



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 55 – 57

“The Sure Mercies of David”

TRANSCRIPT

Let's begin with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of the study of the word again and we thank Thee for Isaiah who listened and heard Thy voice and communicated Thy message, made it available not only to Judah and Jerusalem, but to Israel and to us. And as we ponder again his ancient words the message of them come home to us with power and vitality through the Spirit. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Our subject for tonight is “The Sure Mercies of David or Invitation, Admonition, and Denunciation.” The 55th chapter of Isaiah is another of Isaiah's chapters, which is loaded with great texts. If I were a textual preacher, I think I should have turned often to the 55th chapter of the Book of Isaiah. For example, notice the first verse,

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. (Notice the third verse) Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. (Verses 6 and 7) Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is

near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

What a wonderful promise that is? And then verses 8 and 9, which many of you I am sure know,

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith 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. (And then verse 11) So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

So this is a chapter of great texts. One of the greatest of Isaiah. It is a chapter of grace as is evident from this very first verse. It is not a chapter in which we have a gospel of forms and ceremonies set forth. It is not a chapter in which we have a gospel that has to do with altars and priests or genuflections and possessions and images and incense and darkness and orthodoxies. It is a great chapter in which there is set forth the free grace of God and the first verse is the epitome of it. Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

The other 2 chapters, chapters 56 and 57, which we will touch only lightly and draw out the practical issue of this good news. Notice how the 56th begins, “Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice,” and it ends on the note of if we do not do this in chapter 57, verse 20 and 21, then death ensues, but the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

Let’s turn first to the 55th chapter in which we have set forth for us the sure mercies of David. Remember in chapter 54, last time, Isaiah presented Zion as the bride

of Jehovah in verses 1 through 10, and then in verses 11 and 12, as the city of Jehovah, and finally concluded the chapter with the picture of Zion as the object of divine grace and protection. Notice that last 17th verse, No weapon that is formed against Thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against Thee in judgment Thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord. Therefore, if the city of Jerusalem and Zion is presented as a wife and as a city and as a stronghold of divine grace and protection, there is only one thing left and that is there should be guests who come in to the city and who form the bride of Jehovah and that is the invitation of chapter 55. It is an invitation addressed to all who will come to buy wine and milk without money and without price and as they come they are to be the inhabitants of this city and form the bride of the Messiah.

Now the first verse is full of some wonderful figures. I think you can tell that this is not literal in the sense that he is not asking us to come to the waters literally. He is not asking us to buy wine and milk because of this word waters. You might wonder if he were really being literal because wine and milk were of course things that ever a Palestinian would know about but anyone who has ever been to Palestine knows that there is one thing that land lacks and that is water and so the fact that water is not a product of Palestine is an evidence of the fact that we are to take this 55th verse as a series of figures. They are figures of the blessings of the Lord’s salvation. It is a gracious salvation and it is likeneth the water.

What is characteristic of water? Well, it was refreshing and it was cleansing and so the salvation which is offered to Zion is a salvation that is refreshing and it is cleansing. What is characteristic of wine? A wine is that which produces joy. In the Old Testament, you will notice that when wine is mentioned, it is a figure of joy over and over. It is presented in that light. However, one thing that is why we at the Lord’s Table have bread and wine because the bread suggests the food of life or bread is the staff of life. Wine suggests the joy that flows from the salvation that God gives us and so when we sit at the

Lord’s table to celebrate what he has done for us, we eat bread in token of the fact that the work that he did on Calvary’s cross in offering himself up for us in his body is food for us, spiritual food. We are strengthened by and then also we drink the cup or the wine in order to express symbolically the fact that not only did Jesus shed his blood for us but that blood when we feed upon him, drink his blood, and eat his body, we are feeding upon that which gives us joy and so the work of Jesus Christ is designed to produce joy and wine is the proper drink, and bread the proper food for the Lord’s Table.

I am not going to get off and say anything about whether wine should have alcoholic content or not, but I think it is perfectly alright that it should and if of course you have some feeling against it that is perfectly alright too. I do not think it is essential. If we are to effectively observe the Lord’s table then we drink wine or grape juice with alcoholic content, but I think it is very fitting that there should be wine at the Lord’s table because it is expressive of the joy of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And so here the wine, the milk, and the waters, these are things that are designed to express spiritual realities. The water, refreshing and cleansing. The wine, joy. The milk satisfies.

I understand -- I do not know this to be true -- but I understand that milk is really the only complete food, and I think it is so wonderfully fitting to that milk should be used as a figure of the blessings of salvation for they are complete spiritual food. I have often wondered about infants when they live only on milk. Perhaps, it is true that milk is the only complete food. Well if so, it is very fitting as a figure of the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now he says that they are to come and buy wine and milk without money and without price. For you see the salvation that is presented figuratively here is a salvation that is a salvation by grace.

Let’s turn over for a moment to a great text in Romans, which I haven’t referred you to in sometime. It’s chapter 11 and verse 6 of Romans. It is one of those great texts, which the apostle is responsible for and which opposes the principle of grace and works

so beautifully. Romans chapter 11 and verse 6, and here we read, Paul says in verse 5, Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace for or and if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.

Now the principle that Paul is saying here in the first sentence of this sixth verse is that if salvation is by grace then it is not of works. If salvation is by grace, it is a gift. If it is of works, it is by something we do. It cannot be by grace and have works as within it. It cannot be works and then be called grace for grace and works are diametrically opposed. If I should say to you giving you a present, this is your Christmas present for 1969, then you would say, thank you for the gift. But if I should say, now there is a small consideration, this gift I assure you is worth a lot more than this but I at least would like for you to pay 10% of it. You might like to get my gift if it were really worthwhile but you really could not call it a gift, could you? It wouldn’t be by grace. It would be 90% grace and 10% you had paid for or worked, and so when we have grace, we don’t have works. When we have works we do not have grace. Grace and works are diametrically opposed one to another.

The rest of that sixth verse is probably not in our text because it is not in our better Greek manuscript but it too expresses the truth and if Paul didn’t write it but some ancient scribe wrote it, he was a scribe who understood Paul and theology because he went on to say, And if it be of works then it is no more grace, otherwise, work is no more work. So this great salvation that Isaiah is setting forth before us figuratively here is a grace salvation, Come buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Mr. Spurgeon says “The day which saw Adam driven out of Paradise blotted the word “human merit” out of the dictionary of truth. There can be no human merit for salvation since the Fall of man in the garden of Eden because men are sinners and men, Oh God more than maketh ever pay consequently if they are to be saved. It is only on the basis of grace that they can be saved and by the saving work of our Lord Jesus who died for us upon the cross at Calvary, we have a grace method of salvation.” That total

price has been paid by our Lord Jesus and the salvation is offered freely to all who will come on that basis, acknowledging that they are totally in need and receive it as a free gift.

And it comes by grace, not works. You don’t do one thing. That means you don’t believe on Jesus Christ and join the church in order to be saved. You don’t believe on Jesus Christ and be baptized in order to be saved. You don’t believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and sit at the Lord’s Table in order to be saved. You believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you are saved and then you are baptized because you have been saved. You sit at the Lord’s Table because you have been saved. You join the church or fellowship with believers because you have been saved.

And so this in the 55th chapter, the first verse, What a great gospel text it is, and I am just getting started and I better stop because we have a lot to cover here. Without money and without price. A lot of people seem to think that a free gospel like this leads to sin. They seem to think that if you preach a gospel that you can receive the total work of God on the basis of simple faith, and it is not on the basis of any work whatsoever, well that not just means that we can live as we please.

The Apostle Paul in the sixth chapter of Romans wrote something that pertained directly to that. He says, Shall we continue in grace, shall we sin, because we hear the doctrine of grace? It should be obvious to us I think who have experienced the salvation of God that a free gospel does not lead to sin. Why does a free gospel not lead to sin? Well, it does not lead to sin because when we see this free gospel, it produces tremendous love in the heart of the one who has been blessed by God in this way to love him back because of the love that he has shown to us. A free gospel does not lead to sin. As a matter of fact, it leads to dedication to God because of the motivation produced by love. Love is the greatest force in the universe. Even aside from the spiritual side, we would acknowledge that. Would we not? Love is the greatest motive for anything, any kind of activity in human life. Love is the greatest of motivation and in the spiritual

sphere; it is love to God that is the great motivation. We do not serve the Lord because we ought to. We do not serve the Lord because we have to. We do not serve the Lord because we feel some great obligation to. We serve him because we love him and there is a sense of compulsion that is brought to us because we recognize that we were lost and that Christ has lifted us up out of the muddy pit and set our feet upon a solid rock by his free gospel and we shall never, never turn from the great truth that has come to us and from him who has made it possible.

Speak of morality Thou bleeding lamb, the best morality is love of Thee and if you will study in the history of the great saints, it is those who have come to understand what their salvation really meant. They have done things for God and not only that they have done things for men.

Now in the third verse, he speaks about the everlasting covenant, the sure mercies of David. What is referred to here is the unconditional covenant that God made with David that someone from his seed should sit upon the throne of David and shall rule. And of course the reference is ultimately to our Lord Jesus who comes as the Davidic King and in the kingdom of God upon the earth, he is king.

You see in the 54th chapter, Zion has been seen as the wife of Jehovah. She has been seen as the city of Jehovah. She has been seen as a city whose boardwalks are constructed by God so that no weapon that is formed against her shall prosper. In the 55th chapter an invitation is addressed to all who will come on the basis of grace to enter and to experience the free salvation that God offers within the city of Jehovah of Jerusalem during the kingdom of our Lord but one thing is lacking. They need a king. Now that king is the Messiah. He is the servant of Jehovah about whom we read in previous chapters and so here I will make an everlasting covenant with you even the sure mercies of David. This is a reference to our Lord who shall come as the king and serve them.

Notice verse 4, Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and a commander to the people. I think that probably this fourth verse considered in the light of the context is a reference to David historically but David as a type of our Lord. David was a witness. I was David a witness in his life. Well, he was a witness in his victories. He was a witness in his victories of the great king who shall come and shall accomplish the greatest victory of all. I had told him it was alright. I told him to do it. But at the Second Advent, when he comes prior to his kingdom, this is the great victory that our Lord shall accomplish.

It is a victory that is greater than all of David’s victories. And the Old Testament is very interesting how David is pictured as the man of war, as the type of Christ, the Davidic Messiah, but David is not allowed to have a temple because he is a man of war. Now it is Solomon who comes and who represents our Lord typically as the king who rules. So David is the king who wins the victory. It is Solomon who ushers in the rule of peace which is of course the kingdom of our Lord. So the sure mercies of David are reference to the great covenant that God made with David in 2 Samuel chapter 7, Psalm 89, 1 Chronicles chapter 17, in which it was promised that David should have a seed who would come and who would rule that he should have a kingdom and he should have subjects in the kingdom and David of course was typical of our Lord. This is the everlasting covenant and these are the sure mercies of David and David is a witness in his victory. He was of course a witness in his life of our Lord too. The sweet psalmist of Israel. He was a witness in his words. He was a prophet and in that he represented our Lord too.

Let’s read on, verse 5. Here we have the antitype,

“Behold, Thou shalt call a nation that Thou knowest not, and nations that knew not Thee shall run unto Thee because of the Lord Thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee. You will notice the fourth verse has to do with the past.

I have given him for a witness, David historically, David typically. But the fifth verse has to do with the future. Behold, Thou shalt call a nation that Thou knowest not, and nations that knew not Thee shall run unto Thee because of the Lord Thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel.”

In other words, he promises that in the kingdom of David, nations shall come to Israel for Israel shall be the great head of the nations again and the center of the all of the earth and they shall come he says because of the Lord Thy God and for the holy one of Israel who is our Lord Jesus himself. So there is a reference then to the kingdom and to the fact that during that kingdom the nations of the earth shall recognize that Jerusalem is the capital of the whole of the earth.

Now let’s notice the exhortation in verse 6,

“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

I was looking at this little expression this afternoon again. I had to prepare this message sometime ago and I had a few minutes this afternoon, so I picked up my Hebrew text and was looking at this little expression abundantly pardon to notice what is said again and the expression in the Hebrew is very interesting. It is something like this: And to our God for he will multiply to pardon literally. He will multiply to pardon or as he says, abundantly pardon.

And I began to think about this and did think about some things that I had read on this subject sometime ago and some other things that came to my mind as I thought about this abundantly pardon, I would like to pass on to you. This of course is a great

appeal in the light of great promises but this expression abundantly pardon, what does it mean? Well, it means this. It is an abundant pardon because it is an infinite fountain from which the pardon comes. Think of the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is sufficient. It is sufficient for all sin.

Now, I do not believe that Jesus came to die efficiently for all but there is no question whatsoever that his saving work has the merit within it that cover all of sin. It is an infinite sacrifice in value so it is an abundant pardon because of the infinite fountain. It is also an abundant pardon because of the abundant objects of it. Think of all of the people down through the centuries who have come to the fountain for cleansing beginning with Adam and Eve and Abel and on down through the Old Testament then on into New Testament times, our Lord’s disciples, our Lord’s apostles, our Lord’s friends, the great saving work that existed on the Day of Pentecost that has continued down through the centuries. What an abundant pardon? If we just look at the countless millions, we have come to know our Lord Jesus Christ as personal savior.

There are not going to be just a few people in heaven. Heaven is going to be full of hundreds and thousands, and I believe millions who have come to know Jesus Christ as savior. It is an abundant pardon that God has offered but it is not only abundant because of the abundant objects but also because of the abundance of sins that have been covered. Think of your own sins. Think of how many sins you have committed and then think of the sins of all of the redeemed. What a magnificent covering and washing away was accomplished by our Lord Jesus when he died, an abundant pardon. But then think of the sinfulness of sin.

I read where Mr. Spurgeon describing sin said that he thought of sin as if a spider’s egg had just been hatched, and if you have ever seen a lot of little tiny spiders, it is like that. Or when you look at one sin, one sin it seems comes from a multitude of sins because the sin that is produced is the result of some thought which in turn has been provoked by another. And so actually if we were to consider just one sin, which we have

committed, what a foul thing the one sin is and when we think of the fact of the number of sins with the depth of the sinfulness of one sin. Oh what an abundant pardon is accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ and it is an abundant pardon because of the abundant means. We do not have a little Savior. We have a big Savior. We do not have a small sacrifice. We have a large sacrifice. The sacrifice of Calvary’s cross is sufficient to cover all and to cover the deepest of sins.

And it is abundant because of the abundant terms of pardon. God does not say I will forgive your sin if you will be a good boy. He doesn’t say I will be your Savior if you join the church as I have said or any of these other things. The terms are just as abundant as a loving God could present them for they are simply this. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and Thou shalt be saved. Do you know that’s the gospel. Whenever I knew the terms of the gospel presented in any other way I must confess I get real upset over this because you see God has given us a grace salvation and he has made the term as simple as possible in order that there can be no confusion whatsoever this salvation is by grace and so he says simply believe. Believe.

Now there are figures that are used to express that belief. Come, turn, look, taste, see but these are all figures of what it means to believe in Jesus Christ. What does it mean to believe? Well, it means to trust him and his work. That means to stop trusting everything else. It means to stop trusting all those things that I am talking about. Your good works, your culture, your education, your reformation, the alternatives, anything, whatever it is in which you may have trust for salvation, stop trusting it, believe in the one who has died for you. Trust him and that is the gospel. That means we do nothing except we receive it as a gift.

Receive is another synonym for it. We just receive it as a gift. That’s the term for salvation. We are not preaching a free gospel until we make our terms, the term of freedom, that’s why it’s believe. I do not apologize at all. There are lots of people who say you preach a cheap gospel when you say simply believe but our Lord is the one who

said only believe, even the apostles did not say that, it was our Lord who said, only believe and the apostles followed right along with believe, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and Thou shall be safe. Trust him. Stop trusting in yourself. Trust him. It’s by grace you see is to buy wine and milk without money and without price.

God is not interested in anything that you offer him in order to be saved. He is going to transform you and so it is free. It is an abundant pardon because of the terms. So don’t be embarrassed when someone says you mean all you have to do is to believe, yes, all you have to do is to believe, you cannot do anything else that pleases God. It is abundant because of the fullness of pardon too for what do we get? Halfway pardon, a conditional pardon, no a complete pardon for six months, for a year, 5 years, 20 years, pardon until we sin, no eternal life, eternal life. I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish unless they sin.

Jesus did not say that. I give unto them eternal life and they shall never, remember what the Greek text says there, it is the subjunctive of emphatic negation. That’s the construction. I give unto them eternal life and they shall by no means ever perish. It is as if our Lord searched all through all the languages of the world, finally decided he would come when Greek was a language in which he could express himself most plainly and use the strongest expression of the Greek language, in order to express the security of the person who believes in Jesus Christ. Truly believe. That is an abundant pardon. And it is not only abundant because of the fullness of the pardon but of the abundant blessings that attain that pardon.

In fact you know they are so great that one in theology, this next spring, when we get to this section and we will talk about the riches of divine grace. I sat aside 3 hours for the discussion of the riches of divine grace and you know what I did when I did that, I had a big hearty laugh by my study window as if I could in 3 hours expound the riches of divine grace. Dr. Chafer to say there are 33 things that happen the moment that you believe in Jesus Christ, 33 things happen to you. Bob Theme in Houston says 34. I am

going to tell you which one is right in the spring. Abundant pardon. All of blessings that we have in his great salvation. We can talk about them forever and we wouldn’t exhaust them. By the time you exhaust it everything that I had to say about them, get yourself another Bible to each and listen to him. He will tell you a lots of others new things about them that I never knew anything about.

We have a hymn we often sing around the Lord’s table. I love it. It has a stanza which says, who is a pardoning God like Thee? Or who has grace so rich and free. He will have mercy upon him and to our God for he will abundantly pardon.

I must tell you a story, which some of you have heard me tell but I will tell it again because some of you may not have heard. It is a wonderful story that of an incident that happened in G. Campbell Morgan’s life. He tells in one of his books of conducting evangelistic services in Yorkshire coal fields and at the close of each service as Dr. Morgan used to do, he used to invite people to go into an inquiry room which was on the side of the platform very much like a room like that. He never had a public invitation for men to come down to the front but he did as he closed the meeting invite all who are interested to come into this inquiry room and then at the meeting the Christians were waiting in the room to talk with anyone who was concerned over salvation.

After some days had passed some of the workers came to Dr. Morgan during this meeting and said to him that there is a man who has been coming down every night but we cannot seem to get through to him at all and would you mind coming in and talking with him? Dr. Morgan said certainly I will be glad too if he comes. So that night he was there and he listened to the preaching of the gospel again and he was obviously a man who was under deep conviction for his sin. He looked as if he were in a terrible plight, and then Dr. Morgan gave the invitation to come into the inquiry room after the close of the service. He went over to the room and there was the man, a big, husky collier or coal miner from the Yorkshire minefields and Dr. Morgan was introduced to him and they sat down together.

And Dr. Morgan said that he pointed him to Isaiah chapter 55 and verse 7, this very text, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him forever and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” And he tried to express to him the fact that if he would simply come to God, God would abundantly pardon him and he said the man replied as he had been replying to the other workers, it’s too cheap, it’s too cheap and Dr. Morgan said he was guided by the Holy Spirit apparently because at that point he stopped and he said to the man, What do you do for a living? He said I work in a coal mine. He asked him if he had been to work that day and he said yes, said he had been 800 yards under the earth working and then Dr. Morgan said, How did you get home? And he said, he walked home.

Morgan said, but how did you get to the surface in order to walk home. He said, Oh I came over to the shaft, and I got into the cage, and the cage brought me up to ground level, and I walked out of the cage, and walked home. Dr. Morgan said, How much did it cost you. He said nothing and then he stared abruptly at Dr. Morgan and he said, Oh that won’t do, I didn’t pay anything to come up but it cost the company. Oh my God – and it dawned upon him -- Oh my God, is that what you mean?! You mean it doesn’t cost me anything but it cost God something to give Jesus Christ to be my Savior. Dr. Morgan said that’s exactly right. It is cheap. It is too cheap. You can pay nothing for the salvation but oh how much it cost the company, for the eternal Trinity is involved in the saving work of Jesus Christ, the great text. There will be many a person in heaven, I believe as a result of Isaiah chapter 55 and verse 7.

Now then after invitation and exhortation, there comes foundation. Notice verse 8, For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. You know we like to think, when we think of salvation, we like to think of salvation is something that we do and something that God does. We do a little bit and he does a great deal perhaps, however with some, we do a great deal and God does a little bit. He

supplies the next. And how often when you present the gospel to people do they say, it just doesn’t make sense to me. I just don’t understand I could be that way. They don’t understand grace. You know why they don’t understand grace because they don’t understand their own sin.

If they understood their own sin and what it meant to be a sin and what it meant to be under divine condemnation, they would reach for the gospel of grace like a drowning man would reach for life preserver. But they don’t because they have no sense of conviction of sin, and I have often said, and I believe this with all my heart that no man is ever interested in the gospel of Jesus Christ who has not first of all been the object of the spirit’s work in his heart to bring him to the place of conviction for sin or a sense of need, a sense that there is something wrong in life, however we may put it, there is some maladjustment, something God must do for us, then he is looking for something.

Until that time God’s thoughts are above our thoughts. His ways are above our ways. But once we are in that place, then God’s thoughts become the thoughts of a little child. They are just that clear. That’s why babies understand the truths of the word of God and philosophers often stumble over them because ultimately the problem is not intellectual alone, it is also moral. So, For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

And so he is going to tell us to leave our way and thoughts because his are higher, they are more fruitful, and they are irresistibly effective. Notice, For as the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. You know even if we do not understand the word of God as Christians we should believe the word of God. Even if we stumble over the precise significance of a text, we must accept it is true and we shall discover that often when we accept the truth of the text and live the truth that is plain then there will come understanding of that why and the wherefore. That means we accept the word of God

without questions. It does not mean that we do not seek to try to understand it but we accept it without question.

How many of you believe John 3:16? Would you raise your hand? How many of you believe Psalms 23? Would you raise your hand? How many of you believe Isaiah 1:16? Would you raise your hand? Look at there, look at there. There is one person that believe, 2, 3. You believe all these texts that you are familiar with but you don’t believe those that you don’t know about, do you? Why don’t you believe that one as much as John 3:16? I tricked you. I knew you were going to do that because you know that is human nature. We believe all those familiar texts but if there is something that we haven’t seen and not so sure, we believe it, but if it is the word of God, we should believe it, even if it is a text about Satan, we still believe it, notably it is the word of God, right. So, even when we don’t understand, even when we may not know, our attitude is the attitude of this is the word of God, we shall accept it as the word of God, then we shall seek to understand it.

We don’t want any people around in Believers Chapel and I am sure in your church too we don’t want any people who are just like little babies to whom the teacher says, open your mouth now, and they open their mouths and so they stick in you know that little piece of food and say now close your mouth, now swallow, but you should grow and you should understand but we will never understand everything in the Bible but we believe everything in the Bible. It is God’s word. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. His ways are greater than our ways.

Now notice, how he says that his word is fruitful,

“For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it

shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

This is why I preach the Bible. I preach the Bible not because I expect to get a great crowd to listen but I preach the Bible because I know it is effective in the hearts of men. I know that God’s word is true that his word shall accomplish what he pleases. It shall prosper in the thing where unto he has sent it and if I am faithful in proclaiming the word, there shall be fruit. It may take time. I may not even hear about it but it shall be fruitful that is why the word of God is so important. That is why it is necessary for us to hide it in our hearts. It is far more important that we be true to the word and that we be true to the theology of our day, to the great theologians of our day, even the great Bible teachers of our day, the word of God is the supreme thing.

A student came to me today at seminary and asked me, What had I seen in my years of teaching of the Bible? What had I seen as causes for backsliding among people? And in particularly students, because he was preparing a message for an InterVarsity group. Well, I just said well as far as I was concerned the same things that led to the backsliding of students is a general rule lead to the backsliding of any Christian and I went on to say to him and he was a little puzzled when I said it but I think after he has had 10 years of teaching of the word, he will thoroughly agree with me, that the one thing above everything else that has impressed itself upon me with regard to backsliding is this: the man who does not continue in the word of our Lord is the man who would backslide, in almost every case with some exceptions, where Christians are overtaken in some sin that seems to be a sin of an immediate character. In most of the cases, it is because men have not continued in the word of God. They have not been students of the Bible. I don’t mean just devotionally reading it at the breakfast table. I mean to do some real study of the word of God.

If people will not study the word of God, they are going to need spiritual medicine. They are going to need a spiritual physician, and I think that through the years the thing that has impressed me in the church is that those Christians who are the least problem to the elders are the Christians who are growing in the knowledge of the Bible. They are less, if you could just get a group of Christians in a church together in which everyone was daily growing in the knowledge of the word of God, the elders could set it out and twiddle their forms because it would be a healthy, happy, growing, fruitful body of Christians. This is so fundamental because the word is powerful and God sees that it accomplishes his purposes. It is when we neglect the Bible that we begin to drift, becoming indifferent, lose our love, become overtaken and entangled in sin.

Notice how effective he says it is in verse 12,

"For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." (He is speaking of course of that kingdom that is to come but the principles pertain to us.) Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

A wonderful picture of the effects finally of the kingdom of our Lord upon the earth and it comes through his word.

Now the next two chapters, I just want to say just a word or two about them. I am doing this on purpose because they are not as important as 58, which we will spend our next time on entirely. These are chapters in which we have for example, in chapter 56, sabbatical admonition and consolation for proselytes and eunuchs; general righteousness of life in the kingdom is the theme emphasis on keeping the Sabbath. I would gather from this that during the kingdom there is to be a keeping of the Sabbath. The only thing

that interests me about chapter 56, beyond this is the fact that, do you remember the Ethiopian eunuch, you know his story, I have referred to him before as one of my favorite stories in the Bible. You can’t listen to me too long for hear me refer to it.

But you remember that when Philip came up alongside of his chariot, he was reading what chapter? 53 And he was saved through 53. Philip got into his chariot, preached Jesus unto him, and remember when they came to water, he said, what doth hinder me to be baptized? Philip said nothing, you have been saved, so he was baptized. Philip was caught away, and the Ethiopian eunuch what did he do? Well, he got back into his chariot. He had the scroll of Isaiah in his hands. What do you think he did? I think he kept on reading, don’t you?

And isn’t it striking that in the 56th chapter he has just heard that Philip has just disappeared over the horizon and he reads something about eunuchs, listen. He discovers that there is a special word in the Bible about eunuchs that though eunuchs were prohibited during the days of Moses, from entering into blessings, certain blessings by legal proscriptions, in the time of the kingdom eunuchs are not going to be prohibited and it is a special word to him. Listen, verse 2,

“Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath, from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people. (In other words, I am a stranger, I can’t participate in the blessings of the Lord when Israel comes into their blessings during the kingdom because I am a foreigner. So don’t let him say that.) Neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.”

I am not going to be able to enter into the blessings either, because I am a eunuch and so God has a special word for eunuchs that they are going to enter into that kingdom

and have the full blessing of the kingdom even though they are eunuchs. You know I think the Ethiopian eunuch if he was joyous when he was saved I think he must have thrown the scroll up in the air and said Hallelujah, got out of his chair to catch it, went on his journey back down to Ethiopia.

Well, now there is one final thing in chapter 56 verse 9 and following, there is a denunciation of the leaders and the people which continues through chapter 57, 56:9 through 57:21, denunciation of the leaders and people. By the way did you notice in verse 3 of chapter 57 that there is a reference to the sorceress, as he denounces the people, he says, “But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore against whom do ye sport yourselves? Against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? Are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood,” he talks about apostasy here. Sharp denunciation of them and I think it is striking that it is said here that there are going to be sorceress.

One of the characteristics of the last days is the fact that there is going to be a great deal of stress upon the spiritual, and so we are not surprised here. I will take the *Wall Street Journal* because I am so wealthy. [Laughter] No, I really take the *Wall Street Journal* because I like the stance of the editorial writers and I also like the special reports that its reporters give and they are frequently very illuminating because they frequently have to do with spiritual things and this last week there was a very interesting article entitled, Strange Doings. Americans show best of interest in riches and other occult matters. It begins this way.

“Elizabeth, a petite 34-year-old blonde clad in a flowing purple chiffon gown spreads a white sheet on the bare wood floor of her cramped 12th floor apartment on New York’s East Side. Clouds of jasmine and sandalwood incense swirl around her as she bends to draw a magic circle intended to ban evil spirits on the sheet with a stick of charcoal then by the glow of flickering black candle she chants by the names of the spirit princess and by the ineffable name on which all things are created, I conjure you.

Elizabeth is a witch or so she claims. On this full moonlit evening the attractive freelance photographer with deep brown eyes is casting a love spell to win the affections of a New York City detective she has just started dating.”

Now young ladies, if there are any single ladies here, I do not recommend this method, and we have no assurance that she has won this young man. The article continues, there are lots of interesting things in it. “The practice of witchcraft is casting its spell on thousands of men and women like Elizabeth across the country and Americans are turning not only to witchcraft but also to astrology, spiritualism, all kinds of psychic phenomena, and even devil worship. Indeed mysticism is becoming a big business. A New York bookstore specializing in the occult says sales have zoomed one hundred percent in the past three years. Hundreds of thousands of people buy a computer produced personal horoscopes at \$20 each.

“Ladies, there are even zodiac dresses now that are designed or dresses with astrological designs and in the course of it, it says one psychiatrist utters a stupid remark we are on the moon but we are also in Vietnam (what the connection between those two is, no one has ever discovered, but it sounds good and he says). Perhaps the occult provides the meaning to life and a feeling that man can control his fate (but you know that is in the world we shall not be surprised of that but listen to this,)

“A few schools have run programs in parapsychology where Duke University recently abandoned the field but as mainly organizations such as the Society of the Psycho Research which publishes a journal, and individuals like Arthur Ford a Philadelphia medium that keeps interest in the field alive. Mr. Ford a 73-year-old ordained minister of not the church of Universal Life, but of the Disciples of Christ, Christian denomination, has a reputation among mystics as the world’s greatest clairvoyant. In 1967, he made headlines because of televised sounds with James A. Pike that laid Episcopal Vision. In the sounds, Mr. Ford allegedly made contact with Bishop Pike’s son who had committed suicide. More recently, Mr. Ford claimed to have seen

Bishop Pike lying injured in a cave in Israel Judean desert. (He said that before they heard that he had died. Do you remember that came out in the paper that he was asked about that and he had seen Bishop Pike. He was still alive but he had seen him in a cave and then we notice) where massive search was underway for the clergyman (he was later found dead and not in a cave; Mr. Ford didn’t see anything).

“Demon worship or devil worship or Satanism is a separate phenomenon. ‘Rosemary’s baby has done more of us than anything else,’ asserts Anton Szandor LaVey high priest of San Francisco’s Church of Satan. I am very much the devil’s advocate, he says with a grin. He looks like one too, he has a trimmed mustache, and goatee and often wears horns and a black cape for his group’s rituals. We are pleasure seeking individuals who want to throw off the stifling factors of denial and other hypocrisies he says. Sex plays a big part in the weekly nighttime services. A nude red-haired woman is used as the altar, but Mr. LaVey claims his religion is non-orgiastic.”

We are not surprised by the things that are happening in the world, but I think it is one of the signs of the age in which we live that so-called ordained ministers in the professing church of Jesus Christ are advocates of sorcery. And there goes with that of course the immorality which he referred to.

Our time is up. We must stop. Two weeks from Monday night we shall take up the great 58th chapter of Isaiah. Let’s close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for this great 55th chapter of Isaiah. And we thank Thee for the abundant pardon which we have come to know. Give us to enjoy it and to share it with others for Christ sake. Amen.