

The Return Of The Ransomed Of The Lord.

Text: Isa 35:4-10

1) God's Exiles Will Return

Suggested Hymns:

2) The Eternal Deliverance

225, 487, 739, 294, 486

3) Today Is Important

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Isaiah 35:4–10, ***4 Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you."***

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6 then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; 7 the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

8 A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. 9 No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. 10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

In these beautiful words Isaiah is looking into the future of the people of God. God gives him a glimpse of some remarkable and beautiful things about judgement for the enemy and deliverance for the people of God. Many of the prophecies that God gave to His people have this as the setting — deliverance.

One of the outstanding events in the history of God's people was their deliverance from slavery in the land of Egypt. Under Moses God led them out, freed them, and brought them through the wilderness wanderings into the Promised Land.

So deliverance was a kind of key word to the people of God. Many of the prophets continually repeated and re-explained the deliverance God would bring to His people.

Let us consider *The Return Of The Ransomed Of The Lord*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. God's Exiles Will Return

The prophecies often have an immediate application to a historical event in the life of God's people. Here in this chapter Isaiah is describing in prophetic terms and in poetic language from nature that wonderful event that would take place when God would come to His fearful people in bondage, deliver them, and bring them back again so that the ransomed people of God could return once more to Mount Zion.

The people of God would fall on evil days. Their enemies would triumph over them. They would be carried away into a strange land, away from home, away from their temple.

In their time of great distress they would call upon the Lord their God and would lay hold on and cling to the gracious promises such as this which Isaiah was giving them. And there would come a day when God in His goodness would bring the ransomed people of God back again from captivity, and they would walk the highway of God back to Mount Zion, where they would no longer be in fear and distress.

All the chapters that lead up to this in Isaiah's prophecy seem to be climaxed in this beautiful 35th chapter. It ends the first part of Isaiah's book.

The People of God Ransomed

But in this prophecy we see not just a historical application to the people of God of the Old Testament. Isaiah's vision goes way beyond that.

He looks beyond the historical event into the future. He sees the fulfilment of the rich and gracious promises of God of deliverance, full and final spiritual deliverance, for His people.

Just as deliverance, even in a physical sense, even as the Exodus from the land of Egypt or as the return from the Babylonian captivity, meant a great deal to the people of God of the Old Testament, so likewise the deliverance from the bondage of sin and death and the power of the devil, the deliverance from the spiritual chains that bound the people of God, was looked forward to with great longing and anticipation.

When Jesus Christ came into the world to be the Saviour of man, the deliverance was accomplished. This too was in Isaiah's gaze as he looked into the future.

Jesus Delivers God's People

Now let us listen to some of these phrases again, and think of them in the light of the life and ministry, the suffering and death and resurrection — all the things that Christ did here in the world.

Through His life and suffering and death and resurrection He delivered and gathered the people of God and established His church, His kingdom, the continuation of the people of God of the Old Testament. Jesus in His fulfilment took this very promise and applied it to Himself.

Listen. ⁴ *Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you."*

⁵ *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; ⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water ... ⁸ A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; ... ¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

God's Kingdom Established

The establishment of the Kingdom was in the eyes of Isaiah. By inspiration of God he was led to see the joyful day when God would send the Messiah into the world. Jesus, the Saviour, the Word made flesh, would work out the redemption and salvation of the world. Jesus, the Saviour, would restore sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf. The lame would walk again, and the dumb would be able to speak. All these great and tremendous things would take place in the ministry of our Lord. And His compassion would reach out to men.

The Water of Life, which is Jesus Himself, would bring drink to the thirsting and parched throats of men. He who is the Bread of Life would stifle and still all pangs of hunger and satisfy all the desire in men for spiritual food; He would be the answer to men's needs, and all the wants and desires of the human soul would be met in Jesus Christ.

Isaiah saw this in prophecy. He saw the establishment of this great and beautiful Kingdom of those who through faith had become God's own, the people of God, God's own chosen ones, the ransomed of the Lord.

The Kingdom is made up of those for whom Jesus Christ paid the ransom price, going to a cross, dying on that cross, suffering the penalty and punishment of all men's sins. Deliverance — final and full deliverance from God to men through Jesus Christ.

2. The Eternal Deliverance

But there is even more in the prophecy of Isaiah. The picture goes beyond the establishment of the Kingdom by Jesus and looks to the very end of time, when finally the redeemed and ransomed of the Lord, who have been strangers and pilgrims journeying down the King's Highway, will return to Mount Zion.

Isaiah sees that God's people, travelling the Holy Way, always going toward the eternal goal, will find all the dreariness and dryness, all "*the thirsty ground*" of life in this world suddenly spring forth with growth and life and flowers and beauty and joy.

Then the sorrow and sighing of life in this world will all be over, and the eternal and endless joy of God will begin. God's people will be with God. He will be the Light and the Warmth and the Beauty of the place where God's people have come home.

Listen again, with this in mind, to the words of Isaiah: ⁴ *Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.”*

... ⁸ *A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God’s people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. ⁹ No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. ¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

What a blessed deliverance: the people of God walking their pilgrimage, walking the King’s Highway, the people of God coming home, looking forward with joy to the establishment of the eternal kingdom of His blessedness! Sorrow and sighing indeed shall be no more.

The Christian On The Pilgrimage Of The Ransomed

Christians are on this pilgrimage. You and I are among the ransomed of the Lord. We are the ransomed of the Lord because God through His grace and the power of His Holy Spirit has led us to see in Jesus, the Saviour of our souls, the Substitute who ransomed us.

You and I are God’s children, the people of God, because through our faith and trust in Him we have accepted His deliverance. You and I stand in the same relationship with God as did Isaiah and the people of his day. They were in a relationship of faith and trust and confidence in the promises of God. We are in a relationship of faith and trust and confidence in the fulfilment of those promises in Jesus Christ.

God’s Spirit Empowers

Into your life and mine God’s Spirit has come. Through our faith and trust in Jesus He has opened our eyes. We are no longer blinded by sin to the truths of God. Our ears have been unstopped. We hear the gracious words of God, and those beautiful promises that come from the Master’s lips sink deep into our minds.

We don't only hear them with our ears; we hear them with our hearts and cling to them in faith. We are no longer crippled and lame in the service of God and unable to do what pleases Him. With His strength and power He has come into our hearts, and we are able to leap in His service.

With joy and great devotion we yield ourselves completely to Him. Our lips also have been unsealed. We can now speak the praises of Jesus who loved us and gave Himself for us. We can speak His beautiful Gospel to all people. We can tell of His love. We can show people day by day that we, who are the ransomed of the Lord, live God-like lives. We walk that way of holiness and righteousness, the King's Highway, which ultimately always leads to the King's palace.

God's Strength Sustains

And we have God's gracious promises to guide and lead us. He promises that our enemies, the wild beasts of evil that seek to get us away from God, shall not come near us. In the strength and power of the faith that lays hold on God and grasps the hand of the Redeemer, the Saviour Himself, we walk the pilgrimage, going home to God.

We know that we are always strangers and pilgrims here in a strange land, always looking ahead, always living for that day when the Saviour will take us through death to be with Him in eternal life.

3. Today Is Important

Yet Christianity is not just a "beyond this world" thing. We would be impractical and unrealistic if we thought that the "now" was not important.

If we just idly by and dreamt fondly of the day when we shall be delivered from all of the perplexities and fears of life, if we just dwelt upon the day when in His goodness God will give us the everlasting joy, we would really miss the true comfort and peace of the life with God.

Realistically and practically we need to face the sorrows and sighings of life. We need to live today. Yet the tomorrow, the eternity of God, influences and affects the way we live today.

Notice that Isaiah called the King's Highway "*the Holy Way.*" It is not a bed of ease, or a road of self-indulgence. Nor is it always the road of peace.

It is the road of righteousness, of serving God, of living the Christian life, of loving God and serving Him and our fellowmen. It is not a road that is immune to any hardship or trial or difficulty, but the deliverance of God, the ransom of the Saviour, and the promise of the tomorrow make it the road of faith, of hope, and of confidence.

In faith God holds our hand as we go as strangers and pilgrims in this world, heading home to be with Him. The day that is to come, when we shall be God's own in heaven, influences and affects the now.

We think of today, but eternity affects the way we think of today. The way you and I live in this 21st century is affected by the fact that you and I know who we are, strangers and pilgrims in a strange land.

We know the gracious promise of God, that His power and strength will be here to sustain us, as we walk our pilgrimage through life heading for the home which God has in store for us.

Courage For The “Now”

This is why Isaiah's prophecy is so comforting to us today; it is thrillingly beautiful. It sets our feet in a large place and places us on the way. We who are the ransomed, the redeemed people of God, walk His way, the Holy Way. Isaiah talks of today, not only to some distant time when God will bring the end of the world. Isaiah talks to your today, to your “now” in life. And he says it so beautifully: *‘ Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. ... He will come and save you.”* Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.