



KINGDOM PROPHET

Part Two

Forty Daily Devotions
from the Book of Isaiah
Chapters 36-66
(Based on the NKJV)

Introduction

Isaiah has often been referred to as “The Prince of Prophets!” His name means “The Lord saves,” and that is exactly the message he preached. Beyond the fact that he was “the son of Amoz” (1:1), we know very little about this great preacher’s past or childhood. However, we can be sure that he was proud of his roots because we see the phrase “the son of Amoz” repeatedly (seven times) throughout the book. Beyond the book that bears his name, we can also read about the ministry of Isaiah in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles.

His ministry began in earnest in the same year that King Uzziah died (6:1), and he preached during the same times as men like Amos, Hosea, and Micah. Most of what we know about Isaiah comes from some personal, biographical information that he included in his writings. From his own book, we learn he had at least two sons. One was named Shear-Jashub (7:3) and the other Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (8:3).

If you do some extra reading about the Book of Isaiah, you might discover that there are some who believe he wrote only the first portion of the book. However, there are several reasons to be fully convinced that the entire book was written by Isaiah, but perhaps in two different phases. The first portion might have been written in his younger years while the second might have been written in his later years as he looked back on his life and ministry. The strongest argument for Isaiah’s authorship is found in the title by which he repeatedly addressed the LORD – “The Holy One of Israel.” Beginning at Isaiah 1:4 through Isaiah 60:14, you should be able to find that phrase over 20 times throughout the book. You will also find that phrase once in 2 Kings 19:22, but a careful look will reveal that it is Isaiah that refers to God by that title in that story. Other than in two places in Jeremiah (50:29 and 51:5) and three places in the Psalms (71:22; 78:41; 89:18), you will find no record of anyone else addressing God in that way. Since this title for God seems to be a trademark of Isaiah, and since it occurs regularly throughout the entire book, I am convinced Isaiah was the author of all the wonderful chapters that we will be reading over the next 40 days.

Daily Reading Schedule

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
1	Isaiah 36:1-22	05/07/24
2	Isaiah 37:1-20	05/08/24
3	Isaiah 37:21-38	05/09/24
4	Isaiah 38:1-22	05/10/24
5	Isaiah 39:1-40:11	05/11/24
6	Isaiah 40:12-31	05/12/24
7	Isaiah 41:1-15	05/13/24
8	Isaiah 41:16-29	05/14/24
9	Isaiah 42:1-25	05/15/24
10	Isaiah 43:1-13	05/16/24
11	Isaiah 43:14-28	05/17/24
12	Isaiah 44:1-14	05/18/24
13	Isaiah 44:15-28	05/19/24
14	Isaiah 45:1-12	05/20/24
15	Isaiah 45:13-25	05/21/24
16	Isaiah 46:1-13	05/22/24
17	Isaiah 47:1-15	05/23/24
18	Isaiah 48:1-22	05/24/24
19	Isaiah 49:1-13	05/25/24
20	Isaiah 49:14-26	05/26/24

Day	Scripture Reading	Date
21	Isaiah 50:1-11	05/27/24
22	Isaiah 51:1-13	05/28/24
23	Isaiah 51:14-23	05/29/24
24	Isaiah 52:1-15	05/30/24
25	Isaiah 53:1-12	05/31/24
26	Isaiah 54:1-17	06/01/24
27	Isaiah 55:1-13	06/02/24
28	Isaiah 56:1-12	06/03/24
29	Isaiah 57:1-21	06/04/24
30	Isaiah 58:1-14	06/05/24
31	Isaiah 59:1-21	06/06/24
32	Isaiah 60:1-22	06/07/24
33	Isaiah 61:1-11	06/08/24
34	Isaiah 62:1-12	06/09/24
35	Isaiah 63:1-19	06/10/24
36	Isaiah 64:1-12	06/11/24
37	Isaiah 65:1-12	06/12/24
38	Isaiah 65:13-25	06/13/24
39	Isaiah 66:1-12	06/14/24
40	Isaiah 66:13-24	06/15/24

Day 1: Isaiah 36:1-22

“But if you say to me, ‘We trust in the LORD our God,’ is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and said to Judah and Jerusalem, ‘You shall worship before this altar?’” (Isaiah 36:7)

When we study the Bible, we always must remember that many different people are quoted in the Bible and much of what they had to say differed greatly from what God might say or think. Today’s chapter is a case where those to whom these words were spoken needed to be careful to consider the speaker before they formed an opinion on the subject at hand. The speaker is “the Rabshakeh” whom “the king of Assyria sent...with a great army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem” (v. 2). This high-ranking political representative of the king of Assyria had been sent to negotiate Jerusalem’s surrender. In the speeches this man made to some of the leaders of Jerusalem, he made some accusations against King Hezekiah that were intended to cast some doubt on the king’s commitment to serving God. He was correct when he reminded the people that Hezekiah had “taken away” some of the “high places” and “altars” that existed under Hezekiah’s father, Ahaz. If you do not remember, Ahaz was one of those kings about whom it was said, “He did *not* do what was right in the sight of the LORD” (2 Kings 16:2). The “high places” and “altars” that Hezekiah had torn down were some that Ahaz had built “in every corner of Jerusalem...to burn incense to other gods” (2 Chronicles 28:24-25). One of Satan’s most successful strategies is to destroy people’s confidence in leadership. In this story, we see him using that tactic against Hezekiah.

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to listen to rumor, innuendo, or gossip. Always **consider** who is doing the speaking, and their motivation and intentions, before passing judgment on leadership or its actions.

Day 2: Isaiah 37:1-20

“And so it was, when King Hezekiah heard it, that he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.” (Isaiah 37:1)

The last verse in Isaiah 36 told us that those who met with the representative from the king of Assyria “came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and told him the words of the Rabshakeh.” Immediately upon hearing what had been said, “King Hezekiah...tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.” The phrase “tore his clothes” usually describes the custom of grabbing one’s outer garment at the neckline and, with both hands, tearing it down towards their heart. It was an outward expression that basically said that their heart was breaking. Sackcloth was a rough, burlap type material that was worn in times of mourning and great grief. Beyond that, King Hezekiah sent some of his leaders to Isaiah with this message: “This day is a day of trouble” (v.3). Then “Isaiah said to them, ‘Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me’” (v. 6). The phrase “the servants (plural) of the king of Assyria” suggests that there was more than one person who had come to deliver that evil king’s accusations against Hezekiah. If you do not believe that God has a sense of humor, then you only have to read what God had to say through Isaiah in verse seven. There God said, “I will send a spirit upon him (the Rabshakeh), and he shall *hear a rumor* and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.” How ironic it is that the one who was spreading half-truths, rumor, and innuendo against good King Hezekiah was himself defeated by “a rumor.”

Prayer Emphasis: Always remember God’s laws of sowing and reaping and that “God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7). **Pray** for our governmental leaders today and **ask** God to give them wisdom in all they do.

Day 3: Isaiah 37:21-38

“Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Because you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria...’” (Isaiah 37:21)

In yesterday’s verses, we read where the king of Assyria sent a threatening letter to King Hezekiah. That letter, among other things, said this to Hezekiah: “Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, ‘Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria’” (v.10). The letter suggested that, since the gods of other nations had not been able to protect those nations against the mightier army of the Assyrians, Judah’s God would not be any different (v. 12). Verses 14 and 15 told us that when “Hezekiah received the letter...and read it,” he “went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. Then Hezekiah prayed to the LORD.” Most of the verses of today’s reading contain the message that God sent in response to Hezekiah’s prayer. God was careful to make sure that Hezekiah understood He was going to act against Judah’s enemies, “Because you have prayed to Me!” All the things that God spoke against the king of Assyria in verses 22-35 came in response to one man’s prayer to God. Hezekiah had literally taken his problems (the letter) to the house of God and laid them there on the altar! God made it clear to Hezekiah that things were going to be different because he had prayed! If Hezekiah had not prayed, then great damage and hardship might have come upon Jerusalem and her inhabitants. It is quite possible that the city might have been conquered at that time. Some people may have wondered if it would do any good to pray, but I assure you, Hezekiah was not one of them!

Prayer Emphasis: Make prayer a priority in your life by establishing a “pray first” policy. **Review** the many times that God has answered prayers and **believe** He will do the same if you will ask for His help and guidance.

Day 4: Isaiah 38:1-22

“And the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, ‘Go and tell Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: ‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years.’”” (Isaiah 38:4-5)

We are not provided with any specifics about King Hezekiah’s illness, but we do know he was “sick and near death” (v. 1). When we read 2 Kings 18:3, we see that Hezekiah was a king who “did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.” When we compare 2 Kings 18:2 to 2 Kings 20:6 and Isaiah 38:5, we see that Hezekiah was only 39 years old when this nearly fatal sickness came upon him. Yesterday’s devotion spoke about this good king’s prayer life and the priority that prayer held in his life. Today we see yet another great example of what can happen when a faithful believer prays! Surely James said it right when he wrote: “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16). Some have asked, “If Hezekiah was “right” with God, why are we told that he ‘wept bitterly’ (v. 3) at the thought of dying?” The answer is fairly simple. Old Testament saints did not have the blessing of understanding heaven like those of us who can look *back* to the resurrection of Christ and can also look *at* the promises of the resurrection found in the New Testament. Old Testament saints did not have the information that we have in the New Testament and, therefore, did not have our understanding about death and heaven.

Prayer Emphasis: Praise God for the promise of the resurrection and heaven! **Believe** that even the best of Christians sometimes get sick – and even fatally so. **Pray** for some suffering saint today and then **encourage** them by letting them know you have prayed for them.

Day 5: Isaiah 39:1-40:11

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.’” (Isaiah 40:3-5)

Today’s focus verses contain some of the most often quoted phrases from the Book of Isaiah. But, before I comment on them, let me first point out that chapter 39 closed with the announcement of the coming conquest of Jerusalem by Babylon. Then, chapter 40 begins with God comforting His people and urging them to “speak comfort” (v. 2) to one another. One of the ways they could comfort one another was to help each other be prepared for the ultimate coming of the Messiah as their King! As such, Isaiah was inspired to liken this preparation to the building of a great highway. The phrase “prepare the way of the LORD” is very much like our phrase “roll out the red carpet”! Building a highway in Bible lands and times was both an *extensive* and *expensive* operation. The highway needed to be as “straight” as possible. To make the highway straight, valleys would have to be filled in and mountains and hills would have to be “brought low” or made level. Obstacles that would require crooks in the road had to be removed and the rough places had to be smoothed out. However, when “the glory of the LORD” was finally “revealed” to them on the day that “all flesh shall see it together,” their every effort would prove to have been worthwhile.

Prayer Emphasis: Roll out the red carpet for Christ in your own life and make sure that God has a straight path to your heart. **Ask** God to reveal any areas of your life that should be “under construction” right now and then make any repairs, renovations, or alterations that He reveals to you.

Day 6: Isaiah 40:12-31

“He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:29-31)

Much of what we read in Isaiah 40 is centered in answering the question that God posed in verse 18: “To whom then will you liken God?” Earlier Isaiah said God was so big that He could “measure the waters (all the waters of the earth) in the hollow (palm) of His hand” (v. 12). Verses 13 and 14 indicate there is no one who could ever teach Him anything, and then verse 15 gives us a pretty good idea of just how small this world is when it is compared to Him. As such, God has basically led Isaiah to say: “A God like our God is worth waiting for!” When He does come, He will give “power to the weak” and “to those who have no might He increases strength.” Even in the days where “the youths shall faint and be weary” and “the young men shall utterly fall,” those who “wait on the LORD shall renew their strength...mount up with wings like eagles...run and not be weary...walk and not faint.” The key phrase here is “those who wait on the LORD.” It presents the idea that those who have enough faith in God to know He is always working with their best interest in mind, will remain faithful to God even when others do not. It is to those who faithfully continue to have hope in the LORD – no matter their circumstance or situation – that this precious promise is made.

Prayer Emphasis: Believe that God is always working with your best interest in mind – no matter how difficult your circumstances or situation! **Ask** Him to give you some of His strength when you are weary. **Trust** Him to keep His promises to give you the spiritual strength needed to rise above any problem.

Day 7: Isaiah 41:1-15

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10)

Today’s focus verse contains a command to “fear not.” The word that is translated “fear” there represents something that man has faced since just after his creation. It is translated from the same Hebrew word as the word “afraid” in Genesis 3:10 where we are told that Adam explained to God, “I was *afraid* because I was naked; and I hid myself.” A second command in today’s verse is “be not dismayed.” The word translated “dismayed” there is a word that is most often translated “look.” After Adam sinned, he hid himself because he felt he could no longer look at God or meet with Him face to face. After their many failures, the people of Judah were feeling very much like Adam and God knew it. So, today’s focus verse also contains some very precious promises for God’s people. Two of them are “I am” promises while three of them are “I will” promises. The first “I am” promise is about His *presence*. He said to His people, “Fear not...for I am with you!” The second “I am” promise is about His *power*. The word from which “God” is translated there is “Elohim” – which means “the strong one.” The three “I will” promises follow. The first is “I will *strengthen* you.” This promise implies that God was going to give His people courage. This is the same word that is used when God told Joshua to “be strong and very *courageous*.” The second “I will” promise is found where God said, “I will *help* you,” while the third “I will” promise is “I will *uphold* you.” Yesterday, we read where God could hold all the waters of the world in the palm of His hand. If He can do that, then surely, we should have no trouble believing He can also uphold us!

Prayer Emphasis: **Refuse** to fear! **Claim** these same promises for yourself and your family on a daily basis. **Share** these promises the next time you encounter someone who is fearful or dismayed.

Day 8: Isaiah 41:16-29

“The poor and the needy seek water, but there is none, their tongues fail for thirst. I, the LORD, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.” (Isaiah 41:17)

Today’s focus verse serves as yet another reminder that God never broke His covenant with His people. Although early on in this book, God said that His people had turned their backs on Him (1:4), He never failed to live up to His part of the covenant. For that reason, God says here, even when His people are suffering as a result of their disobedience to Him, He “will not forsake them.” In this part of God’s message to His people, He mentions what He *would not* do (“forsake them”) and then spoke of several things that He *would* do. In verse 17, He said He would “hear them.” Then, in verse 18, He said, “I will open rivers in desolate heights...I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry lands springs of water.” In many places in the Middle East water is scarce, especially in the “desolate heights,” “the wilderness,” and the “dry lands.” God said He would give them, in those places, “rivers,” “a pool,” and “springs of water.” In verse 19, God began to list some of the trees He would “plant in the wilderness.” In most translations, seven different types of trees are listed in this verse. Since the number seven is so closely associated with perfection in the Bible, this indicates that God intended to give His people a perfect provision even in the places and times where they might not expect it. All of this was done so God’s people would “see and know...consider and understand...that the hand of the LORD (had) done this” (v. 20).

Prayer Emphasis: **Pay** careful attention to see if God is trying to show you something through the things He is doing for you. **Expect** God to be faithful even when we are not. **Thank** Him for the many blessings He has given you, even when you have not given your best to Him.

Day 9: Isaiah 42:1-25

“Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; and He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.” (Isaiah 42:1)

In Isaiah 41:8, we read where God said, “But you, Israel, are My servant.” He will refer to Israel as “My servant” again in verse 19 of this chapter. Other passages in Isaiah where God referred to Israel as “My servant” are Isaiah 43:10; 44:1-2, 21; and 45:4. However, it is clear that God is not speaking of Israel here in today’s focus verse. One hint of that is that the word “Servant” is capitalized here where it is not in any of the references mentioned earlier. Another clue is the title “My Elect One” that is given to this particular “Servant” and the fact that God said, “I have put my Spirit upon *Him*; and *He* will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.” All those factors make it clear that God is speaking of a specific *Person* here and not a *people* in general. Israel, as God’s “servant,” was to be God’s light to the world that would help bring all people to God. However, Israel failed miserably at her mission, and God chose to fulfill His plan through His Son. If you look carefully, you will see that the Holy Spirit repeatedly used masculine pronouns such as “He” and “His” multiple times in verses two through four. The greatest evidence that the “Servant” of Isaiah 42:1 is not Israel is that Matthew 12:18-21 quotes from this chapter of Isaiah and clearly indicates that God was speaking of Jesus and His ministry when He made these statements. As God’s perfect Servant, Jesus did what Israel or no other nation could do. He fulfilled God’s plan to carry the message of God’s love to all the peoples of the world – every nation and every generation!

Prayer Emphasis: Take some time to **praise** God that His message of love and redemption eventually came to you! **Ask** God to make a divine appointment for you today and then **watch** for an opportunity to **share** a word of testimony about your salvation with someone you encounter.

Day 10: Isaiah 43:1-13

“But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you...’” (Isaiah 43:1-2)

It has been said that the Book of Isaiah could easily be divided into two large sections with chapters 1-39 *pronouncing condemnation* on God’s people and chapters 40-66 *providing consolation* for God’s people. At the close of chapter 39, God clearly told His people that judgment was coming and they would be made to serve as captives in a strange land. Then, the first words of chapter 40 were “Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” Today’s focus verse confirms that God’s desire was to comfort His people even during their time of captivity. Any Israelite could relate to the terms “pass through the waters...and through the rivers.” No doubt these phrases reminded them of their miraculous flight from Egypt and their equally miraculous entrance into the Promised Land. There were some things that God wanted His people to remember when they went into captivity. He wanted them to remember that He was their Creator and He “formed” them as a nation. He “redeemed” them as was evidenced by the blood that was shed and applied at the first Passover in Egypt when their firstborn was spared from the plague of death. When God said, “I have called you by your name,” He was basically saying that Israel was His child and they were His! So, His command to them was to “Fear not!” Even as the waters and the rivers ascended and seemed as if they were going to overwhelm them, He was going to always be with them and deliver them from their many trials.

Prayer Emphasis: **Write** the words “Fear Not!” on a piece of paper and keep it with you today. When trouble comes your way, take your piece of paper from your pocket and do exactly what it says!

Day 11: Isaiah 43:14-28

“Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert...I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen.” (Isaiah 43:19-20)

Depending on which translation you are using, Isaiah 43:14 begins with “Thus says the LORD” or “This is what the LORD says” and verse 16 repeats that phrase. This is a good phrase to be watching for as you read from this point because you can find it 19 more times in the remaining chapters of Isaiah. I am not surprised that after telling His people that they were going to have to suffer the indignation of captivity as a result of their disobedience, God immediately began to constantly remind them that He was speaking to them, and they should listen to what He had to say. This phrase is also used to remind the people of the divine authority of God’s Word. Look again at verse 16 and notice that God followed that “thus says the LORD” with a reminder He was the One who “makes a way in the sea and a path through the mighty waters.” Then, He spoke of “the chariot and horse” and “the army” that would be extinguished...like a wick” (like blowing out a candle). The “new thing” that God was going to do for His people now was going to be just as miraculous as the things He did for Israel when He delivered them from Egypt and led them through the wilderness to the Promised Land! God often reminds His people to remember and consider all that He has done for those who followed Him in the past. We have only to look at our own past to know that we serve a God Who is able and willing to meet our every need.

Prayer Emphasis: Expect God to keep His promises and to make a way for you even through the toughest of times and situations. **Thank** Him for the many blessings that He has bestowed upon you in the past and **trust** Him to remain faithful to the end!

Day 12: Isaiah 44:1-14

“Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant, and Israel whom I have chosen. Thus says the LORD who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you: ‘Fear not, O Jacob My servant; and you Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.’” (Isaiah 44:1-2)

You should be able to locate the phrase “thus says the LORD” two more times in today’s assigned reading and three times total in this chapter of Isaiah. Two important commands are found in just three words in today’s focus verses. The first has to do with *hearing* while the second has to do with *fearing*. The word that is translated “hear” in the NKJV and other translations is translated “listen” in others. However, I love the way that the Common English Bible translates this phrase to read, “Now hear this”! I know enough about military commands to know that God is here expecting His people to treat Him as if He was their Supreme Commander! After commanding His people to “hear” what He had to say, God could then command them to “fear not.” Notice that the command to “fear not” is followed up by two “I will” promises from God in verse three. When we “hear” God – and take what we hear to heart – then we have every reason to live without fear when we do what He commands us to do. I can only imagine how concerned a parent would be to learn that their nation was about to go into captivity in another country. God was way ahead of the game when He made Israel some promises about the future and their descendants when He said: “I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit *on your descendants*, and My blessings *on your offspring*” (v. 3).

Prayer Emphasis: “Jeshurun” is another name for Israel that literally means “upright one.” It is only found here and then three times in Deuteronomy. **Realize** that when we “hear” God and “fear” only Him, we will learn to walk “upright” in all our ways.

Day 13: Isaiah 44:15-28

“Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and He who formed you from the womb: ‘I am the LORD...who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built,’ and to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’”’” (Isaiah 44:24 & 28)

You can be assured that after every “thus says the LORD,” some particularly valuable information is conveyed. In this case, the phrase is followed by some very wonderful things that God had done for His people in the past. As you read verses 24 through 27, you cannot help but see that God is building up to something very special. That very special thing is found in verse 28! Here God clearly allows Isaiah to prophecy about Israel’s ultimate release from Babylon and her return to the Promised Land. Through God’s leadership, Isaiah specifically speaks of the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the laying of the foundation for the new temple. Here is the most remarkable thing about it all: He even names the person, Cyrus, whom God would use to do all those things for Israel. This is the Cyrus we read about in the Book of Ezra. He was the king of Persia who conquered Babylon and was then led by God to free the Jews from their captivity. The remarkable part about this is that Isaiah named this man who would do all these amazing things for God’s people almost 200 years before the man was even born. This was the man that God said He had “raised up” back in Isaiah 41:25. Isaiah will speak of him again in 45:13 where he says, “I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways; he shall build My city and let My exiles go free, not for price nor reward.”

Prayer Emphasis: Brag on our Mighty God to someone you encounter along life’s way today! While you are at it, do some bragging on God’s Book as well!

Day 14: Isaiah 45:1-12

“Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held – to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut: ‘I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the LORD, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel.’” (Isaiah 45:1-3)

How amazing are these words? God refers to Cyrus as “His anointed.” That word simply means that God had a specific work for Cyrus to do and He was going to empower him to do it. Here we find God using a pagan king to deliver His people from captivity and to help them rebuild Jerusalem and their temple afterwards! One must wonder if King Cyrus, after conquering Babylon, came across a 200-year-old scroll that had been written by the Jewish prophet Isaiah, and found his own name there. Perhaps when Cyrus read (or heard about) the fact that God referred to him as the one “whose right hand I have held; to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors,” he remembered many battles that seemed to have been supernaturally won. And then, perhaps he read or heard that God had done all those things for the sake of “Israel” His “elect.” God seemed to slip a secret message to King Cyrus in these lines when He had Isaiah prophecy, “I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me” (v. 4). I am sure that, after reading or hearing that, Cyrus had no problem with believing God’s next statement: “I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me” (v. 5).

Prayer Emphasis: Believe that God has a plan in mind for delivering you from your current or future difficulties. **Realize** that His plan would probably blow your mind if He told you about it! **Know** that we are serving this same Almighty God today – He has not changed!

Day 15: Isaiah 45:13-25

“Tell and bring forth your case; yes, let them take counsel together. Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, a just God, and a Savior; there is none besides Me. ‘Look to Me and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.’” (Isaiah 45:21-22)

It is clear to me that the Apostle Paul loved the Book of Isaiah. I think one of the reasons he loved that book so was because some of the words that Jesus said to him when He confronted Paul on the day of his conversion on the Damascus Road were from the Book of Isaiah. Then, when the Lord encouraged Paul while he was ministering to the problematic church at Corinth, He once again quoted from Isaiah. Perhaps it is for that reason alone that the Book of Isaiah was so widely used by Paul. Paul either quoted from or alluded to Isaiah’s writings over 80 times in his letters. In Romans 9-15, Paul quoted from Isaiah, by name, five times! Paul was quoting from Isaiah in Romans 3:26 when he said that God was “just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” I personally believe that Paul had Isaiah 45:22 in mind when he made that statement. Verse 21 uses a legal term to set the stage for a very important statement by saying “bring forth your case.” As a “just” judge, God could not let sin go unpunished. But as a “Savior,” He could forgive sin and allow the sinner to go free. By sending His own Son to die in our place, God remained “just” because He did punish sin. But, through His willingness to freely forgive all who have “faith in Jesus,” God was offering grace to all without compromising justice.

Prayer Emphasis: Praise God for being “a just God *and* a Savior.” **Believe** that “there is no other” God Who would condemn His own Son in order that we might be saved! Have you “looked” to God, and God alone, for your personal salvation?

Day 16: Isaiah 46:1-13

“Bel bows down, Nebo stoops; their idols were on the beasts and on the cattle. Your carriages were heavily loaded, a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but have themselves gone into captivity.” (Isaiah 46:1-2)

As sad as it is to imagine, when God’s people were hauled away into captivity by the Babylonians, they took their false gods with them! Isaiah clearly reports that the people loaded “their idols” to the pagan gods “Bel” and “Nebo” on their carts to transport them to their new home. To get them on the carts, the idols had to be laid down – hence “Bel bows down” and “Nebo stoops.” When we think of Bel and Nebo, we have to think of Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar, two Babylonian kings under whom God’s people spent time in captivity. Belshazzar means “Bal protects us” and Nebuchadnezzar means “Nebo protects us.” How pathetic is this scene? These false gods were not carrying the people – the people had to carry them! While they are carrying their idols, God reminds His people that it had been just the opposite when they were faithfully worshipping Him. He said, “Listen to Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been *upheld* by Me from birth, who have been *carried* from the womb” (46:3). He then said, “I will *carry* you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will *carry* you and deliver you” (46:4). How embarrassing this message must have been to the Israelites. Instead of serving the God who had carried them, they were serving gods that they had to carry! One has only to look around to see that many believers are replacing God with foolish, useless things today.

Prayer Emphasis: Learn from the mistakes of those who have lived before us. **Refuse** to allow anything to take God’s rightful place on the throne of your heart. **Trust** God to carry you through the tough times in life and **believe** that you will never have to carry Him!

Day 17: Isaiah 47:1-15

“But these two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day: The loss of children, and widowhood. They shall come upon you in their fullness because of the multitude of your sorceries, for the great abundance of your enchantments.” (Isaiah 47:9)

The words that we read in Isaiah 47 were not spoken to Israel but to her captive nation, Babylon. In this message, God refers to Babylon as if she were a lady accustomed to a royal lifestyle that has been forced to “come down and sit in the dust” (v. 1). The language that God used in verse two likened the great city to a young woman who had been placed in servitude and employed in the hard business of grinding meal. He indicated that she was going to be stripped of her pride and modesty (v. 2) and that her “nakedness” would “be uncovered” and her “shame...seen” (v. 3). In our focus verse, God spoke a prophecy to the people of Babylon warning them that a conqueror was going to come upon them suddenly and their lives were going to be changed drastically. There is no doubt that God was speaking to them about King Cyrus and his great Persian army that would attack and conquer their city. Talk about sowing and reaping! What Persia eventually did to Babylon was exactly what Babylon had done to Israel and other nations! The saddest part about Babylon’s many sins was that the people truly believed they were going to get away with all of the evil things they had done! God said, “You have trusted in your wickedness; you have said, ‘No one sees me’” (v. 10). God then said, “Evil shall come upon you” and “you shall not know from where it arises” (v. 11). That last phrase was just another way of saying, “You will not even see it coming!”

Prayer Emphasis: Realize that Satan never shows you the “big picture” when he attempts to lead you into sin! **Recognize** that sin will bring nothing but shame, sorrow, and regret into your life!

Day 18: Isaiah 48:1-22

“Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do it; for how should My name be profaned? And I will not give My glory to another.” (Isaiah 48:10-11)

While verse 10 speaks of Israel being tested “in the furnace of affliction,” verse four provides some insight regarding one of the things that led to their being there. God said He “knew that (His people) were obstinate” (v. 4). Some translations use the word “stubborn” or “hard” here. The KJV and other translations often translated the Hebrew word that is used here as “stiff-necked.” This was a term used to describe an animal that was hard to lead or guide. No matter how much its master pulled or prodded, the animal was determined to go in the direction of its own choosing! God first referred to His people as being “stiff-necked” in the days of Exodus 32:9. Over 700 years later, things hadn’t changed very much because that was about the time that Isaiah used the same word to describe God’s people here. Some 75 or 100 years afterwards, Jeremiah was directed to accuse Israel of that same sin (Jeremiah 17:23). A little later, Ezekiel was sent by God to speak to Israel, a people that God described to him as an “impudent and stubborn (stiff-necked) people” (Ezekiel 2:4). Fast forward to New Testament times, some 1400 or 1500 years after Exodus, and you will find Stephen referring to his fellow Israelites as being “stiff-necked...in heart and ears” and then explaining what that term meant by saying, “you always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you” (Acts 7:51).

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to struggle against God’s will and resist the leadership of the Holy Spirit in your life. **Believe** that any path down which God would choose to lead you is infinitely better than any path of your own choosing.

Day 19: Isaiah 49:1-13

“Sing, O heavens! Be joyful, O earth! And break out in singing, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people, and will have mercy on His afflicted.” (Isaiah 49:13)

The word that is translated “comforted” in our focus verse is a Hebrew word that is most often translated “comfort” or “comforted” but is translated “repent” or “repented” in just about the same number of places. A basic definition of *repentance* would be that one has made a complete *reversal* from one direction to another. Since God afflicted His people because of their sin and rebellion, the comfort that He later so freely lavished upon them caused a much-appreciated change in His actions toward them. We read earlier in Isaiah an exceptionally good verse to help us understand how this word might be translated “comfort” and “repent” several times in the Bible. In Isaiah 12:1, God prophesied to His people that there would be a day when they would say, “O LORD, I will praise you; though You were angry with me, Your anger is *turned away*, and you *comfort* me.” Perhaps the best way to explain how strong this word for “comfort” is would be to show you how it is used in the first book of the Bible. In Genesis 24:67, it is used to express the kind of comfort that Isaac received from Rebekah after his mother’s death. Then, in Genesis 37:35, it is used to describe the kind of comfort that was offered to Jacob after he had been told (falsely) that his son, Joseph, was dead. The last illustration that I will use from Genesis is found in Genesis 38:12 where, after the death of Judah’s wife, the Scripture states that “Judah was comforted.” The message is clear. Some 800 years after these stories from Genesis, God was still comforting His people in the same way.

Prayer Emphasis: Accept God’s chastening hand and believe that His purpose is always to restore us to a right path and, therefore, a right relationship with Him. **Be** the kind of Christian that comes out of a time of chastening or affliction *better* and not *bitter*.

Day 20: Isaiah 49:14-26

“But Zion said, ‘The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me.’” (Isaiah 49:14)

In verse 15 of today’s Scripture reading, we saw where God asked His people, “Can a woman forget her nursing child?” God’s question came as a response to the fact that “Zion said, ‘The LORD has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me’” (49:14). The word translated “forsaken” in verse 14 is a verb that means “to leave behind” or “to leave alone.” However, it is not a word that means to utterly forsake or forget. The first time this word is found in the Bible is in Genesis 2:24 where God said, “A man shall *leave* his father and mother and be joined to his wife.” We know God did not mean that a man who has entered a marriage relationship with a woman was to utterly forsake every other relationship in his life. To leave one’s father and mother certainly did not mean to never see them, love them, or speak with them again. Hence, the birth of a new relationship did not necessarily demand the death of another. However, it seems that God was now giving His people a taste of their own medicine. Early in Isaiah, we read where Israel had “forsaken the LORD” (1:4). They had not forgotten God, but they certainly were not being faithful to Him! The word that is translated “forgotten” in our focus verse is a word that means “to cease to care.” How sad it is to see Israel singing praises to their God who “comforted His people” in verse 13 of this same chapter and then see them fall so quickly into the pitiful state of mind that would question whether He even cared about them! Again, it seems God was allowing His people to experience what He had experienced from them. In Isaiah 17:10, we read where God told them, “You have forgotten the God of your salvation.”

Prayer Emphasis: Practice the fine art of “remembering” every day. “Never forget” that God “never forgets” His children! Even though He is all knowing, **remind** Him of how much He means to you today!

Day 21: Isaiah 50:1-11

“Thus says the LORD: ‘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.’” (Isaiah 50:1)

God spoke again to His people through Isaiah and notified them that He was aware of their wrong ideas and attitude. Apparently there were those who felt that God had forsaken them and likened His warnings about being sent away into captivity to a man divorcing his disobedient and sinful wife. Under the Old Testament Mosaic Law, a man could present his wife with a divorce certificate that detailed his accusations against her and then require her to leave his home (Deuteronomy 24:1). Although God was not actually divorcing Israel, there were those who were presenting it as though He was. In response to that wrongful thinking, God asked them to produce some evidence that He was divorcing them. He asked for the certificate that had to be presented when a woman was put away and sent from a man’s home. It is obvious that there were also those who likened God’s threatened sentence of captivity for His people to a father who would allow his sons to be sold into slavery to satisfy his unpaid debt. In these statements, God was emphasizing an especially important point to His people – that the captivity into which they were going was of their own doing and not His. As always, God offered His people an opportunity to repent. In verse 10, He asks, “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.”

Prayer Emphasis: Take care how you speak of God to others! **Refuse** to blame Him when His chastening comes into your life. **Listen** for God’s call to repentance in every situation when He has to discipline you.

Day 22: Isaiah 51:1-13

“Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug.” (Isaiah 51:1)

We have talked before about the importance of paying attention when God begins to repeat Himself! In today’s focus verse, God implores His people to “listen.” Three times in chapter 51 God says, “Listen to Me” (vs. 1, 4, and 7). The word that is translated “listen” here is the same word that is used in Genesis 3:8 when we are told that Adam and Eve “*heard* the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” On that day, that verse goes on to say, “Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” In that same chapter, we are told that God called out to Adam, asking where he was, and Adam replied, “I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Genesis 3:9-10). Even though many years had passed since that first sin, man had not changed very much. Once God had their attention, He told them to “look to the rock from which (they) were hewn.” That statement was explained in verse two when God told them to “look to Abraham (their) father, and to Sarah who bore (them).” What God was asking His people to do was to look back at the way He had dealt with His people in the past to learn more about how they could trust Him with their future. When it came to Abraham, God said that He “called” him and “blessed him and increased him” (v. 2). God is telling these people that they have no reason not to expect Him to do the same for them.

Prayer Emphasis: Remember that God loves us just as much as He has ever loved anyone. **Believe** that we, like Israel, are “called” and we can fully **expect** to be “blessed and increased” when we obey!

Day 23: Isaiah 51:14-23

“Therefore please hear this, you afflicted, and drunk but not with wine. Thus says your Lord, the LORD and your God, Who pleads the cause of His people: ‘See, I have taken out of your hand the cup of trembling, the dregs of the cup of My fury; you shall no longer drink it.’” (Isaiah 51:21-22)

In verse 17 of today’s reading, it seems as if God is all but shouting to Israel, “Awake, awake!” He then followed His command for them to “Wake up” with a command for them to “stand up.” Then, in verse 21, He all but begs them to listen to Him when He says, “Therefore, please hear this.” The word that is translated “hear” in that verse, is the same word that was translated “listen” three times earlier in this chapter. We simply cannot read Isaiah 51 without realizing that God is doing everything possible to gain the attention of His “sleepy” people. Unfortunately, things had not changed much by New Testament times. The Apostle Paul once wrote to the Christians at Rome urging them “to awake out of sleep” (Romans 13:11). In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul quoted from Isaiah 26:19 and 60:1 when he exhorted them to “Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light” (Ephesians 5:14). If this “sleepiness” was a problem in Isaiah’s day, as well as in the early days of the New Testament church, we can be sure that it is a problem for the church today. God wanted His people to “wake up” because He wanted them to be ready when their exile ended. He was now making them aware that He was going to remove the “cup of trembling” and “the cup of (His) fury” from their hands and they were no longer going to have to drink from it.

Prayer Emphasis: Remember that God’s chastening is only for a season. If He is willing to forgive and restore His people after they have sinned, then how much more should we be willing to do the same for those who may sin against us? **Experience** the blessing of forgiving someone today!

Day 24: Isaiah 52:1-15

“Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city! For the uncircumcised and the unclean shall no longer come to you.” (Isaiah 52:1)

Just as we saw the words “Listen to me!” three times in chapter 51, we see the double command, “Awake, awake!” three times from Isaiah 51:9 to 52:1. In Isaiah 51:17, God told His people to “Wake up” and to “stand up!” Now, here in Isaiah 52:1, He commanded them to “Wake up!” and to “dress up!” He said to the people of Jerusalem, “Put on your beautiful garments!” The idea behind those words was that the city was going to be rebuilt and be as beautiful as she once had been. In verse three, God told His people they were going to be “redeemed without money.” That certainly did not mean that their deliverance would come without a price. The final verses in this chapter begin to explain what it cost Him for His people to be saved. In those verses, God spoke to His people about His “Servant” (Jesus Christ) and said that “His visage (appearance) was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men” (Isaiah 52:14). We may say that salvation is free, but it was not free to God. He purchased our salvation through the sacrificial death of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. At His crucifixion, Jesus was beaten to a point beyond recognition. When it speaks of “His form” in the last part of verse 14, it is literally saying that the body of our Lord was beaten to the point that it no longer looked like the body of a human being. The face and body of our Lord was so cruelly beaten by the fists and whips of His tormentors that those who looked upon Him were “astonished” (v. 14).

Prayer Emphasis: Consider the high cost of salvation and then **realize** the price that Jesus paid at Calvary was for you! Everything they did to Him was because of our sin. **Believe** that He literally died “for” you – in your place – and then **live** like it matters to you!

Day 25: Isaiah 53:1-12

“Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He has poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” (Isaiah 53:12)

Many believe that the best chapter break between Isaiah 51 and 52 would have been at Isaiah 51:12 with Isaiah 52 beginning with the words of Isaiah 52:13: “Behold, My Servant!” I agree with that argument because I believe the words of Isaiah 53 describe the work of God’s “Servant,” Jesus Christ, as He was “despised and rejected by men” (v. 3) on the cross at Calvary. It is clear to me that it is speaking of Christ and His suffering when it says, “He was wounded for our transgressions” and “bruised for our iniquities” (v. 5). Time will not allow comment on all the things that “He was” exposed to for us. However, time and space will allow them to be listed. “He was”: “despised (v. 3), “wounded” and “bruised” (v. 5), “oppressed” and “led as a lamb to the slaughter” (v. 7), and “cut off from the land of the living” and “stricken” (v. 8). Because of all the suffering to which Christ was exposed during His crucifixion, He was qualified to make “intercession for the transgressors” (v. 12). The simple definition of intercession is “the action of intervening on the behalf of another.” There will never be a better example of intercession than Christ on the cross, praying these words: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34). There are some who argue that Isaiah 53 is not about Jesus. However, Jesus certainly stated that it was in Luke 22:37. Then, the New Testament clearly associates the words of this great chapter with Jesus in Matthew 8:17; John 12:38; Hebrews 9:28; and Revelation 5:6, 12 and 13:8.

Prayer Emphasis: Invest some time into reading the New Testament references listed above. **Thank** God that Jesus Christ made intercession for you when you could not help or save yourself.

Day 26: Isaiah 54:1-17

“No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is from Me,” says the LORD.” (Isaiah 54:17)

You really must read this promise carefully to fully understand what God is saying to us here. He is NOT saying that no weapon will be “formed against” us! In fact, He is clearly stating that weapons will be formed against us! Every Christian should take the time to memorize the words of 2 Timothy 3:12: “Yes, and *all* who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” However, while we are suffering that persecution, we can remain confident that it shall not “prosper” (be successful) against us. There are two things that are specifically mentioned in today’s focus verse: “weapons” and “words” (“every tongue”). I think God is clearly trying to tell us that we may suffer persecution from the things that people *do* and from the things that people *say*. Though it may sometimes seem like the enemy is winning when we receive a bad report from our doctor or a layoff notice from our employer, we can rest on the promise that we will ultimately be victorious against anything that Satan throws at us! A job may be lost, but we must not allow that to cause us to admit defeat. A child may wander, but that should not cause us to fly a white flag of surrender over our soul. Disease, and even death, may knock at our door – and sometimes even barge its way in – but even death cannot “prosper” against God’s child. However, we would do well to remember that we are not victorious because of the strength of our hands but because of “the heritage of the servants of the LORD!”

Prayer Emphasis: Refuse to allow anything that anyone says or does against you to rob you of the victory that Christ earned for you on the cross! **Think** and **speak** like a winner today!

Day 27: Isaiah 55:1-13

“Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” (Isaiah 55:6-7)

Isaiah 55 is another chapter where it is difficult to select one or two verses as focus verses. However, there are three things from today’s focus verses that I felt I had to mention! First, there is a *plea*. God had Isaiah cry out to the people, asking them to “Seek the LORD while He may be found” and to “call upon Him while He is near.” One cannot help but note the sense of urgency in those statements. In these words, we surely get the idea of what Peter was thinking when he wrote: “The Lord is...not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Second, there is a *problem*. Man is “wicked” and “unrighteous” and, therefore, must “forsake his way” and “his thoughts” and “return to the LORD.” This is often easier said than done. After Adam and Eve sinned against God, they certainly did not “return to the LORD.” Rather, they ran and hid themselves from God when they heard Him calling out to them. People know they are sinners. We spend far too much time trying to convince them of that fact. They know they have a problem to which they do not have the answer. Therefore, we must be faithful to mention the third thing that is noticed in this verse – and that is, a *promise*. God says when we “return” to Him, “He will have mercy” on us and will “abundantly pardon.”

Prayer Emphasis: **Believe** that God will never reject anyone who returns to Him! Be faithful to **offer** others God’s solution to their sin problem. Spend more time *lifting up* the Savior than you do *putting down* sinners and you will find your witness to be infinitely more effective.

Day 28: Isaiah 56:1-12

“Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.’ The LORD God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, ‘Yet I will gather to him others beside those who are gathered to him.’” (Isaiah 56:7b-8)

I have often read that the Book of Isaiah is written in two sections. The first section is from chapter one through chapter 39. That first section is very much about God’s *condemnation* of His *sinful* people. The second section is from chapter 40 through chapter 66. That section is predominantly about God’s *consolation* for His *suffering* people. The Book of Isaiah is often compared to the Bible as a whole because it begins reading like an Old Testament book and ends sounding like a New Testament book. I find it interesting that the section on condemnation has 39 chapters (the same number as the books that are in the Old Testament) and the section on consolation has 27 chapters (the same number as books in the New Testament). When you read the words of Isaiah 56, it is clear that God always intended to include Gentiles in His plan for the salvation of mankind. In this chapter, God speaks twice of “the son of the foreigner” (vs. 3 & 6) and of “the eunuch” (v. 3). Under the Old Testament Law, both of these people would have been restricted in their access to the temple. Now God is promising to accept “their burnt offerings and sacrifices” on His altar and is pronouncing that His house “shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” His plan was to continue gathering “the outcasts of Israel” but also to “gather to Him *others* besides those.” This plan was obviously for the future because God said, “My house *shall be* called a house of prayer for all nations” and “*I will* gather” others besides the outcasts of Israel.

Prayer Emphasis: **Praise God** that we are living in this wonderful age of the New Testament church! **Reach** out to someone today and invite them to attend services with you. **Make** every effort to make everyone who visits our church feel loved and welcomed.

Day 29: Isaiah 57:1-21

“The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart; merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil.” (Isaiah 57:1)

If you review the final four verses of yesterday’s reading (Isaiah 56), you will see that Israel’s spiritual leaders had grown cold and irresponsible. You will see in those verses that they were likened to “beasts,” “blind watchmen,” “dumb dogs” that “cannot bark,” and “shepherds” that were only interested in “their own way” and their “own gain.” Then, verse 12 clearly indicates they had no plans to change their behavior! Perhaps these selfish, sinful shepherds (priests and preachers) were at least part of the reason that God had Isaiah say, “The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart; merciful men are taken away, while no one considers...” (57:1). The opening words of today’s reading are obviously a continuation of the rebuke that came at the conclusion of yesterday’s verses. Yesterday, it was about some of the bad things the spiritual leaders were doing. Today, it is more about the good things that were being left undone. It is obvious that the priests were neglecting to meet the needs of the people. The people were drying up and dying spiritually and the priests did not “take it to heart.” God went on to say that good, merciful men were suffering “while no one” considered (cared). I think there is another, more general, application to the words of Isaiah 57:1. I read it and understand it to mean that the people no longer meant anything to the spiritual leaders of Jerusalem and Judah. It seems to me that God is saying that “righteous” and “good” people pass through life, and no one even takes the time to know them or care about their needs. I have to wonder if we are not living in similar times today.

Prayer Emphasis: Notice people and take the time to **know** people! **Remember** that there is nothing more important to God than people. **Express** God’s love to someone that you encounter today.

Day 30: Isaiah 58:1-14

“Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you may break every yoke?” (Isaiah 58:6)

We don’t hear much preaching and teaching about fasting these days. One of my good preacher friends told me that he had a New Testament verse that confirmed the fact that he didn’t need to be fasting. That verse was Ephesians 5:29: “For no one ever hated his own flesh, but *nourishes* and cherishes it.” Many Bible characters, Old and New Testament alike, practiced the spiritual discipline of fasting. Among them were people like Moses, King David, and the great prophets Elijah and Daniel. Examples of New Testament fasting are found in the lives of Jesus, as well as others who lived and served in the early church. Every time I read the Sermon on the Mount, I am reminded that Jesus said, “*When* you fast” and not “*if* you fast” (Matthew 6:16). Another verse that resonates with me is Matthew 17:21 where Jesus said to His disappointed disciples who were unable to help and heal an extremely sick boy, “This kind does not go out except by prayer *and* fasting.” Every time I read that verse, I am reminded that there is a price to be paid if we want to have the power of God in our lives. In the great commission, Christ commanded His apostles, to “Go...make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe *all things that I have commanded you*” (Matthew 28:19-20). Take the time to carefully read verses six through nine of today’s chapter and see how you, and others, might benefit from the faithful practice of fasting. Verse nine sums it all up very nicely when it says: “Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’”

Prayer Emphasis: **Prayerfully consider** the idea of fasting. **Ask** God to guide you in this very private and personal matter. **Start** small – skip a lunch and give what it would have cost you to a worthy cause.

Day 31: Isaiah 59:1-21

“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.” (Isaiah 59:1-2)

Yesterday’s verses contained a promise of how life could be if God’s people desired a right relationship with Him more than anything else. Something that Job said offers us some idea of what it means to be hungrier for God than for physical sustenance. He said, “I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12). Isaiah had just promised God’s people that, when they believed the same way, “Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer” (58:9). Today, Isaiah continues by saying that the problem with unanswered prayer does not lie with God. His “ear” is not “heavy, that it cannot hear.” God told Isaiah to tell the people that there was a problem, but the problem was with them – not Him. Their “iniquities (had) separated (them) from (their) God; and (their) sins (had) hidden His face from (them), so that He *will* not hear.” So, Israel’s prayer problem was not that God *could* not hear them but that He *would* not hear them. Since God had not immediately rescued His people from their trials, some of them had probably begun to waver in their faith and believe that God was not strong enough to save them. That is exactly what is meant by the word “shortened” in our focus verse. It is so typical for human beings to look somewhere beyond themselves to lay the blame for any failure or shortcoming. When God’s people are forced to endure chastening trials, they should be wise and mature enough to admit that the problem is not with God’s *power* but with God’s *people*.

Prayer Emphasis: **Refuse** to allow sin and foolish pride to “separate” you from God. **Realize** that such times of separation have nothing to do with your *redemption* but with your *relationship*. **Repent** of any known sin in your life and then make every effort to put it behind you forever!

Day 32: Isaiah 60:1-22

“Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you.” (Isaiah 60:1-2)

In this prophecy, Isaiah describes a “deep darkness” that will “cover the earth” and “the people.” The first time that the word that is translated “cover” in our focus verses is found in the Bible is in the story of Noah and the great flood. There, we are told “the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills...and the mountains were *covered*” (Genesis 7:19-20). It is important to note that the hills and mountains were “covered” with water because “the waters prevailed exceedingly.” God was trying to use Isaiah to tell His people that “the darkness” that accompanies sin was burying the people of the world and the cure for that darkness was available through His people. Therefore, they were commanded to “arise” and “shine.” Their light was not one that they were going to have to muster from within themselves because it was one that would “come” from “the glory of the LORD” being evident in their right relationship with God. God clearly explains to His people that “His glory will be seen upon (them).” I find it interesting that the word that is translated “glory” here, is the same word that is translated “glory” in Exodus 33:18 when Moses asked God, “Please, show me your glory.” Moses needed to see God’s glory then, and the world needs to see it now. But, how will they see it? They will see it in us!

Prayer Emphasis: **Allow** God to shine through you. **Realize** that being a “light” for God is not something that *you* do *for* God but something that *God* does *through* you! **Ask** God to use you to chase away some of the darkness under which someone might be covered today.

Day 33: Isaiah 61:1-11

“Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD...” (Isaiah 61:1-2a)

If today’s focus verses sound like something that you have read in the New Testament, you are absolutely correct! Right after His temptation, and very early in His ministry, Jesus “came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up...He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read...He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah...when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD’” (Luke 4:16-19). Because of what the LORD was going to do, Israel was going to benefit from what I often refer to as “The Great Exchange!” Because of the ministry of Christ in the world, God’s people who were accustomed to mourning, were going to receive “comfort” and consolation. In place of “ashes,” they were going to receive “beauty.” Rather than having a spirit of continual “mourning” in their lives, they were going to receive “the oil of joy.” And they were going to trade in their “spirit of heaviness” for “the garment of praise” (vs. 2-3). In one of Abraham’s earliest conversations with God he said, I “am but dust and ashes” (Genesis 18:27). As such, he was saying he was worthless in God’s sight. God was telling His people that He would dress them in a “garment of praise” so that others might see Him in them so “He (might) be glorified” (v. 3).

Prayer Emphasis: Check your spiritual wardrobe and make sure you are dressed for success! **Allow** God to make you a window through which others may see His glory!

Day 34: Isaiah 62:1-12

“For Zion’s sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD will name.” (Isaiah 62:1-2)

I have often emphasized that it is important to identify the person who is doing the speaking when you read the Bible. It is also important to know to whom the speaker is speaking. There is some confusion among commentators as to who is speaking here in chapter 62. I thought I might find the answer by researching the Hebrew word that is translated “rest” here. If it was the same word that was used to explain how God “rested” on the seventh day during creation, then I was going to have a strong clue. However, I found that the Hebrew word used here is not found in the Scriptures until you get to the Book of Joshua. I also found that this word was used by Isaiah to describe God at “rest” (18:4); Israel at “rest” (30:15); and even the “wicked...who cannot rest” (57:20). But, since verse six clearly identifies work that only God could do, I think it is safe to say that, when it comes to the speaker here, it is a “Who” (God) and not just a “who” (Isaiah). Verse two provides some ammunition for the idea that the second half of Isaiah is “New Testament” oriented when it speaks of “the Gentiles” seeing Israel’s “righteousness.” The words “all kings” (v. 2) are yet another strong hint that God, even in the Old Testament times, had plans to redeem Jews and Gentiles alike.

Prayer Emphasis: **Thank God** that our nation is one of those Gentile nations that has seen God’s “righteousness” and “glory.” **Pray** for our country and its leaders every day. **Refuse** to criticize anyone for whom you have neglected to pray.

Day 35: Isaiah 63:1-19

“I will mention the loving kindnesses of the LORD and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies, according to His lovingkindnesses.” (Isaiah 63:7)

Isaiah is here reminding God’s people (then and now) that God has given us something to talk about – and many things – for that matter! The word that is translated “mention” in our focus verse is a word that is found in 32 of the 39 books of the Old Testament. It should be said that this word is translated “remember” or “remembered” four times as often as it is translated “mention.” The first time this word is used in the Bible is in Genesis 8:1, where we are told that “God *remembered* Noah.” This is also the word that Joseph used when he asked the butler to “make mention” of him to Pharaoh in Genesis 40:14. I like to think that, in some heavenly conversation between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Noah was *remembered* or *mentioned* and that is when “God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided” (Genesis 8:1). I am certain that Noah was glad he was “on the agenda” that day! In our focus verse, some translations use words like “make known” or “tell of” here, but I personally think that the ESV renders the best translation when it says, “I will *recount* the steadfast love of God.” Some of the things mentioned in our focus verse that are worthy of much recounting are God’s “loving kindnesses,” His “praises,” His “great goodness,” and, of course, “His mercies.” All these things are worthy of being “on our agenda” every day!

Prayer Emphasis: Remember that “grace” is getting what we *don’t* deserve while “mercy” is not getting what we *do* deserve. **Realize** that this verse indicates that all the good things mentioned here were done “according to His mercies.” That was true for Israel then and it remains true for us today.

Day 36: Isaiah 64:1-12

“But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand.” (Isaiah 64:8)

Everywhere I have ever been, and most of what I have been fortunate enough to see, has been seen while I was “on my way” to do some preaching for God! I have often wondered what would have come of my life if Christ had not found and saved me when I was a wayward teenager. I am sure that I would not be as well travelled as I am today if God had not called me to preach. One of the places that I have been fortunate enough to see is Mount Rushmore in South Dakota. In between a couple of speaking engagements there, my hosts took me to see that amazing work of art. No photo could ever do it justice! It is truly a marvelous thing to see! As I stood there, gazing in awe at that transformed mountainside, I could not help but wonder what caused that artist to see something beyond the face of a mountain there. Somehow, this man had the vision to see four famous faces in that mountainside and then spent 14 years releasing them from all that stone and rock. In similar fashion, God sees something in us that, perhaps, no one else can see. Like a potter, He fashions us into what He knows we *could* be if only we *would* submit to the work of His hands. In the right hands, every person could be a work of art. We should never give up on *anyone*, and we should try to bring *everyone* into a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. In Romans 9:21, Paul asked an important question: “Does not the potter have power over the clay?” An even better question might be, “Does the divine Potter have power over me?”

Prayer Emphasis: Surrender to God’s will for your life and ask Him to make of You whatever He might desire. **Rest assured** that God’s plans are infinitely better than ours and He can use us to bring glory to His mighty name.

Day 37: Isaiah 65:1-12

“I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts...” (Isaiah 65:2)

In Isaiah 55:8, we read where God said: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways.” The message there was that our “ways” will never match God’s “ways” until our “thoughts” are coordinated with His thoughts! If there is any change of mind to be made here, it clearly should be on our part and not His! In today’s focus verse, God clearly says that to walk “according to (our) own thoughts” leads us to “walk in a way that is not good.” The next verse clearly defines the “way” that was “not good.” God’s people had been guilty of sacrificing “in gardens” and upon “altars of brick” the things that were supposed to be sacrificed in the temple and on the altar that God had designed. It is to these rebellious people that God said: “I have stretched out My hands.” To stretch out one’s hands was a gesture that signified longing and invitation. God invited His people to leave their own ways and return to His. With those same “outstretched” arms and hands, our loving God was willing to embrace His sinning people and restore them to a right fellowship with Him. Ultimately, God “stretched out” His hands in the Person of Jesus Christ as He died on the cross for our sins. We should never forget that the message of the cross is that God saves us on an “in spite of” and not on a “because of” basis. In spite of our sin and rebellion, God demonstrated “His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Prayer Emphasis: Praise God that He “stretched out” His arms *to* and *for* you! **Reach out** to someone on His behalf today and **tell** them just how much God loves them!

Day 38: Isaiah 65:13-25

“For behold, I create a new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy.” (Isaiah 65:17-18)

It is sometimes complicated, but we must remember that Isaiah’s prophecy had an immediate fulfillment and a long-term fulfillment. The immediate fulfillment would be the soon coming captivity and the eventual return of God’s people from exile to Jerusalem and a restored temple. The long-term fulfillment spoke of the end times and the great tribulation and then the millennial reign of Christ in the New Jerusalem. In our focus verses, Isaiah was speaking of the New Jerusalem and the new heavens and earth. The Hebrew word for “create” here is the same word that is used in Genesis 1:1 when “God *created* the heavens and the earth.” It is a word that means to create something out of nothing. So, the place that Isaiah is speaking of is not a renovation of what already exists but a completely new place altogether. In the New Testament, we read where Peter said the same thing: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens *will pass away*” (2 Peter 3:10). Isaiah certainly indicates that we will not miss the old earth when he says that “the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.” Basically, what Isaiah is “seeing” now is the same thing we are told that John saw in Revelation 21 – only approximately 600 years earlier! It seems clear that it is God’s intention that His people eventually “rejoice forever” in their wonderful new home.

Prayer Emphasis: Consider the words of Isaiah 65:19: “The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying.” **Rejoice** in the precious promises that God has given you in His word and put what you know to good use by encouraging a suffering saint today!

Day 39: Isaiah 66:1-12

“Thus says the LORD: ‘Heaven is My throne, and earth is my footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist,’ says the LORD.” (Isaiah 66:1-2a)

As we begin reading the final summary of Isaiah’s great prophecy, we are reminded once again that God dwells in a place that is not designed or built by man. It never hurts for us to be continually reminding ourselves that the only things in heaven that are made by man are the scars in the hands of Jesus! Also, we are here reminded that God is so great that His majesty fills both heaven and earth. In Isaiah’s day, people placed far too much trust in their temple worship, religious observances, and their sacrifices. In other words, the people placed their hope and trust in what *they* could do for God. It is clear to me that Isaiah, in his closing messages, is trying to tell God’s people that their trust should be placed only in what *God* has done for them! I have said it before, but it is a statement well worth repeating: God is not asking *us* to do something *for* Him – He is asking us to allow *Him* to do something *through* us! In the New Testament, Stephen tried to drive this point home to the religious Israelites when he quoted this very passage to them in Acts 7:48-50. He told the people that “the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hand, as the prophet says, ‘Heaven is my throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will you build for me’ says the LORD, or ‘what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these things?’” Stephen was simply trying to tell the people of his day that, at least at this time, God desires only to dwell in our hearts! I once heard a pastor tell of a time when his young son was sick and at the doctor’s office. The doctor put a stethoscope to the boy’s chest and said, “Wow! What a loud heartbeat you have! Who do you have in there? Barney?” The boy replied, “No! Jesus is in my heart! Barney is on my underwear!”

Prayer Emphasis: Ask yourself the tough questions: “Do I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Is He living in my heart?” If the answers are “Yes,” then **praise God** for that blessed confidence. If the answers are “No,” then **trust Him** as your personal Savior today!

Day 40: Isaiah 66:13-24

“For I know their works and their thoughts. It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory.” (Isaiah 66:18)

There is no question that the next big thing on God’s schedule is the rapture of the church! It is at that moment that God will “gather all nations and tongues” and they “shall come” and see His “glory.” What Isaiah saw very early in his ministry is what we will see immediately after we have arrived in heaven! Isaiah said: “I saw the LORD sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple” (Isaiah 6:1). He saw heavenly creatures crying out one to another “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isaiah 6:3). This is the same place that John saw when he said: “I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here!’” After that he said, “Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne” (Revelation 4:1-2). He also saw heavenly creatures and heard them singing, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come” (Revelation 4:8). The Apostle Paul believed that “the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52). Are you prepared for that moment?

Prayer Emphasis: **Praise God** for the hope of heaven today! **Mention** heaven to someone that you encounter along life’s road today. **Contact us** at 850-562-8069 or gary@seminolebc.com if we can pray for you or minister to you and your family in any way.