

# (Isaiah) the Highway of Holiness

by David Guzik

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*David Guzik's sermon emphasizes the urgency of recognizing God's impending judgment during the Great Tribulation and the need for nations to heed His warnings.*

**Duration:** 50:19

**Scripture:** Isaiah 34:1-4, Isaiah 34:16, Isaiah 35:1-2, Isaiah 35:10, Matthew 11:4-6, Revelation 14:20

**Topics:** "Spiritual Transformation", "Eschatological Hope"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the hope and transformation that believers can experience through the power of God. He emphasizes that nature is eagerly waiting for the Messiah's reign and the glorification of believers. The preacher encourages listeners to strengthen their weak hands and feeble knees, assuring them that God will come with vengeance and save them. He emphasizes that the ultimate goal is not just to endure and reach the finish line, but to experience a complete transformation and joy in the presence of God.

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## Transcript

Day of chapter 34, verse 1. Come near you nations to hear and heed you people, that all the earth here and all that is in it, the world and all things that come forth from it, for the indignation of the Lord is against all nations, and his fury is against all their armies. He has utterly destroyed them, he has given them over to the slaughter, also their slain shall be thrown out, their stench shall rise from their corpses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood, all the hosts of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll, all their hosts shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine, and as a fruit falling from a fig tree. Chapter begins with a powerful few first verses, if you look at verse 2, the phrase should just strike a note of alarm in our hearts almost when it cries out, the indignation of the Lord.

Now again, in the most immediate context, he's talking about God's wrath coming against the empire of Assyria, which threatened Judah. But if you take a look at it as it's described here, and in its larger context, we can see this prophecy as being an announcement of the judgment to come upon the nations during the great tribulation. If you notice the wording in verse 1, the prophet is very careful not to single it out to any one nation.

Come near you nations to hear, and heed you people, let the earth hear in all that is in it. We notice this from our study in the prophets before, how seamlessly they can flow from speaking about an immediate situation, what God wants to do in that situation in the near term, and then just flow right into God's

ultimate fulfillment. I mean, there's judgment, and then there's judgment.

And God is going to bring judgment against the Assyrians. But one day, God's going to bring judgment against this world, and the time that that judgment will be most pronounced is a period of time that the Bible calls the great tribulation. Now our Lord Jesus himself, and many Old Testament prophets, plainly told us of a coming time that Jesus himself called the great tribulation.

You find that in Matthew chapter 24, verse 21. And this is a time when, because of the judgment of God, conditions on earth will be the worst human history has ever seen. Friends, I want you to think about that for a moment.

The worst time that planet Earth has ever seen. I mean, a few months ago on television, they showed it again, Schindler's List, a movie that Steven Spielberg produced about the German Holocaust, and the terrible tragedy that befell the Jewish people during that time. And you watch a movie like that, and there's just something that deep that affects you.

It's like, oh, what a horrible, horrible time to be alive. What a terrible epoch of human history to take part in. Friends, the great tribulation is going to be worse than that.

Jesus said that there was never a time on the earth as bad as what's going to come, and there will never be another one like it. You see, Revelation chapter 6 and then 8, 9 and 16 through 18 describe this horrific time when there will be widespread ecological and economic and cosmic and human catastrophe on a level never before known in history. It'll be God's final outpouring of judgment to try to persuade a Christ-rejecting world to come to him before the final judgment comes.

You say, well, that's no way for God to give people a final warning, pouring out terrible judgment on the world. Why doesn't God try the nice approach? Can I say he's doing it right now? And if you won't respond to that, well, then here comes the judgment approach. God's giving thousands of years of this dispensation of grace.

Friends, the great tribulation is coming upon this world, and it's no wonder that Isaiah pleads with the nations. Look at it there at verse one. Come near you nations to hear and heed you people.

Isaiah wants the nations to understand that this tribulation, that this calamity is coming upon the earth. I mean, in light of how terrible the great tribulation will be when we consider how prophecy has been fulfilled and how the stage is set for even more fulfilled prophecy, we and all the nations should hear and take heed. Do you realize just how close the time is? Friends, the Bible describes a certain economic environment that will mark the very end times.

The Bible describes a political environment. It's spiritual environment, a cultural environment. And Isaiah, we're in that environment right now in each one of those measures.

Now, is it possible that the Lord might delay his coming and not come for another 100 or 200 years? I suppose it's possible, but if it is, he's going to have to recreate the same kind of conditions that we have on the earth right now. Friends, the Bible says that there's going to be a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem before the end. And right now the stage is set for a rebuilt temple that will come in the last days necessary to fulfill the prophecies of the abomination of desolation.

The Bible says that in the very end times, there will be a world dominating confederation of nations that's an heir to the Roman Empire and that it'll rise. And friends, the stage is set. The Bible says that in the last days there will arise a political and economic superman, a political leader who will lead this world dominating confederation of nations.

And friends, the stage is set for that stage is set for the kind of false religion that the Bible says will characterize the very last days. The stage is set for the kind of economic system predicted for the very last days. You can even say that the stage is set for the end time scenario.

The Bible says will happen between Russia and Israel in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39. The stage is set. It's as if God has arranged the whole game board, so to speak, everything's laid out, everything's in its place, everything's in position.

And you say, well, why doesn't he just flip the switch and make it go over? Because God's waiting for as many to come to him in these last days as can. God does not relish the thought of any soul going through this period of great tribulation. He'd rather take them home to him first.

You see, this warning regarding this time of the indignation of the Lord, who's it directed to? Look at verse one. Come near my people to hear and heed my people. No, it doesn't say that, does it? Who's the warning directed to? The nations, not the people of God, the nations.

You see, in that day, they made a division in the mind of of Isaiah and all the Jewish people that time, the Jewish people to this day. You divide humanity among two categories. You have Israel and you have the nations, the goyim.

You have Israel and non-Israel, the nations. And so using the imagery, the figures of speech in that day, God isn't speaking to his people. God's speaking to those who are not his people.

And this is because God's people will escape the terrors of the great tribulation, though they may experience great hardship in the time leading up to it. But Jesus said that we should pray to be counted worthy to escape this time of terror. You can escape it, pray to God to give you the grace to be one of his people, to be counted among those who will be taken away in this great catching away of the church, the first Thessalonians chapter four describes, because it's going to come.

Look at verse five. My sword shall be bathed in heaven. Indeed, it shall come down on Edom and on the people of my curse for judgment.

The sword of the Lord is filled with blood. It is made overflowing with fatness and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the Lord has a sacrifice in Basra and a great slaughter in the land of Edom.

The wild oxen shall come down with them and the young bulls with the mighty bulls and their land shall be soaked with blood and their dust saturated with fatness. The first thing I want you to notice in these verses that I read, verses five, six and seven, is that it specifically names one nation, doesn't it? Edom, the Edomites, who live sort of to the south, actually to the southeast of Israel. You might think, oh, well, fine, this isn't speaking about the whole world now.

This isn't speaking about the Great Tribulation, speaking about the Edomites. No. No, it may have the Edomites in view in the short term, but you see, the Edomites were sort of special enemies of Israel.

Do you know what made the Edomites special enemies of Israel? They were related. They were related. Actually, the father of the Edomites was Esau.

The father of the Israelite nation was Jacob. Jacob and Esau were twins. And so there was an especially bitter rivalry between the Edomites and between Israel.

And at this period of time in Israelite history, the Edomites were a fairly strong nation in competition to Israel. And when Israel was judged by God, the Bible tells us the Edomites rejoiced. They loved it.

Therefore, the Israelites had an especially bitter feeling towards the Edomites. Now, because of this, Isaiah focuses on the judgment that will come against Edom, using them as a single example of the large judgment that will come upon all the nations. One commentator puts it like this, he says, Edom was a sister nation to Israel, but it hated Israel more than any other nation.

Throughout all of history, we see a burning hatred of Edom against Israel. It is for this reason that Edom is frequently presented as a representative of all nations that hated the Jews. So what does God do with Edom in particular, but all the nations that are set against his people in general? Look at it there.

It's a bloody judgment. Verse six, the sword of the Lord is filled with blood. Their land shall be soaked with blood.

The indignation of the Lord finds its final fulfillment at the Battle of Armageddon, which will be a terribly bloody affair. Revelation chapter 14, verse 20, speaks of the scene at the Battle of Armageddon and blood being splattered up as far as the horse's bridles in a terrible, terrible bloodletting during this time. Now, whenever you have the image of so much blood flowing everywhere.

That's not far separated from the image of sacrifice, is it? Sacrifice was a bloody business, wasn't it? And it's in these verses, the Lord saying this is his sacrifice. Notice it, it says here, verse six, it is made overflowing with fatness. Fatness was offered in sacrifices and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys and rams, for the Lord has a sacrifice in Basra.

That was the capital of the Edomites and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. You see, in associating this time of judgment with the image of sacrifice, I think Isaiah and the Lord speaking through Isaiah is making a very important point. This is a payment for the penalty of sin.

Isn't that what a sin offering was? Why was that lamb killed? Why was the ox sacrificed? Because it stood in the place of a guilty sinner. That sacrifice was a way to pay the penalty that sin deserved. And God said, you know what? That's what this judgment is.

It's a payment for the penalty of sin, even as a sacrificial victim paid for the sin of the one bringing the sacrifice. So the bloody judgment of sin at Armageddon will be a payment for the penalty of sin. And I'd say, well, I guess that pays for their sin then.

No, no, my friend. I said it will be a payment, not a final payment, not a complete payment, not a perfect payment, but a payment of some kind. That's God's purpose in judgment.

Now, sometimes we wonder, why does the judgment of the Lord have to be so severe? Why so harsh? I'm not even speaking just of this own life that we have. Why does a just God need to sentence people to an eternal hell for suffering? In the minds of some people, it seems brutal, primitive. As if God is some

strange, sadistic, jealous creature that is pleased by nothing more than seeing people writhe in agony for all of eternity.

My friends, that's not it at all. This idea of people being judged and it being along the same lines as sacrifice gives an important illustration to this point. Friends, you need to understand that God is perfect and the only payment for sin that he can receive is a perfect payment.

A perfect payment is full and complete, right? You got that credit card bill. You make a perfect payment. You pay the whole thing off, right? You're not carrying a balance month to month.

Let me tell you, you know how it works with that credit card bill that you're trying to pay. What happens if you never completely pay the balance? How long will it take you to pay it off? Forever. You'll never pay it off.

Well, you know, it's the same way with the debt of sin that we have before God. Only a perfect being can make a perfect sacrifice for sins. Friends.

You and I, even if we wanted to, could not make a perfect sacrifice for sin because we're imperfect being. It'd just be like, well, chipping away at it. So on the day of Armageddon, people will pay for their sins.

The judgment will be like a sacrifice, but it will be like an animal sacrifice which can never take away sin, just cover it over. You see, the whole dynamic of animal sacrifice in the Old Testament said that the sacrifices had to be repeated time and time again. And if you have to repeat something, let me put it to you this way, if you have to keep writing the check to the credit card company every month, what does it say? So you're not paying it off.

Right. Means you got more to pay my friends. Jesus Christ paid it off once for all.

The only perfect payment man will ever find for his sin is found in the full and complete atonement of Jesus Christ. If you insist on paying for your own sins, you can never do it. That's why you have to pay continually, eternally in hell.

And so here the judgment comes upon the world at the prefiguring here of the Battle of Armageddon. One textual note here, verse seven. There's just kind of something interesting here.

If any of you are using an old King James version, the authorized version, as it was once known, the regular King James version translates what's in the New King James here as wild oxen. In verse seven in the old King James, that's called unicorns. And some people have wondered, well, I mean, does that mean unicorns are in the Bible and and this and that? Well, no, really, the best translation of this really would be wild oxen from Deuteronomy, chapter 33, verse 17.

It tells us that this animal didn't have one horn. It had two horns. And it's just kind of a curiosity how the term unicorns crept into it in the old King James.

Coming on now to verse eight, where it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion, its streams shall be turned into pitch and its dust into brimstone, its land shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night or day. Its smoke shall ascend forever.

From generation to generation, it shall lie waste. No one shall pass through it forever and ever. My friends, again, not only does this have to do with whatever immediate judgment that the Lord would bring against

the Assyrians, which was sort of representative of the nations against the people of God at that time, but in the ultimate sense, it's also referring to the Great Tribulation.

In this period that we call the Great Tribulation, there will be unparalleled ecological disaster. The Book of Revelation tells us that before Jesus Christ returns at the end of the Great Tribulation, one third of the earth's vegetation, one third of the oceans and one third of the fresh waters will be destroyed and unusable. Friends, that is ecological catastrophe on the scale in which man has never imagined before.

Never. And so this is true, this is what it says here in verses eight to ten, even the land shall suffer of it. And you see what kind of desolation is left in this afterwards.

Verse eleven. But the pelican and the porcupine shall possess it. Also, the owl and the raven shall dwell in it and he shall stretch out over the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness.

They shall call its nobles to the kingdom, but none shall be there and all its princes shall be nothing. And thorns shall come up in its palaces, nettles and brambles and its fortresses. It shall be a habitation of jackals, a courtyard for ostriches.

The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the jackals and the wild goat shall bleat to its companion. Also, the night creature shall rest there and find for herself a place of rest there. The arrow snake shall make her nest and lay eggs and hatch and gather them under a shadow.

And also the hawk shall be gathered, everyone with her mate. Friends, so much of the earth will be destroyed that many places only wild animals will be able to live the kind of desolation and destruction that's going to come upon the earth in this time of judgment. It's just staggering, staggering to think of it.

No wonder in the very beginning God warns the nations, I wonder if somehow God could make real to the hearts of those who reject him. If he could make real to their hearts the terrors of the Great Tribulation. They would do everything they could to get right with God right now.

The Bible says that during the time of the Great Tribulation, that at least during one period of it, men will wish to die, long for death, but not be able to die. You'll have people because of the incredible agony coming upon the earth. Agony so great that the Bible says that God will send forth a special, strange insect like creatures that will go and sting and torment men all over the world.

In the midst of this incredible disaster and torment that God will bring upon the earth, men and women will long to die, thinking they would escape it, not knowing that they would enter into an even worse situation, the fires of hell itself. They would long to, to just by chance, escape it by taking their own lives. And God will not allow it.

He won't allow the life to be extinguished. Perhaps they'd mutilate their own bodies, decide to destroy themselves, try to, you know, do whatever they could, but they won't be able to. They won't be able to die.

Friends, if God could somehow make real to the hearts of an ungodly person, the terrors of the Great Tribulation, how much we would say, Oh, Lord, receive me into your kingdom. Count me worthy to escape this time that's going to come upon the earth. It's going to happen.

Look at verse 16. Search from the book of the Lord and read. Not one of these shall fail.

Not one shall lack her mates. For my mouth has commanded it and his spirit has gathered them. He has cast a lot for them and his hand has divided it among them with a measuring line.

They shall possess it forever. From generation to generation, they shall dwell in it. It's amazing, you're not going to find many statements like this in the word of God.

Look at what Isaiah is saying there in verse 16. He's saying, listen, when it comes to pass, you look it up. You can know this remarkable statement tells us that Isaiah understood that his words were the words of the Lord.

It also tells us that this prophecy should be understood literally, perhaps poetically. I mean, there's poetic aspects to language and to the phrasing, but it's describing real events that are going to happen. And it means that Isaiah clearly challenged doubters to look it up once the prophecy was fulfilled.

My friends, this is one of the greatest confirmations we have of the truth of the Bible, and that's a fulfilled prophecy. You know, the Bible says to us very plainly, very powerfully that we have a more sure word of prophecy shining as a light in a dark place. And we can know that God's word is true.

We can know that there's a God enthroned in heaven because he tells us the future before it happens. I mean, think of the multitude of prophecies concerning the birth of Jesus Christ. Born in Bethlehem.

From Nazareth, fled from Egypt. So on and so forth, all throughout the ministry, the scores of prophecies precisely fulfilled. You look back and say, you know what, this had a divine author.

This is a one of those lame, psychic hotline prophecies. You'll meet someone interesting in the next week. Yeah, whatever, you know.

No, my friends, no. This is true, and it shows that there's someone standing outside of time as we know it, looking down upon it, who can see the end of it from the beginning of it. He knows what's happening.

We can trust it's a search from the book of the Lord and read, not one of these shall fail, not one. And if prophecy in the past has been fulfilled so literally, so exactly, we can trust the prophecy in the future is going to be fulfilled that way, too. You know, an illustration that's been offered before, and I think it's an excellent way to picture this is to picture it.

God's panorama of history to be like a parade. Let's say you go down, you see the Rose Parade one year, you know, and there you are camped out at Colorado Boulevard, you camp out there a few days before the parade and you get a great seat, you know, and there you are. And boy, you just got a great thing.

And you watch the bands and you watch the floats and you watch the horses and you watch, you know, whatever it is going down the way you see them all go down. Let's say that above it all is the Goodyear blimp there and you got a little cell phone there with you and all of a sudden you get a call on your cell phone and it's a friend of yours and it's a friend says, you'll never believe where I'm at. You say, well, tell me, because I'm at the Rose Parade.

They say, well, that's funny. I'm at the Rose Parade, too. They say, where are you? Well, I'm right down here on Colorado Boulevard, you know, right in front of this particular building.

Oh, that's marvelous. You'll never guess where I am. I'm up in the blimp watching the parade.

You say, no, you're a liar. You're not up in the blimp, you know, and you go, oh, sure. Listen, and you know, you hear something going on, but it could just be kind of them in the phone, you know, you don't know.

You say, well, prove to me that you're in the blimp. They say, well, tell me where you are and they tell you where, OK, I'll tell you exactly. In five minutes, you're going to see a marching band go by and they got the ugliest purple uniforms you've ever seen in your life.

I can see them right now and I can tell you what's at the end of the parade because I can see the end of the parade right now and the end of the parade is a fleet of beautiful white horses and people in white outfits on the other thing. And sure enough, when the purple band goes by, you say, oh, this is something. And when the other band, you say, you know what, this guy had a perspective on this parade that I didn't have.

I mean, I could just see what was right in front of me, but he's above it all. And he could see the beginning and the end and the whole parade at the same time. Friends, that's how it is with our Lord God in heaven.

He sees the whole parade of human history from beginning to end all at the same time. And he sees what's down the road of the parade, which you haven't seen yet. And in his word, he tells us it's coming.

God sees the great tribulation coming along the way. And he says, look, here it is. Prepare for it.

Nations, get ready. People, get ready for it. Here it comes.

Search for the book of the Lord and read. Not one of these shall fail. We can know somebody living outside of time as we know it is speaking to us from across the ages.

Now, let's be honest here. Isaiah chapter thirty four is pretty much the downer, isn't it? I mean, I don't think anybody's going to get their lifetime memory verse from Isaiah chapter thirty four. But praise God, it doesn't end there.

Look at chapter thirty five. The wilderness and the wasteland should be glad for them. The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it. The excellence of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord, the excellency of our God. You see, Isaiah chapter thirty four described this incredible devastation happening to the ecology of the earth. And what is Isaiah chapter thirty five? It's going to be restored.

Now, again, this happened on a small scale, right? I'm sure when the Assyrian army swept through Israel and swept through the southern kingdom of Judah, they left absolute destruction everywhere they went. You just forward his army and the whole ecology of every place they touched was messed up. And God says, I'm going to restore that.

And even a larger picture, you could say that as the nation of Israel is coming to land now, you should see how they've restored that land. You should see how that land, which was at one time virtually an agricultural wasteland, now provides most all the beautiful fresh fruits and vegetables for all the year. You should just go to Israel and see all the farms and all the beautiful, beautiful agricultural land.

God has blessed that land. And through God's blessing and their hard work and technology, the desert has bloomed. It's blossomed as a rose.

But friends, it's going to be true on the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy when God restores the ecology of the world after the end of the Great Tribulation, the Battle of Armageddon. And he will restore it because after Jesus comes at the Battle of Armageddon, he's going to establish a new world and there's going to be a thousand years of the rule and reign of Jesus Christ on this earth. And even the ecology of the world is going to be different.

Can I tell you something? This earth can't wait for it to happen. If you could listen to the rocks, to the ocean, to the mountains, if they could speak, they would say, get your act together so Jesus can return, so we can be delivered from all of this. Romans chapter eight, verse 19, says.

The earnest expectation of the creation eagerly awaits for the revealing of the sons of God, for the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope, because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Nature is waiting for the transformation that will come when the Messiah reigns and believers are glorified. The next time you pick up that shell and listen to it, I bet if you listen really carefully, it'll say, get your act together, go out and preach the gospel so the fullness of Gentiles can come in and we can be delivered from this.

So the land is restored. But even more than that, look at verse three, strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees, say to those who are faint hearted, be strong, do not fear. Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God.

He will come and save you. You know, the coming judgment that Isaiah announced in Isaiah chapter 34, it would be enough to make the hands of anybody weak. It'd be enough to make the knees of anybody knock.

But in light of the glorious restoration God will bring from that time, it's no time to have weak hands. It's no time to have feeble knees. Get strong and get going.

I mean, when you've got a weak hand, what does that mean? You can't work for the Lord, can you? And hands are what you work with. Weak hands, you can't work for the Lord. Those with weak hands, they're not working for the Lord as they should.

What about those with feeble knees? Well, you use your knees for a couple of things, don't you? First of all, you move around with them, right? You got knee trouble, it's hard to walk. It's hard to get around. It's hard to progress.

It's hard to go anywhere. And also you use those knees for praying, don't you? You got feeble knees. Not feeble from too much prayer, feeble from too little prayer.

Those with feeble knees are not progressing with the Lord and praying as they should. I love it how Hebrews 12, 12 quotes this verse from Isaiah to make the point that even in a time of chastening from the Lord, we should take strength and courage in the Lord, knowing that it's his fatherly love and care that has allowed and directed the chastening. It's time to get strong in the Lord and move on.

Let's think about it. You don't see much progress in your Christian life. You don't see that you're accomplishing much for the work of the Lord.

You got weak hands and feeble knees. Strengthen them, strengthen them. The Lord wants to strengthen your hands.

He wants to give strength and help to those feeble knees of yours to strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful hearted, be strong. Do not fear.

He will come and save you, it says at the end of verse four. You know, in our present trials, we need the strong hope of the Lord to overcome our fearful hearts. You know, our fearful hearts aren't hoped by, helped, I should say, by a vain, vague optimism.

Just look on the sunny side. Behind every cloud, there's a silver lining. Man, that gets old fast.

Friends, look at the end of verse four. He will come and save you. That's not some vain, vague optimism you can bet your life on.

So be strong. Do not fear. He will come and save you.

Are you fearful hearted tonight? Well, the Lord wants to strengthen you. Meditate on it. He'll come and save you.

He'll rescue you. He loves you. Things look bad.

They look bad at the job. They look bad at your home. They look bad in your circumstances of friends or your family, whatever.

Don't worry about it. He will save you. Don't be fearful hearted.

Look at verse five. Gets better and better. The eyes of the blind shall be open and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Then the lame shall leap like a deer and the tongue of the dumb sing. Don't you love that? When God's salvation comes, miraculous power comes with it. And my friends, it's a miracle for the blind to see, isn't it? It's a miracle for the deaf to hear.

I love how he puts it there in verse six. The lame, they just don't walk. They leap like a deer.

The dumb or the mute, they just don't talk. They sing. Isn't that beautiful? That's how God's miraculous power works.

You see, when he will come and save you, he does it with miraculous power. And friends, you can trust God and believe him for miracles. God's miraculous power isn't sure.

God is still the same God who does great things in the days of the Bible. His miraculous power can be a glorious work in our lives. Now, we can't command his miraculous power.

You can't snap your fingers and say, OK, Lord. Bring me my miracle now. Friends, we can believe that our God is a beautiful, powerful, miracle-working God and trust him to do great things.

You know, I think it's fascinating that when John the Baptist was in prison, he became discouraged and began to wonder if Jesus really was the Messiah he had proclaimed him to be. And so John's disciples brought this question to Jesus and they said, now, look, are you really the Messiah or should we look for another? Kind of a funny question for John the Baptist to be asking, don't you think? But you can be real sure about Jesus when everything's going great, right? You know, when the multitudes are coming to hear you preach, when you're baptizing everybody, when you've got the chance to get in the face of some scribes and Pharisees. You know, it just feels great, doesn't it? You know, then, oh, yeah, oh, I know who Jesus is.

Throw you into prison for a while. And all of a sudden, is that really you, Jesus? Are you really the Messiah? Jesus answered back to the disciples of John. This is what he said.

It's in Matthew chapter 11. He said, go and tell John the things that you hear and see. The blind see and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

And blessed is he who is not offended because of me. And Jesus didn't use the exact words of Isaiah chapter 35, but he certainly used the idea. Jesus, the Messiah, had come to bring God's salvation and that would be accompanied with miraculous power.

Praise God. That's not all. Pick it up here at the middle of verse six.

For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool and the thirsty land springs of water and the habitation of jackals where each lay there should be grass with reeds and rushes. You know, when God's salvation comes, miraculous provision comes with it.

What was dry and useless before becomes well watered and fruitful. And Jesus said that he would bring this kind of beautiful provision in the lives of his people. Jesus said, he who believes in me, as the scriptures have said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

But this he spoke concerning the spirit whom those believing in him would receive. Friends, that's what God wants to do is you feel like your heart is dry, that you're just a dried up rock and God can bring water out of that rock. There's no reason for a Christian to endure a dry time.

Not even not when I should say the miraculous power of Jesus Christ to provide his presence. Look at what he can do. It's in the middle of verse six, for water shall birth forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

Now, I love what it says in verse seven, the parched ground shall become a pool. And yeah, OK, it sounds like the same thing, it's not. You know what the literal meaning of that term parched ground is in the Hebrew? Literally, it refers to a mirage.

And God is saying that the mirage will become a pool. It doesn't seem like sometimes in our lives, the good things of the Lord, the blessings of his glory and grace, it just seemed like a mirage. There you are, you're going across the desert, you know, water, water.

I think, oh, look, there's a beautiful pool. It's an oasis in front of all I get all you get all excited, start running, start running. You know, you jump and you go to dive into the pool.

You just get a mouthful of sand. It's just a mirage. It's gone.

It's vanished. Some people feel like that when they walk with the Lord, the good things of the Lord. It's just a mirage.

Oh, you talk about it and you talk about it. But when I went to get it, I just got a mouthful of sand. No, it's just a mirage.

And it's not a mirage. Jesus Christ and his blessing, he'll take that mirage and make it a pool. What was once just an illusion will one day become a glorious reality.

And look how the chapter ends here. Like I say, it just gets better and better. Verse 8, a highway shall be there and a road, and it shall be called the highway of holiness.

The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray. A highway of holiness.

That's what God's going to make for his people. You know, today we take good roads for granted, but in the ancient world, a good road, a highway was an amazing blessing for travel, progress and business. And Isaiah announces that in the ministry of the Messiah, there's going to be a wonderful highway, a road known as the highway of holiness.

And God wants you to walk, wants you to travel on that highway of holiness. The Hebrew word for highway indicates what our English word literally says. You know, our English word literally says a high way.

It also has the idea of a elevated road, you know, something that's built up and lifted up among ground level. That's a causeway. It's something lifted up and it makes its way up high, raised above the ground.

That's what the literal Hebrew means here. It's a high, glorious road to travel on. God has that for you to walk on.

It's a highway of holiness. And can I tell you that the construction of this highway of holiness was the greatest engineering feat ever accomplished. You ever been out in the mountains or maybe through the desert or some desolate or difficult terrain and you're driving on the road and you say, what did it take to build this road? You think they had to blast through a mountain.

They had to build this bridge. They had to work out. I mean, the engineering, the effort, the work.

And here you are. You're just cruising out. You're enjoying it.

But somebody else put all the hard work and effort and engineering into it. And this, this is a well engineered road. Spurgeon said, engineering has done much to tunnel mountains and to bridge abysses.

But the greatest triumph of engineering is that which made a way from sin to holiness, from death to life, from condemnation to perfection. Who could make a road over the mountains of our iniquities? But almighty God, none but the Lord of love would have wished it. None but the God of wisdom could have devised it.

None but the God of power could have carried it out. God had all the wherewithal to do it. Now, this highway of holiness isn't for everybody.

Look at it there in verse eight. The unclean shall not pass over it. You know, this highway isn't for everybody.

It's got a toll booth there. You go there and you want to check on to that highway of holiness. Reach in your pockets, you can't pay your own way.

No way you're going to pay your own way on that highway to holiness. You're only allowed on this highway if you're cleansed by the great work of the Messiah. Those are the clean people who can walk on it, not cleaning themselves, cleaned by the work of the Messiah for them.

And I love it. You know how safe this road is? Look at it here, verse eight. Whoever walks the road, although a fool shall not go astray.

You can't get lost on this road. You just stay on that highway to holiness and you're never going to get lost. You know, you're never going to fall off of it either.

You know, even though his work isn't completing us yet, even though we may be in some ways a fool, yet we are safe because we're on his highway. You're on the highway of holiness. There's guardrails on the dangerous curves.

And even though you're being a fool and bouncing off the guardrail, he's got it set up. You're not going to fall off. Although a fool, you should not go astray.

He'll keep you on it with the guardrails until he develops the wisdom and the maturity in you. That's going to keep you on the highway. You want to know how safe it is? Look at verse nine.

No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it. It shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. No lion's going to be there as we stay on God's highway of holiness.

We're protected from the attacks of the lion. The Bible says that your adversary, the devil, walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Let me tell you something.

That lion has never devoured anybody who kept on the highway of holiness. Never. You stay on the highway of holiness, you're safe.

The promise is sure. No lion shall be there. It shall not be found there.

That's a sure promise, my friends. You go wandering off that highway of holiness. I don't know.

You never know. There's lions and tigers and bears out there. Oh, my.

You better look out. Friends, you're on the highway. You're safe.

Look at it here. Verse 10 is the chapter wraps up. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing.

With everlasting joy on their heads, they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Isn't that beautiful? We use this highway of holiness to come where God lives and where God

reigns. That's Zion.

And how do we come there? With singing. Friends, you need to set a higher goal in your life. Right now, you're saying, oh, Lord, if I can just hang on.

If I can just stagger over the finish line to the highway of holiness, gritting my teeth, hating every moment of it. But at least I'm there, Lord. I remember years ago that gal who was running one of those first Ironman triathlons in Hawaii.

What was it? You know, 50 yards short of the finish line, she collapsed. You can hardly blame her. She just, you know, swam a couple of miles, rode a bike 100 miles and then ran a marathon of more than 26 miles, 50 yards short of the finish line.

And she collapses. And she was in first place. And so she gets up and she claws and she crawls and she goes a few more feet and she collapses again.

I mean, oh, the worst tragedy of it. I mean, if you're athletically inclined at all. The woman who was in second place passed her up while she's trying to, you know, go across the finish line.

Finally, she makes it. But that's it. So, oh, she's just crawling, collapsing, you know, rolling almost over the finish line.

She made it. Maybe that's how you're hoping to make it. You know what? You better set a higher vision for yourself, my friends.

You know how the Lord wants you to come? He wants you to travel first class. Look at that. And come to Zion with singing.

That's how it should be. You're on the highway of holiness. Sure, there's rough terrain.

Sure, there's hills to climb. Sure, there's long stretches to go through without a rest stop. But you go on it with singing.

Notice it with everlasting joy on their heads and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. But we can know some of this now. Ultimately, it's going to be fulfilled in heaven.

But we can know some of it now. Friends, it's just beautiful. What a picture God has given us in this chapter.

It's as if you come to God barren and dry and blind and deaf and weak and crippled. That's the condition you come to him in. Then what does he do? The Lord sends his miraculous power through our Savior, Jesus Christ, to change us and heal us and provide for us.

But that's not the end of God's work. Look at it back there in verse 35. It's not just to have your eyes opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame leaping about like a deer and to have the refreshment of the waters and all that.

That's not it. God does all this restoring, healing, miraculous work in your life. And then what he does? He says, no, I got a highway.

All it is for you to walk on. I didn't do all this work in your life just for you to go your own way. Come on my road now.

Now, that highway would be helpful to someone who was dry and parched and blind and deaf. Think of yourself as a blind man, right? Well, which would you rather go on? A highway or just have to make yourself open terrain and fields? Give me the highway. I can tap my cane and know where the asphalt is.

At least I'll be going in the right direction. It's much better to be on a highway. But you know what? No, no.

The highway isn't for that. I'm going to heal your blindness and your deafness and bring my miraculous power in your life. And then I'm going to set you on the highway of holiness.

When the highway is provided for the one who's healed and provided for as we are in Jesus Christ and the blessings even more amazing. So here's the question for you, friends. First of all, are you on that highway? Are you on the highway of holiness? Secondly, are you making progress on it? Do you take an extended stay and a rest stop on the highway to holiness? Do you feel like you run out of gas on the highway to holiness? Friends, no way.

No way. This highway of holiness, God wants you to be progressing on it. Let me ask you a third question.

Are you enjoying the travel? The Lord wants you to enjoy it. You say, oh, but David, I'm in such a trial right now. I can't enjoy it.

Well, you know what? Then enjoy it in faith and anticipation right now that the trial is going to be over and the Lord's accomplishing his good purpose. And finally, are you inviting others to join? Remember I said it's like a highway. It's like a raised highway.

And here you are walking along and you see other people milling all about. They're not on the highway of holiness. You know, you can call out, say, hey, come and join me on this.

Come on, come walk with me. Come and walk with me along on this highway of holiness. The Lord will bring them on and bring them to that glorious destination to come and be with the Lord in Zion.

So I just want to say thank you, Jesus, for Isaiah chapter 35, because I'm glad we didn't have to end on Isaiah chapter 34. The glorious restoration of the Lord. And let's thank him for it in prayer right now.

Father, we want to thank you together for your word, for your grace, for your love. Father, I pray that every one of us would be on your highway of holiness, that we'd be making progress on it, that we'd be enjoying the travel, singing as we go, Lord. Finally, Lord, that we'd be inviting others to join us on it.

Help us to do it, Lord. Help us to glorify you. Thank you, Lord, for your highway of holiness and for your great work in our lives.

We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

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