

The Salvation of the Remnant Isaiah 10:5-34

Before the reading, we'll pray. Please join me in prayer. Father in heaven, we do ask that by your Spirit, you would indeed bless your word to us. Please help me as I speak. Please help us all as we hear. Please give us ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts that understand and obey. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Isaiah 10, starting at verse 5: "Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury! ⁶ Against a godless nation I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. ⁷ But he does not so intend, and his heart does not so think; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few; ⁸ for he says: 'Are not my commanders all kings?' ⁹ Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus? ¹⁰ As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols, whose carved images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria, ¹¹ shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols as I have done to Samaria and her images?"

"¹² When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes. ¹³ For he says: 'By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; I remove the boundaries of peoples, and plunder their treasures; like a bull I bring down those who sit on thrones. ¹⁴ My hand has found like a nest the wealth of the peoples; and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken, so I have gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved a wing or opened the mouth or chirped.'

"¹⁵ Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? As if a rod should wield him who lifts it, or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood! ¹⁶ Therefore the Lord GOD of hosts will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors, and under his glory a burning will be kindled, like the burning of fire. ¹⁷ The light of Israel will become a fire, and his Holy One a flame, and it will burn and devour his thorns and briars in one day. ¹⁸ The glory of his forest and of his fruitful land the LORD will destroy, both soul and body, and it will be as when a sick man wastes away. ¹⁹ The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few that a child can write them down.

"²⁰ In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. ²¹ A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. ²² For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. ²³ For the Lord GOD of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth.

"²⁴ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: 'O my people, who dwell in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrians when they strike with the rod and lift up their staff against you as the Egyptians did. ²⁵ For in a very little while my fury will come to an end, and my anger will be directed to their destruction. ²⁶ And the LORD of hosts will wield against them a whip, as when he struck

Midian at the rock of Oreb. And his staff will be over the sea, and he will lift it as he did in Egypt. ²⁷ And in that day his burden will depart from your shoulder, and his yoke from your neck; and the yoke will be broken because of the fat.’

“²⁸ He has come to Aiath; he has passed through Migron; at Michmash he stores his baggage; ²⁹ they have crossed over the pass; at Geba they lodge for the night; Ramah trembles; Gibeah of Saul has fled. ³⁰ Cry aloud, O daughter of Gallim! Give attention, O Laishah! O poor Anathoth! ³¹ Madmenah is in flight; the inhabitants of Gebim flee for safety. ³² This very day he will halt at Nob; he will shake his fist at the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

“³³ Behold, the Lord GOD of hosts will lop the boughs with terrifying power; the great in height will be hewn down, and the lofty will be brought low. ³⁴ He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an axe, and Lebanon will fall by the Majestic One.” Amen.

As I said to you at the start of our study of the book of Isaiah, you could take a surface-level reading of Isaiah, and you could say Isaiah is the prophecy of God’s dealing with His covenant people. They’ve broken covenant, they will be punished, they will return, Jerusalem will be rebuilt. That is the surface-level treatment of the book of Isaiah. That is what Isaiah was saying to the people of his day.

But when we look at how the texts that we come across in the book of Isaiah have been utilized and used in the New Testament, we’re forced to come to the conclusion that Isaiah was not only speaking to the people of his day. He was not only prophesying of the things that were to happen in Judea and Israel from his time—let’s say 600, 550 B.C.—for the next couple of hundred years, through to the carrying off into Babylon, and the return of the people, and then a sort of 400-year gap—no prophets prophesy, and then comes John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Isaiah is speaking to all of God’s people, at all times. That’s why the apostles in writing Scripture, and Paul in writing his epistles, are communicating to us using the book of Isaiah, taking passages from Isaiah and applying them directly to the Lord Jesus, telling us that the Lord Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises God makes to His people through prophets such as Isaiah.

Notice—or I hope you’ve already noticed—that our reading earlier this morning from the book of Romans chapter 9, is quoted in Isaiah. What’s Paul speaking of in Romans chapter 9, verse 27? He’s speaking of the fact that God, by His sovereign will, has chosen *not* to bring the genetic, or the biological offspring of Abraham, on the whole, into the church. Only a remnant of them have put faith in the Messiah. God, by His sovereign will, has chosen that the gospel is to be preached out in the nations amongst all the Gentile nations, that the church is to be populated from all the world.

As we saw, Paul quoted from our passage in Isaiah: “For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea,” Isaiah chapter 10, verse 22, “only a remnant of them will return.” Paul quoted that, discussing the reason why God had not made the people of Israel, or the biological offspring of Abraham, obedient to the gospel. They would not accept the Lord Jesus Christ. And he spoke of how he wished that they would. He would almost willingly call himself accursed, if only they

could be won for the gospel. And there are other examples that we've found in our study, where things that have been said by Isaiah have been used in the New Testament.

So first of all, we've got to try and understand, How do we get from the book of Isaiah to the New Testament? What's a reasonable—I'll use a technical term—"hermeneutic" to get from the prophecy of Isaiah to the fulfillment in the New Testament, when you know that Isaiah is speaking to his people in his time, and yet somehow or other, his words are being used for us, in our time, for the church in all time? How do you reasonably get from there to there? So let's just talk about that.

Remember, as we looked at the first part of Isaiah chapter 9, we saw the great promises of the child to be born, the Son who was given, and we were told all sorts of things about this coming Saviour—Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. We know from our studies that this is Jesus. Isaiah was prophesying of the coming of Jesus, the Saviour of the faithful. He's the Saviour. He's the Messiah. He's the one that Isaiah wanted his people to look for, to look to, to put their faith in.

Remember, the Old Testament saints who were justified by faith were justified by faith in the same Jesus in whom we are justified. They were justified by their faith in the coming Jesus. The faithful in Isaiah's day heard Isaiah preach of the coming deliverance, the coming Saviour, whom God was sending. And they trusted that God would indeed send the deliverer. That was their justifying faith. They trusted the promises of God.

We look to that same deliverer. We look to Scripture. We see that He has come and that He has fulfilled God the Father's holy requirements, and that as the fulfillment of those requirements, He is our Saviour. So we look to a Saviour whose work is completed. Not only that, He's now King of kings and Lord of lords. We look to a Saviour who reigns from heaven. We address our prayers to the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. But it's the same justifying faith.

Here's the thing. The question that arises is, Okay, but how do I sort the jumble out? Do you understand what I mean by "jumble"? It seems at one moment Isaiah is speaking to the people of his day about a Saviour who's coming, years into the future. The next moment, he's speaking to them about a threatened invasion that might just come tomorrow. And then he goes back to speaking of the Saviour who's coming years in the future. And then he goes and speaks about a remnant who will return from the captives and come back to Zion. And then he speaks of the Saviour. And you say to yourself, "How does all that fit together? How does all that work?"

Well here's the way that I think we need to approach it. Every fulfillment along the way of the prophet's words is a pointer and a promise to the faithful that the Saviour is coming. The Saviour is coming. It's a progressive revelation of the redemptive work of God.

So Isaiah gives them the big promise—the Saviour is coming. The reconciliation is coming. The Messiah is coming. And then he gives them the stepping stones along the way. So when you see that Israel falls to Assyria—and later on he's going to say, And when you see that Judea will fall to Babylon; And when you see that the kings will be slaughtered; And when you see that from the people in Babylon there will be a faithful remnant; And when you see that the faithful

remnant will return back to Jerusalem—he's saying that all of those are steps along the way, necessary steps that get us from here to salvation. Everything you see, take it as a sign and a confirmation that this great Saviour, this final salvation, is coming.

And that's how you can understand, then, that Isaiah's prophecy seems to jump from his present time right now, off into his distant future, the coming of the Messiah—and then immediately jumps straight back into his present time, to him, the "right now," and constantly seems to jump forward, backward, forward, backward. That's what we need to understand.

So when we read in today's text, for example, passages referred to in the New Testament, which seem to indicate that the text was speaking to people 600 years in the future, that's how you can understand that. He's speaking to the people of his day, he's speaking to all the faithful people. To the people of his day, he is promising a far-off deliverance, and he's also promising a relationship with God, by faith, right then, in their time. I'll try and explain and help us to see that a little more as we get into the text here this morning.

There's two main points here in the text this morning. If you haven't noticed them, the two main points are, one: the sovereignty of God—the overruling, all-encompassing sovereignty of God. He rules and reigns over all the nations, even the wicked. And the kingdom of Assyria was certainly wicked, idolatrous, cruel, brutal. And point two: the salvation of the faithful remnant. They're the two main points in our text this morning.

The Sovereignty of God

The sovereignty of God. We hear all about that from verses 5 to 19. Then we hear about the salvation of the faithful remnant, from verses 20 to 27. Then finally, we get some application, some further explanation from Isaiah of how things are going to be happening. Let's start looking, then, at our text.

As I said, first section we need to look at, verses 5 to 19. I won't read it to us again. We really only just heard it. I'll just pick a few points along the way that I want us to see. Look first at all at verse 6: "Against a godless nation I send him,"—now that's God speaking of the king of Assyria—"and against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets."

And now I ask you a question: How well do you remember the things that have happened already in the book of Isaiah? How well do you remember the names that Isaiah gave to his two sons? How well do you remember that? Turn back to Isaiah chapter 8. Isaiah had two sons that we're told about, and those two sons have particular names.

Isaiah chapter 8. Let's look at verse 1: "Then the LORD said to me, 'Take a large tablet and write on it in common characters, "Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz."² And I will get reliable witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to attest for me.'³ And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, 'Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz;⁴ for before the boy knows how to cry "My father" or "My mother," the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria.'"

Now it's quite a mouthful, isn't it? Maher-shalal-hash-baz. Do you remember what it means? "The spoil speeds and the prey hastens." The spoil speeds and the prey hastens. Now just turn back to Isaiah chapter 10, starting from the last half of verse 6: "I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder." The words there, the phrases, are telling us to remember Isaiah's previous prediction through the naming of his son. "Take the spoil and seize the plunder."

So what's he saying? He's saying, "That earlier prophecy that I made is already being fulfilled. The prey is being taken, the plunder is being taken. The spoil is being seized. You see, this passage before us has actually got many references back into the book of Isaiah. What do we get here? Notice the nature of this king of Assyria. Hear his boastfulness, just looking down at chapter 10, verse 13. ¹³For he says: 'By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; I remove the boundaries of peoples, and plunder their treasures; like a bull I bring down those who sit on thrones. ¹⁴My hand has found like a nest the wealth of the peoples; and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken, so I have gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved a wing or opened the mouth or chirped.'"

The boastfulness. The king of Assyria: "I've got nothing to fear. I'm the great invader. I'm the great general of the armies. No one is as smart as I am. No one is as capable a general as I am. I can do great things. I can come against any nation. They all fall before me. They're so easily defeated, it's like I'm just grabbing a hen's eggs while she's off the nest." He thinks he's great. He thinks he's wonderful. But what is he? What is he actually?

Just look back at verse 5: "Woe to Assyria, the rod of *my* anger." Whose anger? God's anger. "The staff in their hands is *my* fury! ⁶Against a godless nation *I* send him, and against the people of my wrath *I* command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets." He doesn't know who he is. He doesn't see who he is. The boasting of the wicked.

The boasting of the wicked. Think of what's happening in our political situation today. Think of how the wicked seem to think that they've got all the aces that could possibly be dealt out. They've got the strongest hand in the deck. They'll get the laws the way they want them, and people like you and I, we'd better learn to shut our mouth. We'd better learn to bend our knee to the gods of Sodom and Gomorrah. That's their attitude, particularly at the moment in the USA, but it's almost as bad here in Australia. They're so boastful. They're so certain that history is on our side. I mean, what a stupid phrase—"We want to be on the right side of history," they say.

Who decides what the right side of history is? God. I'm sure that the king of Assyria thought that he was on the right side of history. He was establishing a mighty empire that would last for hundreds of years. He would put his sons on the throne, etc., etc., etc. But you know what happens to Assyria when they come up against the nation of Judah? Now, they're being used as a rod of God's anger, and they get right to the very gates of Jerusalem, and they discipline Judea. Judea loses the wealth that it would normally gain from the surrounding countryside. But they come to the gates of Jerusalem, and there they boast.

There's a character called the Rabshakeh. We're not sure what the Rabshakeh was. It would seem it probably means "general over all the king's army," something like that. The Rabshakeh boasts, "How are you going to stand up against me? How are you going to stand up against this army that the king of Assyria has sent that stands here behind my back? What are you going to fight us with? I'll tell you what," he says, "we'll give you some chariots, if you can put some men in them so we could at least have a decent fight out here on the plain. Is your God going to protect you? He hasn't protected any other nation. You think He's going to stand up for you?"

And what are we told? He lost 185,000 men in one night. The people of Judea, the people of Jerusalem, didn't even go out from the gates in that night. The hand of the Lord struck his army. They think they're mighty. They think they're powerful. They think they can do as they please. They think, when they see God's people being humbled, when they see God's people suffering under the hand of God's providence, they think to themselves, "God has abandoned them." Or they think to themselves, "Their God is no God. Our god is the great god." Or they think to themselves, "There is no God. Therefore, we can do as we please."

What did we see in Psalm 2? "The Lord holds them in derision." He holds them in derision. They think they're great and powerful, and they think that everything's going to fall out their way, and they're going to be standing on the right side of history. God's got other ideas. He has other plans. He deals with His people faithfully. His church will never fail. We have that from the very words of Jesus Himself: "Upon this rock I build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Paul, in Romans chapter 8, verse 28, tells us that "all things work together for good for those who love God, for those are called according to His purpose."

It's working together for good, for us, for God's people. That might be hard to see. But the thing is, with God, you can lose a hundred battles in a row with the world, and still win the war, because in the end, there's only one battle that counts, and that's the battle of faith. So you can lose a hundred battles, but still be on the victorious side. God will bring them down in His good time. There's a line in Deuteronomy, "Their foot will slip in due time." They will fall in God's good time. And that's the king of Assyria. He's so confident. He's so sure of himself. Look at verse 7 of Isaiah chapter 10. What does God say? "⁷ But he does not so intend, and his heart does not so think; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few."

I know most of you have heard me say it before, but in a way, all God has in this world are servants. He has faithful and obedient servants and He has wicked and evil servants, and He uses servants according to their nature. Even the evil ones serve God. In their moral rebellion, in their hatred of God, in their rejection of God's law, they are indeed the enemies of God. They are indeed under the judgment of God.

That's why in Scripture, if you pray your way through the Psalms, how often are you going to find yourself praying that the wicked are crushed, their arms are broken, their teeth are broken, their children are destroyed? How often are you going to pray that God will rise up in judgment and destroy them? Because they're God servants. They're our enemy, they're His servant. God has faithful and obedient servants, who knowingly, lovingly, faithfully deliberately obey God. And He uses them to His glory. He has wicked and rebellious servants, who hate God, are

immoral, and yet even in the hands of a sovereign and mighty God, they have their uses and are used according to their nature.

I used to work on a farm that was reasonably close to a main highway. We had a horrible, horrible dog on that farm. It was a German Shepherd, crossed with something else. You didn't want to get too close to it. It was the kind of dog that you put the feed out before it can actually get to you, and then you stepped back. It served its purpose. What was its purpose? The purpose of that almost black Alsatian crossed with something else, with its savage territorial protectiveness, was to live among our purebred calves and make sure no one stole them.

You see, we were close to a main highway, and there was a lot of value in the livestock we had on that place—and this was about 30 years ago. Some of those calves' blood value, the value of their genetic line, was \$1,000 the day they were born. And the easiest thing in the world to do is to steal a calf. They're quiet, they're used to being handled. If you can get into a calf pen, and you can find some use in somebody else's stock, you can steal them.

And so we had a vicious dog. It was a horrible dog. It never came near the house. We wouldn't have let it near the house. If it had started to come near the house, we probably would've shot it and got another dog. It lived in the calf pens. It was fed next to the calves. It protected something of value. It had a use. The evil and the wicked in the world have a use in the hands of God. They have a value. They have a use to God.

But here's the thing: God uses His faithful and obedient servants and draws them on into eternal life, and rewards them with eternal blessing and happiness. God uses His wicked and rebellious servants, but destroys them for the things that they do. He puts them down like a mongrel dog. He destroys them for the things that they do. He judges them according to their nature, and He has the right to do this, for He is God. None of those who are wicked and are serving God in their wickedness are in any way innocent.

I want you to think, now, about the trial and the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. First question: Was it planned by God? Absolutely. Is it the means of our salvation? Absolutely. Was Judas innocent? He did exactly what he wanted to do, according to his faithless, hateful, and unbelieving nature. And it says it would have been better for Judas if he had not been born. Those were the words of the Lord Jesus Himself: It would have been better for that man not to have been born at all. But he was used according to his nature.

Were the high priests, who had a kangaroo court trial, a false trial, a parody of justice over Jesus, and condemned Him to death—were they guilty of their own actions? Yes. They broke the law of God, the very Ten Commandments themselves. There's one there that says, "You shall not bear false witness." There's another there that says, "You shall not commit murder." There's another there that says, "You shall not covet." Why did they hate Jesus? They were jealous of their own petty little operations, their own petty little public notoriety. They broke the very commandments of God in their hatred and in their unbelief. And in breaking the very commandments of God in their hatred and their unbelief, God used them to accomplish the salvation of His elect people. Even so, they're responsible for what they did. They did it according to their nature; therefore, God is right in judging them.

Just turn quickly to Proverbs chapter 16, and there I just want to look at verse 4: “The LORD,” or Yahweh, “has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.” Even the wicked for the day of trouble. Even our fallen foe, the serpent whose head Jesus has crushed, the Devil himself—even the Devil himself is naught now but a wicked and rebellious servant, whom God uses for His purposes, according to His will—even the rebel himself.

And understand something—every one of us, in human terms, is as nothing compared to the power of that fallen angel. When nothing is compared to him, we should not boast, in spiritual terms. We should never boast about this. But he is under the thumb of our Lord and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he can do nothing, absolutely nothing to the saints of God, apart from the will of God. You say, Can he do harm? Yes, he can do harm, according to the will of God, according to the purposes of God. That’s what the Apostle Paul learnt.

Do we remember? Turn to Second Corinthians for just a moment, chapter 12. We’ll start reading from verse 1: “¹I must go on boasting.” Now Paul is here defending himself against the accusation that he’s not much of an apostle. He actually gets quite sarcastic in Second Corinthians, and talks about the fact that the Corinthians are chasing after *SUPER* apostles. “You want *SUPER* apostles,” he says. He’s defending himself as a genuine apostle.

“¹I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. ³And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—⁴and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. ⁵On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses—⁶though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me. ⁷So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’”

Now I don’t want you to worry too much trying to work out what the “thorn” was. No one knows. Paul doesn’t specify it. But he does specify something here. He’s being harassed by a messenger of Satan. And I can tell you that the word behind “messenger” is “angelus”—an angel, a spirit, a demon. He’s being harassed by a messenger of Satan, for what purpose? To keep him from becoming conceited. And God said to him, “No, I’m sorry, Paul. You are going to suffer this. The reason you are going to suffer this is to keep you in a humble state of mind. My grace is sufficient for you.” You see, an evil one is being used to accomplish the purposes of God in the life of a Christian—an apostle, no less.

So can an evil spirit harm a Christian? Yes. Harass, harm. Why? To accomplish the purposes of God. God will allow His people to suffer, in their due times, for the purpose of making them, or conforming them, into the image and the likeness of Christ.

And so we as people should never boast against Satan or fallen spirits. They are powerful spiritual entities. We should not imagine that we are anything else, other than servants of God, saved by grace, cleansed in the blood of Christ. We do actually have authority and power in this world, but it all resides in Christ. It comes from Christ. He is the King.

So our power comes from being in Christ, and being in the likeness of Christ. You don't walk in the power of Christ when you're walking in sin, my friends. I mentioned, we used to keep a vicious mongrel dog to protect the calves. Well, I'm telling you now, you would've been a fool to vault over that fence and land in the calf pen. Once you're landed in the calf pen, you're in the dog's territory. You didn't want to do that.

You can't live in sin, you can't vault out of the likeness of Christ into the world, land in the slime, land in sin, and imagine that Satan can't touch you because you say you believe in Jesus. That's a fool's paradise; that's an idiot's talk. All right, we simply cannot do that. If you walk into the reach of God's attack dog, God's attack dog will get to bite you. It's as simple as that. There's no doubt about it, he will get to bite you.

So my friends, we must walk in the imitation and the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And our power and our authority come by the Holy Spirit, in and through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should not be boastful, we should be humble. We should be humble. Paul was maintained in humility. You could almost say that, in a way, this evil spirit that was harassing him, and some of the versions say "buffeting" him, was enabled to do so because of Paul's tendency to pride. Be warned. Be warned. God uses the wicked according to His purposes for the good of His people, both individually and corporately. And here, in our text this morning, God is using a wicked king to accomplish His purposes for the good of His people.

The Salvation of the Faithful Remnant

Let's keep looking at the text. The second main point: The salvation of the faithful remnant. We're looking at verses 20 to 27. And there's a fair bit here that ties back into parts of the book of Isaiah that we've already looked at, so let's read it, and keep your thumb on that page, and we'll just look at a few references in Isaiah, to see how Isaiah is drawing some threads together to make a clear statement.

“²⁰In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.” Now keep your thumb there, and turn back to Isaiah chapter 1, verse 9. This was also quoted in Romans chapter 9. “⁹If the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors”—and I'll put in brackets there, “a remnant”—“If the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom,” or “we would have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.” The remnant. The remnant that is being saved.

Move forward to Isaiah chapter 4, verse 2. Now this is the prophecy concerning the branch of the Lord. Verse 2: “²In that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel.” “Survivors”—think in bracket, “remnant”—the remainders, the ones God has preserved.

“³ And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, ⁴ when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning.” The remnant.

Move forward to chapter 7. Now here we come to the name of Isaiah’s other son. Remember when Isaiah went to see the wicked king of Judah, Ahaz, God told him to take a son with him. And what was the name of that son? Chapter 7, verse 3: “³ And the LORD said to Isaiah, ‘Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son.’” What does Shear-jashub mean? The remnant will return, or the remnant shall return. “You and Shear-jashub your son.” Why? Because that’s what’s going to happen. The people are going to be carried off and a remnant will return.

Now just turn over to Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6. The promise: “⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Now turn back to Isaiah chapter 10. We’ll start again at verse 20 and keep reading: “²⁰ In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them.” Now stop. Who was “him who struck them”? Remember Ahaz attempted to form an alliance with Assyria. The people of God will not trust in foreign powers. They will not trust in him who struck them, “but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. ²¹ A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.” The mighty God.

So you see, Isaiah is prophesying here to his people about God’s preserving of His faithful people, but he’s also tying that preservation to the coming Saviour. That phrase, “the mighty God”—just flick your page back; it’s one page back in my Bible. What was one of the names of this coming Saviour, the child who was born, the Son who was given? “His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God.”

And so this remnant, this faithful remnant that Isaiah is speaking of, are those who are trusting in God’s coming deliverance. Their faith is in the Messiah. They will return. They will be preserved. By what means? Faith. Faith. Faith in the Holy One. Faith. Faith in the one who will be called the Mighty God. A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the Mighty God.

Let’s keep reading. Verse 22: “²² For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness.” Now remember, that was quoted in the earlier reading we took from Romans chapter 9, speaking of why only a remnant of the children of Abraham were being converted to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—because of the sovereignty of God; because that was God’s plan.

“Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. ²³ For the Lord GOD of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth. ²⁴ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: ‘O my people, who dwell in Zion.’” Stop there. “O my people, who dwell in Zion.”

Who's He speaking to? Who are His people? I mean, what distinction has Isaiah made from the very start of his speaking? God's people are not God's people just because they live in Jerusalem. They're not God's people just because they have a priesthood. They're not God's people just because they've been circumcised. From the very start of the book of Isaiah, who have been God's people? The faithful. Those who actually worship and tremble. Remember one of Isaiah's original accusations was that there was worship, but no fear. There was no reverence in the worship of the people. They took the name of Yahweh upon their lips, they claimed to be the people of God, but they were not. And judgment was coming.

So here he says, ²⁴ "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: 'O my people, who dwell in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrians when they strike with the rod and lift up their staff against you as the Egyptians did.'" "My people, who dwell in Zion." So these people who dwell in Zion, they're not God's people *because* they dwell in Zion; they're God's people because they are faithful; they live in Zion. "My people, who dwell in Zion."

And then God compares the suffering that is coming to what happened in Egypt. "Do not be afraid of the Assyrians when they strike with the rod and lift up their staff against you as the Egyptians did." ²⁵ For in a very little while my fury will come to an end, and my anger will be directed to their destruction." Now verse 26: ²⁶ "And the LORD of hosts will wield against them a whip, as when he struck Midian at the rock of Oreb. And his staff will be over the sea, and he will lift it as he did in Egypt." Remember, that's speaking of the drowning of the armies of Pharaoh. And that reference of Midian and the rock of Oreb, that's where Gideon slaughtered the Midianites. That was the victory in the book of Judges.

But I want you to look back now at Isaiah chapter 9, verse 4: ⁴ "For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian." Now it says in Isaiah 9, verses 2 and 3 that they've walked in darkness, seen a great light, they're rejoicing, the nation has been multiplied, and their joy has been increased. Why? Because the Saviour has come.

What's the fulfillment, then, of this promise God gives to them that He will strike as He does at the rock of Oreb, or He will strike as He did when He brought the sea in upon the Egyptians? Verse 27: ²⁷ "And in that day his burden will depart from your shoulder, and his yoke from your neck; and the yoke will be broken because of the fat." Now remember, Isaiah chapter 9, ⁴ "For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian."

So what am I saying here? God's promising a deliverance for His faithful people in that time. The deliverance is the deliverance of faith. They have faith in the coming Messiah. The remnant will return. They will return to Jerusalem. But at the same time, these promises are the promises of salvation. They were never being saved to live in the Holy Land on this world. They were never being saved to live in Israel, or Palestine, or whatever you want to call it. What were they being saved for? Eternal life in the presence of God. They're going to live in the new creation.

That's our destination, my friends. That's the destination of all the faithful. Where are we going to live? New heavens, new earth, new creation—by faith, through faith. In what? In Christ. Go back to the time of Isaiah and nothing was different. The promises were the promises of eternal life, through faith in the Messiah.

Now, did they understand that? Probably not. Did they have that spelled-out New Testament theology? Probably not. I imagine they had a very basic, simple faith: "My faith is in God; I trust in the coming Saviour; I know that in God I have life." That may well be the content of saving faith in that time. They couldn't talk about, you know, Christology, and eschatology, and soteriology. Sorry about all those words, but you know, they couldn't talk about all those things. They had what God had given them at the time, and they were faithful to the revelation they had received.

So the promises are to them, and the promises are to us. And we with the New Testament can look back at the promises they received, and see that there's only one answer, there's only one fulfillment—the fulfillment is Jesus Christ, the eternally begotten Son of God, who took upon Himself flesh, who became incarnate. The promises are the promises of the gospel—salvation in Christ. And so, we can receive the promises that Isaiah gave to the people of Judah 500 to 600 years before Christ ever came. We receive those same promises, and we rejoice in their fulfillment. We rejoice in their fulfillment.

It's a wonderful thing. God's word is just a wonderful thing—the promises of God, the redemptive history that God has laid out before us, the things that He's been doing over thousands of years, step by step, bit by bit. And every promise along the way, points to whom? Christ, the fulfillment of all promises, the King of all creation. You know, I just want to fall to my knees right now and worship for the things that God shows us in His word, for the things that God declares to His faithful in His word.

O my friends, if the things that God is declaring in His word don't make you want to worship, there's something wrong with your theology. Whatever you might believe, there's something wrong with your theology if the word of God does not make your heart rejoice, and does not make your knee want to bend.

Let's finish our passage off. In verses 28 to 32, Isaiah speaks of how this king of Assyria is going to sweep. He swept all through the Northern Kingdom. Everything in the Northern Kingdom has fallen by the wayside, as easy as you like. He's taken everything of value from the Northern Kingdom, and he thinks to himself, "And now, I'm going to go for Jerusalem. I'm going to go for the throne of David."

So Isaiah, using sort of very poetic language—you know, he talks about how he'll come to Aiath, he'll pass through Migron at Michmash, he stores his baggage—that's for the final attack on the city. Ramah trembles, Gibeah of Saul has fled. They're the names of Jewish towns. ³⁰ Cry aloud, O daughter of Gallim! Give attention, O Laishah! O poor Anathoth! ³¹ Madmenah is in flight; the inhabitants of Gebim flee for safety. ³² This very day he will halt at Nob; he will shake his fist at the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem."

You see, Judah was also being disciplined. The Northern Kingdom being crushed, taken away into captivity, will never be restored. It will never be restored, though we know from First and Second Kings, and First and Second Chronicles, that a remnant of those people did return to worshipping the true God at Jerusalem, that revivals had happened during the time of Hezekiah and Josiah. They called the remnant back in, and there was a faithful people called in, who believed the promises of God. But the Northern Kingdom—finished, never to return, never to be built again. But now Jerusalem herself is under threat.

Verse 33: ³³ Behold, the Lord GOD of hosts will lop the boughs with terrifying power; the great in height will be hewn down, and the lofty will be brought low. ³⁴ He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an axe, and Lebanon will fall by the Majestic One.” When the king of Assyria gets to Jerusalem, he’s done his dash. That’s the end of his marauding. That’s the end of his conquering, and it’s almost the end of his kingdom. Assyria will be destroyed in turn by Babylon, and Babylon will be the nation that God uses to take Judea into captivity.

The last thing I want to leave you with before we close is this—(the last thing’s going to have a few points). First of all, “He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an axe”, verse 34, “and Lebanon will fall by the Majestic One.” Then look at how chapter 11, verse 1 starts: “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.”

So what’s God saying? It’s going to be like a forest felled. Nothing but stumps. Nothing but stumps. Israel—a felled forest. Judah—a felled forest. Nothing but stumps. But in one of those stumps dwells the life of God. “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse.” And Jesse is the father of David. So there’s going to come forth a shoot from the household of King David. All looks dead, but actually, there’s life. All looks dead, but actually, there’s life.

So what are we to learn? God’s people are always being saved through God’s providence. Furthermore, God’s salvation, the final salvation of His people, is accompanied with the destruction of His enemies. God’s final salvation is accompanied with the day of wrath. We’ve looked at this a number of times, but it’s got to be said. God will save His people, and He will destroy Assyria. God will save His people, and He will destroy Babylon. God will save His people, and He will destroy His enemies. Think of the Exodus. In chapters 14 and 15 in the book of Exodus, we see the people of Israel walk through the water on dry land, and yet that same water destroys the armies of Pharaoh.

Turn quickly to Matthew chapter 25. We’re going to look at verses 31 to 46. Jesus is speaking of the final judgment: ³¹ ‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.” ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And

when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?”⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.””

Now let’s just stop and clear up a few things. That’s not talking about salvation by works. It’s talking about the character of someone who has been transformed by faith. In the end, what we are is always displayed in what we do. Christian, you live a Christ-like life. If you don’t live a Christ-like life, don’t call yourself a Christian. It’s as simple as that. If you are truly justified by faith, then you have been empowered by the Holy Spirit, your nature has been changed, and *because* you are justified by faith, *because* you are granted life in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, you live in Christ-likeness. And so you do the things that God wants to see.

Remember at the start, I said to you, God uses people according to their nature. So, God uses Christians to do good in the world, according to their nature. Christians must be transformed into the likeness of Christ. And we must be constantly *being* transformed into the likeness of Christ, so that God will use us according to our nature.

By the way, if it was salvation by works, don’t you think they would have known that they’d done the good works necessary for salvation? But they don’t know. Why? Because they’ve only been acting according to their nature. The righteous will answer, “When? When did we see—when did we do those good things?” They’re only acting according to their nature. Christians, acting according to their nature, are barely aware of the fact that they’re doing something different to the world around them, because we’re only doing what God is planting in our hearts to do. God is working to will and to work for His good pleasure—Philippians, chapter 2. We do good things because that’s the nature we’ve been given.

But let’s look at the wicked: “⁴¹ ‘Then he will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.” ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?” ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, “Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.” ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.””

They live according to their nature, and they are judged according to their nature. And note, the salvation—ultimate, final salvation—is accompanied by the destruction of God’s enemies. Final salvation is always accompanied by the destruction of God’s enemies. Revelation chapter 20, verses 11 to 15, what happens? God’s servants are saved. What happens to those who are not God’s servants? They’re cast into the lake of fire. They’re cast into the lake of fire, according to their nature. God has used them, but that does not justify their existence. It does not make them in any way innocent. God has used them according to their nature, and He will judge their nature, for they are what they want to be. They are as wicked as they wish to be. They’re doing their own desires, and they will be judged on the basis of those desires.

My friends, when it comes to salvation, you can be confident that you have been saved. If you are in Christ, you have been saved. It can be put in the past tense. If you are in Christ, you can

be confident that you are being saved. You can be put in the present tense. Even now, we are being saved. Even now, Christ, our great High Priest and King, intercedes for us, protects us, intermediates for us, watches over His people, makes all things work together for their good.

We are being saved right now. And on that final day, when his judgment is revealed, when His wrath is made known to all of humanity, to all of the wicked—in that final day, we *will* be saved. We *will* be saved. God is doing great things, He has done great things, He will do great things.

God uses Assyria to discipline His people, to destroy an idolatrous kingdom, to reduce Jerusalem to almost nothing. And then He lifts His hand off. Then He punishes Assyria, according to their nature. Final salvation always involves, always involves, the destruction of God's enemies.

And so, my friends, finally, make sure, be certain, be prayerful, be begging, be calling upon Christ for salvation. Be sure that you are in Christ, that you have been saved, that you are being saved, that you will be saved. Surrender to Christ, and all the promises of God—all the blessings of God, all the good things that God has laid up for His people—become your inheritance, become the very foundation of your life, become your life itself. Seek forgiveness in Christ. That's always been God's plan. Let's close.

Our Father, we do thank you indeed that glorious things are revealed in your word for your people. Father, we thank you that by your Holy Spirit, you make your people your own. You conform us into the likeness and the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray, Father, that this gospel would go forth into all the world, that people would be called to repentance. We pray that you would give us opportunity to preach, and the courage to take every opportunity. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.