

## The Great Contradiction

Sunday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1987

### Isaiah 55:6-8

*“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.”*

I would like for you to take your Bible and open it to Isaiah Chapter 55. I'm going to speak today, on this subject: "THE GREAT CONTRADICTION."

I want you to listen very carefully to the words of God's prophet. Isaiah wrote in Chapter 55 beginning with verse 6; *“Seek ye the Lord while He may be found. Call ye upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and God will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord.”*

My friends, it doesn't take a lot of wisdom to understand that what is going on today in the name of religion and in the name of God is contrary to the Scriptures. It is certainly true in our day that our ways are not God's ways. What is going on today in the name of religion and in the name of God is contrary not only to the Scriptures but is contrary to the very character of God Almighty Himself.

It does not require much study or knowledge to see that the emotionalism of this day along with its entertainment, extravagant living and showmanship in religion is nothing but flesh and is totally contrary to the ways of God and the ways of His people.

The Scripture says, *“My thoughts are not your thoughts and My ways are not your ways.”* It is time and it is long overdue for someone to speak plainly, as plainly as he can and forcefully as he can about the direction in which religion today is taking (especially on television).

You might say, "Well; it is ok for people to do what they want to do." It is not ok! I have heard others say, "Well; we can't judge." God's Word judges men. We judge the ministry of men by the Word of God.

I'm going to tell you some things about God's true preachers and God's true prophets. God hasn't changed, His Word hasn't changed, His ways haven't changed and His

preachers haven't changed. I will tell you this and I'm going to try to tell you as plainly today as I can talk; God's true preachers and God's prophets are not con artists and are not money raisers, politicians, or entertainers.

God's preachers and God's prophets are not wealthy men who live in mansions and fine homes and wear diamonds. They don't own condominiums and live luxuriously, not God's preachers. God's preachers are plain men.

They are men who are called of God to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. They are plain men who are separated unto the Gospel of God. That is their calling; that is their objective and that is their goal to make Christ known. They are determined, as Paul says to those people in the great city of Corinth; *"I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."*

God's preachers are not wealthy men who live luxuriously. They are men who live by the Gospel. They live in a simple fashion like their Master, identified with plain people. In the Scriptures you can read of the Levites of old. The Levites of old had the care of the temple, the care of the tabernacle and the care of the ministry of the Word and had care of the sacrifices.

These Levites of old who are our examples, they did not own property. They did not own or promote businesses. God's preachers today (His true preachers) do not own property or promote businesses.

What does come into their hands financially and materially is used to care for the poor, the needy and the less fortunate. They are like conduits; they receive with this hand and they give out with the other. They live by the Gospel.

Their soul and only business is the Master's business. Our Lord said, *"I must be about My Father's business."* I'm talking about preaching the Word of God. So, I boldly declare unto you, according to God's ways and God's Word; wealthy preachers, the extravagant, luxuriously, living preachers are not God's preachers.

God's preachers are plain men with a plain message. I will tell you this and listen to me; God said, *"Your ways are not My ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts. There is a way that seemeth right to men and the end is destruction and death."*

God's preachers are plain men but they are men who preach in power, in the power of the Holy Ghost. God's preachers are men, not women. It is quite clear my friend, in the

Scriptures that women are not to preach, not to pastor and according to God's Word, they are not to usurp authority over men.

It seems to me that women are taking over in this realm of religion today. Women have a very important part in the church, in the Ministry, in the Kingdom of God, a part which cannot be taken by anyone else. They cannot be replaced, women that teach other women and children.

Women build the home, keep the home and raise their children. According to God's Word, His preachers are men and always have been and always will be. Women are not to pastor churches. They are not to teach men or usurp authority over men. They are not to run the business of the church or pastor the church.

Paul plainly says in 1 Corinthians 14:34; *"Let your women keep silence in the churches."* It is not permitted for them to preach or to teach. They are commanded to be under obedience, according to the Word of God, the Law and the Old Testament Scriptures.

It goes back to the fall when God said to Eve, *"Your husband will have the rule over you. Christ is head of the man and the man is head of the woman."* The apostle Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:11; *"Again, let your women learn in silence with all subjection. I suffer not a woman to teach or to usurp authority but to be in silence."*

Women taking over programs, pulpits, classrooms and leading the churches, serving on pulpit committees and conducting the business of the church is not God's way; it is our way. He said, *"Your ways are not My ways."*

I will tell you this, God's preachers are not only plain men, but they are plain men who do not beg. Our Lord is not a beggar and His ambassadors are not beggars. God's preachers do not beg for money to support their ministry or the Kingdom of God; they will not do it and they cannot do it.

God's preachers live and preach by faith, not by the strength of the flesh. It is not faith to tell men constantly our needs. Faith tells God our needs and God supplies those needs. In fact, He said; *"Your Heavenly Father knows what you have need of."*

Faith does not conduct telethons to raise money for our programs and our organizations. Faith is not pleading, begging, badgering, coercing, threatening or rewarding. You don't use your telephones for people to call and have them promise to send you so much money. Faith does not do that! That is our way and not God's way.

Faith does not give away charms, trinkets, gimmicks and books to raise money. Faith does not threaten people with going off the air. How utterly ridiculous it is to even think that a man of faith would stand before a congregation and say, "If you don't do something, I'm going off the air."

God is still in control. God is still on the throne. I will go off the air when it pleases God, not when it pleases a man.

Faith does not beg and faith does not threaten; it never threatens God's people. Faith doesn't threaten people with the death of a preacher. That is the most foolish thing that I have ever heard of in my life! I can't believe they use it as a gimmick to raise money, the threat of God upon the life of a preacher.

Faith does not promise man prosperity if he will support the preacher. Faith does not sell land, investments, cards and bricks. This is man's way and is not God's way. Someone must speak out against it. Someone must stand up and be counted. Someone must warn this generation of all the trickery and the flesh merchandising that is going on today in the name of religion. God has nothing to do with these things.

Faith doesn't organize clubs for people to buy into. There is the 300 Club, the 700 Club and the 1100 Club. Don't you see that these are rackets to raise money? Don't you see that men sit around in groups, boards and organizations trying to figure out a new gimmick?

They are trying to find out a way to get money, a new way to raise money or get a new offer? They run out of this offer and think of another one. They run out of that one and have to think of another.

God's people give and God's people support the church. God's people support missionaries and God's people support true ministers. God's people will support the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

God's people give, and not because they are being threatened or are promised a reward. They are not badgered or coerced to give; they give willingly. Giving is a grace. Giving is an act of love. God's people are to be left to give as they are led and are impressed by the Holy Spirit. They are not coerced by man.

You will probably say, "How will people know my need?" God knows my need. God is my Heavenly Father. God, knowing the need of His people and the need of His church and the need of His preacher, has promised to supply that need. Paul said, "*My God shall*

*supply all your need according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus.*” True faith from the heart of a true preacher waits on God.

God’s true preacher knows that *“salvation is of the Lord.”* That’s right; salvation is a work of grace in the heart accomplished by the Holy Spirit. My friends; coming to the front of the church is not salvation. That is our way but not God’s way.

Our way is to make coming to the front synonymous with receiving Christ. Making a physical move is not reformation or salvation. They want you to raise your hand; we have gone a long way with raising the hand. They want you to bow your head, close our eyes and raise your hands. Raising your hands is not salvation.

*“God looks on the heart”* and not on the raising of the hand or the outward countenance. The saying of prayer dictated by some man is not salvation. Making a decision in a revival meeting is not salvation.

You don’t decide to come in and decide to go out. Joining the church is not salvation. Listen to me; God’s preachers know this, (the true preachers) people who are saved are born of God. They are not manipulated by psychology; they are born of God. They are not manipulated by mass emotionalism; they are born of God. They are not tricked into a decision; they are born of God deliberately, willingly, lovingly and individually.

They are not only born of God but they are born of the Word of God; *“Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth.”* God’s people are saved by the Spirit of God. God’s people are brought by the Spirit of God and through the Word of God to know God in their hearts and to *“know Jesus Christ whom He has sent.”*

True salvation is a new creation in Christ Jesus which only God can accomplish. That is what I do on this program every Lord’s Day, in the pulpit, and through the books that I write. I preach to men; I preach the Gospel to them.

I pray to God to make it effectual to the heart by the power of the Spirit and then leave men alone. Leave them with God; wait upon God to bring them to faith. Leave them to God and His Word and wait on Him to bring them to receive Christ personally and individually.

Do you know that these entire so-called altar calls today and the processions to the front of church, the big crowd going down to the front of the church is the invention of modern man? It is unknown in the Word of God. It is unknown in the ministry of the apostles. It is unknown in the early revivals and unknown by any prophet of old.

You might say, “How do people confess Christ? People do it the scriptural way; they confess by baptism. Go through the New Testament, even at Pentecost; those people were not invited to raise their hands or to come to the front. They were not required to say the “sinner’s prayer.”

Those people cried the sinner’s prayer. They said, “*Men and brethren; what are we going to do; we are in a mess?*” Peter said, “*Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.*”

All the way through the New Testament the Ethiopian Eunuch, the Philippian Jailer, Lydia, Cornelius and others didn’t raise their hands. They did not go to the front. They didn’t sign a card. They didn’t go to an inquiry room; they followed the Lord in believer’s baptism; they confessed Christ.

Our altar calls today and all this running to the front of the church to make first-time decisions is to build the statistics of the preacher and to give him fame, promote his program and give him some converts to report so that he can get the next meeting. Only God can save a sinner. Only God’s preacher is willing to leave it up to God to save that sinner. He will do it!

Eternal life is to know God. Eternal life is not to know religious facts. Eternal life is to be born of God and not to make a decision. Eternal life is to come to Christ, all the way to Christ. You have to come personally by faith and not to come to the front of the church.

You can come to the front of the church without coming to Christ. Most people do this. Eternal life is a heart work that never dies. It is not just a profession of the lips. Our Lord said, “*These people call me Lord, Lord, with their lips and their hearts are far from Me.*” The heart has never left covetousness, never left flesh and never left the world. They just took Jesus to be another god on their shelves.

Eternal life is a living union with the Son of God and not a union with the church. Eternal life is a membership in the family of God and not a membership in an organization. I will tell you this; as long as men can come to the preacher and relieve their consciences and receive some kind of comfort; they are not going to come to Christ.

As long as we are standing out there in their way and inviting them to the front and inviting them to us, inviting them to shake our hands and inviting them to make their

decision; they will come to us. They will come to our organizations and they will come to our altars. They will respond to our invitations but they are not coming to Christ.

You have got to move out of the way for them to come to Christ. Our Lord said, *“You compass sea and land to make one proselyte to your religion and after you have made him, he is two-fold more the child of hell than you are.”*

All of this emotionalism and human persuasion simply denies the power of God. All of this persuasion, pulling and bringing people to the front, denies the power of God to find His sheep, to awaken His sheep, to call His sheep and to save His sheep by His grace.

God is perfectly able to find His people and to make the Word effectual to their heart. That is what our Lord accused the religious people of during the days that He ministered here on this earth. He said, *“You err knowing the Scriptures and you don’t know the power of God.”* That is the biggest problem.

I’m willing to leave a sinner with God. I’m willing to give him the Word. I don’t mean “strike while the iron is hot.” If it is God’s iron it will stay hot until He responds; He will brand him. If it God’s Spirit calling, he will come. If it is God Almighty who is working in his soul, he will be brought.

I don’t have to rush, drag him to the front, talk him into a false profession or pick an apple before it is ripe. I will tell you this; God’s true preacher is bold to declare the Word of God and the true Gospel, even if he stands alone.

That is why Luther stood that day at the Diet of Worms. The whole nation, the whole religious empire, the whole ecclesiastical empire was against him. His life was threatened. He told them what he believed and said, “Here I stand; I can do no other.”

The apostle Paul declared, *“If I please men; I am not the servant of Christ.”* Are you listening? Elijah dared to stand alone that day on Mount Carmel against 450 false prophets. I’m afraid that the way things are going today, the portion is about the same.

God’s preacher is not a servant of the denomination. God’s preacher is not a servant of the board of deacons. God’s preacher is not intimidated by a board or by members of the church. God’s preacher is not afraid of losing his job, his home or his salary; he is an ambassador and servant of God Almighty and no man can touch him.

God’s preacher will preach the Word whatever the consequences. He is not a peace-maker; he is a prophet. He is not a moderator; he is a messenger. He is not a clown

either! Most preachers today are clowns, entertainers and playboys. They are not serious about this business and they are not committed.

God didn't send His preachers into this world just to marry people or to perform at the club or roam the halls of the hospital; He sent him to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Are you listening? "*Your ways are not My ways*" God said. God is saying, "You've changed My ways and tried to conform them to your ways; your thoughts are not My thoughts."

What did the early apostles say when they called for the first deacons? Why did they ordain these men? Why did they select these men? Why do they need these men? They came to this conclusion; we want these men to put over this business of taking care of the widows, the distribution of food and all of these things. But, "*We will give ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.*"

What do I see for my day? I see no change; I see it getting worse, not better, but worse. I see those inventing new ways to violate God's Word. I see those trying new ways to raise money so that the end justifies the means. Well, perhaps, God will raise one up here and one there that will dare speak for God.

In closing, I will tell you this; God's preacher knows the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It says in the book of John, "*He, the Holy Spirit will glory me, for He shall receive of Mine and show it to you.*" The Holy Spirit finds God's glory in Jesus Christ and Christ's glory in Christ Himself.

My friends; the Holy Spirit does not reach after something novel, something new, something different and something spectacular; that seems to be the order of the day in religion. They want something spectacular and some crescendo. They are using music to sway the minds of people.

The Holy Spirit does not need these things to glorify Christ or to preach Christ. He doesn't need strange tongues that men cannot understand. He doesn't need fleshly emotion and bodily healings and creature fame.

Some will say, "We need to get us a big football player here on the platform next Sunday. When the preacher is up maybe someone will come and hear the preacher." That is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard of! What does the Holy Ghost need with a football player?



He doesn't need some man of great power, wealth and influence in order to bring sinners to know Christ or to bring glory to Christ. He finds Christ's glory and Christ Himself. If we want to honor Christ and we want to glorify Jesus Christ, if we want to preach Christ; we must not look for something outside of Christ.

We must not look for something in us. We must honor Him by preaching that which is already His, His Deity, His person, His life, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His resurrection, His intercession and His glorious, blessed return.

Strange as it may seem; there is today, very little preaching of Jesus Christ Himself. The average person in the average church knows nothing about Jesus Christ, practically nothing. He knows about His denomination, about his pastor, all about the famous people of today. He does not know Christ.

People today preach about those who knew Christ and they preach about those who served Christ. They preach about those who wrote of Christ. They will mention Saint Matthew, Saint Jude, and Saint Mark, Saint this, that and the other.

They preach about His church, His doctrines, His commandments and His return. They preach series of messages on those who use to preach Christ. They conduct conversations about those who professed to know Christ and they have these sharing sessions.

They talk about the duties and the responsibilities of believers in Christ but very few messages are on the person and work of Christ Himself. That is what I am saying!

My friends; people today need to return to preaching Christ. Jesus Christ is most glorified and His sheep are most edified, His will and purpose are most accomplished and His church is perfected in faith, hope and love when we preach Christ Himself.

The work of the Spirit of God is not to give us games to play. The work of the Spirit of God is not to call attention to Him or even to the instrument; the work of the Spirit of God is to reveal the beauties of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those beauties and glories are all found in Him.

The hymn writer put it this way:

Oh Christ our hope, our hearts desire  
Redemptions only spring,  
Creator of the world art Thou

My Saviour and my King.