

God Offers Deliverance

There was the windup, the pitch—and then Cameron was hit right between the eyes!

When Pastor Mitchell began his sermon, Cameron felt like the Lord had custom-tailored a message for him. Cameron had been in a spiritual state of paralysis. He had been visiting Lighthouse Church off and on for the past two months. On his mother's side of the family were a few devout Jehovah's Witnesses. On his dad's side of the family were several members who staunchly held Muslim beliefs. It was after his experience with Simone, a Christian friend in college, that Cameron accepted Christ.

But without any routine Bible teaching, Cameron had begun to mix some Muslim and Jehovah's Witness beliefs with his Christianity.

"You're listening to too many voices," Simone had said.

Cameron did feel like he had found real truth, forgiveness, and salvation in the Lord. Only now, years later, he seemed to be in the wilderness.

"You have to take the first step that God is telling you to," Simone had said.

Coming to church this morning had been Cameron's first step. He looked over at his friend Simone and smiled timidly.

"Is there anyone this morning who would like to join Lighthouse Church?" asked Pastor Mitchell. "Please, listen to the voice of God, and get up and come."

And that is what Cameron did.

1. *What are some means through which the Lord speaks to us?*

2. *What are some ways we sometimes respond to what we hear from Him?*

3. *What would make us better listeners?*

Your Land Will Be Restored

Isaiah 51:1-3, KJV

1 Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.

2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

3 For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Isaiah 51:1-3, NIV

¹“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness

and who seek the LORD:

Look to the rock from which you were cut

and to the quarry from which you were hewn;

²look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth.

When I called him he was only one man,

and I blessed him and made him many.

³The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins;

he will make her deserts like Eden,

her wastelands like the garden of the LORD.

Joy and gladness will be found in her,

thanksgiving and the sound of singing.

“Listen to me” (vs. 1) indicates that what follows is an urgent call from God to pay attention to what He has to say. Those who need to listen are those committed to doing what is right in God’s eyes—those who want His righteousness to reign in their lives as well as in the world—but who harbor doubts that God is going to make that happen. It includes the Israelites scattered among the nations by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. as well as those exiled in Babylon in 586 B.C. who would long to return home.

God reassured both groups that He was going to give them the “comfort” they desired (vs. 3). Their land, though desolate, would once again become like the Garden of Eden; joy, gladness, thanksgiving, and singing would be found in it as well. If they doubted this, they needed to remember the “rock” (vs. 1) from which they were cut—Abraham. He was one man, yet God promised that out of him would come many who could trace their heritage to him. If God could work like this through one man, He would surely do the same for Abraham’s children.

4. *Who was God addressing in this passage?*

5. *What was He promising?*

6. *What did the Israelites need to remember if they had doubts about this?*

My Justice Will Reign

Isaiah 51:4-6, KJV

4 Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.

5 My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.

6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish

Isaiah 51:4-6, NIV

⁴“Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation:

Instruction will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations.

⁵My righteousness draws near speedily,

my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations.

The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm.

⁶Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath; the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment

away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

and its inhabitants die like flies.
But my salvation will last forever,
my righteousness will never fail.

The exiles would not just long for their physical deliverance. They would also hunger for a day when God's righteousness would rule the world. God promised this would happen, beginning again with the call, "Listen to me!"

When God said, "The islands will look to me" (vs. 5), He was most likely referring to the Israelites that would end up living far away—especially the inhabitants of the islands and coastlands of the Mediterranean. What they would be waiting for is for God's justice to reign.

God promised that this would happen speedily, at least in His time frame. But it would not happen completely in the lifetime of those exiled. It would occur in part through Jesus when He and the Gospel became a light to the world (John 8:12).

God said that the salvation He provided would "last forever" and that it would "never fail," unlike the heavens and earth below which would "wear out like a garment" (Isa. 51:6). The viability of His promises was more certain than the continuing existence of the world.

7. *What would the Israelites long for?*

8. *When will what they long for be realized?*

9. *How certain was this?*

Your Enemies Will Be Devoured

Isaiah 51:7-8, KJV

7 Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart

Isaiah 51:7-8, NIV

7 "Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have taken

is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

8 For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

my instruction to heart:
Do not fear the reproach of mere mortals
or be terrified by their insults.
8For the moth will eat them up like a garment;
the worm will devour them like wool.
But my righteousness will last forever,
my salvation through all generations."

The final portion of today's passage begins with, "Hear me" (vs. 7), another urgent call by God. Those waiting for God's righteousness to be fully established would experience "reproach" (vs. 7); they would be insulted and terrified. But they were not to "fear the reproach of mere mortals or be terrified by their insults" knowing that God's righteousness, once established, would last "forever" (vs. 8). They were also to recognize the temporary nature of their afflictions. Those who opposed them would eventually be devoured, just like a garment eaten by moths or worms. Some of this would be fulfilled when the Israelites' real-life enemies were defeated by others, but its final fulfillment will not take place until the last days.

When the Israelites were living in exile, they would long to return home. They would also long for a world ruled by God's righteousness. God reassured them that these would take place but it would take time. As the Israelites waited for this to take place, they needed to listen to God and not give into their doubts and fears. He is righteous—and He will deliver.

10. *What would the Israelites experience as they waited to be delivered?*

11. *What was going to happen to their enemies?*

12. *How did God want His people to respond to this?*

Are You Talking to Me?

“He can’t be talking to me?” That’s how I often respond to what I hear from the Lord, whether from the mouth of a kind friend, from a pastor, from the words of an inspiring author, or from the Word of God itself. It seems that I’m often resistant to what God is telling me even if I know deep in my heart that He is talking to me.

Once I was going down a path I was convinced was right but I knew God did not think so. I initially resisted His instruction even though others counseled me that way too. However, I was convinced that what I was doing was best and didn’t listen to them or to God. It wasn’t until I experienced the pain that comes from failure that I realized I was following my own heart and not God’s way. It would have been better if I’d listened to Him in the first place.

I remember another time when I harbored doubts that God was going to deliver me from a difficult situation. I thought there was no way out except to grin and bear it. I was miserable and doubted that deliverance would ever come. My circumstances did eventually change for the better, however, and I did end up thanking God when they did. But looking back, I know I caused my family and myself a lot of heartache by failing to trust in God during those challenging days.

What I’ve learned from these and similar experiences is when what’s ahead seems uncertain or I’m encountering difficult times, it pays to listen to God and trust in His promise of deliverance.

13. *What are some ways God has spoken to you in the past? How did you respond?*

14. *Have there been times when you failed to listen to God or trust what He had to say? If so, what was the result?*

15. *What have you learned from this?*

Listen to God

Some are convinced that God is never silent and that He is always speaking to us in one way or another. If this is true, then God is saying something to you right now. And what He is trying to tell you is important.

It is crucial that we open our minds and hearts so that we can hear what God has to say to us. For who knows what blessing may come our way simply by listening to the Lord and trusting in His righteousness and His promise of deliverance.

► *What is something God may be saying to you right now? How will you respond?*

KEY VERSE

Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. —Isaiah 51:1, KJV

“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn.” —Isaiah 51:1, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of June 27 through July 3

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** Proverbs 8:22-31—God Created the World through Wisdom.
- Tue.** Colossians 1:13-17—In Christ All Things Hold Together.
- Wed.** Colossians 1:18-22—Christ, the Head of All Things.
- Thu.** Psalm 104:1-15—God's Well-Ordered Creation.
- Fri.** Psalm 104:24-35—Praise God for Creation.
- Sat.** Hebrews 1:1-4—The Son Reflects God's Glory.
- Sun.** John 1:1-14—The Word Became Flesh.