



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 55:1-13

“The Sure Mercies of David”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the prophecy of the Book of Isaiah, and we find, Lord, constant amazement as we consider the marvelous way in which this man so many hundreds of years before Christ was given these magnificent prophecies, which have so beautifully come true largely relating to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, but also to other events in human history related to those saving events. And we thank Thee for the privilege of looking at them and to study them and reflect upon the way in which an Old Testament prophet looked forward to the coming of the redeemer and wrote about him. We thank Thee for the wonderful way in which he was evidently encouraged and sustained and excited by the things that he was writing. And Lord, we pray that Thou would give us understanding. And as we turn again to the latter part of this prophecy, may our hearts be warmed as we consider the things that concern the Son of God. Be with each one present. We pray, Lord, that the many spiritual needs that we have may be ministered to through the word of God. And we ask Thy blessing now upon each one of us as we study. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] We're turning tonight to Isaiah chapter 55, and confessedly, I am turning to this chapter primarily because of the reference in verse 3 to "the sure mercies of

David," which of course have reference to the Davidic covenant, which forms such an important part of the understanding of the prophetic word of God. So, our subject tonight is "The Sure Mercies of David," and we're looking at Isaiah chapter 55, verse 1 through verse 13. Perhaps tonight we'll read through the entire chapter as we begin. The prophet begins by saying,

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee. Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and let the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their

hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

The 55th chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah is one that is loaded with great texts. No doubt as I read through this chapter, you thought of several of them that you have probably often cited in various contexts. In fact, if I were a textual preacher, and there is nothing wrong with being a textual preacher if you are preaching the text of the word of God, I don't think it's the best way to do it, but it is at least preaching the word of God, this would be one of my most used chapters.

Look at verse 1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Well, what a wonderful figurative way of speaking of the gospel of free grace.

And then verse 3, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure (or faithful) mercies of David." In fact, that is so evidently a text that is memorable that the Apostle Paul cites it himself in Acts chapter 13 when he's preaching in Antioch and Pisidia.

And then in verses 6 and 7,

"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Magnificent promise there.

And then the thoughts of God "are not your thoughts," he says in the 8th verse, "neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

There is probably very few Christians who've been Christians very long who haven't cited that text or thought about it. My thoughts are not your thoughts, and my ways are not your ways.

And then in the 11th verse, we've often cited this text, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

To illustrate the fact that this is a chapter of unusual texts, Charles Haddon Spurgeon's Treasury of the Old Testament, which is a collection of sermons that he preached, Mr. Spurgeon was a textual preacher for the most part, has six of his sermons devoted to texts in Isaiah chapter 55, which is rather unusual. So, Mr. Spurgeon found many of these texts, texts that were eminently preach-able to use a common preacher's expression.

It is of course a chapter of the grace of God, not a gospel of forms and ceremonies, not of altars and priests, not of genuflexions and processions and images and incense and dogmas of churches and orthodoxies of particular churches, but it is a chapter of grace. And the prophet begins by speaking about every one who thirsts, come to the waters. And those who have no money are to come, and they are to come and buy wine and milk without money and without price. And so, right at the beginning, the note of something given by God is struck by the prophet.

Now, I think it's important for us as we look at these verses for the short time that we have tonight, to remind ourselves of the connection between Isaiah 52 and 53 and then 54 and 55. It is so helpful in reading the Bible if we will note chapter after chapter the connections that the chapters have with one another. In fact, it would be a great thing for you if in reading the Bible you sought to put the contents of a chapter in a line

and then write it in your Bible above the chapter, so that as you went through reading various chapters, you would have a quick, handy way of catching up with the flow of thought.

Many years ago I used to talk to outstanding preachers and ask them, "What were the secrets of their own preaching?" and "What did they try to do in order to master the word of God with a view to teaching it?" And I got a lot of different answers. One answer that I got from Dr. H. A. Ironside was very interesting to me, because he in his day was one of the outstanding expository preachers.

Dr. Ironside was the kind of man who preached through books of the Bible. He was the pastor for many years of the Moody Memorial Church. He actually grew up in a church that had ministry very much like Believers Chapel. And then, he became the pastor of this large church for a number of years, and then finished out his life, again, meeting in churches that meet very similar to Believers Chapel. But Dr. Ironside preached through books. And most of his, I think, over fifty books that he wrote are just simply collections of his sermons that he gave.

And I asked him, when he was a man of about seventy years of age and I was very young, what he might give me as a word of advice about the things that I might do to become a Bible teacher. He said, "Well, I can only tell you what I did and what really helped me." He said, "In my early days, I was working for the Salvation Army." And he was one of the street preachers of the Salvation Army, and he also did some missionary work among the Navajo Indians in Arizona. But he would preach on the street corners. And he said, "I longed to have a set of books by J. N. Darby."

Now Mr. Darby, as many of you know from the history of the Brethren, was probably the most important man in the earlier days of the Brethren. And he was a godly man and a fine student of the Bible, and he wrote a set of books. They're small books; they're called The Synopsis of the Bible. And I've forgotten now whether there are five or

six volumes. They're fairly small print, but not a whole lot of material. Books about like this and would take up about this much space on the shelf of your library.

But he said, "I'd long to have a set of Mr. Darby's Synopsis," because in the Brethren Churches that Ironside was in, Mr. Darby was appreciated next to the Apostle Paul and right behind our Lord. And so, he wanted to have a set of those books. And he said, "Someone sent him five dollars and told him that this was a personal gift to him and that he could buy anything he wanted to," and so he said, "I immediately bought the set The Synopsis of the Bible." You can tell the price of books in those days. But he said, "I read through that with my Bible. I read the Bible, I read Mr. Darby's synopsis, and my goal was to be able to think through every chapter of the Bible, not all of the details." Though of course, he later came to the place where he understood a lot of the details. He read the Bible through at least once every year all the years of his ministry. That was a personal Bible study practice that he had.

But he said, "I read Mr. Darby's Synopsis through with a view to being able to think through every chapter of the Bible in my mind." He said, "You know, Lewis, I preach as often as many as fourteen times a week." And he said, "I don't have time to prepare fourteen messages a week." But he said, "I tried to master the Bible, so that by mastering the Bible, when I'm brought into a congregation or to a group of people to speak," he said, "I go and I sit down on the platform, and I look out over the people knowing what I know about them which has been told me, and then I simply ask the Lord, 'Lord, what would you have me to speak on today?'"

And since he had thought through the Bible chapter by chapter, he was able, of course, to speak on almost any kind of topic from the chapters of the Bible. And that impressed me very much, to be able to think through the Bible. He said, "You know, I only read Mr. Darby's Synopsis once, but I can still recite paragraphs in that book. It meant so much to me at that time to be able to have that help."

So, I'm suggesting to you it is a wonderful thing to be able to think through the books, Isaiah chapter 1, what is that about? Isaiah chapter 2. Isaiah chapter 3. Isaiah chapter 4, and so on. And you will discover, if you will make that as your goal, that your knowledge of the word of God will be tremendously increased.

Well, to come to the point, Isaiah 52:13 through chapter 53 verse 12 is probably the fullest and most magnificent unfolding of the sacrificial work of the servant of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the redeemer, that we have in all of the Old Testament.

Now last week we looked at chapter 54. And in chapter 54, we saw that the prophet speaks of Zion or Jerusalem as the bride of Jehovah, in other words, Jerusalem as the city of Jehovah. And he used the figure that was very common in the east of the god of the people being wedded to the city. Well, that was just a figure of speech of God being united with the people represented by that particular city. So, Jerusalem is the city of Jehovah, and Zion as the bride of Jehovah is a figurative way of referring to the Nation Israel as the redeemed people of Jehovah.

And chapter 54 is an account of what God is going to do in the future for them. For example, in 54 in verse 7, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer." So, we have a beautiful picture of Jerusalem, the place of the Nation Israel, the people of God, as the object of divine grace and protection.

Therefore, when we come to chapter 55, everything is ready. The guests have been invited, and nothing is required except for them to come to this magnificent banquet and reunion that shall take place in the city. And so it's very natural for the prophet to begin chapter 55 and issue the invitation. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

The invitation, of course, is a collection of beautiful figures, waters, wine, milk. Water, of course, was cleansing, refreshing, particularly meaningful for people who lived in the land of Palestine, because water was so difficult to obtain. So, come to the waters, refreshing, cleansing. And then, buy wine – wine, the source of joy, the Old Testament often speaking of wine as that which brings joy. And then milk, satisfying. So this is an invitation to get that which is refreshing and cleansing, to buy that which is the source of joy and which is satisfying.

Now there has not been anything like that among men since the day that Adam was driven out of paradise. Then the word human merit is blotted out of the dictionary of truth, as Mr. Spurgeon says, and from that time on salvation can never be earned by men, but must of course be found only through the grace of God. So the invitation is given, without money and without price.

Sometimes people say that the idea of a free gospel is something that leads to sin, because if we're forgiven and our forgiveness is not based upon anything that we do, then why should not we just go on out and keep sinning and continue sinning so that God can go on freely forgiving and getting more glory actually by our more sinning. So the kind of doctrine that you proclaim of free forgiveness is the kind of doctrine that ultimately leads to more sin. That's why the Apostle Paul has to write in Romans chapter 6 in verse 1, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid."

Actually, a free gospel is not an incentive to sin. It's rather a motivation to holiness, because it is by virtue of the gratitude that comes to us when we realize that what we could not earn has been given to us, that we learn to truly appreciate the Lord God. As that little couplet has it, "Speak of morality, thou bleeding lamb, the best morality is love to Thee." There is no greater morality than the morality that is sourced in the love of God as it is found in Christ Jesus.

Now the prophet asks, "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And why do you spend money for the labor, or why do you labor for that which does not

satisfy? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight; itself in fatness."

That's why, of course, you've never seen a happy legalist. Legalists are always sour and discouraged and defeated kind of people. The only time they really feel good is when they gain a convert for their legalism. Then they're happy for a little while when they've managed to involve you in the unhappiness that they have. They're greatly happy then when they can get you under the law with them. But otherwise, they're an unhappy people, because legalism is ultimately self defeating. It's that which is not bread, or it's what the prophet says is labor but it does not satisfy. And so he invites them to hearken diligently unto him that they may have that which is good.

And then he says that he is going to make an everlasting covenant with them, even the sure mercies of David. Now this covenant is, of course, the source of some of the greatest of the blessings of the word of God. And it will be helpful for me just for a few moments, and I intended to do this as one of the major things tonight, to say just a word or two about the Davidic covenant, because it is one of the three great unconditional covenants of the word of God. And a great deal of our salvation hangs upon the things that are set forth in the Davidic covenant.

The Davidic covenant actually goes all the way back to the Abrahamic covenant, because when God gave his unconditional covenant to Abraham and said to him that he was going to make his name great, and he's going to bring him into a particular land, and also, when he said that all of the nations of the earth or all of the families of the earth are going to be blessed in you, then in the 17th chapter after that, he also added "and kings shall come out of you."

Now later on in the Davidic covenant, unfolded to David in 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17 and Psalm 89, specific reference is made to a king that shall come from the seed of Abraham and who shall rule and reign over the earth. So, the Davidic covenant is really an expansion of the Abrahamic Covenant. It is an unconditional covenant. No

conditions are given. God just promises David that of his seed someone will sit upon his throne. He will have a realm, and he will have people over which he will rule.

Now, the Old Testament is full of that. And we have seen a great deal of it in the passages I mention. And then in the prophets, constantly the Davidic covenant is mentioned. For example, in this very prophecy, back in Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6 and 7, a passage we've looked at, we read in verse 7 of chapter 9, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment."

And then in chapter 11, we read, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse." And Jesse you remember was the father of David. "And a Branch shall grow out of his roots." And then in verse 10 we read, "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; and to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious."

In Amos and in Micah and in Haggai and other prophecies of the Old Testament, the Davidic covenant is unfolded as one of the great hopes of the Nation Israel and of others who were believers in the Messiah who was to come.

And finally when the Lord Jesus Christ's birth is announced, and in Luke verse 30 through verse 33 we hear Gabriel saying to Mary in verse 30,

"Mary, fear not: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David."

It's very interesting to me that this text says that there would be given to the Lord Jesus "the throne of his father David." In other words, there is a literal fulfillment of the Davidic covenant to our Lord Jesus Christ. David was told one of your seed shall sit upon

the throne. And now, we have the Lord Jesus coming, and he is the one who is to literally sit upon the throne of David. In other words, the promise to him is verified. And we read in verse 33, "And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

I would think that since we have this prophecy that the Lord Jesus is to rule and reign in the kingdom of God, and since the first stage of the fulfillment of the Davidic promises is fulfilled in this very literal and normal way, then we may expect the other provisions of the Davidic covenant to be fulfilled in the same way. In other words, those great prophecies of the Old Testament that speak about a worldwide domain, about a king who shall rule in Jerusalem, about how Israel shall be restored to the land and inherit the land, and also that the Gentiles shall also be under this worldwide universal king, that those things shall be fulfilled in a similar way. And so for myself, I look forward to that day when the Lord Jesus shall rule and reign over this earth as the prophecies of the Old Testament have prophesied.

Now you read on through the New Testament and this same kind of thing meets us over and over again. For example, in Romans chapter 1 and verse 3 and verse 4, the Apostle Paul, giving a very important verse or two on the person of our Lord and the gospel, says that the gospel is concerned with "his son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." In other words, it was important for Paul that the connection of our Lord Jesus with David naturally and through the flesh should be made known. That was part of the gospel that the one who would come and be the redeemer, who would be the suffering servant of Jehovah, who would establish the kingdom, would have this fleshly connection with King David of the Old Testament.

In chapter 15 and verse 7 and following of the Book of Romans we have a similar kind of thing. The apostle writes,

"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Messiah also received us to the glory of God. Now I say (This is Romans 15:8) that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God (Notice that, for the faithfulness of God. These are sure mercies of David) for the truthfulness of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse (There he is, David), and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

The apostle also makes reference to the Davidic covenant and its blessings in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 8. And in fact, he makes this something that we ought to keep before us constantly. He's writing to his youthful apostolic legit Timothy, and in the 2nd chapter of 2 Timothy the apostle writes these words, "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel." So, here near the end of the apostle's life, the Davidic covenant is still before him. And the Lord Jesus and his Davidic ministry is still important for him.

And then in the last book of the Bible, Revelation, we have the same kind of stress. In Revelation chapter 3 and verse 7 we read, "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." Why would the Lord Jesus say to the church at Philadelphia that he had the key of David if he were not looking upon himself as the one who is the fulfiller of the unconditional promises made to his forefather David?

Turn over just a page or two to the 5th chapter and the 5th verse where the Apostle John is describing the vision that he saw. And then, in chapter 5 he hears some things that are spoken, and finally in verse 5 we read,

"And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book (Now this, mind you, is the Lion of the tribe of Judah) Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by thy blood some of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made them unto our God kings and priests: and they shall reign upon the earth."

So you see, as one follows through the Davidic promises and the Davidic covenant, we ultimately wind up with the covenant established in the blood of the lamb, and the lamb is said to be the root of the tribe of Judah. And as a result of what he has done, men are redeemed from every tribe, kindred, tongue and nation, that is, the Gentiles also participate in the blessing, and they reign upon the earth. In other words, they are the recipients of the blessings of the Abrahamic and the Davidic and the new covenants.

Now of course, looking at it as you look at it in this way, as you go through the whole of the Scriptures, you get the overview of what the Bible says about the covenants

of the Old Testament. But looking at it from the standpoint of Isaiah 53, what Isaiah understood about the ultimate fulfillment of the Davidic promises, we of course cannot know. But he understood, evidently, a great deal about it, and he knew that there was an everlasting covenant made with David, and it had sure and faithful mercies.

Now when he says the "sure mercies of David," he means mercies that will be carried out, that is, that the men for whom they are given will actually experience them. In other words, the God of the Scriptures is not a God who can be frustrated. He is not a person who tries to do something and then has to give up saying, well, I tried my hardest but man's heart was just too rebellious, and I'm not able to accomplish what I wanted to accomplish. We do not have that in the Scriptures. That's why we're Calvinists and not Arminians, or if you don't like that term, I don't like that term, it's just you could say so much with that one word, that's why we believe in the sovereign grace of God. That's why we say sovereign grace of God. And that's why we mean God on the throne accomplishing all of his purposes.

Now as you read through this chapter, you would see that's exactly what Isaiah says. In fact, I can faintly hear him saying "Preach it, Lewis," [Laughter] because that is really what he means. Notice what he says. It's very obvious that that's what he's got in mind, because in a moment he will say in verse 11, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I have sent it." In other words, these are great promises designed to encourage the people of God.

Now I'd like to suggest to you, because we cannot deal with everything in this chapter in forty-five minutes, but I'd like to just suggest to you that when he says in the 4th verse of chapter 55, "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people," that most likely he is speaking of David. The reason I say that is because of the tense of the verbs. In other words, he's mentioned the sure mercies of David, the promises that God gave to him, and then he refers to David as a

person whom God has given for a witness to the people as a leader and a commander. But then in the 5th verse, he speaks of David's antitype. In the 4th verse it's David as a type of the Messiah but as a historical figure, but in the 5th, of the son of David.

Now I don't have time to stop and give you the exegetical reasons for this. You'll just have to accept my word for it. There are a number of exegetical reasons that might be given. If you have a nice library that you can look at, one of the places you can look among others is the commentary by Franz Delitzsch on Isaiah, one of the better ones even though it's an older one. And you'll find this is basically the interpretation that Delitzsch has given.

So, in verse 5 he says, "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified Thee," David's antitype here. And what the prophet is saying is that he is the gathering point of the nations in the future.

Now that, of course, was part of the Abrahamic promises, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." So when the Lord Jesus comes the second time, and his kingdom is established, we may expect the Gentiles also to flow into the kingdom, because that is part of the kingdom promises that have been given.

In fact, in the present day, we have the Gentiles who are entering into relationship with the Lord in the one body. And Paul says that the Old Testament prophecies are being fulfilled in the Gentile salvation of today. But in the 11th chapter of Romans he says there is a time coming when there's going to be an even greater influx of Gentiles when Israel itself returns to the place of blessing. So, that is what he is talking about here when he says, "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee."

Well, speaking then of this great invitation to come, because the sacrifice has been offered, the promises of glory in the future are given by the prophets, so come, you who

don't have any money. Come, and buy milk and wine, and drink waters without money and price. It's an invitation from the prophet to enter into the possession of these blessings through faith by grace, by the principle of grace.

Now the exhortation is given next. Verse 6,

"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

This is the prophet's appeal in the light of these great promises. Isn't it interesting that he says, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found"? Paul says there is none that seeketh after God, no, not one. So what is the prophet suggesting by calling upon men to seek? Well, he is telling us that while we cannot of ourselves seek the Lord, it is possible to seek the Lord with the help of the Lord. It's just as we are told in the Scriptures, that we cannot believe of ourselves. "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." But we're also invited and encouraged and exhorted to come because we can come with the help of God.

So when we speak about the inability of man, we don't mean that a man cannot ever believe. We mean he cannot believe of himself. So, when a person senses that he is unable to come of himself, what should he do? Appeal for help. Appeal for help. And so he appeals for help that he may believe the great promises. If he cannot of himself seek the Lord and sees that his heart is so hardened that he doesn't want to come, and yet he knows he ought to come, what does he do? Gets down by the side of his bed and says, "O God, my heart is like a stone. And I don't want to come, but I know I ought to come, so give me the grace to come." And you know, he gives grace to come for those who cannot come of themselves. That's what the Scriptures teach. And so, "Seek ye the

LORD while he may be found." Well, that's designed to draw the response "I cannot come of myself." But the promise is that when we appeal to the Lord, we can come in his power.

"Let the wicked forsake his way (And then he concludes with), for he will abundantly pardon." I wish I could read Mr. Spurgeon's sermon on those phrases there "He will abundantly pardon." Magnificent sermon. He talks about the fact that it's an abundant pardon because the fountain from which the pardon comes is an infinite fountain. It's an abundant pardon because of the abundant objects of the pardon. Think of the countless millions who have come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and ultimately, they shall come from every tribe, kindred, tongue and nation.

We who believe in the sovereign grace of God do not believe that heaven is going to be peopled by a little company of believers in sovereign grace, and the vast, vast multitudes are going to pass off into a Christ-less eternity. That's what those Arminians say. They try to persuade you simple souls that what we're talking about is not biblical teaching. It's in the Bible and in the doctrine of sovereign grace that we find in heaven a multitude which no man could number, not even those Arminians with their computers. They cannot figure out how many people are going to be in heaven because there are going to be so many there. The pardon that God is the source of is an abundant pardon.

Mr. Spurgeon didn't say anything about computers, I added that. But he says it's an abundant pardon because of the abundance of sins that are pardoned. And it's an abundant pardon because of the sinfulness of the sins that we commit. And it's an abundant pardon because of the abundant means for the forgiveness of those sins. After all, Jesus Christ is no little savior. He's an infinite savior. And his sacrifice is no little insignificant sacrifice. It's the sacrifice of an infinite God, God-man who has given himself for our sins.

And it's an abundant pardon because of the abundant terms of pardon. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done," but on the basis of the free grace of God,

salvation is dispensed to those who don't have money and do not have the price. Come, and you'll receive salvation as a free gift.

And it's an abundant pardon because of the fulness of the pardon itself. We not only have our sins forgiven, but we're established in the family of God as righteous before God, given the infinite third person of the Trinity to be our guide through life and to teach us and instruct us and to bring us surely and certainly into the presence of God. Such abundant blessings attend the abundant pardon that God gives to those who are part of the family of God. That's why we sing here on Sunday night occasionally "Who is a pardoning God like Thee, Who has grace so rich and free." That's a magnificent text, isn't it?

Now the last part of the passage, and I'll just say a word about it because it's all found in one little word "for" which begins verse 8. In other words, this is the foundation of what he's been saying above. We're told to leave our way and our thoughts because his are higher thoughts, and they are fruitful thoughts, and they are irresistibly effective thoughts.

Notice, they are higher thoughts, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," "as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Your best thoughts are like earth, and his thoughts are like heaven, in other words, a heavenly difference between his thoughts and ours.

Furthermore, his are fruitful,

"As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void."

In other words, when the waters come down and water those flowers that you've planted and those vegetables that you've put in your vegetable garden, it doesn't rush right back up to heaven. It stays there, and fruit takes place, and then ultimately of course, the moisture goes back to God who has given it. But it stays until it is fruitful in the produce of the ground.

And finally he says, it's irresistibly effective,

"For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. (What a beautiful figure that is. You can just see the limbs of the trees moving like this, clapping their hands.) Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

The sure mercies of David. That's what we experience, too, because we are, most of us I presume, Gentiles who've been grafted into the olive tree. And we partake of the root of the fatness of the olive tree by virtue of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you're here tonight and you've never believed in our Lord, think what you're missing, the abundant pardon, the glorious future through the son of David. Come to him. You're poor, you don't have any money. You don't have any wealth at all spiritually. Acknowledge the fact that you are poverty stricken and come to him who offers all of these blessings without money, without price. May God help you to come.

Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for these magnificent promises found in the word of God. What a hope we have! We give Thee thanks for it. For Jesus' sake. Amen.