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# ISAIAH 61

## Spiritual Answers for Mental and Emotional Turmoil—

**Psalms 61:1-3**

*by Daniel A. Brown, PhD*

*“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners...”*

ISAIAH 61:1

### **ANOINTED ONES**

God’s word promises anointing to every member of His Body. In this text, Isaiah speaks of the anointing to bring good news, to bind up the broken, and to proclaim liberty and freedom. But what does the anointing entail? The anointing of the Holy Spirit enables us to speak heart-searching counsel. But we have to grow into it! We must learn to respond to the Spirit and to speak words that are true. It takes a while to learn how to judge, how to discern and how to speak—without being afraid—based not upon what we see or hear, but rather on what God says to us.

The anointing is from the Holy Spirit. But when God has chosen to anoint His Son, why He would He bother to anoint us? Simply this: He has anointed us to bring life to others, not to bring attention to ourselves. *“But through love serve one another”* (GAL. 5:13); that is the whole point of being anointed—so we can, through love, and offer spiritual service to each another. To be *anointed* means: to be set apart for service. That’s all that it means; it’s nothing overwhelming or flashy.

The Greek word, *chrio*, from which we get the name *Christos*, means *God's anointed*. Jesus Christ is *God's Anointed*. So technically speaking, it could be said, "*Daniel anointed of God*" or "*Jim Christ*." It is true for all of us. The term *Christ* simply means *His anointed*, the *anointed one*. Anointed for what, though? Anointed to restore the world, to bring back the world that had been lost.

## THE AFFLICTED

How do we serve the world? First, we are to "*bring good news to the afflicted*." While it is a good thing for us to be mindful of the *afflicted*, we should be aware that the *afflicted* are not just those who are financially impoverished. *Afflicted* people have also been humbled, brought low, or made needy in heart or circumstance. When Jesus said, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit*," He was saying, "*Blessed are the afflicted*." He was speaking about the people who have been deprived in this life, those who are poor, those humbled by circumstances, those whose lives have been diminished from the original scope of what God had intended.

*Afflicted* people have been eaten away, eroded by hurtful, natural circumstances, whether by sin or by demonic impact. They have been run over, knocked down and overwhelmed—beaten up by life, set upon by thieves, mugged, knocked out, strewn along the wayside and left for dead. Their lives have encountered one robbery after another, one violent violation of their personhood after another, one armed assault after another, one death after another, one murder after another. The *afflicted* person is like one who has been shot and who, with futility, tries to stop the flow of blood by placing his fingers over the wound, knowing that his time is limited. He then looks around at everybody else and, finding them as wounded as him, says, "*I guess this is it. I'll just try to make the best of it as long as I can still breathe*."

The scope of who and what the afflicted were originally meant to be has been stolen from them again and again, and as a result, they've lost a great deal of what God had planned for their future. Consequently, they do not even know who they are. Jesus came to speak good news to people like that. He did not come for the people who were doing well. He came for the sick, for the dying, those whose life was slowly ebbing away.

## THE BROKENHEARTED

In addition to the *afflicted*, we are also to be looking for the *brokenhearted*. To be brokenhearted is to be shattered or scattered in our heart, in our thoughts or in our will. It is to be in a state of mental or emotional disarray at the very center of our

being. We look into our hearts to find out who we are, and all we find are pieces. We wonder if anyone can put this jigsaw puzzle together: all the pieces look alike, and there are five million of them. It seems hopeless.

The brokenhearted are not people who just make sad noises about their situation. It's not so much that their life circumstances are being broken apart (although this can be true of them, it isn't really the root of their brokenness)—it's their hearts, their minds and souls that are being blown to bits. With truly brokenhearted people, it is as though in their spirits they are in a daze. When asked what is wrong, they hardly know what to say because they honestly don't know.

Brokenness always happens when we move outside of God's order of things. It's as though giant sledgehammers and anvils were banging against each other on each side of God's path. Once we step outside that path, "*Wham!*" these hammers break us to pieces, and we are left with a completely shattered limb, wondering how we will be mended. But Jesus came to bind up the brokenhearted, and binding up means to *wrap up*. It's like applying a brace to a broken leg: it brings security...it enfolds...it sets in order...it encloses the brokenness.

To bind up the disheveled, the disarrayed, the scattered, is to enfold them. It's not merely to bind the wound to stop the flow of blood, but it's also to provide some degree of closure or discipline to hold together the things that have been fragmented.

The discipline that the Lord encourages us to embrace is not required so that we can become more acceptable to Him by earning "*brownie points*," by reading our Bibles, for example. That is not the point. Rather it is because the consistent "*wrapping*" of reading His word somehow brings together the things in our lives that have become fragmented and blown apart. It is as though, when we read the Scriptures, the Lord lets us take the net of our being, casting it far afield from where we are and with what little we have, so that we can gather in His abundance. Our net becomes full, and we become people characterized by wholeness and maturity.

Biblically speaking, maturity conveys the idea of completeness or fullness. Mature people in Jesus are those who have been filled back up with what God intended for them to be. They have become full not only of Jesus, but they have become full of themselves (of their real self, that is—of the person God created them to be). The problem with most people is not that they are "*full of themselves*," but that there isn't much left of who and what God put inside of them to be. Their purpose and identity have been blown out. And God wants to bring it all back. He wants to mature us.

Binding up the brokenhearted, then, means providing boundaries for those who have transgressed God's original intent for their lives. Without such boundaries people do not even know who they are. The most plaguing and perplexing question of man in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is this: "*Who on earth am I... and what am I supposed to be, to do?*" Once we begin to reject what God has designed for us, we are cut adrift, hanging on to this and that piece of ourselves. We become the most bizarre distortion of bits and pieces compared to what we were intended to be.

## **CAPTIVES AND PRISONERS**

God has sent and anointed Jesus. Therefore, God has sent and anointed *us* to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners in His name. It seems as though proclaiming liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners is saying virtually the same thing, (we are to bring deliverance) until we remember that the Bible often speaks in parallels. Such parallels do not simply make the same statement twice; rather, with closer investigation, we discover significant differences between the statements. They actually refer to two different kinds of bondage.

To proclaim liberty to captives is to grant freedom of movement and choice. One who is liberated has free will, purity of choice and the ability to make decisions without any hindrance. People who are *captive*, however, don't even realize that there is a choice to be made. Their captivity is such that they cannot see the bondage that exists. It is not as though they know to do better and are unable to do so. They do not even realize that there is a way to be different. The possibilities have been removed. All they know is the way they have always been.

While, on the one hand, a captive is oblivious his captivity, the *prisoner* is very aware of his imprisonment. He is yoked, bound, restricted—and he knows it. So the freedom that God brings is, literally, an opening, an unlocking from prison, a rescue.

Unlike the captive, the prisoner is aware of his choices. He knows he is bound, and he knows there is freedom. But his imprisonment is like being on a leash. He is either kept back from the place to which he desires to go, or he is dragged about at the enemy's hand into places to which he does not want to go. It is from this prison then, that the Lord brings freedom. Yet it still remains the choice of the prisoner whether he will walk into that freedom.

## **ANOINTED COUNSEL**

These insights can help us so much as we seek to help other people. We can say things such as: *"I really know that you don't see this, but I believe the Lord really wants us to set you free from something that's trapping you in a way you don't yet realize."* But if they don't realize it, they're not even necessarily open to having you address it or pray for their freedom. They say, *"Of course I don't know it, because it's not there. I've checked, and I don't see it."*

God help us if all we have to rely on is our own analysis of ourselves! That's frightening. I pray like the psalmist, *"Lord, try me and see if there be any hurtful way in me. God, deliver me if there's anything you see."* But I still need people who come alongside and say, *"You know, Daniel, you don't even know that you're this way, but you are."*

### **GOOD NEWS FOR THE AFFLICTED**

Thus, as anointed, ministering people, we should be on the lookout for the *afflicted*. While our flesh would far rather be around people who are not *afflicted*—*afflicted* people do not always make the best company—let us hope the day never comes that we get so healthy that we cannot be around people who have problems. Jesus said, *"Bring the problems to Me."*

How do we *"bring good news to the afflicted"*? The *afflicted*, again, are people who have been humbled or brought low, people who have been depressed by circumstance, who have been run over, knocked down, beaten up and left for dead. They are the kind of people that the robbers have jumped on, beaten and thrown off to the side of the road to wait for some Good Samaritan to come along and take care of them. Those who are *afflicted* have been diminished by sin, and by Satan.

Remember, though, that some people do not want to change at all. They even enjoy being *afflicted*. What God is saying is that we are to be on the lookout for, and to welcome people who are not only *afflicted*, but who also want to be well.

Scripture tells us that Rachel refused to be comforted (JEREMIAH 31:15). Often, we are offered comfort or healing and we say, *"No, thanks. I am not going to be comforted because I like being miserable. It gives me something to be angry about. It gives me a feeling of power to be angry."* We can refuse to be comforted. We can even refuse to be made well.

But Jesus comes to bring good news and He says, *"You do not have to die. You do not have to be so drained of life. You do not have to be so ripped off that there is nothing*

*left. The good news that I have for you is that now, in My name, there can come an end to all that has been taken away from you. I will bring restoration. I will bring recovery. You now have a Champion who fights for you.”*

Jesus is the "big brother" that every bully fears. No one can pick on Jesus; He's the one who promises to fight those who fight us, to contend against those who contend against us, to give a hard time to anyone who gives us a hard time. He is the one to whom we can always run and say, "Lord, go get 'em." And He always does. The full measure of our souls has been eaten away, but Jesus restores that which has been devoured; He brings back that which has been lost. That is the good news for the *afflicted*, and since every one of us has known affliction, that is the good news for *us*.

## **BINDING UP THE BROKENHEARTED**

Another term is "*binding up the brokenhearted*." Someone who is *brokenhearted* has been fragmented, scattered and blown apart in the deepest part of his being. Perhaps there are still parts of himself that he has been able to hang on to, but there are strange contortions in his personality as he tries to hang on to one piece or another of his life that has been blown apart by the enemy. Binding him up occurs through the things we speak: teaching brings him back; love brings him back; correction brings him back; discipline (asking him to accept certain disciplines in his life) brings him back.

Our call to one another as God's anointed, is to bind up, to wrap and to cover each other. And one way that we bandage people is through love. They may be falling apart, but we just keep gathering them up, collecting the pieces. It's like when we carry clean laundry from the dryer—it always seems to fall all over the place. That's how some people are: they seem to be falling apart all over the place. We have to just keep reaching down and picking them up. No matter how frustrating it gets, no matter how often they seem to fall apart, we need to keep, loving them.

Another way that we can bind up the brokenhearted is with truth, with Scripture. The speaking of truth—God's word—enfolds them like an ace bandage. It brings them security because the brokenhearted have been without truth, scattered and without restraint.

Yet another way we can bind up the brokenhearted is through discipline. However, we can get too bound up by discipline; discipline not applied in love, not offered to advantage the other person, is called "*legalism*". Legalism is a bandage that has been

wrapped too tight: doing more harm than good. But without some disciplines in our lives—reading the Word, seeking the Lord—we are going to remain broken in pieces.

Finally, another way we can be “*bound up*” is by walking in submission. Trusting the person who says, “*I see this in you*” when we don’t see it at all, and recognizing that their love for us compels them to help us: it is critical in the process of getting all our scattered pieces back in place.

### **LIBERTY FOR CAPTIVES; FREEDOM FOR PRISONERS**

When God proclaims *liberty to captives*, He is giving them the ability to choose between options they didn’t know existed before. The small place where they have always lived seems as natural as breathing, with no alternatives. But there *are* alternatives, and God restores their ability to see the options and to choose to be different. When you come alongside someone who is held captive by their thoughts, their past, their feelings or addictions, you can present them with alternatives they could never see for themselves.

For the prisoner, on the other hand, the enemy’s accusation sounds like, “*How come you’re such a terrible Christian? How come you’re such an unfaithful believer? What’s wrong with you?*” You know you’re a prisoner when you want nothing more than to just get free. And your hunger for freedom becomes the open door for rescue when you’ve been imprisoned against your will. Jesus came to bring *freedom to prisoners*, the very kind of deliverance you have always longed for.

But He also came to bring deliverance from things that we don’t even know we’re in bondage to. In the first instance, you don’t even have the choice—and by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, all kinds of new choices become real. In the second instance, you’ve been held against your will, and now you’re free to do what you’ve wanted to do all along (and you’re freed to keep from doing what you haven’t wanted to do).

Often we will speak what God whispers to our heart on behalf of the people we care for, and some will say, “*I don’t know what you’re talking about.*” It can become quite a challenge to believe whether we’ve heard what God is saying or not. And, of course, we have to be careful not to become so self-assured that we insist ourselves upon people, rather than always offering words in a spirit of servanthood and humility. Walking the middle course, between confidence in what we have heard and humility toward people, can be difficult.

## CONCLUSION

The first three verses of ISAIAH 61 provide the summary, the epitome of who Jesus is and what His ministry does. Because we are His Body on earth while He is in heaven, these verses also describe the ministry that should be characteristic of each one of us (and by all of us together) as His Church. Anyone coming to our churches should be able to find this kind of ministry without having to search too hard or too far.

The reason that “*the Spirit of the Lord is upon*” us, with all of His gifts and capabilities, is to anoint us, to set us apart to serve the world. When we welcome His Spirit to search our own hearts, we open up endless possibilities for Him to engage us in His ministry to others.

Jesus never intended for any of us to inhabit a land made desolate by our thoughts and actions. As you accept God’s gifts of deliverance and recovery, you’ll become an example to others—who will see your changed life and realize, “*If God can do that for her, or for him...then surely He can do it for me.*” You will find a stability and maturity that gives you the courage to take on the risks and rewards of giving yourself to others. By the Holy Spirit’s leading, you’ll be “*anointed to recover*” the afflicted, the brokenhearted, the captive and the prisoner with the good news that Jesus came to be and do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.