

Cultivating a Fiery Spirit, Part 2

INTRODUCTION

Isaiah 51 is depicting a dialogue, a conversation, between the people of God and God the Father. He's speaking to His people in a time of crisis. There are three key passages around which the conversation is organized.

In Isaiah 51:9, the people of God in intercession in a time of crisis are saying, "God, awake" (Isa. 51:9, paraphrased). In verse 9 the people are asking the arm of the Lord to awake, which is a way of saying, "Lord, release Your power as in the days of old. Come and deliver us. We're surrounded by the enemy. Break in and deliver us." That's what's going on.

Then the Lord turns the conversation. In verse 17 He says, "The problem isn't that I need to awake. I'm more than willing. The problem isn't you convincing Me; the problem is Me convincing you" (Isa. 51:17, paraphrased).

In verse 17 He tells them to awake. Of course they argue by saying, "Yes, but we're in a season of discipline. We can't live with a fiery spirit." Instead of the word *awake*, write the phrase, "Cultivating a fiery spirit." Awakening is living with a fiery spirit before God. That's what God is telling them in verse 17: "Live with a fiery spirit. Press into My heart. Live in spiritual vitality and reality with prophetic urgency. Come after Me with passion." That's what, "Awake, awake!" means.

The argument that they present back to the Lord in verses 17-23 is that they're under a time of discipline and will have to wait this out. "When you're under discipline, you can't live fiery for God."

God says, "Yes, you can. I'll forgive you. I'll restore you. You don't have to wait until a season of probation is over. Arise and press into Me now."

DON'T SPEND A YEAR ON PROBATION BEFORE YOU COME BACK TO GOD

The Lord says in verse 21, "Please hear this, you afflicted ones, those under discipline" (Isa. 51:21, paraphrased). In verse 22, the Lord pleads His case: "I have taken the cup of judgment out of your hands. Yes, you've been under discipline, but I want you to press in with confidence. I want you on fire no matter what bad you did yesterday. It doesn't matter what your struggle was. Rise up and press in. Press delete on shame and stand with boldness in the presence of God" (v. 22, paraphrased).

One of the arguments of the people of God for not being fiery is, "Well, I've been struggling a lot, so I'll coast for a few months until forgiveness sinks in. Then I'll coast for another year in probation so I can prove to God that I'm sincere."

The Lord says, "Forget all that. Awake. Stand. Move into My heart right now." It's a wonderful conversation. We looked at it last week; I don't want to go through it in detail anymore. I want to go to the next level of the dialogue.

AWAKEN AND POSITION YOURSELF TO RECEIVE THE STRENGTH OF GOD

Isaiah 52:1 is the third time the phrase, “Awake, awake!” is used. He’s saying that the issue isn’t the fact that they’re under discipline, which is Isaiah 51:17-23. The issue now is that they’re saying, “We’re powerless. We’re barren. We don’t have any strength. We’re hopeless. It’s not really working.”

The Lord says, “Awake, awake and position yourself to receive the strength of God. Do all that God’s Word describes to position your cold heart before His fire. Let the impartation of fire have His way in you.” That’s what He’s saying in Isaiah 52:1-6.

In Isaiah 51 and 52 the nation is in a time of divine crisis. They’re under divine discipline. Their powerlessness is ever before them. Their own sin and weakness is ever before them. What happens? Isaiah 51:9. They join IHOP. They go to the prayer room. Verses 9-11 are intercession, and it’s good intercession. Isaiah the prophet validates this intercession. They did the right thing by going to the prayer room. They press into fiery prayer, but in verses 12 and 13, the Lord says, “You’re in the house of prayer and doing intercession according to the Book. You’re doing it right, but you’re being dominated by a spirit of fear” (Isa. 51:12-13, paraphrased). God has become an accurate idea instead of a living Person. They’re going through the motions of prayer without actually connecting and communing with God on the heart level.

They ask God the questions in verses 9 and 10, “Are You the God of Moses? Are You the God of the days of old? Are You the God who split the Red Sea? Are You the God who raised the dead? Are You the God who has all the great power” (Isa. 51:9-10, paraphrased)?

Then God turns it around, “You’ve asked Me a few questions. Let Me ask you a few questions. You asked Me if I was the God Who did all the miracles. Yes. I want to ask you, if you’re the covenant people, why are you living so dominated with fear? Why is it that you’re going through the motions but don’t press in at the heart level so that we touch each other in covenant reality?”

If we’ll ask the Lord questions, which is good, we need to make sure we’re prepared to hear the question that the Lord asks back to us. The Lord never asks a question because He’s looking for information. He has all the information. When the Lord asks a question, the Lord wants us to realize the whereabouts of our heart.

“WHO ARE YOU THAT YOU SHOULD BE AFRAID OF A MAN WHO WILL DIE?”

The Lord is saying in verses 12 and 13, “Who are you that you would live in such fear of puny men? I’m the God of Israel. I’m the God of creation. Consider your own spiritual identity and who you are before Me. Why are you letting the little picture dominate you, and why is your God-centeredness pushed out of your inner life?”

In verse 17, He turns the conversation around and says, “I want you to arise, Israel. I want you to wake up, O Body of Christ. I want you to stand up” (Isa. 51:17, paraphrased).

Then, in verses 17-23, they respond, “What about our shame and failure?”

The Lord says, “I want you to press through your failure and shame and move into My heart.”

THE ESSENCE OF LEGALISM: BASING OUR CONFIDENCE ON OUR OWN MATURITY

I talked last week about a religious spirit. One of the essences of a religious spirit, a spirit of legalism, is having our confidence based on our own attainment of maturity. Our confidence before God is based solely on the measurement of our own maturity. When we feel immature, we lose confidence. When we feel like we've really pressed in and fasted and prayed, then our confidence runs high. When we don't do those things, our confidence runs low. That's the essence of legalism—a religious spirit. That's a false way of relating to God.

We relate to God not on the basis of how much we've attained or achieved in our spiritual life in the last three or six months. We relate to God on the basis of His burning desire and heart for us. If we relate to God on the basis of how well we've done in the last season, then if you do well you're proud; if you do badly, you're condemned. The Lord says, "I don't want you to relate to Me on the basis of your spiritual attainment. I want you to relate to Me on the basis of the fact that I burn with desire for you. I gave a sacrifice sufficient in My Son, and by the Holy Spirit you said yes to Me. That's the basis on which you relate to Me."

He dismantles the argument that they can't press in with a fiery heart because they're struggling. Beloved, there are so many of God's people who say, "When I get through with this addiction, when I press through the pain, when I get through with my therapy, when I get through with this next season, I will rise up and go hard."

The Lord says, "No. I want you to rise up hard now even in the midst of your pain, failure, and bad track record. Arise, stand before Me now, and let Me put My strength in you."

"AWAKE, AWAKE! PUT ON YOUR STRENGTH, O ZION!"

We'll skip Isaiah 52:1 and all the other issues from last week. He gives a number of exhortations. He says, "Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city! For the uncircumcised and the unclean shall no longer come to you" (Isa. 52:1). He says, "The enemy will no longer surround you, dominate you, and prevail."

Then He goes on to say, "Shake yourself from the dust, arise; sit down" (Isa. 52:2)! Some of the ancient translations have, "Sit down on thrones of glory." Sitting down and rising aren't contradictions. This is talking about sitting down in positions of glory in the presence of God.

CONFIDENCE IN THE REALITY THAT HE ENJOYS US IN THE MIDST OF OUR STRUGGLE

He says, "Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion" (Isa. 52:2b). Here are a few interesting paradoxes. In verse 1, the Lord by the Holy Spirit calls Jerusalem "the holy city." At the end of verse 2 He calls Jerusalem "the captive city." He says, "O holy city, arise!" Then He says, "O city still in bonds and captivity, still beaten up and worn out and burnt out." The reason there are two descriptions is that in verse 1 when He says, "Arise, O Jerusalem, the holy city!" He's calling them forth in the way that He sees them in the grace of God.

Beloved, if we don't begin to see how God sees us in Christ Jesus, we will never have the strength to rise up and be the holy city. We have to first say yes to the prophetic decree, "Rise up, holy people!"

We say, "Holy people? Are You kidding me? I'm still in captivity, bondage, and a mess."

The Lord says, “Until you see how I see you and say yes to how I describe you in Christ Jesus, you’ll never be able to rise up effectively.”

This is an idea that I feel very strongly about. God wants to give us the assurance that He enjoys us while we’re maturing. There are four or five very important ideas underneath the surface of that sentence or two that I just gave. They’re very important ideas. Number one is the fact that God actually enjoys us. This is a strange idea to many of God’s people, the fact that He would enjoy us in our weakness. Then the thought that we would actually have the confidence and assurance of this in our weakness is a very strange idea to many of God’s people. I’ve had many friendly, sometimes energetic dialogues with God’s servants around this subject. One of the stumbling blocks at first is that God enjoys people while they’re still on the earth.

DOES GOD ENJOY HIS CHILDREN WHILE THEY’RE STILL ON EARTH?

I remember talking to a few leaders once at a restaurant after a meeting. I said, “Do you think that God enjoys people?”

They said, “Well, we know you’re setting us up.”

I said, “I am; that’s true. Still, tell me.”

“Did God in heaven at any time actually enjoy people?”

They said, “What do you mean?”

I said, “Does He out-and-out smile when He looks at people? Does He like people? I don’t mean, does He love them and has to stamp their passport because He already killed Jesus and is stuck with them? Does He actually enjoy them?”

We have this idea that God stamps our passport, “Accepted.” Then He has a “bah, hum-bug” feeling of, “Because I have to. I like Jesus so much and He went to such an extreme. My goodness, it’s done. OK, come in. I’ve got My eye on you!”

These guys said, “He actually does enjoy people.”

I said, “Good. Does He actually ever enjoy people while they’re still on the earth before the perfection of the resurrection?”

They said, “What do you mean?”

I said, “Does He actually smile at anyone before they’re perfected in the resurrection? Anyone? Did He ever enjoy anyone on the earth even for a moment? Even in a weak moment did He smile and actually like them while they were on the earth in less than perfection?”

They said, “I know you’re tricking us.”

I said, “How about Paul the apostle? Did He, not love but *like* Paul and *enjoy* him even for a moment, even the last moment before he died when he couldn’t possibly have sinned again?”

“OK. He enjoyed Paul at the end.”

I said, “Paul wasn’t perfect, but God enjoyed him before he was perfect.”

They said, “Yes, we suppose.”

I said, “Where’s the line, the maturity level on a scale of one to ten? Where’s the line where the smile breaks out and God starts to enjoy imperfect people? Where’s the line of no return where God smiles and you can’t get it back? Is it a level two, five, seven, when they’re in prison and there’s no way out? When does He begin to enjoy imperfect people?”

THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS ENJOYMENT LEADS US TO MATURITY

We went on and on, and the point is this. Some will finally concede that God enjoys humans in the perfection of the resurrection. Others will actually go as far as to say that He actually enjoys humans before they’re perfect, but only at the end.

Beloved, I say this: the knowledge of God’s enjoyment of us in Christ Jesus with a yes in our spirit is the critical issue for us maturing in a consistent, sustained way. We don’t mature and then He enjoys us. It’s the knowledge of His enjoyment, that He sees us as the delightful one, that gives us the ability to be verse 2, the captive one, afflicted one with pain. That gives us the courage to rise up and press in. The result of that, years down the road, is maturity. Maturity is the by-product of this revelation touching the heart. We don’t mature and then He enjoys us. We know He enjoys us, and that gives us the essential strength to rise up from the dust, dirt, and brokenness. When there are chains of shame, hopelessness, and accusation like arrows hitting us, the knowledge that He calls us “the holy city” gives us courage. He’s actually talking about Jerusalem, but it’s a spiritual principle as well. He’s speaking to the people of God in all ages. This is how the grace of God operates at any time frame of God’s dealing with His people in redemption.

Beloved, look at verse 2: “Shake yourself from the dust. Loose yourself from bondage.” You get this picture of a guy lying in the dirt and mud with chains around him, heavy, dirty, fatigued. The Lord says, “Stand up. Shake off the mud and the dirt. Break the chain and throw it away.”

This is such a critical passage of Scripture, because it’s at this very point where so many of God’s people fail to respond in the way the Word of God describes. All they’re aware of is that they’re sitting down covered in dirt and chains. They say, “If the chains go away and the dirt is somehow gone and I’m not aware of it, then I’ll get up.”

The Lord says, “No, you have it backwards. While you’re dirty and the weight and pressure of the chain is on you, that’s when I want you to arise and come before Me as the holy one with garments of beauty on you.”

MATURITY IS NEVER INSTANTANEOUS, NOT EVEN FOR APOSTLES

There’s something in our spirit, a critical moment in every single believer’s heart where we say, “No. I don’t want to do that. I just feel dirty and dumb. I’m going to stay right where I am.” Those believers stay in the dirt.

Then there's another type of person that's broken and beat up. This thing touches their spirit and they say, "Lord, is this really how it works?"

The Lord says, "This is really how it works."

There's not a man or woman in history who arose, who didn't arise out of dirt and chains when they rose up. I thought Paul the apostle was a Pharisee one day, and then a mature apostle the next day. No, he was an angry Pharisee one day. Then he was an immature, angry apostle, with a whole bunch of unsettled issues in his life the next day as a born-again believer. In every one of our lives, there's that place, the critical moment of decision that happens over and over. It's that frame of mind where we say, "God, is this You? If this is You, I will rise up and press through."

So many of God's people say, "No. The dirt is on me. The chains are on me. I will stay here. There's no conceivable way I have a future with You."

The Lord calls them to stand up. Look at this, in verse 1: "Awake, awake!" In other words, "Cultivate a fiery spirit." Move in to the heart of God. Don't be content joining the IHOP-KC staff, as in Isaiah 51:9-11. Don't be content to just learn the model. Don't just lead the prayer meetings. Don't just be a worship leader and then have your heart disconnected from, God dominated by fear (v. 12-15). Your whole inner man is disconnected from the reality of God while in truth you're born again, and you're in the prayer meetings.

The Lord says, "I want you to press in and live with a fiery spirit."

"Well, I'm under discipline (Isa. 51:17-23), and I don't know that You want me."

The Lord says, "I do want you."

"Well, I have no strength. I'm weak" (Isa. 52:1-6, paraphrased). This idea of putting on strength is kind of a frustrating exhortation. It's a command: "Put on strength!"

You say, "Well, how do I do that? I'm in chains, dirt is on me, and it's horrible. Strength. How do I do that?"

He's not asking you to create strength. He's asking you to position yourself as prescribed in the Word of God to receive strength from Him. Whenever God calls His people to put on strength, He's asking them to put their cold hearts before His heart on fire. He says, "I want you to position yourself to receive strength." That's what the exhortation means, "Put on strength." You find it in the Old Testament a number of times. You find it with Paul the apostle telling Timothy, "Timothy, be strong in the Lord" (1 Tim. 2:1, paraphrased). He doesn't mean create divine strength on your own; that's not what he's saying. He's saying, "Position your heart. Respond to the Lord in a way in your private life where your weak, cold heart is before the fire of God's heart." Position yourself to receive strength.

The Lord gives them these two exhortations, "Awake, awake! Put on strength and your beautiful garments. Put yourself in a position to receive the strength of God."

THE BEAUTY HE POSSESSES IS THE BEAUTY HE IMPARTS TO US FREELY

Then He goes on and almost adds insult to injury. Here this person is in chains, dirt, lying on the ground, and beat up. The Lord says, “Put on beauty now” (Isa. 52:1b).

They say, “Beauty! Lord, don’t even use the word *beauty*. The word *beauty* hurts me! The idea that I could enter in to the realm of Your beauty in the way that I’m living, are You kidding me?”

The Lord says, “I want you to press into the truth that the beauty that I possess is the beauty that I impart to you freely.” When He says, “Put on beautiful garments,” He’s not telling the redeemed to try and make up something. He says, “Open your spirit to the truth of the beauty that I’ve prepared for you.”

The beauty that God possesses is the very thing that God imparts. He gives beauty for ashes (Isa. 61:3). He takes the ash heap of our broken humanity, and all our misspent passions. We don’t have this oak tree. The oak tree has been burnt by all the passions of lust, anger, and ambition. All that’s left is a heap of ashes. We burn with sinful passions, till only ashes are left. No one wants those ashes. They’re good for nothing but to throw out. The Lord says, “I’ll take those ashes and give you My beauty, but you have to believe Me.”

When He says, “Put on beautiful garments,” He’s saying, “Open your spirit to the truth of the beauty that I give you.” When He says, “Put on strength,” He’s saying, “Open your spirit and position yourself in the place described in the Word of God to receive strength as a gift.”

IF YOU’RE PRONE TO PRIDE, YOU’LL BE PRONE TO CONDEMNATION

Look at these words of action. “Shake yourself from dirt and mud” (Isa. 52:2, paraphrased). That’s not fun. When I’m doing badly, I feel bad. When I’m doing badly and have stumbled and fallen, for that moment there, and some people for a long time, we don’t want to be forgiven. We think we just have to pay God back by suffering a little. You say, “Just let me sit here in the mud for a little while. I deserve it.”

The Lord says, “I’m not even going to let you approach Me on that basis.”

Again, if it’s on the basis of how well you do, then if you succeed, you’re proud; if you fail, you’re condemned. You can always tell a person who’s condemned easily is a person who will be proud easily if they succeed. People who are proud easily, when they hit the wall—and they certainly will—will be condemned easily. The two go together. The Lord wants us having our confidence in Him. He says, “Loose yourself from this chain that’s around your neck.” It’s the call to action and effort.

WE CAN’T EARN THE FREE GIFT OF GOD’S SPIRIT SETTING OUR HEART ON FIRE

Some people have this confused idea that a life of grace is free from effort. Beloved, what I’m about to tell you is so important right now. They have a total confusion about the grace of God. They think in law you work; in grace you don’t work. That’s not true. In law, you work. In grace, you work. You put effort in the grace of God. The grace of God isn’t about not exerting effort. The difference between law and grace isn’t about exerting effort or not exerting effort; it’s about the motivation you have while you’re exerting effort.

The legalistic person says, “I will pray and fast to try to motivate God to like me.” That’s legalism.

The man or woman in the grace of God says, “I won’t exert effort to try to make God like me, because He already does. That’s who He is. I will exert effort to get my cold heart in front of His fire because He does like me.”

WE EXERT EFFORT OUT OF OUR CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S LOVE

The issue of law and grace isn’t the issue of effort and no effort; it’s the issue of confidence and motivation. People have this idea that if they put effort in their spiritual lives, then somehow they’re earning it. No, I can’t earn the free gift of God’s Spirit setting my heart on fire. I can’t earn that. That’s a free gift of God. It’s because God likes me. It’s because Jesus took the wrath of God for me. However, I must rise up and exert effort to put my weary frame in front of God’s fire through fasting, prayer, and feeding my spirit on the truths of His strength and beauty. The feeding of my spirit is the effort that I exert. If you don’t feed your spirit, you can claim grace all day long. God says, “I’m motivated. I love you and you’re a mess. You’re in grace, but if you don’t exert effort then the confidence that you have that I love you will never bear fruit.”

We have to get people to have confidence that God likes them and enjoys them. Then out of that confidence they exert effort to take their un-renewed mind with all kinds of wrong ideas, their weary body, shame, and sin-consciousness. We need to bring them before God’s fire by the Word of God, feeding our spirit, filling our spirit. That takes effort.

I know what it means to sit in the dust and say, “I don’t feel like it.”

The Lord says, “You really need to do it because I love you so much and I like you so much. If you don’t feed your spirit on the truth right now, then you’re going to buy into the lie. It’s not about law or grace; it’s about your laziness.”

THERE’S A DIVISION OF LABOR IN THE GRACE OF GOD

Beloved, you can’t ask God to do for you that which God has assigned for you to do. There’s a division of labor in the grace of God. You can’t do God’s part, and God won’t do your part. Let me say it again. There’s a division of labor in the grace of God. You can’t do God’s part. You can’t create Holy Spirit fire. You can’t create God’s interest and tenderness toward your brokenness. I can’t produce tenderness in God’s heart when I come before Him in my brokenness. That’s a free gift. I can’t produce Holy Spirit fire. I can’t do God’s part; God won’t do my part.

He says, “I won’t stand up for you and feed you. I’m tender, motivated, and passionate about you. My Holy Spirit is available to you. The gift of righteousness in My Son is yours. You must rise up, take those truths, feed your spirit, move in and touch My heart. Then let the domination of fear”—Isaiah 51:13—“be driven out of you.”

“Well, if I have to go to the prayer room...”

I don’t mean just the IHOP-KC prayer room. It’s the place, whether at home, in your car, in the woods, where you stir up your physical body, and exert effort to put your cold heart in front of Him, wherever the prayer room is. If you don’t do that, you’ll be claiming grace all the way down to spiritual malnutrition and sickness and death.

There are more people claiming grace in a confused way. They say, “Grace, grace, grace. I don’t have to do it.”

I say, “Beloved, you can’t motivate God to be tender toward you. You can’t motivate God to give you power and fire. That’s a free gift. You can’t do anything to make that happen, but you can do a whole lot to position yourself to receive it.”

It’s the illustration that I use so often about the farmer and the preacher. The farmer and the preacher go home after church one Sunday. The preacher says, “Farmer, this land is so beautiful, beautifully manicured for thousands and thousands of acres. God really blessed you.”

The farmer says, “When God had this farm, it was a wreck!” It’s the division of labor. He says, “Until I water and weed, there’s no life-producing dynamic.”

God produces the life inside the seed. If there’s not life in the seed, the farmer can weed and water all day long and nothing is going to happen. There’s life in the seed. But even though there’s life in the seed, the farmer still has to cultivate. Just because there’s a tender heart and the Holy Spirit is willing to touch you doesn’t mean you’re going to do nothing and just hope that your heart sets on fire. There are more lazy Christians with a lethargic, dead spirit with no spiritual sensitivity, because they’re lazy, number one, or they feed their spirit on totally wrong ideas about God. It’s not the thing that puts their spirit in contact with beauty and strength. They feed their spirit on wrong things. I’ve seen really diligent Christians feeding their spirits even on Bible verses but with all the wrong twists. They just get more angry and condemned even in their diligence. When we come before God we have confidence. We have confidence that He’s tender towards us even in our weakness. That’s the grace of God, the confidence that He’s motivated with tenderness when He looks at our efforts. Again, I don’t make efforts to put Myself before Him to motivate Him to like me. It’s the other way around. Because He likes me, I’m motivated to do the effort. We feed people night and day on the idea that God delights in them because of Christ Jesus. Then we have the confidence that if we do these weak, little things, because they really are weak, God will do His part.

God says, “I want you to fill your mind with ideas about Me that are true. I want you to throw in a small amount of fasting, a few ‘I love You’s,’ and a yes in your spirit called a spirit of obedience. Even if you blow it, I want the yes there. I want the right ideas about Me, and I’ll take it from there. I’ll ignite that over time and put power on it.”

“HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME, AS THE SCRIPTURE HAS SAID...”

John 7:38 is a very important passage. I want you to see it with your eyes. We’re familiar with the passage, but there’s a phrase in it that’s often overlooked. Jesus said, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (Jn. 7:38). It’s the key phrase, “as the Scripture has said.” This phrase qualifies the type of believing.

Here’s how many people read this: “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture prophesied, so your spirit will be filled with living water.”

That’s not what He’s saying. He’s saying: “He who believes in Me in the way that I tell you to believe in Me, he who believes in Me My way of believing, the river will flow on the inside.” The phrase “as the Scripture says” qualifies and describes the type of believing.

Here's how a lot of people believe in God. "I go to church, do the devotional thing, and drop in at the meeting. What else does He want me to do?"

Jesus says, "That's not how the Scripture says to believe in Me. The Sermon on the Mount says that I want you to live a life of fasting and prayer. I want you to give yourself. I want your money to be Mine. I want you to fill your mind with truths about Me as a father and bridegroom. I want you to believe on Me in the way that I described believing on Me. If you do that, the rivers will be loosed on the inside."

Many people read the phrase "as the Scripture says" as "as the Scriptures prophesied that the rivers would flow." It's not about the flowing rivers; it's about the quality of believing. Beloved, we have to believe in the eager abandoned way that God says. Then the rivers will flow; they'll take care of themselves.

WE HAVE TO BELIEVE IN GOD IN THE WAY THAT GOD DESCRIBES

We'll look at the way God says to believe in Ephesians 5. I'll be very brief on this because we've hit this passage over and over. We'll hit it many more times. Look at Ephesians 5:14. We have to believe in God in the way that God describes. We have to come before a tender father, a passionate bridegroom, with wholeheartedness, and not on the run. We have to come with fasting. Beloved, fasting is a part of normal one-on-one Christianity. The Western church says that only the radically on-fire ones do it. It's absolutely a foundational part of new believer, Christianity 101 in the New Testament. Prayer and fasting isn't something radical people do; it's what new believers learn in their first session of the new believer's class.

Giving. "Well, I'm an American. We give a little here and there on the run."

The Lord says, "No. Giving is a critical part of your emotional chemistry when you give in the way I said to give." The way we steward time and money is a significant dynamic that qualifies the way we believe. The kind of believing that includes prayer, fasting, and giving is the kind of believing that God says will release rivers on the inside. You don't earn the rivers by believing that way, but you posture your heart with no defenses before the flame of God. The flame of God gets right to you, and there are no barriers to work through. We have to believe in the way that God says to believe.

"AWAKE, YOU WHO SLEEP, ARISE FROM THE DEAD, AND CHRIST WILL GIVE YOU LIGHT"

Here it is in Ephesians 5:14: "Awake, you sleepers" (Eph. 5:14, paraphrased)! Paul is quoting Isaiah 51, the very passage we're looking at. There are two or three places in Isaiah, such as Isaiah 26, but I believe this is a direct correlation to Isaiah 51 as well. "Awake and get fire in your spirit!" is the context. The Isaiah 26 context is about the resurrection from the dead. I believe that Paul's context is getting fire on your spirit, using New Testament language.

He says to the church of Ephesus, "I want you to wake up!" The church of Ephesus had the greatest revival of all the churches in the New Testament. The church of Ephesus had a revival greater than the city of Jerusalem—Acts 19 and 20, the mighty revival in Ephesus. Here it is, a time later, and already they're getting lethargic in their spirits. Paul says, "Hey, you guys! Isaiah 52, get with it. Shake the dust off. Put the chains down."

"Yeah, but I feel bad..."

I told you last week that the victim mentality isn't someone who acknowledges their pain. That's called truth and honesty. A victim mentality is a person who because of the pain releases their responsibility to move in and engage their spirit with God. They say, "I'm hurt; therefore, I refuse to engage my spirit with God." That's a victim mentality. It's not the acknowledging that you're hurt; it's the quitting because you're hurt. It's the giving of the responsibility to rise up in your brokenness and shame, receive the truth of His beauty, and put your heart in front of His fire. It's giving that responsibility away to the therapist. Therapists can't do that for you. Any counseling where the counselor becomes bigger than life and assumes the responsibility that only the individual human can exercise to engage their spirit in the knowledge that God has given them beauty for ashes; any counseling model that cuts that short is a counseling model that will prove ineffective.

A victim mentality isn't one that says, "I'm hurt." That's honesty. It's, "I'm hurt, therefore I quit. Therefore I want other people to engage my spirit with God and make me well."

That's absolute heresy. You can't give that responsibility to another, no matter how beat up you are. God says, "I alone have given you the responsibility and privilege of Me touching your spirit if you'll exert effort and put your weak heart in front of My fire."

“WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY, NOT AS FOOLS BUT AS WISE”

“Awake, awake!” Then look at verse 15: “Walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise” (Eph. 5:15). Look at verse 16. What's the number one issue in awaking? It's spending your time rightly; redeeming your time.

The Lord says, “If you squander your time, your spirit will become weak and passive and lethargic.” Beloved, you can't have a fiery spirit while squandering your time. If you're going to awake and have the anointing, Jesus shining on you, and rise from the dead spiritually (Isaiah 26), you'll have to redeem the time, “because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:16).

What does that mean that the days are evil? He's saying that there are demons, powers, and principalities in the unseen realm everywhere. The days are evil. There's more demonic power in the atmosphere; there's the prince of the powers of the air (Eph. 2:1). When you buy into the fact that when you go to work on Monday morning there are demons everywhere and the days are dangerous in the spiritual environment of the whole earth, then you'll redeem your time. If you think the days are good and everything is neutral, then you'll squander time because you don't believe there are demons hitting you in every direction. When you believe the days are evil and the atmosphere is charged with demonic powers everywhere you go, the anointing is sufficient.

I'm telling you, beloved, you'll never redeem the time until you believe that tomorrow matters in the way you carry and feed your spirit.

“Well, I'm just depressed and down.”

Beloved, you have the power if you just feed your spirit to cast chains off, cast dirt off, and rise up. I promise you, you do.

“I'm just beat up and I'm quitting. I want my counselor to do it for me.” Lie, lie, lie. No one is so beat up that they can't say yes to a tender God who's giving them free grace. It's impossible.

“No, you really don’t know. I’m really beat up and don’t trust anyone.” There’s a way God has constructed your human spirit that it will respond to the Holy Spirit and the tenderness of God if you’ll say yes at the critical point of decision. You’re going to redeem the time; you’re really going to measure your time. You won’t earn God’s fire by spending your time rightly. You’re going to put your cold heart in front of it, and the power of it will hit you as a free gift.

Then he goes on in verse 18 and says, “Get anointed with the Holy Spirit. Get into the presence of the Holy Spirit. Spend your time getting into the realm of the anointing. Be filled with the Spirit.”

How? This is one of my favorite verses. It’s spontaneous singing. Open your heart. Add Colossians 3:16 to this, because it’s the companion verse to Ephesians 5:19. “Open your heart and sing the Word of God with your spirit. Sing with tongues, sing the Word. Open your heart” (Eph. 5:19, paraphrased). I’ve spent session after session talking on this. I’ve seen so many people at IHOP-KC who won’t enter in to verse 19. Others will tap their foot, listen to the good music, and I’m not the policeman trying to figure out who is or isn’t because I want to go myself. I have a passion as a leader that the people would enter in.

I gave this illustration the other day. There’s a man working in 100-degree weather for ten to twelve hours. Heat is pounding on him. His body is broken with fire and heat. He’s so hot. He has a worse problem: he’s parched with thirst. A man brings out a refreshing cup of cold water, a big pitcher. He says, “Oh, my body is hot, but worse than a hot body: I’m parched with thirst. I haven’t drunk a thing all day and it’s 100 degrees.”

The man comes and pours the water on the man’s body. It cools him off and it feels wonderful, but he’s still dying of thirst. People go to IHOP-KC, an anointed environment. They sit there, tap their foot, and get the feel. They say, “Man this feels good.” It’s like they’ve been in 100-degree weather, and someone pours cold water on them. It feels wonderful, but they’re still dying of thirst on the IHOP-KC staff because they never engage their own heart in a personal, deep way. Beloved, I can’t do it for you. The people up front can’t do it for you. You’re never going to feel like doing it before you do it.

GIVING THANKS IN ALL THINGS AND SUBMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER

This is what we do. We exert effort. We redeem the times. The days are evil. The atmosphere is filled with demonic powers and conflicts. The tender God with free power says, “If you’ll rise and put off your chains, you come in the spirit of beauty and I’ll give you sufficient power to set you on fire again.”

He goes on with two more ways: giving thanks in all things (Eph. 5:20), and submitting to one another (v. 21). These three things, verse 19, 20, and 21 are very different. All of them require living before an audience of One. Every one of these three dynamics will change your spiritual and emotional chemistry.

“Give thanks for all things” (Eph. 5:20, paraphrased). When circumstances are bad, the most natural thing is not to give thanks. We busy our lives; we feel shamed; we go and sit in an anointed atmosphere, but we never open our spirit and engage. “I feel bad; I’m tired and ashamed. I’ll just have them pour water on me and not drink.”

Number two: circumstances get bad and the most natural thing to do is worry and complain. The Lord says, “No. Move in all the way. Thank Me for the breakthrough.”

“I don’t want to thank You. I want to get mad, get on the phone and complain, be in a bad mood and worry.”

The Lord says, “You’ll never get free then. Hang up the phone. Stop the complaining and worrying. Begin to thank Me for the supernatural provision and breakthrough.”

“That bugs me, because I have to have vitality with You to do that. I’m just going to be mad. I’ll sit this one out, too.”

The Lord says, “It’s because of shame that you sit out verse 19. Then because of complaining you sit out verse 20. Then, in verse 21, I want you to open your spirit to other people who are imperfect and submit to spiritual authority.”

God will always have spiritual authorities in our lives. We have this idea that if our spiritual authority is good, then we will yield. Beloved, they’re all a mess. The good ones are a mess. The Lord knows that. The Lord says, “I still want you to say yes in your spirit to other people’s directives.” I’m not talking about a spirit of control and obeying people in a mindless way.

There was something that happened to me just the other day. I won’t tell you all the details about it. Someone said, “No.”

I said, “Yes.”

They said, “No.”

It was their call. The Lord convicted me and said, “Go humble yourself and do what they want.”

I said, “That bugs me that they’re saying no. It’s a dumb no. I should be able to do that.”

The Lord said, “It’s not an issue of whether their rule is dumb or not. The issue is this: if you touch Me then you’ll get liberty, and you can do it their way.”

I said, “Yeah, but their way is dumb.”

The Lord said, “That’s not the point. The point is that I want to usher you into My presence. You have to submit to people in order to get there.”

Verse 21 is relational. Verse 20 is circumstantial. Verse 19 is shame and spiritual weariness. He says, “If you’ll press in on those three issues before an audience of One, and if you’ll drink when your natural man doesn’t want to drink, you’ll get the anointing”—verse 18—“and you’ll wake up”—verse 14.

Amen. We’re out of time. Let’s stand.

MINISTRY TIME

Isaiah 52: “Arise! Stand!”

Beloved, we have to move into this thing. We're just going to pray and end because of time and our commitment to be out of the building. Father, we do love You. Lord, we want to rise up. We ask You in IHOP-KC to awake. You tell us to awake, move our hearts, and press in with our hearts.

Lord, I want to be a man with a fiery spirit. I want to move into Your heart. I want to move into the anointing. I want to feed on the anointing. In the name of Jesus. Amen.