

09.14.25

Luke

Chapter 7 - An Unbelievable Faith

Frustrating the Law's Viewpoint (vs. 18-23)

Luke 7:18-23: The disciples of John reported to him about all these things. Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, “Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?” When the men came to Him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, ‘Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?’” At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many who were blind. And He answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.”

We read the gospels, and we wonder, how could anybody take offense at Jesus? And yet, He is a polarizing character, isn't He? Why is it that people are offended by the name "Jesus"? It is extremely offensive to the world, and it's extremely offensive oftentimes within the churches. Not the name of Jesus, but what He stands for. And when I go through Scripture, I realize that if you were to preach this like it's truth, you're going to offend people. I've found that to be true. People come up to me and say, "Pastor, why hasn't your church grown to be real large?" I said, "Because I keep offending people." I mean, they come in and they go out and they come in, they go out. And we're on this kind of vicious circle. And I've oftentimes said, "If you haven't been offended yet, stay tuned, you will be." Because the longer you're here, the more we're going to get into something that affects you. And the Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. It is offensive.

Matthew 15, the disciples come to Jesus, and they go, "You do realize that You just offended the Pharisees?"

And He says, “Get away from them.” He was very controversial.

Matthew 23, He goes very clear against the Pharisees and the scribes and the religious leaders, and He says, “Woe to you! You're hypocrites.” And that's a controversial statement when you think about it. It's easy to be offended by Jesus.

John 6 talks about even some of His own disciples. It seems as if, as you read the text, that Christ purposely offended His own disciples. Because He uses a phrase such as, “Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood...” And they're going, “Wait, that's not kosher.” And it was in this that He ultimately said, “I'm speaking to spiritual things, but I said this to actually farm you out.” Because what we realize is most of His disciples from that point on ceased from walking with Him. And of course, He turns to the rest, and He goes, “Do you want to leave?” And Peter goes, “Where do we go? You alone have the words of life.” And you realize that a lot of this is a decision-making process, and strangely, people will oftentimes reject the Word of God. People

that you would think would be the most accepting would be the ones that reject, and the people that you would think would reject would be the most accepting. As you go through the Book of Luke, what we see is that very unlikely people are being called and coming into the kingdom of God. And at the very beginning of the Gospel of Luke, you have unlikely women that are actually becoming a great part to the kingdom of Heaven. I mean, how is it that an old woman would have a child, and through her would come John the Baptist? How is it that a young girl that's not even married, who is a virgin, would have? So, Luke begins to stir these thoughts. I mean, you have an elderly group of people, more specifically Simeon and Hannah, that become a part of something that they've been looking for years. And if you were to ask them probably a week before, "Do you ever think you're going to see the fruition of this?" They'd probably say, "No, not in my lifetime. Most unlikely." And you have these shepherds and fishermen and tax collectors. Luke is specific on really focusing on these groups of people.

And then as we've been looking at this particular chapter, we've seen, come on, a Roman soldier? That's the enemy. And Jesus will actually turn and say, "This guy's had more faith than anybody in all of your nation." I wouldn't have expected that. God is calling, and He's calling not only those that we would perceive that wouldn't come, but He's calling to those that are in a realm of just dire hopelessness. And it is in that we really see faith grow, because unless you really come to your knees, I mean, I realize that, in fact, faith is actually born in tragedy and desperation. That's the place that it seems to actually stir the hearts of man to run to God, because without that, man really has no fervor or zeal for God.

There's an interesting Psalm.

It reads this way,

(Psalm 61:2) "From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint;
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

That's when we start seeking something more powerful than us, something greater than us, a force that is far beyond us.

As Isaiah 55 would say, clearly His ways are not my ways, and as high as the heavens, that we believe that His ways and His thoughts and His power are far higher than ours. But unfortunately, we don't go there until we start coming against the wall. And the thing that I seem to appreciate the most about this gospel is that He just opens it up to anybody. That sense of whosoever will in the Gospel of John, it seems to be visually seen in the Gospel of Luke.

There's a passage in Isaiah 56, if you look there with me. And I think that we all have something in our lives, whether as we just saw this widow that's in the city of Nain. I mean, we didn't even hear the city of Nain. Who knew where Nain was? It's not going to be mentioned anymore, but there it is. And here she is in her most hopeless state, and God saves her miraculously in the midst of this. But who would think that God would rescue her, and who would think that God would

rescue a Roman soldier and grant a request to him?
There's an interesting passage here in Isaiah 56, and the initial part of this chapter is that God is calling upon us to preserve justice and to do righteousness, and He's calling upon us to actually seek for those kind of things, because the ones that seek for those things will seek Him. When you have a tragedy in the nation, my hope is, it stirs the nation to seek Him. Not to seek vengeance, not to seek retribution, but to seek Him.

So, the passage begins to go into that particular realm, and it says in verse 2,

(Isaiah 56:2) “How blessed is the man who does this...”

You know, who seeks those things.

As it goes on, it reads this way in verse 3,

(Isaiah 56:3) “Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say,

“The LORD will surely separate me from His people.”
...”

There's a thought, "Well, I don't think I belong there. I don't think..." But don't let him say that. Don't say that. You can hear God going, "Don't say that."

"... Nor let the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree."

(Isaiah 56:4) For thus says the LORD,

"To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths,

And choose what pleases Me,

And hold fast My covenant,

(Isaiah 56:5) To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial...."

You know, one of the concerns of people is that they be remembered. And their thought is, "I'm going to be remembered through my children." Absalom fought with that. And as you read the Old Testament, Absalom had no children. Do you know what Absalom did? He built a memorial for himself. He actually built a memorial for himself. So, you go back into 2 Samuel 18, and you read that here he produced this, and his thought was, "I'm going to be remembered because I do that." In this passage, God goes, "You don't have to build one. I'll build it for you. You'll be remembered."

“To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial,
And a name better than that of sons and daughters...”

Wow, really?

“... I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.

(Isaiah 56:6) “Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,

To minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD,
To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath

And holds fast My covenant;

(Isaiah 56:7) Even those I will bring to My holy mountain

And make them joyful in My house of prayer...”

A great passage as Scripture is letting us know that God is going to remember us in a way that we could never think that He could. We all face impossible situations in our lives, situations that maybe are perceived as hopeless or we would perceive to be something destructive in our lives, and God goes, “Don't think that

I'm limited by this. Whatever's in your life and whatever you don't have and whatever you feel you don't possess, I can make up the difference, and I will, and I'll make it better.” If you ever feel and have ever felt lacking in a particular area, rejoice in that, because that's where God proves Himself strong. And that's why Paul will say, “Where I'm weak, He's strong there. And I will most gladly boast in the weakness because that's where He's going to prove Himself.” It is in the Gospel of Luke that we see this and God literally declaring, “I haven't forgotten you. I know who you are. I don't care how obscure, how far away you seem to feel. This faith thing is not exclusive, it's not esoteric, it isn't set aside just for the privileged. This thing of faith is oftentimes for the poor in the spirit. In fact, the poor are the ones that are rich in it.” So, He demonstrates this in such, I think, wonderful ways as we come to this book.

We've seen in Luke 7 that God has revealed Himself to a Roman soldier. We've seen that those that are in the synagogue really are kind of out of it as far as perceiving the truth. But in these distant places, this Roman

soldier and this woman in Nain see the great work of God, and God does great things in their lives. We now turn to one personality that is clearly out there, and that's John the Baptist. I remember reading this the first time and go, "Why would John be doubting?" He's even a relative, you know? So, why would he be doubting this person of Jesus? Of course, we know that he probably grew up kind of on the outskirts and never really even saw the Messiah at an early age. But nevertheless, there was the baptism thing, and he was clearly described by God Himself as the one who He had sent. But at this particular point in time, John the Baptist is having some reservations. And I remember reading this and going, "Why in the world would that happen?" I mean, it's John the Baptist, for crying out loud.

So, we pick up in Chapter 7, and it is only appropriate that we deal with this particular matter in the context of Jesus saying, about the Roman soldier, "I've not seen greater faith in all of Israel." So, as we come to the passage, what we begin to realize is that John is one that is struggling too. And hopefully it's one of the

things that I'm trying to convey to you, even in the Old Testament, as we look to the different ones that are great men, whether it be Abraham or Moses or David, these are all great men, but they're men. And Romans 3 is very clear, "There's none righteous, no, not one. All have sinned. All fall short of the glory of God." That includes Moses. That includes Abram. So, their purpose is not to be a paragon to you. Their purpose is to show that God is working in the lives of men to bring them close to Him, and He's looking for those that will have a relationship with Him. And these are men that do that. But it's clearly not their perfection. So, as we come to this, we're going to see imperfections in John the Baptist. And it shouldn't shock us that there are imperfections in John the Baptist. Let me emphasize this, that you need to be careful not to lift up any man as a paragon. We live in a day and age where we grasp at any and all heroes, and we say, "This was the person." There's something that they did wrong, there's something that they said wrong, and someday you're going to be held to task on that. Don't see them as your savior. As we quoted so clearly from Isaiah 43, "I am

the Savior. There is no other.” And we truly believe that. So, it's God that we lift up. John, we're going to see, has this concern, and it shows his humanness in this. It also demonstrates to us that those that are thinking in the terms of the Law are going to have a difficult time with Jesus. I have come across a number of people that though they would say that they are Christians, then I began to tell them, “Well, you need to do this because Jesus said to do this.” And they'd go, “Well, I don't think I need to do that. I mean, that's taking it a little bit too far.” And what they're fundamentally saying is that Jesus is taking it a little bit too far, that He doesn't think like they do, and it permeates the church. So, it's not a strange thing to see John wrestling with these kinds of things, because he clearly is coming from the standpoint of the Law.

Now, let me just interject this as well, that if you go back to Luke 1, in fact, do that with me and then we'll just kind of underline the verse. Remember when his birth was being proclaimed to Zacharias within the passage? Of course, Zacharias doubts and the angel

just shuts his mouth. Gabriel just shuts his mouth. But if you look in Luke 1:17, there's a quote in Luke 1:17, of Malachi, which is really the prophecy of one coming like Elijah in the final days.

So, it reads this way,

(Luke 1:17) “It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN...”

Actually, a quote from Malachi, by the way.

“... and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Now, who is this being said about? Well, it's being said about John the Baptist, that that's what he was coming to do, that he was going to come. And Jesus will even say, “And if you care to believe it, he was Elijah.” He'll even make that statement. What is He saying? Well, the passage is actually identifying how John will be identified, and that is, he's going to come, there's the two words here, in the spirit and the power of Elijah. Now, it is interesting to me that it doesn't say in the Holy Spirit, but it says in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Now, the question is, what was Elijah like? Not only in garb in the way that he dressed. I mean, you read in the Old Testament in particular, 2 Kings 1:8, the description of this hairy man that wears a leather belt, and we go, “Well, that sounds a little bit like John being described in Matthew 3:4.” That here you have this camel hair coat and leather. So, there's an identification right away with even the way they dress. But it goes far beyond that, because once again, it's the spirit and the power of Elijah. And if you're familiar with certainly Kings, you realize all the things that Elijah did. When you begin to see him actually introduced to you at the very beginning there in 1 Kings 17, what's bizarre is he comes out of nowhere. It just says, “And Elijah the Tishbite.” You go, “I didn't even know Elijah existed.” And God says, “I'm not concerned that you know that. What I want you to know is here he is.” And you know the first thing he does? First thing he does is he calls for a famine in the land. I mean, right out of the race, he just goes to Ahab, he goes, “There's going to be a famine in the land. We're going to get you.” And it really is that mentality or that spirit that is really the Law. I

mean, he'll slay 850 false prophets. I'd be worn out after that. And he'll get mad at himself for running when he hears that people are out to kill him from Jezebel. You begin to realize the kind of person that you're dealing with. Now, he's not an unrighteous person; he's very righteous. In fact, he's so righteous that he just can't bear the sin. He would rather go through a famine himself. He doesn't know how he's going to be fed the moment he begins to pray for that famine.

Nevertheless, he's all for it. (Talk about shooting yourself in the foot.) But the point is that he's zealous for righteousness, and that's a good thing. That's not a bad thing. That's a good thing. But he's going about it in a very vicious way, and he goes about it in such a way that he finds himself really in a place where he is worn out. And let me just emphasize this, if you begin to try to fight wickedness in your own power, you're going to get worn out. Because it's going to keep coming back, and you're not. You're going to wear out. He comes before God, and his great complaint before God is, "I'm the only one. I mean, there's nobody else. I'm the only one." And you'll feel that way. I've felt that way. You

start to do the right thing, you look around and you go, “Why aren't you helping me?” You can't understand why everybody doesn't have the same call you do. “Let's go get them.” “I think I'll stay home, watch TV.” You just get really upset about everybody else. So, you turn to God and you go, “Okay, so why isn't this going well? Because I'm the only one that's helping You.” And God, of course, turns to Elijah and goes, “No, we have 7,000 others that you don't know about.” And even when, in fact, Elijah is given one, Elisha, to come alongside of him, as God granted him that after his great cries, “I'm alone,” he still doesn't treat him with care or concern. He is fundamentally a harsh individual, and he clearly has high standards. He is very demanding and authoritative. There's no doubt about this. John is no different. John will come on the scene and like a bulldog, begin to go after Herod. Now, Herod's a sinner, there's no doubt about it, and he shouldn't have taken his brother's wife. And that's really the accusation, of course, as you read in Mark 6:18, John the Baptist goes up to Herod and he goes, “You have your brother's wife. That's unlawful.” And

he's right, it's unlawful, but then he wonders why he's thrown in prison, and I suppose he ultimately wondered, “Why are they getting ready to chop my head off?” But they do, and what you begin to see is in the spirit and the power of Elijah. Now, once again, what you have is the spirit and the power of the Law, which is righteous. The Law is righteous. There's no doubt about that. So, he's going and he's baptizing. And as Christ will go on and explain the ministry of John, He'll really elevate his ministry. We'll actually read that in the next paragraph afterwards. But at this juncture, that mentality is causing John to feel a little skittish about who Jesus is, because Jesus is not lining up with the way Law does. He fulfills the Law, but he's not thinking like Law.

The passage reads this way, if you look with me, in Luke 7:18, it says,

(Luke 7:18) “The disciples of John reported to him about all these things.”

What things? Well, that He had been healing. I mean, there was a young man raised from the dead. There

was a servant that was healed instantaneously by not even going there. I mean, these are great events that are happening, and people are being healed all around them. Miracles are happening all around them.

“The disciples of John reported to him about all these things.”

Now, I just want to emphasize that they're disciples of John, and they're reporting to him. That's telling us that there's some kind of hierarchy there that's being involved.

It then goes on and says,

(Luke 7:19) “Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord...”

So, now what you have is an authoritative individual. He has these disciples and he hears this message as they report back to him, so to speak, and then he goes, “Okay, we need to deal with this.” So, he takes two of them and he sends them. Now, why two? According to the Law, you have to have two witnesses. So, what we know is that everything being done is official, it's legal, it's a delegation that's being sent by him. That's highly

appropriate because this is the way you do things. This is the way truth is revealed.

“Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, “Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?”

Now, the way this is written in the Greek, it uses what is called the subjunctive, which means that John was questioning; subjunctive basically means that it's not seen as a fact, but he's just wondering, “Is it possible that You're not somebody else?” The only reason I bring this up is that the tone will change in just a minute. But just kind of mark that.

So, then verse 20 reads,

(Luke 7:20) “When the men came to Him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, ‘Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?’”

Now, remember I told you that when John gave them the question to ask, that it was in what seemed to be the subjunctive, which means that there was a question involved. He could be, might be, possibly He's not. The way they present it is in what is called the

indicative, and what that means is this, that they were convinced that He wasn't. There's now no longer a question. I have found this to be true, be careful in your doubting because your doubting will not only cause somebody to even doubt; it will cause them to go away from the truth. It shows just how sinister, just the doubt is. I mean, “Has God said?” It goes back to the garden.

So, as you come to this, the men come before Him, “Do we look for somebody else?”

Watch verse 21,

(Luke 7:21) “At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many who were blind.

(Luke 7:22) And He answered and said to them, “Go and report...”

Now, once again, falling in line with the Law and the necessities of the Law.

“... “Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are

raised up, the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.”

Once again, that's a direct quote fundamentally from Isaiah 61. That is the same quote that's actually used in Luke 4, where Jesus is in the synagogue in Nazareth, and He's reading out of Isaiah. It's that particular passage. In other words, His message has not changed. His calling has not changed. The mission has not changed. “I'm doing what I've been doing from the very beginning. It is the word of God that I'm fulfilling.” There's no doubt about that as we come to the passage. What's interesting is, you would think that John the Baptist would go, “Wow, miracles.” But John, the Law is not looking for miracles. The Law is looking for proof. I know that there's kind of semantics involved here, but he's not looking to be wowed. He just wants the legitimate proof and the evidence that you are who you say you are, which basically what the Law says is, “I want to see it. I want to see evidence.” So, Jesus puts it in the context, “Tell them what you've seen. Tell them what you've seen.”

Now, in a way, this is almost sad, and the reason I say that is if you look with me in John 10:31, this is such a great chapter because it's dealing with, of course, Jesus is proclaiming Himself to be the Good Shepherd. I mean, you can literally pull it out of Psalm 23, and now you see that that's Jesus. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. But you drop on down, of course, those that are listening are angered over the fact that He's proclaiming these things, and they gather around, and it says in verse 31,

(John 10:31) “The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.

(John 10:32) Jesus answered them, “I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?”

(John 10:33) The Jews answered Him, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.”

(John 10:34) Jesus answered them, “Has it not been written in your Law, ‘I SAID, YOU ARE GODS’?”

In other words, “I’m going to make you strong ones, powerful ones.” Basically, is what the word is making reference to.

(John 10:35) “If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken),

(John 10:36) do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?

(John 10:37) “If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me.”

Now, what Jesus has just done in that simple phrase is He's lowered the standard of faith into that which is evidential, our sight. In other words, “You see the things that I'm doing, at least believe that.”

But watch the phrase,

(John 10:38) “but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works...”

Well, that's kind of where John is. I mean, it is the message, right, that makes you believe? It's not the evidence. It's the message. The Word of God, the

Gospel of God, changes the heart. Jesus turns to His disciples, “Gentlemen, who do people say that I am?” “Elijah. Jeremiah.” “Who do you say that I am?” “Well, you're the Christ.” “Flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you. That was My Father that told you this.” Because there is no evidence that would do this. Man is looking for some sort of evidence that God is doing a great work, and God is doing a great work. He's healing hearts. He's saving souls. There's no doubt about it. We don't see that because the work that He's doing doesn't match up to the work that we want Him to do, which is basically, “Get him!”

I know that because if you look with me in Isaiah 64, just to kind of give you an example of this, you begin to see that God goes, “I know what you're asking for, but do you know what you're asking for?” The way that it reads at the beginning of Isaiah 64 is the cry of His people, and the cry of His people is not much different than Habakkuk, which is, “You've got to get rid of these people.”

But if you look in Isaiah 64,

(Isaiah 64:1) “Oh, that You would rend the heavens and come down,

That the mountains might quake at Your presence—”

That's what we're looking for, right?

(Isaiah 64:2) “As fire kindles the brushwood, as fire causes water to boil— ...”

“Wow, we'd like to see some people boiling in it.”

“... To make Your name known to Your adversaries...”

“Yeah, that'll teach them.”

“... That the nations may tremble at Your presence!”

“We'll get them trembling instead of us.”

The passage then goes into something very unique in the fact that it describes that there clearly is no God like our God who demonstrated His great works on the earth, and the way it reads is, if you drop on down to verse 4,

(Isaiah 64:4) “For from days of old...”

And what He's basically saying, “From of old, You've done great things.” You can't say that our God has been

passive. I mean, He parts the sea, manna comes down from heaven, burning bushes, and I haven't even mentioned what he did to Pharaoh. That's all historical stuff. I mean, that's stuff that the Jews are celebrating today of what happened.

So, the passage reads,

“For from days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear,

Nor has the eye seen a God besides You,

Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for Him.”

In other words, “Other nations have never seen something like this. Nobody's ever seen anything like this or even heard anything like this, but us. We have.”

Now, the next question you have to ask yourself is, “So, how did that work for you?” And the answer is, it didn't change them. It didn't change Israel. They were continually in the state of rebellion.

If you've ever read Psalm 78, you find Israel, they're in a loop. It says, “Then God slayed them, then they repented.” Yeah, they're dead. But just constantly, and then they come back to God, then they go back, and

then they come back, and they go back. It's just ebb and flow all the way through. Well, this passage is saying, "From of old, you've experienced this."

But Look at Isaiah 65:1. How does it read?

(Isaiah 65:1) "I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me;

I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me.

I said, 'Here am I, here am I,'

To a nation which did not call on My name."

Even though they saw these things, even though they heard these things, even though there was a God in their midst that did things that... I mean, name one other god that did anything like this. I mean, the only thing the other gods can do is stand there and look like an idol, and then you have to carry them around. So, they're just burdens.

Now, what's interesting about Isaiah 64:4 is that Paul will quote this verse in 2 Corinthians 2:9, and in quoting the verse, he'll use it to demonstrate that you cannot come to God through empirical reasoning, through

your eyes, through your ears, through even your own heart, reasoning, that it's impossible. But the only way that you're going to come to God is by a magnificent divine act of God revealing Himself to you, and the heart has to be in a state of humility that says, "I don't trust myself, and I don't trust the evidence that I see. I only trust the One who's proclaiming the truth." In other words, "I believe Him. It's not the evidence that I believe."

We were talking about this earlier with the men. I said, "Is it possible that somebody can be saved if they had enough evidence to believe that God existed, perhaps through creationism?" I've had people come up to me and they go, "I went to a class of creationism, and at first, I was a non-believer. Then I saw all the evidence of science, and I said, 'I believe.'" And I said, "You're not saved." And they said, "What do you mean I'm not saved?" I said, "Because you believed on what you saw. Faith is the substance of things not seen." And so, when man begins to come into his own realm and he begins to take some sort of control, then doubts

become forefront, and it doesn't matter what he sees; he's not seeing what he wants to see. John had a perception of the way the Messiah should be. He wasn't panning out. Was Jesus fulfilling the Law, doing exactly what He was called to do? Yes, it says in Isaiah. But what about coming and just rending the heavens and tearing those people up? It's not happening. "Well, I'm offended by that." And there are oftentimes that, if something happens, perhaps seen as just heinous wickedness, horrific events, and we go, "Why isn't God doing anything?" And I would say He is. He's saving. That's what He does. You're looking for something else, and because of that, you're offended by Him.

There's a great passage and I want to end this. It's found, and of course most of it because it is so familiar, Isaiah 53. But it's in Isaiah 53 that it starts off, and let me just emphasize the simple question that's asked, "Who has believed this message?" Who could believe it? It's an unbelievable message. I mean, I can believe that God would come in His fire and His glory and wipe out everybody. I can believe that. But who could believe

that He would come and die for you, that He would let man crucify Him, that He would be willing to be despised and rejected among men, and that He would yet still embrace them?

(Isaiah 53:1) “Who has believed our message?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

(Isaiah 53:2) For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,

And like a root out of parched ground;

He has no stately form or majesty

That we should look upon Him,

Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

(Isaiah 53:3) He was despised and forsaken of men,

A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;

And like one from whom men hide their face

He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

(Isaiah 53:4) Surely our griefs He Himself bore...”

Who would do that? What God would do that?

“... And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

(Isaiah 53:5) But He was pierced through for our
transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

(Isaiah 53:6) All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.”

Who has believed this message? It's an unbelievable message. I mean, that God would be pleased to crush Him, verse 10? Who could believe that? That's not the way I think, and oftentimes God will work in such miraculous ways, but we're so focused on a way that He needs to be working that we'll miss Him working. I mean, we'll literally miss everything that He's doing. And I'll tell you, I've seen the Lord just saving people and moving people and stimulating people and

inspiring people, and God knows what He's doing. But my faith is in Him, not in the circumstances or how I perceive them. Because once I become the standard of perception, then Jesus begins to offend me, and He'll offend you too, because He doesn't think like you. But I can tell you that's the greatest source of comfort to me, that He doesn't think like me, and blessed are all those who will keep from stumbling over Him.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your word and Your encouragement to us, that You're doing a work and You're doing a great work in the lives of those around us. You're sovereign and orchestrating great things in the realm of this world. You are not limited, and Your arm is not so short that it cannot save. You alone are the Savior, and we put our trust in You, and we rejoice in what is happening. We believe to be absent from the body is to be present with You, and we believe that as a sovereign God is orchestrating the lives of His children, You do all things well. Not one good thing will You

withhold from us, and not one good thing will You rob from us.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, what I'm asking you to do is simply trust Him. Believe in Him. Experience the peace that passes all understanding, that your God is in control.