

No.

155.

"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

I S A I A H 55. 1,2.

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by

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I S A I A H 55, 1 & 2.

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"Ho, everycne 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. Wherefore do ye spend money on that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness".

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It is deeply important that we should appropriate Scripture in accord with spiritual wisdom. Let us see to whom each passage is addressed. There are some who misappropriate Exodus 20, (the commandments given to Israel), but they are not brought out of the land of Egypt, nor are earthly cities given to THEM. There are some who appropriate Isaiah 55, when they have never felt a thirstiness. The promises of the Gospel call attention to character. Not that character secures a share in the promise, but a condition of helplessness realised is the evidence of Divine working. The promises of the gospel are not addressed to those who have attained a certain height of power, but to those who know their nothingness. It is not that men are too low down for the gospel, they are too high up. It is not that they are too poor, and the gospel demands something more, - but they are too rich. God has no gospel for the self-righteous, God has no gospel for the self-confident. The man who thinks he can save himself will die in his sins. But when we are at our wits' end, we cry unto the Lord, and the Lord delights to save the helpless. The promises of the gospel meet the need of the heart-broken sinner, and the promises of the gospel emphasise the nature of the gospel. They emphasise its freeness, and also its denial of any good in man. Every human religion looks to man for something good, but the gospel of the grace of God emphasises that all comes from God. Man is an utter failure. Man's best rises no higher than man. Man's climax is still in the sphere of man, and flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. When the sinner is brought to realise himself in need, he knows himself lost, and the Son of

Man came to seek and to save that which was lost. When the poor helpless sinner sees his position, he cries out, "I am blind and maimed, and lame and poor," and for such there is mercy. When there is an acknowledgment that we are dead in sins, the dead hear the voice of the Son of God; when we confess we are far off, we have the privilege of being brought near. The thirsty are invited to partake of the gospel refreshment, and those that have no money are invited to come and buy. That is the beauty of the gospel. "He that hath no money". Some people add extra words to Scripture. Revelation 22 warns against this. They think this passage means, EVEN if he hath no money, and they take it to suggest, EVEN though he is in that condition, nevertheless, let him not be discouraged, he will be as welcome as those a little better off. But Scripture says nothing of the kind. Here we have, not an invitation that just manages to stoop down to the one who has no money, but it "stoops no higher". I say advisedly, "stoops no higher", because the gospel has a centre of gravitation quite different from that of man, and therefore the glory of the gospel is that it stoops no higher than the utterly destitute! It wondrously reaches those who are nothing; it has nothing for those who are something. It has everything for nothings, and nothing for those who estimate themselves better.

"He that hath no money". The word "money" is here used to set forth and include any human power of securing. But it has two or three other thoughts as well. It may have many further thoughts, for every word of Scripture is an ocean, and we are children on the sea-shore. We only know a little of the truth of every word. Every word of Scripture is a mine, and our shaft is not as deep as it might be. But let us remember, if we would draw out the precious ore, we need to be earnest and energetic. The word "silver" which is here used, does not merely refer to money in general, but has special reference to the aspect of redemption, for silver was used for redemption money in connection with Israel. We think of the firstborn, and the number redeemed by silver, and also of the way in which, when Israel's hosts were counted, every man brought a

half-shekel, from which the sockets of redemption in the tabernacle were cast (Exodus 30). Silver is not redemptive, but it is pictorial of redemption, and we can see the principle of Scripture interpretation. Many things are called by the names of their antitypes. So silver pictures redemption, but it has no redemptive power in itself. The sinner sees redemptive power outside himself. THAT is the glory of the gospel. WE contribute nothing to our redemption. The present day theory, covered by many words nevertheless, runs throughout every religion of man, and that theory is "Do your best and God will do the rest". Such a theory is an utter failure, for, first of all, it glorifies our worthless best, and, secondly, it degrades God into the position of an assistant. But the glory of God's work is that He begins when there is nothing in the sinner to invite or help or co-operate.

The word "silver" is from a root which probably signifies a growing pale, (for silver is the pale metal), with intense feeling, intense expectation. It implies a longing. Indeed, one word for desire is from the same root. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters", and thus the message is to the one who has no "desire". You say, "a contradiction in terms". Here is a person who has no desire! Rather, we have two aspects brought before us here. Just as the gospel appeals to those who are helpless under the name of "without strength", so it reminds us that in ourselves we had no desire. Our very thirst was produced by grace, For a dead man has no thirst. The NEED for Christ was not produced by grace, that was our own. But the SENSE of the need was produced by grace. There is a vast difference between the fact of the need and the sense of the need. There is a vast difference between a sinner and one who owns to the name of a sinner. The old English word has lost its meaning to-day. In older times they spoke of a SENSIBLE sinner, with no allusion to the present word "sensible" in its general usage. The thought is of one who is sensitive and feeling. I need hardly say, this has many helpful thoughts. Indeed the

history of language is full of the richest teaching. The conscious sinner, the sensible sinner who feels his need, flees for refuge to the ready Saviour. It was in this sense of the word that the old poet wrote, "A sinner is a sacred thing, the Holy Ghost hath made him so". A sinner is the reverse of sacred. He is abominable. But when he is in a condition to acknowledge himself a sinner, the Holy Ghost has made him willing to answer to the name. To the one who has no money, no desire, the gospel gives a desire, and then he has no other desire but Christ and until that desire is settled he is an empty, despairing, hopeless man. When he has been brought unto the waters, he comes, he buys, he receives water, wine, milk, without money, without price. The water suggests to us the need of refreshment. The wine is pictorial of fruit, not, of course, to be confused with the concocted wines of to-day. Milk is indicative of the richness of the blessing which we have in Christ, for the word "milk" implies a richness, and our gracious God is pleased to grant a reality of richness without money and without price.

"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto Me". Oh how sad to find there are many who are spending their strength for that which is vain. Why? They have not hearkened to the Lord. If they are brought to hearken to Him, everything is changed. "Wherefore do ye spend money", "silver", "desire", for the word has this thought. Wherefore do ye spend your desire? weigh out the desire carefully, and see its worthlessness.

"For that which is not bread". Bread is the staff of life. Bread therefore, is typical of that which is needed. "Wherefore do ye spend money?" Observe here a contrast. "To the one who has no money there is an invitation. But there are some who have money, and they spend it in that which is not bread. There is not a syllable in this passage to suggest that one who has money spends it for that

which is Truth. Ye who have the money, spend it wrongly, and the one who has no money is welcome. Such words are never illustrated in their fulness in an earthly sense, but the figurative parallel is plain. Those who think they are fairly good, are always seeking that which will never satisfy. Those who own they have nothing at all, are entirely welcome to a Saviour who has everything. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread"? There are many things which we can obtain by our earnest efforts in the world but they are not true bread for the real soul need. "Not bread". The Lord Jesus rightly put it thus. "My Father giveth you true bread from heaven". "And your labour for that which satisfieth not". How many devotees will spend themselves for that which satisfieth not. Write these words across all the efforts of man - "For that which satisfieth not". There are some who aim at wealth - "That which satisfieth not". Others aim at popularity, - "that which satisfieth not". There are those who think that if they had certain usually desired advantages, they would be in peace; "that which satisfieth not". "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" The contrast is preciously true, we have the bread of life, we have that which satisfies. "I will satisfy her poor with bread", that is the Divine promise. "My people shall be satisfied with my goodness". "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of Thy house". Oh beloved friends, what mercy; if we have that which satisfies!

"Hearken diligently unto Me". The word "diligently" brings out the repetition of the word "hearken". Hearken; hearken; hearken within; hearken without. Hearken diligently unto Me. Oh that we might hear this Divine voice. When we are brought to hearken unto the Lord, the next step is blessed, "And eat ye that which is good". That which is good is waiting for us. "eat ye that which is good". Oh that we might beloved friends enjoy the things of God. "Eat ye that which is good". Salvation is not only a fact, it is an experience, it is not only the possession of a new life, but the possession

of a fed life. If I had physical life without any food, I should feel the very possession of life a strain. The Lord gives food as well as life. "Eat ye that which is good". We are encouraged to continually partake, we are encouraged to receive true knowledge ourselves, we are encouraged to enjoy the things of God. Physical food is refreshing. We are not to be the slaves of it, but we find it useful, and spiritual food is meant for God's people. "Eat ye that which is good". And the verse continues "And let your soul delight itself in fatness". Instead of the labouring for that which satisfieth not, let your soul delight itself. God emphasises soul delight. He makes us drink of the river of His pleasures. In His presence is fulness of joy. To the extent we are in His presence, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness". God has not only emphasised the deliverance of which chapter 4 speaks ("No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper" and so forth), He has also emphasised the enjoyment of salvation. The mock eat and be satisfied, and they increase their joy in the Lord. We remember the words of the Song of Songs, "Eat O friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved". "Let your soul delight itself in fatness". "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thine house". God's paths drop fatness, and it is for us to partake and rejoice. "Let your soul delight itself". Oh, beloved friends, if we have a Saviour, we are to have our soul delighting itself. Not only your souls, but your soul, - a united people. "Let your soul delight". Let there be an entering into what salvation means. There is plenty of fatness, there is plenty of fulness, there is plenty of richness in the Divine supply. "Let your soul delight itself", and as we are brought to hear that voice, we are brought to delight ourselves. We are not encouraged to be miserable. We would be sorrowful for sin, but we are led to a realisation that in the path of sins FORGIVEN, in the enjoyment of grace bestowed, our soul is to delight itself in fatness. God does not stint us, "Let your

soul delight itself in fatness. Oh that we might hear the voice of our adorable Lord.

"Incline your ear" is the Divine message which at once continues. "Incline your ear and come unto Me". The "hearken diligently" is emphasised, and here we have a further explanation of the manner of hearkening. "Incline your ear". Saved by grace as helpless ones, we are kept by grace as humble ones. "Incline your ear". The inclination implies, not only a bending out of humility, but a refusal to listen to the many voices which are in the world. "Incline your ear". Turn away from them. "Incline your ear and come unto Me". Thus we have the Divine invitation, "Incline your ear and come unto Me". "Come unto Me", saith the Lord elsewhere. Here are the blessings that are all linked with the inclined ear, and the coming to him, if, in mercy, we have been brought to come, and have experienced the salvation which God so graciously gives. Let us ever seek to incline our ear.

Here then are the refreshments in front of God's people. Those that have nothing are saved, and those who are bidden, have the joy that follows from salvation. Oh that we might from henceforth, delight ourselves in fatness. God's supplies do not run dry. There are no more winter torrents in the river of His pleasures. Let us delight ourselves, and let us ask ourselves now, have we the joy of the Lord as our strength at all times? As we have seen, in Haggai, lack of joy was when the things of God were forgotten, and do we not know what it is to find in ourselves a thinking of our ceiled houses as it were, and a forgetting of God's house; even our Christian work it may be, and forgetting God's work? Anything instead of the exaltation of God is Satan's insinuation. But let us be those who by grace are occupied with the joy and privilege of pleasing our beloved Lord, as we have received from Him the joy and privilege of a soul, delighting in the fatness of that which God supplies, and enables us to enjoy daily in the power of His Holy Spirit.

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