

Restoration

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the chapter we read, Isaiah chapter 40. Reading at verse 9.

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news. Lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news.

Lift it up, fear not. Say to the cities of Judah, Behold your God. And so on. As we know, this prophet Isaiah, his prophecy, or his time of prophetic office, spanned the reign of four different kings.

And he saw good kings and he saw bad kings in that period. Of course, the best king that Judah ever had was Hezekiah. And he had the privilege of prophesying during his reign.

Tradition has it, we don't have a biblical account, but certainly strong tradition has it that he was martyred during the reign of Hezekiah's son, Manasseh.

[1 : 23] As we remember, Manasseh was an incredibly evil and cruel king. And he made the streets of Jerusalem run red with the blood of God's people.

As he tried to obliterate every form of godliness out of the land. And it's quite extraordinary that this man, Hezekiah's father, Manasseh, who was the son of Hezekiah.

And Hezekiah was the best king that Judah ever had. So, Isaiah, it was also reckoned that Isaiah was of royal blood. And that he had a lot of access to the kings and those in authority.

So, he saw and lived through the reign of good kings and of bad kings. But because the land was turning more and more and more away from God, and they were moving in a direction where they were following the ways and the patterns of the nations round about, turning their back upon God, God was going to come in justice, in judgment, and in chastisement upon them.

And God continued to warn his people through Isaiah the prophet. And the first sort of 39 chapters of Isaiah has a lot to do with judgment. And yet, throughout these chapters, there are wonderful passages of great comfort, great promises, jewels that really encourage and inspire.

[2 : 59] But then from chapter 40 onwards, tends to be more what we would call restoration chapters, which are dealing with God restoring his people.

And that's exactly what happened. Although, during Isaiah's reign, the people didn't want to hear what he was saying, because he was telling them, offcoming judgment, that unless they were to turn back to the Lord, because you've got to remember, that the nation of Israel, although it had divided into two, after Solomon's son, or during the reign of Solomon's son, there was Rehoboam. During his reign, the kingdom divided into two, and Jeroboam led the northern part, Israel, and then Rehoboam, had the southern part, of where Jerusalem was the capital.

And prior to this, Israel had fallen so, so far away, that they had been taken captive long before. But here was, now the kingdom of Judah, and they were heading in exactly the same direction.

And the prophets, parts of their great work, was to be a conscience to the people, and to remind the people, and say, look, just stop and think, and reflect for a moment. Think about your history.

[4 : 27] Think about God. Think about what God has done for you. Think of where God brought you. Think of all that he has given you. Because their history was just so full, of God's gracious dealings to them.

And all they had to do, was to reflect and to think, and to see how God's hand, had been upon them, God's hand had been guiding them, and leading them, and providing for them.

And as long as they followed the Lord, and went in his way, then God continued to bless them. But the worst thing that they could do, was to turn their back upon God.

Because one of the things that God had, right from the very beginning, and this was something that the Jews were very, found very hard to take on board, even down to the days of Jesus, they found it very hard to take on board.

Because when you go right back, to the days of Abraham, God had said to Abraham, that he was going to bless, all the nations of the world through him.

[5 : 33] And of course we know, that that was ultimately, through the fulfillment of the Lord Jesus Christ. So it was essential, that the word of God, which had been given, to the people of God, that that word be kept alive, and that the ways of God, would be kept alive, because not only, were they going to be blessed through it, but all the other nations round about, were going to be blessed as well.

So if they lost the word, if they lost sight of God, if they then just began to embrace, all the other gods round about, and stopped worshipping the living, and through God, then everything was going to just, collapse into utter disarray.

And so God is saying to the people, look, you've got to, you have got to listen, you've got to heed what I am saying. So God's word was such that, a lot of the people, didn't want to listen to it.

But of course, inevitably, captivity came. So Isaiah is prophesying, about coming judgment, in the first section, but he's also prophesying, about restoration.

So when the people would be, in captivity, and they'd be thinking back to, oh, what have we done? What have we lost? How have we arrived here?

[7 : 04] How has it all gone wrong? The words of the prophet, would be coming back to them, of judgment, but also the words of restoration, that God wasn't finished with them.

And that's one of the great messages, of the Bible, is that God doesn't give up easily, on anybody. In fact, God doesn't give up at all. When God begins, on somebody, he doesn't give up.

We might be, quite bad at giving up on people. We might give up quite easily. God doesn't. And God is saying to the people, look, even although you've got it wrong, even although you've lost, your cities, you've lost your temple, you've lost your land, you're now in a land, you don't want to be in.

The situation looks bleak, and you've got to remember that, to travel from Babylon, where they were taken into captivity, back to Judah, back to Jerusalem, would take a long, long time.

But it wasn't just the travel, of getting back there. How on earth, were they going to get back? How on earth, were they ever going to be released, from that mighty power? But God is promising them.

[8 : 20] He's promising them healing. He's promising them restoration. And he's promising that, even their failures, are not ultimate ruin.

And I think that's very, very important for us, to take on board as well. Because even as we look around today, one of the things we know, is that Christianity is on the wane, in our own land.

And it's on the wane, quite strongly. We're all too well aware, of how there seems to be, so much pressure. And that the Christian faith, is being squeezed, and being squeezed.

And sometimes you can get, quite despondent about it. But we mustn't. Because as we read in this chapter, God is in control. This is quite an extraordinary chapter.

And it's worse when you go back home, reading it again, reading it slowly. When we see the majesty, the glory, the enormity of God, the power of God.

[9 : 19] And if we are, the nations are just like a, like a little drop in the bucket, to him. Just, you know, it's quite extraordinary.

And sometimes it's important, for us to get back, to understanding, who we are, and who God is. And that's one of the great things, that Isaiah is so good at doing, is lifting God up, and declaring something, of his majesty, and of his glory, and his authority, and dominion.

And again, even although we look, at things nationally, we can also look, at ourselves. And sometimes we feel, we can feel a bit of a failure too. And we look at our own lives, and we often think, oh, I should be far further forward, than I am now.

If you're today a Christian, you probably say to yourself, you know, my Christian life, has certainly not been, what I thought it would be. When I started out, I was full of enthusiasm.

I was full of great ideas. I was full of what I was going to be, what I was going to become. And now you're here, and you say, how little I've done.

[10 : 30] How little I've grown. Have I grown at all? Am I going back the way? You know, as Christians, we're always asking ourselves, these questions. We're always wondering, about these things.

And sometimes, we can become despondent, and feel, what is going to happen? But God is saying, no, listen, I'm in control. And there's a version of the Bible, which reminds us, that he who has

begun a good work, that he will complete that work.

So that's a great thing, we've got to remember, okay, it's not my work, it's God's work. He's in control, of all things. So we see here, that as we focus in, on this particular verse, we notice that it's a message, of good news.

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news. And that's where the gospel is. Remember when Jesus was born, into this world, that the angel appeared, and the words of the angel, was fear not, for I bring you news, of great joy, which shall be, to all people.

Here is the greatest news, that this world, needs to hear. Sometimes it's a, and it's often, the news this world, forgets that it needs to hear.

[11 : 51] Because there's many, people today, have no interest, they don't care. It's many people, they don't realize. That this is, this is news, that is life changing.

Because Jesus, Jesus changes lives. That's what Jesus, came to do. He came to, change people's lives. And so it's, it's the greatest, good news, that we could possibly have.

And it says, get you up to a high mountain. In other words, get up to a prominent place. Because this is a message, that needs to be, declared, a message that needs, to be heard.

And, we aren't to be half-hearted, in preaching the gospel. And, it's possibly, one of the great charges, that can be laid, against the church in general, is that it has failed, spectacularly, over the, over many, many years, in this direction, within our own land.

And when I talk about the church, I talk about it, in its very broadest sense. in that, there is always a tendency, or a danger, of watering down, the gospel.

[13 : 04] Of trying to make it, sort of, easier, to take. Because some people think, the, the word of God, some parts are very hard, to digest.

Some people think, oh, this is, this is heavy. But we've got to remember, that the word of God, is the word of God. And some of that word, is challenging.

And sometimes people, don't like being challenged. In fact, none of us, like being challenged. But that's one of the things, that the word of God does, it comes and bang, it hits us.

But it hits us, in order to help us. It hurts us, in order to heal us. That's what the word of God does. And it doesn't just, hurt us, and walk away.

It hits us, and hurts us, in order that we will listen, wake up, hear what it is saying, what the word is saying, and believe, to accept.

[14 : 01] And so, this is what we have here, the importance of, proclaiming the word, the importance of, preaching the word. And again, we must never, substitute, preaching, with anything else.

That doesn't mean, that we don't, use other, ways, and, of, sharing the gospel, and of, witnessing to people, and of, discipling people, and, reaching people.

But never, at the expense of preaching. Because preaching, the public reading, and preaching of God's word, is the means, that God himself, has appointed.

And we will be very foolish, if we say, ah, we're not going to use this. This is old fashioned. We've got to put preaching aside, and try other things. And the God, who we read about, in Isaiah chapter 40, is saying, no, who are you, to say, I'm not going to use, the way that I have appointed, that God has appointed.

So we must never be ashamed of it, or, dismissive of it, or say to ourselves, oh, this doesn't work anymore.

[15 : 11] This is something that's been used for years, and years, and generations. We better try something else. No. It is through the preaching of the word. Now, again in the Bible, it talks sometimes, about the foolishness of preaching.

And to many people, that's what preaching seems to be. Foolishness. And there are times, even to the preacher himself, it can sometimes, particularly if you've had a bad day, you say to yourself, you know, it doesn't feel more than foolishness to me.

But we know that that's not true. But the amazing thing is this, that as we come under the word, God uses that word, to touch us.

In whatever way, I don't know, but he does. Because the Holy Spirit, will take the truth. And the Holy Spirit, will minister that truth.

So that in one way or another, in something, from the word, you're able to take something, and it becomes personal, to yourself. So, this is what we're told, that we are to, proclaim the word.

[16:22] And at the end of the verse, it says, behold your God. Behold your God. Well, that's what we are to do.

And here he is, Emmanuel, God with us. And that's a great message, that we are to proclaim. But we see also, what it says, behold, the Lord God, comes with might, and his arm rules for him, and so on.

So, what is the message, that we are to proclaim? Well, if we go back to the beginning, it tells us here, comfort, comfort my people, speak, says your God, speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her.

This is what we're to say. Her warfare is ended, her iniquity is pardoned, and she has received, from the Lord's hand, double for all her sins.

Now, some people struggle, a wee bit, by the end, at the end of verse 2, where it says, that she has received, from the Lord's hand, double for all her sins.

[17:24] And people are saying, does that mean, that the Lord, is going to punish, and keep on punishing, and that it's going to be, a double portion, of chastisement, and pain, and punishment?

Is that, is that what it is saying? Well, that's not what it's saying. Because, we've got to remember, that this section, comes to us, in the exile, after they've been, taken captive.

And this is God, in the business, of restoring. And, normally in scripture, whenever we come across, the words, we could say, virtually, every time, we see these words, received from the Lord's, hand, double, it has respect, not to punishment, but to God's favor, and God's blessing.

So, what the Lord, is saying here is, yes, you went astray, yes, my hand, was heavy upon you, but it's over, and I am now, coming, with a hand, full of blessing, full of favor, and I am now, bestowing upon you, good things.

That's really, what it's saying here, when it talks about, double, for all our sins. In fact, I read, and I don't know, whether it's true, but I read, that it was, an ancient, eastern custom, and, that if a person, got hopelessly, into debt, and couldn't pay it, that the creditor, would write, on a parchment, everything, that was owed, and fix that, to the person's door.

[19:08] So, there would be, a public notice, put there, on the person's door, of everything, that they owed, the creditor. Now, if, a person, was passing by, and everybody, would see that, but supposing, there was a person, passing by, who was, a friend, of this person, who was in debt, and was wealthy, could go to the creditor, and say, hey, look, I will pay, what you're owed, and he would pay, whatever the amount was, and immediately, that amount, was paid, the creditor, would then go, and he would fold, into double, on the door, that parchment, and he would write, on it, paid, in full, and he would pin it, back, on the door, now, I've read, that that was a custom, in the east, I cannot, vouch, for that being true, but if it is, it's a beautiful picture, really, of what the Lord,

Jesus Christ, has done for us, because we have debts, that we couldn't pay, and there was written up, in heaven, against us, an account, of everything, and that was a huge, huge, growing account, but we know, that there is somebody, who came, somebody, who was rich, beyond any riches, we could ever, meet or understand, and he said, to the Father, in heaven, you know, I'll pay, I'll pay, because they can't, and that's exactly, what the Lord, Jesus Christ did, when he went, to the cross, he went, and he took, on himself, all, our sin, and that is, the message, of the gospel, this is the glory, of the gospel, this is the great, invitation, of the gospel, to accept, and to believe, Jesus, because he has, paid the Lord, he has paid, what we couldn't, that's why, Isaiah later, in Isaiah 55, says, who everyone, that thirsts, come to the waters, come by, wine and milk, without money, without price, you don't have, the money to pay for it, but it's all, been paid for already, and so, we find this, this wonderful, transaction, has taken place, that Jesus, has forgiven, that he has forgiven, all, our, transgressions, and all, our sins, so, in heaven, the record, before, that was, the books, that were full, of all, that we have done, now, it's clean, and written over, it is, debt, cancelled, it has been, all washed clean, by the blood, of Jesus Christ, and this is, a message, that we have, to lay hold upon, because you know, you might be here today, as a believer, and you feel weighed down, because of your sin, just, as we were saying earlier, because of where you are, well,

I want you today, to grasp hold, of what is being said here, their sins, and their iniquities, I will remember, no more, that's what the Lord, is saying, it's not that the Lord, somehow, as, as a, his memory, is being affected, because it cannot be, but it's, as if you had never sinned, the Lord has, another beautiful thing, from Isaiah, he has cast, all my sins, behind his back, when you don't need, anything anymore, you throw it away, throw it away, behind you, it's not, something you're, going to

need, to deal with, ever again, that's what the Lord, has done with our sin, they're gone, forever, it's, it's extraordinary, the language, and the, the power, that is spoken of here, and so, we've got to, we've got to try, and take this, on board, and remember, all this, and so, the Jews, when they were in captivity, this would be music, to their ears, as they would think of it, so that's the first thing, that we see, there are two things, that really come to focus, and the first of these, is, that our sins, are pardoned, but then, the second thing is, that we are delivered, because, you see, forgiveness, is not, the end, of Christian experience, it's only the very beginning, we are forgiven, but we are delivered, because, remember, when Jesus came, we're told, that his, his name shall be called Jesus, not that he will save us, in our sins, but he will save us, from our sins, and there's a huge difference, and so, what the Lord, is promising the people is, we see this, in verse three, a voice cries, in the wilderness, prepare the way, of the Lord, now again, this takes us, to the New Testament, takes us to John the Baptist, and so on, make straight, in the desert, a highway for our God, but then notice, every valley, shall be lifted up, and every mountain, and hill, be made low, the uneven ground, shall become level, and the rough, places plain, so what, has been brought, to our focus here, is, that all the obstacles, and all the hindrances, and all the things, that would make it impossible, for us to be restored, will be sorted out, that God will, make the rough places plain, the mountains, that you couldn't get over, they will become flat, the valleys, that were going to be so deep, to go down, they will be lifted up, to be a plain, everything, is going to be sorted out, that's what the Lord, was saying to the Jews, they were in captivity, in Babylon, and they were saying, how on earth, can we ever get back, well the Lord, made it all possible, and again, we can't, haven't time, to read about that, just now, but that's exactly, what happened, in the history, the impossible, happened, and the door, was open for them, to return, and so, this is what, what the Lord, is saying, I'm not only going, to forgive you, but I'm going, to deliver you, and so, again today, if you're here, and you feel, that the joy, has gone, that the love, that you once had, that it's, waxed cold, that the peace, that you once knew, that it's no longer there, and you say, how, how am I going, to get back, and sometimes, you feel, that the hill, is too steep, to climb, you feel, that the valleys, are too deep, to get down into, but you say, to the Lord, Lord, I want to get back, to you, because I remember, what it was like, and I know, where I need to be, you don't need, to be too far, away from the Lord, to want to get back, back, sometimes we can, go back a long way, sometimes just a little way, but it doesn't matter, but the wonderful thing, is the Lord says, yeah, I'll sort that out, I'll deliver you, I'll get you back, and we've got to remember, that there's nothing, that the Lord, loves more to do, than to bring back, to restore, in fact, we find it even just, the Lord just, it's so important, even just one, that's gone, remember that picture, we have of Jesus, and the, he says, there's 99 sheep, but there's one, what does he do, he leaves the 99 sheep, and he goes off, after the one, that's wandered away, because that one, is so important, to him, and you remember that, if you're here today, as a struggling, limping, believer, who's wandered, far away, you, are so important, to Jesus, and he'll restore you, he'll restore the comfort, comfort, comfort, my people, wherever you're at, today, it's not the end, of the story, and then, the Lord gives us, the assurance, in verse 8, of all this happening, the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God, stands forever, this, is our great assurance, the word, things may come, and things may go, but the word, stands forever, and when God, gives his word, to something, he will guarantee, he guarantees, that it will happen, [28 : 25] God doesn't speak idly, he doesn't give his word, just in a half-hearted way, God is not a man, that he should lie, nor the son of man, that he should repent, hath he not said, and shall he not do it, has he not spoken, and shall he not make it good, these are the words, we find in Deuteronomy, God is a God, who will fulfill, his word, and you know, what he loves, he loves us, to take his word, to him, and to pray that word, that's what he, that's real faith, and if today, you're saying to yourself, you know, I need to experience, God's pardon, I need to experience, God's forgiveness, I need to experience, God's restoration, and God's deliverance, you take the words, from here, and go to him, and say to him, Lord, make this real, in my experience, bring me home, get me back, or even if you've never been, in the first place, today, say to the Lord,

Lord, so much I don't know, but this one thing I know, I really want to get sorted, with you, will you, come, and sort out, my heart, my life, let us pray, oh Lord, our God, we give thanks, for being under your word, and we pray, that the reality, of this word, will go deep, into our hearts, we pray, that you will bless us, individually, personally, bless us collectively, bless us as a congregation, we give thanks, Lord, for the new ministry, that has begun here, and we pray, that you will, indeed bless, Reverend James McKeever, and Donna, and the family, and make James, a great blessing, to us

as a congregation, and bless him, in return, we pray, to bless the work, of the gospel, throughout our town, throughout our islands, and we give thanks, Lord, for every witness, and for everyone, who seeks, to share, the gospel, we again, we pray, for our street pastors, and we know, that it's not an easy thing, to engage, with people, on the streets, but again, it is so necessary, because so many people, today, don't come to church, it's important, to bring the word, to where they are, we ask, oh Lord, that you will, encourage us all, and take us, to our different homes, safely, for giving us, our every sin, in Jesus name,

Amen, we are going, to conclude, singing from, Psalm number 19, the 19th Psalm, this is from, the Scottish Psalter, we are going to sing, verses 7 to 10, on the tune, is credit, in Psalm number 19, Psalm 19, and verse 7, God's law is perfect, and converts the soul, and sin that lies, God's testimony, is most pure, sure, and makes the simple wise, the statutes of the Lord, are right, and do rejoice the heart, the Lord's command, is pure, and doth light, to the eyes impart, and spotted, is the fear of God, and doth endure forever, the judgments of the Lord, are true, and righteous, all together, and so on, 7 to 10, the tune is credit, and it's on page 223,

God's law is perfect, and converts, God's law is perfect, the praise and con■est, and■■■ Esois pienses, and moment dats.

The name of the Lord, has fallen som safely, and spoken of the Lord, yes tofahren, and enlightened, and ■■■■ Partner, and Hare, and survive, the birth of the Lord, die- Blood, the land, God's law is perfect, anditar ■■■, And do rejoice the heart The Lord's commandment through and the Life to the eyes impart Unsolved is the fear of God And I'll endure forever The just ends of the Lord are true

[33 : 18] And righteous altogether Give more than gold, give much kind gold To be decided out And while he had him from the fall The prophet's sweeter part Now may the grace, mercy and peace Of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit Rest and abide upon each one of you Now and forevermore Amen Thank you Thank you Thank you Thank you Thank you Thank you Thank you

Thank you