

Insight from an Oreo

By: Rev. Kay Mortimer

Don't we enjoy Oreo cookies? There are the "dunkers," who like to dunk the whole cookie in milk and get it soft, then enjoy each luscious bite. And there are the "scrapers," who like to pull apart the crackers and lap up the scrumptious middle, either eating the leftovers cookies or discarding them. We can't forget the "mashers," who like to mash up the Oreo and eat its pulp. And there are the "diehards," who'll bite into the plain Oreo, enjoying the cookie and filling mixture. However you satisfy your taste for Oreos, one thing is established: Oreo cookies have been a favorite for people of all ages, races, nationalities, and socio-economic statuses for decades.

In studying through Isaiah, especially chapters 53-55, I observed something that intrigued me and made me think of an Oreo cookie. The analogy differs, however, in that the "middle" I discovered isn't something we want to open up, but rather we're glad the cookies keep it contained and ineffective.

As a Bible student, I enjoy digging into the depths of meaning enhanced by the word studies and by mining original languages. In such a feat, when studying Isa. 54:17, the Lord broadened my insight by showing me this message with a simple Oreo cookie.

For those in covenant relationship with God through the blood of Jesus Christ under the new covenant, we are now heirs of all the promises that formerly belonged to the nation and children of Israel. (See Gal. 3) Now, in Christ, both Jewish believers and Gentile believers (all believers who aren't Jewish) in Jesus, experience the same blessings and are partakers of the same divine inheritance. I believe Isa. 54 lists in one chapter many of the blessings of this inheritance that we are party to, by virtue of saving faith in Jesus Christ and entering the blood covenant with Him.

Verse 17 lists for us an aspect of the inheritance we have received as believers: *"No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me', says the Lord."* (NKJV)

Although there is rich treasure in studying every word of this passage, on this occasion the Lord honed in for me on what would NOT prosper, by also asking me to consider what WOULD prosper.

I immediately thought of Isa. 55:11, where we are told that the Word of God WILL prosper in what it is sent to do. Then, He encouraged me back to a previous chapter, Isa. 53, and specifically verse 10. Here we are told that the Will of the Lord WILL prosper in the hand of this suffering Servant.

As I pondered these two things guaranteed to prosper versus the one that will NOT prosper, He gave me insight in how these two words in these two chapters sandwiched in Isa. 54:17. Then, I thought of the Oreo.

Using the Oreo as our analogy, let's consider the "filling" first. Isa. 54:17 speaks of the plans, predetermined schemes, tactics, and weapons that the enemy, the Devil, forms, presses, and squeezes against us, similar to the molding of a piece of clay into a shape. Yes, Satan may fashion and press against us with his weapons, but they shall not be successful.

The Hebrew word for "prosper" comes into importance now, since we are considering what will not prosper versus what will. *Strong's* and *Brown-Driver-Briggs'* definitions include push forward, rush, advance, prosper, progress, succeed, be profitable, bring to a successful issue. It signifies a pushing forward, advancing, or moving forward in distance, position, or authority, per the *Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible*. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* defines it as a pressing through, and declares that it will satisfactorily accomplish its intent.

It's critical that we remember the essence of what "prosper" means as we consider these Isa. 53, 54, and 55 verses. The promise to the believer who's in covenant relationship with Him and, therefore is an heir, is that no weapon the enemy presses into shape or forms against you will advance. It shall not successfully accomplish its intent against you. None of it, not one nor the whole. What a blessed promise.

Even more exciting is to consider the "cookies." Like the cookies of the Oreo, these cookies encase and close off the enemy's plan, keeping it contained and inoperable. The first "cookie"

we will look at is Isa. 53:10: *“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him, He has put Him to grief. When You 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.” (NKJV)*

Here again, much treasure awaits the student who digs to uncover the depths of meaning in each word. But, for our purposes, let's focus on the last part of the verse. We are told clearly what WILL prosper in regard to this work of the Suffering Servant that Isa. 53 describes, who we know is the Lord Jesus Christ. It's interesting that the prospering is done in His hand, and we as Christians rejoice because of the nailed Hand of the Lord who died for us. By His hand, His act of sacrifice for our sins on the cross, we are partakers of all these blessings and promises.

So the first cookie we're told about is the “pleasure” of the LORD that will prosper. In the original language, this refers to the desire or what which one takes delight in, according to *Strong's* and *Brown-Driver-Briggs*. This derivation of the root word is first used in the Old Testament in I Sam. 15:22, when Samuel contrasts what God takes delight in with what He doesn't. Here, Samuel speaks boldly to King Saul with a rhetorical question, when he asks, *“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?”* Samuel further testifies that God delights in obedience rather than in sacrifices.

God doesn't take delight in a stubborn and rebellious person who won't obey His Word, but yet will come to church on Sundays and offer praise with his lips. God takes great delight, rather, in the one who obeys Him, who lives in accordance with the mandates of Scripture all through the week. When this person comes to church on Sunday morning and offers praise, it's a sweet savor to God, because He has a lifestyle of integrity and sincerity in his walk with God.

When I think about the “will” of the Lord and what He delights in, I'm immediately reminded of Micah 7:18 where we are definitively told that God delights in MERCY. Here, the root word speaks of that in which God delights in, summed up in one word: MERCY.

We've heard “mercy” expressed as “not getting what we deserve.” It signifies kindness, goodness, favor, and connotes a “bowing” of the head to show kindness to someone. The first use of the word in Scripture is in Gen. 19, referring to the rescue of Lot. Here we can see a beautiful picture of what “mercy” means.

Lot, through deliberate actions of his own, has found himself far away from his beloved and pious uncle Abraham. He chose what appeared to be the “best” land for himself and pitched his tent toward Sodom. Not long after, he moves into Sodom, and takes on their filthy ways to the point of being willing to sacrifice the honor of his daughters as a bribe to appease evil men.

Yet, God sends his messengers to this wicked city specifically to rescue one man and his family, as many of whom will come. In that moment, God bowed His own head to extend mercy to Lot and his family by providing a way of escape for them.

This reminds me of another “messenger,” the Son of God Himself, who bowed His head to allow cruel men to force a crown of thorns upon Him. I remember how, after He carried the heavy weight of the sin of the world and was nailed to a wooden execution stake on a hillside outside Jerusalem, He bowed His head and died, after crying “It is finished.”

“It” here refers to the work of a merciful redemption of mankind that he was commissioned to do, as the perfect sacrifice for sin. The work is complete. Mercy has triumphed over judgment for all who will believe.

And MERCY prospers in the nailed hand of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every time one sinner repents and believes in Jesus, being born into the family of God, MERCY has again prospered! Every time one believer overcomes an addiction, or learns a valuable lesson from God, or grows in his faith, MERCY has again prospered! Every time God’s child walks in obedience to God, MERCY has again prospered! The first cookie that seals off the enemy’s weapons against us is “MERCY,” the very thing God delights in.

The remaining cookie we’re shown is in Isa. 55:11. Verses 10 and 11 testify to us of the efficacy of the Word of God, also attested in the New Testament Scriptures as well. These verses in Isaiah plainly tell us that God’s Word will not return to Him empty or without effect. It will accomplish His purposes and It will prosper!

This cookie, the Word of God, represents TRUTH. Consider what Jesus says in John 17:17: “...*Thy Word is truth.*” Plain and straightforward. Truth is God’s Word, and God’s Word is

truth. David said in Psa. 119:160 that the “*entirety of Your word is truth...*” So, we have no question as to what the Word of God consists of: TRUTH.

The Hebrew word used here refers to what God has said or says, not only including the statements themselves but how they are delivered. It also connotes the legal matter, signifying its authority in the delivery. Heb. 4:12 expounds on this concept by helping us understand that God’s Word is alive, powerful and full of energy and effectiveness, and able to accomplish its tasks with one blow, even more powerfully than a two-edged sword.

God’s Word, absolute TRUTH, will prevail and it will prosper. It will advance in its mission and successfully accomplish its intent – every time, every place, every way. It will not fail – not ever. How fitting that TRUTH comprises the second cookie in the OREO illustration.

I am not surprised, however, because MERCY and TRUTH find many passages of Scripture where they are coupled together. Consider, such passages as Gen. 24:27 when Abraham’s servant praises God for His mercy and truth being with him in the search for Isaac’s bride. Again, when God reveals Himself to Moses in Exod. 34:6-7, mercy (same Hebrew word, but translated by some as “goodness”) and truth are coupled here also. Samuel also understands their interweavings when he addresses the people of Israel with his admonishment at Saul’s coronation in I Sam. 12:22-24.

David has keen insight into how mercy and truth combine together, as he is one of the primary instruments to testify of the couplings in many passages. These include 2 Sam. 2:6, 2 Sam. 15:20, Psa. 25:10, Psa. 40:10-11, and again in Psa. 57:3, 10. The Psalmists, including David and the sons of Korah, understood mercy and truth together, as ten other Psalms they’ve written contain verses with these joined. One, Psa. 89:14, even declares for us how important these are in that they go forth from before Him: MERCY and TRUTH.

Solomon also knew of the union of MERCY and TRUTH. In his prayer for wisdom recorded in 1 Kings 3:6, Solomon mentions these. He also writes of these two together in four different Proverbs.

Two other authors record these both together, Isaiah in Isa. 16:5 and Hosea in Hos. 4:1. And the final testimony of MERCY and TRUTH combined in the Old Testament is found in Mic. 7:20, just after he tells us of how God delights in MERCY.

The greatest attestation to the binding of MERCY and TRUTH, however, is found in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. John 1:14, 17 tells us that He is rich in “grace” (goodness, favor) and TRUTH. This Greek word, “charis,” is often translated “grace.” Yet, it carries the idea of the correlating Hebrew word for “mercy” we’ve discussed. Kindness, goodness, and favor shown to an individual are part and parcel for understanding “charis.”

The OREO cookie seen as an illustration of these select verses in Isa. 53-55 shows us how MERCY and TRUTH, the foundation of God’s throne, seals off and encloses the plans, weapons, schemes, and assignments of the enemy who would seek to devour us. His plans cannot and will not advance, nor will they successfully accomplish their intent.

But, beloved, God’s will (His MERCY) and God’s Word (His TRUTH) WILL prosper. Both of these will successfully accomplish their intended purpose and they will advance in direction, position, and authority. What great news.

Who ever thought that an OREO cookie could show us Jesus Christ and the work of the cross in such a delicious way. Taste, eat, and enjoy the OREO God has provided for us through His MERCY and His TRUTH. You will see that the LORD is good!