

We Shall Be Saved

We previously noted chapter 63 ends with a request for God to *look* down from heaven to behold the needs of His people. Today's chapter begins with a call to the Lord to *come* down from heaven in a demonstration of power to deliver the church from her oppressors. The Old Testament church knew trial and persecution, often physical and brutal. It is the earthly experience of all Christ's church to be tried. Satan's antagonism towards believers is not a new phenomenon.

Daily deliverances

The Lord *has* personally come down from heaven to deliver His people at the cross. He will return again from heaven to deliver the church at His second coming. However, it is perhaps best to consider Christ as coming spiritually and providentially to defend His little flock when He protects and preserves us day by day in this world. The world, the old man and the devil are our enemies but the Lord delivers us daily from their strength, subtleties and schemes. Well might the nations tremble at the intervention of Christ on His church's behalf.

Misjudging God's hand

Yet this intervention is not properly interpreted by fallen creatures. The world smarts when divine judgment is inflicted but it does not discover its real source or discern the reason. Retribution will fall upon all who hurt the church. However, this misjudgement is also true of God's people. We, too, mistake the Lord's providential dealings and fail to see the good He is doing in us and for us. Only when God's providential care is revealed to us through faith will we have ear to hear and eye to see it at work.

The wonder of God's ways

The Lord deals in love with His people in this world. Even our hardships are designed for good. He meets with us having made us pure and holy in Christ. Yet, in ourselves, we neither feel holy, nor pure. We mistakenly interpret our hardships as rebukes when actually they are helps to bring us closer to Christ. The Lord continues with us, that is, He does not alter His covenant grace and goodness. We are not consumed by His wrath. We are everlastingly saved.

Experimental Christianity

Isaiah is explaining how the church truly feels in its dealings with God. We feel unclean. We readily confess that all our best works are tainted and soiled. Grace makes a sinner feel his sin more than ever before. Consequently, we often lose sight of the Lord's mercy. Frail flesh and Satan's accusations distress us. We imagine, 'thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities'. Our only comfort comes by faith. We discover God to be our Father and we the work of His hand; He the potter, we the clay. Faith teaches us to trust Christ despite our feelings of guilt and need.

The contradiction of grace

The church confesses its poor state to the Lord. We know our sin and our failures. As the Old Testament Jews lamented the destruction of Jerusalem the church laments the ravages of sin and the corruption that remains in our flesh. This is the contradiction of the Lord's saints. We feel our faults and we believe the gospel. We see our sin and we behold our Saviour. We lament our lack of holiness and we possess perfect imputed righteousness in union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Contending with the flesh

In this state we cry to the Lord, 'Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O LORD? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?' The answer is no, not for long, not forever. If for a time we lose sight of the Lord even this is for our good and it shall serve His purposes of grace and love. Whether we consider the faults we see in the church or the effect of sin in our own lives, believers learn by faith that where sin abounds grace does much more abound.

Pictures of mercy

Isaiah shows how much the Old Testament people understood about the workings of grace in the lives of God's remnant people. Isaiah revealed his own heart's experience and in the language of Old Testament typology pointed to the war between the old man and the new. From out of the debris of sinful human nature God's grace has formed a holy people;

beautiful and righteous, whom He is pleased to call His own.

Living by faith

We confess we deserve to die yet marvel in the sacrifice of our Substitute. We know ourselves to be fallen, ruined and weak, but we see the Lord Jesus bearing our sin and perfecting us by His strength. We discover with Paul, ‘in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not’ (Romans 7:18). Yet, by faith, we are able to declare ‘salvation is of the Lord’ and ‘He hath done all things well’.

Amen

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