SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

STUDY OF ISAIAH 55

Isaiah 55 is one of those nuggets hidden in Scripture. The ordinary believer who attempts to read the book of Isaiah is fascinated by the imagery and convicted by the message very early in the book. As one continues to read the book, one starts to become confused as to the subject in question and the extent of the prophecy. Is Isaiah writing about Israel or Judah or Hezekiah or the devil or the coming Messiah? Are the prophesies contained within the book for immediate fulfillment in Isaiah’s day, for dual fulfillment for Israel and the end of time, or for fulfillment only in the end of the ages?

The book is divided into two sections. Section one is chapter 1-39 in which the material is more focused on judgment with some aspects of the Messiah’s coming intertwined. Section two is chapter 40-66 with more focus on prophecy in the coming of the Messiah as the suffering servant and the King who reigns. By the time the ordinary believer gets in the middle of the book, the interest in Isaiah may begin to wane. In the later portion of the book is Isaiah 53, the most intent passage about the suffering servant. Two chapters later comes this nugget of the Lord. The passage seems as if it belongs to the writing of Paul or in a New Testament book. Isaiah was inspired to provide a very concise message that could be labeled as Discipleship 101. He treated the needs of man, the need for the Lord, the power of the Word and the promises of God. Each division of the chapter sees God as the God of satisfaction, fulfilling every need for man in a perfect manner that always brings glory to God and growth to the believer. Isaiah implied the question, why do men seek satisfaction in areas in which it can never be provided? Only God can truly satisfy man’s needs. God is satisfaction guaranteed.

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

SATISFIED NEEDS

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.” (Isaiah 55:1, 2)

God is a God for everyone though not everyone will recognize Him as God. God has an offer for everyone though not everyone will believe God’s message and accept His offer. God can change the life of anyone though not all will desire that change. The greatest invite of all is when God says, “Come.” Why should people come to God? Isaiah provided these answers.
Only God Can Truly Satisfy the Needs  “Come, everyone who thirsts”

What does it mean to be thirsty? In terms of water it would mean being dehydrated or parched. In terms of desire it would mean yearning or craving. In terms of motivation it would mean eager or avid. Being thirsty is avidly seeking what one believes will satisfy one’s presumed needs. Until that thirst is thoroughly satisfied, one will continuously search, at times accepting things of less value and fulfillment for a quick relief only to still be thirsty.

People are often confused about needs. At times wants are perceived as needs. When trials and difficult times arise, people tend to get a better perspective on the reality of needs and wants. A person’s needs can be identified in five categories: sustenance such as food, water and clothing; sufficiency in daily sustenance (needs provided tomorrow as well as today); security (love); significance (purpose); and self-worth. Man has been trying since the beginning of time to find satisfaction for these needs in every means possible. Men have sacrificed, stolen or become workaholics in order to satisfy their needs.

For the Christian, the satisfaction for needs lies totally in God. For sustenance and sufficiency Christ offered this refrain. “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” (Matthew 6:33, 34) The needs of security and significance are also fully satisfied in Christ. Security: “For I am sure that neither death nor life….nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38, 39) Significance: “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21)

Self-worth is not the aim of the Christian but worth in Christ. Christians are precious to God. “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

Knowing that God meets every need and does so satisfactorily, Christians must always thirst for God and the things of God. That thirst will always find satisfaction. “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” (Colossians 3:1, 2)

The Christian’s desire ought to be to ever thirst for God, more so than the thirst for anything in life. Complete satisfaction will be found. Notice the words of the psalmist.

“As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” (Psalm 42:1, 2)

“O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.” (Psalm 63:1)

“When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” (Isaiah 41:17)
Only God Can Truly Refresh the Soul  “come to the waters”

Water is refreshing. Multitudes of people seek the beaches, lakes, and water parks every summer as a respite from the winter and a release from being shut-in for a season. The invitation to “come to the waters” is God calling souls to refreshment and rest. David wrote how God truly refreshes the soul. “He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me besides still waters. He restores my soul.” (Psalm 23:2, 3) The chorus to the song “For Those Tears I Died” provides a good perspective.

“And Jesus said, “Come to the water, stand by My side, I know you are thirsty, you won’t be denied; I felt ev’ry teardrop when in darkness you cried, And I strove to remind you that for those tears I died.”

Christ spoke about man’s needs and how only Christ could satisfy and refresh. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” (Matthew 5:6) Christ offers rest for the weary soul in sin and He offers rest for the suffering saint. “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30) In the first portion of this text the Lord is encouraging the sinner to cease attempting to save self by works. Christ offers a free gift of which works has no basis. In the second portion of this text Christ encourages the saint to take on the yoke of servitude for the Lord. The place of service may have its challenges and difficulties but the soul finds rest in serving the Lord despite the hardships. The reward for the soul is refreshing in comparison to the difficulties of the task.

Isaiah wrote, “For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.” (Isaiah 44:3) He also wrote, “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” (Isaiah 12:3) Sometimes one has to dig a little deeper to find the water. In the days of the patriarchs digging wells was necessary. If one well dried up they dug another or they dug deeper. The well of the Lord never dries up but at times the Lord does require His child to go deeper.

On the occasion of the Feast of Tabernacles, Christ was in Jerusalem. It was customary for the high priest to gather water from the pool of Siloam. A procession would follow back to the temple by way of the Water Gate. There would be three trumpet blasts upon which the people would recite Isaiah 12:3. With people watching the priests would march around the altar with the water while the temple choir sang Psalm 113-118, the Hallel. The water was then poured out upon the altar in sacrifice signifying God’s blessings. The pouring out of the water was also prophetic looking forward to the Lord’s reign with Israel upon the earth. “On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.” (Zechariah 13:1) On this occasion Christ declared the Holy Spirit as this refreshing water. “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of His heart will flow rivers of living water.’ Now this He said about the Holy Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John 7:38, 39) Christ is the water of life providing refreshment to the soul.
His offer to the Samaritan woman is still relevant today. “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and He would have given you living water.” (John 4:10)

**Only God Can Truly Give Value**

“he who has no money...without money and without price”

Isaiah continued the invitation to come. The offer is to purchase what one needs with the only condition not to spend anything. There is no price, money is not needed when purchasing from God. God’s gift, His provisions, His blessings, etc. are not for sale. There is no price tag. This does not mean there is not a cost. It means that someone else paid the cost, thus making it free for the consumer. “He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?” Romans 8:32

Peter wrote of the cost of redemption which was paid for man by Christ in His death. “…knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.” (1 Peter 1:18, 19) God’s salvation is free to man but a cost was paid. As the substitution for man, Christ paid the penalty for man’s sins. No man is ever asked to pay for his sins in order to be accepted by Christ.

A unique situation arose with Peter and John. Upon hearing that the Samaritans were receiving the gospel, they traveled to Samaria. Peter and John prayed that the manifestation of the Holy Spirit come upon them. By the laying on of hands, the new believers received the Holy Spirit. A sorcerer named Simon saw this occurrence and desired to have this power. Simon had been saved and baptized recently under the ministry of Philip. He wanted to purchase the power of God. “Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money…May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!” (Acts 8:18, 20) People debate Simon’s conversion experience. The point of emphasis is that salvation is free and the power to live for Christ is free. There is no cost to enjoying the abundant empowered life given by Christ.

When serving the Lord, the same idea must be exemplified. No one should be required by anyone associated with ministry to first pay a cost in order to be served. When serving the lame beggar, Peter and John gave this wonderful declaration. “And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, ‘I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!’” (Acts 3:5, 6) What Peter and John offered could not be purchased and was of more value than any money.

God does not measure value in the same standards of man. What God gives to man cannot be measured in earthly terms of value. Paul wrote, “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.” (2 Corinthians 6:10) Who experienced more value, the rich man or Lazarus? The song “Give Thanks” reflects this thought.
Give thanks with a grateful heart. Give thanks to the Holy One. Give thanks because He’s given Jesus Christ His Son. And now let the weak say I am strong. Let the poor say I am rich because of what the Lord has done. Give thanks.

**Only God Can Pay a Satisfactory Wage**

“labor for that which does not satisfy”

Why do people work so hard for things that have no true value? People are unfulfilled, not satisfied because they seek the wrong things to find fulfillment. The idea of labor is toil. The laborer is toiling for what does not fulfill. The reward or pay for the effort is insufficient.

“Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever! Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress. He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in. Let them thank the Lord for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of man! For He satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul He fills with good things.” (Psalm 107:1-9)

Campbell Soup designed Chunky Soup to be a meal of more sustenance. It was more than liquid. In fact, it was so much more substance it would require a fork. Their motto was, “so chunky you can eat with a fork.” Christians often settle for less wages, wasting effort on things that have no real value instead of living fully for the Lord patiently waiting for the most satisfying reward. Even if the road is difficult, one must be patient for the reward of the Lord. “Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord is at hand.” (James 5:7, 8) God does not forget the labor of the faithful servant. “For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for His name in serving the saints, as you still do.” (Hebrews 6:10)

**Only God Can Provide Healthy Fat**

“delight yourselves in rich food”

The world of fat is a world of humor and of distress. So much is made of what is good fat and bad fat. There are four basic kinds of fat: saturated, monounsaturated, polyunsaturated, and trans fat. There are certain ones to avoid and certain ones necessary. Fat is not to be totally ignored. The normal diet recommends no more than 65 grams of fat per day. Fat does have a purpose.

God has a fat program that has no negative impact. In fact, man is to take pleasure in God’s fat. “Rich food” is the Hebrew word for fat or fatness. It is used in Job to describe God’s table. “He also allured you out of distress into a broad place where there was no cramping, and what was set on your table was full of fatness.” (Job 36:16) Jeremiah uses the same term though it is translated abundance. “I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, declares the Lord.” (Jeremiah 31:14)
Three admonitions are given by Isaiah: “listen diligently”, “eat what is good”, and “delight yourselves.” “Listen diligently” has the intention to obey. This has always been God’s desire for His children. “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13) “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” (John 14:15)

To “eat what is good” is to be sustained and nourished by the things of the Lord. Look at all of the references about the goodness of God.

“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!” (Psalm 34:8)

“For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.” (Psalm 84:11)

“For the Lord is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations.” (Psalm 100:5)

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” (James 1:17)

To “delight yourselves in rich food” is to take pleasure in the fatness of the Lord. The psalmist wrote, “My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise You with joyful lips.” (Psalm 63:5) To delight in the Lord is to totally look to Him for satisfaction in life. Nothing else can be allowed to please for everything else is insufficient. Even what man may desire of that which is good and honorable will be provided by God when one delights only in the Lord. “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4) This is not a carte blanche to have what one wants but a promise to receive what one needs that is good and honorable. God does not offer everyone a Cadillac. Sometimes He gives a Volkswagen. For an even greater extreme, God does not give everyone a Rolls Royce. To some He gives a Ford Pinto. The emphasis is that the only true satisfaction can be found in God and He never disappoints. “I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or His children begging for bread.” (Psalm 37:25)

Paul’s admonition is very fitting for this passage. “And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)
SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

STUDY OF ISAIAH 55

SATISFIED PURPOSE

“Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for He has glorified you.” (Isaiah 55:3-5)

Now that God has invited and satisfied the needs of man, God proceeded to prod man to listen to Him. Isaiah’s writing of “incline your ear, and come to me” implies God asking for one’s attention. God has something very important to tell. He has a plan for each one’s life and God desires that each one of His children understand that plan. Someone may ask, ‘What is the purpose of my life?’ Paul revealed the answer in this manner. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10) Paul also gave this admonition, “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” (Colossians 3:17) This passage from Isaiah 55 beckons man to come to God to find real purpose, the only purpose that truly satisfies.

PURPOSE: Pay attention to what God has to say. “hear, that your soul may live”

There is a pretty simple thought, hear and live. The implication is one who does not hear will not live. Christ often used the phrase, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Matthew 11:15) The Apostle Paul wrote, “So faith comes from hearing.” (Romans 10:17) His thought was based upon what Isaiah had written centuries before. “Who has believed what he has heard from us?” (Isaiah 53:1; Romans 10:16) The idea to hear and live is to obey what one has heard and accept it as the truth. Thus in salvation, one hears the Gospel, accepts it as truth, receiving Christ and eternal life. Real life is only experienced when one acknowledges the truth, hearing, accepting and obeying.

Hearing and obeying are parts of the same aspects. One cannot obey what one has not heard. One has not truly heard if one is not obeying. Amos expressed the same thought in a slightly different manner. “Seek me and live....Seek the Lord and live....seek good, and not evil, that you may live...” (Amos 5:4, 6, 14) One will seek God when one has heard from God. In hearing from God, one will obey God, thus seeking good and not evil. Abundant life will result. While living the Christian life, the soul must be constantly listening to God for His purpose for each and every day. When God’s purpose is obeyed, abundant fulfilling life results. Israel had been seeking other gods, worshipping in other places. God’s judgment would come upon them. God had one temple, not many. God is one God, not many. There was no other god to seek or other place designed for worship. Israel was failing to fulfill her purpose because she was obeying other gods rather than listening, seeking and obeying the one true God.
People may say they desire to do God’s will, seeking His purpose for their life. As long as they are seeking other gods, not listening to the daily voice of God, failing to obey God in everything, they are never going to understand God’s purpose for their life. God honors those who are faithful in little, giving more responsibility, more challenges of faith. Those who are not proven faithful in the little things will not be given greater responsibility or purpose by God. “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.” (Luke 16:10)

PURPOSE: Have assurance in what God has to give. “make with you an everlasting covenant”

God challenged the people of Israel to trust in the Davidic covenant. “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish His kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever….And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” (2 Samuel 7:12, 13, 16) Isaiah reiterated to the people of Israel this covenant also related to them. “For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.” (Isaiah 61:8)

Isaiah wrote of God’s eternal plan for Israel and for all of the world in relation to God. “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.” (Isaiah 9:6, 7) Christ coming is the fulfillment of God’s covenant with Israel. It is a covenant of eternal love.

That same covenant brought Judah hope despite being taken captive. “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, therefore I will hope in Him.” (Lamentations 3:22-24) That same covenant had been evident throughout all of Israel’s history. Psalm 136 emphasizes that truth in Israel’s history in every verse of the chapter, “for His steadfast love endures forever.”

The same covenant of steadfast love is true and assured today. “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.” (1 John 3:1) In his prayer for the church, Paul wrote, “that you being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:17-19)

Christians are to be attentive to what God has to say. Christians are to enjoy the assurance of knowing they are eternally loved by God. Paul asked, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?” (Romans 8:35) His condensed answer: NOTHING! Christians will disobey God and fail to trust Him always. God will never fail in His steadfast eternal love.
PURPOSE: Have confidence in what God ask you to do.  “I made him a witness”

David had been “a leader and commander for the peoples.” He was God’s chosen man for the hour. God has been choosing men and women since the beginning of time to lead in ministry. Some are well known and others have been totally forgotten. They are not forgotten by God. David had a heart for God. He stood up for God’s glory, depending upon God for daily strength and guidance. Yes, he did stumble and bring disgrace to his family. God does not use perfect people. Almost every leader mentioned in the Bible had some major flaw. Perfect people need not apply for leadership positions with God. Perfect people have a tendency to trust in self rather than to rely upon the Lord.

It has been said many times, God does not call the equipped but He equips the called. Notice some character flaws of those God used.

- Noah was a drunk.
- Abraham was too old.
- Isaac was a daydreamer.
- Jacob was a liar.
- Joseph was abused.
- Moses stuttered.
- Rahab was a prostitute.
- Gideon was afraid
- Samson was a womanizer.
- David was an adulterer and murderer.
- Elijah was suicidal.
- Jonah ran from God.
- Matthew was a tax collector.
- Zaccheus was too small.
- Peter denied Christ.
- Paul persecuted the church.
- Timothy was too young.

God does not choose those who can. God chooses those who are willing to be servants of God.

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, He may give it to you.” (John 15:16) When one is faithful to God for the position in which He has put one, one will be blessed. Too often in this world of acceptance by achievement, Christians succumb to the pleasing of man trap in order to feel accepted. Success is not measured by man’s applause or popularity achieved. Success in ministry is measured by being surrendered to do whatever God asks. Success is not results. Success is faithfulness. The increase is always in God’s hand. Christians are asked to plant and water. “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.” (1 Corinthians 3:6, 7)
Every Christian should have a testimony of what God has called them to do in ministry. “But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in whom I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.” (Acts 26:16-18) God saved Paul for a purpose, specifically to be a servant and a witness. That same call exists today. Every Christian has the purpose of being a servant and a witness. Some may declare they cannot do what God is asking out of fear of inability. Paul gave two statements that Christians are to rely on to overcome such excuses. “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13) “…for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” (2 Timothy 1:7)

PURPOSE: Have influence toward those God desires to save. “call a nation...run to you”

One day peoples from all lands will turn individually to the Lord. “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” (Revelation 7:9, 10) The Jews were God’s chosen people. Before Christ’s first coming, some Gentiles turned to Jehovah. Some notable individuals include Rahab and Ruth. After Christ’s first coming, many Gentiles have turned to the Lord. It was the goal of the Jewish nation to be proclaimers of the Gospel. That role is now fulfilled by the church. Christians should live in such a way that non-Christians are drawn to Christ. Christians are to be active in reaching the lost with the Gospel of Christ. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles as opposed to being an apostle to the Jews. That did not preclude Paul from seeking the salvation of the Jewish people. “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.” (Romans 10:1)

Christians are to be ready to answer the questions of their walk with the Lord. “…but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience…” (1 Peter 3:15, 16)

Christians are to actively fulfill the Great Commission. Christians have the God given purpose to represent Him among the nations. “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” (2 Corinthians 5:20) Not all witnesses will be received. Not all lives exposed to the Gospel will accept its truth. “For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.” (2 Corinthians 2:15, 16)

Christians are to pray that the government never passes laws that infringes upon the sharing of the Gospel message. “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good and it is pleasing in the sight of
God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”
(1 Timothy 2:1-4) As each generation passes more infringement is being placed upon an open witness.

Every Christian is a witness. He or she either witnesses positively for the Lord or apathetically about the Lord. Every Christian is a missionary.

So in what purpose can a Christian find the ultimate satisfaction?

- Listening attentively to the voice of the Lord and obeying His voice
- Having an assurance in one’s relationship with the everlasting loving God
- Trusting confidently in the call and equipping of God for the ministry
- Being an open and effective influence by Gospel witnessing and purpose praying

You want to be real, you want to be empty inside.
You want to be someone laying down your pride.
You want to be someone, someday. Then lay it all down before the king

You want to be whole, you want to have purpose inside.
You want to have virtue and purify your mind.
You want to be set free today. Then lay it all down before the king, oh yeah.

This is my desire, this is my return.
This is my desire to be used by you.

You want to be real, you want to be emptied inside.
And I know my heart, is to feel you near.
And I know my life, it's to do your will. It's to do your will.

This is my desire, this is my return.
This is my desire, to be used by you.
Oh yeah, this is my desire. This is my desire to be used by you.

All my life I have seen where you've taken me.
Beyond all I have hoped and there's more left unseen.
There's not much I can do to repay all you've done. So I give my hands to use.

This is my desire, this is my return.
This is my desire, to be used by you.
Oh yeah, this is my desire. This is my desire to be used by you.

Jeremy Camp - My Desire Lyrics
SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

STUDY OF ISAIAH 55

SATISFIED RELATIONSHIP

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

The terms of the text are very redemptive in their tone. Salvation can be powerfully preached from this text. Yet Christians should not discard this text as having no importance to them. Just as the story of the prodigal son can be used as a salvation text or a text teaching the blessedness of the saint returning to the Father’s way of life after choosing a path of destruction in the world, so this text can be used in a dual fashion. There are times when the saint may feel very far from God. God has gone nowhere. The saint has intentionally or passively allowed one’s focus on life to drift away from God. The flesh is being fed and served while the spirit is being starved and neglected. Prayer and Bible study become negligent in the activity of the saint rather than needful experiences of faith. Thus it is necessary for the saint to “remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.” (Revelation 2:5)

Urgency is implied in the passage. The urgency of souls coming to Christ before impending death or His impending return is emphasized. The urgency of getting things right with God before a seared conscience and bitterness take root is vital. “...through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared...” (1 Timothy 4:2) The longer a saint stays in a drifting manner from a real intimate walk with God, the harder it is to return. Too many Christians go adrift from serving the Lord because someone offended them. If the situation is not corrected there is great danger the heart will become so bitter that a return to enjoying the Lord daily will never come to fruition. “See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.” (Hebrews 12:15)

Urgency of God’s Offer

Seek is to enquire; figuratively to learn to study; also to rub or beat. It could be seen today as the adage rubbing a path on the floor signifying a continual search. The idea is for the sinner when convicted by God to deliberately invest one’s whole being into discovering the truth about God. Man without the conviction of God will not seek God, at the least the true God. Every man knows there is a greater being. This truth is taught throughout Scripture. To see God as the Savior is only by the message of the Gospel and the work of God’s Spirit upon the sinner’s heart. It is as Nicodemus, when upon hearing the words of Christ and seeing the works of Christ came to Jesus enquiring about eternal life. “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” (John 3:2) Another example of seeking out God is the Ethiopian Eunuch. He was reading from Isaiah. God brought Philip to his path. God sought out the eunuch. He sought out
Philip. He joined them together. “So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’” (Acts 8:30, 31) The eunuch was seeking out God only after God had placed His scripture before the eunuch and directed Philip to him. One of the prime examples of being sought by God is with Paul. Paul had no desire for the saving Lord. He served God in the sense of the Mosaic Law. God came to him. Upon God’s appearance, Paul sought out the Lord to be saved and to serve.

For the Christian, seeking God is to go deeper with the Lord in the relationship. It is to seek out the truths of His word. It is to seek out the mind of Christ and to ask for wisdom in making the appropriate decisions of life.

Seeking implies finding. Found can be to acquire or attain. Christ said, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.” (Matthew 7:7, 8) James wrote, “You do not have, because you do not ask.” (James 4:2) God does not invite sinners on a fruitless search. God does not encourage His children to seek with no possibility of finding. Though spoken about wisdom, a truth given by James is true in all manner of life pertaining to God. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.” (James 1:5) Seek and one will find. Ask and one will be given. So many blessings are available. So many answers are waiting to be given. If Christians would just ask God, how much greater the day would be. Everyday Christians need to be seeking God and finding Him.

A few years ago there was the Prayer of Jabez craze. It is as if this passage of Scripture instantly appeared. The passage in question, 1 Chronicles 4:10, is over 2,500 years old as far as being in Scripture. It is much older than that as far as the actual time of occurrence. The prayer of Jabez became the fad of the day as far as Bible studies, trinkets, posters, etc. The prayer itself is a tremendous lesson as to what should be the daily cry of the saint in seeking God’s blessing and finding God’s grace. “Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!” (1 Chronicles 4:10)

Seek, found, and near are three intricately webbed words. Near can be proximity in place, time or relationship such as kinship. In looking at time, the nearness of God to the individual is the moment of conviction. Solomon implored young people to “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, ‘I have no pleasure in them.’” (Ecclesiastes 12:1) Both Moses and Paul used the phrase, “Behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6:2) It was said in Noah’s day that God’s “Spirit shall not abide in man forever…” (Genesis 6:3) When the altar of conviction is before man because God has sought him out, man needs to seek out God’s salvation for another day may never come.

Christians in seasons of hurt, pain, distress must seek out God. He is always present and ready to help in time of need. “Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help.” (Psalm 22:11) “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18) “Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, that glory may dwell in our land.” (Psalm 85:9)
Urgency of Man's State

Not only is there an urgency for man to seek God when God has come seeking him, there is also an urgency to refrain from sin. “The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” (Romans 13:12)

Isaiah wrote, “...let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts...” (Isaiah 55:7) Forsake is to leave or leave behind; man’s sin is to be left behind. This is the functioning of repentance. Thoughts are those things of which one meditates or purposes; the mindset, worldview, or agenda is to change.

Salvation is found by repentance and faith. “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17:30) John the Baptist’s preaching was known by these simple words, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 3:2) Jesus’ message was identical, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17) A saved or born again individual is a changed individual. One aspect of that change is the newly saved individual no longer desires the things of pre-salvation. Peter wrote how the friends of the sinner cannot understand the change of salvation. “With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you...” (1 Peter 4:4)

For the saint repentance is still important. Christians still sin. Repentance is necessary not to regain salvation. That issue is permanently settled at the moment of conversion. Repentance is necessary to restore fellowship when one has decided to live in the flesh rather than in the spirit. Sinful deeds are to be confessed. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) Misguided thoughts or ill construed thoughts are to be taken captive and made obedient to Christ. “For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.” (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

Christians will usually agree that evil thoughts have no place in the mind of a Christian. The problem is not with evil thoughts but misguided thoughts, thoughts that are seemingly good yet contrary to the Lord, specifically in regard to His will for one’s life. True faith does not always understand the will of God but accepts the will of God. “Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.” (Proverbs 16:3) “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.” (Proverbs 19:21) True faith is not having to understand but to trust. David’s writing is important. “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.” (Psalm 19:14) May Christians ever be in prayer as the Savior on His night of great agony. “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” (Matthew 26:39)
Urgency of God’s Redemption

An open door is extended by God. “Let him return to the Lord, that He may have compassion on him and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” (Isaiah 55:7) The northern kingdom of Israel, which still existed in Isaiah’s day though its captivity was very soon, and the southern kingdom of Judah had repeatedly served anything except for God. As noted Israel’s captivity under the Assyrians would begin in Isaiah’s lifetime while the captivity of Judah would be at least another 100 years. While Israel would not return from the Assyrian captivity in whole, many of those who lived in the northern kingdom did flee to the southern kingdom. Judah’s captivity would be for seventy years. God allowed their captivities for their sins. God promised to restore Judah. “And after I have plucked them up, I will again have compassion on them, and I will bring them again each to his heritage and each to his land.” (Jeremiah 12:15) “Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, declares the Lord.” (Jeremiah 31:20) “For the Lord will not cast off forever, but, though He cause grief, He will have compassion according to the abundance of His steadfast love.” (Lamentations 3:31, 32) God poured out judgment but God also desired to pour out compassion and extend pardon.

The primary idea of pardon is to lift up. God lifts the burden because of sin. God lifts the sorrow. God lifts the judgment. God lifts the brokenness. One can go on. David who knew the heavy consequences of sin wrote “To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.” (Psalm 25:1) In the same chapter David says of the Lord, “For your name’s sake, O Lord, pardon my guilt, for it is great.” (Psalm 25:11)

Verse seven in Isaiah 55 could easily fit among the prodigal son story. “And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they begin to celebrate.” (Luke 15:20-24) Why do people stay in sin when the Father is eagerly waiting to have compassion upon them and restore them to the fellowship of the family?

For the sinner the urgency is great to come to the Lord and receive His gift of salvation. For the saint the urgency is just as great to return and experience the compassion and forgiveness of the Lord so as to enjoy the fellowship of God. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) David expressed well the agony of sin and the exhilaration of forgiveness. “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah.” (Psalm 32:1-4)

David wrote, “Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found...” (Psalm 32:6)
SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

STUDY OF ISAIAH 55

SATISFIED MIND

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8, 9)

To most people the fact that man does not think the way God thinks should be well understood. God is not foreign to man for God uses creation and conscience to prove His existence to every man. “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.” (Romans 1:19, 20) Even though God can be known by creation and conscience man still does not understand because of sin. “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God.” (Romans 3:10, 11) Paul wrote of this to the church at Ephesus. “They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.” (Ephesians 4:18) The devil intentionally and powerfully blinds man’s heart to the truth that is Christ. “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4)

Even the believer will not see things or know things of God in a perfect manner for the knowledge of God’s person is more vast than the capability and capacity of man’s mind to know. “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor? Or who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.” (Romans 11:33-36)

To be higher as Isaiah noted of God’s ways and thoughts is to be lofty or exalted. God sees things and designs different from man because God sees and designs in regard to a different viewpoint, one that is holy, God glorifying and eternal. Because of this, the Christian is exhorted to “look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:18)

Three basic statements may be made in light of this passage in Isaiah:

- That is not what I had in mind.
- That is not the way I would have done it.
- That is not how I see it.
That Is Not What I Had In Mind

How often this phrase has been used in various refrains for numerous purposes. In opening the birthday, anniversary or Christmas gifts, one is shocked by what one has received and may declare that is not what I had in mind. When the husband has planned a romantic evening and it does not quite meet up with the wife’s thought of romance, she may declare that is not what I had in mind. When the father brings home a first car for his teenager, the teenager upon seeing the car may ghastly say that is not what I had in mind. There is no limit to the ways in which one may express this phrase. So as with God when He directs, leads, provides, prods, comforts, etc. and God acts in ways that one did not have in mind.

The people of Israel had been in Egyptian slavery for over 400 years. In perfect timing God raised up a deliverer in Moses. After a time of training working with sheep in Midian, Moses is called to go lead the people out of bondage. Leaving Midian and returning to Egypt, Moses met first with his brother Aaron and then the elders of the people of Israel. Upon hearing Moses’ account and challenge given by God, “the people believed...they bowed their heads and worshipped.” (Exodus 4:31) Moses and Aaron subsequently went to see Pharaoh to ask permission to go “three days’ journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God...” (Exodus 5:3) Pharaoh refused and contemplating upon the request, he directed his taskmasters to stop providing straw for the bricks the people of Israel were laboring to produce. The workers had to not only produce the brick but also now provide their own straw while keeping up the same quota of work. The foremen of the people of Israel complained and were told the reason for the added hardship was because of Moses and Aaron and the request of them for the people. Upon hearing Pharaoh’s reasoning for the added difficulty, the people of Israel who had been crying for deliverance for centuries and were excited about Moses’ presentation for deliverance now turned against Moses and Aaron. “The Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.” (Exodus 5:21) This was not what the Israelites had in mind.

After the ten plagues, Israel took their leave. They arrived at an obstacle called the Red Sea. Pharaoh had changed his mind about releasing the nation and was in full pursuit of them. Upon seeing Pharaoh’s fierce chase, the people of Israel “feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses, ‘Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.”’ (Exodus 14:10-12) This was not what they had in mind upon leaving Egypt.

Israel again would not fully enjoy what God was doing when God provided manna. Every day, the “what is it” would appear. Each family had just enough for each day, nothing more or nothing less. After a time the people became disenchanted with the manna. The diet was not what they had in mind.

One other example of how God did things or allowed things to happen that was not quite what His children had in mind involved the Ark of the Covenant. The people of Israel were in a great battle
against the Philistines. They had a bright idea. “Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies….As soon as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel gave a mighty shout, so that the earth resounded...And the ark of God was captured.” (1 Samuel 4:3, 5, 11) This was not what they had in mind.

Facing obstacles, making decisions, expecting outcomes, etc. are all challenges whereby one may expect God to act in a certain manner. God does act but not always in the way expected. God delivers in the most unusual ways at times. God provides in the most unlikely scenarios. God at times allows what is most unexpected. The bottom line is God does what God does without man’s permission, in manners so unlike what man would ever conceive and at times with results totally opposed to what one had in mind.

That Is Not The Way I Would Have Done It

Every person has moments when the way they do things is the best way or only way. In Christian life and ministry this is reluctantly true all too often. New ideas or fresh ideas are totally rejected. Every project goes under scrutiny to see how it was done and how it could have been done better. A few things have happened in Scripture when events occurred that lead no one to ever conceive a good outcome. Yet good things happened, not in the manner which may have been expected.

Joseph is hated by his brothers and sold into slavery. He is cast as a servant; falsely accused and imprisoned; forgotten by one who promised to help. Not allowing bitterness to creep into his spirit, Joseph remained faithful and the end became what God intended in a manner man would not have chosen. Joseph’s words to his brothers speak volumes. Upon their father Jacob’s death, the brothers of Joseph were fearful for their lives and the lives of their families. Joseph responded to their fears, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” (Genesis 50:19, 20) The end for Joseph and his family was good. It did not happen in a way that man would have done it.

Jericho was a walled city, a people very secured. The town stood in the way of Israel’s journey and conquest of the land. God had planned to destroy the city. The people were to walk around the city, the priests blowing trumpets, one time a day for six days. They were never to shout, talk, fight or make any other offensive move. On the seventh day, the people were to march around the city six times as before and a seventh time they were to march, blowing the trumpets and shouting. “As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city.” (Joshua 6:20) This was not the way General Sherman or General Patton would have done it.

One day an angel visited a young virgin. He said to a fearful young women, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob
forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:30-33) God’s means of salvation would come via a young woman betrothed to a young man. A means of possible disgrace allows for the birth of a king and a Savior for sinful man. This is not exactly how man would have done it.

That unorthodox means of birth is the only means by which a Savior could come. His very gift of salvation would be made possible by a cruel death and a glorious resurrection. His gift would be extended by grace to the unworthy. No merit of man could earn this gift of salvation. “But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12, 13) This is not the way that man would have done it. “But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are.” (1 Corinthians 1:27, 28) “Then who can be saved? But He said, ‘What is impossible with men is possible with God.’” (Luke 18:26, 27)

Even in His trial, Christ revealed how the manner in which God does things is not how man would do things. “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” (John 18:36)

God is a God “who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think…” (Ephesians 3:20)

That Is Not How I See It

The viewpoint of man is often out of line with God, even for Christians. Paul wrote of three distinct types of individuals to the church at Corinth. There is the natural man, the man who has never been saved. There is the spiritual man, the man who has been born again. There is the carnal man, the man who has been saved but lives and functions as the natural man. The difference between the natural man and the spiritual man is the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit indwells each believer and provides the mind of Christ, the path that a Christian is to live. The carnal man refuses to live according to the mind of Christ. “But we have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:16) Here are some examples of not seeing things the way God saw them.

Jonah was called by God to go to Nineveh and preach. God saw people who needed compassion and redemption. Jonah did not believe the people deserved God’s love and mercy. That is why he ran from God’s call. After Nineveh turned to the Lord upon Jonah’s preaching, Jonah became angry toward God because God has shown mercy to the people of Nineveh. “But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the Lord and said, ‘O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.” (Jonah 4:1, 2) Do believers today see lost people with eyes of compassion or with minds of judgment? How do Americans see Muslims? How do victims see perpetrators who give their life to Christ? How did God see sinners? He saw and sees them through the cross.
“Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.) So Jesus said to Peter, ‘Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?’” (John 18:10, 11) Peter’s view of the night was vastly different from that of Christ. This was not the last time this evening Peter’s viewpoint would be in error. Peter did undergo an attitude adjustment. “And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.’ And he went out and wept bitterly.” (Luke 22:61, 62) To make a point even stronger how a person’s viewpoint can be in error, not only did Peter misread what to do, Christ even healed the servant’s ear. Christ brought healing where Peter sought destruction. “But Jesus said, ‘No more of this!’ And He touched his ear and healed him.” (Luke 22:51)

One of the deeper problems of not seeing as God sees is with personal sin. Christians live to impress just as non-Christians. Facades are built up that have no foundation. What the world sees is not true to what God sees. In the search for a new king, the Lord gave Samuel this admonition. “But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7) God sees the very depth of man’s being through all the make-up of man’s foolishness. “And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.” (Hebrews 4:13) Even Christians have a problem seeing the truth of their own lives because they view them differently from the lives of others. “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.” (Matthew 7:3-5) Jesus spoke those words in His Sermon on the Mount. On another occasion, Jesus said a similar truth with a slightly different idea. “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” (John 8:7)

Pride has no place in the Lord’s work. To be like Christ is to be humble. That is not always the case in the ministry. John gave this illustration and these words. “I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first…..” (3 John 9) To put himself first was to take preeminence over anyone. Diotrephes sought to be the focal point of the church. Nothing happened without his approval. The idea of first is someone who is self-centered and self-seeking. It suggests someone who only desires to be served but never serve.

How dangerous it is to see things only from man’s perspective. The view of the Lord is paramount to effective ministry. The church at Laodicea was affluent. Much of what is said by the Lord about them is metaphorical to an item made or produced in their city. The Lord counseled them to buy from Him, “…salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.” (Revelation 3:18) May Christians see things by the perspective of God.
SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

STUDY OF ISAIAH 55

SATISFIED RESULTS

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:10, 11)

The one constant about the weather is that it is not constant. The old adage is very true, if one does not like the weather, wait it will change. Isaiah uses the weather to provide a lesson about God’s Word. The lesson is not that God’s Word changes. Contrary, God’s Word has never changed nor will it ever change. The lesson involves how the weather affects life on the earth. The hydrologic cycle is the process of evaporation, condensation and precipitation. There are a few other variables in the process but these suffice for the example. Water on the earth evaporates, condenses in the atmosphere and then becomes precipitation upon the earth. This cycle is repeated again and again for the continuous production, nourishment and growth of life upon the earth. The Jews annually looked for both the early rains and the latter rains. “He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil.” (Deuteronomy 11:14)

The Word of God is as the precipitation from heaven. It goes forth to produce and nourish life, the life of a believer. The seed of the Gospel is planted and the Word of God continues to grow and develop that seed. God’s Word has a purpose and it will produce the fruit God has intended.

ABIDING WORD “do not return there”

As rain falls from the heavens, it infiltrates the ground providing necessary nourishment. In hard soil there may be run off. In workable soil, the rain seeps deep within the ground to reach the roots of life and provide a stable life cycle. New lawns and bushes require much watering to take root and establish life. Many times when trees are planted, people will place a pipe at an angle that goes into the ground toward the roots. Water is placed within the pipe to reach the required areas to enable a proper means of growth.

The Word of God is the water to the soul in providing the necessary nourishment for proper development and growth. Paul wrote, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” (Colossians 3:16) To dwell is to be at home. God’s Word is not to be an infrequent visitor or guest in the home of one’s heart. It is to be a permanent resident, an abiding presence which God will use at various times to grow the child of God. The Word of God is not just to be at home in the heart of a child of God but also it is to dwell richly meaning abundantly or extravagantly. At times man splurges to make one’s home beautiful or extravagant. It might be the plush carpet, the stone floor, the granite counter top, the fancy drapes, expensive furniture, etc. God’s Word is to dwell
in the heart of the Christian in an extravagant manner. It is the talk of the company when they visit. It sets the house off from other houses. As people place potpourri or candles or other scent making items around one’s home, the fragrance of God’s Word should be easily noticeable in the heart of a Christian.

In the days of advancing technology, it is still necessary for input to be first before output can be produced, so also with the Christian. One cannot output what has never been inputted. The psalmist said it in this manner. “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.” (Psalm 119:11) The indwelling presence of God’s Word is vital for the Christian to overcome the daily battle with sin.

Paul wrote Colossians 3:16. He also wrote Ephesians 5:18, 19 which has similar wording as the passage in Colossians. Notice instead of the Word of God directing one’s interaction with others, it is the Holy Spirit. “....be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart...” (Ephesians 5:18, 19) Is it the Word of God or the Holy Spirit that has the greatest impact? It is the Holy Spirit using the inputted Word of God. While one learns God’s Word, the Holy Spirit inputs the Scripture in the heart. At times, it may seem as if the Christian has forgotten what one has learned but when necessary the Holy Spirit brings that truth which abides in the heart to the forefront. The Holy Spirit cannot bring truth to the forefront when truth has not been inputted.

The abiding of the Word of God and the use of the Word of God by the indwelling Holy Spirit endorses the fellowship of the Christian with the Son and with the Father. “Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.” (1 John 2:24) The abiding Word of God enhances the daily relationship with the Lord. The Bible is God’s voice to man. When it is never read, the voice of God is dull to the hearer.

**PRODUCING WORD** “seed to the sower and bread to the eater”

Not only is the Word of God to abide in the Christian’s heart for growth, it is to be required for growth and nourishment. A newborn requires milk and soft foods until the body is able to handle solid foods. A baby is not born ready to eat steak. The digestive system has to be nurtured in the proper manner or else it will be an issue for the entirety of life. Newborn Christians cannot handle the steak of God’s Word. They require the milk. “I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it.” (1 Corinthians 3:2) The milk of God’s Word is the primary truths of the Gospel. These are partially described in Hebrews. “Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God...” (Hebrews 6:1) The problem occurs when Christians take the milk and stay on the bottle. They do not develop thus causing developmental problems of which Paul wrote, “And even now you are not ready.” (1 Corinthians 3:2)

Christians are to grow and mature using the Word of God as the means of growth. Christians begin on the milk and gradually begin to digest the meat. Sadly the commentary for many Christians is the failure to advance in their diet, thus not being useful in God’s kingdom and ministry. “About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this
time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” (Hebrews 5:11-14) Paul wrote to Timothy Christians are to be “useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.” (2 Timothy 2:21) This is not possible without a steady diet of the Word of God. The Word of God must be the steady diet of the Christian if Christian growth is to ever be experienced. Man may live on bread for the nourishment of his flesh. Man must live on God’s Word for the nourishment of his soul. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)

DIRECTIVE WORD “goes out from my mouth”

God’s Word has a purpose. God did not speak as some just to hear himself speak. The Word of God is God speaking to man. It is not the compilation of various men’s writings. God is the Word. God inspired the Word. God spoke the Word. “…knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:20, 21) God gave the Scriptures to man in order for man to know the reality of God; the need of a Savior; the person who is Savior, Jesus; and the means of salvation, by repentance and faith. Everything in Scripture is directing man toward God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God….And the Word became flesh and dwell among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1, 14) Everything in Scripture including the narratives of Old Testament lives was purposely given by God to bring man to Him. “Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.” (1 Corinthians 10:11) God spoke directly in giving His Word to men to write down God’s truth for ages to come.

God not only spoke but He still speaks. The Holy Spirit takes the inputted truth of God’s Word and teaches those truths to a heart willing to develop and grow properly as a Christian. “But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge…But the anointing that you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie – just as it has taught you, abide in Him.” (1 John 2:20, 27) This passage does not teach that pastors and teachers are not needed. They are tools that God uses to help the teaching of God’s Word to the heart. “And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...” (Ephesians 4:11, 12) God spoke the Word into existence and God still speaks to the heart of man from His Word.

Not only did God speak and not only is God speaking, God will speak. The Word of God was evident in the beginning: “And God said...” (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29) The Word of God is evident today. The Word of God will be evident in the end. “He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which He is called is The Word of God.” (Revelation 19:13) God has never changed. His message is His and His alone. He spoke it to men to form the Scriptures. He speaks it
today to inform of the gospel and His message to His children. He will speak it in the end as the means of judgment upon man. “For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

**PURPOSEFUL WORD** “accomplish that which I purpose”

God’s Word will accomplish what God has intended. When shared, it will convict and save. When taught it will instruct and edify. When applied it will effectively direct in the path of godly living. Paul wrote to Timothy of the effective purpose of God’s Word. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Christians cannot competently serve the Lord without a regular infusion of God’s Word in the mind and soul. One of Paul’s favorite phrases is using a form of the words, “renew the mind.” This renewal can only be achieved by a consistent study and application of God’s Word. Those who refuse to open God’s book will be starved spiritually and can never be an effective servant for the Lord.

Peter cited Paul’s writings and the need to consistently learn God’s Word to effectively grow the Christian life. “And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” (2 Peter 3:15-18)

God’s Word has a purpose. This is illustrated in the parable of the sower. “Hear then the parable of the sower: when anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the Word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the Word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the Word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the Word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.” (Matthew 13:18-23)

God’s Word has a purpose designed by God that will be accomplished. Christians must yearn to learn. Once the Scriptures are learned, the Holy Spirit can use them in shaping the Christian life. A Christian will wither without the abiding Word of God, but will be transformed into the image of Christ when the Word of God dwells within. A Christian life filled with the Word of God will accomplish God’s purpose, producing fruit at various levels in life. May the prayer of every Christian be for God’s Word to be loved, read, stored and applied every day.
SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

STUDY OF ISAIAH 55

SATISFIED HOPE

“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” (Isaiah 55:12, 13)

Isaiah 55 is filled with invitations. “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters....incline your ear, and come to me....seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.” The sinner comes to the Lord for salvation. The saints come to the Lord for continuous grace. One never stops coming to the Lord. Christians are to come boldly to the Lord and His throne for in the Lord there is a forever hope. “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16) Christians are not to be timid in approaching God, wondering if God will help or not. When God says to come to Him boldly it is not a tease with a surprise but an encouragement that breeds confidence in the saint that God is always for the saint. He provides, secures, forgives, loves, etc. The last two verses of Isaiah 55 speak to the confidence Israel is to have in God concerning their relationship with Him and their future. This same confidence is to be in the lives of Christians toward God. God never disappoints. What does this confidence bring to the heart of the Christian?

Joy

There are a few words that always accompany the Christian aura, words like joy, peace, and love. Joy and peace are mentioned by Isaiah. Though love is not mentioned it is implied in the security taught by the text. Joy is a constant expression of the life of a believer according to the Scriptures. It is the outflow of a heart that has come to know the good news. “Fear not, for behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” (Luke 2:10)

Joy is a result of understanding the word of God. “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” (John 15:11)

Joy is the encouragement to face the trials of life. “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.” (James 1:2, 3)

Joy is the hope that overcomes the world’s challenges. “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the
Father in my name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” (John 16:20-24)

Joy is the uplifting attitude of an obedient Christian walk. “Blessed are …..” (Matthew 5:3-12)

Joy is the sweetness of a heart that has been forgiven. “Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.” (Psalm 51:12) “For His anger is but for a moment, and His favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.” (Psalm 30:5)

Joy is the enablement to go on despite the obstacles of life. “And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Nehemiah 8:10)

Peace

Closely connected to joy is peace. If one does not have joy one probably does not have peace and vice versa. Peace is often the word people will give to describe what they felt the moment they were born again. The guilt of sin and the despair of being without hope were removed by the saving grace of the Lord. In the last days of Christ’s life on earth before the cross, His disciples were very distraught. Christ had told them of the plan of the Father for His life, death on a cross. The disciples would be losing their leader, the one who they thought would usher a return of the kingdom of God upon earth and the Jews would finally see the fulfillment of the promises given to Abraham and reiterated in the promises to David and the writings of Jeremiah and Isaiah most particularly. Christ said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” (John 14:27) He added, “Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:32, 33)

At the moment of salvation the sinner finds peace with God. As the Christian lives the peace of God is always available in facing the trials of life. The assured hope of the Lord breathes out peace in the midst of the stormiest days of life. “I sought the Lord, and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to Him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and delivers them.” (Psalm 34:4-7) Isaiah wrote “be led forth in peace.” It has the idea of one being released from captivity. There is no more imprisonment, no more captivity.

Singing

Notice it is not the people that are singing. It is nature. God has brought His joy and peace and given it to His children. It is almost as if nature is aware of what God has done and nature glorifies God because of His actions toward His own. Paul wrote that creation does have an awareness of God and His workings especially in regard to man. “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope the that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole
creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” (Romans 8:20-23)

On His triumphal entry, the crowd shouted out praises to the Lord. “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Matthew 21:9) The Pharisees told Christ, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples. He answered, ‘I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.” (Luke 19:39, 40) From the beginning of time, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork.” (Psalm 19:1)

Christians should not let nature do all the singing. In the darkest of hours let songs ring out. “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” (Acts 16:25) God is the one “who gives songs in the night.” (Job 35:10) Christians are to “be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Ephesians 5:18-21)

Prosperity

The curse of sin brought the thorns and briers. “And to Adam He said, ’Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, “You shall not eat of it,” cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.’” (Genesis 3:17, 18) God’s grace brings fruit. Christ said the “tree is known by its fruit.” (Matthew 12:33) True Christians produce fruit. Their fruit will remain and prosper. They are as trees planted by the waters. “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.” (Psalm 1:1-3) John the Baptist said, “Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Matthew 3:10) Isaiah mentioned myrtle trees which some Jewish people even today use their leaves for healing.

Security

This relationship portrayed in the latter part of Isaiah 55 is sealed with “an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” Israel was still God’s people. They would be taken into captivity but this would not annul being God’s people. Upon repentance, Israel would enjoy the secure relationship found only in Christ. They would be forgiven and they would be restored. God’s working with Israel was not for just a season. There is an interlude today in regards to the fulfillment of God’s promises to the nation. Just as sure as the sun comes up each day, God’s promises will be fulfilled regarding Israel. The same is true for God’s interaction with His children. Believers are ever secure in the hand of God. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.” (John 10:27, 28)
Christians have all the reason of eternity to have a song in their heart, enjoying the unceasing joy and peace found only in Christ. They will be fruitful if they allow God to fulfill His purpose in their lives. No matter the circumstances, no matter the world’s view or hostility, no matter the apathy of others, Christians always have and will always have a secure hope in Jesus Christ. In Christ there is satisfaction guaranteed.

- In Christ one is confident needs are satisfied.
- In Christ one identifies a satisfying purpose.
- In Christ one enjoys a satisfying relationship.
- In Christ one understands a satisfying mind.
- In Christ one experiences satisfying results.
- In Christ one is encouraged with a satisfying hope.

*I’ll Be Satisfied*

Written by Joe Pannell

When my soul is singing in that promised land above, I'll be satisfied.
Praising Christ the Savior for redeeming grace and love, I'll be satisfied.

I'll be satisfied (satisfied). I'll be satisfied (satisfied).
When my soul is resting in the presence of the Lord I'll be satisfied.

Living in a city where the soul shall never die, I'll be satisfied.
There to meet with loved ones never more to say good-bye, I'll be satisfied.

When I meet the ransomed over on the golden shore, I'll be satisfied.
There I'll join the angels singing praises ever more, I'll be satisfied.