

Isaiah 30

Introduction: It is quite a commentary on our fallen natures that God commands us to ‘stay free’ (**Gal 5:1, 13**). Sin is servitude, bondage, a kind of slavery (**Jn 8:34-36**). But, much of what we call ‘small sins’ which appeal to our flesh do threaten our liberty in Christ—sins such as gossip, over-eating, blame, self-pity, pride, anger, sexual lust, selfishness, telling ‘white lies’, etc. God is commanding His people to put sin to death by the power of the cross and the enablement of the Spirit (**Rom 8:12-13**).

And, our responsiveness to that command describes a life of trust and obedience. The record of trust and obedience (and its opposite, unbelief and disobedience) is played out in the 4000 years of redemptive history preserved for us in the OT.

After 400 years in cruel bondage, the Lord delivered the Israelites from their Egyptian slave-masters—and the Lord did so in order to make them His own, a people for His own Name: “I will be your God and you will be My people.” That formula seems simple enough, but the temptation emerged almost immediately to go *back to Egypt* (in the book of Numbers you’ll see how often it is proposed).

Egypt is a type of the world, offering human ingenuity, human resources, human security, human control, pride and passion. In **Exodus 20**, the Ten Commandments are given in the context that God has delivered the Israelites from slavery, bringing true freedom—you belong to Me now, therefore “you shall have no other gods before Me.” “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me” (**Ex 20:2-3**).

This can be easy to miss: namely the entire idea that to be a saved person is to be God’s own possession (**Titus 2:14**). For, this present world is telling us in a million ways that you belong solely to yourself. But, that is a lie that damns those who believe it (no matter how sweet they are, or how many charities they support).

How God delivers His people from their sin is the great revealer of who He is. If you know God, then you know Him through His giving of the Lord Jesus Christ who became your suffering substitute by His obedience unto death on the cross. And, you know Him by the miracle of Christ’s resurrection through which He graciously granted you the new birth (by which regeneration the saving work of Christ was applied to you) (**Titus 3:4-7**).

And, now as God’s child, He commands you to live a life of trust in Him (the very heartbeat of your walk with God). This radical trust is a daily proposition, we don’t live upon last week’s faith. New circumstances call for fresh exercises of trust (EX. Bombeck and the onion). The child of God is to prepare for tomorrow’s

unknowns by practicing the promises of God today.

That spiritual discipline begins with the redemptive formula, “I will be your God and you will be My people.” For in that promise is massive support—God is literally saying, I will use my infinite attributes for your eternal good. “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life” (**Jude 20**).

But, the ways in which He deals with us will often puzzle and perplex us, for His ways are not our ways (**Is 55:8-9**), and His timing is often not our timing. That is why walking by sight and sense will trip us up. And, our message from Isaiah chapter 30 deals with this very issue, of faith versus sight; of self-will versus surrender. How we need to supplement and be building our trust in tranquil times, in preparation for trials that are sure to come; trials that can stretch us to the limit.

We can be so bound up in our own little world, we imagine things are in orbit around our own issues. Brethren, only by practicing the promises of God can you be taken off of self, off of a self-occupied life. We can be so flummoxed fighting our circumstances that we forget how God’s world actually works. This is God’s universe, and it operates in the way He intends—and here it is, He made the cosmos and everything in it out of nothing, for His glory.

Therefore, trust and obedience honors God and His Word, and therefore trust and obedience produce the byproducts of peace, joy, comfort, hope, stability, and refreshment. Everyone wants peace, joy and security, but as we shall see in **Isaiah 30**, it is possible to pursue those things by a rebellious path of unbelief and disobedience.

God has filled the Scriptures with both positive and negative examples in terms of trust and obedience. They are incredibly instructive for us (**1 Cor 10:6-12ff.**). Our text this morning is a kind of appointment with God, He is calling each of us to refocus our confidence in His Word, unto obedience. Thus, the intent today is to supplement your faith so that you can respond to life’s ups and downs with the trust and obedience that pleases God.

I. Who is not a help to us? Egypt, don’t go back (the ‘world’) 30:1-7

A. Human protection; obvious but empty (vv. 1-5). All the way back in Exodus and Deuteronomy the Israelites were commanded not to enter alliances with Egypt (their former slave masters). Now their infidelity has become evident in their placing trust in an idolatrous people while withholding praise from God.

Carnal rebellious plans result in shame and humiliation. One act of unfaithfulness often leads to another. They originally brought Assyria into their land to protect them from the Samarian-Syrian alliance. Now they are hiring and allying

themselves with Egypt to protect them from Assyria. EX. You might as well swap a rattlesnake for a cobra when considering a pet.

B. Human favor; costly but worthless (vv. 6-7). The land of Egypt, certainly a power broker in Isaiah's day was a haunt of demons—should Israel expect them to risk life and limb and show integrity in regard to the alliance? The Hebrews had made a dangerous, arduous journey as well as very large financial sacrifices to bribe the Egyptians.

Isaiah mocks the impotence of this sinful plan. God ridicules the cost through His prophet, Isaiah. It is madness, but they are not discouraged about their plan. APPL. Our sinful plans are dangerous, they become a yoke that binds us. But, Christ's yoke (of trust and obedience) is easy.

The Jews will be vexed when their plan for Egypt's protection fails. In God's world, He does not have to think up judgments for sin. APPL. Many of the consequences that follow willful sinning occur because sin frequently (most of the time) contains its own punishments. God is moral Governor of the universe, and all sin is lawlessness (1 Jn 3:4). So, no surprise concerning its consequences.

II. What should we listen to? Smooth lies or the sharp Word of God? 30:8-17

A. God's truth is always relevant (v. 8). A record is drawn up on how God has justly punished them. Their crimes are to be publicly known—fastened upon the memory, for their betrayal and treachery is no ordinary affair. There's is a record of no repentance; of God's will versus self-will. Scripture brings this warning into our time, and not just to their time (2 Tim 3:16—for reproof and correction; Heb 2-3ff.).

B. Pleasant illusions leave us crushed and panicked (vv. 9-17). Judah is a rebellious nation that won't be restrained by any doctrine. Vv. 9-11 -- They refuse to hear Yahweh and they have a contempt for His Word. They have become unteachable. The apostate priests and the rebellious people have entered an unspoken 'contract'—if you pronounce us 'well' we will support your ministry. My friends, sin is filled with self-deception—and it hates to have that deception factor exposed (that you have been fooling yourself, you have been living as the devil's patsy). No wonder they resisted God's threatenings!

Remember, they boasted that they were related to Abraham, that they worshipped God. They behaved as if Isaiah was their problem; his judgmental-ness; his sharp reproofs. They wanted smooth things spoken to them. They wanted the ratification of their plans with Egypt—a kind of tacit validation from the religious authorities. They wanted forbearance toward their vices.

APPL. Repentance means making your heart vulnerable to the truths most offensive to your self-will/self-trust, and rebellion. EX. The spear point of God's

Word pokes and pierces the conscience, but the smooth things of deception melt in your mouth like a chocolate truffle.

Vv. 12-14 – We must keep our senses and passions chained and bound by God’s authority, for it they are allowed to ‘make the call’ we leave humility behind and we become obstinate toward God. Pride goes before a fall—and here (in **vv. 13-14**), their rebellious plan borne of pride is compared to a tall bulging wall that is about to collapse.

High walls are supposed to provide security, protection, privacy, safety, assurance. But this high wall of their trusted plans will be so ruthlessly shattered like the busting of a ceramic pot, that no fragment will be left large enough to make the round part of a spoon or ladle. APPL. God disintegrates our self-willed plans sometimes. His Word cuts right across ordinary human thinking. Tim LaHaye once said, the majority of God’s Word is 180 degrees opposite of how we naturally think.

V. 15– Repentance and faith fill us with salvation. Trust, rest in the Lord and repentance is where real strength is found. We must repent of that imperious self-will that whispers in our hearts, “I will do it my way.” “I know best.” Repentance is not like a series of New Year’s resolutions, nor is repentance a vow to do better, nor is it tipping over big idols for smaller ones. True repentance is repentance toward God—a bi-directional turn in which a person grieves over his sin against God so as to not return to it—true repentance is ‘toward God’ in that there is a hunger and thirst for righteousness and holiness (and not simply toward the desire to be better person).

The threats in this passage (**vv. 1-14**) should make a deep impression upon us so that we intensify our reverence for the Word of God. For, the punishments here are severe for those who despise His Word (‘destroyed’ ‘ruined’).

Isaiah reproaches them for their ingratitude—they rejected the great protection they would have had in God. They have rejected the Holy One of Israel and solicited protection from the Egyptians. This shutting out of God is a great, intolerable wickedness. For, the Lord requires that we fully rely upon Him—they rejected His command. God states that when we embrace His promises, our souls will be delivered from perplexity and will have a quiet disposition.

Vv. 16-17 – God is really willing to show mercy to His foolish, obstinate people. But, instead of waiting calmly on the Lord, the Jews boasted that they will flee on horses. But, this trust in outward assistance will result in no advantage. Just like our own carnal plans, at first there may appear to be some prospering, but then disgrace, distress, and no real advantage. When God lifts a finger against us, and His chastisement hits us, we are undone.

The means by which they sought escape is become object lesson of folly. Fleeing on horses becomes a byword, a proverb of their terror and defeat. **V. 17** -- The signal flagman on a hill in ancient times was meant to rally troops to a portion of

the battle front, but here the troops are slain, silent in defeat. They had not heeded the warnings God has issued through His prophets. There will be no foreseeable end to their calamities.

But, that is not the end of the matter. God adds a remarkable consolation so that the godly remnant among them do not despair. Please look at **v. 18**.

III. What can we anticipate? ANS. Not the false promises of idols (30:18-26)

A. Divine mercy is available to those who repent (v. 18). He soothes their minds and encourages them with the hope of better things. They are called to embrace the mercy and compassion of God amidst their miseries. God has moderation in inflicting punishment. He is inclined to mercy.

APPL. Even the true child of God is harassed at times by unbelief—we are to wait on God calmly without murmuring. That is what it means to hope in Him (**Jer 10:24; 30:11; Hab 3:2**). So, how precisely do we wait—we must acknowledge that He is waiting for our waiting upon Him. **ANS.** Are we pursuing all things for His sake, for the sake of His goodness (whether friendship or career or life partner)? God is not an emergency strategy, or catastrophic insurance plan. He requires that He occupy first place in our lives. And, we express our love and gratitude to Him through our trust in Him.

Faith in the Lord's compassion involves trusting with openness, with confidence, and humility that His timing and methods are wise. It is waiting on Him in reliance that He has been patient with us, not forsaking us, for nothing can separate the true child of God from His love. But, waiting upon Him involves a mind-shift, for God is bringing us to the point where we cherish Him, and see that God's greatest gift to us is Himself (even amidst our affliction).

Oh, to see our stupid idols for what they are—that Christ alone, faith alone, the Scriptures alone, and grace alone are all the conditions for life (abundant). (EX. I think of Jacob's first solo camp-out, and his crazy barter prayer under the stars—paraphrase: 'if you take care of me I will let you be my God'—see **Genesis 28:18-22**). Do we have to coax Him? God misses not a single molecule of faith.

B. God's grace brings His personal teaching, healing, sanctification, and blessing (vv. 19-26). Through Isaiah, God addresses the people as if they are the heart of one person. God would exhibit grace to them by means of His Word, and the land would be purged of idolatry. The remnant sees idolatry as repugnant (**v. 22**).

APPL. 'Junking' our idols accompanies the display of His grace in our lives. When those idols lay in pieces at our feet, God undertakes the renewal of all things. As a 'Doctor' the Great Physician, He binds our wounds.

Vv. 25-26 -- The 'fall of towers' means that God's plan includes judgment for the rebel, and blessing for the penitent. APPL. Right now we don't always treat God

as being for us (our greatest ally), but He is faithful still. Our hearts are prone to wander, to be drawn away to self-sufficiency. But, we need to be led away from false saviors, and we need to celebrate endlessly His all-sufficiency. That is what it means to ‘know His Name’—for that is knowing His reputation (Name) by experiencing His faithfulness.

I know, these spiritual absolutes can appear lofty; that they can seem as out of reach as the stars themselves. But, God is infinitely greater than what we can think or imagine, and He is able to help us hone our level of trust in Himself. Here are three biblical essentials of gospel trust in the Lord:

- 1) Avoid any spiritual path that deviates from the gospel (**Jn 16:13**).
- 2) Guard against your prejudices which take offense at the counter-intuitive ways of God. Open yourself to newness—God has the right to surprise you. You don’t have all the answers (**Prov 3:5-6**).
- 3) As the Holy Spirit speaks to you about false saviors (through His Word and through the faithful admonishment of brethren) that you are presently allied with, be honest with the Lord, and break those alliances, and lean on Christ alone. He is a strong Savior (**2 Cor 7:1**).

What we have seen today is that Isaiah preached an improbable message: repent and rest in God despite being outnumbered by your enemies. Well, there is an improbable message that God is commanding us to believe and to trust: for the cross of Christ is the most counter-intuitive message of all. The world/natural man regards it as utter foolishness and folly—defying all common sense. But for those who are being saved, it is the epitome of life, peace, power, and love.

“For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (**1 Cor 1:21-25**).

In **verses 27-33**, God’s power is harnessed for healing. His wrath is channeled into deliverance for His remnant; He is described as judging His enemies.

IV. Who is not a threat to us? ANS. What we previously feared (30:19-26)

A. God’s judgments prepare His remnant for salvation (vv. 27-29)

B. God’s wrath ultimately defeats His enemies and ours (vv. 30-33)

