

## **Stay on the Job**

The reason I set the entire thirtieth chapter of Isaiah as the Scripture verse for this message is that, outside of certain passages from the Book of Jeremiah, there are several lessons to be learned from the prophet's message.

September 26 is coming, the day and the week that has been set aside for national prayer and repentance, alike on the National Mall in Washington D.C., in our own communities and in our own hearts. Regardless of what maneuvers the enemies of the Lord will likely take to prevent, lessen or somehow negate the efforts of believers on that day, no one can control what goes on in your heart. We still live in a time when no one can control what you say in the privacy of your own home. And – equally important – no one but you can control what steps we take, individually and collectively, after we have made things right with God.

At this point, you're probably thinking I'm going to speak on the election in November. Yes, who we vote for to the office of President of the United States is important, but there's more to it than just that office. There's even more to it than just the other offices at all levels of government, even the ones that get passing (if any) mention in news stories. There is what happens beyond Election Day, because for far too many of us, that's where our attention gets diverted to other matters.

Chapter 30 comes after an admonition by Isaiah against those who think that by keeping up the rituals of worship to the Lord that He is somehow obligated to defend the people from invading armies and perpetuate the prosperity they enjoyed. In many cases, people kept up appearances of Godliness and righteousness but permitted the worship of false gods to take root in the land – or even engaged in the practices themselves after they had “done their Godly deed for the day,” as it were. In Chapter 28, Isaiah compares their hypocrisy and corruption to tables full of vomit (Chapter 28:8) and warns against those that *come near Me with their mouths and honor Me with their lips but their hearts are far from Me* (29:13) and *Woe to them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord; for their works are in darkness and they say, ‘Who sees us’ and ‘Who knows us?’* (29:15). Chapter 30 begins with a concise statement of this:

*Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of Me, and cover with a covering, but not by My spirit, that they may lay sin upon sin: (30:1, GNV)*

Verses 2 and 3 cover the effects of such detachment from the Lord:

*Which walk forth to go down into Egypt (and have not asked at My mouth) to strengthen themselves with the strength of Pharaoh, and trust in the shadow of Egypt. But the strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. (GNV)*

The kings of Israel and Judah ceased to look to the Lord for your protection, and began to look to other countries and alliances with them for protection. This was costly to God's people in that they lost some of their treasure and, eventually, began to take up these other nations' ways, especially in the worship of their false gods which was clearly and expressly forbidden in the Commandments and the Covenant with the Lord. God vowed that this tactic would not work, and the people would regret taking this action as alliances with other nations would not stop the coming judgment upon Israel and Judah.

Today, many in government claim to be believers, and proudly state which mainstream denomination they belong to, but some can get rather testy if you bring up differences between the teachings of the Lord Jesus *or* (as much as it pains me to have to write this) their church and the lawmakers' practices in government, the bills they sponsor or vote for and the causes they embrace. The latter have developed a mind-set that believes Americans should cease to think of themselves as an *exceptional* (or, in other words, *blessed*) nation and to adopt the ways of countries in Europe, or possibly China. The current COVID-19 crisis has given some of these lawmakers an excuse to do something they would never have been able to carry out before the virus hit; restrict church services, the number of worshippers that can attend and even the type of worship that could be done in a service. A number of pastors are beginning to defy these restrictions, despite the threat of fines and possible imprisonment. The true intent of such people in government can also be summed up by Isaiah:

*They say to the seers, "See no more visions!" and to the prophets, "Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. Leave this way, get off this path, and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!" (30: 10, 11, NIV)*

How did things get this way? Simple – we as believers permitted this to happen. Individually, for the sake of the petty sins we have permitted ourselves to indulge in, and collectively, for the sake of caring more about our own comfort and prosperity and being well thought of by others. We have forgotten that there is a judgment for believers at the end of this life – not as to whether we get to stay in Heaven, but as to rewards for service, which are given or denied by God Himself. The day of prayer and repentance scheduled for this month should have taken place nearly seventy years ago when the first stirrings of the nation breaking away from worshipping God were being felt. We got caught up in the trappings of our position as the nation's leading superpower; we traded worship of the Creator for what He created, and replaced Him with a number of false gods; sports, science, pleasures, etc. Instead of depending solely upon God and doing His work, the nation depended on the shortcut of politics; that if the "right people" were elected to public office, all our problems would be solved. The issues that now so bitterly divide us can be traced back to one cause... abandoning God.

When Israel cried out to God for deliverance from slavery at the hands of the Egyptians, Notice that He did not simply wipe out Pharaoh, his court and his army all in one shot and tell Israel, "Okay, you're free – off you go." First he sent Moses and Aaron to confront the gods of Egypt, one by one, and demonstrate to not only the Israelites but to the Egyptians as well that their gods were false and that they were dealing with the only real Deity in existence. And as each plague sent by Him grew more severe, culminating in the death of the firstborn of the Egyptians, the court of Pharaoh grew more convinced of the truth of the Lord as God. Pharaoh (who in Egyptian mythology was himself supposed to be a god) was the last to turn.

The false gods of America are being judged by God, one by one, as He works to leave us no room for anything in our hearts but Him. Our faith in our scientific abilities, represented by the U.S. space program, was judged by the Challenger and Columbia disasters. The idols of sport are now being

brought down by God as He permits the athletes' own *hubris* to drive people away from the arenas. And as the endless sniping and backbiting in the name of politics reaches a fever pitch as the election draws near, the people's opinion of government reaches ever newer lows. And lurking beneath all this are the idols that stay in darkness, dealing with the sacrifice of children. God is bringing all this into the light to be seen by the people, who are already showing revulsion at the idea. (Notice the number of *Save the Children* signs beginning to be seen at some protests?) *Then* He will make His move.

When He does, as people who say we believe in Him... what will our reaction be? What if the election turns out not the way we think or pray for? What if things have to get even worse before they get better? What if God decides to show His people that He works on His agenda and schedule, and not our own? Will we continue to do as He asks of us or throw up our hands and walk away from Him?

What God wants us to do is the same thing He told us to do before His return to Heaven: *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.* (Acts 1:8) No matter what happens in the world, the mission remains. He needs His people to stay the course and on the job.

Do you know Him? You've probably heard "God loves you" more times than you can count, but have you ever considered just what that love means? That God doesn't want us – and, yes, that includes you – to die in our sins, be separated from Him and be lost forever? That He took the punishment our sins deserved upon Himself in the form of His Son, Jesus of Nazareth, satisfying His Holiness, but opening the way for us to be reconciled to Him? And, by raising Jesus from the dead, he also promises that those who believe in Him will live with Him forever? You can know this love by:

- Admit to yourself that you have sinned against God, and repent (which means to agree with God that those sins are wrong and deliberately turn away from them).
- Ask God to forgive you and accept Jesus as your Savior, which means to accept His sacrificial death as the payment for your sins and to live for Him. Scripture says that, *If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.* (Romans 10:9) I offer the following as a guide for you to pray; you can put it in your own words if you wish, but the important thing is that you speak – out loud – to God from your heart in all honesty with Him: ***Lord Jesus Christ, I ask You now to please come into my life. I believe that You are the Son of God, that You died to pay for my sins and were raised from the dead by God the Father. I accept You now as my Savior and as my Lord; please forgive my sins and give me a new heart to live for You and I will serve You all the days of my life. Please do this now, I pray, in Your Name, Amen.***
- Tell others about your decision, because the first thing Satan is going to try to do is persuade you that what you just did never really happened. Telling others helps to firmly establish your decision in your own spirit.
- Get a Bible, and start reading. There are a number of modern English translations available to help with your understanding (the New King James Version is a good one). I recommend starting with the Gospel of John, then the other Gospels, then the rest of the New Testament and the Old Testament.

If you prayed that and meant it, then God says you are a New Creation in Him (refer to 2 Corinthians 5:17), but you'll probably know that in your own heart without having to be reminded. Welcome to the Body of Christ, and congratulations on the best decision you will ever have made!

Please contact us if you have so that we can give you some help and direction in your new walk with Jesus.

For the Glory of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ  
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