

Series: Isaiah  
Title: The Church's Travail  
Text: Isaiah 66: 7-9  
Date: April 24, 2016  
Place: SGBC, New Jersey

Our subject today is "The Church's Travail." Our text is Isaiah 66: 7-9. As we read the text, notice the church is spoken of as a woman before she travails and then as soon as she travails.

**Isaiah 66: 7: Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. 8: Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. 9: Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut *the womb*? saith thy God.**

Zion is the church of God. The analogy is of the church as a pregnant woman. Before Zion travailed she delivered a man child. Then as soon as she travails she brings forth her children. The man child is Christ and all God's elect born at once in him before as yet the church travails. The children are God's elect, personally, born-again as soon as the church travails.

**Proposition:** God declares he shall save his children by grace apart from our works, using the church, and shall not lose one child.

**Divisions:** 1) Salvation by grace; 2) The Means of grace; 3) The Certainty of grace

## **SALVATION BY GRACE**

The salvation of every elect child of God is by grace, apart from our works—**Isaiah 66: 7: Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. 8: Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once?**

Here God declares his salvation is all by his grace, by Christ's accomplished redemption, apart from our works—"Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child."

He shows salvation to be by grace by comparing the birth of his people to a woman having a child before the travail of labor pains--"Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things?" No one ever heard of a woman bringing forth children before as yet she labored or had a single labor pain.

To show what a miracle of God's grace salvation is, he asks, "Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day?" It would be a miracle if a farmer planted seed in the earth and in one day the earth brought forth a harvest!

To show us God's salvation is by amazing grace, he asks "or shall a nation be born at once?" We would think it amazing if every citizen of a nation was born all at once. We would say it can only be an act of God.

So it with the salvation of all God's elect. God's salvation is by his amazing, miraculous, free grace, apart from any work on our part.

In one day, Christ put away all the sin of all his people on the cross fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah. There God said,

Zechariah 3:9...I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

Not one member of Christ's church travailed to put away our sin and make ourselves everlastingly righteous before God. We did no work, no labor, no travail. No member of the church did anything to save ourselves or anyone else. But our Substitute travailed—oh yes—he travailed to bring forth every elect child of God in perfection.

Isaiah 53: 10: Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11: He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

God laid all the sin of his people on Christ our Substitute—he bear our iniquities. Then all the wrath of God's holy justice bruised him in our place. The cross was the travail of his soul—the most intense labor pain every endured was endured by the GodMan on the cross. Having satisfied the justice of God he saw of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied: by his knowledge God's righteous servant justified many, for he bore our iniquities.

Then from that broken Seed cast into the earth, in one day the earth brought him forth in resurrection glory, and in him came forth all God's seed. The entire harvest of God's elect was brought forth in one day.

When Christ arose God's entire holy nation—the entire church and nation of God—was born in one day when Christ was raised from the dead.

Ephesians 2:4: But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5: Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6: And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

Colossians 3: 1: If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God....3: For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

In Christ, all God's elect were saved by Christ's works, by God's grace, raised in Christ justified and we were born in him that day, apart from any work done by his church or by any one member of his church. Are we sure that is what this text is teaching? After Isaiah 53—after Christ lays down his life for his sheep, after he sees the travail of his soul and is satisfied—then Isaiah 54 begins with these words:

Isaiah 54:1: Sing, O barren, thou *that* didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou *that* didst not travail with child: for more *are* the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.

Are you glad salvation is not by any work of your hand? If you know how totally incapable you are of doing anything to make yourself righteous and holy and accepted of God then salvation entirely by grace is the best news you could ever hear. It is why is it called the gospel of God's grace.

Romans 5: 15...For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

## **THE MEANS OF GRACE**

God shows us that he will use the church as the means through which God shall make each child individually be born again in regeneration—**Isaiah 66: 8...For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.**

Zion is the church—those God has already called out and regenerated by his grace. Zion—the church—is Christ's bride—she is the woman, the mother of all Christ's children.

Each elect child is born the first time of a man and a woman. Even so, each elect child is born again of Christ the Husband through Zion his bride, his church. This is not earthly Jerusalem;

Galatians 4:26: But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Each elect child is born the first time by corrupt seed. Even so, each elect child must be born again by the Holy Spirit, conceived by the incorruptible Seed, through the preaching of the gospel.

John 3:3: Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God...5: Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God...7: Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8: The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

1 Peter 1: 21: Who by him do believe in God,..23: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever...25:...And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Every elect child of God was born the first time through travail of their mother to some degree or another. Even so every elect child is born again through the travail—the labor—of Zion, the church, Christ's bride—**Isaiah 66: 8:...for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.**

In the garden, God told Eve that due to the curse, she would have much travail in child birth. God made the travail of natural labor to illustrate the pain and travail of his church in bringing forth children in the supernatural new birth.

The labor of Christ's bride is the labor of her preachers and all her born-again children. We travail in prayer to God for his people and in preaching and spreading the gospel throughout all the world and in all the labor involved with that. We travail in the rejection of sinners whose minds are enmity against God. The apostle Paul said

1 Corinthians 4:15: For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *have ye* not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

Galatians 4: 19: My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

Romans 9:1: I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, 2: That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. 3: For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

Romans 10:1: Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

Brethren, our text declares salvation is entirely of God's grace alone—not of any man's works. But it also declares that when God saves his people, Christ unites us and uses us to bring his children to this new birth through the gospel.

Be sure to understand. We are not as vain religion. One time I was on a sales call and a fellow tried to bear witness of Christ to me. I felt sorry for the fellow. He did not want to talk to me at all. But proselyting is the major focus of most works religion. We are not to do what they are doing. We are not merely trying to build a church or a denomination or count numbers. Christ said,

Matthew 23:15: Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

But Christ makes his true bride to have burden for her lost children. He makes us—travail—for the souls of his redeemed. That is our one responsibility and one charge from Christ. Let us each ask this question, do I have a burden on my heart to see God's elect saved through the gospel? Am I travelling to bear witness of Christ to needy sinners? If not then why? "For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children."

Wherever there is a birth of Christ's redeemed—there shall be—by God's sovereign predestinating grace—a travail by Christ's church that precedes it. On the day of Pentecost, Christ's church travailed in prayer and suddenly the Holy Spirit came upon them and through their preaching Christ saved three thousand souls. A little later, Peter was imprisoned, beaten, commanded not to preach Christ—the church gathered and as they were praying—Christ poured out the Spirit and saved a host more. Paul suffered much. But God saved sinners through him at Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica. Think of the travail during the days of Martin Luther, Calvin, John Knox.

God is so wise to save through his church spreading the gospel.

- 1) By this he makes us see the importance of the preaching of the gospel of Christ—for ourselves and our children and all his people
- 2) By this, he unites us—he cements us together in one common cause.
- 3) By this he gives us a love for those who ministered to us and to those he saves through us.

After God gave me life and faith in Christ, the more I saw the travail of the church in the past—to provide a pastor, to provide a place to worship, those who sent tapes from Kentucky and travelled down to preach the gospel to me. The more I learned of that travail the more it united my heart with them in love and made me want to do the same for other sinners!

Also, now I know how precious those children of God are to me for whom we have travailed. That is part of God's wisdom in choosing to save through Zion's travail—to make us abound in love toward one another. (1 Thess 2: 1-8)

## **THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S GRACE**

God asks two rhetorical questions by which God declares the certainty of God's grace to save each elect child whom Christ has redeemed—**Isaiah 66: 9: Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut *the womb*? saith thy God.**

Look at this carefully. God says, “Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth?” Shall I bring my church into travail and not cause my lost child to be born-again?

Though God uses his people we cannot boast of any labor done by us. When we travail and labor it is because God “brought to the birth.” God brought us to travail, to labor, to have a heart to see sinners saved. Every door that is opened, God opens it. Every prayer, God puts it in our heart. Every word we preach or witness, God gives it. Every bill we pay, God provides.. Everything about our travail is of God. Likewise, the birth is of God’s grace—“he causes the born-again child to be brought forth.”

Also, be sure to get the second question. God says, “shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God.” God will not save one elect child then stop his bride from bringing forth. God shall make his church labor and bring forth all his children—“till we all come to the unity of the faith.” till Christ’s body is complete.

Our salvation is all of God’s grace. The means of using his church is all of grace. And the certainty that each elect child shall be called is due to God’s grace. Knowing this, may God give us a burden for his lost sheep that we might travail in prayer and preaching for their birth and Christ’s glory!

**Amen!**