

The Fading Flower of the Drunkards

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Isaiah

By Scott T. Brown

Bible Text: Isaiah 28:1-13

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Hope Baptist Church

3721 Quarry Road

Wake Forest, NC 27587

Website: www.hopebaptistchurch.info

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/hopebaptistnc

Isaiah 28:1-13

1 Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, Whose glorious beauty is a fading flower Which is at the head of the verdant valleys, To those who are overcome with wine! 2 Behold, the Lord has a mighty and strong one, Like a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, Like a flood of mighty waters overflowing, Who will bring them down to the earth with His hand. 3 The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, Will be trampled underfoot; 4 And the glorious beauty is a fading flower Which is at the head of the verdant valley, Like the first fruit before the summer, Which an observer sees; He eats it up while it is still in his hand. 5 In that day the Lord of hosts will be For a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty To the remnant of His people, 6 For a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, And for strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate. 7 But they also have erred through wine, And through intoxicating drink are out of the way; The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, They are swallowed up by wine, They are out of the way through intoxicating drink; They err in vision, they stumble in judgment. 8 For all tables are full of vomit and filth; No place is clean. 9 Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? 10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little." 11 For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, 12 To whom He said, "This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest," And, "This is the refreshing"; Yet they would not hear. 13 But the word of the Lord was to them, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little," That they might go and fall backward, and be broken And snared and caught.

Let us pray.

Thank you for your word, Lord. Oh God, I pray that you open our ears to hear your word. Holy Spirit, I pray that you use your word once again and use Mr. Brown to speak the truth to us. Amen

In Isaiah 28, the prophet appeals to us to look to the drunkards, to think about the drunkards, to think about the intoxication, to think about the stumbling, to think about the blurred vision, to think about the filth. He uses this imagery of drunkenness both literally and figuratively but he really is appealing in these first 13 verses primarily about this whole matter of being intoxicated. What does spiritual drunkenness look like? He's pointing to an example. The prophet is speaking to Judah about the northern kingdom of Israel so that's the direction of the language. He's talking to Judah about what's happening in Israel and then he turns around and says, "You're just like Israel." That's really the whole structure of this chapter here. So it's a warning to Judah to look to Ephraim and, of course, Isaiah is a prophet in his own nation of Judah and his own nation has fallen apart. It's a society under judgment and under collapse. He's feeling the weight of it. He's seeing sort of the spiritual inebriation and drunkenness in his own land. He sees that there is a dramatic judgment coming upon his nation. I think that as we have been going through Isaiah, we have thought many of the same thoughts. You know, how ought we to be like Isaiah in our own nation, a nation that is under collapse, a nation that is under judgment? How should we say the same things that Isaiah said to his nation to help prepare them for the calamity coming? First by repenting and then also by crying out in that nation and proclaiming that the judgment of God is at hand.

So Isaiah is among his own people and he's seeing this collapse and what does he see? He sees a people that are drunk. This imagery of drunkenness, just runs through the whole thing. He's speaking of this thing that causes drunkenness, this primary thing that causes drunkenness: it's the P word, pride. It's pride and that's why he opens this up, "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim." Pride and this kind of drunkenness that he speaks about are really connected. What God is doing through Isaiah is to use him to rescue a people who had become inebriated, whose pride is destroying them. You know, you can trace so many of your problems right back to pride. The prophet nails it right there in the first verse and really casts a vision for what is happening. And pride is the reason for the drunkenness. You've heard of the term alcoholic, how about prideholic? That's what he's really talking about. Prideholics have so many problems. How many of your maladies can you trace to your prideholism? The discouragement that you experience is almost always simply traceable to a wounded pride. Wrong purchases often come from pride. Unwise speaking, marriage problems, children that do not honor their father or mother, wars, church splits. All kinds of things. They just go right back to pride and it makes people drunk. It makes people think wrongly about everything. I'm pretty sure that most of the people in this room have not had a DUI lately but you probably had an LUI, a living under the influence of pride lately. That's what he's talking about here. But God is kind. To those who are overcome with wine, they can be sobered up. They can be sobered up by standing on the rock, by having a precious cornerstone, by listening to the word of God. That's how you get sobered up. That's how you get delivered from

your staggering, blurred vision, stupid statements and ridiculous life that you end up living because of P-R-I-D-E. This thing is all about pride.

This is a new section in Isaiah. In each chapter from chapters 28 to 33 begin with the word "woe." There are six woes that are proclaimed in this next section and this is why some commentators have called this section "the book of woes." Others have called it "the book of Judah" because the focus is Judah itself. So these prophecies in chapters 28 through 33, they also picture a different reign of a Judean king. In the chapters up to 27, primarily it's the reign of Ahaz that has been pictured. Remember, right at the beginning, the prophet Isaiah meets with Ahaz at the highway to the fuller's field at the end of the aqueduct and he has this meeting with him and he says, "Trust God," and he can't do it. He trusts in Assyria. He places his whole trust in Assyria and Assyria doesn't rescue him as was agreed. But now there's a new political power and that is of the reign of Hezekiah. Hezekiah is a different kind of man. Hezekiah is a man of God. He does love God. He does have one great weakness: fear. He fears Assyria and so he trusts in Egypt and he makes an alliance with Egypt which is why when you get to the following chapters, you will find words like "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for advice." Don't go to Egypt for advice. Trust God. So we have Hezekiah who really is a godly man and yet he has this Achilles' heel in his soul.

The central message in these upcoming chapters is characterized by the word "woe." Why woe? Because at least in chapter 28, because of drunkenness, because of a kind of inebriation that comes over the human soul. There is a very, very clearly identifiable reason why that happens to people, it's really rejecting the sure foundation and not listening to the word of God. By letting it become to you like blah blah blah blah instead of having it pierce your heart and change everything about the way you're thinking and feeling and living. That's what we're dealing with here.

With that as an introduction, let's go into verse 1. First of all, we find that there's this warning to Judah. By the way, let me just say one more thing by way of introduction: the first 13 verses are a warning to Judah looking at Ephraim, the northern kingdom, as an example. The following verses from verse 14 on is a message to Judah. So there is a warning first of all, we're dealing with that today, and then there is the message and we'll deal with that next week. In some ways, it's hard to read the first part without reading the second part because the big answers are in the second part really, particularly verses 14 and 17. I think they are the heart of the text and so as we go through this, continue to have verse 14 which says, "Hear the word of the Lord," and verse 17 which says that Jesus Christ "is a sure foundation."

Verse 1, there is this warning to a fading flower of pride. "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, Whose glorious beauty is a fading flower Which is at the head of the verdant valleys, To those who are overcome with wine!" First of all, we run into this word "woe." It's the very first word in this chapter, "woe." He's speaking to Judah about Ephraim and remember how that works. The kingdom was divided. There are 10 northern tribes that are called Ephraim, they are also called Samaria and they are called Israel. Ephraim, Samaria, Israel, they are all the northern 10 tribes. Have you got that?

Then the southern two tribes are Judah and Benjamin. So Judah is one, they are a divided kingdom. Brothers have been divided against brothers and you can often see Isaiah's pain in the separation, in the way the brothers have gone to war against brothers. He's tracking the spiritual trajectory of his brothers in the north. He is his brother's keeper in that sense and he's also, of course, living in the southern kingdom himself. He lives in Jerusalem itself. So he's speaking to Judah, the southern kingdom, about Ephraim and he talks about this crown of pride, this thing on your head that can be seen. Pride actually has its manifestations and it's something that you're proud of in the way that a crown makes you proud of yourself because it makes you be yourself, who you really are: your look, your expression, your way. When my kids were growing up, we would sing this song, "I'm going to do it by myself, oh yeah." That's the song of pride. And pride is linked to this idea of drunkenness. Pride and drunkenness are connected here so when you're proud, God says, "You are drunk. You are inebriated." Terrible things happen to you when you're too proud. Remember that old story, I don't even know if it's true, of Mohammed Ali. He was on an airplane and he was the greatest and he was on an airplane and a stewardess said, "Mr. Ali, please put on your seatbelt." He said to the stewardess, "Superman don't need no seatbelt," and without skipping a beat she replied, "Superman don't need no airplane." Pride can make you think really stupid thoughts and pride is the root of the problem here. What does pride look like to God? It looks like drunkenness. "Woe to the drunkards of Ephraim."

Pride is really the root of all of our worldliness. Here Isaiah is pushing back on the worldliness. He's pushing back on the pride. As a preacher of these words, I just want to somehow have all of us including myself, push back on the pride that God would reveal to us our pride, that he would push back on it here today. I've seen a number of things in my own life that need that push back to really come back to Christ. They have become intoxicated. Calvin said they had been intoxicated by their prosperity. Their wealth made them proud. He speaks of this beautiful place that they lived there in Samaria. Samaria is the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. They were intoxicated. He speaks of the drunkards of Ephraim. If you've had drunkenness in your background. If your father or mother or grandfather or even yourself have ever become entrapped in drunkenness, you know what he's talking about. You know what a trap there is. You know what happens and how devastating it is. Here the Lord is using pride and intoxication as comparable. As we go through this life, if we read the word of God, we start thinking God's thoughts after him. We start thinking about the things that we see in this life rightly. Here, I think the prophet is trying to teach his own people how to think rightly about pride and he's connecting it with drunkenness.

You know, there's an alcohol treatment center in California that identifies six stages of intoxication. Stage 1: euphoria characterized by difficulty in concentrating, talkative, lowered inhibitions, brighter color in the face, fine motor skills lacking. That's stage 1. Stage 2: excitement, senses are dulled, poor coordination, drowsy, beginnings of erratic behavior, slow reaction time, impaired judgment. Stage 3: confusion, exaggerated emotions, difficulty walking, blurred vision, slurred speech, pain is dulled. Stage 4: stupor, cannot stand or walk, vomiting, unconsciousness is possible, decreased response to stimuli, apathetic. Stage 5: coma, unconscious, low body temperature, possible death,

shallow breathing, slow pulse. Stage 6: death, death as a result of respiratory arrest. These are the six stages of intoxication.

When you read those, you think about connecting that with pride because that's exactly what the prophet is doing. He is taking drunkenness and he's saying, "This is what happens to you when you're intoxicated with your own pride." Again, he's speaking to Judah and he's saying, "This is what's happening up there in the northern kingdom. This is what has happened to your brothers." So there are enormous problems with drunkenness. It makes you someone that you really aren't and it really emboldens you to do foolish things and say stupid things. The problem often is that you just can't face the reality of who you really are so you want some kind of help to get you where you are not. So you go to the wrong place to get you where you're not rather than to go to the sure foundation, rather than go to the word of God to help you to be who you ought to be. You go to the thing that actually might end in your death. But along the way, there is this progressive deterioration that begins with just being talkative and it may end in a coma and finally death.

So Isaiah is using this analogy of drunkenness for our own benefit. What does this do? It gives you nothing but fading glory. "Whose glorious beauty is a fading flower Which is at the head of the verdant valleys, To those who are overcome with wine!" Pride causes true beauty to fade. Of course, the glory had been fading in Israel. It had been fading just like those stages of intoxication. It had at least been fading from the time of Solomon. We're standing some time before the sacking of Israel in 722 BC so you mark the time between the time when Solomon built the Temple and dedicated it and it's about over 200, 213 years from the time of the dedication of the Temple to the time of sacking Israel and the great destruction that took place there.

Here is this fading glory. I want us to camp on that for a minute. I want to camp on the whole matter of deterioration because the Christian life, you're either in a state of deterioration or increased glory. Here is a picture of fading glory, the trim line is running down, the trajectory is heading down. One of the most important things for a Christian is to know when the trim lines have turned down because what you were may not be what you will be and that's what's happening in Israel. It's a fading glory. They're continuing on this trajectory and there are so many things that can trip the trajectory downward in the Christian life. Of course, pride is the one that's in the center stage right here, thinking that your ways are better ways than God. Thinking that you can beat the system. Thinking that you can find some pleasure outside of God's ways. That's really the beginning of the trajectory downward.

We can think of this in terms of our own nation. Of course, Isaiah is talking about a nation and America has enjoyed enormous success. The question is, will it continue? Is it on an upward or a downward trajectory morally, socially, religiously? When you have this society who wants to do its own thing which really is the summary watchword of the philosophy of most people in our nation, "Do your own thing. If it feels good, do it." It started with my generation and it's rolling as hard as ever now. That was really the beginning of a downward trajectory in our land. We talked about that a little bit last week

but when you insist on doing your own ways because of your pride, you are on a downward trajectory. Let's don't forget the greatest, most powerful nations in history, they all fell. All of them fell. Rome fell. Don't think for one minute that the downward trajectory treat of America is unstoppable.

So here you have this beautiful, wealthy part of the world. "The verdant valleys. Those who are overcome with wine." Then we see that there is a strong one coming in verse 2. Again, this is where the warnings escalate, it is a warning of coming judgment, "Behold, the Lord has a mighty and strong one, Like a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, Like a flood of mighty waters overflowing, Who will bring them down to the earth with His hand." Notice first the word "behold," verse 2, do you see that? Behold. It's like Isaiah is trying to call the people back to reality, "Open your eyes. Get real. See the world as it really is. Stop lying to yourself about your nation and about yourself and about your priests and everything." There's got to be a time in everyone's life where they behold, where their eyes open and they behold. Maybe that's a time in your life, even this morning, God has it that he brings people together and there is a time to behold, a time when God looks you in the eye and you see. You experience this beholding. You finally get real with who you are and where you've been going all your lifelong and you repent, you believe in the gospel and you are saved. Or this happens all throughout life where in many ways, we're all a bunch of recovering drunks. We've drunk of the world so long that it takes a while to get it out of our system. Thankfully, if you're just a physical drunk, it doesn't take that long to get it out of your system. You can clean your system fairly quickly. The problem with sin is that it takes longer to get rid of the drunkenness that's there. So there's this time where you must behold. But they are spiritual drunks. They are irrational; they are letting things happen that are ludicrous. This is what drunk people do. They do ridiculous and unthinkable things because they are drunk. And they all make perfect sense to them but they lead to death.

Now, look at this description of what's coming. First of all, "the Lord has a mighty and strong one," do you see that in verse 2? That is either Nebuchadnezzar or Sennacherib. I think it's Sennacherib but you can debate that. But there is this strong one and the mighty one is coming. Look at the language, "Like a tempest of hail." It's like this destroying storm. You know, when I first moved here, there was a gigantic hailstorm that totaled all of my cars and thousands and thousands of cars around. I had never been in a hailstorm before. But there were these knife-like pieces of hail, 6 to 8 inches long coming out of the sky and just shredding the trees. I had never seen anything like it before. It's a good thing we weren't outside. We were planting a church and we were having a picnic. It was our first church picnic and we were all able to run inside the building and we were protected there. But this is a tempest of hail. Think about the gigantic hailstones that can fall and have fallen. They just destroy everything.

"Like a flood." Okay, so hail is not enough for you to get its so it's like a flood. Have you ever been in a flood? Things just are swept away by mighty waters. Remember the tsunami? Remember watching the pictures of the tsunami and the whole city just floating? It's the most terrifying footage I think I've ever seen. People just continued to watch it. It just took your breath away. Well, it's like a flood of mighty waters

overflowing and then he says, "Who will bring them down to the earth," and then he uses what might not seem so terrifying but it's probably the most terrifying image in the whole sentence, "with His hand." The hand of God. So he piles up all this imagery to speak of this strong one, what God will do against pride. How God is going to deal with this drunkenness.

Let's say that this was depicting Nebuchadnezzar coming in and laying siege to Jerusalem in 586 BC and there was Daniel with the Hebrew children. Put yourself in their place. There is this military force that comes in and destroys everything and they take captives. They castrate Daniel and his friends and then they march them to Babylon and they walk into Babylon. I mean, Daniel and his friends experienced this in a very real way. There is this might and this strength that's spoken of here.

Then you see the swiftness of the judgment in verses 3 and 4, "The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, Will be trampled underfoot; And the glorious beauty is a fading flower Which is at the head of the verdant valley, Like the first fruit before the summer, Which an observer sees; He eats it up while it is still in his hand." Again, there is this other imagery. He leaves the hand of God and now it will be trampled underfoot in verse 3. Then it will be like a first fruit. He gives you this image and just put yourself there for a minute: you're standing and there's a fruit tree out there and there is a man walking over to the fruit tree and Isaiah is telling this as a bystander. Do you see that? It's amazing to me as we go through Isaiah how often Isaiah puts you in a place of observation and he says, "Look at that. There's what that's like." There are like these freeze-frame moments that he puts you in to bring you to your senses. He does that here. So there's this scene: there's a tree and there's a man and someone is watching the scene from afar off. The man walks up to the tree and he picks a fruit and instead of putting it in his pocket and saving it for a meal, he picks the fruit and he puts it right in his mouth. He's explaining how quickly the judgment will come and he just gobbles it up. Right when the ripeness appears. Right when the right time comes when the ripening of the disobedience has come to its perfect moment, it is picked and it's dealt with right there. We won't leave this concept of: God times all of his judgments perfectly. He times them perfectly and he times the length of them perfectly. All of his chastisements come that way, they are perfectly timed. But here is a picture of speed. He picks the fruit and instead of saving it, he eats it. That really speaks of the swiftness of the judgment.

Then in verses 5 and 6, there is this reminder of God's favor. Isaiah does this over and over again. He shows the judgment but then he exposes the mercy of God to be a blessing to his children. "In that day the Lord of hosts will be For a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty To the remnant of His people, For a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, And for strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate." So there is also something else going on. There are people during this moment who love God. Their hearts are toward him. They don't just have their little toe on the sure foundation, they are resting their whole life on the sure foundation. They are hearing the word of God so he's speaking of these kinds of people. Notice what he says. He changes the language and instead of a crown of pride, it's a crown of glory. This is God's favor. He bestows glory upon them.

You know, David said, "You're my glory and the lifter of my head." This is the picture of the glory of God upon a sinner. Peter in 1 Peter 4, he speaks about the fact that believers are all reproached and scorned and slandered in this world but then he says, "But the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. Though you may be blasphemed, the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." So he speaking about the glory of God upon you. Now, we all know that we fall short of the glory of God but even those who fall short of the glory of God are bestowed upon them his own glory. In 2 Corinthians 3, we're told that we are transformed from glory to glory. As we behold the glory of the Lord we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory. As you behold the Lord Jesus Christ, you are transformed into his glory. You change. That's the process of progressive sanctification.

So instead of a crown of pride, it's rather a crown of glory. It's a diadem of beauty and it's also a spirit of justice. Verse 6, "For a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment." This means that when people listen to God, when Jesus is their sure foundation, they judge things rightly, they see things rightly. Justice is a sense of what is right and what is true. The people of God will have wisdom to know what is right because the wisdom of God rests upon his people because they have their foot on that sure foundation and they listen to the word of God.

Then, also strength in battle. "And strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate." This has to do with the fact that the people of God are involved in a battle. We're not just resting. We're also waging war. We're here in the world to turn back the enemies of God in the days of battle. This is one of the functions of the church of Jesus Christ. How do you turn back the enemies of God in the day of battle? You do it with the sword of the Spirit. You open the word of God and you proclaim it: in your house, on the streets, wherever you are. This is the weapon of battle. The word of God. Our weapons of warfare are not physical, they are spiritual. The church isn't given of violence from metal and guns. The church is given the violence that comes about by preaching the word of God. That's our tool. And you get strength from the battles, strength in battle with it.

Then there's the disclosure of the waywardness of Judah in verses 7-13. You see, now in these verses Isaiah turns the discussion. He's been talking about the northern kingdom. He's been talking to Judah about the northern kingdom. Now he's talking to Judah about Judah and he's saying, "You're just like your northern brother." That's why we pick this up in verse 7, "But they also," that word "also" gives you this understanding that he is now speaking to Judah, "they also have erred through wine, And through intoxicating drink are out of the way; The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, They are swallowed up by wine, They are out of the way through intoxicating drink; They err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filth; No place is clean." Again, he takes us back to this imagery of wine. You remember the stages of intoxication? These are the stages of the trajectory of the people of God and he brings out this same kind of imagery again. Now, he says they have "erred through wine." So he talks about this whole matter of erring through wine and then, "they are out of the way." Out of the way in Hebrew language, this term means to stagger, to wander.

It's sometimes used for being misled morally or mentally. It's wandering mentally. It's interesting that Isaiah is actually picking up what is almost a textbook medical description of intoxication. Then he says "they are swallowed up." They are just devoured and then "they err in vision." They just can't see straight which is part of this whole technical description of intoxication. And "they stumble." Stumble just like the intoxicated person stumbles around. Then "they vomit." This disgusting picture of what happens. The filth on the table that you see.

So there's this whole discussion of intoxication, of alcohol. There are three main positions on the use of alcohol. The first position is the prohibitionist and this is the person who believes that wine is prohibited by Scripture and therefore its unlawful to ever consume it at all, to ever let it touch your lips. The second position is the abstentionist position who doesn't believe wine is prohibited but just chooses to abstain. The third position are those who hold that the use of alcohol is acceptable in moderation as long as there is no drunkenness.

Here in these first 13 verses, the language of intoxication runs through the entire section and it really is a disclosure of what happens to you morally. The Bible does speak quite a bit about strong drink and wine. I think there are over 150 references to it in the Bible. There are a number of contexts for it. Sometimes it's related to blessing. For example, in Amos 9:13, Isaiah 55:1, Jeremiah 40:12, 1 Chronicles 12:40. All of these relate to wine being a blessing and that it is not a curse at all. It's hard for people to even hear this that wine is actually related to blessing but we have to be honest with what the Scripture says. We have to have our minds washed by the water of the word of God, to quit thinking our own thoughts, to think God's thoughts after him.

The second context that the Bible uses strong drink or wine is the context of warnings, really dramatic warnings for the misuse of wine. Proverbs 20:1 I think is a summary verse, "Wine is a mocker. Strong drink is a brawler and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." There are dozens of references just exactly like this that speak of the dangers of wine.

The third use of the terminology for wine occurs in relation to the worship of God because wine is actually used in worship. It's inconceivable to me to think that wine could be used in worship but actually if you read your Bible, you must recognize that it's true. It is absolutely true. Like in Leviticus 23:13 where you read, "Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the Lord, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine." There are many references to wine being used in worship. In fact, the Lord Jesus Christ himself promotes this in the use of the Lord's Supper. But at the same time, drunkenness is a gigantic problem in the world that we live in today but somehow in a world of drunkenness, the people of God have got to get their wits about them and think biblically about it. It's really important that we do that.

Here Isaiah is giving us a picture of drunkenness and he's connecting it with pride so we're learning more about wine and strong drink through this passage. God was always

concerned that the priests not drink wine. In Leviticus 10:8, the priest were to be temperate. Then the Lord spoke to Aaron saying, "Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink. You nor your sons with you when you go into the tabernacle of meeting lest you die." What we get to the New Testament, we learn that elders must not be given too much wine in 1 Timothy 3:2. God is concerned that kings did not drink much wine in Proverbs 31:4-5 which tells us that kings should not drink wine in order to guard themselves because they might forget the law and they might only think about themselves and forget the afflictions of others. He says, "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, Nor for princes intoxicating drink; Lest they drink and forget the law, And pervert the justice of all the afflicted. Give strong drink to him who is perishing, And wine to those who are bitter of heart." Ecclesiastes 10:17 warns of immature leaders who grow up with a silver spoon in their mouth and they drink whatever they want. I think in this matter of kings and priests and prophets being very careful about wine, with greater responsibility it is required that there is greater care and greater protection. I think that's the idea that the Scriptures are speaking about when you talk about priests and prophets and kings not drinking like that.

Then you see this mocking. You see the intoxication in verses 7 and 8 and then you see another expression of this pride being explained. It is another form of intoxication. It's the intoxication that you experience when the word of God makes no affect on you at all. It's just a bunch of gibberish to you. It's a form of intoxication by pride. Verse 9, "Whom will he teach knowledge?" I believe that here in verse 9 the "he" is Isaiah and the people are mocking Isaiah. They are mocking what he has been teaching. It could be God. I more think it's Isaiah. Does it change the interpretation? Not at all. "Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts?" He's saying, "The things you say is baby talk. You're treating us like babies. It's not really helping us. It's not giving us what we need." Then they say, "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little." They are mocking. They are mocking him. They would rather not hear. We've heard of the proud of Ephraim and now we come to the scornful of Judah and they are scorning him. You have this precept upon precept, line upon line. "Precept" is the word "tsav" and it could mean commandment upon commandment, precept upon precept. And "line" is the word "qav." So how it sounds in the Hebrew is, "Isaiah, when you speak it's like tsav tsav tsav, qav qav qav qav, tsav tsav tsav, qav qav qav. That's it, it's just a bunch of gibberish to us. You're just babbling to us."

So they despise the teaching. They are mimicking the word of God. They are hearing it with their ears but all they hear is blah blah blah, yada yada yada. That's the state of drunkenness. When you reach that state, you're in big trouble. I know there are many children here who've heard the preaching of the word of God for many years. Here's how you know when you're in danger, when it's like blah blah blah, yada yada yada. When you're in that state, you need to know where you stand before God. You're drunk. You're inebriated and you're in one of these stages of drunkenness that lead to death. You have to understand where you are at any given moment. But if the word of God is open and

being read and it's just like blah blah blah, yada yada yada, tsav tsav tsav tsav, qav qav qav qav.

That's what was happening. The prophets speak and it's just gibberish. They don't see the beauty in it. They don't see the glory and the happiness in the kingdom of heaven. They don't long for it. It doesn't touch them. It goes right over their head. If it goes right over your head, recognize what's happening. You're drunk. You're inebriated. What's the source of it? Pride. Pride. Repent. Repent of it.

Verse 11, he says, "For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people." So God is saying, "Okay, so if it's just blah blah blah, yada yada yada to you, then I'm going to send you people in another tongue and they'll talk to you. I'm going to send you people with a different language like how about the Babylonians? Or how about the Assyrians? They're going to show up and they are going to talk to you and they are going to tell you what for and it's going to be to you blah blah blah, yada yada yada. You won't even know what they're saying. If you can't hear me now, I'm going to send another voice and you'll know what it's like." This mocking voice.

Now, this is prophesied in Deuteronomy 28. I'll just read it for you. He speaks of this time in the future, Moses does. Moses is speaking around 1400 BC and now it's almost 700 BC and now this is being fulfilled what Moses spoke in Deuteronomy. He says, "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations. But if you do not, he'll destroy you." He says, "If you don't serve God with joy in your heart," in other words, if your heart hasn't been changed here is what will happen to you. He says in verse 49, "The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand." God judges his people when all they can hear is blah blah blah, yada yada yada and he sweeps them away. Here he says he's going to send another nation that will speak a language that they do not know.

Habakkuk 1:4 speaks of this but interestingly enough the Apostle Paul quotes this very verse in 1 Corinthians 14. Go ahead and turn there. Look at verse 21. This is the whole context of tongues, the tongues being spoken in the church. This whole matter of being so prideful that all you hear is blah blah blah, yada yada yada, it's a judgment against the church. Verse 21, "In the law it is written: 'With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,' says the Lord." Verse 22, "Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe." Now we don't have the bandwidth and time to go into a detailed discussion about tongues but there are two things that I want you to notice. One thing that is sort of interesting, he says, "in the law it is written," and he's quoting Isaiah. He's saying that Isaiah is part of the law. I think that's interesting. It's worth some consideration. But then he says that tongues is a fulfillment of what Isaiah spoke of in Isaiah 28. You can't understand tongues until you go to Isaiah 28. I don't know if you've ever heard messages on the gifts of the Spirit and landed on tongues and nobody ever mentions Isaiah 28. Here's the deal, you cannot understand 1 Corinthians 14 until you go to Isaiah 28. The Apostle Paul says, "This is that."

This prophecy that Isaiah is giving extends to the time of the apostles. Tongues are a sign that you are talking to a people who are unbelievers. God gave languages to his people so that other languages could hear. I believe tongues are languages because that's how they are used. When people don't understand the gospel, then they are spoken to in a language and the person speaking it is not speaking it in his own language. He supernaturally speaks in their language so they can hear the gospel. Tongues are languages and they are testimony that God is not going to speak to the Jews. They are a testimony and a sign against Israel that they have ceased hearing the word of God. That's why tongues came to pass. It's to declare judgment on the Jews, that they had come to the place where it was all blah blah blah, yada yada yada and therefore God was going to speak to people in other languages, to the unbelievers in other languages and he gave that gift as a supernatural manifestation. Unknown tongues show that God would speak to a people who would listen to their language and that he was taking away the kingdom from apostate Israel.

You know, it's interesting that in Romans chapter 11 Paul says that Israel was blinded. Does that sound familiar to you? You have blurred vision here in Isaiah 28. He says that God gave them a spirit of stupor. What does that sound like? It sounds like the same drunkenness in Isaiah 28. He says eyes that they should not see, ears that they should not hear. Their whole sensory perception has been hampered just like drunkenness does. Then he quotes David and he says their table became a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense. Let their eyes be darkened. This is the very same language. Then he says there in Romans 11, and bowed down their back and then they have stumbled that they should fall. This is the same picture. This is the same picture of Isaiah 28. The Jews had become just like their forefathers in Isaiah's day. They heard the word of God and it was qav qav qav, tsav tsav tsav tsav, blah blah blah blah, yada yada yada.

O. Palmer Robertson has an article on this whole matter and he says that there are four elements of New Testament tongues. New Testament tongues 1, were revelational. They weren't private, they were revelational to declare a word of prophecy. 2. They were foreign languages. 3. They were for public consumption. 4. They were a sign indicating a radical change in the direction of redemptive history. So probably most people haven't heard that Isaiah talked about tongues in Isaiah 28 but he did. It's an important matter here."

Then you see the loss in verse 12, "To whom He said, 'This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest,' And, 'This is the refreshing.'" Here is what they missed: when you get to the place where it's nothing but blah blah blah, yada yada yada, what do you lose? What's to lose? What's to lose by just sitting there and hearing blah blah blah, yada yada yada? Your answer is right here in verse 12. You lose rest. You become weary. And you do not get refreshing. That's what happens. That's why Peter said, "Repent so the times of refreshing will come in." But if all you've got is blah blah blah, yada yada yada, here's what you're missing: rest, refreshing. That's what you're missing. It's a tragedy.

Then you see the result, "But the word of the Lord was to them, 'Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little.'" Tsav tsav tsav, qav qav qav. Why? "That they might go and fall backward, and be broken And snared and caught." It's such a great tragedy to fall backward. Have you ever seen anybody fall backwards and slam their head against the concrete? It's terrifying to think about it. That's the image here. They are broken and then snared and then caught. This is what happens when your heart cannot hear the word of God and love it and be nourished by it and cared for by it. It gives you such reason to cry out to the Lord Jesus Christ to save you so that your eyes would open, so that they would be words of life, so that you would love to have your foot resting on that foundation, you would love to hear the sound of his voice. That really is the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian. The Christian wants to hear the sound of the voice of his Savior. He wants to hear it. Of course, he might struggle from time to time with discipline and he may go through periods of dryness but overwhelmingly his life, his heart does desire it, the word of God.

Okay, let me give you some applications. First of all, for any here whose hearts have not and do not hunger for the word of God, for those who only hear blah blah blah, yada yada yada. For those here who are only marking time, their big concern when they come here is, "Do we get the service done in time to so that we can get on with life?" If you're in that state, God is giving you an opportunity to consider the trajectory of your life and the station of your soul and where it rests. To you, I just want to say: Jesus Christ is so much better than anything that you hope to achieve by your worldliness. That God is good. That the ways of the world our outperformed by God. That his ways are pleasant ways. That his ways are the only way to happiness. You thought you could get happiness by getting drunk on pride or drunk on anything, you are wrong and you've got your ladder leaning against the wrong wall. How do you know? It's when all you hear is blah blah blah, yada yada yada and "When is this service going to end?" Know who you are. Cry out to God. Find the refreshment that he has for you. Hear the word of the Lord.

Now, application 2, for the drinkers, for the pride drinkers. I hope you're not drinking alcohol to get intoxicated. I hope you're not. And if you are, turn from it. Have a right view of alcohol. Go to the Bible and wash your mind about what the Bible says about it. The Bible says, "Be not drunk with wine but be filled with the Holy Spirit." The issue is control. The Bible doesn't say, "Don't ever drink wine." It says, "Be not drunk with wine." That's what the Bible says. But the issue is control. Wine controls you. It makes you stagger. It slurs your speech. It causes you to think ridiculous things about yourself and everyone else. It makes you a buffoon. It makes you a laughingstock. It finally will kill you. So if you're drinking, if you are taking drugs, stop. Return to the Lord. Trust in God for your sustenance.

There might be some people here who are secretly addicted to alcohol and you're hiding it really well. Turn. Understand where that goes. But for the other drinkers, for the other pride drinkers, for the prideholics, this is a really good opportunity for us to consider our ways and ask ourselves what pride has gotten us and what we ought to do about it. Have you been getting drunk on pride? Every time I've ever gotten discouraged in my life, I have always been able to trace it to drinking out of the glass of pride, caring so much

about myself and I drink that and it never goes well. So what have you been drinking? I don't know what pride is doing to you but you should know. You should know what the drinks are doing to you.

Here, Isaiah has talked about the drunkards of Ephraim. What about the drunkards of Hope Baptist? Let's talk about the drunkards of Hope Baptist for a while.

Application 3: Isaiah is rebuking Judah for her pride. Judah thinks she is so spiritual. Judah thinks she is so far ahead of Israel, her brother to the north, the big giant idolaters up there, the bad guys. That's how Judah thinks about Israel. Do you know what? There is some truth to the accusation that Judah makes but Judah is looking at Israel and they are thinking they are so fine. Isaiah says, "No, no, no. They are just like you." Is there any of that in us? Do we think that somehow we are just so much better than anybody else as a church? Because we do this and they don't do that? Because we pay attention to this but they don't? Therefore we are so holy? Let's banish any of that kind of thinking. Let's don't be like Judah. God is dealing with Judah so God is giving an example to Judah of Ephraim. I think we should look at Judah as an example as well. God gives us examples and Judah is saying, "We're fine. We're not going to fall. They are going to fall." God says, "No, you're going to fall too, Judah." Let's make sure that we've really had our minds washed by the water of the word and have thought rightly about ourselves.

Finally, which is really the central thrust of this entire chapter: remember the sure foundation. It's in verse 16. We'll unpack it more carefully next week. "Therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act hastily.'" So here you have these two ways of living: the way of the drunkard and the way of the one who is standing on a precious cornerstone and it is solid underneath his feet and there is refreshment there. Isaiah brings us back to the thing that we see all through Scripture: there are really only two ways, there is the narrow way, the way of happiness, the way of refreshment and there is the broad path, the way of drunkenness and confusion and stumbling and staggering and finally death. Choose life.

Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you that you've given us Isaiah to help us think rightly about all these things. I thank you, Lord, that you've put the drunkards of Ephraim before us to help us understand pride and its own ways upon us. O Lord, that you would come and help us with all these things. Amen.