

ISAIAH 35:1-10 | Your Savior Comes with Strength!

Sunday, December 14, 2014 – Third Sunday of Advent

¹ The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus,
² it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God.

³ Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; ⁴ say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you."

⁵ Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. ⁶ Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. ⁷ The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

⁸ And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it. ⁹ No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there ¹⁰ and those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

This young woman felt hopeless. She was completely overwhelmed. Kids were crying, the house was a mess, her husband was at work, and she felt alone. As she thought about her life she couldn't see the good; all that was visible to her was the bad. Family was miles away, friends were non-existent, and even the very home she sat in seemed like a prison. To her, she didn't feel like she had the strength to continue. She could barely muster getting out of bed in the morning. Even the thought of bringing children into public sent chills up her spine. She had no strength left...

This old man was tired. He was tired of fighting. He was tired of pushing. He was tired of caring. He just wanted to give up. What was the use. His wife was gone. Family and friends had moved on, giving their cursory once a month visit. Even his friends in his home were useless. They could barely speak much less carry on a conversation. It took all he had just to converse with the nurse who checked on him every day. For him, life seemed like it had no point. And he had no strength left...

This man struggled. He knew that what his son was doing was wrong. He knew that the life he was living was one that God disapproved of. But it was so hard to fight it. He could see that his son couldn't resist the urges, the temptations, the luring of the sweet taste of sin. And, this man was tired. He had been battling this for years. He knew that he had put up a good fight, but how long was this going to last? How long would he need to carry on this battle? And at what point would it be acceptable for him to just give in? He knew he couldn't last much longer. And he had no strength left...

Here sat Judah, waiting. For nearly 70 years God's people had been sitting in captivity. Thousands of miles away from their homeland, all they could do is look to the west and pray. Pray towards the rubble that was once Jerusalem. Pray towards the pile of stones that was once the temple. Pray. But it seemed

like that was all they had done. It seems like they've prayed every day in every situation and nothing was ever done about it. It seemed like God had left them. And they were tired. Tired of the foreign food and society. Tired of the persecution and the turmoil. Tired of being refugees in a strange land. And they just wanted to go home. They just wanted to see something familiar, something heart-warming. They just wanted to be home. But they weren't. They couldn't. They were trapped. And the fight that was once in them was gone. They had no strength left...

Sitting next to you today is someone who is tired. Sitting in the same pew, in this very building is a heart that is weary, a body that is weak, a soul that is tired. Maybe you're that person, maybe you're not. But we've all had times like this, haven't we? We've all had these moments, months, maybe even years when everything, even something as simple as waking up, seemed like a chore. Kids, chores, bills, jobs, to-do lists, health, exercise, cooking, cleaning, bathing...all of them get tiresome.

It's understandable. We live in a world weary with sin. Since the fall of Adam mankind has had to battle the effects of sin in a world intended to have existed in perfect order. Work, once a joy, had become a despised thing. The family, once considered the utmost blessing, now seemed like a chore at times. Bodies created in perfection were anything but. And we see sin soak and stain every semblance of good in our lives.

But to make matters worse we don't just battle that "abstract" idea of sin. There are wild beasts and animals running around us. We know especially that there is a lion prowling around every day, just waiting to devour the weak. It's true. If you've ever watched one of those nature documentaries about the African savannah, you'll realize very quickly that lions have no sympathy, especially for the weak. They prowl and pounce on that poor gazelle with the broken leg. Lions don't sit back and consider, "Awww...that poor gazelle. He can't run well, so we'll wait for it to heal up." No, the lion sees a convenient meal. And after the gazelle is caught, it's devoured.

The same goes for Satan. He doesn't sit back and have compassion or sympathy on the weak. He doesn't wait for you to gain your strength back. In fact, it is in your weakest hour, your darkest moment that Satan comes along and pounces. It's then that you realize that he is powerful, that it's impossible to fight back. It's when those cold, hard jaws of temptation wrap itself around you and you find yourself falling quickly into that specific sin that you realize you're in trouble. But by then it's too late. You can fight; you can kick; you can scream. But it's no use. You're weak. You have no strength left...

So what can you do, dear Christian? What can you do when it feels as if you have no strength left? Look to your Savior! You see, here he comes. Next week your Savior comes again. He comes with security and safety. He comes with strength and power. He comes for you. For me. Your Savior comes with strength.

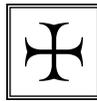
God would come again for Israel. As the captives wearily walked toward Jerusalem again, their hearts were glad. Their souls were filled. Their God had answered them. Their Lord had saved them. And what was to fear? It didn't matter that the thousands of miles meant beasts and deserts and scorpions and snakes. It didn't matter that their homes were gone. It didn't matter that the temple was destroyed. Their God reigns! Their God answers! Their God came again with strength and power to release them from their dreadful prison and bring them home again.

Dear Christian, your God reigns! Look around. There may not be snakes or scorpions or wild beasts. But there are co-workers; there are so-called "friends;" there are family members who want to tempt

you rather than help you. But pay no attention to those things. Those people, those beasts, those snakes are nothing. Look around, Satan is there. But he has no power.

*Though devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill; They shall not overpow'r us.
This world's prince may still Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none.
He's judged; the deed is done!
One little word can fell him. (CW 200:3)*

Dear Christian, a mighty fortress is your God. He comes. He comes with strength. Your Savior comes with strength to save you. Amen.



Soli Deo Gloria!

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