

THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, October 16, 2024

By: David Alexander

Today is Wednesday, October 16th, and this week we are reflecting on how God sets us free from guilt by the power of his grace.

OPENING PRAYER

In this season, we are praying this prayer together.

May the cornerstone of my life, and of our life together, be Christ and Christ alone. AMEN.

SCRIPTURE

¹ *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.*

² *Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.*

³ *A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

⁴ *Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.*

⁵ *And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."*

Isaiah 40:1-5

REFLECTION

As one of the major prophets of the Old Testament, the book of Isaiah is full of warnings of Israel's impending doom. Because Israel had continually sinned against God and failed to uphold God's law, Isaiah pronounced again and again that destruction was coming. A foreign nation would come and eventually conquer their land. Bad days were ahead. Their short-term future was a bleak one.

A once great nation would soon lie in ruins. Yet, with all of Israel's great prophets, sprinkled among all these devastating premonitions, they also speak of a day that will come **after** Israel's suffering. In the language of Isaiah 40, verse two, it will be when,

"...her (Israel) hard service has been completed... her sin has been paid for..."

On that day, which will surely come, God will speak "*tenderly*" in order to "*comfort my people*." As the early church sought to understand the full significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus, it became clear that **His faithfulness** was meant to serve as the substitute for **Israel's failure**. And it was through his faithfulness to fulfill God's divine plan, that the Messiah paid the penalty for Israel's sin.

By facing evil, he conquered evil.

Through his death, he vanquished death.

He complete the hard labor.
He paid the bill.

And on the other side of Easter's empty tomb, what do we find? A God who speaks ""*tenderly*"" in order to "*comfort (His) people.*" Remember our reflection from Ephesians 2 on Monday.

You were dead and you didn't even know it. *But God...*

You were living an anemic life, not an abundant one. *But God...*

You had a life that was about pursuing what felt good today without any real hope for the future. *But God...*

God intervened on your behalf.

Would you pause for a few minutes this morning to allow that message to seep down deeply into your soul? Take a moment to close your eyes and take some deep breaths. Maybe take some time and go for a walk this morning. You might put on some Christian music and let those songs of praise bring a renewed appreciation for the great gift we have received through our Messiah Jesus.

Let **His joy** rise in your heart this day.

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to you, in every way.

Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.

Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say. AMEN.

-Prayer from Lectio 365 App