

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 35:1-10

The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God. Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you."

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and those the LORD has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Isaiah 35 is a powerful poetic word of comfort for the mourning Judahite exiles, who lost their temple, land, and sovereignty. Their suffering is manifested in:

“feeble hands” (verse 3),

“knees that give way” (verse 3),

“fearful heart” (verse 4),

“obscured vision” (verse 5),

“hindered hearing” (verse 5),

“lameness” (verse 6),

“muted tongues” (verse 6).

The literary “body” constructed in **Isaiah 35** has been utterly overwhelmed by **despair and weariness**. Their capacities needed to move through this world have been diminished. The exiles feel God’s sorrow in their very bodies.

The good news is that the God of Jacob does not abandon God’s people to their despair. Their sorrow will come to an end, and on a day the sick body will find new life in God.

TITLE:

“Go Up The Highway of Holiness”

MAINPOINT

1. The Highway of Holiness

2. The Way Right Through

3. The One and Only Way

I. THE HIGHWAY OF HOLINESS

The specific phrase 'highway of holiness' is found only once in Scripture, in **Isaiah 35**. God promises that, in the future, the land of Israel will be blessed with fertility and "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose (**crocus**)" (verse 2).

There will be gladness and shouts of joy when the new, restored Zion will see God's glory, experience His presence, and be guided and protected by Him. At the time the kingdom is established, "*a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness*" (**Isaiah 35:8**).

The point of the prophecy is that God will remove all obstacles and “smooth the way” for His people, enabling them to access the blessings of the kingdom. The language of **Isaiah 35** gives it a broader context, including physical healing and environmental blessings (**verses 5–7**).

Characteristics of the Highway of Holiness:

1. The Highway of Holiness is made for God's people.

Isaiah announces that in the ministry of the Messiah, there will be a wonderful highway, a road, known as the Highway of Holiness.

"A high-way" speaks of a raised road, lifted above the ground. It is a high, glorious road to travel on.

“Engineering has done much to tunnel mountains, and bridge abysses; but the greatest triumph of engineering is that which made a way from sin to holiness, from death to life, from condemnation to perfection. Who could make a road over the mountains of our iniquities but Almighty God? None but the Lord of love would have wished it; none but the God of wisdom could have devised it; none but the God of power could have carried it out.” (Spurgeon)

This highway **is not for everyone**. *"The unclean shall not pass over it"*. You are only allowed on this highway if you are cleansed by the great work of the Messiah.

The travelers on the Highway of Holiness are **the ransomed**. Related to the word **goel** – the kinsman-redeemer.

We use this Highway of Holiness to come to where God lives and reigns – Zion – and we come there with singing.
"And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing".

With everlasting joy on their heads... We can know some of this now, but we are not at our destination on the Highway of Holiness yet. But when we arrive there, *God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.* (Revelation 21:4)

When we stick on God's Highway of Holiness, even though His work in us isn't complete yet – we may still be in some ways a fool – yet **we will not be lost because we are on His highway!** *“Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray.”*

2. Safety is in the Highway of Holiness

As we stay on God's Highway of Holiness, **we are protected from the attacks of the lion.** *"No lion shall be there"*. Though your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (**1 Peter 5:8**), that lion has never yet devoured anyone who stayed on the road.

Using the pictures of this chapter, it is as if we come to God barren, dry, blind, deaf, weak, and crippled. Then the miraculous power of God comes to change us, heal us, save us, protect us and provide for us. He goes on to make a Highway of Holiness that the transformed man can walk on.

God never promises a magical, science-fiction-like teleportation from Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem majesty without the people ever setting foot on any part of the 500 mile journey back home through the wilderness. Neither does God promise a magic elimination of our wilderness experience.

Instead, God promises a new way, a **way** right through it.

II. THE WAY RIGHT THROUGH

Many have been trapped in the long, winding road of weariness.

So many people today seem to be so beaten down by the everyday struggles of life. They seem to be so very tired and weary. It is so bad that it has brought on a new illness called ***chronic fatigue syndrome*** and it's a real and crippling condition.

We have felt overwhelmed with the complexity of life. We are tired and weary physically, mentally, and emotionally. We all have things that are bothersome to us.

The sad fact is that we all have something that puts us under enormous pressure and stress from time to time.

Eg. 45 year-old New York Judge.

Our weariness is a long and winding road. We have been going around in circles like the children of Israel in the wilderness. We are groping our way in the darkness and uncertainties. Maybe our past defeat has been haunting us.

God does not eliminate the reality of the wilderness. Instead God promised a new, transformed, and holy way of living within and walking through it.

First, He makes a road way

Scripture reminds us that God's presence and guidance are revealed in wilderness.

God finds Moses "beyond the wilderness" and guides Moses into a mission of delivering the Jews from bondage in Egypt (**Exodus 3**).

When Queen Jezebel threatened Elijah's life, he fled a day's journey into the wilderness. Here, God met a fatigued and despairing Elijah and gave him a rekindled spirit and a renewed mission (**1 Kings 19**).

It was the Spirit of God who led Jesus into the wilderness to be tested by the devil (**Matthew 4:1-11**).

Second, God opens blind eyes that just can't seem to see God's presence in those times of overwhelming fear, anxiety, confusion, and doubt.

God empowers those who view themselves as trapped in their own weariness; disabled by their own fears. God will increase their energy and send them leaping like a deer along God's holy way (**Isaiah 35:6**).

Those chaotic and confusing spaces still exist. However, God changes the way we see and experience them; from hopeless and helpless, to potential and possibility; from exhaustion and despair, to renewed energy and anticipation.

E.g. Story about a children's Sunday school Christmas pageant.

Third, and finally, God's holy way includes changing behavior as we travel.

In our text, Isaiah describes that preparation for the discouraged exiles and for us. *"Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, be strong, do not fear! (Isaiah 35:3).*

Life is tough. Alone, our hands are weak; our knees feeble; and our hearts are fearful. We cannot do it alone.

III. THE ONE AND ONLY HIGHWAY

It is the King's highway, the highway of the King of kings, which he has ordered and appointed, and is common to all his subjects, high and low, rich and poor, stronger or weaker believers. It is an old beaten path, which saints in all ages, from the beginning of the world, have walked in. It is the good old way, the more excellent, the most excellent one.

This high way is not two ways, but **ONE**. The WAY shall be a highway, a WAY cast up, raised, and "elevated". This is no other than JESUS CHRIST, cast up, raised and elevated on the cross for sinners to see. He is the only Way of life and salvation.

A "**Holy Way**", Jesus is perfectly holy in nature and life, and the holiness of both is imputed to those that are in this Way. All in this Way are sanctified by the Spirit and grace of God. This Way leads to perfect holiness in heaven, and none but holy persons walk here.

Salvation by Christ no ways discourages the practice of holiness, but is the greatest motive and incentive to it. Christ leads his people in paths of righteousness, in the paths of truth, of ordinances, and of worship, public and private, all which are holy and in the path of Gospel conversation and godliness.

WARNING: Some are deceived into thinking that because they are saved by grace they can travel down any moral highway. **1 John 1:5-7** - *This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*"

As we journey down this Highway, we become more like Jesus. God in His grace changes us with each step and each passing day.

On this journey, the stinking clothes of our sinful old life are cast off, our minds are renewed by God's truth and Jesus girds us in new garments decorated in His righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Be both sincere and patient with yourself on this Journey. Jesus will not leave you nor forsake you, but He will change you as you press forward.

CONCLUSION:

The highway of holiness is a place of holiness. It is reserved for those who are righteous in God's sight. No one entering the kingdom will be foolish or sinful but Christ alone provides the way of holiness, having exchanged His perfect righteousness for our sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). His righteousness is imputed to us, enabling us to be holy, even as He is holy. The highway is reserved for His people alone.

God's people will experience safety and security on the highway. No wicked persons, symbolized by lions and ravenous beasts, will be allowed on the highway. **The redeemed of the Lord will walk there in peace and safety.**

Just as the ransomed captives would return joyfully from Babylon, **all the redeemed of the Lord will be restored with everlasting joy.**

