

(Isaiah) the Blessing of Looking to the Lord

by David Guzik

God offers his people a promise of salvation and strength, but they must return to him and trust in his guidance and power.

Duration: 48:26

Topics: "Gods Judgment", "Divine Providence"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the blessings and judgment of God. He emphasizes that while God will bless the material aspects of life, such as rain and crops, the greatest blessing is God's loving care and healing of His people. The preacher also highlights the joy and celebration that God's people will experience when they witness His judgment on sin, not because they delight in the punishment, but because they recognize it as part of God's righteous plan. The sermon concludes with the assurance that God hears the cries of His people, promises to answer them, and provides guidance in times of adversity.

Transcript

Let's open up our Bibles to the book of Isaiah chapter 30. Tonight we're going to be covering Isaiah chapters 30 and 31. It's worth it for us to give just a little bit of context.

These two chapters tonight are the word of the Lord to the southern kingdom of Judah. We remind ourselves that at this time in the life of Israel, there were two nations made up of Israelites. The northern kingdom was known as Israel.

It comprised the ten northern tribes. The southern nation was known as Judah, and it encompassed the two southern tribes, basically the tribes of Benjamin and Judah. Now, in this current time, there was the threat of an Assyrian invasion coming down upon Judah.

The Assyrians came from the north, and first they conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, and they finished them off. There was no more northern kingdom of Israel after the Assyrians came in, wiped them out, and carried them off in exile. But the southern kingdom of Judah was stronger, both spiritually and militarily.

But the Assyrians were sweeping through the southern nation of Judah and conquering everything, and they were rapidly approaching Jerusalem. And if Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah, fell, then the entire nation was done for. In this time of stress, of this time of national panic in Judah, Isaiah brings a prophecy

to the leaders of Judah.

The people are included as well, but it has to do mostly with the leaders. Notice here, verse 1, Isaiah chapter 30. Woe to the rebellious children, says the Lord, who take counsel but not of me, and who devise plans but not of my spirit that they may add sin to sin, who walk to go down to Egypt and have not asked my advice to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh and to trust in the shadow of Egypt.

Now, again, this prophecy was given at a time when the Assyrian army threatened the survival of the southern kingdom of Judah. And the times looked very bleak. So, the leaders of the southern nation of Judah did what many people might do in that situation.

They looked to another nation to protect them. They wanted to join with a stronger nation in an alliance to protect them against the Assyrians. And so, what did they do? They looked to Egypt for protection against the Assyrian invasion.

In looking to Egypt, Judah forsook the Lord. Did you notice this, what it says in verse 1? Who take counsel, but not of me, who devise plans, but not of my spirit. Now, in one sense, it was good for Judah to understand that they needed help and that they had to look outside of them help for themselves.

Isn't that usually a good place for a person to be at? You know, I'm in a desperate place. I can't do it on my own. I need help.

Typically, that's a good place. But in the larger sense, it was foolish and evil of Judah to look to others, especially Egypt, for help because they weren't looking to the Lord. Isn't this a powerful passage? I trust that when you read those words, it struck your heart.

You ask the question of yourself. You take counsel, but is it of the Lord? Or are you reading books and getting the advice of the ungodly? Are you just doing the opinion poll of your friends? You take counsel, but is it of the Lord? You devise plans, but are they of God's spirit? I want you to see that it is one sin to reject the Lord and it's another sin to trust in something else. Therefore, what Judah did in this situation was two sins.

That's why he says at the end of verse one that they may add sin to sin. They're doing two things. They're rejecting God's guidance and then they're embracing the guidance of the ungodly.

And what's worse? It's just foolish. Look at it here. Therefore, the strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame and trust in the shadow of Egypt shall be your humiliation.

For his princes were at Zohan and his ambassadors came to Hamas and they were all ashamed of a people who could not benefit them or help or benefit, but a shame and also a reproach. You see, from the perspective of heaven, the strength of Pharaoh was nothing. As the Lord saw it, Egypt was no substance.

It was just a shadow. And here is Judah desperately reaching out to Egypt for help. And not only is it sinful, but it's foolish.

When the Egyptian ambassadors came, they looked at the people of Judah and they said, well, listen, they have nothing to give us. And it was foolish for the leaders of Judah to trust in a nation that looked at them this way. It's going to amount to nothing.

Look at here, verse six, the burden against the beasts of the south. Keep that in mind. I'm going to explain that in a minute.

That's very, very interesting. I love the way Isaiah puts things. The burden against the beasts of the south, through a land of trouble and anguish, from which came the lioness and the lion, the viper and the fiery fleeing serpent.

They will carry their riches on the backs of young donkeys and the treasures on the humps of camels to a people who shall not benefit them. For the Egyptian shall help in vain and to no purpose. Therefore, I have called her Rahab Hem Shabbath.

You know what I love about these verses? I love the way Isaiah puts things. Here's the picture. Judah is reaching out to Egypt for help.

Now, do you think the help of the Egyptians is going to come cheap? Please help us come. Send your armies. Fight on our behalf.

What, are they going to do it for nothing? No. Send your money. Send your riches.

Send your treasures. We get your treasures. We get your money.

We get that. Then we'll fight for you. And so what do the princes of Judah do? They load down donkeys.

They load down camels. And they send them in a caravan, retracing the route that Israel used to come out of Egypt hundreds of years before. And they go back to Egypt with the camels and the donkeys loaded down with treasures to buy the support of the Egyptians.

And you know how Isaiah puts this? He says, I want to sing a burden to those poor donkeys, to those poor camels who have to go across the desert on a fool's errand. They're carrying the riches. They have to brave the lions and the serpents and the vipers and the heat.

And they're the ones who have to do all that. And you know what? It's not going to amount to anything. Not only do I love Isaiah's perspective, but it's almost an insult to the princes of Judah, right? He doesn't feel sorry for them.

Isaiah feels sorry for the donkeys. For the camels, they probably seem to be wiser than these princes of Judah. But that's who he feels sorry for.

And then he says, listen, this isn't going to do any good. It's going to gain you nothing. It's going to be wasted money.

Because if you look at it here at verse seven, for the Egyptians shall help in vain and to no purpose. No wonder Isaiah feels sorry for the donkeys that are going to carry the treasure of Judah down to Egypt. Despite all the riches that the pack animals bring across the desert, Egypt is not going to help Judah at all.

You know why? As it'd be rather not. Do you know why? Or so much so that if you see at the end of verse seven, this is what you can call Egypt. Rahab, Ham, Shabbat.

Well, that's saying something, isn't it? Let me explain to you what that means in the Hebrew. What it simply means is Rahab sits idle or Rahab, the do nothing. Now, Rahab is a word or a name that

essentially means proud.

And it's used a couple of times in the scriptures, Psalm 87, verse four, for example, to refer to Egypt. And so essentially what Isaiah is using here in this prophecy saying you could call Egypt, Egypt, the do nothings because they're not going to do anything to help you. They are going to sit idly by as the Assyrians trouble Judah.

It's all useless. It's useless. You're being threatened by a killer, Assyria.

So what do you do? You go make an appeal to another killer, Egypt, to come and help you. It's not going to work. It's not going to help.

It's all foolishness. Isaiah continues on here in verse eight and he says, Now go write it before them on a tablet and note it on a scroll that it may be for a time to come forever and ever, that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of the Lord, who say to the seers, do not see and to the prophets, do not prophesy to us right things. Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits, get out of the way, turn aside from the path, cause the holy one of Israel to cease from before us.

God tells Judah this before it happens and he wants to document it. He tells Isaiah, you put this in writing. I want them to know it before it even happens.

And you tell it to the rebellious people, to the lying children who say to the seers, do not see. Judah was rejecting God's message and God wanted that documented. Judah wanted to hear from prophets.

Judah wanted to hear from God's message. You might say that the people of Judah, that the leaders, they were good church going folk. But when they came to church, when they came to hear the message of the Lord, they didn't want to hear God's message.

They had itching ears that they wanted to be tingled. They wanted to hear a message that was cultivated for them, not a message from God. They wanted religion, but they didn't want the living God of heaven to be real in their life.

In fact, this is what they say. Do you see it at the end of verse 11? Cause the holy one of Israel to cease from before us. Oh yeah, we want to hear from the prophets, but only smooth things.

We want to hear from the seers, but only the things we want to hear. Matter of fact, God, well, we want to be religious, but not without God. You know, that's what the corrupt heart of man desires most.

Man is instinctively spiritual. We want something spiritual. We want something religious.

But in our fallen nature, we want religion apart from God. The true God, at least. The God of our own making, the God of our imagination.

That's exactly the trap that Judah was falling into. And the problem God confronted in Judah didn't end in the times of Judah. Paul describes the same kind of heart in 2 Timothy chapter 4. Listen to this.

Paul says, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. But according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables. Heap up for themselves teachers.

I've got itching ears. Scratch my ears, preacher. The preacher's not there to scratch you.

He's there to deliver a message. Judgment is going to come from God upon Judah for this. Look at verse 12.

Therefore, thus says the holy one of Israel, because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perversity and rely on them. Therefore, this iniquity shall be to you like a breach ready to fall, a bulge in a high wall whose breaking comes suddenly in an instant, and he shall break it like the breaking of a potter's vessel, which is broken in pieces. He shall not spare, so that shall not be found amongst its fragments a shard to take fire from the heart or to take water from the cistern.

You see, there's serious consequences for rejecting this message of the Lord. Because they despise this word, God promises that just a nation of Judah that's trusting in Egypt instead of him, everything will be broken and collapsed. Judah's going to be like a collapsed wall.

Did you see the photographs or the footage from that terrible earthquake in Turkey? Where entire buildings, huge walls just collapsed in an instant into rubble. That's what God says it's going to be like. See that wall, all beautiful and standing? Whoosh, it's collapsed.

Devastation, rubble. You see that pot that used to serve a useful purpose? Boom, now it's broken. And there's not even enough substantial pieces to take a little piece of pottery and use it to scrape out a little coal from the fire and carry it to someplace else.

That's how it destroyed the potters. God says, this judgment is coming upon you, Judah. I'm telling you it so that you can turn.

No, instead, God is going to bring them love. Notice it here in verse 15. Where thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, in returning and rest, you shall be saved and quietness and confidence shall be your strength.

But you would not. And you said, no, for we will flee on horses. Therefore, you shall flee and we will ride on swift horses.

Therefore, those who pursue you shall be swift. One thousand shall flee at the threat of one. And at the threat of five, you shall flee to your left as a pole on top of a mountain and as a banner on a hill.

What significant verses. See what God did in verse 15. He makes a precious promise to his people.

I believe that this promise God makes in verse 15 is a promise, not just for the people of ancient Judah. I believe this is a promise for us to look at it carefully. Says in returning and rest, you shall be saved in quietness and confidence shall be your strength.

Isn't that beautiful? God offered to Judah the promise of protection from Assyria. He says, hey, you guys are foolish looking to Egypt. I can help you.

I remember me, God, sovereign God of the universe. I can help you in this. And if you will just return to me, if you'll just rest in me, you'll just have quietness and confidence in me.

I'll show you my strength. I'll save you. They didn't need to look to Egypt at all.

They could have trusted in God's promise. Trusting God's promise. Look at it there in verse 15.

It means returning. If there is a conspicuous disobedience in our lives, we must return to the Lord's ways. Outright disobedience is never consistent with real trust in God's promise.

You might say that you trust in God's promise, but if you are in conspicuous disobedience, my friends, you're not trusting God's promise. You're flaunting God's promise. So return, draw close to the Lord.

You've been astray, but now draw close to the Lord and God will show you his salvation. Trusting God's promise doesn't just mean returning. Look at the next part.

It means rest. In returning and rest. When we trust God, we don't have to strive for ourselves, do we? We don't have to run all about trying to protect or guard ourselves.

We have the best protector, the best guard in God. We can rest in him. And when we do, it shows that we're really trusting in God's promise.

So he says, in returning and rest, you shall be saved. What's the next one? Trusting God's promise means quietness. You saw it there in verse 15.

In quietness. You know, you don't need to argue for your side when God's on your side. Be quiet before him and before others.

It shows you really trust him. In quietness, and then look at it, and confidence. So be your strength.

Trusting God's promise means confidence, doesn't it? When you're given to despair, when you're given to fear, because of all the circumstances around you, you're not trusting God's promise. But when you are trusting in God's promise, you're not given to fear. You're not given to despair.

You know he can and you know he will come through. And you have a profound confidence in the God who loves you. Friends, that is triumphant faith.

That's the promise to you. God will show you his salvation. He'll rescue you.

He'll show you his strength. All of these things together mean that a real trust in God's promise. And all of them together means that we shall be saved.

And it means that we will find strength. There is no person walking this earth that's more powerful than a child of God who's boldly and properly trusting the promise of the living God. Isaiah says, you could have had it.

You could have had this. God's offering, this is his promise. Look at the end of verse 15.

But you would not. It was on a silver platter. But you wouldn't.

And you said, no, for we'll flee on horses. Hey, we don't need to trust God. We've got great horses.

And you know what God says? He says, great, you're going to need those horses. Because you're going to have to get away fast. Because Judah rejected God's promise and trusted in horses and other such things.

Instead, they would need to flee if they would have trusted God's promise. Instead, they would have never had reason to flee. And they would have seen the Lord's salvation and strength instead.

Instead, look at how it's going to be. One thousand shall flee at the threat of one. You know, in Leviticus chapter 26, verse 8, God makes a precious promise to Israel.

He says, you know, when you obey me, I'm going to bless you. And one of you is going to put a thousand to flight. You're going to go into battle.

It's going to be a thousand against one. And here this soldier from Israel is going to come up. This one guy goes, okay, let's fight.

And a thousand guys are going to go, no way. We need more troops than this. And they're going to run away.

God says, that's how it's going to be when you obey me. Do you see the exact opposite is happening here? Now, one enemy is putting a thousand Israelites to flight. God says, that's how it is because you've rejected me.

You're trusting in Egypt. You're not trusting in me. Now, it's pretty bad, isn't it? I mean, you look at this and just shake your head.

Oh, Judah, you're so messed up. But you know what? I love this about the book of Isaiah. It's so filled with hope.

I mean, Isaiah just can't get away from the hope. Man, he nails Judah time and time again. But he always brings in God's restoration.

Look at it here, verse 18. Therefore, the Lord will wait that he may be gracious to you. And therefore, he will be exalted that he may have mercy on you.

For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all those who wait for him. Isn't that great? The Lord will wait that he'll be gracious to you.

You know, we often wonder why the Lord waits to do things in our lives. Isaiah tells us why. Why did he wait? So that he could be gracious to you.

No, no, Lord, you're making me wait because you want to torture me. I know that guy. No, Lord, you're making me wait because you're punishing me.

Because I was bad. No, you know why the Lord's waiting? Because he loves you. Because he's being gracious to you.

No, no, that can't be it. I got it all figured out. You see, I know the order in which and the timing in which God needs to do things.

No, you don't. I think God knows it better than you. Certainly knows it better than me.

And Isaiah tells us plainly that the Lord waits so that he may be gracious to you. Whenever the Lord waits or seems to delay, it always has a loving purpose behind it. We can trust that even when we don't understand it.

And so he says, and therefore he will be exalted that he may have mercy on us. When God has mercy on us, it exalts him. I love that.

Mercy does nothing to exalt the person it's given to. Right. Here's the judge standing behind the bench and the guilty criminal comes to him and the guilty criminal comes and he's totally guilty.

And the judge says, I'm going to have mercy on you. And he declares and he has mercy on that criminal. Does that say anything good about the criminal? No, not a thing.

He's guilty. But it does say something wonderful about the judge, doesn't it? God exalts himself by the mercy that he shows us. And it shows God to be loving and generous and full of mercy when he shows us that graciousness.

I like the end part of verse 18, too, where he says, let me read both of these together. And therefore he will be exalted that he may have mercy on you. For the Lord is a God of justice.

Blessed are all those who wait on him. I don't know if any of you picked up on this, but there's an apparent contradiction in this verse. I mean, people are, as I say, well, you know, the Bible is filled with contradictions.

The surefire way to refute that is just ask them, where? And nobody ever knows. They just heard it somewhere that the Bible is filled with contradictions. But I'll show you a contradiction in the Bible right here in verse 18.

That he may have mercy on you for the Lord is a God of justice. Are mercy and justice compatible? Not really. If a guilty criminal stands before the judge, he has a choice.

I'm either going to show justice or I'm going to show mercy. Which one is it? Justice says I put you away for a long time. Mercy says you're on probation.

What's it going to be? You know what? God is so great that he can show mercy and justice at the same time. And you know where he did it at the cross. You see, at the cross, Jesus took the punishment that we deserve.

So God's justice is satisfied. You may have heard me say this before, but you haven't heard me say it enough. Forgiveness of sins because of the work of Jesus is not God just letting us off.

Those sins are paid for. They are satisfied. It is not God letting the guilty sinner into the courtroom and saying, I'll just go your way.

I'm having a good day. It's not God saying, let's let bygones be bygones, because friends, that would violate God's holy justice. No.

My friends. Forgiveness in light of the cross is given because justice is satisfied. Because Jesus took the punishment that we deserve.

So justice is satisfied. But now that justice is satisfied at the same time, God shows mercy by extending the work of Jesus to us as a payment for our sins. You might say, well, no, if justice is satisfied, then I deserve to have my sins paid and cleared away.

No. There's nothing compelling God to extend that to you. Right? Why does he extend it to you? Out of mercy.

And so God is so great. He can reconcile mercy and justice. And so I guess there's not a contradiction in verse 18 after all.

But there's something hard in it. Did you see the last sentence? Blessed are all those who wait for him. Oh, Lord.

Why does it have to be that? You see, because God is so great, there's a built in blessing for those who wait for him. There's a proverb in Swedish that I learned from my wife, and I can't say it in Swedish, but I can say it in English. You never wait too long when you wait for something good.

Well, when you wait for the Lord, you're waiting for something good. And when Isaiah says wait, he doesn't mean the sense of just passing time, but in the sense of patiently waiting for and trusting God's promise. And God sometimes just calls us to wait.

Charles Spurgeon had a wonderful paragraph on this text. He said, certain of God's people are in trouble and distress, and they're eager for an immediate rescue. They cannot wait God's time nor exercise submission to his will.

He will surely deliver them in due season, but they cannot tarry or wait until the hour comes. Like children, they snatch at unripe fruit. To everything, there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heavens.

But their one season is the present. They cannot and they will not wait. They must have their desire instantaneously fulfilled or else they're ready to take wrong means of attaining it.

If in poverty, they're in haste to be rich and they shall not long be innocent. If under reproach, their heart ferments towards revenge, they would sooner rush under the guidance of Satan into some questionable policy than in childlike simplicity, trust in the Lord and do good. It must not be so with you, my brethren.

You must learn a better way. Well, we all must. This is deep work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

Verse 19. God just is going to bless Judah, even though they don't deserve it. It says, for the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem and you shall weep no more.

He should be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry. You know, when God's people wait on him and patiently trust his promise, God pours out his grace at the cry of their hearts. Even if it feels like God is distant, he hears and he promises to answer.

God also promises to bless his people with guidance. Look at verse 20. And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers.

Your ears shall hear a word behind you saying, this is the way, walk in it. And wherever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left. Isn't that a precious promise? You see, when Judah was prosperous and comfortable, they wouldn't listen to God.

But now God gave them the bread of adversity and the water of affliction. Has that been your meal lately? You've been eating the bread of adversity. You've been drinking the water of affliction.

Well, praise God. God's doing something in your life. Now you're listening to the Lord in a way you weren't listening before, were you? Now you're seeing things in the Lord that you weren't seeing before.

Now you can be taught of him in a way you couldn't be taught before, but now it's great. My friends, it's always better to be uncomfortable and in tune with the Lord than to be comfortable and out of step with God. And this is a blessing God gives unto Judah.

He also promises to bless his people with a desire for purity. Look at this verse 22. You will also defile the covering of your graven images of silver and the ornaments of your molded images of gold.

You will throw them away as an unclean thing. You will say to them, get away. You know, the people of Judah kept household idols that they used to honor or worship other gods.

He'd go out over a person's house in Judah. You walk in and there's a little room there. And well, there's a little statue of Baal.

It's all covered there and it's hammered over with silver or gold or something. And the Lord promises that when he does his work among his people, that they're going to take those images and they're going to throw them out. They're going to cast out those unclean, defiling things.

They're going to get rid of them. They're going to say to those things, get away. Isn't that beautiful? This desire for purity that God blesses his people with.

Verse 23, God's even going to bless nature. He says, then he will give the rain for your seed, which you sow with which you sow the ground and the bread of the increase of the earth. It will be fat and plenteous.

And the day your cattle will feed in large pastures. Likewise, the oxen and the young donkeys that work the ground will eat cured fodder, which has been winnowed with the shovel and fan. There will be on every high mountain and on every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter.

When the towers fall. Moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun and the light of the sun will be sevenfold as in the light of seven days in the day that the Lord binds up the bruise of his people and heals the stroke of his wound. God's going to bless the material or he says, listen, I'm going to bless the rain and I'm going to bless the crops and I'm going to make them fat and plenteous.

Better than the material blessing of the Lord, though, is his loving care. He's going to bind up the bruise of his people. He's going to heal the stroke of their wound.

Now, those are some precious promises, aren't they? Verse 27 begins another precious promise, but it's a little bit stranger. Look at this one, verse 27. Behold, the name of the Lord comes from afar, burning with his anger and his burden is heavy.

His lips are full of indignation and his tongue like a devouring fire. His breath is like an overflowing stream, which reaches up to the neck to sift the nations with the sieve of futility, and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err. You say, hmm, that doesn't sound very good.

You see, that's directed towards Israel's enemies, towards Assyria, towards, look at it there in verse 28, to the nations. The word for nations there is goyim, not the Israelites, not the Jews. And so that's God's judgment upon the nations, upon them.

He's going to bring that judgment and look at what the response of Israel is going to be. Verse 29, you shall have a song as in the night when a holy festival is kept and gladness of heart as when one goes with the flute to come to the mountain of the Lord, to the mighty one of Israel. You know what you're going to do when you see this judgment on the nations? You're going to throw a party.

You're going to have all music and dancing and let us go up to the house of the Lord. Now, on the one hand, we say, that doesn't seem right. If God's bringing this judgment, God's people should be sad.

No, you know, my friends, I believe that when we see the fullness of God's judgment, we're going to rejoice. Not because people are being judged, but because God's righteous plan is unfolding. Can I say that's a good thing? If the judgment wasn't good, God wouldn't do it.

I'm not saying it's pleasant. I'm not saying it's nice. One commentator puts it like this.

Says the truth is that God's people are here portrayed rejoicing at his judgment on sin because they must take his point of view on everything. Because this judgment is at the same time their salvation. That's how it was for Israel.

You know, 1 John chapter 4 verse 17 expresses the same idea. It says, love has been perfected among us in this, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. Because as he is, so are we in this world.

Boldness and joy in the day of judgment is a precious gift from God. Verse 30 continues on with the idea of the glory of the judgment of the Lord. The Lord will cause his glorious voice to be heard and show the descent of his arm with the indignation of his anger and with the flame of a devouring fire with scattering tempest and hailstones.

Through the voice of the Lord, Assyria will be beaten down who struck with a rod. And in every place where the staff of punishment passes, which the Lord lays on him, it will be with tambourines and harps. And in battles of brandishing, he will fight with it.

For Tophet was established of old. Yes, for the king is prepared. He has made it deep and large.

Its pyre is fire with much wood. The breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, kindles it. Wow.

What's that mean? You want to know what it means? God's judgment is coming upon Assyria. And God is going to bring Assyria's king straight down to hell. Wow.

That's what it means. Look at verse 33. It says, For Tophet was established of old.

Yes, for the king it is prepared. Tophet was a place in the valley of Hinnom. And the valley of Hinnom lay just outside of Jerusalem's walls.

And there was a high wall and then over the wall was down a ravine. And in that ravine was the valley of Hinnom. And in that place was a location or a little spot or a little place known as Tophet.

So Tophet is always associated with the valley of Hinnom. Now, the valley of Hinnom was basically Jerusalem's garbage dump. That's where they would throw the garbage, the trash, the refuse.

That's where they would throw the rotting corpse of an animal. That's where they throw things. And because it was a garbage dump and they like to burn the stuff there, the refuse, there would be constantly smoldering fires there.

Tophet and Hinnom were unclean places, disgusting places, burning places, places where there were worms and maggots and filth and uncleanness. It was that. And so you know what Israel said? You know what? They associated hell with the valley of Hinnom, with Tophet.

Matter of fact, the Hebrew word for hell is Gehenna, which comes from valley of Hinnom. They consider it a picture of hell. When he says, for Tophet was established of old, he's talking about hell.

He's using a picturesque way of describing it. And he says, here you go. God's going to take you and look what he says.

For the king, it is prepared. He has made it deep and large. King, God prepared a special place for you in hell.

It's pyre. It's fire with much words. You know what a pyre is? It's a stack of wood, like pallets of wood that you put a body on to be burned.

And God says, God's making a big pyre in hell for you, king of Assyria. And you know what? He's going to light it himself. That's a pretty heavy picture, don't you think? Friends, I want you to notice as well.

God says simply that Assyria will be beaten down in verse 31. And it's true. They were beaten down.

You know what happened in this whole crazy invasion? The Assyrians came and they conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. And they came and they swept through the countryside of the southern kingdom of Judah. And they came right up to a mile or so outside of the walls of Jerusalem.

And man, this was an army of almost 200,000 people. This was an army that was destroying everything. Jerusalem was going down.

I'll tell you that right now. And so the people were scared. Oh, go to Egypt.

Oh, what they wouldn't do is trust the Lord. They wouldn't trust God to help them. But you know what? God said, you know what? Even though you're not trusting me, I'm going to glorify my name.

And we'll see this in the next chapter. I love Jerusalem. I'm going to protect it.

I'm going to take care of these Syrians. And so you know what God did? It says in 2 Kings 19, verse 35, God sent the angel of the Lord. And in one night, the angel of the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrian troops.

The commander of the army of the Syrians woke up. He looked up. 185,000 of the soldiers dead.

One night, angel of the Lord did it. And he said, well, I guess it's time to go home. I think God was capable of protecting Jerusalem.

I think God could do it. But Israel wasn't blessed by it. God did it anyway, but Israel wasn't blessed by it.

Chapter 31 continues on with the same thought here. Notice it here. He says, woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses who trust in chariots because there are many and in horsemen because they're very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel nor seek the Lord.

Again, here we have the two sins, right? You're trusting in Egypt. You're not seeking the Lord. Now, Judah felt they had a reason to trust in chariots, right? What's the reason? Look at verse one.

Why should they trust in chariots? Well, because there are many. I'll trust in chariots. We've got a lot of them.

And they trusted in the horsemen. Why? Because they're very strong. Well, it all makes sense to me.

Doesn't it make sense to you that they say now, why should you trust in the Lord? And I think, hmm, they couldn't think of a reason. Oh, I can think of a reason to trust in the chariots. I can think of a reason to trust in the horsemen.

Now, why should I trust in the Lord? I don't really know. My friends, I want you to realize you're going to put your trust in something. You're going to have faith in something.

That's just part of the human condition. You know, you're a big stock market guy. You're a financier.

Then you trust market forces. You're a soldier. Then you trust your gun and bombs.

You're a scientist. You trust the ebb and the flow of nature. Everybody trusts in something.

Jerusalem's leaders trusted in Egypt. Chariots, horsemen, that's what they're trusting in. They felt they had good reason.

Friends, how much better it is, the heart of the psalmist in Psalm 20, verse 7, where he says, some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. By the way, might I say that our trust should only be in the Lord. Not half in the Lord and half in something else.

You know, you take somebody and they got one foot on the rock and one foot in the quicksand. I think they're going to sink just pretty much as quick as a person who got two feet in the quicksand, right? Friends, if you got, I got one foot on the Lord, put all your strength on him, all your strength. Why? Well, if they needed a reason to trust in the Lord, God will give them a reason.

Look at verse 2. Yet he also is wise and will bring disaster and will not call back his words, but will arise against the house of evildoers and against the help of those who work iniquity. Now the Egyptians are men and not God, and their horses are flesh and not spirit. When the hand, when the Lord stretches out his hand, both he who helps will fall and he who is helpful fall down.

They will all perish together. You know, Judah couldn't seem to find a reason to trust God, but the reasons were there. God says, you know, I think I'm smart, too.

I'm wise. I've got some strength. Maybe you should try trusting me.

God says, you're going to see that the Egyptians are just men. They're not going to help you at all. But you know what? The Lord will defend.

Look at it here in verse four. With us, the Lord has spoken to me as a lion roars and as a young lion over his prey. When a multitude of shepherds is summoned against him, he will not be afraid of their voice nor be disturbed by their noise.

For the Lord of the host will come down to fight for Mount Zion and for its hill like birds flying about. So will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem, defending. He will also deliver it passing over.

He will preserve it. God is going to protect Jerusalem. He's going to protect Mount Zion.

How's he going to protect it? Well, first, he said, I'm going to protect it like a lion. How would you like to face a lion in some hand-to-hand combat? God says, that's how I'm going to protect it. But then he says this.

Did you see that in verse five? First, he'll do it like a lion. Then he'll do it like birds flying about. You know what the picture is there? The picture is of a mother bird protecting her young.

Sheltering her young, covering her young. So God will defend Jerusalem with the ferocity of a lion and also with the tender care of a bird. Isn't that a combination of two very powerful pictures? F.B. Meyer said, the Lord of hosts will be as strong as the lion that growls over his prey.

And he will be sweet and soft and gentle as a mother bird. So what does God do? He invites them to repent. Look at verses six through the end of the chapter.

Return to him against whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. For in that day, every man shall throw away his idols of silver and his idols of gold. Sin, which your own hands have made for yourselves.

Then Assyria shall fall by a sword not of man. And the sword not of mankind shall devour him. But he shall flee from the sword.

And his young men shall become forced labor. He shall cross over to a stronghold for fear. And his princes shall be afraid of the banner, says the Lord, whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.

Friends, it was fulfilled completely. Assyria fell, but not by the sword of man. 185 Assyrian soldiers dead in one night.

Not one man raised the sword. Nobody could take credit for that. It was the Lord and it was the Lord alone.

And so what does the Lord say? Look at it there in verse six. Return to him. You know, I think this is something that is very meaningful for our walk before the Lord right now tonight.

Are you a child of God? Have you given your life to Jesus Christ? If you haven't, get that square with him now. Get that square with him tonight. But if you have, you know, you belong to him.

The Lord loves you. The Lord's watching out for you. He's going to work his victory in your life.

He's going to do it. The question is, what are you going to put yourself through to get to that place of victory? Think of two people. Think of Isaiah here, the one who gave these prophecies.

And I'm going to assume, I hope I'm not stepping way out on a limb. I'm going to assume that Isaiah trusted this word of the Lord that was brought through him. Pretty fair assumption, huh? So how do you think Isaiah felt when he saw Jerusalem surrounded by a couple hundred thousand Assyrian troops? You

think Isaiah was panicked, running through the streets? The Assyrians are coming.

The Assyrians are coming. We're going to fall. We're all going to die.

Are you kidding me? Isaiah's saying, hey, the Lord's going to handle it. He said he would. I'm not worried about this.

You worried about it? I'm not worried about it. God said he's going to do it. Then again, you have the leaders of Judah.

Oh, send the messengers down to Egypt. Oh, send the treasurer down there. We've got to pay him a lot of money.

Where's the Egyptian army? They haven't come. Yeah, that's Egypt. Do nothing, right? Where are they? They haven't done anything.

Oh, what's going to happen? Who's going to save us? Fretting, panic, fearful. Oh, everything. Crushing down upon them.

Now, you know what? The Lord is going to take care of the Assyrians either way, right? Isaiah enjoyed it. The leaders of Judah put themselves to great misery because of it. So, what's it for you? Lord's going to win his victory, folks.

He's going to do his work and his life. But you know, God doesn't want you just to muddle through with it. Maybe God is speaking to you tonight saying, he's got something a little bit better for you than that hanging on by the fingernails kind of walk with him.

Let's come a little bit deeper. Let's go further. Let's trust him more.

Let's take the promises. Let's believe in him. Let's stand on those precious promises and say, no, I'm going forth with Jesus Christ.

You know, that hanging on by the fingernails Christian life. I'll tell you, it's better than no Christian life at all. God bless you, you know? You're walking with the Lord.

God bless you, you know? But you've got to admit, it's not much of a testimony to people on the outside, is it? It really isn't. You know, you kind of want to say, come to the Lord and have what I have. If you'll say, huh? But man, when you're in the place Isaiah was at, people could look at Isaiah and say, I want what you've got.

Either you don't have a clue about what's going on or you really trust God. They could say, I know exactly what's going on. God told me and I believe him and I trust him.

That's something. That's a marvelous, marvelous word to say to the world. And God will build that in our lives.

Let's pray and ask him to do just that. Father, we want to thank you tonight for your word. And we ask, Lord, that you would.

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