

## Everlasting Kindness – Isaiah 54

**Introduction** – The repercussions of Isaiah 53 are eternal, infinite, world-changing, life-changing (Isaiah 53:5, Eph 3:14-19). If it is true that the Servant of the LORD has done this for you – and for the world – nothing will ever be the same for you. We do see in Isaiah God’s holy wrath burn hot against the sin and idolatry of His people, but He makes clear, it is for a moment (54:8) and propitiated in the work of His Servant. Israel’s coming exile and prophesied return is more than a nice Bible story. Here we see the everlasting kindness of God over His creation and over a humanity barren, alienated and destroyed. Faith, a gift of God, sees beyond present circumstances, to the kindness of God’s grace – even future grace that is still to come. And that faith breaks out in song! The result of the Good News of Isaiah 53 results in three miraculous transformations described in Isaiah 54. They begin to describe a New Creation that you, individually, are invited to join (chapter 55).

**Israel, the Spiritually Barren Woman: Fruitfulness** (vv1-3) - This passage (and others) can be painful in a very personal way for those couples struggling to conceive – and nothing is being said to make light of such pain. But God has been using this story of barrenness for centuries to speak metaphorically of His everlasting kindness and plan for the world. Sarah could not conceive and God promised that Abraham’s descendants would be as numerous as the stars (Gen 15). When the promise did not manifest in Abraham’s and Sarah’s timeframe, they took the matter into their own hands (Gen 16). But God remained true to His Word and in due time Isaac was born (Gen 21). In Gal 4:21-31, Paul quotes Isaiah 54:1, referring to this story, to declare the supernatural work of the Spirit alone as the means of salvation. The old covenant was coming to an end and the new covenant of adoption by the Spirit was going forth to all nations, Jew and Gentile alike.

Israel is told before there are any offspring that their fruitfulness will be immense. They are to enlarge their tents (v2) because they will “*expand to the right and to the left, and your descendants will inherit the nations*” (v3). If Israel was told to believe this in Isaiah’s day, and if Paul believed this was beginning to occur in his day, how much more must we be like both and “believe God” in our day, that it might be credited to us? What is God promising the barren church? Fruitfulness beyond measure – not by our efforts, but by the Spirit and power of God. William Carey, the father of modern missions, used v2 as his text when he preached and is now quoted as saying, “Expect great things from God; Attempt great things for God.”

**Israel, the Spiritual Harlot: Reconciled** (vv4-8) – Not only is Israel barren; as the bride of God, she had become a spiritual adulteress with her idolatries. Because of this, she was alienated from the Lord “*like a woman forsaken*” (v6). And while the wrath of God and the consequences of our sins are holy, just and right, yet “*For a mere moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. With a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you*” (vv7-8). Notice the highlighted contrast (as Paul would in Rom 5:20-21). This is the Good News. This is what Isaiah 53 procured.

**“Says Yahweh, Your Kinsman-Redeemer”** (v8) – The covenant-keeping God always had a plan. And it wasn’t primarily a plan of restoration to the land; it was restoration to the face of God. It was a move from alienation to reconciliation in relationship. The Redeemer under Mosaic Law had to be a kinsman. And this is why Jesus took on flesh and blood, “*that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death...*” (Heb 2:14-15). This is not primarily about physical death, but spiritual death and eternal alienation from God and His peace. His merciful kindness would overrule such a final state through the work of His Son (1 Tim 1:14-17). The waters of Noah (a judgment) no longer cover the earth (v9) for God hung up is warrior bow at the Cross and is satisfied. Hence, “*My kindness shall not depart from you, Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed, says the LORD, who has mercy on you*” (v9).

**Israel, the Spiritually Destitute: Secured** (vv11-14) – Now, Israel is pictured in her temple-city, which would be destroyed. Cities were places of security and prosperity. The New Jerusalem is both the heavenly city brought to earth, and the bride of Christ, prepared for Him with all glory by His blood (Rev 21:9-11). Where can an individual, a family, or a nation find security and prosperity? Where will it be said “*All your children shall be taught by the LORD and great shall be the peace of your children*” (v13)? It is here, in the church, in the covenant of peace, in the city of God.

**What of the Difficult Circumstances of Life?** (vv15-17) – If we have moved from a place of barrenness to fruitfulness, of alienation to reconciliation, and from insecurity to security, what of the enemies that remain? What of the exile that was to come? What of our own trials, setbacks, and persecutions? These verses can be summed up with the beginning of v17, “*No weapon formed against you shall prosper.*” Jesus understood this well as He stood before Pilate who would crucify Him, “*You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above*” (John 19:11).

**This Covenant of Peace** – Those who are in the finished work of the Servant are in this covenant of peace with God (v10), a peace full of everlasting kindness and mercy (v8), far from oppression or terror that can have any eternal effect (v14). In that Covenant with the Servant, we become like Him, “*This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is from Me*” (v17). We are now servants of this covenant of peace to the world. We bestow the righteousness which is from God given to us on the world through the preaching of this Good News. His inheritance is us and His heritage is ours. Is it yours?