

A song for God's people

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[0 : 0 0] Can you please turn with me to the passage we read in Isaiah chapter 12. Isaiah chapter 12, and we're going to be considering the whole of this chapter, but if you could look with me at the words that we find in verse 2.

Isaiah chapter 12 and verse 2, Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid. For Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song.

And he also has become my salvation. I want us this evening to focus on this song of salvation, this thanksgiving of the faithful.

And it is a song that is very much a response to God's grace. It is a testimony to God's grace. And my hope as we go through this song is that this song would be the song of each of us.

That this song would be the song of each of us. And we're going to look at the song as it's divided for us in three headings. The first thing we see is a confident testimony. A confident testimony.

[1 : 0 7] Verses 1 and 2 we read, And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee. Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away and thou comfortst me. Behold, God is my salvation.

I will trust and not be afraid. For Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song. He also is become my salvation. And what we see in these verses is that Isaiah speaks of the confident testimony that a Christian can give regarding God and his salvation.

Isaiah speaks of the confident testimony that a Christian can give regarding God and his salvation. And he begins by saying, In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee.

And I just want to note here that this verse is in the singular. It is addressed to one person. And it is one person who is testifying. God saves every person individually.

There is no such thing as a second hand salvation. You are not a Christian simply because your parents were Christians. Or because your grandparents were Christians. Or because they brought you up going to church.

[2 : 1 8] As a Christian, you sing individually. And you sing personally of the God that you have experienced. And the salvation you have tasted. And as a Christian, you sing individually and personally to this God that you have experienced.

This God who has saved you. And despite what everyone else is thinking and saying and doing around you, you find this God to be enjoyable and desirable and praiseworthy.

And Isaiah says, Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away and thou comfortst me. Now this is the gospel according to Isaiah. In chapters 1-5 of this prophecy, Isaiah states that Israel and Judah have rebelled against the Lord.

And they are now under his condemnation and judgment. But from chapters 6-11, Isaiah is given promises that the Lord will send a deliverer. A virgin will give birth to a royal son.

And he will bring everlasting peace for his people through saving them. And these are promises that we know are centered on and fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

[3 : 32] And here in chapter 12, Isaiah says that because of this Jesus, God's anger is turned away. Now every Jew knew that for God's anger to be turned away, a sacrifice was needed.

A sacrifice was needed where the sin of the people was placed on that sin offering. And that sin offering would now be under the judgment of God. Now where is the sacrifice in Isaiah?

Chapters 52 and 53 that we read on Friday night. Where this same deliverer, this same Jesus, this same servant of the Lord, dies on a cross.

And as he does so, Jesus takes the sinner's place. Jesus bears the sinner's load. Jesus pays the sinner's debt. Jesus endures the sinner's punishment.

Jesus secures the sinner's peace. That is the gospel. And because of this gospel, because of this Jesus, you can look this God in the face and you can say to him, O Lord, I will praise thee.

[4 : 36] Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away and thou comfortst me. That is why we took the bread and the wine this morning. They are not magical.

They don't make us Christians. They are simply visual reminders to us, to point us to the body of Jesus, broken for us, and to point us to the blood of Jesus, shed for us.

They are illustrations to us of the grace that is found in the gospel and pledges of what God promises us in the gospel. But Isaiah goes on and he says, Behold, God is my salvation.

I will trust and not be afraid. He says, God is my salvation. Isaiah is saying, God is the author. He is the cause. He is the agent. He is the accomplisher of my salvation.

Salvation is not something that we do. It is not something that we earn. It is not something that we work toward. It is something that has been done for us. It is something that has been given to us. It is a gift for us with a big bow on it.

[5 : 44] It is God's gift to us. It is God's work for us. And because God is our salvation, as Christians we can say, I will trust and not be afraid.

Now, Isaiah spent much of his ministry trying to persuade the people of Israel and Judah to trust God and not be afraid. Whatever crises hit them, whatever providence has rocked them, because God was their salvation.

And a Christian is someone who holds on to God and holds on to his promises through a crisis. A Christian is someone who can look into the blackness of the unknown and they aren't anxious because God is their salvation.

A Christian is someone who can enter into the storm of depression, enter into the storm of loneliness, enter into the storm of singleness, enter into the storm of bereavement, enter into the storm of financial difficulty, enter into the storm of illness, enter into the storm of marital strife, knowing that the captain of their salvation is with them and he is for them.

And he says to them, you are of more worth than many sparrows. Do not be afraid, little flock. I have overcome the world. A Christian is someone who on their very worst day, when they backslide so badly, knows that they are still loved by their heavenly Father because their acceptance is based on Jesus.

[7 : 14] A Christian is someone who doesn't need to be afraid of being known by others, being found out by others, because their identity rests not in their performance, but in Christ's perfection.

A Christian is someone who knows that God is their salvation and they don't need to worry about their past. They don't need to worry about their present. They don't need to worry about their future because Christ, the living God, is taking and will take care of it all.

I will trust and not be afraid is the motto of the Christian, the motto of the pilgrim of heaven. But Isaiah goes on and he says, the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song.

He has become my salvation. He says, the Lord is my strength. The people in Isaiah, they found strength in a lot of things. They found courage in a lot of things. Foreign alliances, other gods, mediums, spiritists, their own leaders.

And today, people still find strength and courage in a lot of things. Some find strength and courage in drink or drugs. Others in their own willpower.

[8 : 24] Others in their bravado. Others in their religiosity. Others in their relationships. Others in a particular church member or a particular church leader.

And they rely on those supports to get them through whatever comes their way. And here Isaiah says that the Christian who sees God as their salvation finds this same God to be their strength.

And they lean on Him. They depend on Him. They wait on Him. Whatever comes their way. But Isaiah still goes on. And he says, the Lord is my song.

Now we're probably all familiar with musicals here. Some of us may have grown up with films such as The Sound of Music or Seven Brides for Seven Brothers. Others, maybe the younger ones, have grown up with the Disney musicals such as Robin Hood or Beauty and the Beast or more recently Frozen.

Others of us may appreciate the more mature musicals such as Mamma Mia or Les Mis. And normally the storyline in these musicals is flowing along until something happens which triggers one of the characters to burst into song.

[9 : 33] Now it's pretty ridiculous. I'm sure none of us has ever gone singing in the rain. But the human heart has this capacity to sing from within when it experiences glory and greatness and goodness and grace.

The heart sings when it accepts how little it matters about us contributing to our salvation and how much it matters about what God has done for us in Christ when it comes to our salvation.

The heart sings when it accepts how little it matters that we are in control and how much it matters that God is in control in Christ. The heart sings when it accepts how little it matters about us being able and how much it matters that God, in Christ, is able to undertake on our behalf.

As Christians, the Lord is our song. And I hope today he is the song of every one of us. So here is the question. What is your confident testimony?

What have you found to be the greatest wonder of your life? Isaiah would say here, the greatest wonder of your life is that the God who was opposed to you because of your sin now comes to comfort you and lavish his grace on you.

[10 : 55] He is your salvation. Is that your confident testimony? The second thing we see in this passage is a rich enjoyment.

A rich enjoyment. Verse 3, therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And here Isaiah speaks of the rich enjoyment that a Christian can experience in God and his salvation.

The rich enjoyment a Christian can experience in God and his salvation. Now the language in verse 3 is borrowed from the Exodus. And you remember that God through Moses redeemed his people from Egypt and he settled them in the land of promise.

It is a wonderful foreshadowing, a wonderful type of the supreme salvation found in Christ. But between God redeeming his people from Egypt and settling them in the land of promise, he is seen providing them with water on their journey through the wilderness.

They have to walk across this dry sand, this hard rock in the blistering sun. And if left this way, they would know only emptiness and exhaustion and eventually death.

[12 : 08] But God provides water. He provides wells of salvation at Marah, Elan, Massah and Meribah. It was an extension of God's goodness to his people where he revived them, where he refreshed them physically, but even more spiritually as he reminded them that he was with them.

He was for them. He was committed to them. He loved them. And here Isaiah says, God doesn't just save us through Jesus. Wonderful though that is.

Instead, God keeps lavishing his people with his goodness. He lets them draw water from the wells of salvation. He is reviving them.

He is refreshing them by continually reminding them that he is with them. He is for them. He is committed to them. And he loves them. Have you ever wondered what the greatest blessing in the gospel is?

The greatest blessing in the gospel isn't being forgiven so we don't go to hell. The greatest blessing in the gospel isn't getting relief from a guilty conscience as we realize our sins are forgiven.

[13 : 20] The greatest blessing in the gospel isn't entering heaven. The greatest blessing in the gospel, the greatest blessing in salvation is that we get God himself.

It is where God is with you. Where he is for you. Where he is committed to you. Where he loves you. This is the well.

This is the refreshment of salvation. As we come to realize God is no longer our enemy. He is our friend. And as we go through the Bible, we see that life without God is described as being very dry.

Now we can be tempted to think that life with God, life as a Christian is very, very dry. Maybe that's what some of you feel and you think I could never become a Christian until I'm much older because I want to have more fun in life right here, right now.

And we believe that all manner of substitutes and all manner of alternatives will bring us satisfaction and fulfillment in life. But it's a life without God. It's a life without hope.

[14 : 28] It's a life without promise. It is a life of emptiness. No one sums it up better than the rock band of Rolling Stones. Who enjoyed everything that a hedonistic lifestyle could offer.

And yet sung, I can't get no satisfaction. Life with God. God himself, as we've sung in Psalm 63, as we've sung in Psalm 107, is the satisfaction of the human heart.

And here Isaiah speaks of people enjoying God and enjoying his salvation and drawing from those wells each day. He is encouraging us to picture weak, weary, dry, dirty people drawing water from those wells of salvation.

Every day drawing from those fresh, cool waters in endless supply. And he says, this is a picture of the believer being satisfied with God.

As God is with them and he is for them. Perhaps the clearest picture of this. The clearest picture of this spiritual satisfaction is found in that encounter that we read between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4.

[15 : 39] We find Jesus sitting at a well in Samaria. And he encounters this woman who's had five husbands. And the man she's currently with isn't even her husband.

And the whole passage is speaking of her spiritual emptiness. Her cavernous thirst. She's been seeking identity and satisfaction in relationships and intimacy.

She's got such a strong desire to be loved. She doesn't care what others think of her or what happens to her as long as she has a man. She has such a longing to be desired.

She sacrifices her own body. She is spiritually thirsty. And her soul is unsatisfied. And Jesus comes to her. And what does he say to her?

Does he say to her, you're such a mess? Does he say to her, get away from me? I can't be doing with you. Does he say to her, get your life sorted before you can come to me?

[16 : 37] Not at all. He speaks gently to her. And he says, I have living water for you. I have refreshing water for you. And he says to her, this is a gift.

You don't need to earn it. You don't need to buy it. You don't need to work for it. And he says, if you drink this water, you will never thirst again. It will fill your longing soul.

And he says, it will become for you a spring. A well of living water which you can keep drinking and coming to. And he says, this water will give you eternal life.

And what is this water? It is Jesus himself and the salvation that he has accomplished. Which her longing soul is craving after.

So I want to ask now, are we knowing the joy of drawing water from the wells of salvation? Are we knowing the joy of drawing water from the wells of salvation?

[17 : 36] Today we are encouraged to feed on Christ. To enjoy Christ. To drink from the wells of salvation. Reminding ourselves, he is with us.

He is for us. He is committed to us. He loves us. And his shed blood is proof of this. And so before going to work, drink from those wells of salvation.

And when you have a moment of peace in a very busy life, drink from those wells of salvation. And before you go on to the football pitch or the rugby pitch, drink from those wells of salvation.

And as you listen to music, drink from those wells of salvation. And as you go on a date, drink from those wells of salvation. And when you count your finances and they are not looking so great, drink from those wells of salvation.

And as you study for your exams or prelims, and as you sit your exams and your prelims, drink from those wells of salvation. And as you stand at the graveside of a loved one, drink from those wells of salvation.

[18 : 44] And before going to bed, and as you lie in bed at night, drink from those wells of salvation. And remind yourself, God is for you. He is with you. He loves you. He is committed to you through his Son.

Because if you are not drinking water from those wells of salvation, you won't enjoy following Jesus. And coming to this church or whatever other church you belong to will be a duty, but not a delight.

But if you are feeding on Christ, if you are drinking from the wells of salvation, the most boring sermon that is preached, the longest prayer that is uttered, the dullest, most tuneless psalm that is sung, will be a means of grace to your soul.

For those of us who celebrated communion today, I hope it was an opportunity for us to feed on Christ. And drink from the wells of salvation. As we were reminded that he is with us.

For us. Committed to us. Loves us. Where we were able to say, I am his. But also he is mine.

[20 : 04] A rich enjoyment. The final thing we have in the passage is a universal mission. A universal mission. Verses 4 and 6.

And in that day shall ye say, praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord, for he hath done excellent things.

This is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee. And here Isaiah says that every Christian, every one of God's people, is engaged in a universal mission to make God and his salvation known.

Isaiah begins in verse 4 saying, in that day ye shall say, praise the Lord. And that is all we can do when it comes to salvation. We cannot sit down with God at the bargaining table and negotiate how we can repay him.

All we can do is give him thanks. That is what our church services are about. That is what this communion season is about. Our public, corporate thanksgiving to God for his goodness to us in the gospel.

[21 : 22] That is why we began this morning saying, oh sing a new song to the Lord for wonders he hath done. His right hand and his salvation, the victory hath won.

And Isaiah goes on and he says, call upon his name. That God's name is who he is. It is his character. He is the infinite God. He is the eternal God. He is the unchangeable God.

The wise God. The powerful God. The holy God. The just God. The good God. The God who is absolutely sovereign. The God who is infinitely glorious. The God whose ways are true.

The God whose words are true. And the God whose person is true. And Isaiah says, call on his name. Acknowledge who he is. Worship him.

Celebrate his name in praise. And then he goes on and he says, declare his doings among the peoples or among the nations. And this is a wonderful missionary text.

[22 : 22] As we are told to both go to the nations. And what we are to tell the nations. And we are to declare God's doings or deeds among the nations.

And the word doings here or deeds is a significant word. It relates to God's saving work. It's a word that is used frequently in the Exodus redemption narrative. You see, evangelism isn't where we tell people about ourselves.

Evangelism isn't even where we tell people about our church. Evangelism is where we speak of the man Jesus. Who lived a perfect life. Where we speak of the man Jesus who died a perfect death.

Where we speak of the man Jesus who rose again. In triumph and glory and perfection. And we speak of the saving work of God. Accomplished through his life.

And his death. And his resurrection. We point to Jesus. And we simply wish to be clay pots. In which the treasure of the gospel. Jesus himself.

[23 : 25] Is contained. And shines through. Embracing the passion. And the attitude of John the Baptist. I must decrease. And he must increase.

And Isaiah goes on. And he says, make mention. That his name is exalted. Isaiah lived in a world. And we live in a world. Where people have forgotten that God's name is exalted.

They don't magnify him with their hearts. They don't worship him. They live as if he didn't exist. And the task of the church. And the task of every Christian.

Is to remind people. That God's name is exalted. The church doesn't exist. To give the opinions of men. The church doesn't exist. To teach that all religions. Are equally good and valid.

The church doesn't exist. To beg people. To unite with her. The task of the church. Is to cause people. To know. That God's name. Is exalted. And if God wills.

[24 : 22] They too. Will exalt his name. Isaiah goes further though. And he says. Sing to the Lord. For he has done excellent things. This is known.

In all the earth. God's salvation isn't to be hidden in a corner. It is to be sung about. It is to be made known.

In all the world. So that all peoples. Will praise. This. God. I love what John Piper says in this regard. Where he says. Mission exists.

Because worship. Doesn't. There is an awful lot of talk about mission. But mission is only an end in itself.

Mission is about seeking to see people. Brought to Christ. So that the lamb. Would receive the reward of his suffering. We want to see Christ.

[25 : 19] Worshipped. And Isaiah goes on. And he says. Cry out. And shout. Thou inhabitant. More literally. Inhabitants. Of Zion.

The people of Zion. Are the people of Jerusalem. God's people. Whom he has saved. And here Isaiah says. To this nation. And to this city. That we are so often divided.

Cry out. And shout. With joy. Together. And isn't that what communion is all about? Isn't that what our Sunday services. Are all about? God's redeemed people.

God's saved people. Gathering together. To shout. And sing. For joy. To God. For what he has done for us. Through Christ. We come together.

From different backgrounds. Different ages. Different communities. Different contexts. And even this evening. From different countries.

[26 : 16] But we come united in Christ. Christ. We come one in him. We come as the people of Zion. And Isaiah rounds it all off.

By saying. For great. Is the holy one of Israel. In the midst of thee. And that is the whole focus. And bedrock. Of these verses for the Christian.

God is holy. And this holy God. Isn't content. To stand at a distance. As his people engage. In this universal mission. Of making him.

Of making Jesus. Of making his salvation known. God dwelt with his people in Eden. God dwelt with his people in the temple. God dwelt with his people in the person of Jesus.

God now dwells with his people by his spirit. And God promises. That he will dwell with his people. In the new heavens. And the new earth. Where he will lead them to fountains.

[27 : 12] Of living water. And will wipe every single tear. From their eyes. And this God. Goes with his people. As they make. Him. Known.

And as John Knox. The great reformer once said. One man with God. Is always in the majority. That is our confidence.

That is our bedrock. As we go to people. Saying behold your God. We have God with us. How will Point Free Church grow.

Without God with them. How will Thurzel Free Church grow. Without God with them. You can have the most forward thinking elders. You can have the greatest preachers.

In whatever pulpit. You can have the most outgoing church members. But our only hope. And our only confidence. Is that we have the holy God.

[28 : 11] In our midst. And he works. And salvation is always his work. So Isaiah looks forward. To this message.

Of a saving God. Spreading throughout the world. As God's people. Proclaim the infinite majesty. And infinite greatness. And infinite glory of God.

As revealed in the gospel. To others. And that is our calling today. The last thing Jesus told his disciples. Before he left on earth. Was what? Go and watch your televisions.

Go and enjoy spending time with your friends and family. Go and enjoy reading the newspaper. And keeping an eye on how your favorite football team is doing. Not at all.

The last thing Jesus said. Before he ascended to heaven. Was go. And make disciples. Of all nations. And the nations. May be your neighbors.

[29 : 08] On your doorstep. We want the world. We want the people in our midst. To see the worth. The loveliness of Christ. Through the works.

And the words. Of his God. The sought of people. Where we are decreasing. And he is increasing. We don't want people making much of us. We want them.

To make much of the king of kings. And the lord of lords. The universal mission. Of the Christian. Let us pray.

Amen.