

Awakened Hope

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Bible Text: Isaiah 51:17-23

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Testimony to be able to say, "Saved by the blood of the crucified one," something that is only for those that the Lord in his grace has chosen and made to be so.

Let's take our Bibles and look together in Isaiah 51 and I want to read for you from verse 17 down to verse 23 and talk to you about being awakened in hope. Awakened in hope. If you are the Lord's, you know what I'm talking about because any that are his for whom he died, in time by his Spirit, he does awaken to a living hope. Isaiah 51 and beginning with verse 17,

17 Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out. 18 There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up. 19 These two things are come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee? 20 Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the LORD, the rebuke of thy God. 21 Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine: 22 Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again: 23 But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.

Clearly, Isaiah was called to preach to a generation that was lost. They were a people, a nation, that the Lord had done many mighty works in, and yet left to themselves over time, they became increasingly idolatrous, much like the nations around them, and when the Lord raised up Isaiah, it wasn't to go out and preach a message of health, wealth and prosperity. In fact, if you recall and it's good to do this because we have taken so long going through Isaiah, but if you go back to the first chapter of Isaiah, this was the generation to which Isaiah was called to preach and how are they described here? Well, you can see the same sort of language in verse 2, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth:

for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD," that is, in seeking out other ways of worship, "they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger." There is only one way of satisfying a holy God and that is through that sacrifice which he has ordained and accepted, the blood sacrifice of his Son. But, "they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." So he says, "Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers."

So that's how it begins, but here in Isaiah 51 now, we can see that through all of the Lord's fury upon that nation, there was a remnant that he purposed to save and to keep and to awaken. That's who this word is addressed to here in Isaiah 51:17. Awaken and see the mercies of the Lord in preserving them even though he destroyed a whole generation. Generations upon generations. So when we talk about being awakened in hope, the very first thing I believe we need to consider is our own need. How many messages have we heard preached against the nation of Israel? How bad they were and what they did and yet that history, if compared to our own lives and our own souls, we'd have to say it's cookie cut. It matches exactly who we are before the Lord.

So in this matter of being awakened in hope, I believe that it's a matter of seeing our own need and seeing that the Lord has judged other sinners and not awakened them, not given them hope, left them in their lost estate and cast them out just like he did many in Israel. Yet here, Isaiah now is called upon to preach a message of hope to the remnant, to those that remain. Those, as it says here in verse 22, for whom the Lord would plead their cause. You know, if I have been awakened in hope by the Lord and I trust I have, I trust that what I experienced a number of years ago even though at the time I was in Africa and was in missionary work, so-called, yet the Lord arrested my heart and caused me to see that, to that point, I was not preaching the Christ, that I was living a life based upon a profession that I had made and yet I was lost. And as the Lord began that good work in me, I believe that just like with the birth of a baby, there is life, we're not born mature adults. There is a growth as time goes on but that life to which we've been awakened is to Christ and that hope to which he awakens is to Christ and we are brought to see that if we have been preserved alive, it is only because he has pled our cause. It's not for anything in us.

So this is a message of comfort when it says here, Isaiah 51, "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury." I believe this is the first thing that the Lord teaches us when his Spirit awakens us in hope is we see that indeed we deserve the wrath of God. We deserve his justice. And perhaps when he awakened you as he did me, there was a sense of that wrath. There was a sense of that

holiness that was prevailing that caused you, as it caused me, just to tremble and, actually for days and weeks, live in a darkness that there was no hope. That should he cast me into hell, he would be right in doing so. Yet as he continues to do his work, even as here, he shows you that he has taken, as it says in verse 22, "taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling." That wrath has been removed.

Now, how does God remove the wrath? Here historically, God was going to reestablish Israel back in the land, rebuild the temple, all that being the last phase up to the coming of Christ to fulfill all that was prophesied concerning him through those types and pictures, but when we consider our own estate before the Lord, when it says there in verse 22, "Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again." There was a time when even as God's elect ones, we were under condemnation. We were under that wrath. That wrath was out due and when it was taken out of our hand was when the Lord Jesus Christ took it. This is why I believe it's so important that we see that we were not justified before a holy God until Christ died. There had to be a satisfaction before there could be a justification. There had to be that ransom paid before there could be an acquittal.

None of us has been saved just by God simply arbitrarily decreeing, "You're saved. You're not. You're saved. You're not." That's how some men reason. No, there was an eternal choosing out of that people for whom God would plead their cause, as we see in verse 22. "Thus saith thy Lord the LORD." This is a God that natural men take exception with. They don't want him doing the choosing but he is the Lord and their Lord for whom he has pled their cause. He will plead the cause of his people. I don't know how you can state it any more plainly than that. So he has pled their cause by taking their cause. The word "to plead the cause" is a legal term. It's one of an attorney, a defender or a term maybe we're more used to from Scripture, an advocate. "If any man sin, he has an advocate with the Lord, Jesus Christ the righteous," and that's what it took. It took Christ becoming a man and taking that cup. We know that even our Lord spoke of that cup. He asked his disciples, "Are you able to drink of the cup of this baptism that I am about to drink of?" What was that cup? Well, that was the cup of the wrath of God, removed from us for whom he died, and yet he himself having to drink it completely to the last drop.

"Even the dregs of the cup of my fury." The message of hope in that is in verse 22, "thou shalt no more drink it again." I no more fear the wrath of God in anything that he does. You say, "Well, sometimes he chastens us." Yes, but it's in love that he chastens us. Whom the Lord loves, he chastens. There is not a drop of wrath in anything that the Lord brings our way to any of his children if Christ has paid the debt. And I just believe the word. I believe that so complete was the death of the Lord Jesus Christ that when he died, every last dreg of God's wrath was drunk by our Savior and he put it away.

That is the hope to which we are awakened. Just like Israel at this point may have questioned, looking back on their history, seeing how God had dealt with their predecessors, they may have questioned God's sincerity in saying, "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem," but they needed not question because he had purposed to reestablish that nation of Israel back into the land in order to fulfill every prophecy and promise and

type that pertained to his Son until Christ should come. And now that Christ has come, unlike much of what we hear in preaching today that he still has a plan for national Israel, no, his purpose and his will has been fulfilled for his spiritual Israel.

I know that because when you come over to Romans 2, just take a look here real quickly, Romans 2, Paul says in Romans 2:28-29, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh." There was a time when it was but he's speaking now since Christ. He says, verse 29, "But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." So just as there was an awakening of Israel as a nation in the sense that the Lord brought them back from captivity and reestablished them in the land whereas they had been the subjects of his fury and of his wrath, so spiritually there is an awakening. There has been awakening and there is an awakening of those that are his spiritual Israel. I believe that when Christ paid the debt and died there on the cross, all of Old Testament history was fulfilled in that one time and one place and the foundation was laid at that time for the building, if you will, or rebuilding of God's true Israel and what he is in the business of doing now is calling out of darkness, calling out of their dispersion, their lostness, every one for whom he died. Just like he brought back Israel from captivity, so he is bringing back now in our day and building his church those for whom he died.

So this is the message that we see here. God's work in awakening and hope. To waken and hope means to never fear again that that wrath should ever come upon us and I know sometimes in our weakness in our flesh when the Lord shows us our sin, we begin to question, "Am I the Lord's or am I not?" But if we're the Lord's, there is no reason to doubt. This is where we're called upon to not look within but look without. Righteousness isn't in here, righteousness is seated in the heavenlies in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and if he has paid your debt, you have every reason to hope. Doubt yourself but don't doubt him. Don't doubt his work.

So this message, awakened in hope, is designed for the comfort of the Lord's people. Just as he accomplished what he said he would do with the nation of Israel and brought them back, even though at one point it seemed like it could never happen. This is what he is describing here. You talk about being left out, hung out to dry. How thorough was God's judgment at one point with this nation of Israel when he took them into captivity? Well, look in verse 18, "There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth." They continued to produce children. There was a generation called Israel but there was no identification. They were carried into the land of Babylon and were there for 70 years and it looked like the whole life of Israel had been taken out.

It says there, "neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up. These two things are come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee?" There was no man to comfort them. If you want a good definition of what it is to be lost, I believe these two verses give it to us in type. How lost is lost? It means there is no way back. Unless the Lord himself is pleased to bring you back, there is no way back. There is

none that can help you and until the Lord brings you to that point, you have not been lost. You see, this is the area even as he dealt in my own heart that he caused me to realize, because suddenly I was still in my heart over those years, even though I wouldn't say it, but suddenly in my heart there was a confidence that somehow what I was doing and how I had learned and what I believed would help me and when the Lord began to show me who I was and take all that away, that's where I was caused to see I was lost. There was none to help me. All of my predecessors, all of my professors, all the books I'd read, my profession, all of these things could not help me. They didn't bring peace. They didn't bring comfort. I was as a dead man laying before the Lord.

Now, you might look at that and say, "Well, that's cruel." It was a mercy. I'm thankful that the Lord dealt with me in such a way. When I have tried to explain it to people over the years, there is no explaining to somebody that's never been through it, that's never been lost. Try explaining being lost to somebody that has never been lost. They can't understand it, but that's fine. This is not a matter of trying to convince others of their lostness or even convince others that I was lost. I just know, just like that blind man, when they kept questioning him, he said, "All I know is I was blind and now I see. There is one that gave me eyes to see."

So that's important in understanding this matter of being awakened in hope. There is that hope to which the sinner is awakened but before he is awakened, there is a lostness. There is a depravity. There is this reality that there is none among men to help and there is nothing within you to help. You see, today people say, "Well, you're depraved in every area but your will." I was just talking about this with somebody this past week as they were trying to understand, "What's the difference between how you see the fall and how others see it?" Well, most everybody I talk to, they'll talk about being fallen in Adam, but they still believe that somehow in that fall, man's will was protected and so now that man realizes there has been a fall, he still has something in him that he can exercise called free-will and with that, he can please God and approach unto him. That's not what it is to be lost. If there is even a wiggle left, you're not lost. We're talking about dead, d-e-a-d, dead. Dead in sin. Dead in trespasses. Described here in verse 20, "Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net." Caught. No way out. No way out. And "they are full of the fury of the LORD, the rebuke of thy God."

Until we are brought to see that is our condition, we can't say we've been found. There are two blessed states, I believe, of a sinner before God: one is being lost and one is being found. A lot of people talk about having found Christ, no, he found me. He found me. He was never lost. I didn't find him, he found me and he had to find me. Well, even by his Spirit when he came and found me, he had already found me because if I was the Lord's, that means that when he went to that cross and paid that sin debt with his life, my name was already written on his breastplate as the high priest before I even knew anything about it.

That's what it is to be awakened. Have you ever been awakened? You fell asleep and there was a danger and suddenly you were awakened and at first you have a tough time getting your bearings and there is a fear. There is a racing of the heart. There is

uncertainty until you're brought to safety or realize that, "Okay, everything is okay." I believe that that's how this is described here. There is an awakening out of stupor. An awakening from that lost estate under which we were. There is an awakening in our minds and hearts to the danger of, "If God had left me in that state that I would most certainly have been lost."

Yet, the Lord doesn't play cat and mouse. If he has awakened you, it is because he has delivered you. That's the sense here when he says in verse 21, "Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken," but look at the last part, "but not with wine." We're not talking about being drunk with wine but drunken with the religion of self. The book of Revelation that we're studying on Tuesday nights, we see over and over again how the great whore, the false religion, has given wine to drink to her adepts, to her followers, and that describes the majority of the people we run into day in and day out. They are drunk with themselves. They are drunk with their profession. They are drunk with their works. When you're in a drunken stupor, that wine controls you. You have no control over what you're saying or what you do. It affects every part of your being and this is the reality of people that we deal with even that call themselves Christians. They'll give up most everything but they won't give up that profession of self-will, of works, of some sort of righteousness in themselves that will commend them to God. They go to their death, so drunk are they. They go to their death believing that somehow God is going to approve them or appreciate them for all of their service and what they have done in their lifetime.

That's a drunkenness and that's to whom this word is addressed here. We would be in the same stupor, continue to be in the same stupor, were it not for the Spirit of God awakening us. Awake, thou that sleepest. And, you know, even as the Lord's children, it's possible that we be caught away in that spirit again of pride with ourselves. That's why we need the word. That's why we need to be reminded in these times of worship when we read the Scriptures. Bob, you read it here in Romans 13, and I would have you look back there with me just to refresh our memory, but Paul was concerned about this very thing with regard to these to whom he was writing and these were believers. These were the Lord's people. How many times have you said to your children or you've said to somebody, a loved one, when they're driving, "Well, make sure that you take time to take breaks. Don't fall asleep at the wheel." It's in our nature to fall asleep. It's in our nature spiritually to fall asleep. Again, I'm so thankful for the Spirit that will not let us sleep the sleep of death, but just realize that we still have this depraved heart that were it not for the Spirit of God would pull us into condemnation.

But Paul wrote here in Romans 13:11, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep." Let's don't be lulled to sleep by those about us just like Israel was. Because of family and friends, you begin to think, "Well, it really isn't that serious." That's what happens when you start getting sleepy. Your senses go away and there could be a great danger and you don't know it. So how we need the Spirit of God to continually awaken us through this word to remind us, "No, there is only one way," and let it never be questioned, there is only one way in which God is pleased to save sinners and that is through the death of his Son, that blood and that righteousness which he has

accomplished, no matter how much men testify otherwise or try to mix a little grace, a little works. No, there is one way.

"Awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." That's a continual thing. What are the works of darkness? Anything that darkens counsel, that would be leaven with regard to who Christ is and what he has accomplished and to look to him alone.

So this is what awakening does. It gets your senses about you. As you wake up, initially they're dull but then as you continue to be awakened, your sense come about you and there is thought. There is discernment. There is decision. There is determination that comes as a result of being awakened. But in all that, we don't take any of the glory. It belongs unto the Lord alone and that's the sum of it in verses 22 and 23. We see the need to be awakened. We see the nature of that awakening, but we also the source here in verses 22 and 23, "Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God." You say, "Why is that so repetitive?" Lest anybody think that if they're the Lord's that they had something to do with it. We didn't.

Therefore, "Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again." This reminds me of what our Lord said coming over to John 10 as the good shepherd. It wasn't that he just took the cup out of our hand and then placed it somewhere to be picked up again. No, he drank it dry. He is the substitute for his people.

When we read here in John 10:11, look in verse 10, he says, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." That describes those that the Lord has left to themselves. There are people that they will follow. There are men they will follow but they are thieves, they are murderers and they are destroyers. They destroy men's souls by the very message they preach. That's who Christ was referring to there, false preachers. They abound. But he said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Life and awakening are synonymous terms. You awaken because there is life. Life has been given you to be awakened and to be called out of darkness unto his glorious light.

But how is that all accomplished? Look at verse 11, "I am the good shepherd." How is that cup of God's wrath taken from your hand by the Lord? Well, the good shepherd. "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." You see, the law said a life for a life, a tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye. There had to be substitution, but rather than require it of your hand or mine for whom Christ died, he required it of his Son.

Any other message, any message that a man would preach, that preacher is a hireling. Do you see that in verse 12? "But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not." There are a lot of men, that's all they preach for is their wages and once they get a little dissatisfied with those wages, they're moving on. Everything is a

steppingstone to something bigger and better. They are hirelings. They don't have Christ's sheep in mind, they have themselves and when they see "the wolf coming, they leave the sheep and flee." The wolf could be anything, particularly if it affects them, their livelihood. When things get a little tough for them, they're on their way. "And the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep." But the Lord said, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." How is that we are brought to know him? When he awakens us. But Christ said, "I preach to you and for you." I only preach because he was revealed in my heart. It's not anything I learned from men or in a school or in a classroom. It was completely isolated but it was from this word. This word is true but let God be God and every man a liar. This word is true.

But such is the work of God through his Son in removing that cup of his fury so that none of his would ever have to worry about drinking it again. Once God's wrath has been satisfied, it's satisfied forever. That's why I know there are none in hell for whom Christ died. That would be double jeopardy for God to punish his Son and then to punish again the sinner for whom he died. Over here in John 10, we see that very same thing said of the Lord. He makes a distinction, just like when Christ called Lazarus forth, he said, "Lazarus, come forth!" He didn't say, "Anybody that hears me, come forth!" There was a specific command to one of his own to come forth.

That's what we see here in verse 26, the Lord made a distinction. He said, "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." That word "order" is important. It doesn't say, "Well, since you don't believe then you can't be my sheep." No, "Ye believe not because you're not of my sheep." Anything but a sheep will continue to listen to hirelings and will continue to follow them. That's why you scratch your head sometimes and say, "How can some of these men have such followings?" They get all excited about them. Well, that's what it is to be lost and blind and unless they're the Lord's sheep, they will die following such men in a false hope. That's as much of God's fury that he leaves upon sinners justly. He doesn't have to save them. He doesn't have to deliver them out of that darkness, but if he has delivered you, if he has delivered me, it's a grace. It's a mercy. It's because he set us apart to be his sheep.

He says there in result, verse 27, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life." You see, this is the parallel to "thou shalt no more drink it again." "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." This matter of salvation is in the hand, it's not in a plan. It's in the hand of an Almighty Sovereign Savior, one that we address as the Lord, our Lord, our God. Just like Thomas, when the Lord opened his eyes, he fell and said, "My Lord and my God." When the Lord awakens a sinner, that's what he cries, "My Lord and my God."

Now, coming back here to Isaiah 51:23, how vital, how important is this truth? Well, the Lord says, "I will put that cup of wrath or fury "into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over." You're going to know oppression, you're going to know affliction, you're going to know isolation when the Lord

delivers you out. Think of that blind man who stood alone but the Lord stood with him. Someone said, "God plus one is a majority."

Well, if I'm in Christ, he's all I need and any that oppose this message, that's basically what the Lord is saying here, any that would continue to desire to afflict you, persecute you, isolate you for what the Lord has plainly taught you, they need to be wary. He said, "I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee." This very wrath which so many feel like they have escaped and yet they stand in opposition to the truth, they stand in opposition to Christ and his righteousness alone, imputed alone, they're going to know that wrath. Someone said at one time, "It's one thing to die and to enter into eternity never having known there was a Savior," and there are many in the world that have lived and died idolaters. Have never heard the name of Christ, but God doesn't owe it to them. I don't know why that would bother anybody the fact that God would bring people onto his earth and cause them to live this life and some live a very long life and die without any knowledge of Christ and go into condemnation. That's his prerogative as God to do so. There are some that will take exemption with that, but it's like this one man said, "It's one thing to die that way, but it's another thing to have lived this life and have adhered to a false Christ, a false Savior, and have had a false hope and enter into eternity and find out that their Savior, their hope was no hope at all. No Savior at all."

Yet the Lord in his justice, he hands it to sinners. If we have trouble with that, then it means we have trouble with God. It is his prerogative to save whom he will and to condemn whom he will. But here we sit week in and week out. We have the privilege of hearing of the one message. We have the privilege of being able to weigh this matter before the Lord in our hearts as to who is the Christ, who is the Savior. And I know this, if he has awakened your heart, your heart and your desire will be toward the Lord Jesus Christ alone and toward that work that he has accomplished alone so may he ever awaken us, even as he has awakened, continue to awaken us to this hope which is Christ and him crucified and I pray he is.