

**INTENTS****Galatians 4:28-31, Isaiah 54****(Read Galatians 4:28-31)**

**Intro:** I've been working through Galatians in my devotions this week and Paul's frustration with the Galatian Church is palpable. They had done so well and had been so receptive to the Good News. But they had fallen prey to the old legalism and slavery of the Jewish Law. In chapter 4 Paul assures them of the fact that they are now sons and daughters of freedom and not slaves to the old ways. Instead of seeing God as a slave master, they can call him Abba – Daddy – and now they are sons and daughters of promise.

In the verse immediately preceding the text I just read, Paul quotes from Isaiah with,

*“Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear;*

*break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor!*

*For the children of the desolate one will be more*

*than those of the one who has a husband.” Galatians 4:27*

. . . showing that God's promise will transform those who are desolate and hopeless into children of joy because they are no longer slaves to the works of the law. Instead they are sons and daughters by his grace.

Paul was drawing on the imagery of Isaiah 54 and I want to do the same. I want to talk about the Holy Restoration that comes from standing on God's promises. Let's do that as I take Isaiah 54 passage by passage. We will see that our future is intents – ever expanding tents to be exact..

Read Isaiah 54:1-3

In a crazy mixed up world that can make the most optimistic person feel hopeless, the people of God can . . .

**Proceed with confidence**

- In Hebrew culture for a woman to have no children was a hopeless and shameful thing. Not only was she coming up short in one of her main purposes for existence, which made her feel a failure, but she faced the desolation of old age with no one to care for her. This was on top of the thought that she was failing her husband who was counting on her for an heir.
- Barrenness was a curse. Various accounts in the Old Testament point this out.
  - Sarah is a very famous one and she is who Paul is referring to because she was so desperate to provide an heir for her husband Abraham. So desperate in fact, that she gave him her slave girl, Hagar. That scheme failed miserably, and it's the subject of another sermon. Suffice it to say it's a prime example of what happens when we try to get ahead of God's plan.
  - Hannah was another barren woman who desperately wanted a child and her faithfulness was rewarded when she finally had Samuel who became the last and greatest Judge of Israel.
  - Naomi was not barren, but her two sons died, making her as desolate as one who never had children.
- But God is assuring his people as they come home from exile that their terrible fortunes would be reversed. No longer would they be as shamed and empty as a barren woman but, as they go on in confidence and faith, they could actually plan for expansion. They were to expand the footprint of their tent – they were to move the tent pegs so it covered more and more. God will bring the victory and the people of God will grow in number. The promise is intents!
- This is because . . .

**The past is past**

- Listen, (Read Isaiah 54:4-6)
- Remember that old shame you had? Well forget it! It's gone. What brought shame for the barren woman is driven out by a house full of happy kids. The old activities and sinful practices that placed an insurmountable gulf between God and his people and drove them into exile, is gone. The past is past.
- This is something we Christ Followers need to realize – when we receive the forgiveness of our sins that Jesus made possible as the ultimate sacrifice on the Cross – we are new persons. The old is gone and we are new. The old song puts it perfectly, *My sins are all pardoned, my guilt is all gone! Glory, I'm saved! Glory, I'm saved! I'm saved by the blood of the Crucified One!*
- The past is past and don't let anyone, Satan, or anyone who knew you in the old days, or even your own guilty conscience, tell you otherwise.

- This is because . . .

### **Love remains**

- Listen, (Read Isaiah 54:7-10)
- God had utilized some really tough love on his people. They lost everything and were sent into exile. But it literally hurt him worse than it hurt them. He loved the world so much he sent his only begotten Son – and that hurt!
- Through it all love remained because tough love is still love. The heavenly Father had closed the door to their room and they screamed in a horrific tantrum but he knew what they needed, and when they realized what they needed, his compassion (a word that is used in verses 7, 8, and 10) opened the door and he gathered his children into his arms and brought them back into fellowship with him. His love remains.
- His promise also remains. He had promised Noah that he would never destroy the earth by flood again. Here he makes good on the promise that he had made to his people, *He will not leave you or forsake you.* Deuteronomy 31:6c. God keeps his promises and his love remains.
- And that makes his people . . .

### **Children of promise**

- Listen, (Read Isaiah 54:11-14)
- Look at those promises! As the people of God are restored, they will be in a bejeweled city. Precious stones everywhere! I had to look up the jewel called carbuncle since the only thing I was aware of called a carbuncle was basically a terrible skin infection much like a boil. Here, it's a beautiful red stone that can be polished into a jewel. From exile to palatial splendor – that's the promise.
- And look at the other blessings to come. Not only will our children be taught by God, but they will enjoy peace. In the coming righteousness, oppression will be a thing of the past (remember, the past is past) and we will be free of fear.
- As children of promise we need to release our fear and rest in God's arms. Are you fearful? Don't be, God's got this.
- Finally, one more point that is very clear here in the closing verses of Isaiah 54. Listen, (Read Isaiah 54:15-17)
- Here's the point . . .

### **God does not send trouble**

- God gets a lot of blame for what goes on in this world. Back on March 14, 2020, as something called Covid 19 was closing the world down, I attended a prayer meeting and one person began his prayer with, "Father God, we don't know why you have caused this disease . . ." and I cringed. God doesn't cause disease! God allows disease in his creation, but in his perfect Creation there was no disease. The truth is, humanity caused disease. Yes, by the disobedience of Adam and Eve and every human since, except for one perfect man, disease has spread. God doesn't stir up trouble – we do that quite well ourselves, thank you very much!
- Oh, God could stop it, but he doesn't. Instead he calls his people out of it. Don't fall into the trap of thinking trouble comes from God.
- Here's a good thing to remember as we have many suffering in our church family and in our community – God didn't cause it! God doesn't do that. He isn't some cosmic bully who laughs wickedly as he causes the suffering of a fly as he pulls its wings off or tortures a puppy. No! We just pointed out that he has great plans for us – not disease or strife or death. His love remains. But trouble happens because of the activity of the evil one and his willing accomplices who have either rejected God or have never heard about him.
- So when disease or pain or evil of any kind comes, know that it is not from God. What we have from him are the promises he gives to us as his children of promise that *no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed* (v. 17a). We have the final victory through that one perfect man who took all our sins to the Cross and the grave.

**Conclusion:** Talk about intents! He took our place and we celebrate that as we gather around the table of the Lord. Let's prepare for Communion. Amen.