

Isaiah 34:1-17 (NKJV)

1 Come near, you nations, to hear; And heed, you people! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, The world and all things that come forth from it.

2 For the indignation of the LORD *is* against all nations, And *His* fury against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to the slaughter.

3 Also their slain shall be thrown out; Their stench shall rise from their corpses, And the mountains shall be melted with their blood.

4 All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; All their host shall fall down As the leaf falls from the vine, And as *fruit* falling from a fig tree.

5 "For My sword shall be bathed in heaven; Indeed it shall come down on Edom, And on the people of My curse, for judgment.

6 The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, It is made overflowing with fatness, With the blood of lambs and goats, With the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, And a great slaughter in the land of Edom.

7 The wild oxen shall come down with them, And the young bulls with the mighty bulls; Their land shall be soaked with blood, And their dust saturated with fatness."

8 For *it is* the day of the LORD'S vengeance, The year of recompense for the cause of Zion.

9 Its streams shall be turned into pitch, And its dust into brimstone; Its land shall become burning pitch.

10 It shall not be quenched night or day; Its smoke shall ascend forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; No one shall pass through it forever and ever.

11 But the pelican and the porcupine shall possess it, Also the owl and the raven shall dwell in it. And He shall stretch out over it The line of confusion and the stones of emptiness.

12 They shall call its nobles to the kingdom, But none *shall be* there, and all its princes shall be nothing.

13 And thorns shall come up in its palaces, Nettles and brambles in its fortresses; It shall be a habitation of jackals, A courtyard for ostriches.

14 The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the jackals, And the wild goat shall bleat to its companion; Also the night creature shall rest

there, And find for herself a place of rest.

¹⁵ There the arrow snake shall make her nest and lay *eggs* And hatch, and gather *them* under her shadow; There also shall the hawks be gathered, Every one with her mate.

¹⁶ "Search from the book of the LORD, and read: Not one of these shall fail; Not one shall lack her mate. For My mouth has commanded it, and His Spirit has gathered them.

¹⁷ He has cast the lot for them, And His hand has divided it among them with a measuring line. They shall possess it forever; From generation to generation they shall dwell in it."

We are entering into 2 chapters this morning that fit together as a pair. The first, Chapter 34 is about God's judgment of the world. The next, Chapter 35, is about the salvation of God.

What we see, from a bigger picture, is God calling his people to make up their minds. He is calling us to decide.

God lays out the truth that He alone is trustworthy. He alone is capable of saving us. He alone is worthy to be called our Lord and Master. He has shown Himself to be close to us when we are needy. He has come to our aid when we needed help. He has made great and precious promises to us. He does not need to prove Himself again. He has proven Himself over and over.

But what are we like?

Isaiah shows us over and over again. I think it was John Calvin who said that our hearts are idol factories. Our flesh creates them one after another if left uncontrolled.

And we are always, always looking for salvation. We are driven to find salvation from our restlessness, and fear, and insecurity, and meaninglessness, and uncertainty. Yeah. It is salvation that every human heart wants, not just Christians. We want a salvation that will provide everything our hearts desire. We want to be accepted and loved and desired and worshipped. We want safety and security and to be protected from every painful thing that could happen to us. We want to be important and respected and admired. Yes, we want salvation **from** what **we don't want** and salvation **to** what **we do want**.

So our hearts run to those things we think will save us. We never call it that. But that is what it is. Whether it is some form of sexual immorality, or

materialism, or pursuit of pleasure, or obsession with some hobby, or giving ourselves over to entertainment, or a pill, or drink. We can fill in the blanks with all kinds of things. What we look for is salvation. We need to call it that. We run to that which we think will save us. That explains our lives. That tells us why **we did what we did** and why **we do what we do**. We feel the need for salvation.

We want to be saved from and for those things that are most important to us, so we create gods that we hope will provide those things. We label our fleshly produced urgencies “needs” and then we find a god to meet those needs. We proclaim, either verbally or in our heads “I need this” and then we demand that need to be met. But we rarely take the time to evaluate what the one true **God** says. And that is the source of our idolatry.

But what about **real** salvation, **true** salvation, the salvation **we really need**? Well, to have it we must give up all our ideas. We have to surrender them to God. We must say, Yes Lord, **Only You know what I need**. Yes Lord, only you **can supply** what I need. Yes Lord, only you can **save me** as I truly need saved, no matter what I might think. So, Yes Lord, I trust you and you alone to save me. I will turn to no idols to give me what I really need.

And what about the salvation God provides?

God takes care of our **greatest need**. He forgives us of our sin and grants us new life. He forgives the old and makes all things new. And how do we respond? Imperfectly. As always. God shows us grace. He loves us in spite of **our record** or **our responses**. And we take a life time to truly **adjust to** His salvation, to truly **appreciate** His salvation. We are so very very slow to get it. Martin Luther wrote:

Let it not be tedious to you if we repeat these things that at other times we teach, preach, sing and set forth in writing. For if we lose the doctrine of justification, we lose everything.... It cannot be beaten into our ears too much. Yes, though we learn it and understand it well, still no one takes hold of it perfectly or believes it with all his heart, so frail a thing is our flesh and disobedient to the Spirit.

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

Here is a quote from Mr. Ortland that was too good to not pass along.

The default setting in our hearts is to treat God as a shaky person, while we trot off to other saviors for reassurance. We don't think of it that way, because we don't see that the category of "salvation" is the key to

everything. Salvation is what we are always looking for, even in the wrong places. But true salvation is simply God entering into our lives with his grace in Christ to meet all our needs. And Isaiah has been urging us to *treat* God as a faithful Savior, so that we look like people who have actually been saved from something. Then our faith will be convincing.

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

Let's jump into our text.

¹ Come near, you nations, to hear; And heed, you people! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, The world and all things that come forth from it.

Now Isaiah moves from the local issues that Judea was having with Egypt and Assyria and he moves to the whole world. God was never only the God of Israel. He has always been the God of Heaven and Earth.

So his message now is to everyone who breathes. And He is about to give us the alternatives. We can live for the salvation offered in the **here and now** that has disastrous results. Or we live for the salvation offered by **a God outside of our realm** that has **wonderful** eternal results.

Isaiah calls out with a very severe imperative. Come near to hear. It is similar to when we have called our children saying, all of you. Get in here NOW! Every child knows what that means. There is trouble brewing for somebody. We are not going to read verses 2-8 that were read earlier, but you should check it out.

Have you ever thought about the makeup of the Bible. Some scholar said that it is at least 75% negative. Why is that? Why is so much of what the Bible says prohibitive. Why is so much of it about punishment?

Well, have you ever read much about illegal drug use? Especially drugs like Heroin and Crystal Meth? How much good have you read about them? Have you ever read someone who was encouraging everyone to partake of these drugs for the **positive effect** they will have on your health and your family and the rest of your life? Probably not. You have read warning after warning of how terrible these things are and what the consequences are for using them. But the problem is they make you feel ecstatic for a little while.

Well sin is much like that. We are sinners and gravitate to sin like water flows downhill. And sin will be destroyed one day. It will be annihilated. And everyone who clings to it will go with it. There is a lot to be said negative of sin.

It is said of Francis Shaeffer that if he had an hour to talk to a person about their soul he would spend the first 50 minutes telling them about the danger of their position and 10 minutes telling them about the good news. As we have often said, the good news means nothing until we hear the bad news. A person who comes to Christ without an understanding of the bad news will spend a period of time as a Christian coming to grips with that fact. We cannot appreciate salvation until we understand lostness, until we understand depravity, until we **really understand** what we are **really like** apart from God. All of our optimistic preconceptions of ourselves are going to have to die before we are willing to follow God on God's terms.

God is gracious to humans, even when He is talking about His wrath, because when He **speaks of wrath** He normally gives us a chance to **avoid His wrath**. It gives us a chance to get right with God.

Now let's look at what God has to say about His wrath.

First let's see what what God reveals about Himself.

² For the indignation of the LORD is against all nations, And His fury against all their armies

⁵ "For My sword shall be bathed in heaven; Indeed it shall come down on Edom, And on the people of My curse, for judgment.

6 For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, And a great slaughter in the land of Edom.

There is a very popular evangelism tool that starts with a statement that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life. That is very difficult to square with the statement here that says that the indignation of the Lord is against all nations. Anger is the first word in the sentence in Hebrew. The **theme** of the verse, the **focus** of the verse, is anger

The word used for indignation is usually an anger that is produced by someone's failure to do their duty. Show me one person who has done their duty towards God. None of us, by our own admission, have done our duty towards God. We have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. That is true of every man. So if we do not have the righteousness of God imputed to us, we are toast. We will face God's indignation.

Now fortunately we know that even though God's indignation and fury are against **all**, it is only **all** of a certain thing. God's fury is not against all human beings. It is also not against all soldiers. John the Baptist advised soldiers

how they should perform their duties in faithfulness to God. So there must have been a way to do it in God's favor.

No, this is not as much about the **individuals** as the symbols of human power and independence. What is it that the Judeans were afraid of? Nations, armies. And what was God going to destroy? Nations, armies. He would destroy any human defiance to Him and His kingdom.

There is a scene in a popular movie where a street thug attempts to threaten someone from Australia with a switch blade. The Australian pulls out his knife which is several times larger and says something like, now this is a knife. In our text the armies of the world threaten the world with their swords. And Isaiah is essentially saying, now **this is a real sword**. God has a sword and it will come from a place that no one can reach. It will come from a power that cannot be challenged. And who does it come down on?

it shall come down on Edom, And on the people of My curse, for judgment.

6 For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, And a great slaughter in the land of Edom.

Why Edom? Why are they singled out here. Some scholars believe that this is directed to the literal people of Edom. But it seems better fitted, based on the first verse to be a figurative use of the word Edom.

If the slaughter is over all the nations, this enemy must be a worldwide people. The people of the curse.

Bozrah, in verse 6 is the capital of Edom. And we see that these people will be slaughtered. They will be a sacrifice.

Now, again, what is so special about Edom?

Numbers 20:14-21 (NKJV)

14 Now Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom. "Thus says your brother Israel: 'You know all the hardship that has befallen us, 15 how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we dwelt in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers.

16 When we cried out to the LORD, He heard our voice and sent the Angel and brought us up out of Egypt; now here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your border.

17 Please let us pass through your country. We will not pass through fields or vineyards, nor will we drink water from wells; we will go along the King's Highway; we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left

until we have passed through your territory.' "

18 Then Edom said to him, "You shall not pass through my *land*, lest I come out against you with the sword."

19 So the children of Israel said to him, "We will go by the Highway, and if I or my livestock drink any of your water, then I will pay for it; let me only pass through on foot, nothing *more*."

20 Then he said, "You shall not pass through." So Edom came out against them with many men and with a strong hand.

21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory; so Israel turned away from him.

Edom is shown here as blocking the people of God. They ultimately stood against the **plan** of God and the **people** of God. They stood against the **salvation** of God that He would provide to the world.

Mr. Ortland explains

Edom tried to block the salvation that God was bringing into the world. Edom, then, is the antithesis to God's pilgrim people. That is why Isaiah singles out Edom. The ethos of the Edomite culture is the spirit of the whole world, a spirit that finds its salvation in the resources of this temporal, physical order. We have to get past Edom to be saved by God. And Isaiah is saying to us now, "I want you to listen in to what God has to say to this world about the great and final day of judgment. Is *that* what you want to be a part of? Or will you set your heart on a salvation from outside this world, coming only from God?"

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word - Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

You and I have choices. What do we want? Do we want to be loyal to our master? Or do we want what the world has to offer? What the world has to offer is packaged so well. But it leads nowhere good. Destruction. That is the choice in front of us every day all day. What will we do? What will we choose? What will we do when no one is looking? What are we really looking for?

Now look what continues. This is not a temporary judgment.

4 All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; All their host shall fall down As the leaf falls from the vine, And as *fruit* falling from a fig tree.

This is talking about the destruction of all nature. God is going to destroy everything He created, everything we assume about day to day existence.

What the global climate change people are trying to preserve will be burnt up intentionally by God no matter what they hope to accomplish. That is so common in the world of God against man.

⁸ For *it is* the day of the LORD'S vengeance, The year of recompense for the cause of Zion.

⁹ Its streams shall be turned into pitch, And its dust into brimstone; Its land shall become burning pitch.

¹⁰ It shall not be quenched night or day; Its smoke shall ascend forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; No one shall pass through it forever and ever.

Here we see a fire that will not be quenched night or day. We find in Revelation a similar statement.

Revelation 14:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

God's punishment on the wicked definitely lasts forever. It will never end. Does the individual torment end? Maybe it does. Maybe it does not. I read a book by Francis Chan about Hell while I was on the cruise. If you want to put a damper on a cruise, try that. But Francis Chan dealt with this issue. And he ended up coming to the same conclusion. We cannot know for sure. Scripture never specifically tells us. So the torment may or may not stop. But the punishment does not stop.

Mr. Chan wrote the book to counter a doctrine that Rob Bell is pushing that says that Hell will be used to convert sinners. It is called universalism and it believes that everyone will be saved in the end. That idea is also held by some fringe Christian groups. And a person may believe scripture and be a follower of Christ and hold that view. But I think they are making a very big mistake in how they are interpreting scripture.

There will not be some period that God relents and says I will let you go now. My disfavor is over. No. If you do not receive Christ, if you do not submit to Him, your punishment is eternal. Whether that is in death or life.

Later in the text we see that wild animals take up residence in those places that were the thoroughfares of the rich and famous. The point is that those who thought themselves so great had no power to possess for themselves a

lasting dynasty. It all ends. And humble animals take those spots that the proud thought could own it for themselves forever.

12 They shall call its nobles to the kingdom, But none *shall be* there, and all its princes shall be nothing.

13 And thorns shall come up in its palaces, Nettles and brambles in its fortresses; It shall be a habitation of jackals, A courtyard for ostriches.

14 The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the jackals, And the wild goat shall bleat to its companion; Also the night creature shall rest there, And find for herself a place of rest.

Are we getting what this is saying? Everything that our world sees itself as achieving, all of the things the rich and powerful think to gain, everything that the atheists love because they can see and they can touch and they do not need faith in God for, all of those things will be habitations of wild animals. There will be no glory for men. No people will be there.

16 "Search from the book of the LORD, and read: Not one of these shall fail; Not one shall lack her mate. For My mouth has commanded it, and His Spirit has gathered them.

17 He has cast the lot for them, And His hand has divided it among them with a measuring line. They shall possess it forever; From generation to generation they shall dwell in it."

God has seen fit that the wildlife will dwell in the land before the arrogant and Godless will. The snakes take precedence to the evil.

Verse 16 is assuring us that God always does what He says. And it encourages us to **know** what He says and **trust** what He says. We can bank on it. We can plan on it.

We are back to the **salvation of God** as opposed to the salvation that is offered from any other thing. Are you depending upon the salvation that God offers? Is that where your hope and confidence lies? Are you willing to quit trusting in other forms of salvation? What are you **really** trusting to save you today? What is it you are depending upon to give you what you feel you need? What must you have right now? Are you willing to trade that for a quiet confidence in the Word of God that promises that God will give you exactly what you need and when you need it? Will you let go of your desperation and trust God for the salvation He has promised? Like here in Isaiah you will find that **your way** or gaining salvation just ends up as a home for undesirable

beasts. But **God's way** ends up in peace and security forever. Who and what will you trust to save you?