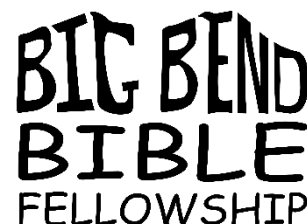


Blessings for the Faithful

Isaiah 65:1-16

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Isaiah 65:1-7 – Shallow Repentance (NIV)

“I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’² All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations—³ a people who continually provoke me to my very face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on altars of brick;⁴ who sit among the graves and spend their nights keeping secret vigil; who eat the flesh of pigs, and whose pots hold broth of impure meat;⁵ who say, ‘Keep away; don’t come near me, for I am too sacred for you!’ Such people are smoke in my nostrils, a fire that keeps burning all day.⁶ “See, it stands written before me: I will not keep silent but will pay back in full; I will pay it back into their laps—⁷ both your sins and the sins of your ancestors,” says the Lord. “Because they burned sacrifices on the mountains and defied me on the hills, I will measure into their laps the full payment for their former deeds.”

v1 – Who are those who did not seek the Lord but found Him anyway?

God would be found by those who did not seek Him — namely, the Gentiles.

v2 – To whom did God hold out His hands all day long?

Israel... It wasn't that the LORD had ignored the Jewish exiles in Babylon, and others like them. He stretched out His hands all day long to them. Some responded, but most were a rebellious people.

Why was Israel not faithful to God?

Who walk in a way that is not good, according to their own thoughts: This defines what it is to be a rebellious people — simply, to walk in a way...according to their own thoughts.

- To trust in our own wisdom, our own judgment, our own thinking, is to be among the rebellious people.

Is walking in your own way a problem today?

Proverbs 14:12 – *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death*

Yes... To live according to their own thoughts may sound like freedom, but really it is bondage. God's solution to living according to our own thoughts is:

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.*

Why did Paul quote this passage in Romans 10:20-21?

Romans 10:20-21 – ²⁰ *But Isaiah is very bold and says: “I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.”* ²¹ *But to Israel he says: “All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people.”*

Paul was making the point that Israel as a nation had rejected the good news of Christ but that God was not done with Israel. The very next chapter affirms the promise that all Israel would be saved in the future.

v3-4 – What was Israel doing to provoke God?

The walk of these people, according to their own thoughts, expresses itself in the most offensive and unholy ways before the LORD. The people sacrifice in gardens to idols. They sit among the graves, breaking the commands against contact with the dead (Numbers 19:11). They eat swine's flesh and drink the broth of abominable things.

- Each of these sins were grossly offensive to the LORD.
- It is tragic, but true, that walking according to our own thoughts will always lead us into direct, blatant, opposition to the LORD.

v5 – What was God's perspective of Israel's unfaithfulness?

Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am holier than you: They could say this, even in the midst of such extreme offense before God. No wonder God considers such people as smoke in My nostrils.

- Therefore, judgment is promised to them: I will not keep silence, but will repay...your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together.

How could anyone think they are more sacred than God?

They put human reasoning over God's revelation. This is a dramatic display of the blindness pride brings. They could say, "I am holier than you!" and really mean it, because of their complete blindness.

v6-7 – What would God do?

He would see that justice would be done... that those who reject Him would receive their due as He has warned everyone about.

Isaiah 65:8-16 – Promises realized for the faithful (NIV)

⁸ *This is what the Lord says: "As when juice is still found in a cluster of grapes and people say, 'Don't destroy it, there is still a blessing in it,' so will I do in behalf of my servants; I will not destroy them all. ⁹ I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah those who will possess my mountains; my chosen people will inherit them, and there will my servants live. ¹⁰ Sharon will become a pasture for flocks, and the Valley of Achor a resting place for herds, for my people who seek me. ¹¹ "But as for you who forsake the Lord and forget my holy mountain, who spread a table for Fortune and fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny, ¹² I will destine you for the sword, and all of you will fall in the slaughter; for I called but you did not answer, I spoke but you did not listen. You did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me." ¹³ Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "My servants will eat, but you will go hungry; my servants will drink, but you will go thirsty; my servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame. ¹⁴ My servants will sing out of the joy of their hearts, but you will cry out from anguish of heart and wail in brokenness of spirit. ¹⁵ You will leave your name for my chosen ones to use in their curses; the Sovereign Lord will put you to death, but to his servants he will give another name. ¹⁶ Whoever invokes a blessing in the land will do so by the one true God; whoever takes an oath in the land will swear by the one true God. For the past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from my eyes.*

v8 – What will the Lord do on behalf of His servants?

Despite the unholy rebellion and pride of some of His people, God still has His remnant, and He will bless and restore them.

- God finds a few "good grapes" among the corrupt cluster of His people. It is for the sake of these — for My servants' sake — that the LORD shows blessing and restores.

v9-10 – What is God's promise to Israel?

God reinforces the promise that the faithful of Israel will inherit the land He gave them and that the land will flourish.

v11-12 – What does God have to say to those who forsake Him?

Not all are numbered among the servants of the LORD. They are destined for judgment, because, when God called, they did not answer; when He spoke, they did not hear, but instead did evil before Him, and chose that in which He does not delight.

- On top of all their other sins is the sin of simply refusing to listen to God's correction.

What is the worst sin?

It is one thing for us to fall into sin through weakness or ignorance; such sin is indeed sin, and God must deal with it as such. But refusing to respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit is far worse.

- It is bad to be speeding; but it is worse to ignore the flashing red lights in your rearview mirror.

v13-14 – Why does God bless His servants while cursing those who reject Him?

If God does not reward His true servants, and curse His false servants, then God is not shown to be the God of truth and justice.

Is this prosperity gospel; God blessing His servants while cursing those who reject Him?

No; the greatest blessing and cursing is not realized while we are in our mortal bodies.

- But there are plenty of blessings and cursings in the here and now... For example: applying God's principles yield blessings while disregarding them come with consequences in the here and now.

v15 – Why will God give His servants another name?

Revelation 2:17 – *To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.*

The white stone probably has to do with the ancient Roman custom of awarding white stones to the victors of athletic games. And to the gladiator, it allowed them to retire from combat. The winner of a contest was awarded a white stone with his name inscribed on it. This served as his "ticket" to a special awards banquet.

- The new name would probably something that identifies the obedient believer in terms of their distinctive character.

v16 – Who gets the credit for blessings and promises kept in Israel?

God does... the One from whom all blessing flow and the One who keeps His promises.

Where have we heard that before; the One from whom all blessing flow?

From a commonly heard doxology. A doxology as an expression of praise to God, especially a short hymn sung as part of a Christian worship service. The word doxology comes from the Greek doxa, (“glory, splendor, grandeur”) and logos, (“word” or “speaking”).

“Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow,” was written in 1674 by Thomas Ken, a priest in the Church of England...

“Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye Heavenly Host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.”

What does it mean that *past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from my eyes?*

This verse comes to mind...

Psalm 103:12 – *As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

The idea is that, when God forgives, He really forgives. Our sins have been removed from us as far as is possible to imagine. It is a statement of complete and utter forgiveness. Once our sins have been removed, we will never be held accountable for them. They will never come back to haunt us.

- God promises that, under the New Covenant, *“I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more”* (Jeremiah 31:34).

What applications come to mind from our discussion?

- Insisting on your own way is deadly; seek God’s way!
- Human reasoning apart from God’s revelation is irrational blindness.
- God will bless the remnant who are faithful to Him and curse those who reject Him
- All glory goes to God alone... soli Deo gloria