

Isaiah 33:1-24

"A Prayer & A Promise"

The last several weeks we've been covering this section of 6 woes. Ch 33 being the 6th in the section. By way of reminder, at this point in Israel/Judah's history, Israel (the northern kingdom) has been essentially wiped off the map by their Assyrian invaders. Now, Assyria's showing no signs of slowing as they're tromping through Judah (the southern kingdom), making their way toward Jerusalem. – & Here in Ch 33, God gives Isaiah a word of "Woe" to the nation of Assyria & a *precious promise* to the nation of Judah.

Vs 1

You can kind of see it in your mind's eye, can't you? Here is this unstoppable force (the Assyrian army). They're pillaging, they're plundering, nothing can get in their way. They've taken Israel, they've marched through all the fortified cities of Judah & taken them, nothing can stop them... Then God gives Isaiah a message, "I'm going to stop them."

You see, what Isaiah doesn't reference here, (but you discover in 2nd Kings Ch 18) is that when Sennacherib (the king of Assyria) took all the fortified cities of Judah, Hezekiah (the king of Judah) sent to him saying, "Look, just tell us what you want to get you to leave us alone & we'll pay it." So Sennacherib imposed a price upon Hezekiah & Hezekiah paid it. He even scrapped all the gold off the doors & pillars of the temple to pay him off. But then after Sennacherib took the payment, he came anyway & completely ignored the deal.

He's plundering having not been plundered. Dealing treacherously though he hasn't been dealt w/treacherously & God essentially sends the message, "Your days are numbered & I'm bringing all this to an end. At the end of your plundering, you'll be plundered. You've dealt treacherously, you'll be dealt with treacherously."

* The world likes to call it "Karma", this providential force of some kind that gives back to you what you give back to others. The bible refers to it as a spiritual law. It's called, "Sowing & Reaping". We *reap* what we *sow*. If we're generous toward others, others will be generous toward us. If we're always criticizing, we'll be criticized.

Jesus spoke of being careful w/the way we judge others. (He never said it was wrong to acknowledge truth, or agree w/what the Bible calls sin, that's not judging, that's agreeing w/God's word.) But people make judgments all the time. If you agree w/me, you've judged that I was right. You disagree w/me, you've judged I was wrong.

Jesus simply said that the way we dole it out, we'll receive it back. He said this, *"Judge not, that you be not judged." For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.*¹ God has every right to hold us to the same standard that we impose upon others. To deal w/us the way we deal w/others.

James echoed this same sentiment when he said, *"For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."*² & Of course, it's hard for us to hear *those* words w/out being reminded once again of *these* words, *"Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy."*³ God will deal w/people the way people deal w/others. To plunder is to be plundered, to deal treacherously is to be dealt with treacherously. Judgment is w/out mercy to those who've shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. *

But this is why we're exhorted not to avenge *ourselves*. God knows the whole situation. He understands what's going on thoroughly, He sees every situation w/absolute clarity, & He will execute judgment perfectly. Write it down, memorize it later, Romans 12:19-21.

Vs 2-4

From the *pronouncement*, to *prayer*. "O Lord, be *gracious* to us. We have *waited* for You." I'm already in love w/*this* prayer (for 2 reasons). #1 We see that Judah is no longer looking to Egypt, they're not trusting in themselves, they've turned to the Lord... This is where we want to be. Not looking to the world, not trusting in our own strength or our own merit. But looking *to* & trusting *in* the Lord. "We have waited *for* You."

#2 Isaiah isn't crying out for justice, he definitely doesn't want what they deserve. The cry is for *grace*. & It's by *grace* that we are saved, through faith. & This is the essential cry of Vs 2. That God might save them by *grace*. He says, "God, *You* be our arm (or our strength) every morning, our salvation also in time of trouble."

They're finally in that place that God would have us all to be. Again, waiting *on* the Lord, trusting *in* the Lord. "God, *You* are our strength (day by day, every day) & our salvation. "When You lift Yourself up, the nations will be scattered." – I love the confident expectation in this statement. From every appearance, right now, the enemy has won. He's surrounding them on every side. But there's a sense in which they're resting in that reality...

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 7:1-2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jas 2:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 5:7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“Nothing will be impossible for God.” Isaiah is *trusting in advance* that God is going to move on their behalf. * I think often times, our prayers are filled w/a trust in God’s *ability*, but not so much w/a sense of *expectancy*. God would have us trust *not only* that He *can* move on our behalf, but that He *will* move on our behalf.

& Not in that weird way that makes Him subservient to us. But that when we’ve aligned ourselves w/His word, His heart, His will, we should expect to see Him move. Not necessarily for our *gain*, but for His *glory*. *

In Vs 4 Isaiah says that they’re trusting God for the total decimation of the enemy. As the running to & fro of the locusts. What happens to a lush, fruitful crop after a swarm of locusts comes through? There’s nothing left. Total ruin & decimation. That’s what’s going to happen to the Assyrian army. Total ruin & their treasures left to plunder. The people of Jerusalem (like a swarm of locusts) will clean them out.

Vs 5-6

Continuing to build upon the expectancy & offering thanksgiving in advance Isaiah writes, “He has filled Zion w/justice & righteousness.” How many of you realize that you don’t have to wait till God does something to thank Him for what He’s said He will do? * Too often we w/hold thanksgiving from God. We feel we need to wait for Him to move, *then* we can thank Him for what He did.

Imagine treating people like that. There you are, you’re broke down on the side of the road. So you phone a friend & you say, “Man, I’m stuck between here & Springfield & I don’t know what to do!” Your friend says, “Hey, I’m calling a tow truck, I’ll pay for it to be taken to the shop & I’m going to drive out there, pick you up & bring you home safe.” What are you going to say to your friend? “Well, I feel an inclination to give you thanks, but I’m not going to do that yet. After all, you *said* you’d do those things, but I haven’t seen you yet. So, all things being equal, I’m going to w/hold my thanks till my car is in the shop (the bill is paid) & I’m safe at home.” What kind of *jerk* move is *that*!? ☺ You’re going to be thanking your friend, singing the praises of your friend, declaring the faithfulness of your friend & they haven’t even gotten off the couch yet! But you trust in their word!

How much more should we trust in the promises of *God’s* word, give *Him* thanks, sing *His* praises & declare *His* faithfulness before we ever see Him do a thing? He’s not a man that He should lie. If He says it, He’ll make it good! We can trust His word, give Him thanks & sing His praise! *

Now, look at Vs 6 & underline it.

* “Wisdom & knowledge will be the stability of your times, & the strength of your salvation.” Wow. What a word in due season. In the ever shifting, instability & volatility of our times... What is it that you need to experience *stability*, to remain firm in this ever shifting, unstable culture to which you’ve been called? What serves as the *strength* (the sufficiency [we might even say the super sufficiency]) of your salvation? Wisdom & knowledge... Listen, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.”⁴ & Again, “When wisdom enters your heart, And knowledge is pleasant to your soul, Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you,”⁵ The scripture references are to vast for our time, I cannot emphasize enough the essential need to pursue wisdom & knowledge. It will anchor you, bring stability to you in the ever shifting sands of the culture to which God has called us. “How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.”⁶ He who gets wisdom loves his own soul! *

“The fear of the Lord is His treasure.” Couple of ways people interpret this line (I think there’s validity either way). One would be that the treasure of wisdom/knowledge that makes for your stability is found in the fear of the Lord.

Another would be that the fear of the Lord is a treasure that He gives to us. That we might honor Him & rightly revere/worship Him. Again, I think that too often we see God as our buddy. We don’t really revere Him & have the proper awe of Him that we should. We think if God were to manifest, we might run up & high-five Him for the good things He’s done... We don’t understand the holy, awesome nature of who He truly is.

But a proper fear of God will keep us safe/stable. The Bible says that the fear of the Lord is *clean*. Keeps us from doing dumb stuff, motivates us to live godly lives, serving Him, honoring Him, obeying Him...

One less popular interpretation (but I’m going to lean into it a little bit because it’s true whether intended here or not) is that they who fear the Lord are *His* treasure. Isaiah has been speaking of the plunder that Israel will take from Assyria. * The treasure of the Lord is those who fear Him. You (child of God) are His treasure. You need to know that. How much God loves you, how much He values you.

Jesus said, “the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”⁷

⁴ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Pr 1:7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Pr 2:10–11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Pr 16:16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Mt 13:44). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The field is the world, the man who gave all that he had, who sold everything that he might purchase the field is Jesus. He redeemed the whole earth, that He might extract the *treasure... you*, out of it. Paul, in praying for the Ephesian church prayed, *“that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,”*⁸ God loves you. He values you, you are a treasure to Him. He’s given everything for you... *

Vs 7-9

I suppose we could get into some details here of how the valiant, those who sought for peace by trusting in Egypt or the arm of the flesh will weep bitterly... But ultimately what I want you to see here is a hopeless situation. “The highways lie waste, the traveling man ceases, (the cities are destroyed, Jerusalem surrounded), he has broken the covenant.” (The king of Assyria went back on his word; Egypt was no help at all). The earth mourns & languishes. Hope in *anything* else & *everyone* else is lost.

Vs 10-13

* From the *pronouncement* to the *prayer*, to the *promise*. “Now I will rise,” says the Lord. Here’s what I want you to see (because it’s a fairly common response w/God). God is never late, He’s always right on time. However, He often waits until we’ve exhausted every resource, every recourse, each & every option outside of Him. Then when He does what only He can do, only *He* receives the glory.

You might write this down, “Man’s extremities are God’s opportunities”. Perhaps you recall when Gideon had 32,000 soldiers w/him & they were poised & prepared to fight 135,000 Midianite soldiers. But according to God’s count, he had too many. (Lest they gain a victory & boast in their great ability). So God reduced them down to 300 men! The odds were absurdly impossible (over 400>1). But when the victory came, everyone knew. It was *God* who moved, not *Gideon*. To God went the glory, great things *He* had done... *

The Assyrians had all sorts of plans, they were “pregnant” w/ways by which they were going to conquer Jerusalem. God tells them they’ve conceived chaff, they’re bringing forth stubble, they’ll be devoured like thorns in the fire... Then Jew & Gentile alike (those afar off & those who are near) will acknowledge *God’s* might. We’re to recognize & honor the work of God in our midst & on our behalf...

Vs 14-16

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Eph 1:18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

In coming out of 1st John we learned that God is *light* (in Him is no darkness at all). We learned that God is *love*. The Bible also declares that our God is a consuming fire... “Who among us shall dwell w/the devouring fire? ... w/everlasting burnings?” There are none who escape the devouring fire of God. The question is will it consume us, or consecrate/purify us? It all depends doesn’t it? Are we standing on our own merits, our own works, our own lists of “dos & don’ts”? Or are we founded upon the rock, the righteousness of J.C.?

In Vs 15-16 what we have is a listing of attributes that survive the fire. Don’t see them as what you need to survive, but rather the *results*, the *evidence* of having what you need. It’s the fruit (the outcropping) of a relationship w/God. “Walking righteously” & take special note of the next one “& speaks *uprightly*... He will dwell on high”.

* Family. We live in a culture that is absolutely, *intentionally* immersed in “touchy topics”. Topics that trigger division, explosive reactions & hostility. It could be abortion. It could be C.R.T. (Critical race theory). It could be D.E.I. (diversity, equity & inclusion). It could be “white privilege”, it could be sexual expression & identity, the LGBTQIA2S+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Two-Spirit, and the countless affirmative ways in which people choose to self-identify).

& Many believers are either afraid, perhaps misinformed, or uneducated, or maybe just confused as to how to handle these situations. Some want desperately to believe something to be true (meaning it’s ok to lead certain lifestyles that the Bible clearly articulates that God is not ok with because it’s based in abolishing truth & distorting, disfiguring & debasing His creation, [having created us in His image]).

But listen to me. What people need is for us to be bold & to speak the truth in love, because lies & deception will entangle & ensnare a soul, but you shall know the truth & the truth shall set you free. Love *demand*s truth. Our problem is the fear of man. We’re afraid to hurt feelings, or risk being ostracized (& I understand that). But I wonder how many children who are 5, 6, 8, 10 or 12 yrs old today, who are being indoctrinated rather than educated in our school systems will rise up in judgment against our generation?

How many will look back & languish saying, “Where were the adults to defend us? To stand in the gap & fight for us? We were 5, we were 10, we didn’t know, we trusted our teachers. We were told all manner of perversion is normal.” Family, it’s not normal! It’s an affront to God & we need to fear God more than we fear man... Silence is compliance! Tacit behavior will be held accountable (& that scares me). *

What is “tacit approval”? It’s when I understand something & my silence is taken for approval. God speaks to this in Num 30. In Num 20 there’s a detail that’s often overlooked. It’s the scene where Moses strikes the rock twice, misrepresenting God & God tells him he won’t enter the Promised Land because of it.

But what many people don’t pick up on is that God tells *Aaron* the same thing in Vs 12! Wait... why was Aaron held accountable for what Moses did? It’s because he knew what God told Moses to do. He knew that Moses was to *speak* to the rock... Out of nowhere Moses gets whipped up into a frenzy & he *strikes* the rock. That probably caught Aaron off guard. But when Moses raised that staff the 2nd time, that was Aaron’s cue. He should’ve spoke up. He should’ve said, “Moses! This is wrong, don’t do this!” He stayed silent. “Tacit approval.”

* Listen to me, faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of the enemy are deadly. He who knows to do what’s right & doesn’t do it, to him it is (what?) Sin. Sins of commission & sins of omission. Who will stand in defense for the unborn? Who will stand in defense, use your words (speak uprightly) to combat evil & stave off the oppression that’s being heaped upon our children & grandchildren?

This is why the big push (or exhortation) to Christians to not shop at Target. Because they linked arms w/Erik Carnell, (pic) a trans-man (a woman who transitioned to man, who is an openly active Satan worshiper) to design the children’s apparel that they’re sporting for pride month.

It’s why you see people standing up for our children, standing up for the unborn. Those who can’t speak for themselves, or defend themselves. Proverbs 31 Vs 8-9 (NLT), *“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice.”*⁹ & Again, I know I’m walking on divisive ground w/these things. But I fear God... & One day we’ll all stand before Him & we’ll have to answer for our actions, or our inactions. *

“He who despises the gain of oppressions, who gestures w/his hand refusing bribes.” You know what that means? It means some things are more important than money. Earthly gain is temporary. We’re to live w/a view toward eternity. (Vs 16) If you honor God, God will honor you. Doesn’t mean everything will work out perfectly on this planet (this isn’t our home). But ultimately, eternally God will bless you.

Vs 17-19

“Your eyes will see the King in His beauty.” Yes there was a sense in which Hezekiah was a foreshadow of this. But we’ll see it fulfilled in J.C. – Your eyes will see the *King of kings* in His beauty... Hallelujah.

Today, we get a glimpse of Him occasionally, obscurely. As though viewing through a glass darkly. But one day your eyes will see Him w/perfect clarity. Family. Heaven is precious for many reasons. Reuniting w/loved ones, saints of old, angels around the throne, streets of gold, pearly gates & all the rest... But what really makes heaven, heaven, is the unhindered, unrestricted, presence of our LORD... to see the King in His beauty will be the greatest experience of your eternal existence.

Vs 18 is to the Assyrians, the battle strategist, their efforts of waging war will be in vain. Vs 19 is to Judah. Assyria will not overtake them, God will deliver them.

Vs 20-21

We’re looking here at the millennial kingdom of Christ. There will actually be a geographic change. The Bible speaks of a river that will surround the city in that day. But there will be peace, no naval attacks upon the city. Just peace/prosperity.

Vs 22-24 Close

* **The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; He will save us... Forgiveness. It’s our greatest need. & God has extended His right hand of forgiveness, in the Person of His Son who has loved you & given Himself for you.** Let’s bow our hearts. I’m going to read this Ps to you & I’d encourage you to acknowledge His might & give Him thanks for the great things He has done, in redeeming you... ***“Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,”***¹⁰ *

Prayer Points

Father, You are Great & Greatly to be Praised! You alone have accomplished this immeasurable victory for us in the Person of Your Son. We bless You, We thank You, We honor You... Give us boldness (the righteous are as bold as a lion). Teach us to stand up, to speak out & give people what they need, the truth, in love. Be glorified in this place & in our lives.

If you’re here & you haven’t experienced God’s forgiveness. Don’t put it off another day. Surrender completely & absolutely to J.C. Turn from your sin, trust in Him & be saved.

¹⁰ *The New King James Version*, (1982). [Ps 103:1–4]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.