glories in Jehovah (61:10-11)

In verses 10 and 11 we read of words placed on the “lips” of “Zion” as she stands fully clothed and in dignity and beauty before God.

*¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the LORD;
my soul shall exult in my God,
for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
He has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

The people of God voice praise for salvation as one person. Each of us who are in Jesus Christ may express ourselves in this fashion with these words. God is praised for He is the author and worker of salvation, first to last. Salvation, or righteousness, is likened to a garment that has been placed upon us as a bridegroom or a bride would be clothed in festive garments of beauty on their wedding day. It is a time of festivity and rejoicing.

The middle clauses of this verse are particularly significant. They provide the reason that the people of God are to rejoice in the Lord. -- *for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.*

“Righteousness” here should be understood as God imparting the gift of righteousness to His people.. It is a state before God that is granted to those who believe the gospel. Rather than being regarded as a guilty and naked sinner, the believer is clothed with a royal, wedding garment, a robe of righteousness. This make him suitable to be in the King’s presence and numbered among His blessed guests. Without this garment of salvation, this robe of righteousness, the sinner is not admitted to the great Messianic banquet that awaits all the citizens of the Messiah’s kingdom.

This garment of righteousness is not our own, but is the righteousness of Jesus Christ that is given to us. It is a gift that is imputed to us by the King, who not only invites us to His banquet, but He qualifies us also so that we might enter His glorious presence. It is common to describe this gift of righteousness as an “alien righteousness”; that is, it is not our own inherently, but it is that which has been given to us by God’s grace.

If a person is not clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, he cannot have salvation. Our Lord Jesus taught this in the parable of the wedding feast. Here are His words **Matthew 22:2ff**,

²The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, ³and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. ⁴Again, he sent out other servants, saying, “Tell those who are invited, ‘See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.’” ⁵But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. ⁶And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. ⁷But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. ⁸Then he said to his servants, “The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.” ¹⁰So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹*But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. ¹²So he said to him, “Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?” And he was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the servants, “Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen.

No one will be accepted into heaven apart from the righteousness of Jesus Christ having been credited to them. This righteousness is a gift from God freely bestowed up any and all who trust Him for it. **Romans 3:20-22:**

²⁰Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. ²¹But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²²even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe.

We now arrive to the last verse of chapter 61, in which we read of the Lord God's purpose to expand this kingdom of the Messiah to encompass the Gentiles of the world.

***¹¹For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to sprout up before all the nations.***

An analogy is taken from the seasons of the earth. Just as God causes growth to occur in the earth, perhaps after a winter season, so God causes righteousness and praise to spring up all over. This describes an increasing measure of God's blessing when He brought salvation into the world through Christ. This has been and is being realized through the gospel of Jesus Christ. His kingdom is expanding. It always has and always will until the day that the Father sends the Lord Jesus back to this earth, the day on which Jesus Christ will judge all the inhabitants of the earth, bestowing the fullness of salvation upon His people through their bodily resurrection from the dead and their exoneration from guilt in judgment, but also declaring and committing of unbelieving and unrepentant sinners to their just doom and destiny—eternal ruin and punishment in hell.

In the light of these things let us be holy Christians not only in faith but also in life. As Peter wrote:

¹⁰But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

¹¹Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹²looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. ¹⁴Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless. . . ¹⁷You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; ¹⁸but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen. (2 Pet. 3:10-14, 17-18)

Orthodox in Creed--But Heterodox in Life!

By Charles Spurgeon

When we hear of men living in sin and yet claiming to be Christians, we are disgusted with their *pretenses*--but we are not deceived by their *professions*.

In the same manner, we care little for those who are *orthodox Christians in creed*--if it is clear that they are *heterodox in life*. He who believes the truth, should himself be true. How can we expect others to receive our religion--if it leaves us foul, false, malicious, and selfish?

We sicken at the sight of a dirty dish, and refuse even good food when it is placed thereon. So pure and holy is the doctrine of the cross, that . . .

he who *hears* it aright will have his ear cleansed,
he who *believes* it will have his mind and heart purged,
he who *preaches* it should have his tongue purified.
Woe unto that man who brings reproach upon the gospel by an unholy walk and life!

Lord, evermore make us vessels fit for your own use, and then fill us with the pure juice of the grapes of sound doctrine and wholesome instruction. Do not allow us to be such *foul cups* as to be only fit for the wine of Sodom!

The Imputation of Christ's Righteousness

by Thomas Brooks
(1608-1680)

Ninthly and lastly, known for your comfort, that imputed righteousness will give you *the greatest boldness before God's judgment-seat*. There is an absolute and indispensable necessity of a perfect righteousness wherewith to appear before God. The holiness of God's nature, the righteousness of his government, the severity of his law, and the terror of wrath, calls aloud upon the sinner for a complete righteousness, without which there is no standing in judgment, Ps. i . 5. That righteousness only is able to justify us before God which is perfect, and that hath no defect nor blemish in it, such as may abide the trial before his judgment-seat, such as may fitly satisfy his justice, and make our peace with him; and consequently, such as whereby the law of God is fulfilled. Therefore it is called the righteousness of God; such a righteousness as he requires, as will stand before him, and satisfy his justice, Rom. x. 3. So the apostle saith, 'The righteousness of the law must be fulfilled in us,' Rom. viii. 4. Now there is no other righteousness under heaven whereby the law of God was ever perfectly fulfilled, but by the righteousness of Christ alone. No righteousness below the righteousness of Christ was ever able to abide the trial at God's judgment seat, and fully to satisfy his justice, and pacify his wrath. A gracious soul (i.e. one in whom God has worked His saving grace) triumphs more in the righteousness of Christ imputed, than he would have done if he could have stood in the righteousness in which he was created. This is the crowning comfort to a sensible and understanding soul that he stands righteous before a judgment-seat, in that full, exact, perfect, complete, matchless, spotless, peerless, and most acceptable righteousness of Christ imputed to him. The righteousness of Christ is therefore called the righteousness of God, because it is it which God hath assigned, and which God doth accept for us in our justification, and for and in which he doth acquit and pronounce us righteous before his seat of justice, Rom. iii. 21, 22, and x. 3; Phil. iii. 9. There is an indispensable necessity that lies upon the sinner to have such a righteousness to his justification as may render his appearance safe and comfortable in the Day of Judgment. Now there is no righteousness that can abide that day of fiery trial, but the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. Paul, that great apostle, had as fair and as full a certificate to shew for a legal justification as any person under heaven had, Phil. iii. 4-6; Acts xxiii. 6; 2 Cor. xi. 22; but yet he durst not stand by that righteousness, he durst not plead that righteousness, he durst not appear in that righteousness before the dreadful judgment-seat. But oh, how earnest, how importunate is he, that he may be found, in that great day of the Lord, in the mediatory righteousness of Christ, and not in his own personal righteousness, which he looked upon as filthy rags, as dross, dung, dogs' meat, Phil. iii. 9,10. The great thing that he most strongly insists upon is, that he might be clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness; for then he knew that the law could not say black was his eye, and that the judge upon the bench would pronounce him righteous, and bid him enter into the joy of his Lord, Mat xxv. 21, 23, 24; a joy too great to enter into him, and therefore he must enter into that when the match is made up between Christ and the soul, that soul bears her sovereign's name. The spouse of the first Adam and her husband had both one name, 'God called their name Adam, in the day that he made them,' Gen. v. 2; so the spouse of the second Adam, in the change of her condition, from a single to a married estate with Christ the Lamb, had a change of her name The head is called, ' the Lord our righteousness,' Jer. xxiii. 6; and so is the church: Jer. xxxiii. 16, 'In those days shall

Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, the Lord our righteousness.' Here is a sameness of name. As Christ is called, 'the Lord our righteousness,' so his spouse is called, 'the Lord our righteousness.' Oh, happy transnomination 1 Christ's bride being one with himself, and having his righteousness imputed to her, is called, the Lord our righteousness;' and therefore they may, with the greatest cheerfulness and boldness, bear up, in the great day of account, who have the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to them, especially if you consider, (1.) That this righteousness is of infinite value and worth; (2.) That it is an everlasting righteousness, a righteousness that can never be lost, Dan. ix. 24; (3.) That it is an unchangeable righteousness. Though times change, and men change, and friends change, and providences change, and the moon change, yet the Sun of Righteousness never changes, 'in him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,' Mai. iv. 2; James i. 17; (4.) That it is a complete and unspotted righteousness, an unblamable righteousness, and unblemished righteousness; and therefore God can neither in justice except or object against it. In this righteousness the believer lives, in this righteousness the believer dies, and in this righteousness believers shall arise, and appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to the deep admiration of all the elect angels, and to the transcendent terror and horror of all reprobates, and to the matchless joy and triumph of all on Christ's right hand, who shall then shout and sing, Isa. lxi. 10, 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels.' Oh, how will Christ, in this great day, be admired and glorified in all his saints, 2 Thes. 1:10, when every saint, wrapped up in this fine linen, in this white robe of Christ's righteousness, shall shine more gloriously than ten thousand suns! In the great day of the Lord, when the saints shall stand before the tribunal of God, clothed in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, they shall then stand, *rectus in curia* ; they shall then be pronounced righteous, even in the court of divine justice, which sentence will fill their souls with comfort, and the souls of sinners with astonishment, Rev. xx. 12, and xii. 10. Suppose we saw the believing sinner, holding up his hand at God's bar; the books opened, the accuser of the brethren present, the witnesses ready, and the judge on the bench thus bespeaking the sinner at the bar, Rom. vi. 12, 14, 16, and Gal. iii. 10. O sinner, sinner, thou standest here indicted before me, for many millions of sins of commission, and for many millions of sins of omission; thou hast broken my holy, just, and righteous laws beyond all human conception or expression, and hereof thou art proved guilty; what hast thou now to say for thyself why thou shouldst not be eternally cast? Upon this, the sinner pleads guilty; but withal he earnestly desires that he may have time and liberty to plead for himself, and to offer his reasons why that dreadful sentence, Go, you cursed, &c, Mat. xxv. 41, should not be passed upon him. The liberty desired being granted by the judge, the sinner pleads that his surety, Jesus Christ, hath, by his blood and sufferings, given full and complete satisfaction to divine justice, and that he hath paid down upon the nail the whole debt at once, and that it can never stand with the holiness and unspotted justice of God to demand satisfaction twice, Heb. x. 10, 14. If the judge shall further object, Ay, but sinner, sinner, the law requireth an exact and perfect righteousness in the personal fulfilling of it; now, sinner, where is thy exact and perfect righteousness? Gal. iii. 10; Isa. xlv. 24. Upon which the believing sinner very readily, cheerfully, humbly, and boldly replies, My righteousness is upon the bench,' in the Lord have I righteousness.' Christ, my surety, hath fulfilled the law on my behalf. The law's righteousness consists in two things, (1.) In its requiring perfect conformity to its commands; (2.) In its demanding satisfaction, or the undergoing of its penalty, upon the violation of it. Now Christ, by His active and passive obedience, hath fulfilled the law for righteousness, and this active and passive obedience of Jesus Christ is imputed to man His obeying the law to the full, his perfect conforming to its commands, his doing, as well as his dying obedience, is by grace made over and reckoned to me, in order to my justification and salvation; and this is my plea, by which I will stand before the judge of all the world. Upon this the sinner's plea is accepted as good in law, and accordingly he is pronounced righteous; and goes away, glorying and rejoicing, triumphing and shouting it out, Righteous, righteous, righteous, righteous; 'In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory,' Isa. xlv. 25.¹¹

¹¹ Thomas Brooks, *The Works of Thomas Brooks*, vol. 5 (Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), pp. 249-251.