

## Floods Upon the Dry Ground: A Promise to Plead

Bible Text: Isaiah 44:3-5

Dear congregation, every age is in need of hope, and ours is no exception. When earthly hopes fail we need a higher hope, a heavenly hope.

The prophets of the Old Testament, from Isaiah on, give this hope because they served God, and God is a God of hope, and because of that they were men of hope.

To be sure, they warned against sin and judgments to come, but even these warnings and these coming judgments were meant to lead the people to look to God alone for hope.

You should compare the prophets of the Old Testament to watchmen standing on the city walls to see what was approaching, that which was near, but also that which was far off, and they peered and with binoculars, as it were, given to them by the Lord, they could see far into the distance, hundreds of years into the distance.

Peter says in his first epistle that the prophets searched diligently for what time God would fulfill the things that He had spoken to them.

They saw the days when the Lord Jesus Christ would come to this earth. They saw the days of His ministry and they saw shadows of the cross in which He would bleed and die for sinners.

They perceived afar off the resurrection on the third day, the ascension of Christ, and the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

They saw it with their own eyes and they saw all that would transpire until the very fullness of time at the end.

And that's why we read these prophets and their words. We wish that they would enter into our souls to give us hope because these words are filled with God-centered hope.

One of these words we wish to hear with the Lord's help tonight. You can find it in the prophecy that was read in your hearing, Isaiah 44:3-6, where the Lord says,

3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: 4 And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. 5 One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel. 6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.

Our theme tonight is "Floods Upon the Dry Ground: A Promise to Plead."

We will see,

First of all, the glorious agent in this promise;

Secondly, the wide reach of this promise;

Thirdly, the wonderful Person central to this promise;

Fourthly, the blessed effects of this promise;

Fifthly, the rich experience of this promise; and

Sixthly and lastly, the absolute certainty of this promise.

1) Floods upon the dry ground: a promise to plead.

First of all, the glorious agent in this promise.

"I will pour water." Who is speaking here?

When you look at the context, it's clear it's the Lord God.

Verse 2 says, "Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb."

And so it is the Creator God speaking here, the God who made you and me and formed us from the

very beginning.

And He is the Creator, not just of us, but of every soul, He is the Creator of the ends of the earth, the sovereign God who made everything that ever was out of nothing.

So too He can make you and me. He can make us after his own image.

He calls the things that are not as though they were, and here in the words of our text, He says it without any doubt, "I will."

We say these words ourselves with reference to ourselves many times. Pay attention as you go through the day, to how many times you say "I will do this. I will do that."

James 4 speaks about it. Our minds are filled with our own. "I will's."

And how many of them come to pass? And even the things that we do do, all of them are stained with sin. And so our "I will's" are hopelessly compromised.

What if the Lord here in this text said "you will pour water?" It would be hopeless. Might as well close this church! There would be no hope whatsoever for many of us.

What a wonder it is that the Lord says here, "I will."

And here it is not just a sovereign Lord who speaks, but also a merciful Lord because, as you can read in the context, especially in 43, He is speaking to a people who have gone astray, who have rebelled against him, who have been hard-hearted, who have not given the Lord what they should. Instead, they have offered themselves to idols and yet despite all this, and in the face of all this, God comes to such a people and He says, "I will."

He is a sovereign God, He is a merciful God, and He is a rich God in Jesus Christ because notice how it says, "I will pour."

Children, you know that when you pour something, maybe a heavy bucket filled with water, if you pour it on top of someone, that's different than just a few drops or a little bit of a spray.

To pour speaks of plentitude, of abundance, a great amount.

It would be one thing if the Lord said here, "I will sprinkle," as He does in Ezekiel 36:25 "I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean."

But this promise is larger, wider, deeper, "I will pour!"

Do you see, congregation, how the Lord opens His heart here and shows you what a depth is in His heart of mercy, not just a sliver of mercy, not just one drop of mercy, but it's full. His heart is bursting full with mercy! "I will pour," he says.

Before we leave this first point, notice how He focuses us not on ourselves, not in any human agent, but on Himself.

He says, as it were, "Look to me. I will pour." He is the glorious agent of this promise, but upon whom will he pour, congregation?

2) This brings us to our second point: the wide reach of his promise.

Listen to what the text says, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thy offspring."

There's really three things, three groups, if you will, in focus here.

And the first is the thirsty one. Everyone by nature is parched and dry. The Bible tells us that we have left God. The Bible says in no uncertain terms that you have departed from the fountain of living waters and hewed out for yourselves cisterns that can hold no water.

What you are pursuing in life can't satisfy you. It can't hold water. There may be some water, as it were, but it can't hold it and in a moment it is dry and your parched lips can't find relief, hydration, refreshment, revival.

And here specifically when it's speaking about a thirsty soul, it's speaking about someone

who has discovered for themselves that nothing on earth can satisfy their soul.

Do you know what I'm speaking of? Has the Lord made you thirsty for something beyond this world, something that this world or even religion cannot give you?

When God works in our hearts, He makes us to thirst for him, "My soul thirsts for God."

He makes us realize how parched we are, and how really what we consume of this world just makes us even more thirsty.

My friend, if that is you, the Lord has you in mind. Notice how it is singular, "I will pour water upon him or her that is thirsty." God sees you, God knows you.

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke to people like you when he said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

Put your dry lips and your parched tongue into the grace freely offered in the gospel. Sinner, it's right there in the gospel. "He who believes in Me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

So powerful is this thirst-quenching water that is Christ that one drink of it turns you forever into a fountain.

My friend, if you're here today and you're thirsty, be done with the world. Be done with your own works, with your own righteousness. Be done with your own resolutions, all those ways in which you're trying to come up with one drop of water to cool your tongue. You won't get there.

But listen, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty."

Look up, see Him who speaks here in His word. In Christ, he calls you tonight.

"When the poor and needy seek seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them. I the Lord, the God of Israel will not forsake them." Isaiah 41:17

It's a promise for you, my friend. If you can't get your thirst slacked, hear what the Lord says, "I will hear them. I will not forsake them."

Congregation, our text would be wonderful if it only said this, but this promise doesn't just end with the thirsty soul.

Here we get the majesty and the miracle and the mystery of it all. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground." What is the dry ground?

Well, this is different than the thirsty soul. Dry ground isn't even looking to have its thirst quenched. There are some people like that in the church. They come here, and they leave again and never do they need a drop for their souls. They're just so barren, so dead, so dry, just like the dry wilderness ground. No cry in their soul. No need for God.

This promise of the Lord has in view you unawakened souls here tonight who have no care for your soul. You live, you eat, drink and are merry and that's it, and you come here only to please people around you, your father, your mother, your children, or to look good to others.

God has a promise even for you. Imagine that!

You don't ask for Him, you don't need Him.

But God speaks about you and to you here. "I will pour floods upon the dry ground."

M'Cheyne says about this flood, "you would expect it to be a flood of wrath, a flood of judgment, of fire and brimstone. But no, the Lord's heart beats with mercy towards sinners who don't even ask for Him. Floods of grace, floods of blessing, floods of mercy!"

And notice it doesn't say flood but floods.

Lachlan Mackenzie says this: "A single shower will not do when you've had a long drought. The Lord here promises floods. "I will pour floods."

Isaiah 35:6 & 7, the Lord says this, "In the wilderness," the dry land, "shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water."

And the Lord has done that many a time. People that never asked for Him. People who came into a church like this or didn't, and yet the Lord reached them in the flood of His sovereign grace. The Lord opened the windows of heaven, and showers came upon the dry ground of their souls and of their lives and the parched earth of their souls soaked in this refreshing rain of heaven. "I will send showers of blessing."

There's also a third group here. The reach of this promise is not just the thirsty one, not just the dry ground, but it's also the next generation, your seed, your offspring, your children. What that means, congregation, is that the Lord has an eye for the upcoming generation, and He includes them in His promise.

It's no wonder that Peter said in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, "For the promise is to you and to your children." He said that on the basis of the scriptures.

God has an eye to the upcoming generation, He sees them, He knows them, and He has a word for you, children and young people. He has a word for the next generation. In fact, for generations to come as long as the Lord tarries.

Shouldn't we plead this before the Lord regarding our children? Parents, do you ever just come to an end of your own wisdom with regard to your children? Sometimes when they're so young, you hold your newborn in your arms, and you know you can't be what this child needs you to be. There's no way. Well, then plead this promise.

Or when they grow up, and they are busy in school or when they become independent, or they rebel against their upbringing, whatever it is, there's a promise here for your offspring. Plead it. Plead it before the Lord.

Even if they've gone their own way for a long time, with no regard for God, here is a promise to plead. Put your finger next to it and say, "Lord, these are not my words. These are Thy words, please fulfil it."

Congregation, we need to plead this promise of the Lord, for thirsty ones, for dry ground, for the next generation.

Let me quote from M'Cheyne once again who says it so well. He says, "We are often in favour of preaching to awaken sinners, but we should be more praying upon it." Prayer is more powerful than preaching, he says. "It is prayer that gives preaching all its power. I observe that some Christians are very ready to censure ministers and complain of their preaching, of their coldness, their unfaithfulness. God forbid that I should ever defend unfaithful preaching or coldness or deadness as an ambassador of Christ. But I do say, where lies the blame for unfaithfulness but in the want of faithful praying? Why, the very hands of Moses would have fallen down had they not been held up by his faithful people. Come then, ye wrestlers with God, ye that climb Jacob's ladder, ye that wrestle Jacob's wrestling, strive with your God that He may fulfil His word. I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground."

3) Well congregation, we have seen the glorious Agent and the wide reach, but what is it that the Lord promises here? Or better said, *who* is it that the Lord promises here? We've been speaking about water, but the Lord goes on to explain what this water is. He says, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thy offspring." Notice that. No less than God's own Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

And notice how this word "my" is there, *my* Spirit, the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of the Son. You see, it was in the heart of God from eternity to pour out not just blessings, not just mercy, not just salvation, but to pour out *Himself*, His very self upon people like you and me, upon sinners, upon wayward sinful people.

Imagine that, to pour *Himself*, His Holy Self upon unholy sinners! "My Spirit." The Spirit who moved at creation, the Spirit that rested on Christ, that Spirit is willing to come upon unholy sinners!

That Spirit is here compared to water. Why? Well, water refreshes, doesn't it? On a hot summer day, sometimes you just can't get enough water. And that's what this Spirit does. That's who the Spirit is. But water also cleanses. Notice how it says here, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty." The Lord isn't saying here, "I'll just give a thirsty soul something to drink. You can put this water to your lips and drink." No, "I'll pour water upon them to cleanse." He is a cleansing Spirit.

And water also does this, it makes fruit to grow. And that's why we speak of the fruit of the Spirit because He comes upon dry ground and what does He do? He brings refreshment and cleansing, but also life. "Thy Spirit, O God, makes life to abound and fruitful is the ground because of it."

But water is also powerful. Some people say there's hardly anything more powerful than water. Yes, in small quantities, it seems to not have so much power, but take it all together. Take a river and have it come down off a cliff into a ravine, and you can provide electricity to whole cities with that power. What a stunning power the Spirit of God has.

And the Bible says more about the Holy Spirit, about how He enlightens us. If we get dust in our eyes, we use water to wash it out so we can see properly. So the Spirit helps us see properly. Paul prays that the eyes of your understanding might be enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

Do you see all the ways in which the Holy Spirit is compared to water? What an amazing promise. Take the picture of our text and just let your mind think over it. Here is this dark, parched, dry wilderness. Nothing grows there, but thorns and thistles. It will never become anything unless the heavens open and showers come down. You see, what we need on our dark, parched souls is the water of heaven, the Spirit of God who shows Christ to sinners like ourselves.

I spent some time in Israel and I saw it in the different seasons. When you leave Jerusalem and go towards the east, you go over the Mount of Olives and you come into a desert where no one lives except some nomads. They have some tents there and they park themselves at an occasional spring, but for the rest it's just dust and dry, parched ground. Nothing grows there. Except, one day in February or March, we drove with a bus over the Mount of Olives, and we went towards Jericho in the east. And I looked out the bus window and I couldn't believe my eyes. I had to look twice because over what before were just sandy rugged hills, there was a layer of green. It was like a sheen that just all of a sudden had transformed this whole ground. In fact, it wasn't just green, because if you looked closely, there were flowers that were blossoming there in the wilderness. Of course, all those seeds had fallen there the last year at that time and laid there until showers of water had come, and then those seeds had begun to grow. Now it was a meadow, and it had happened in a day or two, very quickly by the power of God.

And that's what Isaiah 35:1 & 2 says, that the desert shall blossom like a rose. Like an amazingly beautiful fragrant flower. Who does that? Well, the God of heaven who comes down to earth, who gives His grace and His salvation in the life of a sinner like you and me, where nothing good grows. But there He comes, and God gives Himself away and the life that we don't have, He gives to us in and through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

When he left the glories of heaven, a beautiful paradise of God, He came to this world which was such a wilderness. If it's a wilderness to us, what a wilderness it must have been to the Creator of heaven and earth, he who formed everything.

Dry. Dead. And He walked this earth.

Especially in His suffering, there He hung, in the land of forsakenness, in the wilderness of the wrath of God, consumed by agony. He, who was the Fountain of life, He had nothing to cool his tongue. He cried from the depths of misery and forsakenness, "I thirst."

For Him there was no promise. God gave Him no drops then, much less the pouring out of His love. But Jesus did it in order that the parched ground of your soul, sinner, might have this promise, this promise of life, of peace, of refreshment for Christ's sake.

And He gives Himself away because when we have the Spirit, we also have the Father and the Son. The Spirit brings the Father and His love, and the Son and His love, and life to sinners like us. It is heaven come down to earth. It is God and sinners reconciled. God has done wondrous things!

4) This takes us to our fourth point: the blessed effects of this promise. Our text outlines for us the blessed effects when the Holy Spirit comes down in fulfilment of God's promise.

You can read this in verse 4, "And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the LORD'S."

There are three things again, that the text puts before us,

and the first is that when the Spirit works, there will be conversions, even abundant conversions. In Psalm 72 it says, "They of the city shall flourish like grass upon the earth." When the Holy Spirit comes upon the parched ground and He is poured forth, we cannot contain the blessing.

On the day of Pentecost, there were 3,000 conversions, and then later you read of thousands and thousands more.

How we ought to pray for abundant conversions!

Sometimes we think that the Lord's people are becoming less and less, and indeed in certain places in the world it may look like that, but the promise of God stands sure. There will be a full harvest. The Lord will have His people in every age.

And not only will there be abundant conversions, there will be strong spiritual growth and that we should pray for as well. Notice how it says as willows by the water courses. One thing about the willow tree is that it loves water and it puts its roots in the water, it just can't have enough water, and this makes them grow quickly.

How necessary it is for us to put our roots down deep into the water of God's word and into the water which is in Christ, the fountain Himself.

That's where we grow. Do you want to grow? Your growth is in Christ, "From me is thy fruit found."

We may plead for these blessings of abundant conversions and strong spiritual growth on this promise.

But after using the imagery of grass and willows, the prophet says clearly, "One shall say, I am the LORD'S". He or she consecrates themselves to the Lord. Up till this point they have lived for themselves, "I am my own," that's been their refrain, that's been their joy, that's been their delight, but now the opposite is the case. "I am not my own but belong unto the Lord Jesus Christ."

Jesus seeks sinners. In your soul you may have a lot of fears, a lot of doubts, a sense of your own unworthiness, but you want to be done living for yourself. You say yes, when the preacher says, "Wilt thou go with this man? Wilt thou belong unto this man, Jesus Christ?"

Jonathan Edwards said this, "I have been this day before God and I have given myself, all that I am, and all that I have, to God. With all my unworthiness, with all my sin, with all my shame, I've given myself away to God so that I am in no respect my own. I can challenge no right in myself, in my understanding, in my will and my affection. Neither have I right to this body or of any of its members, no right to the tongue, no right to my hands, no right to these feet, no right to these eyes, these ears. I've given myself clean away. I am the Lord's."

5) That's what the Spirit does when He works in fulfilment to this promise. Yet, there will be variety in how we experience it, as we will see in our fifth point, a rich experience.

The text says in verse 5, "One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

So the prophet here says one does this, and another does that, and another does that. And that means that there is a variety of experience in the Christian life. Not everyone is exactly the same. Not everyone speaks exactly the same. Not everyone's life looks exactly the same. We're not cookie-cutter Christians, that everyone looks and speaks exactly the same. One shall say this, another shall say that, and yet, when you listen to what they're saying, the words are different but the reality is the same. The heart is the same. The essence is the same.

And so you can speak to another Christian who looks very different than you, who's come from a different background than you, whose experience is different from you, and yet there is the same essence, and there is that recognition of one another. And when it all boils down, it is exactly this, "I'm not my own, but belong to Jesus, I've given myself away."

But there's something else in this text. It is interesting that the name Jacob is used here. "Another shall call himself by the name of Jacob. Another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord and surname himself by the name of Israel." The name Jacob means Liar, Deceiver. Even though God changed Jacob's name to Israel, the Bible actually uses that name Jacob more than the name Israel. Why? Because Jacob still had that old nature and he had come to see that. And the Lord knew that. In fact, the Lord in the Bible is pleased to call himself the God of Jacob! Think of that, to attach His glorious name to that awful name, Jacob.

The Lord teaches His people that even after you receive grace, if it were up to us, left to ourself, we are no more than Jacob, a liar, a deceiver. And that's why Paul says even at the end of his life, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." It's as if he's saying there, "I still know and feel that Jacob nature. Call me Jacob. I'm a sinner. But there's a God of Jacob, and He is my hope, He is my expectation."

There are other people who may focus more on the name Israel. The Lord has touched the hollow of their thigh, He has changed their name, and they can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And they know it is not out of themselves, they know that God has made them so, and that the work that He has begun shall by His grace be fully done.

There are times when they can say, "There is now therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? I know whom I have believed."

Because of these differences, we need each other!

How important it is to be real one with another.

Sometimes people feel the urge to parrot one another and to talk like other people do.

But I need you, and you need me. We balance each other out, we are all members of the body. We can lean on each other. We can be an arm and a foot to one another.

6) In our final point, we see that the fulfilment of the promise, and the absolute certainty, the foundation of it all lies in God. That is what we see in verse 6. We can't omit that.

"Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and His Redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God."

The Lord starts the promise with Himself, and He ends the promise with Himself.

"I will....Thus says the Lord."

He's the first, he's the last, and that's what makes it so secure.

It is all in God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It is His word, His word to plead. "Lord, hast Thou not promised. Lord, hast Thou not written it as in blood, thy Son's blood? 'I will pour'".

As we close, congregation, Are you thirsty? Are you dry? There is a promise for each and every one here tonight. Be done with your own water. Be done with the fountains of this world and pray God to pour water from out of his Son, from out of the cross of Christ. "In that day shall a fountain be open for sin and for uncleanness."

Oh, cry to God and believe the God who promises. He is the God of hope who cannot lie, and he says here, "I will pour."

A church had a special prayer meeting because there hadn't been rain for months, and everything was parched and dry, and the crops were failing. A little girl came to the prayer meeting, and she came with an umbrella! She knew and believed that the God who says, "Call upon me and I will answer" the God who says, "I will pour", He can do it!

Are you like that little girl? Oh, for that childlike trust that looks to the Lord, "O Lord, do it. Do it now. Do not wait. Lord, I thirst for Thee. The ground is so dry, my offsprings needs Thee. Oh rend the heavens and come now and leave a blessing behind for all Thy glory's sake."

Amen.