

# From Judgement to Blessing

by Richard Ganz

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*God desires our hearts, not our external actions or sacrifices, and He will judge those who reject His word and disobey His commands.*

**Duration:** 42:47

**Scripture:** Isaiah 66:1-2, Isaiah 66:4-7, Romans 11:33-35

**Topics:** "Judgements"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the Old Covenant prophetic book of Malachi and its ending with a message of judgment. Despite the terrifying nature of the words, the Old Covenant authors were faithful servants of God, speaking what needed to be said regardless of the response. The sermon then transitions to the book of Isaiah, specifically focusing on chapter 66. The speaker highlights God's sovereignty over heaven and earth and questions the need for physical sacrifices, emphasizing the importance of a humble and contrite spirit. The sermon concludes by discussing the new covenant through God's Son, Jesus, and the inclusion of Gentiles in the church, ultimately giving glory to God for His wisdom and knowledge.

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## Transcript

Please turn with me in your Bibles to Isaiah. We are in the last chapter of our study through this book. May God be blessed as we continue and begin to continue wrapping up this book.

We looked at the first two verses last time. I'd like to look at verses 3 through 14. I'll begin, though, with verse 1. 1, this is what the Lord says.

Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things and so they came into being, declares the Lord? This is the one I esteem. He was humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

But whoever sacrifices a bull is like one who kills a man. And whoever offers a lamb is like one who breaks a dog's neck. Whoever makes a grain offering is like one who presents pig's blood.

And whoever burns memorial incense is like one who worships an idol. They have chosen their own ways and their souls to lighten their abominations. So I also will choose harsh treatment for them and will bring upon them what they dread.

For when I called, no one answered. When I spoke, no one listened. They did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me.

Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at his word. Your brothers who hate you and exclude you because of my name have said, let the Lord be glorified that we may see your joy. Yet they will be put to shame.

Hear that uproar from the city. Hear that noise from the temple. It is the sound of the Lord repaying his enemies all they deserve.

Before she goes into labor, she gives birth. Before the pains come upon her, she delivers a son. Who has ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen such things? Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment? Yet no sooner is Zion in labor than she gives birth to her children.

Do I bring to the moment of birth and not give delivery? Says the Lord. Do I close up the womb when I bring to delivery? Says your God. Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her.

Rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her. For you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts. You will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance.

For this is what the Lord says. I will extend peace to her like a river and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream. You will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees as a mother comforts her child.

So will I comfort you. And you will be comforted over Jerusalem. When you see this, your heart will rejoice and you will flourish like grass.

The hand of the Lord will be made known to his servants, but his fury will be shown to his foes. That is where we're stopping for this evening. God, may you be pleased to bless our study of your word.

Let us not take your word for granted. Let us not sit back and fear not trembling that we would tremble before you. And yet we would recline and repose in the shelter of your wings where you are a loving, gracious father.

We thank you for that, Lord, as we listen to and learn of your grace and your judgments. In Jesus' name, amen. As the book of Isaiah closes, it brings us to the heart of the gospel.

It urges us to take our eyes off of ourselves and see God for who he is and to see God's plan for what it is, urging us to trust not in ourselves, but to trust in the saving work of Jesus Christ instead, warning us that God is holy and sovereign and does not view our sins lightly, that God's judgment is coming quickly, judgment from which we cannot escape unless we turn and repent, unless we turn from our sins and repent and change the way we live in response to God's work in our hearts. Indeed, you see, the book of Isaiah is ending with terrifying words of judgment. It's the strangest thing.

I mean, normally speaking, no one wants to write a book. No one wants to communicate a sermon, a message, and leave with a sound of judgment. And here in what is perhaps the greatest Old Covenant prophetic book, the words are terrifying in the degree of judgment to which they call upon the wicked, and yet this is how it ends.

And yet the Old Covenant, Tanakh, very Tanakh, ends that way as well. Malachi chapter four, ending with 400 years of silence. Following it ends with, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.

The Old Covenant authors were not thinking, what's the best way to sell books here? Let's keep it light and lively. They were servants of the Most High God. They said what had to be said regardless of what the response of the readers might be to it.

Listen, just listen, for example, to the Lord's verdict concerning Israel after 66 chapters of dealing with Israel. They have chosen their own ways and their souls delight in their abominations. So I also will choose harsh treatment for them and I will bring upon them what they dread.

For when I called, no one answered. When I spoke, no one listened. They did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me.

That's in verses three and four, the beginnings of where we start tonight. It's obvious what God hates. It should be obvious to anyone who's interested in what God desires and what God doesn't.

And it's so interesting though because knowing what God hates, many of these things we often look at and within our context and our social circle of believers, it's often, there are central things and there are peripheral things. So much of this is peripheral. It doesn't really matter.

What's the big deal? Well, obviously if we wanna take the entire word of God seriously, these things matter to God. And God's word spells out clearly what he loves and what he hates. God hates idolatry and he hates religious hypocrisy.

He despises it when people say that they love God but only go through the motions of holiness and get caught up and live in the realm of superficialities but are far from God when it comes to really worshiping God and pleasing God the way he calls us to worship him and please him. They want to do it their way. They accept what I would call the existential hymn of our culture, at least in the latter part of the 20th century, the song made famous by Frank Sinatra, I did it not in a shy way.

I did it my way. And that's often the way that the church wants to live as well. Rebelling against all that God calls us to be as worshipers of him, the living and holy God.

It's so easy to show little or no concern for obedience. It's easy. We have already the ways to do this.

That's legalism. It's not legalism. It's obedience.

How do we make that mistake? We make it at the peril of our own souls. And I think we have to be very sensitive and aware of that. They speak words that sound godly.

This is Israel now, but their glory is not in God, but in superficialities that can never ever please God. And this is clearly seen in verse three where it's made obvious that while the people are offering sacrifices and burning incense to God, they're doing these things. None of this is pleasing to God.

Indeed, their offerings and their sacrifices and their incense are completely abhorrent to him because those things he's saying he sees are only an outward show. God says in Isaiah 66 verse three of these people, they've chosen their own ways. Their souls delight in their abominations.

Jesus' concern as well was never to allow or to admit or to accept or to be pleased with any kind of religious superficiality in any kind or any way of an outward flaunting of good religious deeds. Jesus was not primarily concerned whether or not, for example, and this was the discussion last time, whether or not his disciples loved the temple building. He told them that building that you love, wow, look at the building, look at it, it's glorious.

Yeah, that not one stone will be left upon another. Whether or not they washed their hands at a point in time, this was critical to the Pharisees, whether or not they picked grain so that they could eat, not for commerce, but so that they could eat on the Shabbat. Jesus was concerned with how they viewed God.

Whether or not they loved God and obeyed God, whether or not their hearts were fixed on God and whether or not their deeds and actions flowed out of that love and obedience to God. Now, this is not a new concern of God's. For instance, in 1 Kings 8.12, I read this passage last time at the building of the temple.

Solomon says, I indeed have made a magnificent building, magnificent temple for you. This is not a bad thing for him to say. God ordained for him to do this.

A place for you to dwell forever. And just, you see, as this magnificent work is being completed before anything had happened in this new temple, God meets once again with Solomon and he has this to say to him in 1 Kings 9.6-9. But if you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commandments and decrees that I have given to you, and you go off to serve other gods, which is what Israel was doing all the time, and worship them, then I will cut off Israel, not I will cut you off or cut your sons off or cut this family off, I will cut Israel off from the land I've given them and I will reject this temple. I will reject the people and I will reject the place that I am dwelling in that I have consecrated for my name.

And remember, his name is his presence, it's his character, it's his glory, it's his being, it's his identity. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all the peoples, he's saying. And although this temple is now imposing, all who pass by, he says, will be appalled and will scoff and say, why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple? And the people will answer, because they have forsaken the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of Egypt and have embraced other gods, worshiping and serving them, that is why the Lord brought all this disaster upon them.

God is not looking for people to build something for him, no matter how grand it might be, no matter how glorious it may be, as he puts it in Isaiah 66, one and two, this is what the Lord says, heaven is my throne, the earth is my footstool. Could you ever build me a temple as good as that? In other words, the heavens and the earth. Could you build a dwelling place for me? Could you build me a place to rest? My hands have made both the heavens and the earth and they are mine, I the Lord have spoken.

In other words, you can't answer that. That's the final word. Now, if God doesn't want a temple, which he says he doesn't, if God does not want sacrifices which are connected with the temple to begin with anyway, what then does God want? I mean, I'm sure they ask this all the time, what do you want then from us? Because they kept thinking, we gotta give you something.

If you're gonna accept us, we gotta give you, we gotta make something for you. What can we do to receive your blessing? And Isaiah concludes that second verse by telling us what God desires of us. He tells us, this is the one to whom I will look.

And the word look means to penetrate deeply, intently into the person's being. What is it that God desires? What will he look upon with favor? Here's what God says. I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts who tremble at my word.

I don't know if there's much trembling today. We read in James that the demons believe that God is one and tremble. I read the Puritans and I read about trembling, people really being convicted of sin.

I hear God speaking. This is what he says to us. See, God is not looking for our buildings.

He's not looking for our sacrifices. He's not looking for clean hands. He does not need them.

His hands have made the heavens and the earth. God wants us. God wants our hearts.

God does not want temple buildings and sacrifices. He wants his people serving him with their whole heart. As Psalm 51, 17 says, the sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite heart, a broken spirit and a contrite heart.

Oh God, you will not despise. In other words, the psalmist understands. I can give you anything.

I've got more money. I've got gold and silver and everything, but I know what you want. You want me broken.

You want my heart broken over sin, over lawlessness. You want me to turn back. And when I do, and that's the great psalm that deals with this turning back, you will not cast me out.

He understands the power and the force and the judgment of God, but he also understands the grace and the mercy of God. And this tells me that the Lord calls us to brokenness. He calls us to contrition.

He calls us to humility. He calls us to the right kind of fear. He says, tremble at my word.

And that root meaning for tremble is to shake. Isaiah's call to all of Israel and all of us is to hear God's message, hear the word of God and to tremble at God's word. You know what that says to me? It says to me that the preaching of God's word should be at such a place where it can provoke such a trembling.

It can't be this kind of nonsense like, okay, guys, you know, what are we gonna talk about today? Let's see, oh, well, I don't need my Bible for this. What are we gonna discuss now, folks? Anyone got an idea? Seriously, you think that's just caricaturing it? No, well, maybe it is a bit. But that's where we're moving and that's disgusting to God.

He wants prophetic preaching that can claim the hearts and change the hearts of his people and those who are low on me, not my people. God reiterates this three verses down. He says, hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at his word.

God's people are to be those who really hear and really obey God's word and who tremble in reverence and awe and fear at such a word. Who, as the rest of verse six says, continue hearing and obeying and trembling at God's word in the face of and in spite of the religious hypocrisy and idolatry, those who would mock and scorn them and exclude them and toss them aside because of their steadfastness to God and to God's word flowing out of hearts that are filled with love for God and trust in God. These are the ones God tells to hear him.

Those who tremble at his word, who listen to it and tremble and really, and they tremble because this is, they know they're hearing God's word. They're coming into worship. God's people, we should be coming in.

God, make my heart tremble. Speak to my heart, bring about contrition for sin in my heart. Change my life, make me to be clean.

Forget my hands, but make my heart to be clean before you. And not to rest on, wow, I'm glad he's made my heart clean through the penal substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ because that means I'm okay no matter what I do. No, it never can mean that.

It means God's mercy is great. But what does he want from us? He wants everything from us. He wants our life.

He says he will put to shame those who mock and scorn such wholehearted devotion and service. Is there any reason to tremble at God and his word? After all, isn't God just a God of love? Most Christians today seem to be vigorously distancing themselves from any connection with a God who might ever be angry or mete out judgment. But in Isaiah 66, with verses such as, I will choose their punishments and bring on them what they dread, verse four, or the Lord will come in fire and his chariots like the whirlwind to render his anger with fury, for the Lord will execute judgment by fire.

That's verses 15 and 16. It shows us that we can only distance ourselves from the reality of anger and judgment, the anger and judgment of God, if we allow ourselves to embrace a theology that sees God as a God of wrath in the Old Testament and God as a God of love and mercy in the New Testament. You follow what I'm saying? In other words, two gods.

That's the only way we can do it. And you hear it all the time. I can't, I mean, that's the Old Testament.

And you hear Christian pastors basically shaking their head and go, yeah, that's really basically the way it works out for us. That kind of accommodation, that kind of declaration regarding the character of God is blasphemous. God does not change.

The switch of a covenant, even through the cross, does not change the character of God. God is a God of love in both the Old and New Testaments and God is a God of wrath in both covenants as well. I've heard it said that Jesus spoke twice as much about wrath as he did about love.

And I can't say that I've checked out those figures. I haven't done that. It can be done easily enough, I guess.

I haven't done it, but I've basically accepted them until I check it out differently. But certainly, Jesus spoke frequently regarding the judgment of the wicked. It was there in Jesus' discourse with his people.

In Mark 9, 47, Jesus says it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. When my Muslim friend was talking with me about hell and he was arguing as well with a couple of Jehovah's Witnesses, and they told him, you don't have to be worried about hell. Hell, there's no such thing as hell.

It doesn't exist. It's never spoken of. Fire and hell is never spoken of.

He came back to me and he said, they said there is no fire there. There's no fire in this New Testament of yours. It doesn't exist.

And I read him that passage where the worm never dies and the fire is never quenched. And he told me, I went back to them. I went to them and I told them that I spoke with you, and this is what you said.

And it was fascinating to me because he told me that they said, well, yeah, that's true. But we'll come back to you and we'll have something to say about that at another time. He says, you know something? I don't need you to come back to me at another time because you lied to me.

You knew it was there and you lied to me. In John 3.36, we read, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life for God's wrath remains on him. Paul, I'm just going through the main characters to get this.

In Romans 2.8 says, for those who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. Peter in 1 Peter 3.12 says, the Lord is against those who do evil. He's against them.

And in 1 Peter 4.17, it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God. And if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? God does not change. We need to understand that.

The messages of the old covenant are the same as the messages of the new. What is most unique in the new covenant is not the appearance of love, but the flowering of God's love in the cross and in the centrality of the cross as the most clear representation of God's love where he gave his only begotten son. That's what's unique, the flowering of love and the blossoming and the fullness of Jesus giving of his life for us.

In Hebrews 2.3 though, we read, how shall we escape? I could change that for a minute and say, how shall we escape if we neglect the cross? Because what it says is, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great, if we neglect such a great salvation as that? Speaking of the cross. We can't, the answer is we can't. That's the point of the question.

We can't escape. The God who says here in Isaiah 66.6 that the sound that we hear is the sound of the Lord repaying all of his enemies. That is the same God who in Isaiah 54.5, just 12 chapters earlier and many other times in that same book says things like this.

For your maker, in other words, your God is your husband. The Lord Almighty is his name. The Holy One of Israel is your what? He is your redeemer.

Many things could be said, but he's the redeemer. It's pointing to Christ even there. He is redeeming us from our sins.

He is called the God of all the earth. And there God is talking about his relationship with his people. He's describing it as tender, compassionate, protecting, a oneness because he is calling himself the bridegroom of his people.

And yet here in Isaiah 66.6, God is judging the wicked. As verse six puts it, repaying his enemies for all they deserve. This is who God is.

Who are the enemies of God that are crying out and hearing the voice that's being described there and that God with a loud voice is repaying in verse six. The text says that the noise of God's judgment is coming from the temple. The enemies are those who are in the temple.

What does that mean? It means that the enemies are the nation of Israel. That is basically what's being said there. And you know what this is? And especially as a Jew, this is unthinkable.

It's terrible. The nation of Israel was God's chosen people and yet because of their idolatry, because of their religious hypocrisy, God is calling them his enemies and is bringing judgment upon them. Can you understand why there'd be silence at the end of Malachi? And at the end of books like this where Isaiah can't go on, what else do you say if you speak of a curse that is hitting the very constituent nature of his covenant with his people? Can there be anything but catastrophe when God's people are being so universally judged by God as is being described here? Wait, because immediately in terms of that question, the solution to such a seeming unanswerable problem arises.

In verse seven, a son is born, it says, without any labor. Now, we can spend, just looking at that at first, you know, it's like you get a headache thinking what? What in the world? And then you just go back, you look at the references to the birthing, to the beginning, to the son, to the people, to the covenants, to God's work through history and you see it has to be a reference to what? The church, to the ingrafting as we saw this morning of a wild olive tree into a root of the olive tree of old covenant Israel in the new covenant yet to come. This is why it's amazing to me the connectivity between the revelation and what we're dealing with here in Isaiah.

God, as in Matthew 3.12, is winnowing, clearing his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn but burning the chaff with an unquenchable fire. Friends, this judgment upon Israel is not in vain. You look at it and you say, how can this be? How can a nation who was loved tenderly with their names written on his hand, how can they respond to such love this way? Because even as such judgment brings about ultimately what? What does it bring about? It brings about the end of the entire old covenant.

700 years later, that's what it comes to. You're gonna see something interesting in a minute but I'll leave that for now. It brings about the end of the old covenant through God's son and through God's son, a new covenant is going to gloriously take the place of the old and in this new covenant, the Gentiles will become the members of an Israel of God.

This is the amazing plan of God. Verse eight says, who has ever heard such a thing? I mean, it is really a remarkable thing to think and speak about this. Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once? The answer is with God, absolutely, yes, it can.

And think about it, think about how the Gentiles were added in, suddenly there's an explosion of the spirit of God upon Gentiles and boom, they're in the church, the Jews can't believe it but they are in the central part of the church. Even here, you see, judgment is not the final word because mercy triumphs over judgment as the promise to Abraham is fulfilled that what? He will become, remember Genesis 16, four, the father of many nations and in that manner, all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, Genesis 12, three, through the promised what? The seed of Abraham brings that blessing to the entire world and yet, such a fulfillment of judgment that ended the old covenant did not come about for how long? 700 years. You read this and you think Israel is about to get blown away instantaneously.

They had 700 years to repent. There was a great deal, there was seven centuries of time for disobedient Israel to yet repent and be part of the Israel of God and indeed, there was always a remnant from Israel that was that part. Despite though, this mercy from God, despite the clear warnings of what he was going to do, Israel refused to repent and instead rejected God and rejected their savior, God's son, Jesus Christ but this is not where it ends.

An even greater mercy is in store for Israel which will come about when the cast off people, Israel, shall find that as Romans 11, 15 says, their inclusion back into the church, the Israel of God is like life from the dead. Romans 11, 15. We can say then that through the death of his son, all of the birth pains were born by him.

The entirety of the struggle was his and the fruit of such a loving sacrifice is abundant. It is for those who are recipients, listen to this, as if there had been no labor at all. They come in easily and as Isaiah says, there has been no work on their part.

It has all been what? It's a perfect display of grace. The entire Gentile world comes in through the work of God alone. The door is open and they come rushing in.

No one should ever presume with God. The old covenant Jews presumed that they had a hold on God when really he held them. When they refused to worship him in spirit and in truth, when they chose disobedience, when they placed their hopes in themselves and in temples and in sacrifices and in idols after repeated warning after warning came to them, it was time for God to bring judgment.

Yes, it took 700 years for this announcement. Judgment that was so fierce that the effects from a distance as an uproar through all of this, come through all, and even before all of this, God had a plan and verse nine says that God will certainly accomplish all that he has planned and he does because such chastening on Israel brought about an outpouring of God's spirit upon the Goyim, the nations, and they become the heirs of the new covenant. And as the heirs of the new covenant, it becomes incumbent upon them, and Paul writes about this, to be gracious to Israel from whom they took over the promise.

And not only were they to not hate Israel, which is quite a bit of a joke actually when you look at it historically, but strive in the love of Christ to bring Israel to jealousy, so that they, as the nations, as the Gentiles who've been brought in will, as it says in verses 10 through 14, listen to this of Isaiah 66, that they together with Israel will rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her. Rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her, for you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts. You will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance.

For this is what the Lord says, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of nations like a flooding stream. You will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you.

And you will be comforted over Jerusalem. When you see this, your heart will rejoice and you will flourish like grass. The hand of the Lord will be made known to his servants.

The plan of God is one that brings tremendous rejoicing amongst God's people, his true people, amongst those who hear God's word and tremble at his word. It brings such rejoicing even right here, even there in the heart of the old covenant. And right after a word of destruction has been promised for the old covenant people of God, because God is not destroying the Israel of God, all those who belong to him and will yet

preserve a remnant, preserve a people for himself.

There is mercy to those who are going to be delivered without pain. There is such a different deliverance for the new covenant people. And it's so different than what there was for the Jews.

These newly grafted people need not be brought out of physical bondage. They do not have to cross a sea with chariots bearing down upon them. They do not have to live for 40 years in the wilderness eating manna, which means what in the world is this? What is this? 40 years of what is this? I call the Gentiles in this, oh, easy people, easy people.

Such were the Gentiles, easy in the sense of the way it was opened to them, long after the beginning, but nonetheless, and it should have been open from the beginning, but Israel kept it closed. But once it was opened at Pentecost day and on, it was easy in a humanly speaking sense. But the Jews were not eternally saved through these things.

Their deliverance, the deliverance that they received, their deliverance pointed always to an even greater deliverance, one bought and paid for through the work and through the pain of Jesus Christ, the Savior. There was work, there was pain, and that was the work of Christ through whom all people are saved without work or labor on their part, both Jew and Gentile from that day on, all of those who repent and through faith in Christ for their salvation come to him so that in the fullness of the Israel of God, as the Jew and the Gentile meet over the hope of a new and heavenly Jerusalem, which is mentioned by the way, both in the old covenant and the new covenant, mentioned in Isaiah chapter 65, Revelation chapter 21, 1 Peter chapter three, I think it is, I can't remember exactly. And a temple made without hands, Mark 14, 58, through it all God is being glorified.

The city is seeing joy once again in a new covenant community of Jew and Gentile and in the midst of this, the old covenant people should be increasing in their jealousy. The church should be a people that makes the Jewish community jealous for what we have, not who would ever want to be part of that. And soon they will for the last time and once again as a people enter back into covenant with God.

Let us understand the glory of nations. That's what it's speaking about in verse 12. The glory of nations will flood in.

Why, how? Because the nations will flood in. That's the glory of the church, the nations flooding into Christ. It will be the glory.

What is the glory? It will be the glory of a people coming to Christ as those who are alive from the dead and obtaining peace with God through Jesus Christ. These nations and many people will be grafted in and will see the church as their own and they will see it with joy. But there is a root to the church and the apostle is quick to say in Romans 11, 17 through 26 which I want to read, if some of the branches have been broken off and you though a wild olive shoot have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root do not boast over those branches.

If you do, consider this, you do not support the root but the root supports you. You will say then branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in, granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief and you stand by faith.

Do not be arrogant, be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and the sternness of God, sternness to those who fell but kindness to you

provided that you continue in his kindness.

Otherwise, you will also be cut off and if they do not persist in unbelief they will be grafted in for God is able to graft them in once again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature and contrary to nature you were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, this isn't contrary to nature. It's contrary to nature for the nations to come into the olive tree.

How much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree? I do not want you to be agnostic, ignorant without the knowledge of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited. Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in and so all Israel will be saved. Well, there we have it.

A word of judgment, a sentence of doom, a God of wrath turned, so to speak, so that in an instant by his own decree he reveals himself as the God of matchless grace and he can do this. He can do this because he's not one or the other. His wrath will never diminish his grace and his grace will never eliminate his justice.

Why? Because he is God. He is fully, totally, absolutely God and the bottom line here in Isaiah 66 is the glorious showering of grace to those who are far off and to those who are brought near and those who were near but now cast out only to one day be brought back in to be once again near. Friends, pay heed to God's warning.

Turn to him in repentance and faith. Do not take God, do not take his word lightly. What he says he means but there's still time for repentance.

You never know how much time. This may be the end of time for you or for all of us because God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness and truth. Exodus 34.6. What starts out here in terrible wrath and judgment on the disobedient ends in nations, the world being saved, peoples being grafted in and even the root being restored.

The passage in Romans 11 ends fittingly in verses 33 through 35 with words with which I would like to end tonight. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out.

Who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

God, may the glory from our lips and our lives be for you and not for ourselves. May it be your glory forever and ever in Jesus' name. Amen.

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/22/SID22545.mp3>

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