

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTERIES

Expository sermon

November 2011

GOD'S LIBERATING ORDERS

Scripture Reading – Isaiah 52:1-15.

Introduction

At this point in their history God's people were captives in Babylon. In this passage of scripture, God, speaking to His people with a sense of urgency, calls them to deliverance from that captivity and bondage. In Isaiah 52:11-12, He says, "Depart, Depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the vessels of the Lord. But you will not leave in haste or go in flight; for the Lord will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard." Now you will remember that the literal fulfillment of this passage of scripture is given to us in the Book of Ezra, where we read of a great procession of people moving slowly yet fearlessly across the desert that lay between Babylon and Jerusalem, returning again into the land of God's promise to them. It was a journey that took them about four months. God said to them, "you will not leave in haste or go in flight for the Lord will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard." You will also recall that they scorned to ask for a military escort to guard them from the dangers of the journey, for they were sure of the presence of the Lord as they responded to Him in obedience. And as they traveled on the road with this unshakable sense of security, you will remember that the priests carried the vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple when he invaded Israel years before and which Belshazzar had used in his drunken feast as described in Daniel chapter five. There were no less than 5,400 vessels that they carried back to their homeland. But the real significance of this passage is not restricted to that immediate, historic fulfillment of the deliverance of God's people. Only in a very limited sense did the release of God's people from Babylon describe the event recorded here. It had prophetic significance.

The great Old Testament truths have significance in the New Testament. The New Testament explains and interprets the meaning of the message of the Old Testament. One has rightly said, referring to the Old and New Testaments, that the "New is in the Old contained and the Old is in the New explained." In other words the Old Testament contains the New Testament and the New Testament explains the spiritual meaning of the events, actions, truths and workings of God among His chosen people in the Old Testament. And so there is a deeper prophetic meaning to this deliverance than just a physical deliverance from Babylon. And so you might ask "Deliverance from what? Babylon is a type or a description of the condition of the sinner held in sin's bondage and sin's captivity, and it is clear there is no peace or freedom or joy in that state.

The story of the Old Testament really is a story about the mighty redemptive acts of God on behalf of His people. The message in Isaiah was a speaking of the promise of the salvation that was to be provided by the Son of God. There is a prophetic word about greater deliverance than the deliverance from Babylon. In the context in which this verse is found, there is one that lets the light in and that takes us beyond the physical event described by the Prophet Isaiah. Observe what verse ten says. "The Lord will lay bare His holy arm in the sight of all nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God." Isaiah 52:10. And in the next chapter, Isaiah 53 recounts how one day the Son of God would become the Son of man - The suffering servant, Verse 3 " a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering." And in verse 5, we read, "He was pierced for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." The thrust of this entire message is that there is far greater freedom from a far greater bondage, than the freedom from the captivity of Babylon. Paul talks about this freedom when he wrote his letter to the Church in Galatians. In chapter 5:1 he writes "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free." And in Romans chapter 8 v 2, he writes, "the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death." This freedom belongs to the children of God and is the fruit of our salvation. And this

salvation is a universal salvation and it is God who provides it. "The ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God." That is significant news. God is calling all men and women to this freedom. It is His urgent instruction to us. The call of these instructions is rooted on,

1. AN EXCITING PROCLAMATION. Isaiah 52:3, 7, 10.

Note what the Lord says to His people. V.3. "You were sold for nothing, and without money you will be redeemed. V.7 "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion your God reigns." This is the message of the gospel. This message is good news and the scripture clearly states, "How beautiful are the feet of them" who bring this good news. But what the Lord is doing here is laying a foundation for trust and setting down the reasons for faith. If there is to be salvation and spiritual freedom, there has to be a foundation upon which is founded. Faith can only stand firm if the foundation is firm. Oswald Chambers wrote that it "is not our trust that keeps us, but the God in whom we trust who keeps us. We are always in danger of trusting our trust, believing our belief, having faith in our faith. All these things can be shaken; we have to base our faith on those things which cannot be shaken." Faith can only bring victory and freedom if it is rooted in that which is eternal and that which will not be shaken by adversity or intimidated by the forces of darkness. The victory which overcomes the world is our faith. It is only the faith that believes "that Jesus is the Son of God that overcomes the world." (See 1 John 5:4-5). It is a faith that is rooted in that which is eternal and unshakable. That is to say that faith is grounded in the eternal truth that Jesus is the Son of God.

Now as you follow the chosen text, you will observe that two vital and eternal truths make up the basis of this exciting proclamation. The first is indispensable.

It is the fact that

a. **God is Sovereign. Isaiah 52:7.** How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news... who say to Zion, "Your God Reigns." This implies that our God is alive. It intimates that He is the God of power. It means that He is the God who is in control. He is the God who is not overwhelmed or intimidated by the catastrophic cataclysmic events of our day. I suggest to you that this is a message of which we need to be reminded, when at this moment in time across our world, violence war and rioting is spreading with avalanche proportions. It seems that the world is off its axle and society is becoming a more and more out of control morally and spiritually. But one truth remains unchanged, "our God still reigns." And the in the context of what is meant in this chapter, God's people who were in captivity needed to hear this message. God in His sovereign power was about to deliver them from the clutches of that pagan nation. What the Lord is doing here, is laying foundations for trust, and setting down reasons for faith. If they accepted the truth that their God reigned, then they could with confidence follow His marching orders. God reigns. That is a vital truth. It is one thing to have a man reign, but an entirely different thing to have a God who reigns. A mortal passes from this earth. His days are numbered. His reign is limited. His authority has narrow parameters. But God's reign is not this way at all. A mortal king has limited powers, but God has unlimited powers. He is sovereign. He reigns. To rest in that truth is freedom indeed. There is liberty in submission to His sovereignty. As we surrender to His sovereignty, and rest in it, then that which happens to us, we know He permits for our good. We may not understand it and we may not even like it, but you can be sure that God works for our good in everything that happens in the orbit of His Will. We can and will have trust and peace in everything as we remain in the center of His sovereign will. For Israel to be delivered from the bondage of the Babylonians, they had to fully surrender to and trust His Sovereignty. It was only as they submitted in obedience to the Lord that there would be liberation from the chains that shackled them. This was the first and indispensable step to freedom. God reigns and there is no power in heaven, no force on earth, no authority in hell, that can drive Him from that throne, and nullify His rule. God was still in control and if He decided to break their shackles of Babylon and bring His people back to their land and He did it.

Now there is a parallel truth in the New Testament. Because God is Sovereign He has the power to break the chains of sin and provide a full salvation for you and I. In the power of the crucified risen Christ He has provided

a glorious freedom from the bondage and power of sin. Are you free from your personal Babylon? Are there sinful habits that bind you? Is there a sin that plagues you and from which you long to be free. God reigns and He has power to deliver you. He is Sovereign. But the second truth that is an integral part of this exciting proclamation is that,

b. God is Savior. Isaiah 52:3,9-10. In verse 3, “This is what the Lord says, “You were sold for nothing and without money you will be redeemed.” And in verse 9 He says, the Lord “has redeemed Israel.” Here are foreshadowing’s of the New Testament message. Peter writes in a similar vein in 1 Peter 1:18-19, “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect.” And the Lord said in Is 52:3, many years before Peter wrote these words, “without money you will be redeemed.” And again in verse 10, “all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of the Lord.” We know that God was speaking to a captive people and it appeared that there was nothing they could do about it. They needed a power outside of their bondage to break their chains. It was then that God stepped in to save them. But their freedom was dependent upon three things,

i. The Promise of God to bring them deliverance. Isaiah 52:8-9. “When the Lord returns to Zion they will see it with their own eyes...all of the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. That was the promise God made and it had prophetic overtones. It looked to the future. Their deliverance was dependent on God’s promise. Secondly their deliverance was contingent on the,

ii. The Sovereignty of God. God reigns. God is ruler. He is in control. We have said quite a bit about this truth already, suffice to say that this means when He acts things happen. Promises are fulfilled. Goals are reached and His purposes are accomplished. Thirdly their deliverance rested on,

iii. The Power of God, Isaiah 52:10. The figure of speech used here is comes with force. “The Lord will lay bare His Holy arm in the sight of all nations and all the ends of the earth.” What an incredible description of the power of God to bring deliverance to His people. It is noteworthy that God moves from this point to describe the agony and the suffering of His one and only Son who would be the perfect sacrifice to would take away the sin of the world. You will discover this in Isaiah 52:13 to chapter 53:1-12. When you read those words you become deeply aware of the promise of the Cross and its power to bring deliverance to those who live in darkness and are bound by the power of Satan. Note the significant words in Isaiah 53:5, “He was pierced through for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities... the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed...the Lord on Him the iniquity of us all. In verse 11 “...my Righteous servant will justify (or make righteous many) and He will bear their iniquities.” There is in the background of these chapters, the shadow of the cross which is the promise of a deliverance from all unrighteousness. There is freedom, glorious freedom in the crucified risen Christ. Let me echo the words of Paul again. “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.” This is the exciting proclamation of these chapters. Now God’s liberating instructions are characterized by,

2. AN ENDURING PRINCIPLE. Isaiah 52:11.

When God challenges his people to walk in the freedom of the Gospel, He underscores two important factors. Firstly there must be,

a. A Firm Resolve. Isaiah 52:11. It is resolve combined with obedience to God’s challenge. What did God say to His people? v.11. Depart, Depart, go out from there.” They had lived in exile in Babylon. God was about to deliver them. That was His promise. They could have sat there and said as they had in Isaiah 49:14. “The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me.” But God wants to liberate them. Their reaction seems to be. . ‘Impossible! How could such a thing ever be?’ God has forsaken us. He does not remember us, in any event we have been in Babylon too long. We got used to it and such a strong master as Babylon is, would never release us.” If you read the intervening chapters you discover that God deals with their objections, and declares His unchanging purpose to set His people free. God stepped into their lethargy with startling words. Isaiah 51:1,

“Listen to me you who pursue righteousness.” And verse 4. “Listen to me my people.” V.7. Hear me,” and then in verse. 17. “Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself to be free!” God was getting their attention. And the message was clear. God would deliver them if they obeyed Him with resolve and determination and He says, “Depart, Depart, go out from there.” “Get out of Babylon. Leave your life of bondage, shake off the shackles of the old life and follow me, for I have provided a way of deliverance for you.” This was their choice. They must decide if they want to be free. So it is with each of us. We must resolve to shake off the old life and follow Him. He will deliver us from it. He will save us from it. There is always freedom in obediently resolving to follow Him. The choice is ours to make. If we are to continue to be his followers it demands obedient resolve. Depart and leave behind your bondage. God also underscores that in an enduring principle of freedom there is a,

b. A Fundamental Requirement. Isaiah 52:11. Note what the Lord says, “Depart, Depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the vessels of the Lord.” This is a necessary action to take. The reason is obvious. They could not stay in Babylon and at the same time be free. They could not be tied to Babylon and be pure. The first step to freedom was to leave Babylon, and God’s requirement of them was that they take it. God’s requirement had three facets to it. Firstly God is saying,

i. Be Divorced. Isaiah 52:11. Divorce yourselves from that which will defile you. The significant words in this verse are, “Go out from there! Touch no unclean thing.” Be divorced is the thought here. Divorce in a marriage is an unacceptable option. But there is a legitimate spiritual divorce that must take place in the life of God’s people. God’s chosen people were in the land of bondage. We have already said it was a type of the life of worldliness, self-centeredness and the life of sin, and God was saying to His people divorce yourself from it. Cut the ties with the old life. As Paul would say, put off the old man and put on the new man. He also had something to say in this regard in his second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 6:17, talking to the Christians says, “Therefore come out from among them and be separate, touch no unclean thing and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” There is a world system that is corrupt and depraved and the scriptures are quite clear that we are to separate ourselves from it. Jesus said that he who is a friend of this system is the enemy of God for it hates Him. How then can we who are Christians follow a system that hates God? How can we be tied to it, and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. So often in our day the church is silent on this issue. God said to His people go out from there. Leave Babylon and touch no unclean thing. Have we divorced our selves from a sin stained and sin controlled world system. Are we still allowing it to control and influence our life-styles? God says, “Divorce your selves from it.” This thought flows into the next facet.

ii. Be Discerning. Isaiah 52:11. “Touch no unclean thing.” In everyday living we avoid touching that which is unclean. We spend time cleaning the filth from our houses. We are comfortable in the atmosphere of cleanliness. Discerning what is evil and divorcing ourselves from it is vital in our Christian walk because it touches our relationship with God. If we want to walk with a Holy God – be discerning. Touch no unclean thing. The third facet in this requirement that God has set down for us in our deliverance from our Babylon,

iii. Be Distinctive. Isaiah 52:11. “Be pure you who carry the vessels of the Lord.” When we have divorced our selves from the corrupt world system and have been discerning enough to not to touch that which is unclean, and when we know that the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ has purified us from all sin, we are to serve Him in purity and in holiness. This is fundamental in our walk with God. “Be pure you who carry the vessels of the Lord.” In a world system that is full of evil, this is a distinctive life-style. Purity of heart and life is foreign mindset in our world. But God has called us to be the “light of the world.” We are to shine in its darkness. This means we are to be distinctive. It is pure vessels that God uses and blesses. The measure in which we are committed to holiness and holy living is the measure in which God can use us. Dr. M. R. De Hann uses a helpful illustration to communicate the value of holiness. A bar of steel worth \$5.00 can yield any of the following: If made into horseshoes it will be worth \$10.00. Manufacture needles and the value becomes \$350.00. Use it to create delicate springs for expensive watches and it will yield \$250,000. We are like a bar of steel. The extent of our surrender to the life of holiness will determine whether we become Christians of minimal, moderate or

dynamic spiritual influence. Be distinctive. Be a light in the darkness. Be the salt of the earth. "Touch no unclean thing and be pure." God's liberating orders include,

3. AN EMPOWERING PROMISE. Isaiah 52:12.

God said to the Israelites "But you will not leave in haste or go in flight; for the Lord will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard." If we accept this exciting proclamation and live by the enduring principle, we will be empowered by the presence of God to live a holy life. We will be delivered from our Babylon. The promise of the Lord in verse 12 is reinforcing and empowering to all of us. Note

a. **The Confidence it Inspires. Isaiah 52:9-10, 12.** It is the Lord who says, "You will not leave in haste or go in flight.; for the Lord will go with you." What is noteworthy here is that they are not leaving the enemy panic stricken. They don't need to because the Lord is going before them and he is their rearguard. They are not in a hurried flight from Babylon for two reasons. First,

i. **Because God had delivered them. Isaiah 52:9-10.** The Lord has "redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord will lay bare His Holy Arm." Secondly they are not in a hurried flight,

ii. **Because God goes before them. Isaiah 52:12.** "You will not leave in haste or go in flight; for the Lord will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard. They would move at God's pace. They would not move out in haste or go in flight. This speaks to us of an unshakable confidence in God that results in peace. If there is no haste and flight there will be rest in the soul. The failure to fully respond to God's liberating orders to step out of the captivity of sin's bondage, are reasons for a vast majority of the tensions that disrupt the lives of professing Christians. There are too many who are carrying the baggage of the past. There are those who are like Lot's wife who bodily left Sodom but her heart was still there. As they were fleeing she looked back to see what was happening in that city, and in doing so disobeyed the command of God and turned into a pillar of salt. She was out of Sodom but in essence she was still there. There are those who have the face of a Christian but their hearts are still in their Babylon. They are bound by the allurements of the world and the peace of God eludes them. The Lord Himself tells us in Isaiah 48:18, "If only you had paid attention (or obeyed) my commands your peace would have been like a river and your righteousness like the waves of sea." Is there a deep settle peace in your soul. If not why not? For Jesus said, "My peace I give you." Is your spirit characterized by haste and restless flight? Or is it marked by restfulness?" The promise of God in your life inspires confidence, the fruit of which is peace. Finally the promise of the is empowering because of,

b. **The Protection it insures. Isaiah 52:12.** "...the Lord will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard." As the Children of Israel moved out with God in their journey, they would look behind and God would be there. They would look ahead and God would be there. The God who had delivered them from the shackles of Babylon, now surrounded them with his protecting and strengthening presence. You may recall that the early Christians were called, "men of the way." They were men who had discovered the secret of joy and peace, a path that would take them through every difficulty to heaven itself; and if you had asked them their secret they would have said one word, "JESUS." The question that faces us is, "have we obeyed God's liberating orders and obediently surrendered to His Sovereignty. Do you have the peace of God that passes all understanding? It is a peace that is born and nurtured in a complete obedience to God. It is a peace that has come to your life because God has delivered your soul from the guilt and bondage of sin. God wants us to move out of Babylon. It is not God's intention that we live in Babylon.

Conclusion

One has prayed in this way. "At first Lord, I asked you To take sides with me. With David the Psalmist I circled and underlined: "The Lord is for me." "Maintain my rights, O Lord." "Let me stand above my foes." But with all my pleading I lay drenched in darkness Until in utter confusion I cried

“Don’t take sides, Lord, Just take over.’ And suddenly it was morning. For the light had come and I been liberated

The hymn writer wrote, “Make me a captive Lord and I shall conqueror be. Force me to render up my sword. And I shall conqueror be.” Only in a full and complete surrender to the will of God is there authentic freedom and victory. Have you looked into the Face of God and prayed. “Lord just take over?”

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