

# Abundant Life

Isaiah 55

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9/17/2023

**BIG BEND  
BIBLE  
FELLOWSHIP**

## **Isaiah 55:1-7 – An invitation to receive blessing (NIV)**

*“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. <sup>2</sup>Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. <sup>3</sup>Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. <sup>4</sup>See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a ruler and commander of the peoples. <sup>5</sup>Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations you do not know will come running to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor.” <sup>6</sup>Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. <sup>7</sup>Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

### **v1 – To whom is this passage directed?**

*Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters:* It is an invitation to everyone — specifically, to everyone who thirsts. Only those who thirst will come to the waters. If we aren't thirsty for what the LORD can give us, then we will never come to His waters.

*John 7:37 – On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.*

### **What does it mean to thirst?**

To desire what you need to stay healthy and live.

### **What does the provision of God cost?**

Those who do thirst, and answer the LORD's invitation, don't need to bring money. Their money won't really do them any good. They can simply bring their trust and faith and receive what God has to give them.

- It's all free. It isn't that the entrance into the Christian life is free, and then we must be charged to advance in the Christian life.
- It's all free; our growth is just as much a gift of grace as our salvation.

### **If you have no money, how can you buy what you need?**

What God has to supply is not purchased with money. It is purchased by exercising the faith He gave us, by trusting in Him.

### **What do the waters, wine and milk represent?**

Water represents the life-giving and cleansing work of the Holy Spirit; wine is our communion with the Lord; and milk is the sustenance we receive from God's Word...

*1 Peter 2:2 – as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby*

### **v2 – How is it people spend money for what can't satisfy?**

This is a relevant question, in light of all the things we can pour our time and money and effort into — things which will never satisfy the way the LORD can satisfy.

- We spend money on the temporal while the more important eternal things are free.

### **What must we do to eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance?**

The invitation is clear. The offer is made, the provision is made, and everything is available — but we must still do some things...

1. We must listen carefully. The satisfaction God promises eludes those who will not listen carefully. It takes time, attention, and effort to listen carefully, and some aren't willing to do this.
2. We must eat what is good. This requires discernment. We must choose what is good, and then eat that. Many just simply eat whatever spiritual meal is set before them, without taking care to see that it is good.
3. We must let your soul delight itself in abundance. You can sit down at a great spiritual meal, but your stubborn or bad attitude will not let your soul delight itself in abundance.

### v3 – What does it mean to *incline your ear*?

It means we must make an effort to hear God. Whoever will genuinely “feast” upon the word must consciously incline their ear towards what God will say.

- This explains why two people can listen to the same message, and one benefit and the other not.

### Why should we seek to hear God?

*Hear, and your soul shall live:* The benefit from inclining your ear to God is impressive. When we do it, we have life for our soul.

### What did Jesus mean when He said, “He who has ears to hear”?

Jesus’ parable of the sower contrasts types of hearers: those who let the Word of God pass straight through their ears and those who truly listen and seek understanding (Mark 4:13–20). Some hear the Word, yet they do not allow it to take root because of:

- Satan removes it from their mind (wayside)
- superficial treatment of God’s Word (hard ground)
- worldly distractions choke it out (thorny ground)

Whenever Jesus says, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear,” He is calling for people to pay careful heed. It’s another way of saying, “Listen up! Pay close attention!”

There is also a sense of having the presence of the Holy Spirit to be able to understand spiritual matters...

1 Corinthians 2:14 – *the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*

### What is this everlasting covenant God makes with us?

For the one who will listen to the LORD, God promises a covenant. From Isaiah’s perspective, this covenant is still in the future (*I will make*).

### How is this covenant connected to the *faithful love promised to David*?

God showed His great mercy to David; not only by sparing David’s life when he was guilty of murder and adultery, but also in blessings and preserving and guiding David every day of his life. If God promises us the same mercy He showed to David, we are blessed indeed.

- The mercies of David are sure, certain. God never gave up on David, never stopped showing him mercy.

### v4 – How was David a gift to Israel?

*I have given him as a witness to the people, a leader and a commander for the people:* God promised the blessing of good and wise leadership as a part of His sure mercies. God gave David and his remarkable leadership as a gift to

Israel; here God promised that He would keep giving this gift according to the pattern shown in David.

### How was David a witness of God?

David was a witness in the sense that he had a real relationship, a real experience with God, and could speak to Israel as a witness of what he had seen and heard in that relationship with God.

### How was David a leader for Israel?

David led Israel spiritually, politically, and militarily. He led by his godly example and his shepherd’s heart.

### What was the significance of David being a leader and a commander of the people, instead of for the people?

He led with a shepherd’s heart that genuinely desired God’s best for the people.

### How was David a good example for a leader?

David’s reign was quite troubled. He came to the throne of Israel through much struggle and difficulty. He slipped into terrible scandal, marked by murder and adultery. There was incest, rape, and murder among his own children. His reign was marred by an ugly civil war, in which his own son almost deposed him.

- Yet David is here lifted up as a wonderful leader of God’s people! This shows that David’s heart after God meant more than outward success, comfort, and ease.
- It also shows that God’s best and most effective leaders don’t necessarily have it easy.

Because David had a sense of the heart of God, being a *man after God’s own heart* (1 Samuel 13:14), he could boldly lead God’s people.

### How will the mercies of David be realized for Israel in the future?

These prophecies will be fulfilled ultimately when David — literal King David in his resurrection body — reigns over Israel in the millennium, the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ over this earth.

Jeremiah 30:9 – *But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.*

Ezekiel 34:23-24 – *I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them; My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.*

Ezekiel 37:25 continues... *Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children’s children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever.*

**v5 – Was this addressed to Israel, or to David as the leader and commander of God’s people?**

*Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, and nations who do not know you shall run to you:* Possibly both. Certainly, its ultimate fulfillment is in the millennium, when the nations will flock to Israel (Isaiah 60:5, 60:9).

**Why will the nations flock to David and/or Israel?**

*Because of the LORD your God, and the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you:* Because the LORD has lifted them up, in accordance with His blessings of restoration.

**v6 – Why is urgency emphasized here?**

*Seek the LORD while He may be found:* This is the time. God can be found now. Seek Him now. He can only be found when our hearts are inclined to look for Him, and that inclination itself is a gift from God! We must receive the gift and make the most of it while we have it.

- Also, the rapture could happen at any time or we could even encounter a driver falling asleep at the wheel on Highway 67.

**Who are the wicked and what should they do?**

*Let the wicked forsake his way:* The wicked are those who don’t trust in God’s provision for salvation.

- The prophet impresses the need for repentance. Repentance is simply turning around our way — turning from our own way, turning to God’s way.
- The LORD’s glorious restoration works in and through our repentance.

**What is the difference between wickedness and unrighteousness?**

Isaiah made an important point when he wrote, *and the unrighteous man his thoughts.* Wickedness may be demonstrated by our actions (*our way*), but unrighteousness can be found in our very thoughts.

- The battleground for a righteous walk with the LORD is often found in our minds, in our thoughts.

The Apostle Paul knew this also...

2 Corinthians 10:5 – *bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*

Romans 12:2 – *do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

**What is the promise to the wicked and unrighteous?**

*God will have mercy on him* who repents! When we turn to the LORD, He will have mercy on us! In fact, He will abundantly pardon!

- The problem is never that we turn to the LORD and find that He rejects us. The problem is that we fail to return to the LORD.

**Isaiah 55:8-13 – The glorious ways of the LORD (NIV)**

<sup>8</sup> *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord.* <sup>9</sup> *“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”* <sup>10</sup> *As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,* <sup>11</sup> *so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.* <sup>12</sup> *You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.* <sup>13</sup> *Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper, and instead of briers the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord’s renown, for an everlasting sign, that will endure forever.”*

**v8 – How is it God’s thoughts are not our thoughts?**

God doesn’t think the way we do. We get into a lot of trouble when we expect that He should think as we do. Because we are made in the image of God, we can relate to God’s thoughts, but we cannot master them.

**How is it our ways are not God’s ways?**

God doesn’t act the way we do. He does things His way, and His ways are often not our ways. We get into a lot of trouble when we expect that God should act the way we do.

**v9 – How far is the distance between God’s thoughts and ours?**

*For as the heavens are higher than the earth:* The distance is as great as the heavens are higher than the earth.

**Will we ever close the distance between God’s thoughts and ours?**

Our thoughts and ways can be transformed to be more like God’s thoughts and ways. This is what it means to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).

- The distance will never be closed; God will always be God, and we will always be human.
- But when our salvation is complete, the distance will be as close as is possible.

**How should we respond to recognizing the great gulf between God’s thoughts and ways and ours?**

The difference and distance between God and man is revealed, not to discourage us from seeking Him, but to keep us humble as we seek.

### **v10-11 – How is the water cycle a good analogy for the impact of God’s Word?**

Using the figure of the water cycle, the LORD illustrates the essential principle that His word shall not return void, but it shall accomplish what He intends.

- Rain and snow come down from heaven, and do not return before serving their purpose on earth (they water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud).
- Even so, God’s word, when He sends it down from heaven always fulfills His purpose on earth.

### **How is rain water likened to God’s Word?**

*Make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater:* The use of these pictures to illustrate the operation of God’s word shows that God’s word brings forth fruit. It also shows that the fruit has many different applications. The same grain that gives seed to the sower also gives bread to the eater.

### **What is the purpose of God’s Word?**

*It shall accomplish what I please:* God’s Word has something to accomplish. His word is not empty or lacking in power.

- He didn’t speak in unfathomable mysteries just to blow our minds, or confuse us, or leave things up to any possible interpretation.
- When God speaks, He speaks to accomplish a purpose.

### **What does it mean that God’s Word will prosper in the thing for which He sent it?**

God’s word doesn’t barely get the job done. It shall prosper in the purpose God has for it. It is rich and full of life. God’s word always succeeds, and always fulfills God’s purpose.

### **Does this mean that it doesn’t matter how God’s Word is presented?**

Sometimes a terrible sermon has been excused by saying, “*God’s word doesn’t return void.*” But because of the preacher’s poor preparation or preaching, there has been little of God’s word set before the people.

- The preacher can ignore, dilute, or obscure God’s word so that little actually goes forth.
- When little goes forth, that little will succeed — but how much better if more of the whole counsel of God went forth to succeed.

### **How can we say God’s Word always prospers in those who hear it when it doesn’t result in changed lives?**

The change might not happen when we expect it to happen. 1 Corinthians 3:6 – *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.*

And when someone never responds to God’s Word, it still serves the purpose of condemning those who refuse God’s free gift of salvation.

John 3:18 – *He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

### **v12 – What will cause Israel to have joy and peace?**

*For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace:* When God’s people turn to Him, listen to Him, and His Word does His work in them, joy and peace are always the result.

### **What does it mean that the mountains and hills will burst into song and the trees will clap their hands?**

The joy of Israel will be so great, that even all of creation will join in. Indeed, much of the curse will be removed during the Millennial Kingdom.

### **v13 – What does it mean the cypress tree would replace the thorn?**

Where before there was barrenness and reminders of the curse (*the thorn*), now there will be beautiful and useful trees. The picture is clear; in His glorious work of restoration, God takes away the barren and the cursed, and brings forth beauty and fruit.

### **What is the significance of beautiful and useful plants replacing thornbushes?**

Genesis 3:17-18 – *Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you*

Thorns are symbolic of the curse of a fallen world. Much of the curse will be removed for the Millennial Kingdom which foreshadows the Eternal State when all the curse will be removed.

### **What will result from the Lord’s restoration?**

*will be for the Lord’s renown:* When the LORD restores, all the work is done for His name, and for His glory. When the LORD restores, the work is secure; it is an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

### **What applications come to mind from our discussion?**

- Salvation is a free gift... but you must accept it to have it.
- There is an urgency to seek the Lord... don’t put this off.
- God will have mercy on him who repents!
- God’s thoughts & ways are not ours... always remember that.
- God’s Word doesn’t return void... share it every chance you get.