

Forging Ahead

Isaiah 55:6-9

Sermon Outline

A. Remain Focused (vs. 6):

1. Seek – Isaiah charged Israel to inquire of the Lord which could be by way of prayer or by way of being committed to the covenantal relationship He explained to them through Moses. This is an active process which highlights determination.
 - a) Isaiah knew of God's promised blessings to His people according to the Mosaic Covenant (Deuteronomy 28:1-14) and His punishment if they disobeyed His commands (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). Isaiah was calling God's people back to God and away from the sin that prosperity brought during the reign of Uzziah. He knew God would judge Israel if they did not repent but would eventually restore the nation because of His covenant relationship.
 - b) There is a sense of urgency when Isaiah says to seek the Lord. Since we cannot control His coming or going, we need to take advantage of His presence.
 - c) The speaker is now Isaiah. (This is indicated in verse 7, where he refers to “our God.”) The idea in this verse is not that the reader should *seek* God before God moves away and becomes distant. Rather, the idea is for the readers to seek God while their hearts are soft and willing to believe. They need to seek Him and grow in their faith. In Hebrew poetry, the center of a poem often is the main point. Isaiah's urge to Zion is the center of the chapter. Therefore, this appeal to *seek the Lord* is the main point.¹
 - d) Key verses:
 - *Seek the Lord* (Hos. 3:5; Am. 5:4,6,14) – “And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart”. 14 “And I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile”. (Jer. 29:13-14; NASB)
 - Amos 5:4 – “This is what the Lord says to the house of Israel: “Seek me and live.”
 - Amos 5:14 – Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say He is.”
2. Lord – Isaiah says Lord not God, as He does in verse 7, because the Lord means He is constantly demonstrating His desire to have a relationship with Israel. The Lord also has the power and authority to make this happen.

¹ Pechawer, L. (2008). *Poetry and prophecy* (Vol. 3, pp. 160–161). Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing.

3. While He may be found – This purposeful search should occur because the Lord can easily be discovered. He is not lost, and He has not displaced Himself from Israel because of His covenant. The same takes place in the New Testament because of Christ's covenant on Calvary (Luke 12:29-32; Acts 17:27-28).
 - a) The Temple is open, and they are urged to avail themselves of the worship opportunities it offers. *While He may be found. While He is near.* The vision is a vast illustration of times when He is not so readily available to the worshiper, when He is upholding His curse or His ban on His people (chap. 6), with good reason. But now is the acceptable time, a time of openness and grace (cf. 40:1–9, *et passim*). The opening call had excluded no one. Let him or her who wills come to seek Yahweh.²
4. Called upon Him – We are commanded to loudly, but with specificity, seek the Lord's attention especially since He can be found.
5. While he is, To be – The Lord is always available to us because of His covenant. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit lives inside of us as a seal of our salvation (Eph. 1:13-14). He is not distant, He is near, and is always a present help. We choose not to abide in Him and drift from Him (Hebrews 2:1-4).
6. Near – To be near the Lord is being able to experience His presence. It is a reference to the high priest going into the Holies of Holies. It is to no longer walk in the flesh but in the Spirit so that we become drunk with the Spirit (Eph. 5:15-18) fully under the Lord's direction. Paul puts it this way; *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."* (Gal. 2:20).
 - a) He "will not always be chiding, neither keepeth he his anger forever" (Ps. 103:9).³

B. Not Our Ways (vs. 7):

1. Let the wicked forsake his ways – Those who willfully decide to continually sin (e.g., by violating the social rights of others, by being oppressive, greedy or being dishonest in their business practices and constantly twisting the law) must put this behavior aside by neglecting what is evil for the laws of God.
 - a) A particular group needs a special exhortation to come. *Their way* of life and thought, *their convictions*, stand in the way. They oppose God's plans, resisting his announcement and invitations. This conflict prevents unity and cooperation. But God's ways are set. They will not be changed.⁴

² Watts, J. D. W. (1987). *Isaiah 34–66* (Vol. 25, p. 246). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

³ Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Ed.). (1910). *Isaiah* (Vol. 2, p. 330). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

⁴ Watts, J. D. W. (1987). *Isaiah 34–66* (Vol. 25, pp. 246–247). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

- b) These are probably the people who were in fact guilty of rebellion in chap. 53 and who had received amnesty because of Zerubbabel's judicial murder. But they have not changed their convictions or their ways. The offer still stands: if they will repent, *turn to Yahweh* and *to our God*, he will receive them in love and *multiply pardon*. The verse is a classic expression of God's open invitation to those who resist his call, determined to live their own way.⁵
2. His ways – The wicked person must willfully decide to abandon their behavioral patterns that violate the Word of God.
 3. Unrighteous – A person who is unrighteous knows the Word and understand its implications but chooses to be deceptive while living in sin.
 - a) The “wicked” sins more openly in “his way”; the “unrighteous” refers to the more subtle workings of sin in the “thoughts.” All are guilty in the latter respect, though many believe they are safe, because they are not openly “wicked in ways” (Ps 94:11).⁶
 4. Thoughts – When a person chooses to live outside the standards of God and employ their mind to deliberately make plans that are not within the will of God, they must willfully seek to turn aside from making these kinds of judgments (2 Cor. 10:3-6).
 5. Return to the Lord – The Lord remains near so those who are wicked and unrighteous in their behavior or thoughts need to continuously make it a lifestyle pattern to depart from their ways and repeatedly make every effort to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord (Romans 12:1).
 - a) “Return” implies that man originally walked with God but has apostatized. Isaiah said, “*our God*,” the God of the believing Israelites; those themselves redeemed desire others to come to *their God* (Ps 34:8; Rev 22:17).⁷
 6. He will have compassion – The Lord, who endlessly desires a relationship with His children, because of His great love for them, continuously extends kindness to all those who return to Him.
 7. God – Isaiah switches to the sovereign, supreme nature of the Godhead when He talks about the forgiveness given to everyone who returns. The entire Godhead is involved in reconnecting those who have strayed away.
 8. Abundantly pardon – The return of the unrighteous or wicked person, finds the Godhead overwhelming ready to forgive by extending grace to each person. An example of this is shown in the story of the prodigal son.

⁵ Watts, J. D. W. (1987). *Isaiah 34–66* (Vol. 25, pp. 246–247). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

⁶ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 493). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁷ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 493). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

9. Abundantly pardon – Abundant in the passage means that God’s grace is immeasurable; regardless of how wicked or unrighteous the person is, God forgives.

C. Trust Him When Everything Says Not to (vs. 8-9):

1. My thoughts are not your thoughts – The way God forms his ideas, strategically devises His plans, and make His judgements, nowhere compare to our way of planning or thinking.
2. Your ways, my ways – God’s behavioral patterns, His moral compass, and the paths the Lord establishes cannot be compared to ours; His path is holy and ours are not.
 - a) However difficult a sinner may imagine it would be to go God’s way, the frequent reminders in Scripture of His creating heaven and earth and having all power should quell doubts. Nothing is too hard for Him (Jer. 32:17, 27). Obstacles to faith that are impossibilities for men are not roadblocks to God’s ability (Ps. 18:29).⁸
3. Declares the Lord – What Isaiah is saying comes directly from the One who desires to have a relationship with us and has all authority and power.
 - a) But Yahweh makes clear that they cannot have the benefits of his presence while they resist the structures of his will. The old truth of Sinai’s covenant remains valid (Exo 20 and Deuteronomy).⁹
4. As the heavens are far from the earth – The heavens, where God reside as compared to earth. This is the third heavens which is billions (maybe a whole lot more) of miles from earth.
5. His ways compared to our ways – Isaiah repeats these words because it is a central thought. There is absolutely no way that the manner in which God lives comes anywhere close to the lifestyle patterns we choose.
6. My thoughts, your thoughts – Isaiah repeats these words because it is a central thought. There is absolutely no way that the manner in which we conceive ideas and make judgements can come anywhere close to how God devises His plans or implement them.

⁸ Rosscup, J. E. (2008). [*An Exposition on Prayer in the Bible: Igniting the Fuel to Flame Our Communication with God*](#) (p. 1131). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁹ Watts, J. D. W. (1987). [*Isaiah 34–66*](#) (Vol. 25, p. 247). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.