

Worship and Witness

by Alan Redpath

Jehovah is the only true God who can bear our burdens, be active in our lives, and deliver us from our sins.

Duration: 32:29

Scripture: Isaiah 46:7, Isaiah 46:13, Matthew 6:33, Luke 8:6, Luke 8:13

Topics: "Worship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the parable of the sower from the eighth chapter of the gospel of Luke. He emphasizes the contrast between those who receive the word of God with joy but lack deep roots and fall away in times of temptation. The speaker then highlights the inadequacy of lip service to God when faced with crisis and the importance of true worship from the heart. He also shares a story about a young man who built a nightclub against his godly father's wishes, illustrating the consequences of misplaced worship. The sermon concludes with the reminder that God is the one who bears the burdens of our lives and offers us his everlasting arms of support.

Transcript

Let us look to God in prayer. We thank thee for the reminder, dear Lord, that thou, the great, the mighty creator, art the God who is so faithful and who has never broken one word of all his promises. Fulfill thy word this morning and speak to our waiting heart so that we may be blessable today, that there be no barriers of thought, of outlook, of mind, of heart, of attitude, so it would prove a block to the Spirit of God.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We are continuing this morning, dear friends, the series of messages from the prophecy of Isaiah, and I invite you this morning to turn to the 46th chapter of Isaiah.

Our general heading has been, faith for the times, and we take for our text this morning the closing verse of the chapter, I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry, and I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory. If you were to scan through this chapter, you would see that its story, recorded about 170 years before the actual event, anticipates a day when, in fulfillment of God's purpose which can never be thwarted, Cyrus, king of Persia, would invade Babylon, and in so doing would be instrumental in releasing God's people Israel from bondage. You have in the opening verses of this chapter, the graphic picture of the two great Babylonian gods, Bel and Nebo, after whom the two great kings of that empire were named, Belshazzar and Nebuchadnezzar.

You have these two gods being carried off in carts, as a trophy of the Persian victory. Not of course, that they would have any place in their lives for the worship of Babylon's idols, but the capture of them demonstrated the completeness of their victory, and the folly of the people, and the futility of the gods, to rescue them from defeat. The sixth verse suggests to us that they had been made at great expense.

They had been lavishly decorated, and yet these wretched idols, only emphasized in time of defeat, their futility, and the absolute stupidity of the people of ever having lowered their dignity to worship them. Now of course, my friend, these details are past history, but the principles are up to date. And I would underline a lesson at this very beginning of our message this morning, to say that any nation which departs from her former glory, in the worship of a living God, to that of idols, whatever form those idols may take, whether they be wooden images, or mighty men, or weight of armaments, or lust of power, whenever a nation does that, and looks to these things for deliverance in the time of crisis, they find them only a burden.

And they prove the absolute folly and futility of lowering our dignity, in departing from God, to worship an idol. In his State of the Union message this week, President Kennedy said, world order will be secured only when the whole world has laid down those weapons which seem to offer present security, but which in fact threaten our future survival. That Armistice Day seems very far away.

How true. But if we are to put down those things in which we have put our confidence falsely, and forsake our confidence in false gods of armaments and material strength, what are we going to put in their place? What's to be the ground of confidence if that in which we've trusted proves to be false? No nation and no individual can live in a vacuum. Now to that question, this chapter has the tremendous answer.

For it paints in a vivid contrast, in a vivid picture, a three-fold contrast between the idols of Babylon and Jehovah, the God of Israel and our God. And this contrast goes far deeper and far further than ancient heathendom. It comes right to where you and I live this morning.

Whatever a nation or an individual may put in the place in our heart which rightly belongs to the God who made us and bought us with his precious blood, he only erects an idol before which he worships, and in which he places his faith. And by doing this he lowers the whole dignity of his manhood, and reaps the inevitable reward of the judgment of a holy God. A judgment incidentally, which is not only reserved for a dreadful future day, but one of which God gives a man and a nation ample warning in the course of life here and now.

Look then with me dear friend, will you, at this contrast between Jehovah and every other idol, and let me ask you very earnestly to put yourself, as I would seek to put myself, into this vivid picture. In the first place there is a contrast here in burden bearing. In the seventh verse of this chapter of the idol it is said, they bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him.

In other words, the idol is something that has to be carried until it becomes a crushing burden. But Jehovah says in the fourth verse, even to your old age I am he, even to your poor hair will I carry you. I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry, and I will deliver you.

You see, a man makes and then carries his idol, and many people spend a whole lifetime at the job, making that in their own imagination which is worthy of their worship. And they make this thing and surround themselves with it, and then they worship it, and spend their whole lives in propping it up, until it becomes a tremendous, crushing, overwhelming burden. But God makes and offers to carry the man.

If I turn from the worship of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord, immediately I make myself an idol, which though it seems to offer present security, threatens my future survival. To some folk, even their religion is a burden. A burden of ritual, a burden of ceremony, a burden of duty, a burden of service.

But to other people who yield themselves wholly to God in Jesus Christ our Lord, they find that religion, far from being something they carry, in fact, carries them. And of course that's exactly the intention of the Christian faith. It isn't something you're to carry as a dreadful load, it is something that is designed to put a lever under the weight of your life, and to carry you.

And beloved, if your heart is right with God this morning, if there's a living faith in him, then your religion cannot be a burden, because he is the great burden bearer. He bears the burden of our sin, and that's the root cause of all the trouble. Isaiah 53, 4 says, Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.

He was wounded for our transgressions, and he was bruised for our iniquities. And though this world is dark with its sin, and with its crime, he hath borne it at the cross, and he will not rest until one day he comes again, and to put down all sin, and to rule in righteousness, and to fill this earth with his glory, he bears the burden of our sin. He hath borne it at Calvary, the crushing, intolerable load of the idol that I have worshipped, he bears it.

I have said from this pulpit, let me repeat it, I don't believe there's any such person in existence as an atheist. People almost pride themselves on such a philosophy, I'm an atheist, which simply means they worship themselves, they have their own God. Man, because of the kind of creature he is, is incapable of living without worshipping something.

Perhaps the greatest form of conceit and idolatry is to worship ourselves. But God even bears the burden of this, of my independence, of my sin, and he took it to the cross, and bore the guilt and the load of it, that he might lift the burden. And when he's done that, bless his holy name, he bears the burden of my life work, and my life responsibility.

The task which so often threatens to overwhelm me, the responsibilities which sometimes seem too heavy for us to bear, and seem such a dead, crushing weight, why just there, when I have had the burden of my sin lifted, he comes and he places underneath the lever of his everlasting arm, and he bears the burden of our lives. I think I told you the humorous story of a man going along the road in an automobile, and seeing a poor fellow standing at the side of the road, carrying a great heavy sack. And he put him, offered him a lift, and the man got in with his sack on his shoulder, and he kept it there, and the driver of the vehicle said, well now, why don't you put your sack down? Oh sir, he said, I was so grateful, I was so grateful that you carried me, I didn't think it was fair to ask you to carry my sack as well.

Oh, says the Psalmist, cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee. Says the Apostle Peter, casting all thy care upon him, for he careth for you, and at that verse, on the 10th of August 1926, in a little tavern, near the boundary of the Roman Empire in Northumberland, England, I cast my guilt and my burden at the feet of Jesus, and bless the Lord. He's carried it for 35 years and more, and he'll carry it right through till I get to heaven.

And therefore he says, come unto me, all ye that labour on a heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Oh, my dear listener this morning, is your religious experience a burden that you're carrying? Are you going through life crushed with it? Or have you found that He, Christ, has begun to carry you? Is there a heart that is willing to lay burdens on Jesus' breast? He is so loving and gentle and true, come unto Him and be

blessed. Contrast in burden bearing, and then the contrast in activity.

Verse 7, speaking of the gardens of Babylon, they set him in his place and he standeth. From his place shall he not remove, completely immobile. This is the helpless condition of inactivity of the idol, as it stands by watching the complete overthrow and the destruction of the nation that's worshipped it.

It has no suggestion to offer, it has no counsel to give, it has no remedy to suggest, and desperately the worshipper seeks its aid, but all in vain. There it stands, immobile. But notice the contrast.

Verse 13, I, says Jehovah, bring near my righteousness. Here is God on the move, here is God taking the initiative. What a contrast.

And in the constant battle of life between men and God, we spend our time running away from Him. And He's continually in pursuit with a love that will not let me go. And even though I may be, in the words of verse 12, far from righteousness, God brings near His own.

Even though I may be clothed with all the filthy rags of my own wretched failure, at that point God brings right near His own, in order that He might cover all my filthiness with His spotlessness. A righteousness that I receive by faith in and by commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord of my life. Beloved, He follows every man to the very gate of hell, and He bars the road to a lost eternity with His cross.

Years ago, in London, there was a story told of a certain nightclub which has a very lurid reputation. The story of its opening is quite extraordinary. A young fellow, who'd been living a pretty wild sort of life, came to the age of discretion and maturity, an age when he inherited from his father quite a fortune.

He demanded the whole fortune that his father had, and he went off with it, and he told his father, I'm going to open the hottest nightclub in London. I'm going to paint the place red. His father was a godly man.

To hear his son talk like that just broke his heart. Plans were made, a site was purchased, the nightclub was being built, and there came to them a moment of the great opening day, which was thoroughly well advertised in the press. And as that young fellow went along to open it that special night, that great night, with all the swagger and pride of what he'd accomplished, to his amazement, when he reached the place, he found his father standing at the door.

And already he'd driven away a whole crowd of potential patrons. And he was continuing to do this as the people had lined up to enter. There was this young man's father standing there, sending them all home.

And this young fellow went up to his father, put his arms upon him and said, Here, you get out of the way. This is my show, my club, not yours. And his father looked at him straight between the eyes and he said, My son, there is nobody will ever enter this building tonight except they do it over my dead body.

We talk about hell, we talk about judgment, and we think it's severe. Beloved, I declare to you in the name of our wonderful Lord Jesus that there is nobody will go out into a Christless eternity except he tramples upon the blood of Jesus Christ and turns his back upon God's offer of salvation at Calvary. God's whole purpose of redemption is to separate us from the thing that he must judge.

And because he is holy, he is inevitably bound to condemn and destroy that which is sinful. And his whole plea to every one of us is that we might be separate from our sin. And if I refuse him, then isn't it only logical that I must become involved in the judgment of the thing which he must condemn.

Oh, the activity of God today to bring near his righteousness is the answer to our deepest need. And every false god stands silent in a very silent mocking, mocking the stupidity and folly that we've ever turned from the living God to worship another. But our God has taken the initiative, and he's stepped out of heaven, and he's stepped out of glory, and he's purchased our pardon at Calvary, and he's offering to us a righteousness that is complete, which we can receive as a free gift, or else we'll never receive it at all.

A contrast in activity. But there's something else here, beloved. It's not only a contrast in burden bearing and a contrast in activity, it's a contrast in power.

Verse seven, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble. Listen, worship that seemed sufficient in peaceful times had proved absolutely inadequate when the crisis came. That was the lesson Babylon learned.

Lip service to a God who wasn't real was absolutely useless when the chips were down. Are we not proving that today? This world, involved as it is in a global civil war, presents a terrifying picture. And the gods in which we've placed our trust are in fact threatening our destruction.

I wonder if we who profess to be Christian are reaping the fruit of years of lip service before a God who's never been real to us, while the true worship of our hearts is being given elsewhere. President Kennedy said this week, if we cannot fulfill our own ideals, we cannot expect other people to accept them. Of course not.

And we have set up an ideal of a Christian society, but we don't attain to it because our God is not real. He's merely the patron of the society, instead of the Lord of it. And God is not here to be patronized, he's here to be obeyed.

May I illustrate what I mean to you, in a very personal sense? If you were to turn with me for a moment to the 8th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, you would find in it the parable of the sower. You remember the story. It's recorded in other Gospels, but I simply refer to the Gospel of Luke here at this point because the wording of it is, I think, is so striking.

And we're told here that as the sower sowed his seed, some fell on a rock. Verse 6 of Luke chapter 8. And as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And by way of interpretation, our Lord said in verse 13, They on the rock, are they which when they hear, receive the word with joy, and thee having no root, for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

May I put to you today, may I, may I put to you and present to you these three tremendous words. I want them to sound like an alarm bell in my own soul as I give them to you. Having no root.

Having no root. Examine yourself and let me do the same in His presence today in the light of that text. Have we received the word joyfully? Have our feelings been stirred time and time again? Impressions have been made.

But beloved, to receive the word with our ear is one thing, and to receive Christ into the depth of our being is another. And the strange paradox, and yet maybe your experience will confirm what I say. The strange paradox is simply this, that very often, the man who superficially responds so eagerly and quickly to the word, is the man who has the hardest of hearts.

The seed fell on ground, says the Lord, fell on ground with a rocky foundation. And when it began to take root downward, it found its downward growth was prevented by hard stones. And so that seed began to spend its strength in pushing up green shoots as high as it could.

But because it had no inward moisture derived from root nourishment, it withered away. Is this your case? Is it mine? Have you made quite a show of religion in the flesh? But with no corresponding inner life, have I understood, have you, that true growth in the things of God takes place upwards and downwards at the same time. And the word of God cannot take root on a rocky, unbroken, unsanctified heart.

I would dread more than anything, I tell you I would dread more than anything a form of godliness which has a wonderful show, but no root. Oh beloved, if our heart remains unsoftened, the seed of the word may germinate for a little while, but ultimately because of lack of moisture, because it has no root, because it hasn't gone deep into the well of life which Jesus plants into the heart of a true believer, because the word has nothing upon which it can grow inwardly, then that life withers away. If my mind remains stubborn and my heart remains unbroken, then my religion will die and my judgment is inevitable.

All because that in spite of outward show, the fact is that God has never been real. In truth, we've worshipped a dumb idol and we've refused to allow God to break our heart. Oh, my prayer is, my prayer is that the word would plough deep into your soul this morning, dear friend, and into mine, and that he would cast the truth down deep into us and he may meet no resistance and the only thing the word may find in me today is a heart that hungers and thirsts for Jesus.

I wonder if what I've just been saying has gone home to some folks listening to me this morning, who perhaps for years, even in this church, have put up the show, but have had no root. And your spiritual life today, beloved, is withering, withering away, because the word, every time it preached, every time it's spoken, it hits a rock, an irresistible rock, of a mind that rejects it and of a heart that rebels against it. And because there's no moisture, why you try to build up your life and put up the show of religion and pretend, but it has no root.

I wonder what it'll take to break that heart. I know what it took to break mine, just a revelation of Calvary, and what it must have meant to him to bear away my sin. And of course, you see, this is the final answer, the final contrast of this whole chapter in Isaiah 46.

The powerlessness of the idol is contrasted with the power of Jehovah. Verse 13, I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory. Think of those words, the idol couldn't save, but Jehovah can.

In him there's power for anything, in his will. Of course, truly, our verse anticipates a day when God shall set his king in Zion. When Jesus shall reign, where'er the sun of his successive journeys run, his kingdom stretch from shore to shore, till moon shall wax and wane no more.

Great day, but that's future. Here's something for me now, today, in Chicago, where I live, in my home, in my job, something wonderful. So near does he bring his righteousness, that he places salvation in Zion, for Israel his glory.

Or put it into the language of the New Testament, listen. I listened to our Lord, as he prayed, just before the cross. The glory thou hast given me, I have given them.

I in them, thou in me. John 17, 22. Listen again.

As he spoke to a little group of bereft disciples, who were going to lose his presence. I will pray the Father, and he shall send you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever. At that day ye shall know, I am in my Father, you in me, and I in you.

Bless the Lord, it happened. It happened at Pentecost. Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me.

And by that transforming power, he achieves in us all his purpose, and he calls his people. Oh, what an amazing thing. He calls his people, my glory.

Oh yes, the greatest revelation of the power and the glory of God, in a world today, indeed the only revelation, is the Christian. And the only hope for your life, and for the world, is that somehow that glory should get in, and begin to shine through. Let me conclude again by, well, going back to where I began.

I'm quoting again from our President. No, let me paraphrase, paraphrase President Kennedy a moment. Listen, heart rest will only be secured when the whole man lays down the gods which seem to offer him present security, but which threaten his future survival.

And that armistice day can happen now. How? Oh, for a closer walk with God. A calm and heavenly frame.

A light to shine along the road that leads me to the land. Where is the blessedness that once I knew when first I saw the Lord? Where's that so refreshing view of Jesus and his word? Here's the key, here's the key. The dearest idol I have known, what e'er that idol be, help me to tear it from thy throne, and worship only thee.

Shall we bow in prayer? Together with our radio audience we bow for one moment of silent prayer. Lord, as the truth dug deep, gone deep, has the word broken through the rock of your heart and fallen today on receptive, hungry ground? If so, glory to God. He has brought near his righteousness and put salvation in Zion for his people, his glory.

Oh, thou loving, living, lasting Lord. We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts.

We have offended against thy Holy Lord. There is no help in us. But thou, O God, have mercy upon us, miserable offense.

Spare thou them, O God, who confess their faults. Restore thou them that are penitent. And each one of us, by grace, would lift up our hearts to thee and say, Lord Jesus, that means just me.

O Spirit of God, may thy word be as the hammer that breaks the rock in pieces. We ask it for thy name's sake. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/21/SID21070.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/alan-redpath/worship-and-witness/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net