

The Day Of Vengeance

Our passage divides into three sections. The connecting thread is the Lord's deliverance of His people from their enemies. In the first part Isaiah anticipates a day of divine vengeance and 'the year of my redeemed'. In the second part the kindness and faithfulness of God in times past is recalled, especially the deliverance of Israel from captivity in Egypt. The final part is a prayer for help. In it, faith is expressed, sins are confessed, and an appeal is made for recovery and restoration upon covenant grounds.

Isaiah quizzes Christ

The prophecy is descriptive of the victories of the Lord Jesus over His enemies at the cross and the triumphs of His love and grace in redemption. It opens with a series of questions and answers. The prophet is fascinated by the figure who approaches him out of Edom, the land of Israel's ancient enemy. This person is figurative of Christ. He is seen returning from battle in victory, glory and strength. None but Jesus Christ can truly bear the title 'I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save'.

Blood-red garments

Christ's garments are perceived to be stained with blood. The coming of the Messiah was foreseen by the Old Testament people in multiple ways. He would be a mighty king and yet a humble servant. He would serve as a priest to intercede for His people, yet suffer on the altar as a sacrifice on their behalf. Under the rod of God's anger He would take His people's sins and bear their punishment, yet in dying and rising again He would overcome the enemies of His church.

Whose blood?

In really shedding His own blood the Lord Jesus symbolically shed the blood of His enemies. He who bore our sins and carried our sorrows worked out the whole of our redemption by His death and resurrection. On Christ was laid the iniquities of us all. Under the weight of sin and guilt the Lord Jesus suffered and bled. Under the condemnation of the law He died. He settled our debt, paid our ransom, redeemed our souls 'and washed us from our sins in His own blood'.

Atonement and vengeance

Yet, Christ's death was also 'the day of vengeance' to His foes. As He suffers to save His people from their sins He simultaneously treads down, with everlasting destruction, sin, death, hell, and the grave. Multiple roles belong to Christ in the covenant of grace and peace. He undertook to fulfil whatever task was needful and to satisfy every demand of holiness and justice. Under the terms of the covenant Jesus alone answered all the sacred purposes and accomplished His own, and His Father's will.

Great is Thy faithfulness

The second part of this chapter celebrates the Lord's deliverance of Israel from Egypt. The Lord's faithfulness in times past is portrayed as a precursor of forthcoming redemption. In mercy and love Christ confessed His people to be His own and became their Saviour. However, the prophet notes that Israel's salvation was not without hurt to their Lord. 'In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.' This is a beautiful type of the cross.

Salvation, an undeserved gift

Despite knowing all this the people of Israel rebelled. Despite the care displayed and the good bestowed upon them, Israel turned its back on the Lord. Such is the evil of the human heart and the contrariety of our nature to the kindness of God. Isaiah rehearses the victories and faithfulness of the Lord for the people but he will not permit these Old Testament Jews to forget that salvation is all of grace, it is costly and God's elect are totally undeserving of the blessings Christ bestows.

A prayer

Isaiah's prophecy becomes a prayer for God's mercy. He builds his plea upon the Lord's own glory and His covenant purpose. He calls for a display of divine zeal and strength. He calls for unrestrained love and mercy. He calls for God to

fulfil His promise to be the everlasting Father and Redeemer of His people for His own name's sake. They are powerful and effectual prayers that are made in faith to God for His own name's sake.

A confession

The closing verses express a heartfelt confession by God's people concerning the nature and extent of our own sin. God's elect are justified and holy in His sight. They are viewed in Christ as 'children that will not lie' and 'the people of thy holiness'. However, in our own estimation we shudder at the depth of our sin. We wonder that the Lord should permit us to wander from His ways by withholding His grace and withdrawing His presence. The Lord's people do encounter such times yet these, too, serve God's purpose. Here Isaiah prays that the Lord will turn again and remember the weakness of His people. This prayer will continue in the next chapter.

Amen

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