

## Isaiah 5:1-5 -- February 25, 2021

### *Dangers in Abundance*

JD Farag

All right, good evening, and welcome to our midweek Bible study. On Thursday nights, we're going through the Bible book-by-book and chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse. Tonight, we find ourselves having completed Chapter 4 in Isaiah. We're in Chapter 5, and we would encourage you at this time to join us if you're not already there.

We're going to get right to it. But before we do, if you would please join with me as we pray and ask the Lord's blessing on our time together in His Word tonight, if you would please. Father in heaven, thank You so much. Lord, we posture ourselves before you tonight as a people who are hungry and thirsty for You, knowing that only You can satiate that hunger and that thirst that we have in our souls, Lord. Lord, Your Word is the bread of life, the water of life, and so Lord, we want to be fed, we want to be nourished. We want to be strengthened and filled, filled afresh. Lord, we have before us tonight a chapter that is very interesting, in some ways intense.

We readily admit that we need for the Holy Spirit to be our teacher and our guide tonight. We need the Holy Spirit to minister to us, to get our attention, and hold our attention, so our minds don't wander. More importantly, Lord, we need for the Holy Spirit, as only you can, Lord, to speak into our lives in that still, small, refining voice. Lord, as You do speak, we want to not only listen and hear but take heed. So, Lord, thank You in advance for our time together in Your Word. We ask for your blessing on it. In Jesus' name. Amen and amen. All right.

I'm really looking forward to this chapter and actually made the decision earlier this week to only take and tackle this one chapter tonight. I know last week we got three chapters, not tonight, maybe not next week either because Chapter 6 is another very interesting chapter.

One of which that we've actually talked about and referred to when Isaiah, in the year that King Uzziah died, looks up to the throne and sees the Lord seated on the throne high and lifted up, and it just settles him because he was so unsettled and even shaken. So that's Chapter 6, I don't know yet. We'll seek the Lord this week concerning what we do next Thursday.

But tonight, I just really sense from the Lord that this chapter was such that it would require a night devoted to a sort of unpacking it and rolling up our arms sleeves and going through it. It's a big chapter, not just in size necessarily, but more importantly in its strength. The strength of this is such that it speaks to the dangers of abundance in the life of a Christian.

What we're going to see tonight is a parable of sorts, as God likens Judah to this beautiful vineyard that He has done everything and stopped at nothing - to do everything that He possibly could for. This vineyard/Judah was so blessed, abundantly blessed, so much so that they forgot the Lord.

Do you know how that is? It's cyclical, isn't it? Think this through with me. God blesses you; God prospers you exceedingly, abundantly, above and beyond anything you could have ever imagined or thought of, let alone ask. Then you get kind of comfortable and lackadaisical, and you forget the Lord, and you end up distancing yourself from the Lord because, after all, things are going very good.

Doesn't it show up in our prayer lives - you know how it is? When things are going good, your prayers are kind of like, Lord bless me, bless this, bless them, and Amen. But boy, let adversity strike, oh, God! Creator of the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that in them is! We put some reverb into it. I mean, this is bad, this is really bad!

Hey, by the way, have you ever thought of it this way? That maybe God knows that's the only time you're going to call upon Him. He kind of misses hearing from you because you've been kind of blessed and off-and-busy. I haven't heard from him for a while. I really would like to hear from him.

It's kind of like parents, right? The only time your kids call is when they need something? God's like, maybe I'll just have them need something. Have you ever thought of it like that? I have. I know they have clinical terms for this way of thinking. If that's the only time I'm ever going to hear from them is

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when adversity strikes, well, then I think there's probably adversity in their future because then I'll hear from them.

It's cyclical, and I think we do err greatly when we come down too hard on Israel and God's people. I mean, it's pretty easy. I'm just as prone as the next guy. You go through the Old Testament, and you read about the rebellion of God's people after they have been blessed so abundantly. You're like, how could they do that? Oh, really? We do that! Here's what happens. Here's that cyclical nature of it. God blesses us, and oh, praise the Lord! We get kind of soft and flabby. I'm sorry to use that word, for lack of a better one, spiritually, flabby. We kind of drift because things are going really good.

Then adversity strikes, and we're on our face before the Lord, and we repent, and God blesses us again. And then we forget the Lord again. And then God allows adversity again. And then we repent again, and then God blesses us again. You've seen this movie. It's the movie of our lives, our Christian lives.

I think of Ecclesiastes 7:14 in our study through the Book of Ecclesiastes. Actually, that whole chapter, Chapter 7, but in particular verse 14. It's a very interesting verse. Solomon writes, "In the days of prosperity, enjoy it." It's almost like he's saying, hey, during the good times, enjoy it while it lasts. As it's been said, you're either coming into a trial, having just come out of a trial, or right smack in the middle of a trial. Isn't that true? But there are those times when God is just blessing you, times of prosperity and blessing.

Then he goes on to write, "But..." I don't like that word right out of the chute. "During times of prosperity enjoy, but [when-not if] when adversity strikes [and adversity strikes], stop and consider that God allows one as well as the other." Some translations render it that God brings prosperity alongside adversity for this purpose: So that man will discover nothing about his future, meaning that man never gets to this place where they just take it for granted.

Adversity could strike in an instant, and when it does, it keeps us dependent upon the Lord and the Lord alone. Often times it has the much-needed effect of returning us to the Lord. Those times in our lives where we just need to repent and draw near to the Lord.

James says, "When we draw nearer to Him, He draws near to us." Sometimes it takes that adversity, especially during times of abundance. Times of abundance can be very dangerous, and we're about to see this in a very graphic way actually, in this chapter, so why don't we jump in,

Verse 1, "Now let me sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved regarding his vineyard. My well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst and also made a winepress in it. He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes."

Wow, right out of the chute here. Here's this vineyard, this fruitful vineyard that God has done everything, and again stopped at nothing to bless and prosper in abundance, even going as far as building a tower in its midst to protect it. Do you see here in these first three verses both provisions and protection from the mighty hand of God?

Now God wants to be blessed by and taste from the fruits of His vineyard that He has done everything for. So, here's a cluster of grapes, fully expecting that they will be sweet and delicious, but instead, they're wild. Do you know what's interesting about this - wild grapes? They're not just sour; they're noxious. Not obnoxious, though that can apply, I guess. Noxious, they are foul in their smell, and not only are they noxious, but they're also poisonous and, as such, dangerous.

Now here's the picture: Here's Judah, this beautiful vineyard, and it has now become like these wild grapes. Have you ever thought about it like that we, as God's people, can actually become dangerous? And instead of sweet fruit growing in our lives, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, we can actually instead become these wild grapes?

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Verse 3, "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between me and my vineyard. What more [verse 4] could have been done to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?"

This is, of course, a rhetorical question, as it were. Why, when I've done so much for you? I think about when the Prophet Nathan confronts David in his sin of adultery and even murder of Uriah, his adultery with Bathsheba. From what we can tell in 1 and 2 Samuel, in the Chronicles, and then also in the Psalms, where we have some of the blanks filled in, is that it was about a year from the time that David had done this to the time that Nathan confronted him.

There's this one very interesting detail that's recorded in the Scriptures that God deemed necessary to have recorded. Nathan, the prophet, says to David from the Lord, the Lord wants to know why basically. He has done so much for you. He has given everything to you. He would have given anything to you. Why? Why would you do this?

Judah, I would have done anything. I've done everything for you. Why? Now please, never imagine for a moment that God is coming down on Judah with this harsh condemnation. It's more like this: It's a loving conviction, and this is how you can tell the difference between condemnation and conviction. This is the litmus test if I can call it that. This has served me well over the years in my walk with the Lord. I hope it will be an encouragement and even a discernment for you as well.

How do you know the difference between condemnation and conviction? Condemnation will distance you from God. The conviction will draw you nearer to God. See, the devil condemns. Paul, writing to the church in Rome, Chapter 8:1, said, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus."

This is not a condemnation. This is, if you can see it like this, a plea to repent. It's a conviction, and let's not be too quick to just kind of blow off or sweep under the rug this word "conviction," as we often do, and I'll explain why I say it like that. It's a much-needed conviction so that we'll take the rightful blame and not point the finger of blame to someone else or something else.

That's the Adamic nature of man. I think about it in the garden... it's humorous. You'll forgive me for seeing the humor in it here. It is very serious. Of course, sin has now entered the world because Eve has partaken of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. So, God now confronts Adam and Eve.

When he confronts Eve with the "why" question, I gave you all the trees of the garden, but of this one tree, why? I would have even done more in this garden, in this vineyard, in your life, Christian. There's nothing I would have withheld from you. Why? Of this one tree, I forbid you to eat.

So, what does Eve do? Well, she blames the serpent. Actually, do you know what she's really doing? She's blaming God for putting the serpent in the garden. The serpent deceived me. It's not my fault. I'm not to blame. The serpent is to blame. Actually, God, you're to blame for putting the serpent in the garden."

Now, before you guys get all excited about, yeah, those women! Yeah, you know what Adam did, right? Even worse, it's even more insidious and laughable, and again, you'll forgive me for the humor, but he says, it's the woman You gave me. It's not my fault. If You would have not given me that woman, this would have never happened. Wow!

What is it about us that is quick to point the finger of blame on everyone and everything else except ourselves? That's what conviction is. True conviction is a godly sorrow that leads to a genuine repentance. There are two kinds of sorrow, by the way. You know how it is, parents when you catch your kids doing something wrong? Oh, they're so sorry. No, they're not. They're sorry they got caught. That's why they're sorry. If they were really, genuinely sorry, there would be repentance, change.

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I always use the illustration of traffic because that's a thing; I'm walking in victory. Actually, I'm driving in victory, I should say, but over the years, that's an area where God has really worked in my life. Many years ago, on the mainland, I'll never forget this. It's like I can remember it like it was yesterday.

I pull out. I'm running late, as always, in a hurry. Whenever you're in a hurry, it's like the car in front of you knows that you're in a hurry. Well, on this particular morning, here I'm praising the Lord, having a great devotional. Okay, running late, I get in the car, and my sanctification flees from me when a car pulls out in front of me.

You know what makes it really bad is when they have some Christian symbol on there. That's why I don't put Christian symbols on my car. This particular morning, this car cut me off with personalized plates, and it wasn't that far from my house. It was close in proximity. I drive that road every single day. I've never seen this car before. I would have remembered because of the personalized plates which had on them "H8W8," - "Hate to wait." Oh, you know it's bad when God has to speak to you through a personalized license plate on a car that cuts you off in traffic. Anyway, enough of my traffic woes.

But there is a conviction that leads to a repentance, a change. Otherwise, it's no conviction at all. It's just the sorrow of being caught. You get pulled over. I'm sorry, officer. No, you're not. You're sorry you got caught. If you were really sorry, you would change your driving habits, and you wouldn't drive so fast. That's true conviction.

Here's how it works. Conviction leads to a godly sorrow, not the sorrow of being caught, the worldly sorrow, and that godly sorrow will, in turn, lead to a genuine repentance. What is God doing here in asking this "why" question? He's trying to bring His people to this place of conviction where they point the finger of blame upon themselves and themselves alone - rightfully so - so that process of repentance from the godly sorrow can commence.

That's why. It's not God coming down hard on them, rubbing their nose in it. How could you, after all I did for you? No. It's I want you to understand that you alone... it's not My fault. I did everything I could. It's your fault, you're to blame, and unless and until you can take ownership and responsibility for what you've done, there's nothing more I can do. You have to come to repentance, and that's the only way it comes.

Verse 5, "And now please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard. I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned, and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will [verse 6] lay it to waste. It shall not be pruned or dug [hang on to that], but there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it. For the vineyard [verse 7] of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression. For righteousness, but behold a cry for help."

There's quite a bit here, and I want to point out a number of things, starting with this hedge of protection that God says, well, I'm going to remove it now. We often and affectionately refer to it and even pray for it, pray a hedge of protection. Do you realize that God has a hedge of protection around your life and how often do we dismiss it and take it for granted?

I was talking with a brother the other day, and we were just kind of thinking about all of those times in our lives when God, unbeknownst to us, had protected us without us even knowing. I mean, how about the times that we know where you see the fingerprints of God's hand of protection, His hedge of protection around your life, and it's unmistakable? And you look back at it, and you go, wow, Lord, that was close! Thank you, Lord, that could have been so much worse! That's just the time that you do know. What about all those times when God in the realm of the Spirit protected you, unbeknownst to you?

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I know this is a stretch, but just indulge me. We're in heaven, and one of the angels comes over and says, Hey, I want to take you into your theater, in your mansion, and we'll pop some popcorn. There's going to be popcorn in heaven, I'm pretty sure. We just want to show you a video of all the times in your life on earth that God miraculously protected you, unbeknownst to you. I think mine would be like a series, like 10 seasons of 15 per season. It would take a long time. Ho, it's no problem. We have all eternity so...

Where am I going with this? Well, to me, this speaks to our propensity to take God's hedge of protection for granted. I'm going to take it a step further because it's also when you think about when God says, do you know what? I'm not going to even prune you anymore. I'm no more going to dig. I'm not going to prune. I'm not going to tend to this vineyard, and oh, by the way, I'm also going to tell the clouds no more rain for this vineyard.

Because every time I did the pruning, you complained and you resisted, even protested. Well, I was pruning you, but you didn't like the pruning. And then those times in your life when I was tending to the vineyard of your life, and I had to do some digging, I had to dig some things out of your life, those weeds that were choking your life out. And what did you do? You resisted, and you protested, and you made My job a lot harder, and you also made it take a lot longer.

Many times I think about the trials in my life where I just fought the Lord kicking, biting, scratching, screaming, "God!" You know, and had I but just trusted Him, I just wonder if that trial would have ended a lot sooner? If I, in that protesting and resisting and fighting the Lord, did I unwittingly prolong the trial unnecessarily? Probably. That's the impression I get here with what God is saying here.

There are those times in our Christian lives when God has to do some pruning. Why? Because He wants to make us more fruitful. So, my wife has these... it's amazing; she's amazing. I have an amazing wife, man. So, every once in a while, she'll make me go out and prune her bougainvilleas. Oh, thank you for that. You feel my pain, right, literally, even through gloves. Oh, they're beautiful, those thorns, though. I come in, I look like I've been beaten up, bludgeoned, and just lacerated with those thorns. But she sends me out to prune them. Why? Because there's going to be more flowers now, but what a painful process.

Well, God does that in our lives, those dead branches that are stopping us from bearing more fruit. Again, when God does that pruning process, as much as we dislike it, it is so needful in our lives. It's like God's saying, I pruned, I tended, I brought the rain.

By the way, parenthetically, I need to say this. Do you know that verse that says, "God lets the rain fall on the just and the unjust"? I know when I was a young believer, I used to think, yeah, God, get them. You rain on the unjust. No, rain is a good thing in an agricultural society. Do you know what they call a place that never has rain? A desert, thank you very much, a barren, dry, fruitless desert. No, we need the rain.

But isn't it true when those storms of life hit and the rain, that torrential rain of trials in our lives, what's our response? Oh, God, what are You doing? You need water, you need rain, you need storms. In fact, it's those storms that make the roots of your life go down deeper, so you don't falter and fall when the storms hit.

Did you know that about trees? We have a plumeria tree in our front yard. Boy, I tell you, when we first moved here, I thought that's the most amazing thing. Where I come from, they don't have flowers on trees. This thing is beautiful. Then the winter came, and it died. I remember telling my wife, I looked at this plumeria, I was like, no, it's dead! She goes, no, it's not.

But I mean the branches in the winter on a plumeria tree, do they not look dead to you? I mean, they're just hanging there, just dead, dry, brown, gray, nothing. She says you'll see. Oh, by the way, it may not look like anything's happening, anything is growing, but you know what those roots are

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doing? You know, the roots of a plumeria tree? Those things are huge, and they go down deep. Do you know what makes them go down deep? The storm.

Same thing with palm trees, by the way. That's why with hurricane-force winds, you see the palm trees. They don't break, they bend, they bow. That's a good posture, by the way. When the storms of life hit is to bend and bow in humility before the Lord, stop resisting Him, stop fighting Him. Let him do what He wants to do in your life.

Verse 8, "Woe." In our day, woe is like, whoa. It's not what this is. Woe means curse. Curse. "Curse to those who join house to house. They add field to field till there is no place where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land. In my hearing [verse 9], the Lord of hosts said, truly many houses shall be desolate, great and beautiful ones, without inhabitant. For ten acres of vineyard (verse 10) shall yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield one ephah.

This is the first of six curses that are pronounced on Judah, and this one has to do with the greed and the corruption that had taken over. They were completely given over in their corruption because of their abundance, by the way. Isn't that ironic? Here, God blesses them with such abundance, and it's not enough. They're greedy for more, so much so that they take over another's property, another's home, another's field, and God pronounces a curse upon them for this.

Verse 11, "Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may follow intoxicating drink, who continue until night till wine inflames them. The harp and the strings, [verse 12] the tambourine and flute, and wine are in their feasts, but they do not regard the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of His hands.

Therefore [verse 13] My people have gone into captivity because they have no knowledge. Their honorable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore [verse 14] Sheol has enlarged itself and opened its mouth beyond measure, their glory and their multitude and their pomp, and he was jubilant shall descend into it.

People shall be brought down [verse 15], each man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled. "But [verse 16] the Lord of the hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness. "Then [verse 17] the lambs shall feed in their pasture, and in the waste places of the fat ones, strangers shall eat."

This is the second curse, and it has to do with their hedonistic lives. They are not only given over to corruption, but they are given over to gluttony and drunkenness. We're going to talk more about this in a moment, actually the sixth curse. But they, in their abundance, have now this insatiable thirst and pursuit of worldly pleasures. That's what they live for.

They're no longer living for the Lord. They're partying, drinking, eating, merry, and they have no regard, no thought for the Lord of hosts, the things of God. Their pursuit is not of the Lord. They are pursuing, not holiness and godliness. They are pursuing the pleasures that the world has to offer.

Verse 18, "Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity and sin as if with a cart rope that says, let him make speed and hasten his work that we may see it and let the Council of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come that we may know it." Oh, this is the height of pride and arrogance and insolence.

This third curse, interesting, by the way, speaks to those who justify their sin. Arrogantly, if you can imagine taunting God, saying, "Where's your judgment? Go ahead, bring it on us." But see, here's the thing: God is slow to anger. He's abounding in mercy, mercy, abounding in mercy, and because He doesn't act immediately in judgment, those given over to this, to their own peril, I might add, mistakenly believe that they've gotten away with it. It's no big deal, and that's what this curse is about.

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Again, it goes back to this taking blame for one's sin. This is now taking it to a whole new level where you're justifying it. You're justifying it, and when this kind of justification of sin reaches full measure, it manifests in this notion that, well, God hasn't judged me or chastised me. It must be no big deal to God, and so you just kind of justify it.

Here's how it sounds in our lives. It's very subtle. It goes something like this. It's just a little thing. Oh, really? Yeah, you know, it's just this one area, this one issue. Oh, it's an issue? When it comes to adultery, we've really kind of taken the edge off of it. We don't call it that. We call it an affair. Oh, it's just an affair. No, it's adultery. I just have this one issue. No, it's sin. Call it what it is because as long as you continue to call it anything but, it's hands-off to God. Because God doesn't forgive "issues." Right?

1 John 1:9, "Confess your "issues," and He is faithful and just to forgive you of your "issues" and cleanse you of all of your "affairs." No, sin, sin. No, no, no, don't, hey, come on, that's legalism. Huh? It's legalism, really? Legalism? No, you're a sinner. You've sinned. When are you going to stop justifying it and making excuses for it? Oh, we're so good at making excuses.

You want to talk about brilliant creativity? We come up with some of the most amazing excuses to justify it and again point the finger of blame. Well, you know? "I know, but if you only knew my wife and the things that I have to deal with, with her, you know?" No, you're justifying it. By the way, do you know how insidious that is? It's not just pride; it's spiritual pride. It's spiritual pride.

Verse 20, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter, for sweet and sweet for bitter." This is well-known, right, often quoted? We refer to this; this is kind of a go-to, especially, and you'll forgive the pun when it comes to low-hanging fruit. We cite this nation, the United States of America, which I think in all fairness, is an apt description of not just this nation but the whole world. Evil is good now, and good? Oh, evil. Bitter is sweet; sweet is bitter.

In my preparation for Sunday's Prophecy Update, which, Lord willing, actually, we're going to be talking a little bit more about this, we're going to answer a "why" question. Why the church is in the condition that it's in today. We know that the church is in a weakened state, feckless. You'd be hard-pressed to find a church that doesn't look like the world. Instead of the church reaching the world, the world has reached the church. Instead of the church influencing the world, the world has influenced the church.

Again, I know this is low-hanging fruit. Good is evil; evil is good. But here's the thing: This will always ensue when one forgets God and rejects God. Everything is out of whack. Everything is upside down. Everything's backward. When you reject the truth, then any lie is in play and fair game.

We'll talk more a little bit about this in a moment, but all of a sudden, now, the Christian is the problem. Isn't it true that the Christian's in the way? Well, you know, one of these days, I believe very soon actually, sooner than any of us could possibly imagine, we're going to be taken out of the way and so is the restrainer, 2 Thessalonians 2.

I know that God's not going to let me do this when we're taken out of the way and taken out of this world in the rapture. But I just want to be able to say, and this is in a very sanctified way, so don't look at me like you're looking at me right now. I want to be able to say, okay, you can have the world now. It's all yours. Oh, spoiler alert: You only get it for seven years and, oh, by the way, it's not going to be pretty for seven years, but it's all yours, Aloha." Is that mean, is that bad? I tried to be sanctified and pastoral.

It's kind of like right now the Christian's the problem, the Christian's the enemy. I read an article in my... I read so many, I have to go through so many things, and I didn't really have time to vet it. But if I'm not mistaken, it may either already be the case in America or it is about to be the case in America

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with this whole cancel-culture thing? The Bible is going to be outlawed because it's "hate speech," and it's anti-LGBTQ; it's racist.

It's just a matter of time. They've censored us on the Prophecy Updates on YouTube. It's just a matter of time before a Bible study like this in Isaiah Chapter 5 is going to be censored. If the Lord tarries, certainly it will because evil is good and good is evil. Verse 21, "Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight."

This fifth curse, hang in there with me for just a moment. I was really inquiring of the Lord because it kind of seems like this deals with making intellectualism, a god, little "g." I'm going to take it even further and dare to say that it's also speaking to those who are wise in their own eyes because they're the science. Science has been deified.

Isn't it interesting, don't you find it interesting? I'll be careful here. I'll be prudent, not paranoid, prudent. But don't you find it interesting that the narrative is, listen to the science. Excuse me? Listen to the science? I'm sorry, I'm going to listen to the God of science. He's the God of... oh, but you can't mix science and God. Really? You might want to take that up with God. I don't want to be anywhere close when you do. God created science.

How about that? Oh, you're so smart, are you? Yes, because science says... And you just picture the guy... I don't know that they do this anymore with the pipe... you know, pontificating, stroking his beard with his other hand. You know, based on the thesis that... Shut up! Close your mouth. I'm sorry if that word's offensive. I know it is for some, and my apologies. I sincerely mean that. But I said anyway. It actually felt really good to say it. I'm sorry. Pray for me. But close your mouth.

Be very careful what you speak. You will give an account for every word you speak, and you are heaping up for yourselves... this is going to be on Sunday, too, for the update. You are heaping upon yourself the wrath of God because you say there is no God. You're a fool. You think you're so wise. You are a fool. "It is a fool who says in his heart there is no God."

I mean, you can pontificate all you want that we came from the goo to the zoo to you. I love that one; I heard that like 25 years ago. I said I'm totally stealing that one. Evolution, really? That takes more faith than creation. Have you ever heard that illustration, the Big Bang Theory? Well, there was a big bang. God said, bang, and He created, so I guess in theory, that can work, but that's a stretch.

But this whole thing of there was this big bang? That would be like an explosion in a factory, and it created a functional Boeing 747. That's faith. That's wow! I'm not worthy; I mean that I am ashamed of my little faith. That's a lot of faith to believe that.

Verse 22, we've got to keep moving. Stop doing that. "Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink, who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away justice from the righteous man!"

This is the sixth and last curse. I suppose you could say it deals with what we call today "alcoholism," which always leads to blurred judgment and injustice, not to mention the destroyed lives it leaves in its wake. Strong drink, intoxicating drink.

Verse 24, "Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble and the flame consumes the chaff so their root will be as rottenness and their blossom will ascend like dust because they have rejected the law of the Lord of Hosts." It's worse than that. Not only did they reject it, but they also despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. That's pretty strong.

"Therefore [verse 25] the anger of the Lord [and this is a [righteous anger, just anger] is aroused against His people. He has stretched out His hand against them and stricken them, and the hills tremble. Their carcasses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this, His anger is not turned away, but [this is a good but by the way] His hand is stretched out still."



## Isaiah 5:1-5 -- February 25, 2021

### *Dangers in Abundance*

JD Farag

Did you catch that? We talked about this Sunday, having the word "but" in the right spot. You can say, man, I know God works everything together for the good, "but" I don't know how I'm going to make it this month. Your "but" is in the wrong spot. I don't know how I'm going to make it this month, "but" I know that God works all things together for the good. Do you see how it just changes the whole complexion of it?

Well, such is the case here. After all this judgment, I mean, this is like almost too much information, TMI, as we say. I don't want to know about the carcasses... I mean, this is horrific, right? "But"... this is a "but God." "But" God has His hand of mercy stretched out still. Oh, by the way, they are nail-pierced hands, hands of mercy and grace stretched out still.

Verse 26, "He will lift up a banner to the nations from afar and will whistle to them from the end of the earth." Surely, they, speaking of the Assyrians... Now, this is really interesting. The precision with which we are told this is going to happen, and it did happen.

"Surely, they will come with speed swiftly. No one will be weary or stumble among them. No one will slumber or sleep, nor will the belt on their loins be loosed, nor the strap of their sandals be broken. Whose arrows are sharp and all their bows bent. Their horses' hooves will seem like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind." The Assyrians coming against Judah will be effortless with precision accuracy.

"Their roaring will be like a lion." You know it's been said that a lion will roar right before it pounces on its prey. It's quiet as a mouse when it's stalking its prey, but at the moment that it is ready to attack its prey, it lets out a blood-curdling roar. That's what's being described here.

"Their roaring will be like a lion. They will roar like young lions. Yes, they will roar and lay hold of the prey. They will carry it away safely, and no one will deliver. In that day [verse 30], they will roar against them like the roaring of the sea. And if one looks to the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened by the clouds."

Wow, what a way to end the chapter! I don't want to end the Bible study on such a dark note, literally. Whatever light there was, was darkened by the clouds. At first read, this seems horrific, right, coming from God's hand? However, upon closer examination, one can actually see the love and the mercy of God.

If you kindly allow me to in the remainder of our time, I want to take just a couple of minutes and explain why that is. We just got done reading where God is allowing the Assyrians to come with precision speed to take captive Judah, and they did. This was fulfilled exactly as we're told it would be.

Why would God do that? That's not loving, is it? Oh, yes, it is. That's kind of harsh, almost disproportionate. I mean, so they forgot you. Do you need it to be that harsh of a judgment? Yeah. Why? Because that's what's going to take to get them to return to Me. That's what it's going to take to get them to repent. This is My love. If I didn't love them this much, I wouldn't bother.

What parent, even grandparents, because they love their children, their grandchildren, will meet out what could seem to be this harsh punishment, but in the end, it has the end of bringing them back to the Lord because that's what it takes.

This is Proverbs 20:30, "Blows and wounds cleanse away evil, and beatings purge the inmost being." I think of David in the Psalms, in Psalm 119:67, listen to this. He says, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray." I forgot the Lord before I was afflicted - then God afflicted me.

Do you know what happened? Oh, now I obey His Word; before I was afflicted, I went astray. God blessed me abundantly, and it caused me to stray, but then he brought the much-needed blows of affliction. It brought me right back to Him, and now I'm walking in obedience for You.

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A few verses later, in verse 71, he says, "It was good for me to be afflicted." It was good. I don't want to have to go through it again, but it was good. It's good that God did that. "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn Your decrees."

Let me close this way... In fact, why don't you stand? And we'll have the worship team come up, and I'll just share a closing thought. If you're anything like me, and I suspect that you are when the chastisement from the hand of a loving God comes and strikes, and His hand is against us, stretched out against us to strike us, it's always because He loves us.

He chastises those whom He loves. Never think that God is angry with you. No, He took all of his anger, and He put it on His Son on that cross, and all of His wrath, all of His anger was placed on Jesus. And He took that for you, for me, instead of you, instead of me, so there is therefore now no God is not angry with you. Yeah, but... I know He loves me, but it doesn't feel like He likes me too much right now. You know how it is, right?

We tend to look at our heavenly Father through the lens of our earthly father, and our earthly father. When we messed up really bad, we'd lay low. I know I did. I'm going to get it. So, we lay low because I really ticked him off this time, and I'm going to get it.

We kind of tend to view our heavenly Father like that if we're honest with ourselves, right? I'm like, man, I really blew it again. I better lay low, and the enemy's right there, isn't he? You had better lay low after what you did. It was bad. I know. I wouldn't go to church if I were you if the people in church knew what you did.

Don't look at the person sitting or standing next to you right now. Man, I wouldn't even bother praying right now. I'd just kind of let God cool down because He's kind of angry right now. Not at all. Don't fall for it. Don't fall prey to it. The sooner you can get to the cross, the sooner that sin is forgiven.

Don't let the enemy keep you from the cross because he knows that's the game-changer. That will change everything, and as long as he can keep you from the cross where that sin was paid for, having you believe and be deceived that God is angry with you.

That's where the condemnation comes in, and then he distances you from God because he knows the moment you get to the cross and confess that sin, you're forgiven immediately, instantly. It's been paid for in full. Well, what are you saying? Is the trial I'm in chastisement? Sometimes it is. Don't despise it. Don't chafe at it. Don't fight it.

See it and embrace it as coming from a God who loves you so much. He's trying to protect you from yourself. You know that expression: "You're your own worst enemy." I look at my mug in the mirror. I'm looking at the enemy straight in the eye. You're the enemy, you. Me! I'm my own worst enemy, and I cooperate with the enemy of my soul, and he couldn't be happier.

Let's pray; Father in heaven, I thank You so much. I thank You for Your loving mercy, especially in those times when we misunderstand it. Lord, I pray that tonight as we... this is a pretty heavy, weighty chapter concerning Judah, but its application to us in our lives. It's so apropos.

Lord, in the abundance of the blessing that You poured out upon our lives, oh. Oh, Lord, may it never be that we would stray from You, distance ourselves from You, take it for granted, and need to be chastised. Lord, thank You for Your Word, in Jesus' name. Amen.