

# Preaching Redemption for Reformation and Revival – Isaiah 51:17 – 52:12

**Introduction** – “As wonderful as creation was, and as true as divine providence is, it is redemption that is earth’s great song” – Oswald. The gospel is the song of redemption. But it is also the song of reformation when we have lost our way and the song of revival when we have lost our affections. Regarding the gospel, Martin Luther said, “It cannot be beaten into our ears enough or too much. Yes, though we learn it and understand it well, yet there is none that takes hold of it perfectly or believes it with all his heart. So frail a thing is our flesh, and disobedient to the Spirit...” In our passage, Zion, asleep in a drunken stupor, is summoned to wake and come forth. The church is the assembly of the redeemed and yet she is in a desperate need for reformation and revival. She is awakened by the voice of her Redeemer.

**Wake Up to Faith** (vv17-23) – Zion had called on God to “Awake, awake” (51:9). The appeal is reversed here, for it is actually Zion which must awake (v17). She has received the cup of the Lord’s fury, drained it, and is unresponsive to reason. The good news seems foolish and irrelevant to her (much like the natural man in 1 Cor 2:14). There seems to be none who can deliver her among her sons, they are all netted like wild antelope, wild-eyed in exhaustion and in a hopeless struggle (vv18-20). Somehow Zion must be roused from this apathetic hopelessness and awakened to a fresh faith.

**“Thus Says Your Lord”** (vv22-23) – Zion hears from the “...Lord (this could be translated, “your husband” expressing the particular close relationship of God to Zion)..., Yahweh (the covenant-keeping name) and your God (the Creator Who upholds all things).” He speaks and removes the cup which He had given to Zion, promising to now give it to the ones who thought they could walk all over Zion. Zion is redeemed, reformed and revived by the voice of the Lord whose voice removes the cup and stupor. She is now prepared to get up and get dressed.

The Voice is not of the One who is Zion’s punisher. It is the One who has reconciled Himself to them already, the One who is ready to bring them home. Like the story of the prodigal son, the Father is ready to receive; He is simply waiting for the son of whom it is said, “But when he came to himself...” (Luke 15:17). This is the sign of reformation and revival: the church is awakened from her drunken, apathetic, unresponsive slumber.

**Wake Up to Repentance** (52:1-6) – God grants faith and God grants repentance. They are both gifts from the Lord. Faith is turning to God with a believing heart. Repentance is turning away from “the unclean,” shaking the dust of worldliness and unbelief, and loosing yourself of the bonds which have been broken by the Word of the Lord (vv1-2). This is what Zion is called to awaken herself to as well. She is to put off weakness and “put on strength”; she is to put off the filthy garments and “put on your beautiful garments.” Paul speaks in similar language of “putting off” and “putting on” (i.e. Col 1:1-14). This is where a life of faith takes action.

**“For Thus Says the LORD...the Lord GOD”** – Again, it is the voice of the Lord that enables, activates, motivates, equips and awakens Zion. He has no debts to pay in order to redeem Zion (v3) and just as nothing hindered Him in His deliverances from Egypt or Assyria (vv4-5), so His people will “know My name” (v6) and that it is He that speaks. Their deliverance proves His presence. When the gospel brings real repentance, we know it is He Who has granted that repentance.

**Wake Up to the Voice of Good News** (vv7-12) – When it is a Spirit-wrought repentance the gospel is sweet again. Reformation and revival have always come from a fresh preaching of the gospel to God’s people first. Paul quotes v7 in Romans 10:14-17. When and where the gospel is preached in such a way that there is widespread reformation and revival, it is because the preacher’s voice has been heard, they do not hear “about Christ” but rather they hear and see Christ Himself (Rom 10:14 should be translated “...how shall they believe in Him whom they have heard?”). Those are the preachers who have been sent (v15) and their coming is beautiful with glad tidings of the gospel.

Isaiah expands on this. A single Preacher comes (v7), the watchmen of the city catch wind of the sermon-song and lift up their voices (v8), God’s people break forth in joy and singing (v9), and all the nations “shall see the salvation of our God” (v10).

**“Depart, Depart”** (vv11-12) – Again, the fruit of such faith and turning to God is the freedom to leave sin and its power behind (Rom 6:17). There is no end to the impact of the gospel; its power is unstoppable (Rom 1:16). Lives change and the people of God are willing to go places they might never have gone before because they know “the LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.”

You thought you could never change. You thought you were stuck in your sin. You thought you could never experience freedom in Christ again. “Awake! Awake!” You need to hear the feet of the One coming upon the mountains singing His glad tidings of the gospel of peace. “Your God reigns!” Jesus Christ was born of a virgin under the law. He lived a perfect and sinless life and was crucified for our sins. He was laid in a tomb cold dead and, according to the Scriptures, He rose from the dead on the third day. He then ascended to His throne and given rule over the nations. And He will return to judge all men, dead and alive, on the final day. No one and nothing can stop this Good News – no king, no congress, no laws or regulations, not even an unbelieving heart.