

How does God get our attention when we refuse to listen? How can He turn our selfish hearts from fixating on His gifts to adoration of Him, the giver of every good gift (James 1:17)? It is His furnace of affliction that refines us. There is an easier way, a way which He would much rather see us take. It is to follow His leading and take heed to His commandments. One way or the other, He will see His name is glorified.

¹ Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and who came from the waters of Judah, who swear by the name of the LORD and confess the God of Israel, but not in truth or right. ² For they call themselves after the holy city, and stay themselves on the God of Israel; the LORD of hosts is his name. Isaiah 48:1-2 At the first read through, I thought these people who call themselves by the name but not in truth or right could be compared to those who call themselves Christians today but have no idea what it means to follow Jesus. I hear people say they are a Christian and declare that Jesus would be on a certain side of an issue, when in fact the gospels clearly say the opposite. Some people act in a manner that is inconsistent with the Gospel and yet teach it. This is certainly a source of confusion about Christianity in our culture. We can't expect those who are not born-again to catch the Spirit behind the letter of the Word (¹ Corinthians 2:14), or discern who is truly born-again.

After reading through this chapter again, I found that it is not the unredeemed being addressed. God is addressing His redeemed children. They confess His name and stay themselves on the God of Israel. But they do not do so in truth or right. They are born-again, but they have not allowed Jesus to be the Lord of their lives.

This passage applies to the Christians who attend church, read their Bibles, and trust the Lord, but are caught up with worldliness. The faith they profess isn't seen in the lives they live. There is a disconnect between what they believe in their hearts and the priorities of their daily lives. Unbelievers point to those lives as a reason to reject the Bible and Christianity (2 Samuel 12:14a).

It happens so easily. It is the pattern of spiritual lives and denominations. Someone described it this way: **Man, mission, movement, method, monument.** It starts with someone inspired and anointed by God. The mission is clear and focused. Others join in as they see the zeal and fruit that is resulting from it, and it becomes a movement. But then it develops into a method that is taught to others with some success at first. Then it becomes a routine void of the Spirit. Eventually it is merely a monument to what God did in history.

In an individual life, it begins with that first encounter with Christ. There is a hunger for the Word and a desire to follow wherever He leads. The person discovers their gifts and calling. There is

Commented [P1]: James 1:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

Commented [P3]: 2 Samuel 12:14a (ESV)

¹⁴ Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the LORD,

Commented [P2]: 1 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

fruit that results from it. But eventually it becomes a routine done in the power of the flesh (Revelation 2:4). Without renewal it becomes just ritually going through the motions. Testimonies that are shared are only ones from long ago. This passage is going to tell us how to keep from following that pattern.

³ *"The former things I declared of old; they went out from my mouth, and I announced them; then suddenly I did them, and they came to pass.* Isaiah 48:3 God announced from the founding of the nation that if they worshiped other gods they would go into captivity (Deuteronomy 29:63-64). He did that with the ten northern tribes and was about to do it to Judah. The next verse tells us why.

⁴ *Because I know that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead brass,* Isaiah 48:4 Prophet after prophet warned them of their impending fate (Jeremiah 7:25-26). Ungodly kings would lead them to a defeated condition, and godly kings would lead them to prosperity. They didn't make the connection, but continued to turn away to idols. Our own lives can be just as obtuse to the fruit of sin in our lives.

This pattern reminds me of obstinate way our country views and teaches its own history. The iron sinew neck is a picture of people who will not turn when God is calling them. Their bronze forehead is their refusal to consider the discipline of God. They continue on their way to their own destruction (Ezekiel 18:31). Even believers can be opinionated, self-

assured, "know-it-alls." We limit God to our preconceived ideas of how He will work and shun the wild, unpredictable God of the universe.

⁵ *I declared them to you from of old, before they came to pass I announced them to you, lest you should say, 'My idol did them, my carved image and my metal image commanded them.'* ⁶ *"You have heard; now see all this; and will you not declare it? From this time forth I announce to you new things, hidden things that you have not known.* ⁷ *They are created now, not long ago; before today you have never heard of them, lest you should say, 'Behold, I knew them.'*

Isaiah 48:5-7 God gives us prophecies so that we won't give the credit to something or someone who has nothing to do with the events that took place. We can be so obstinate that we would give the credit to anything or anyone other than God. Our culture even mocks the idea of God's sovereignty over nature and the course of nations. That is because we don't want to bow our knees and submit our lives. Idols don't demand our all. God deserves our all.

⁸ *You have never heard, you have never known, from of old your ear has not been opened. For I knew that you would surely deal treacherously, and that from before birth you were called a rebel.* Isaiah 48:8 This is the nature of man, rebellious. It was said of Jesus that His ear was opened (Psalm 40:6). In other words, Jesus' spiritual ear was tuned to the Father and always listening for His instruction and direction. But even the redeemed can refuse to allow their ears

Commented [P4]: Revelation 2:4 (ESV)

⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Commented [P5]: Deuteronomy 28:63-64 (ESV)

⁶³ And as the LORD took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the LORD will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it.

⁶⁴ "And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known.

Commented [P6]: Jeremiah 7:25-26 (ESV)

²⁵ From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day.

²⁶ Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers.

Commented [P8]: Psalm 40:6 (ESV)

⁶ In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.

Commented [P7]: Ezekiel 18:31 (ESV)

³¹ Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel?

to be opened (Matthew 11:15). If we hear, we are then obligated to obey (John 15:22). We deal treacherously by accepting the teachings of the Word but refusing to open our ears to the Spirit's application. The rebellious nature of Adam was never put to death with Jesus on the cross (Romans 6:6).

⁹ *"For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off.* Isaiah 48:9 Our refusal to listen does not stop the grace of God. He's angry because He has every right to expect us to listen (Deuteronomy 1:43). After giving us life and so many proofs, after giving His one and only Son for us, it is only right that we open our ears to His instruction. But He defers His anger. His mercy and grace are reasons to praise Him. They are attributes of His name. We deserve death (Romans 6:23), but He restrains Himself from immediate judgment and does what He must do to get us to listen and change our priorities.

¹⁰ *Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction.* Isaiah 48:10 Here is His tool, the furnace of affliction. In other cases God compares His refinement to that of precious metals (1 Peter 1:7; Ezekiel 22:22). Here, He says it is different. This furnace is not a smelting furnace but the crucible of affliction. It is in the trials that we draw near the Lord and give up that which holds us back from a deeper relationship with God.

¹¹ *For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be*

profaned? My glory I will not give to another. Isaiah 48:11 It is true that God does things for our good, but ultimately it is for His own sake. That is because He is righteous. His character is holy. What He does is right and good. To bring glory to His own name is to demonstrate mercy and grace. If His promises to Israel did not come to pass, the false gods of other nations would be glorified and God's name profaned (Numbers 14:13-16). If He did not demonstrate justice and grace as well, His name would be profaned. He acts so that that will not be the case.

¹² *"Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am he; I am the first, and I am the last.* Isaiah 48:12 This is the third declaration of God being the first and the last (Isaiah 41:4; 44:6). Listen up called out children of God! Open your ears. Hear this in the depths of your soul. He is the beginning of all things. He is the end of all things. He will do all that He pleases and His purposes will stand (Isaiah 46:10)

¹³ *My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand forth together.* Isaiah 48:13 He is the Creator of the space and all that fills it. He made this planet to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18). He commands every asteroid, planet, moon, and star the number of which is so great we cannot fathom it (Psalm 8:3-4).

¹⁴ *"Assemble, all of you, and listen! Who among them has declared these things? The LORD loves him; he shall perform his purpose on Babylon, and his arm shall be*

Commented [P9]: Matthew 11:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Commented [PW10]: John 15:22 (ESV)

²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.

Commented [P11]: Romans 6:6 (ESV)

⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

Commented [P16]: Ezekiel 22:22 (ESV)

²² As silver is melted in a furnace, so you shall be melted in the midst of it, and you shall know that I am the LORD; I have poured out my wrath upon you."

Commented [P12]: Deuteronomy 1:43 (ESV)

⁴³ So I spoke to you, and you would not listen; but you rebelled against the command of the LORD and presumptuously went up into the hill country.

Commented [P17]: Isaiah 41:4 (ESV)

⁴ Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he.

Commented [P18]: Isaiah 44:6 (ESV)

⁶ Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.

Commented [P13]: Romans 6:23 (ESV)

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Commented [P19]: Isaiah 46:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose."

Commented [P14]: 1 Peter 1:7 (ESV)

⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Commented [P15]: Ezekiel 22:22 (ESV)

²² As silver is melted in a furnace, so you shall be melted in the midst of it, and you shall know that I am the LORD; I have poured out my wrath upon you."

Commented [P20]: Isaiah 45:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established ... [1])

Commented [P21]: Psalm 8:3-4 (ESV)

³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ... [2]

against the Chaldeans. ¹⁵ I, even I, have spoken and called him; I have brought him, and he will prosper in his way.

Isaiah 48:14-15 God especially wanted them to hear His prophecy about Cyrus, the ruler who would set God's people free from Babylon. It would encourage their faith when it came to pass. They would know it was God that did it and not circumstances or idols. They needed this assurance to make a final turn from idolatry and to prepare the way for the Messiah (Isaiah 40:3).

¹⁶ Draw near to me, hear this: from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there." And now the Lord GOD has sent me, and his Spirit. Isaiah 48:16 Once again God commands their ears to be open and hear. God inhabits eternity and knows all things. He does not hide His ways or instruction (Isaiah 45:19). It is open to all. It can be tested (John 7:17). It is provable.

The "he" of the previous verse speaks, for He is the Word of God. Jesus does not hide His ways or instruction. It is open to all. He was in the beginning with God (John 1:2). The Son is saying the Father has sent Him and His Spirit. "Has sent" is a singular verb in Hebrew because they are one. There is unity in the diversity of the trinity. "Me" in the verse is the sent One, the Servant of the Lord.

¹⁷ Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go. Isaiah 48:17 Here is the alternative to the

furnace of affliction. It was too late to save them from the coming Babylonian captivity, but it was not too late for after the captivity or for us. Our Redeemer teaches us how to be profitable. That is to be useful. It is to ascend in our spiritual life and move beyond that which is vain to that which is eternal (John 6:27). If we will give Him our hearts and our ears, He will lead us in the way we should go.

So often people wonder about what is the right choice between the paths that lay before them. They want to do God's will and want the decision to be one that honors Him. If that is truly their heart, He will teach them what is profitable and direct them in the way they should go (Psalm 32:8).

¹⁸ Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea; ¹⁹ your offspring would have been like the sand, and your descendants like its grains; their name would never be cut off or destroyed from before me." Isaiah 48:18-19 This is God's lament for all who refuse to take heed to His Word. If we would just see the Word as the light to our path and follow it without struggling to convince ourselves our own inclinations are better, what peace we would have! Peace is knowing in your heart that you are being obedient to God in everything He has revealed to you (Psalm 119:165). Knowing Jesus as Lord and Savior, and being obedient and surrendered in everything that is revealed to you means your righteousness is like

Commented [P25]: John 6:27 (ESV)

²⁷ Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."

Commented [P22]: Isaiah 40:3 (ESV)

³ A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Commented [P26]: Psalm 32:8 (ESV)

⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

Commented [P23]: Isaiah 45:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, "Seek me in vain." I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right.

Commented [P24]: John 7:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.

Commented [P27]: Psalm 119:165 (ESV)

¹⁶⁵ Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.

the waves of the sea, wave after wave after wave. That is consistent, dependable, and righteous.

²⁰ Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea, declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it, send it out to the end of the earth; say, "The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob!" Isaiah 48:20 When God would set them free from captivity, they would know their relationship with God had been restored. They would know He had mercy upon them again and had not forsaken them. They were to go out with shouts of joy, proclaiming to the ends of the earth the wonder of our gracious Redeemer. And that is what we are to do as well when God sets us free from the captivity of sin (John 8:36).

²¹ They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts; he made water flow for them from the rock; he split the rock and the water gushed out. Isaiah 48:21 Once again God reminds them of the provision of water during the wilderness wandering on the way to the Promised Land. That is because it is a picture of the coming outpouring of the Holy Spirit (John 7:38-39). It promised provision as they journeyed from Babylon to Jerusalem. It promises our spiritual provision as we journey to New Jerusalem (John 14:26). The overflowing grace of God toward us obstinate, iron sinew necked rebels, keeps inviting us to listen so that we can hear and understand what is real. When we listen and let the Spirit open our eyes as well, we realize Babylon is enslavement. Even if we lose everything by coming out of

her, we gain much more in Christ. That is what we shout about.

²² "There is no peace," says the LORD, "for the wicked." Isaiah 48:22 Here is the great contrast. We open our ears and obey from hearts of gratitude and have peace like a river. The Hebrew verb "to hear" is used ten times in our passage today to emphasize our great need and the source of our peace.

The wicked will never know the peace we experience. You may have seen the bumper sticker, **No Jesus, No Peace – Know Jesus, Know Peace**. It succinctly sums up the last part of our passage today. Peace is unattainable to those who refuse to listen to Jesus, because it is only found in a relationship with Him. To hear God we just need to hear the incarnation of His Word. This contrast between the peace of the righteous and the lack of peace for the wicked emphasizes the need for those who are redeemed to always keep their relationship with Jesus alive by listening to the Spirit, reading the Word, and submitting to Him (John 4:23-24).

Do you know peace in your heart regardless of life's circumstances? Listen in a special place alone with God in prayer and as you go throughout your day. Listen to His Spirit as you read the Word. You can know peace like a river and your righteousness can be as consistent and powerful as the steady waves of the sea. Are you willing to put Him first in everything?

Commented [P28]: John 8:36 (ESV)

³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Commented [P31]: John 4:23-24 (ESV)

²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

Commented [P29]: John 7:38-39 (ESV)

³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Commented [P30]: John 14:26 (ESV)

²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Questions

- 1 Who is God addressing in verses 1&2?
- 2 How does the passion and joy die?
- 3 Why does God give us prophecies?
- 4 What does "opened ear" mean?
- 5 Why does God defer His anger?
- 6 How does God refine us?
- 7 What does God want us to hear?
- 8 What does the Redeemer offer us?
- 9 What/Who can give us peace and righteousness?
- 10 What should we do when we are freed from sin/captivity?

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Isaiah 45:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): “I am the LORD, and there is no other.

Page 3: [2] Commented [P21] Paul 8/28/2015 12:36:00 PM

Psalm 8:3-4 (ESV)

³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

⁴ what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?