

Man's Vain Pride **Isaiah 2:6-22**

Our text this morning is Isaiah chapter 2, verses 6 to 22. Before that reading, we'll pray and ask for God's blessing. Please join me in prayer. Father in heaven, we do pray that you would now bless this time of worship as we hear from your word. Please help me as I preach. Please help us all as we hear. Lord, may we be given ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to understand and to obey. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Isaiah 2, verses 6 through 22, the end of the chapter: “⁶For you have rejected your people, the house of Jacob, because they are full of things from the east and of fortune-tellers like the Philistines, and they strike hands with the children of foreigners. ⁷Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is filled with horses, and there is no end to their chariots. ⁸Their land is filled with idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made. ⁹So man is humbled, and each one is brought low—do not forgive them! ¹⁰Enter into the rock and hide in the dust from before the terror of the Lord, and from the splendor of his majesty. ¹¹The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. ¹²For the Lord of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low; ¹³against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up; and against all the oaks of Bashan; ¹⁴against all the lofty mountains, and against all the uplifted hills; ¹⁵against every high tower, and against every fortified wall; ¹⁶against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft. ¹⁷And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. ¹⁸And the idols shall utterly pass away. ¹⁹And people shall enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground, from before the terror of the Lord, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth.

“²⁰In that day mankind will cast away their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, to the moles and to the bats, ²¹to enter the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs, from before the terror of the Lord, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth. ²²Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he?” Amen.

I'm going to read you a few statements. Some are taken from Scripture, and some are a few quotes I've gathered together from history. Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.”

Or how about the people in the construction of the tower of Babel? “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”

How about one of the Herods? “On the appointed day, Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. And the people were shouting, ‘The voice of a god, and not of a man!’ Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down because he did not give God the glory. And he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.”

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Or how about the people of the world, who are bearing the mark of the beast? “They worshipped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshipped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?’”

How about some quotes from history? Adolph Hitler in 1933: “The Third Reich will last 1,000 years.” It lasted about another 12.

Or how about Neville Chamberlain? Now this is an interesting one. Neville Chamberlain was the Prime Minister of Great Britain at the start of World War II, and he had tried to negotiate a peace treaty with Adolph Hitler. And if you look on YouTube, you can actually find a newsflash, a newsreel that was run in the cinemas before a movie, and the headline of this newsflash actually says, “One man saved us from the greatest war of all.” And then in the clip that comes after it, Neville Chamberlain’s waving a little piece of paper in his hand, and he says, “I have here a document which I believe will give us peace for our time.” It lasted 12 months.

How about a certain Australian Prime Minister in the late 80s? “By 1990, no Australian child shall live in poverty.”

How about a certain Australian Olympian just before the 1984 Olympics? I don’t know if you remember this far back, but I remember it. I remember the story. It was actually a headline, front-page headline on “The Telegraph,” which was then the biggest paper in the State of New South Wales: “How I’m going to win the marathon”—Robert D. Costello. Didn’t even get a medal. Wasn’t on the podium. It all went wrong.

How about John Lennon, the Beatle? “Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I don’t even need to argue that. I’m right. I’ll be proved right. We’re more popular than Jesus now.”

Mankind—we’re but a vapor. We’re but a vapor. We look at each other, and you look at a person, and you think, you know, there’s something of substance there. Do you know anything about atomic structure? Do you understand anything about the way an atom works? Do you understand how little matter there actually is in a person?

You know, you’ve got atoms, you’ve got protons and neutrons and electrons spinning around—those protons and neutrons—in various combinations. Now if you took the space that separate protons, neutrons, and electrons—if you had, for example, the power of God and you took the space away from between those protons, neutrons, and electrons, and were able to just condense a person into what is actually the amount of matter within them, what do you think they would fit within? What do you think I would fit within? Believe it or not, a pinhead. A pinhead.

We’re actually upheld by the laws of physics, put in place by the living God. Our substance, if it could be reduced to nothing but substance with the energy taken away that holds us together, would fit into a pinhead. That’s almost beyond belief. Blows you away—it blew me away, the first time I heard it.

What does Scripture say? All flesh is grass, but the word of our God stands forever. The word of God is actually more real, more powerful, and more solid than the ground we’re standing

upon. But we, humanity, we're vain. We're imaginers. We imagine, we dream that we're great. We look at the things that people can make, and the things that people can do, and the stuff that they're made out of, and we imagine—there's power; there's true power.

In those quotes that I just read, I read a quote from Hitler, followed by a quote from Neville Chamberlain. Maybe you think that was a little bit unfair. After all, Hitler was a mad dictator who, through the use of military power, was determined to take over all of Europe, and if possible, all of the world and put his own stamp upon it. And Neville Chamberlain was, in a way, the poor, innocent dupe, or victim, or fool, fooled by that crafty, subtle Hitler.

But you know, the truth is, both of those men were just different sides of the same coin, because both of them had a philosophy that was built upon the idea that there is no God, and that mankind, with just the right leadership, just the right legislation, just the right laws, could lift himself up to some kind of utopian state of being. They had different plans to get there, but they actually had, at the core of it, the same or common denominator, and that was human pride and human philosophy. They imagined that man could be more than God has made man to be. They imagined—whether they would ever have used the words or not—they imagined that man could be God; that people could be gods; that the way to happiness is through legislation and the exercise of human power.

Isaiah speaks to such people. In his day, he was speaking to the nation of Judah. He was speaking to a nation that called itself the people of God, that imagined that God was on their side. But the truth is, they weren't trusting in God, they were trusting in anything but God. They were trusting in their religious activity. They would still have sworn by Yahweh, Lord of Hosts, or the Lord, and they still conducted temple worship and sacrifices, and they still turned up for feasts when they were held. But they were trusting in their works, and not in the Lord. And the king was trusting in his armies, and not in the Lord. And they were living in constant disobedience to God.

Deuteronomy chapter 8 tells us that God required His people to remember that everything they had, He gave them, and that even their own safety was the result of their living in covenant with Him. And if they broke covenant, their shield would go, and God would allow them to be ravaged, just as they are ravishing those idolatrous nations who were before them.

Humanity and pride. I mean, just think of the world today. Think of the US election—the latest election. Think of the two people that got to the front of the line. I mean, honestly, would you want to live next door to either of them? In all honesty, could you imagine two more unpleasant people? The only reason they were at the front of the line was because they pushed themselves to the front of the line, and because they considered themselves to be born leaders. And they were certain that the common, average Joe—you and me—should be happy to have such wonderful people pushing themselves into leadership. All ego and no substance. A pair of millimeter-deep fools. And that was the best thing that the U.S. could get to the front of the line. The good ol' US of A.

Now I'll confess here openly before you, I've got kind of a love-hate thing towards the US of A. The best books I read and the best stuff I learn comes to me from the best Christian organizations

and churches and denominations in the USA. And the evil that is destroying our society and the things that I hate most are these days coming to us channeled from the good ol' USA. I confess it's a love-hate thing there. The best of the USA is at the moment the best in the world, and the worse of the USA is at the moment the very reason why the world wants to destroy the USA. It appears to be a nation under the judgment of God, at this moment. And we, being their satellites or allies in world terms, we, too, seem to be a nation under the judgment of God.

Isaiah is addressing a proud people. Once again, there's no particular time marker, but we're told that there is going to be something happen in the future. There's going to be a day of the Lord. Down at verse 12: "For the Lord of hosts has a day." Now what you need to understand about that phrase "the day of the Lord" or "a day of the Lord" is that it is pretty much any time that God visits in judgment.

Now there is coming at the end—we've all read the whole Bible, I hope, and you've read the book of Revelation and you know there's going to be a final day of the Lord, a final return. But there are days of the Lord coming. When Jesus went into Jerusalem near the end of His life and He wept over Jerusalem, what did He say? He said, "You did not know the day of your visitation." Their day of the Lord was the day that the Lord Jesus entered the city on the back of a donkey. And they did not know the day of their visitation. And forty or so years later, in 70 A.D., the day of the Lord became the day of destruction. The Romans destroyed the city, brick by brick, person by person.

The Lord of Hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up, and it shall brought low—all that is proud and lofty. We look at the world, and we look at aircraft carriers and spacecraft, we look at fighter jets, we look at all sorts of things. We look at skyscrapers, we look at the bridges that we can build—bridges that 100 years ago were not even within the imagination of engineers and architects. We look at the things that we can do, and we imagine we're powerful, we're mighty, we're safe. We're looking after ourselves. We've got the right allies, we've got the right equipment. And God, in all honesty, laughs us to scorn and says, "I've set my King on Zion's holy hill. And when He comes, when He returns, kiss the Son." The Lord Jesus Christ will return. The Lord Jesus Christ will bring all things to their end.

Isaiah is speaking to the house of Judah about *their* end, at their time, about their nation, about what is happening in their nation. But as I've said to you, it's kind of timeless. It applies. It applies today, it applied 100 years ago, it applied 1,000 years ago. God's word is timeless.

I've got a few subtitles or subheadings here to help us work our way through the text. Verses 6 to 8, my subtitle is "Proud Sinners." Let's have a look. This is Isaiah speaking to the Lord:

⁶For you have rejected your people, the house of Jacob, because they are full of things from the east and of fortune-tellers like the Philistines, and they strike hands with the children of foreigners. ⁷Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is filled with horses, and there is no end to their chariots. ⁸Their land is filled with idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made."

Proud sinners. That reference, for example, “Their land is filled with horses.” Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 17. God in His law knew the kind of people that He was dealing with. And I don’t mean by that that the Jews were any worse than any other race. He knows what we’re all like. It wouldn’t have mattered which nation, or which ethnic group He had chosen to be His covenant nation. He would have still been dealing with the same problems. In Deuteronomy 17, move down to verse 14. It’s got a subtitle in my Bible, “Laws concerning Israel’s kings.” Let’s hear what the Lord has to say:

¹⁴ “When you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ ¹⁵ you may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. ¹⁶ Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the Lord has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’ ¹⁷ And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.”

Read the description, Isaiah 2, verse 7: “Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is filled with horses, and there is no end to their chariots.” The commandment of the Lord was that His people would live in the promised land, worshiping Him and trusting Him for their protection; not that they strike up all kinds of alliances with surrounding nations; not that they see their strength as being in armies, divisions, chariotry, soldiers on the ground.

Have you ever wondered, if you’re read through Second Samuel, what was so bad about King David taking a census? Remember he sends out Joab to take a census, to count the people. What was so bad about that? He was relying on the number of people. He wanted to know how many men he could put on the battlefield. And the Lord was saying to him, “It doesn’t matter. It doesn’t matter. Commune with me, David. Love me. Worship me. You don’t need any particular number of soldiers.” But no, David had to have a number. He wanted to know just how great a king he was. And a plague fell upon the people because of his sins. The king sins, and the nation suffers. Well this land is filled with silver and gold, horses and chariots. They think they’re so great.

And back up at verse 6: “For you have rejected your people, the house of Jacob, because they are full of things from the east and of fortune-tellers like the Philistines.” It’s basically saying they’re practicing a form of witchcraft, divination, the occult. We would talk about tarot cards, or fortune tellers, palm readers, low-level occult practice.

“They strike hands with the children of foreigners.” That could have a couple of possible meanings, and the couple of possible meanings could actually be associated. It could be suggesting that they’re making alliances. It could be suggesting that they’re marrying the children of the nations around them, that for political and business reasons, they’re bringing in foreign wives or foreign young men—that they’re forming alliances. They’re striking hands. It could all be interrelated. It could have to do with business, it could have to do with marriage. But the idea behind it is simply compromise. They’re doing things that they ought not to do.

Now God is not saying that we should not have dealings with the people around us. We're stuck in this world, and as Paul makes the point, you can't get out of it. You've got to deal with the world around you. But you don't compromise the word and the law of God, and here was the problem. If you want to marry your son to the daughter of an idolater, you're going to have to make some kind of offering to that man's idol to close out the contract of marriage. You're going to have to make some kind of evil compromise, and that's the problem. It's not that they're trading, it's that they're trying to confirm alliances with idolaters. And so they're proud sinners and they think that the numbers are on their side. We've got the army, we've got the horses, we've got nothing to worry about.

Verses 9 to 11. My next subheading is "Pride Before the Fall." Let's read it: "⁹ So man is humbled, and each one is brought low—do not forgive them! ¹⁰ Enter into the rock and hide in the dust from before the terror of the Lord, and from the splendor of his majesty. ¹¹ The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day."

Pride, haughty looks. It's interesting in verse 9, there's a bit of an irony going on there, or an antithesis—the idea that each man is humbled. Now in a way, to be humble is to be good thing, but that's not what it's saying. You know, if we indeed were humbled before and by the Spirit of God, and fell to our knees, confessing our sins, that would be a good thing. But what he's saying here with regards to these being humbled, or each man is humbled, is that they're humbled because they've fallen out of covenant with God. They've become rebels. And so they're not what they should be. They're not what they ought to be. They ought to be God's special people in the world, different to all the nations around them. But they've been humbled. They've become just like the other nations. They've been broken down by their sins.

It makes me think of Romans chapter 1, where Paul speaks about the handing over of people who refuse to be thankful and give glory to God. They're handed over to their sinfulness. They're handed over to their idolatry. And in the end, that becomes expressed in perversion and sexual perversion. And then in sexual perversion, they're handed over to the perversion, so that the lust becomes ever more dominating and controlling, until it's basically the only thing they think of. That's the pattern that you see in Romans chapter 1. These people are proud. They're bold. And what does the proverb tell us? Proverbs chapter 16, verse 18: Pride cometh before the fall. "Oh, but we've got power!" And God, as I said, laughs at them.

And here's the thing, and here's what we need to understand. Isaiah is addressing the covenant nation, Judah, the people of God. But because the people of God are not obedient to God and are living just as the nations around them, God is treating them just as the nations around them. Don't call yourself Christians, don't call it a Christian nation, don't say, "We are the people of God" unless we're going to *live* as the people of God. An empty claim to being the people of God does nothing but draw down the judgment of God.

Paul, in the book of Romans once again, speaks about the circumcision of someone who is unrighteous, the circumcision of someone who does not actually obey the law, and he says, "Do you think that circumcision will do them any good?" Answer: No. That circumcision will

witness against their unrighteousness. They've got the mark of the people of God on them, but they don't have the life of a person of God, and that circumcision will become a sign against their unrighteousness.

And that's what's happening here. These people call themselves the people of God. You know, the nations proclaim themselves Christian nations in our day and age. Well, my friends, it was Christian nations that went to World War I and World War II. They claimed to be Christian nations. They made the claim, they made the boast. You know, I wish we lived in a truly Christian nation. We live in the kingdom of God. I wish Australia were truly a nation of Christians. But it's not. I pray that God will do great things. I hope that He will do great things.

Turn to Psalm 146, and start reading at verse 1: "¹ Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! ² I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. ³ Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. ⁴ When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish." Put not your trust in princes.

My friends, no elected leader is going to solve our problems. All right, we look at our nation and we see evil happening. I, too, sign the petitions, and I, too, have sent letters off to Parliament and to our local members saying, I don't want you to vote in favor of homosexual marriage—the normalization of homosexuality. And I've given them reasons why I don't want them to. And I've explained the whole thing to them. I send those letters off. I'm fighting that battle, too.

But understand something. No leader, no prince, no person, is our salvation. Our salvation is God—from God, by the Spirit. Our salvation if it comes—if our nation is to be turned around, if problems are to be solved, if things are to be made better—it will be by the works of God. The churches actually have to return to being what God said churches should be—a gathering of God-fearing people, dedicated to the propagation of God's word; a people who are actually truly righteous and holy and set apart from the world around them, even though we be sinners.

The problem with the visible church in Australia today is that it is anything but that. I'm not saying there are not faithful congregations, but let's be honest. We all know the truth. You sometimes can drive a long way before you find the next faithful congregation, but you can find an awful lot of congregations where any kind of dribble and nonsense you can name is being taught as teaching from God—any kind of rubbish: from pathetic liberal theology teaching an effeminate God and lovey-dovey, fluffy Jesus who doesn't really care about anything; to the Word-of-Faith Pentecostals, who tell you all you've got to do is put the right amount of money in the plate and say the right faith prayer, and you'll be victorious and nothing will ever go wrong in your life; to the Roman Catholics, who turn the gospel into a lifetime of labour and uncertainty and misery. That's what the visible church in Australia is.

We've got to make the true church, the spiritual church, what the theologians call the invisible church—we've got to make that visible. We make that visible through how we live. We make that visible through the things we say. We make that visible through how we worship. Our whole life should be a worshipful life. What you're doing at work, my friend, you're doing it in the presence of God. What you're doing in this society in some way contributes to this society, and you're doing it in the presence of God.

There is such a thing as common grace and common good, and your work is actually worked in the presence of, and ultimately, for God—unless you're working in some exceedingly sinful way. But I trust none of us here are, and all Christians should understand we should not be. There's no place for a Christian in an abortion clinic, for example. We've got to be making the true, the invisible church, visible because that's the only way the nation can be turned around.

We all know that in this town, and in other towns, there is this—I don't know what to call them, other than the Social Security Class. They live on the fortnightly government payment. Now I'm not trying to belittle them, and I'm not trying to say that we're a better type of person than that, but let's face it—the churches in Australia are not reaching that class, and that class is probably somewhere in the millions now. There are suburbs filled with them, and we know it's a fact. And the church in Australia does not reach those people at all.

They get their fortnightly pay from the government for doing nothing, and being paid to do nothing, they therefore do nothing. And they're blinded and they're still poor—they're still poor. Poverty is not actually about a wage, it's not about the money in your pocket. It's actually something in here—it's something in your head. That's poverty. When you can't see past the next handout, you're in poverty, and it doesn't matter how big the handout is. If we doubled the amount of Social Security money this class of people are getting, they'll still be like they are, because they're not getting any light. All they're doing is being paid to do nothing, to stay away.

You know, what the government really wants when it hands out that money is, Go away, shut up, don't whinge, and don't attract attention. That's what they're saying when they hand out the money—Go away, don't whinge, shut up, and don't attract attention. And that doesn't work, because you can't reform a people apart from the word of God. Human philosophy, socialism—you can't solve a problem with these foolish philosophies.

You know, I've talked about this sometimes at work, and some of the union reps get all annoyed with me, and they say, Oh, you want to go back to the days of the working poor! And I say, Well, they'd better off than the poor are today. The working poor were better off than the poor are today. They're better off on the minimum wage. They're better off actually working eight to ten hours a day. They've got something constructive to do with their time, and they'll have a reason to actually try and live like normal people. Human philosophy. Human philosophy.

Now, seeing as how I'm there, I might as well just sort of finish the rabbit trail. Our politics today—we say we've got the Leftists and the Conservatives. My friends, we don't have either. We actually do have the Leftists, but we don't have conservatives. When I say "Leftists," we don't have hard-core communists in power, mostly. But those who are Conservatives today, with very rare exception, all they are is slow-motion Leftists. They're slow-motion socialists. They don't actually want to change or correct anything. All they want to do is get in power and slow it down. In the end, it ends up at the same place.

What's the problem? The problem is their philosophy, or their epistemology. The source of their knowledge is wrong. It's the wisdom of man. You know, we imagine that communism was defeated when the Berlin Wall came down. Well I'm sorry, but communism is just a word.

Behind communism is the teachings of a man called Karl Marx, and behind Karl Marx is the teaching of a man called Charles Darwin. And as long as Darwinism is taught, it tends towards the philosophies of human wisdom, which are the practice and the application of death.

Socialism, this whole supposed socialist safety net that's supposedly the solution for our nation, is based upon Marxism. Do you understand why they want to bring thousands upon thousands of Muslim refugees into our nation? I'll tell you. Point one, it's not compassion. It is not compassion. It's got nothing to do with compassion. Here's what it is: Marxist ideology, socialist ideology, teaching that religion is no real thing, that there is no true spirituality, and that religion has no true power. Marxist or socialist ideology teaches that there are only material causes, that people are poor because they're born in a cycle of poverty, that people have no opportunity because they're born under a burden of poverty, that people can't change unless their financial circumstances are changed.

So they look in the world today, and they see these Islamic nations under darkness where people are in poverty and slavery, and they say, Here's how we can prove our ideology. Here's the test case that proves that everything we say is right. We can bring in Muslims to a nation like Australia. You give them money every fortnight, and you put their kids in secular government schools, and, hey—presto! Religion will mean nothing to them and they will turn into normal, average Joes like everyone else.

It's an experiment, and they will never admit it, even if the experiment is going wrong. They're trying to prove that their ideology is correct. And that's why they do things like take that TV presenter and give him an award. Why? Because that's them saying, "You see, you see our ideology is correct. This guy is a Muslim"—what's his name, Waheed, Raheed Alli [Waleed Aly], something like that?—"You see, our ideology is correct. We brought in a Muslim family, we put this kid through secular education, and now he's just a normal contributing Aussie. Give him the gold prize! Our ideology is correct!"

And every time there's some kind of Islamic-based crime, whether it's the gangs in the cities, whether it's the extremist, fundamentalist Islamic terrorists, who thus far, praise God, have failed to cause any trouble in our nation—they say, "Oh, the reason they're doing it is they don't have the opportunity, and they're poor, and they don't understand, and they've never had the opportunity to be like us"—utterly denying that their motivation is theological and religious, because their ideology says their motivation can't be theological and religious, because there is no such thing as theology and religion.

That's why the socialists love liberal Christianity. They love soft-core Christianity. They love the kind of Christianity that you get outside of the Sydney Diocese of the Anglican Church—the lovey-dovey, God is just the fluffy teddy bear cross between John Lennon and Santa Claus theology—all he wants to do is give you a gift and say he loves you—that kind of theology that's taken that abomination called the Uniting Church and turned it into a joke in the Christian world. They love it. Why? Because it says there's nothing to Christianity, other than pretending you're nice. So that fits perfectly in with their socialist ideology.

So left-wing politics goes with liberal Christianity. And people who submit to the word of God as the truth of God, left-wing politics sees us as the enemy of all happiness. As far as they're concerned, what we're doing here today is destroying the peace. We're destroying happiness. We're the problem, and the world would be perfectly happy if finally everybody would adopt their utopian dream. And God laughs. He laughs at their foolish human philosophies. A day is coming. A day is coming. Let's move on.

To verses 12-21, I gave the subheading, "Proud Sinners Destroyed." "¹² For the Lord of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low; ¹³ against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up; and against all the oaks of Bashan; ¹⁴ against all the lofty mountains, and against all the uplifted hills; ¹⁵ against every high tower, and against every fortified wall; ¹⁶ against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft. ¹⁷ And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. ¹⁸ And the idols shall utterly pass away. ¹⁹ And people shall enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground, from before the terror of the Lord, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth.

"²⁰ In that day mankind will cast away their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, to the moles and to the bats, ²¹ to enter the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs, from before the terror of the Lord, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth."

The Lord of Hosts has a day against all that is proud and is lofty. Now notice something here. This is where we've got to understand that we're in a spiritual battle, and it's not good enough to be able to win a philosophical argument. It's handy to win a philosophical argument. I encourage you to study, to be the sharpest tool you can possibly be in the hand of God. But we're actually in a spiritual battle.

Look at verse 20: "In that day mankind will cast away their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, to the moles and to the bats, ²¹ to enter the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs, from before the terror of the Lord, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth." They will cast away their idols. They will realize that that which they have trusted in and which they have believed in does not have the power to save. But it doesn't say that in casting them away, they'll turn to God in repentance.

They know that they're under the condemnation of God, and they do not repent. Remember back to verse 9—that last phrase in verse 9 Isaiah says is, "Do not forgive them!" Do not forgive them. People hardened in their sins can only repent by the power of God. You can meet a person who knows they're under condemnation, and they will not repent. They just will not soften their heart. They cannot. They do not have the power within them. They know that the judgment of God is just and that they're headed for it. They'll cast away the idols and know they're going to destruction, and they will not repent. They won't come into the light. The people love the darkness rather than the light. So in that day when God returns in judgment, even though those who are being judged know they are being judged, and rightfully being judged, they won't repent. They won't be softened. They won't accept. They would rather die proud. They'd rather die proud than bend the knee to Jesus. God.

We're in a spiritual battle, my friends. We must be praying desperately. It's not enough to win the arguments. It's not enough to show people that their philosophy is wrong. It's not enough that we can show movies here from the Creation Science Society and from other apologetic organizations. It's good that we do. That's why we do it. But it's not enough to strip people of their false ideas. God must open their hearts to the receiving of the truth. They must receive the truth by the power of God.

And we must be ever ready and always speaking that truth, and living that truth, and sharing that truth at every opportunity we possibly get. And maybe we should just get a bit pushy about it and start trying to make some opportunities to share that truth—to get it out there, to speak it out there to the people. It's basically saying that everything that the people trusted in and thought was powerful is absolutely nothing in the sight of God. That's why it speaks of the cedars of Lebanon—these great tall wonderful trees, lofty mountains and hills, towers, fortified walls—all of them will be destroyed.

Turn very quickly to Isaiah chapter 40. The message of John the Baptist, we'll see tonight actually in the gospel of John, was, "Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Isaiah chapter 40, reading verses 3, 4, and 5: "³ A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵ And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'"

How did John apply the text? What was John saying when he quoted that? As I said, we'll see it tonight, but his application of the text was, Be baptised, repenting of your sins. The way that the hills were going to be made low, the way that the roads were going to be made level, the way that things were going to be prepared for the reception of the King was the way of repentance, the way of humble broken hearts before God. The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite heart. A humble spirit, O Lord, you will not despise. Psalm 51.

God will bring about, in the end, He will on that day destroy all that is proud. And our message to the nations is, "Repent. Make every mountain a low place. Make your uneven ground level. Prepare your hearts to receive the Lord and be saved. You're sinners! We're sinners too, but God is being merciful to us, and He will be merciful to you, if you but repent!"

God hates human pride. He utterly abhors and abominates our pride. The temptation into which the first man and woman fell was that "if you eat of it, you will be like God and you will not surely die." And we live in a society that keeps telling itself—We will not surely die. We can have a gay Mardi Gras. We will not surely die. We can legalize homosexual marriage and we will not surely die. We can have abortions and we will not surely die, never mind the poor baby that will surely die. We will not surely die!

God says, "No. No. Repent now. Let the high places be made low now, because if I have to come and do it in person, I won't be gentle." He came once in all gentleness and humility. He took upon Himself flesh. He came once, the humble Savior. The next day of the Lord is not

going to be quite like that. We've just finished looking at Second Peter and have seen that the next day of the Lord is going to be a day of destruction. It's going to be a day of the vengeance of God, and He will save His own, and He will judge the rest—lest they repent. And His church must preach the message of repentance. His church must preach the message that John the Baptist was preaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. We must obey God. We must repent.

Verse 22: "Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he?" Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he. What's that saying? Okay, Genesis chapter 2, verse 7. What does it tell us about man? It tells us that God made man from the dirt of the earth, and He gave him the breath of his nostrils. It was God who breathed into man that first-ever breath of humanity.

What it's saying is that man is a contingent, or a reliant creature. That's my final subheading—"Man a Contingent Being." That means we rely on God to keep us alive. We rely on God for our existence. God relies on no one and nothing. The only truly independent being that there is, full stop, is God. He relies on no one and nothing. He needs no one and nothing. He lives by His own power, His own life. He's the beginning of all things and He's the end of all things—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the God whom we must worship. He—He alone is the thing that upholds us by the power of His Spirit. God alone. And God's word through Isaiah is, "Stop looking to people. Look to me!"

We imagine that God is going to send down some kind of superman, or some kind of wonderful politician's going to come along and turn the clock back. My friends, what we need is actually an outpouring of God's Spirit and a true revival, where people's hearts are broken before God and they're brought into submission to the word of God. And we need that on the same scale as it happened in the first Great Awakening. We need that all over. And we don't need one man speaking in a stadium. We need thousands of men speaking in all the highways and byways. We need thousands. We need God to send forth laborers into the harvest, because He's going to save by the foolishness of preaching.

The wisdom of man is foolishness before God; the foolishness of God is more powerful than the wisdom of man—that little conundrum that Paul sets up in Second Corinthians. It's the preaching of the word. It's preachers sent out into the harvest—thousands of little men, nobodies, whose breath is in their nostrils, but who give glory to God, who give glory to God on high. They preach the word and let the chips fall where they will, calling people to repentance. Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he?

You know, the public marches and the sign-waving, and all that stuff—look, you know, as I've said to you, I send my letters off to Parliament, too, and I get as active as I can be, and I do the things that I can do. I try to push every button and pull every lever that God has given me in this society. I want you to do that. God has put us in this place with a particular type of government, and under that government we can play a part, and so we should. By His grace, He has given that to us. He's given us a right to exercise. We should be attempting to influence the politics of our nation. We should be attempting to influence our local members. We should be doing those things. But they're not the means of salvation. They're not the means by which God will turn this nation around. It will be an outpouring of His Spirit.

You see, there is another day of the Lord spoken of in Scripture, and that's the day of the Lord when old men will dream dreams, and young men will prophesy, spoken of by Peter in the book of Acts, where he quotes the prophet Joel—the day of the outpouring of His Spirit, the day of the calling of His people to repentance. That also is a day of the Lord. That's what will turn the nations around. That's what could turn this nation around.

We're in a spiritual war, my friends, and we must be a people of prayer, submitting to God, praying. We must be a people prepared to call upon the Lord to do His work through *us*. Understand something, what you're asking for—you're most likely going to be the means by which it's answered. The people you're praying for, and the town that we're praying for, and the nation that we're praying for? Well guess what—if we're praying that God will send a gospel harvest, we're the harvesters. That's all there is to it.

God doesn't use people who aren't His for His gospel. He does use them, in many different ways. God uses everyone, one way or the other. Even Satan is a tool in the hand of God—even the Devil. But His people are used for sowing His word and for gathering His harvest. We're His ordained means. There's something to be done, my friends. There's something to be done. I don't want to consign my nation to hell in a handbasket, and I don't want to consign the people around me to hell in handbasket. I have hope. As long as we have prayer and the word of God, and if the Lord Jesus hasn't returned in the clouds, we have hope that we will see thousands, thousands, and thousands saved. That's what we should be praying for.

Forget about the foolishness of man, and forget about the strutting millionaire, Word-of-Faith Pentecostals, driving around in their Ferraris, and they've got their TV shows and their cameras and the flash clothing and the rock band, and the whole show. It's not the fact that they're Pentecostals that I'm so much against, it's the fact that they think that they're the star, and that God is using them so specially and wonderfully. Yeah? Who are you reaching?

I spoke of that poor underclass, that poverty-struck underclass on government money. Are they receiving a message—"Oh, put your money in the plate, do it my way, say the right words, and everything will go right for you"? Is that the message that appeals to people in darkness? I mean, where is that biggest church in Australia? Smack bang in the middle of some of the wealthiest suburbs of Australia.

That tells you all you need to know. I'm sorry, but it does—all you need to know. Because only people who are upwardly mobile with money are going to go for that malarkey. "Oh well, I'll put the money in the plate. Everything's going right for me. My house is always increasing in value, I can turn over the real estate and make \$100,000 just on the real estate every two years." Positive, positive, positive. It's all going good.

And that's why in the southwestern suburbs, where the Centrelink money's just been shoved out the door, the gospel goes almost nowhere, and reaches almost no one. Because the only message that's going to reach someone in darkness is the message of, what? The message of God's great glory, the message of the Lord Jesus Christ who died for sinners, the true and the real gospel. That's the only gospel that's ever reached the stricken underclasses.

Try and think of any good thing that's ever been done in the world apart from Christianity. My friends, you'll be thinking for a long time. Hospitals, education, the rights of children, advanced medicine. You know, it was a Christian man who first discovered penicillin. It was a Christian man who discovered anesthetics—a Christian man who came to understand microbes and biology, and came to understand the importance of antiseptics when conducting operations.

You know, for hundreds of years, the surgeons knew the body. They knew what was wrong with the body. They knew how to conduct an operation, but people were dying—half the people they ever touched died. You know why? Because they didn't understand about bacteriology. They didn't understand about microbes, the unseen life that invades through the open skin. They didn't understand about cleanliness. It was a Christian man who understood those things and brought them into practice. And suddenly the surgeons could operate and people could recover.

Pick anywhere in the world where the philosophy of man has actually delivered something good. Try and find a place. Everywhere that an atheist philosophy ascends into political power, the result is death and destruction and misery. It may take a while and they may look good in the early years, but in the end, it's death, destruction, and misery. Why? Because man is a sinner. It's as simple as that. All of mankind is sinful. We can't save ourselves. We do not have the power.

And what we've got in the world at the moment, and what we've got in our society called the West at the moment is a complete generation of leaders who do not fear God, and do not believe in the power of God. And what they think is that if they could just get the right amount of political power, the right laws, the right authority—if government could just take enough control, we could all be living in utopia. And unfortunately, as I've said, what is supposedly the Left and the Right of our politics, what is supposedly the Conservatives, all they are these days is slow-motion socialists. They just slow it down a little bit, because they're coming from the same godless philosophy these days.

You know, the true Conservative has something to conserve, and the only thing that's worth conserving is the word of God, faithfulness to Christ. The only standard that should be fought for is God's law. The only righteousness that works is God's righteousness. That's the basis of truly conservative politics, not what we've got these days—lip service, and as I've said, slow-motion socialism, slow-motion atheism. In the end, it's just atheist philosophy attempting to be applied. And that's why it only brings death.

Think about it. Darwinianism—the whole idea of evolution—what is it predicated upon? What is it based upon? What has to happen? In Darwinian evolution, something has to happen to the weak. What has to happen to the weak? Die. In Darwinian evolution, the weak must die. And when you get a political system that's based on Darwinian evolution, and attempts to apply Darwinian evolution to humanity, what's the result? What happens to the weak? The weak end up dead. Why are babies being aborted in the news? They're weak. They can't fight back.

It's funny, isn't it—that's not actually bringing about evolution, that's destroying evolution, because we're destroying the genetic base. I mean, I don't believe in evolution at all, but if

you're going to have evolution, you actually need a genetic base to evolve from, and abortion destroys it. It's the ultimate illustration that the idea that life comes through death, in Darwinian terms, just doesn't work. It can't work. It can never work. So the weak die, the weak are killed.

But what does God's law say. What's God's accusation been against His people thus far through the prophet Isaiah? "They do not bring justice to the fatherless," looking back in chapter 1, "and the widow's cause does not come to them." God's law doesn't say that the weak should die. God's law says that the strong care for the weak, that the strong protect the weak, that the strong provide for the weak. But it doesn't say that that happens through atheist legislation. It says that happens from a heart given over to the worship of God, willfully providing for those around us.

God has set aside a day on which He will judge. Now as I've said, I do not know the times, don't claim to know the times. This I know, though—this is a fact. I really see three possibilities: Either (1) the Lord's return—Amen, Hallelujah, problem solved; or, (2) our society, the West, is on the way to judgment—a day of the Lord is coming for our society; or (3) God is going to grant an Almighty revival. I really see one of those three.

Perhaps I'm creating a false dilemma there. Perhaps there are really more options, but I just cannot see the wickedness of our world, or Western world, continuing as it is, without some response from God. I pray that it's merciful. I pray that God's response is that grace will pour into our nations like a flood, that we will see the salvation of thousands, and that we will once again have the clout to force those who are in power to listen, that righteousness will once again be the basis of our nation's laws. That's what I'm praying, and that's what I hope.

The others? Well anyway, it's all in the hands and in the providence of God, isn't it? I mean, that's the message. That's what the message today is. All of these things come under the power and the providence of God. We, the people of God, must obey in all of the things that God has put under our hand. In all the ways that He has called us to obey, we must obey. He will do what He will do. My friends, pray for that revival. Pray that God will empower and strengthen His church—the invisible church, the gospel-believing, gospel-preaching, Scripture-submitted church; that the invisible will be made visible in this nation, all over; that thousands will be called to repentance. Let's close in prayer.

Father in heaven, our Lord and our God, we do ask and pray that you would look upon us with mercy. We ask that you would look upon our nation with mercy. We ask that you would pour out your Spirit upon your church. We ask that the invisible church would be the visible church, that the false teachers would be silenced, broken down, and driven away. We pray, Father, that we would see your mighty work of salvation. We pray, Father, that the foolish philosophies of unbelieving men would be shown up for what they are and would be cast down, that the light of the gospel would once again become the foundation of our nation. These things we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.