

Series: Isaiah

Title: The Goodness of the Flesh

Text: Isaiah 40: 6-8

Date: April 7, 2011

Place: SGBC, New Jersey

Isaiah 40: 6: The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh *is* grass, and all the goodness thereof *is* as the flower of the field: 7: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people *is* grass. 8: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

What does the LORD say all flesh is? Grass. Are there any exceptions? None—ALL flesh is grass. What is the very best goodness of our flesh? And ALL the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field. What happens to the grass and to the flowers? The grass withereth, the flower fadeth. Does all flesh wither? Do all men see that their best goodness is just a fading flower? No.

Proposition: Those spoken of here are those chosen of God in Christ and redeemed by his blood. Their flesh shall wither and all the goodness thereof fade before them as grass.

Isaiah 40: 5: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see *it* together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*. How can we be sure? How will the flesh of the Lord's redeemed be withered? Verse 7, 8 says, **because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people *is* grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."**

The Spirit blows and the flesh withers. As Israel was withered before the Lord came to this earth—so shall each child of mercy have all his very best fleshly goodness to wither before him like a flower by the Spirit blowing, but as the apostle Peter has shown us, the child of mercy is "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you."

The Gospel reveals the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. It declares not what we must do but what Christ has done on the sinner's behalf. The living and incorruptible Word is planted within us by the Spirit. It gives spiritual life where life was not. It makes a new creature using nothing of the old. Wherever this new life comes through the Word, it is incorruptible, it lives for ever.

When the believer begins to build again that which the Spirit of God has destroyed—having begun in the Spirit, we begin to look to our flesh to measure our growth or lack thereof rather than to our completeness in Christ Jesus—the Spirit blows and withers our flesh—but the Word of the Lord endures forever.

- Isaiah's Woe is Me
- Moses went from being next in line to Pharaoh to rejection by both Egypt and Israel
- Peter's fall
- Paul's thorn in the flesh

The word we need to begin hearing and need to continue to hear is this---all flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof as the flower of the field—the flesh withers because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it but the word of the Lord endureth forever. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profits nothing—bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness {inward godliness, of the Spirit, in the new heart} is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come (John 6: 63; 1 Timothy 4: 8.)

The Pharisee's were carnal men—all they minded were things of the flesh--religious as could be, knew the law and the prophets inside and out, and kept the law so meticulously that they would make our modern day Pharisee's look like out and out harlots—but it was all carnal mindedness—proud flesh--it was malice, guile, hypocrisy, lying to one another—not mercy, not forgiveness--Paul was one of those.

I. The Spirit of the Lord blew upon Paul's flesh. Listen to apostle Paul (Philippians 3)

II. Even as an apostle, one who travelled and preached, one who was used to establish so many early churches, one who was used to write $\frac{3}{4}$ of the new testament, he said this:

Romans 7: 18: For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. 19: For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.... 21: I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. Romans 8: 1: *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

To walk after the flesh is to seek righteousness, acceptance with God, salvation and eternal life by the dictates of the flesh, by works of righteousness.

To walk after the Spirit is to seek eternal life by faith in Christ alone, trusting him to do for us what we could never do.

Romans 8: 3: For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

III. The fulfillment of righteousness for the believer is Christ

Matthew 5: 17: Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. 19: Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Every one who enters glory must fulfill every jot and tittle of the law—Christ did it and he has taught us that the work of God is that we believe on him—by faith in Christ the believer has fulfilled the law of God—Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes.

Romans 8: 5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. 6: For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Paul was just that way, “I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came sin revived and I died.” The law was given to be our schoolmaster until Christ came. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. But the carnal minded man actually thinks he can and has fulfilled the law of God, yet he is not subject to the law of God for he rests not in Christ by faith. And he uses the law to unlawfully measure his godliness by looking at his flesh, using the law as his yard stick.

Romans 8: 8: So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9: But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

The Judaizer’s who came into Galatia wanted to try to make the grass of the flesh more than what it is so they constrained men saying that now that they had begun in the Spirit, it was a necessity to add the law to faith.

Galatians 6: 12: As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. 13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. 14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. 15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. 16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. 17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

The marks Paul bore were inflicted because he was persecuted for the cross of Christ. Those who claimed to be keepers of the moral law—murdered Christ, their hearts were full of malice, guile, covetousness, and so on. And they did the same to Paul. They did the same to Abel and a host of prophets through the ages. As believer’s we depend entirely upon the Spirit withering us and making the word effectual in our hearts—for without it we would turn the grace of God into the same lasciviousness.

Application

Romans 8: 10: And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11: But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. 12: Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13: For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14: For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15: For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

We do not want to think sinful thoughts or perform sinful deeds and when we do we mourn over our sin, but the Spirit mortifies that flesh which makes us to think that our sins make us *less* perfect than we are in Christ.

Likewise, when the believer does that which is right and honorable, when our fleshly, grassy pride begins to bloom like a flower, it is only through the Spirit that our flesh is withered so that we cease thinking our deeds make us *more* perfect than we are in Christ.

And we behold by faith that the Word of the Lord endureth forever

This is what growth in grace sounds like. Notice this progression.

1 Corinthians 15:9: For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Ephesians 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

1 Timothy 1:15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

Be careful to maintain good works. But remember this, brethren, all flesh is grass and the goodness thereof as the flower of the field—**BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURETH FOREVER.**

The more we are made to cry out:

Romans 7: 24 O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

The more we are made to *thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

AMEN!