



Isaiah

God gave Isaiah the difficult task of preaching profound biblical truth to a people who would completely ignore it. But this does not mean that Isaiah's words were wasted because they are a blessing to us today. In this series, we will learn from Isaiah's message about our God, who is a righteous king and an irreplaceable sovereign judge. Yet the very same God is a suffering servant who comforts us in our times of need and provides Hope to the nations.

WEEK FOUR

Our God Corrects and Restores

Message Passage: Isaiah 1:10-17 & Isaiah 30:18-22

Small Group Passage: Isaiah 4:2-6; 12:1-6; Hebrews 12:5-11

TEACHING AND VIDEO NOTES

One of the things that turns many people off the book of Isaiah is that God acts as a righteous judge. He is punishing people and nations for their unconfessed sin. As we talked about in week one of this series, that is not a bad thing. We want God to be a righteous judge. But what many people misunderstand is that much of the stern and even violent language used is not strictly God's judgment and wrath, but his correction of his covenant people. Let me explain the difference.

- **God's judgment:** God condemns and punishes sin. He can not overlook it. In Isaiah, God judged and punished the sins of the nations (temporarily), especially those who rose against Israel. One day, he will give just eternal punishment and consequences of sin for all those who have not trusted in Jesus Christ for eternal life.
- **God's correction:** God also corrects his people with whom he is in a covenant relationship. He gives consequences and punishment that are intended to turn them from their sinful rebellion. God corrects like a loving father and good shepherd.

The problem: The problem is that we, as believers in Jesus Christ, often respond to God's loving correction as if it were God's judgment. In the moment, they feel similar

because both are unpleasant. But the why and purpose of the two could not be further apart.

Today, I want us to see what God's loving correction looks like and what it is intended to bring about, so that we may recognize it, respond to it rightly, and therefore receive the blessing from it.

Isaiah 1:10 *Hear the word of the LORD,
you rulers of Sodom;
listen to the instruction of our God,
you people of Gomorrah!*

Isaiah is speaking to Israel, but comparing them to Sodom and Gomorrah based on the context of verses 1-4. What could Israel have been doing that was so bad that Isaiah compared them to Sodom and Gomorrah?

Isaiah 1:11-14 *"The multitude of your sacrifices—
what are they to me?" says the LORD.
"I have more than enough of burnt offerings,
of rams and the fat of fattened animals;
I have no pleasure
in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.
12 When you come to appear before me,
who has asked this of you,
this trampling of my courts?
13 Stop bringing meaningless offerings!
Your incense is detestable to me.
New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—
I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.
14 Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals
I hate with all my being.
They have become a burden to me;
I am weary of bearing them.*

Israel was still sacrificing animals and keeping many of the religious holidays as described in the Law. But they were simply going through the motions. **They were not worshipping their God.** Because in the midst of this "worship", they were worshipping false gods as well (2:8, 2:18–20; 17:7–8; 27:9; 30:22; 44:9–20). Divided worship is false worship and therefore just as bad as no worship at all. So what was Israel's sin that brought about God's judgment/correction? Divided and half-hearted worship. At least, that was one of their sins.....

Isaiah 1:15-16 *When you spread out your hands in prayer,*

I hide my eyes from you;

even when you offer many prayers,

I am not listening.

Your hands are full of blood!

16 *Wash and make yourselves clean.*

Take your evil deeds out of my sight;

stop doing wrong.

The unconfessed and unrepentant sins of Israel had made it impossible for God to have an ongoing relationship with His people. A righteous and Holy God could not and would not ignore the sins of His people. He refuses to ignore ours as well.

Isaiah 1:17 *Learn to do right; seek justice.*

Defend the oppressed.

Take up the cause of the fatherless;

plead the case of the widow.

The term "social justice" has been used and abused since 2020. However, that should not lead us to ignore the fact that God does condemn the sins of a people and society just as much as he does the sins of an individual. Isaiah makes that point painfully clear....

- Oppressing the poor, widows, and orphans — 1:17, 23
- Bribery and corruption — 1:23
- Unjust legal systems — 5:7; 10:1-2
- Greed and land-grabbing — 5:8

It was sins like these that went unconfessed for generations. They became cultural norms within the society of Israel. God sent prophet after prophet to correct His people, but they were all ignored (Hosea 9:7-9, 2 Kings 17:13-15, Nehemiah 9:26, and Matthew 23:37). So God sent the Assyrian Empire to destroy and judge the ten northern tribes of Israel in 722 BC (1 Chronicles 5:26, 2 Kings 17:6). For the most part, these tribes never returned to the promised land. They were judged and punished.

God also sent the Babylonian Empire to correct the two remaining southern tribes in 586 BC (2 Kings 24:10-25 & 2 Kings 25). God was not simply punishing and judging the Southern tribes of Israel; He was correcting them. He had a plan for them. He had a redemptive purpose for their pain in exile. A plan that even included their restoration.

Isaiah 30:18 Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!

God desires to show us compassion; he desires to show mercy. Yet, he is also just. Meaning God is not rebuking us simply because that is what he gets deep joy from. Much like a loving parent, God corrects because he knows it is for our ultimate good. God desires for us to walk in obedience, which is for our good. He desires that so much that he willingly does what is not pleasant for Him or us, correction, so that we will turn from our sin.

Isaiah 30:19-21 People of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you. **20** Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. **21** Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

God's purpose in correction is clear. **He gives us the "bread of adversity" so that we may see the way that we are to walk in.** He desires for us to turn from our sin and walk in obedience. God corrects because repentance is for our good. That is why Isaiah uses the familiar language of God as a good shepherd (Isaiah 40:11).

Isaiah 30:22 Then you will desecrate your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them, "Away with you!"

This is some graphic language, but do you see the plan behind the correction? It was only after God gave Israel the consequences of their actions and the correction they deserved that they realized that the sin they had once cherished was worthless and to be thrown out. If not for God's correction, repentance would never come (Isaiah 17:7-11 & 26:7-10)

#1 Not every trial or problem is God's correction. Sometimes a difficulty is just a product of living in a broken world. This is the mistake that Job's friends made.

#2 God's correction is a sign of God's love.

Segway to Small Group: Therefore, respond to God's correction as if it were love. Once we realize our God corrects as a father corrects, we can see that God's

correction does not equal God's rejection. Therefore, we can trust that we can be restored.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Leader Guide (Set up the Passage): In Isaiah chapter three, God rebukes the nation of Israel and explains in graphic detail the consequences of their sinful rebellion. Part of the correction that God would provide was the Babylonian conquest and captivity of Judah (597 bc). This conquest would remove the majority of Israel's inhabitants. However, there would remain a "faithful remnant" of people who humbly relied on God alone.

READ: Isaiah 4:2-6

1. Vs 2-4 Israel had faced harsh but necessary correction for their sinful rebellion. But on the other side of that correction, they had turned away from their former life of sin. Has there ever been a time in your life when God corrected you and you learned to trust and obey Him because of it?
2. Vs 5 - The smoke referenced in verse five refers to God's presence in near identical terms as it was described in the Exodus account. Isaiah was communicating that God corrects us so we will leave our life of sin and return to our relationship with God. Israel needed to know that they could once again be a people who enjoyed the blessing of God's visible presence, as their ancestors had. Why is it so important that we fully trust that God does not cast us out of his presence when he corrects us?

Leader Note: God corrects us so that we may draw near to Him (James 4:8). God's correction is not a sign that God's love has ceased. Instead, God's correction is one way we are reminded of God's steadfast love. "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. Therefore, be earnest and repent (Rev 3:19).

READ: Isaiah 12:1-6

3. Isaiah wanted it to be abundantly clear that the Lord's correction should lead to our rejoicing and worship. But that is not the common way that we approach God's correction. Why is that?

Leader Note: I think we tend to forget the why behind God's correction. God corrects us because he loves us. He corrects us because he desires for us to return to Him. He corrects us because he has not rejected us. We have to remember that the creator of

the universe loves us, desires a relationship with us, and has not rejected us despite our mistakes. That is good news worth rejoicing over. That truth should lead to worship. God's correction is ultimately a blessing (Psalms 94:12).

Read: Hebrews 12:5-11

4. Vs 5 - How do we go about not making light of the Lord's discipline and not losing heart when he rebukes us?
5. Vs 6-10 - God's correction is compared to the correction of a loving father who corrects out of love. The problem is, we can easily respond to God's loving correction as if it were from a cruel and overbearing boss, which he is not. How can we remember that God's correction does, in fact, come from a God who loves us and corrects like a loving Father?

Leader Note: For some people, the concept of God correcting as a loving father is an easy one to understand and respond to. Yet, for others, it is difficult because their father was overbearing, distant, or even absent. This reality leads many to ignore or even reject the imagery of God as a loving Father. This is a mistake. The reality is that every earthly father falls short of the mark of perfection (Matthew 7:9-11). But our heavenly Father never falls short (Matthew 7:9-11). That is why he is the Father to the fatherless (Psalm 68:5).

6. Vs 11 - God's discipline is not pleasant at the time. It hurts. Yet, it produces a "harvest of righteousness and peace." This is especially true for those who are trained by it. The question is, how can we identify when something unpleasant or painful is God's correction or something else?

Leader Note: There is a lot that goes into this conversation. Here are a couple of thoughts.

- The account of Job's life clearly shows that not every instance of pain in this life is God's correction or punishment. The reality is that in a broken world, we should expect pain and difficulty. Oftentimes, we do not get a direct why for the pain and suffering that occurred this side of glory.
- Regardless of the source of our pain, God can be glorified by our trust in Him (John 9:1-4).
- We should not foolishly assume that we know whether or not difficulty in someone's life is God's correction. It is wise to leave room for the Holy Spirit to do what only the Spirit can do, convict (John 16:8).

PRAYER TIME

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