

In Affliction Draw Near and Listen to the Lord

Isaiah 48:1-22

8 Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time *that* thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.

9 For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.

10 Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

16 Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there *am* I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me.

17 Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I *am* the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou shouldest go.

18 O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:

19 Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.

Sinner from the Womb

8 Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time *that* thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.

We don't like to think about this but God called Israel "a transgressor from the womb" or a sinner from the womb.

- Before they could make any choices in their lives they were already sinners.
- The Bible says in Romans 5:12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."
 - We inherited a sin nature from Adam, which is what makes us a sinner even at birth and our acts of sin that follow just provides more evidence that we are born in sin.
 - The verse says that death comes by sin and another passage in Romans 6:23 says the same thing, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
 - Whenever God talks about sin and death, he always talks about mercy...

Mercy For His Name's Sake

9 For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.

You know why God shows mercy to sinners, not because Israel deserved it.

- No, he calls them “O house of Jacob” in the first verse, he calls them by their old name, trickster.
- They “swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth and righteousness.”
 - God said you talk about me with your lips, but you don’t live in righteousness, you are nothing but hypocrites and in verse 4, “I knew that thou art obstinate,” which is like saying, “I knew you were stubborn” before I called you as my people.
 - God knew we would be stubborn, defiant, distrusting, rebellious, and lazy when he sent his beloved Son Jesus Christ to die for our sins...he wasn’t doing it for us, he did it “For my name’s sake.”
- “For my name’s sake will I defer mine anger” praise God, because if it were up to my name’s sake there would be no cause to defer judgment, which is why we need to give all glory to God!
 - “...for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.”
 - Every time we stray, every time we sin, every time we do our own will, it should draw us back to God and we should repent and praise him for his mercy, for his name’s sake.

With Mercy Comes Affliction

10 Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

Because you are sinners, because the Jacob comes out in you, because you are hypocrites, because you are obstinate/stubborn...I will show you mercy for my name’s sake, but look at verse 10.

- “Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.”
 - I have sent afflictions your way to refine you, using the imagery of afflictions being like a furnace.
 - I sent you into bondage, I allowed enemies to camp around your city, I allowed plagues to come, I allowed you to be in trials, which would act like a furnace to burn away the impurities.
 - Trials tend to remove the hypocrites, if you aren’t in it for the right reason, which is to serve God for his glory, then you won’t last in the fire.
 - We don’t like trials, but they can bring us closer to the Lord, they can remove some of our stubbornness and get us to live righteously.
- For my name’s sake, I will show you mercy, but I will also send you into the furnace of affliction from time to time!
 - I believe he does that for his name’s sake too, because if we are God’s people and we are followers of Jesus Christ, then we need to not act like Jacob or act like this world, we need to be a separate people and new creatures in Christ!

Draw Closer to the Lord and Listen

16 Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there *am* I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me.

One of the things that is repeated in this passage is that the Lord says to listen, he starts out in verse 1 with “hear ye this” and in verse 12, “Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel...” and verse 14, “All ye, assemble yourselves and hear” and verse 16, “Come ye near unto me, hear ye this...”

- One of the main reasons why Israel was in the wicked state that they were in is the same reason that we get further apart from God, we stop listening to his voice, we stop getting into His Word and we stop listening to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
 - The further away you get from God, the harder it is for us to hear him!
 - Come ye near unto me....means that they had wandered apart from God, get back close to God.
- God reminds them “I have not spoken in secret from the beginning” he had given them the law, he had sent judges and prophets, he didn’t keep his will a secret.
 - He has given us a Bible, he doesn’t have secret words that only few know about, he said, you have had my word from the beginning.
 - The prophet starts talking in first person, “and now the Lord God, and his Spirit hath sent me.”
 - Not only do we have God’s Word, but he has sent men and women of God that were filled with the Holy Spirit to teach us how to live godly lives and what God expects out of us.
 - Living righteously isn’t a mystery, it is a choice and many times we choose the opposite.

17 Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I *am* the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou shouldest go.

- Anyone willing to learn the way to live that will best profit your life, turn to the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel” turn to the Lord, listen to the Lord, live for the Lord and watch your life change for the better.
 - Are you tired of the trips to the furnace of affliction, come near unto the Lord and listen, He will teach you and he will “leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go”!

Missed Blessings from the Lord

18 O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:

19 Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.

The Lord told them they were hypocrites, sinners and stubborn at the beginning, he told them that he chose them knowing this before they were born, he showed them mercy for His name's sake and he sent them through the furnace of affliction to refine their life and now he wants them to come near and listen...why?

- Verses 18 and 19 really hit me... "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea: Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof;"
 - God was telling Israel, I haven't been able to bless you as much as I wanted to bless you because you refused to follow my commandments.
 - Your unrighteousness caused you to miss out on peace that I would have sent you that would be like a river.
 - You could have had a river of peace but your unrighteousness caused you to receive a furnace of affliction.
 - You missed out on blessings from me because you went your own way, followed your own will and worshipped your own gods.
- It is easy to pick on Israel, but the God can say the same thing to the church today, I would have blessed you so much more than I am blessing you now if you would have listened to me and done what I told you to do.
 - I would have multiplied you, but you chose your own way.
 - It reminds me of David after he had sinned with Bathsheeba and was visited by Nathan the prophet...

2 Samuel 12:7-8 And Nathan said to David, Thou *art* the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; **8** And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if *that had been* too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

- God said, I blessed you with so much, I made you king, I gave you a home I protected you from Saul, I have you Israel and Judah, "and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things."
 - God told David, I would have given you more if you would have come to me.
 - We are missing out on blessings because James 4:2 says, "ye lust and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not."
 - God says you are missing out on blessings because you don't ask it of me and try to get it yourself.
 - Also, we miss out on blessings because of our unrighteousness.
 - We need to draw closer to the Lord, listen and follow God's will and he will bless us and he will teach us and he will use us for his name's sake and for his glory...that is our sole purpose in life!