

BEAUTY FOR ASHES

Isaiah 61 is a prophecy of God's plan for the nation of Israel, and the arrival of the Messiah and how His arrival would impact the world.

Isaiah 61:1-3 (nkjv) “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings (good news) to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
² To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn,
³ To console those who mourn in Zion (Israel), to give them **beauty for ashes**, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”

It's important to understand the significance of ashes in the Old Testament.

It was customary for people to sit in ashes or cover themselves with ashes to express their mourning or deep repentance.

Ashes were associated with pain, loss and suffering, which is key to understanding *Isaiah 61:3*.

The promise of "*beauty for ashes*" is God's promise of deliverance and Salvation.

Isaiah 61:1-3 gave hope in the midst of horrible circumstances.

Today, we too can receive encouragement and hope from these same verses when facing difficult circumstances.

LIFE IS NOT ALWAYS "HAPPY."

Life can hurt. It's hard and can be dark. And it leaves its mark, like ashes of grief, in the deepest parts of our souls, where no one but God really see.

Maybe you have experienced the pain of ashes?

- You've lost a loved one
- You've received a hard diagnosis
- You've been deeply wounded
- You've experienced a broken relationship
- You've suffered anxiety, fear and brokenness

We don't always get what we deserve.

*Ecclesiastes 8:14 (ncv) Sometimes something useless happens on earth. **Bad things happen to good people, and good things happen to bad people.***

And we may wonder where is God? Why didn't God intervene?

Or, why didn't God stop that difficult event or illness from happening?

Job

Job 2:8 (niv) Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

Daniel

So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. Daniel 9:3 (niv)

Tamar

Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing. She put her hands on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went. 2 Samuel 13:19

Hebrews 13:5b ...For God will never leave us or forsake (abandon) us,

The truth is, and though we may not always see or feel it, or even understand it, we can **know** beyond a doubt, **that God is with us.**

Jesus referred to *Isaiah 61:1-2* in *Luke 4:18-19*
“The Lord has put His Spirit in Me, because He appointed Me to tell the Good News to the poor. He has sent Me to tell the captives they are free and to tell the

blind that they can see again. God sent Me to free those who have been treated unfairly¹⁹ and to announce the time when the Lord will show His kindness.”

And that's the key to dusting off the ashes of our pain. **To allow Jesus** to heal, release, cleanse and comfort every bit of our grief, pain, sin, and disappointment.

Jesus came to bring forth beauty from our ashes.

Jesus **IS** the answer to rising from the ashes.

Jesus said, *...the world will make you suffer. But be brave! I have defeated the world!" John 16:33 (gnt)*

We overcome because Jesus has overcome, and our lives are hidden in Christ.

Take courage. Jesus is greater than any sin, pain, sickness, suffering and disappointment we face in this life.

We either run **from** Jesus or run **to** Jesus!

RELY ON JESUS

Philippians 4:13 (ncv) I have learned the secret of being happy at any time in everything that happens, I can do all things through Christ, because He gives me strength.

Isaiah 26:3 (ncv) *You, Lord, give true peace to those who depend on You.*

Psalm 34:18 (niv) *The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

Psalm 62:8 (niv) *Trust in Him at all times, O people, pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge. God wants to comfort us in our hardship!*

Corrie Ten Boom writes this while suffering in a Nazi concentration camp, *“No matter how deep our darkness, God is deeper still.”*