

# Delivered from Autonomy

Isaiah

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**Bible Text:** Isaiah 29:15-24

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## Hope Baptist Church

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Today's Scripture reading is from Isaiah 29, verses 15,-24.

15 Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the Lord,  
And their works are in the dark; They say, "Who sees us?" and, "Who  
knows us?" 16 Surely you have things turned around! Shall the potter be  
esteemed as the clay; For shall the thing made say of him who made it,  
"He did not make me"? Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed  
it, "He has no understanding"? 17 Is it not yet a very little while Till  
Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, And the fruitful field be  
esteemed as a forest? 18 In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the  
book, And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of  
darkness. 19 The humble also shall increase their joy in the Lord, And the  
poor among men shall rejoice In the Holy One of Israel. 20 For the terrible  
one is brought to nothing, The scornful one is consumed, And all who  
watch for iniquity are cut off - 21 Who make a man an offender by a word,  
And lay a snare for him who reproves in the gate, And turn aside the just  
by empty words. 22 Therefore thus says the Lord, who redeemed  
Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: "Jacob shall not now be  
ashamed, Nor shall his face now grow pale; 23 But when he sees his  
children, The work of My hands, in his midst, They will hallow My name,  
And hallow the Holy One of Jacob, And fear the God of Israel. 24 These  
also who erred in spirit will come to understanding, And those who  
complained will learn doctrine."

*Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you that we can take comfort that you are in control, that you control all things: you control the weather; you control the tides; you control us; you control our daily circumstances; you control the hearts of kings and the hearts of the homeless. Father God, may you let our hearts be turned to you. May we humble ourselves, lay aside our pride and come to you and be as willing clay that lays before your hands and may you make of us glorious vessels that bring you honor. We ask this in Jesus' name amen.*

As we continue in Isaiah to consider the chronicles of how it is that men walk in darkness and can be rescued from that darkness and begin to walk in light, how God glorifies himself through the salvation of those who walk in darkness. Also, for the way that he glorifies himself in the damnation of the wicked because God glorifies himself in one way or another. So our session here in Isaiah 29 opens in verse 15 and it begins with autonomous man who lives in the midst of his secret sins, who is independent of God or so he thinks he is independent. He thinks that he's not seen but he learns nothing from God. He wants nothing from God. The chapter progresses to the very end in verse 24 and concludes this woe with the people who are learning doctrine. So it begins with this depressing scene of a man all on his own with his own thoughts, trapped there, and it progresses to a person who is learning from the Lord, one who has embraced the power of the gospel and the darkness and the curses of independence have transformed them. They become learners from God and they've heard the joyful sound from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me."

That's the beginning to the end of this but in the middle, there are all these images that are so beautiful. You have first of all, this beginning in darkness but then you read about this field that is no longer a dark forest with the shadows and dead branches but it's like a field with the sun on it. A completely transformed piece of ground. You see it's a deaf man who can hear, a blind man who can see, in this passage. A proud, unhappy man who is increasingly joyful. You see the poor rejoicing and you also see the shameful who are no longer ashamed. But he goes on, he doesn't stop with imagery like that: he talks about the pale face that is getting brighter and brighter; one who was hallowing himself and now he's hallowing the Lord; the errant who now have understanding; and the complainer, yes the complainer, is now learning doctrine. So it's a beautiful passage that speaks of this progress of the soul.

In the previous woe, "This people honors me with their lips." This is man-made religion. Now in verse 15 there is a contrast to man-made religion; now there is true religion that has arisen out of darkness. It's a section that explains the power of God to save and how he opens his blind eyes. Now, this is the third woe in Isaiah 28, 29, 30 and 31 through 33 and here's what we've learned so far: we've learned that every woe also has its cure and this is the blessing of God. Whenever you hear of judgment, you also hear the call of his voice to come out of darkness. It's a beautiful thing. And so in chapter 28, in the first woe, "Woe to the drunkards of Ephraim," the staggering stumbling spiritually intoxicated and the cure for them is a foundation stone, solid ground, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the second woe in chapter 29, verses 1-14, there are these people that are honoring God with their lips but their hearts are far from him. What's the cure for them? It's the cross that destroys the wisdom of the wise and brings their hearts into consistency with their lives. Now in this third woe beginning in verse 15 through 24, Isaiah brings us really to a disclosure of the power of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon a human soul and how God rescues sinners. His Holy Spirit comes and it does marvelous things to them and it shows how this impulse of the autonomy of man can be broken. It's even possible to unravel the unbelieving proud spirit that says, "I'll do what I want to do. I'll think what I want to think. I'll be who I want to be. I'm the master of my own destiny. I know what's

right. I know." It's a picture of that kind of person and the hope that there is for that kind of person and how the inebriated can see the reality of God.

So as we encounter this third woe, we find ourselves observing really it's kind of a crossfire of man's desire for invisibility before God and God's watchful eye and his care for them to call out to them. to tell the truth about them. To say, "This is who you are. This is what you have become." But that doesn't have to be the end of the story. So you see the outline in front of you. I've broken this passage up into four sections. The first section focuses on verses 15 and 16, the community of the autonomist is explained and exposed. It's a community. It's a people and this is how they think and they live and we're going to describe that in verses 15 and 16. Then you see there is a transformation that's prophesied and you see the remarkable beauty that there is who have walked in darkness. Then there's the grim reality that is affirmed in verses 20 and 21. Fourthly, there is a new community that is described in verses 22 through 24.

So we start with this community of the autonomist that's explained and it's exposed in verses 15 and 16. The woe is this: "Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the Lord, And their works are in the dark; They say, 'Who sees us?' and, 'Who knows us?'" It's a fellowship. It's the fellowship of those who walk in darkness. People who walk in darkness like to find those who walk in darkness and they have a fellowship. You know, there's the fellowship of the light and there's the fellowship of the darkness. We flock together. Now, their impulse is to hide from God and we see this all throughout Scripture. Where do we see it first? Well, almost everybody knows that. Where did the first ones hide from God? Well, they really didn't hide, they thought they were hidden. They tried to hide but it never really works out. The very first manifestation of the impulse to hide happened in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve tried to hide themselves. They were ashamed. They were trying to cover their shame in different ways and they wanted to hide but they found out that there's really nowhere to hide from God. Here in this passage, there are two things that they are trying to hide: counsel, that's the first thing, "who hide their counsel far from the Lord." What is this counsel? It's the sum total of what they say to themselves and to others. It's the opposite of, "Search me and know my heart. Try me and know my ways." It's just trying to live in the midst of your own counsel. All of your self talk. So self-exalted that you praise yourself for the things that you say to yourself and other people and you don't really care what God says about it, you just want to keep repeating the mantra of your own brain. They try to hide their counsel and keep it for themselves.

But not only that, they are also hiding their works. Their counsel and their works. This has to do what they are doing; trying to hide what you're doing from the Lord. It's completely fruitless but they don't come to the light because they know that their deeds will be exposed. They see themselves as disconnected and separate. They are independent. They are on their own. They value their separateness and independence from God. They live as if God doesn't see them. Their conversations continue on as if God is not looking over their shoulder. Their meditations are lived as if God doesn't exist and doesn't know their thoughts. They're on their own. They are independent. They do whatever they want. You know, I'll never forget a man that I hired many, many years ago

at my electronics plant. He told me he was an atheist. He didn't believe that God existed and I'll never forget walking out in that plant and looking out over the manufacturing floor and I saw that there was a man who doesn't have anybody looking over his shoulder and it terrified me.

Well, this is how the wicked try to live and this is a picture of a man. There is an important doctrine here and I'd like to speak of it. This is a part of the larger canopy of the omniscience of God. Here man is proclaiming that God doesn't know and here in this text we learn that God does know. He is omniscient. This is the category of the omniscience of God and so right at the beginning of this woe is a disclosure of God's knowledge of everything. In Psalm 147:5 it says, "Great is our Lord. He is mighty in power. His understanding is infinite. He knows everything. He understands absolutely everything." In the book of Hebrews, we read that nothing is hidden from his sight. He knows what excuses you have; he knows what your fears are; he knows what you are bowing down before; he knows why you've not become a Christian. He understands everything. Nothing is hidden from his sight. He knows everything. You cannot hide from the Lord. Jeremiah 23:24 says, "'Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?' says the Lord; 'Do I not fill heaven and earth?' says the Lord." Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good." Proverbs 5:21 says, "For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, And He ponders all his paths." Think about that for a minute: God is pondering your paths. He has the capacity to ponder the path of every person. You know, you might not be able to ponder the paths of every person that are in your circle of friends, well you can't. You might not be able to completely ponder the paths of everybody who lives in your house but God ponders every path. He knows. You might not know what your friend is doing but God knows what your friend is doing. He ponders the paths. He knows. Psalm 44:21 says, "For He knows the secrets of the heart." Psalm 90:8 says, "You have set our iniquities before You, Our secret sins in the light of Your countenance." This is the doctrine of the omniscience of God that is declared here. Psalm 90:17 says, "For nothing is secret." But he doesn't stop there. He says, "nothing that is secret that will not be revealed."

So not only does God see everything done in secret, he will also reveal what is done in secret. This is why your greatest problem is not yourself, it's not your boss, it's not your wife, it's not your husband, it's not the economy, it's not Obama, it's not ebola. Your greatest danger is God and so be reconciled to God through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is your greatest danger because he knows everything and he will reveal the truth one way or another and he does know the secrets of your heart. Ecclesiastes 12:14 says, "For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil."

This brings us to the whole subject of secret sins. I recommend highly to you Jeff Pollard's, Free Grace Broadcaster on secret sins. You can get it online for free at Chapel Library. His whole focus is about secret sins. I've extracted some citations from this. Thomas Brooks is quoted here. Thomas Brooks says, "The conscience is God's spy in the bosom." God has given us a conscience to be the eyes of God, the spy of God, to know

the internal things that no one else knows. Why? So that light would shine. So that water could be put on the field. So there could be growth and an emerging from darkness. The paleness from the darkness drops away but the conscience is God's spy in the bosom. What is your conscience saying? Pay attention to it. It's the voice of God many times. He says, "How many of you have been guilty of impious, profane, passionate or indecent corrupting language? Have you been guilty of uttering what is untrue? Have you been guilty of perjury or false swearing? Have any of you, we must propose this unpleasant question, been guilty of violating the commandment which forbids adultery and its kindred vices? Have you been guilty of fraud, injustice or dishonesty?" That's Thomas Brooks in the Free Grace Broadcaster on secret sins.

Here's Charles Spurgeon, "Sirs, will you keep your secret sins and have eternal fire in exchange for them? Remember, it is of no use. They must all be given up or else you cannot be God's child. You cannot by any means have both. It cannot be God and the world. It cannot be Christ and the devil. It must be one or the other." That was Charles Spurgeon on secret sins.

Here's Octavius Winslow, "To have a sight of sin and a sight of Jesus at the same moment constitutes one of the holiest and richest in the pages of Scripture."

Obadiah Sedgwick says this, "It is the desire of a holy person to be cleansed not only from public but also from private and secret sins." He says because secret sins will become public sins if they are not cleansed. He says that Christians often live like they are atheists in this sense. He says, "If there's not a formal atheism, yet there is a virtual atheism. It is as if God were not God in secret but only in public, that he could see in the light and not see in the darkness. That his eye is as the eye of a man." He says, "He is a universal eye and is a light without all darkness."

Well, what do we learn here? We learn that God doesn't see as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart and as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4, "The Lord will bring to light the things that are hidden in darkness." This is the whole doctrine of the sovereignty of God, his watchful eye which is omniscient. His eye collects everything into his own mind and he knows everything. His eyes see everything. Pouring forth that knowledge into his mind knowing everything. Knowing the path of every person. This is why the only rational thing in the world is to flee to God. He knows everything. You know, God knows everything but he doesn't know everyone and he also forgets some things. He forgets your sins covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. He knows the Son personally and intimately and lovingly and yet he knows all things. This is the knowledge of God.

This is the omniscience of God and the secret sins that are disclosed here in this first woe. Now, secret sins, things done in secret. It's well-known by the statisticians who study it, 80% now of young boys are looking at pornography weekly. That's a secret sin. What happens to a society when you have 80% of your young boys looking at pornography and who knows what percentage of their fathers? What happens to society? What happens to wives? What happens to sexual intimacy? What happens to children? What happens to

churches when that happens? Do you understand the danger that our whole culture is in today regarding this whole matter of secret sins? People think that they are secret but they are not secret and they will come out in some way and there will be harm. There will be public harm and trouble as a result of that. It will come out, believe me. You cannot look at things in secret and not have it affect you in public. It cannot happen. God has not wired the world that way. If you think the world is wired that way, read Isaiah 29:15. God is here to refute your wrong idea about pornography and secret sins. Things hidden you think, they are not. They will come out in one way. Your secret thoughts are really the best indicator of who you really are. Solomon said, "For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he." In other words, what you think is who you are and what you are and God understands who you really are. No matter what you say to your friends in church or in public, God knows what you're really saying in your heart.

But then verse 16. It's really a confrontation. He says, "Surely you have things turned around!" So God throws himself in the way of this life of secret sin and he says, "Surely you have things turned around. You've got it backwards." Actually the word that Isaiah uses is a word bigger than backwards. You don't just have it backwards, he calls it perverse. It's a term that brings forth the idea of perversity, things just so twisted up and mangled and turned way upside down. Up is down, down is up, good is evil, and evil is good. If you think you can hide your sins, you've got it wrong. You've got it completely wrong and upside down. He says, "It's turned around." God is all-knowing. He is independent and while man wants to act like he's independent, he's not. He's not the master of his fate or the captain of his destiny.

Then we read, "Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay; For shall the thing made say of him who made it, 'He did not make me'? Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, 'He has no understanding'?" So there in the latter part of verse 16, God is confronting this independence, this walking in darkness and it's an interesting verse because here you have the clay is talking to the potter. It's like a cartoon. The clay is talking. Clay doesn't really talk to the potters and here Isaiah has this absurd scene where the clay is telling the potter what for and the general perspective of the clay is, "You're just like I am." Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay? This is putting God on lesser terms. There are two things that the clay says about the potter. Two things, they say this: he did not make me. These are the people who don't believe that God is the Creator of the world, that God created them and God knows them. "He did not make me. He cannot tell me what to do." This is the whole problem of mankind. He doesn't want to admit that he has been created and that the Creator has a right to speak to him and tell him what to do. This is the great conflict of the world today. Does God have the right to tell anybody what to do? Or how about this one: do the people of God have any right to tell other people what God has told them to do? Well, we actually believe that the people of God are supposed to tell the people of God and others what God has told them to do. We think that human beings have a right and actually an obligation to do that. We're supposed to proclaim the word of God in our context.

So they say, "He did not make me," and then they say a second thing, "He has no understanding." In other words, God's ways are not workable. God's ways are outmoded.

It's so old-fashioned. It is so plasticine. It's so 1950s. God doesn't have a right to say anything. He has no understanding. They read the Bible and they say, "This is ridiculous. This is stupidity. Oh, you believe this? Do you really believe what this thing says?" Absolutely, we do. How many times have you been belittled for believing what's in here? And here's what the clay says, he says, "There is no understanding here. This is ridiculous." When you hear that, you have a person who is walking in darkness.

But the Bible has much to say about the potter and the clay. One thing that the Bible says about the clay is that the potter often takes malformed, deformed clay and he reshapes it. This is what the potter does. The Bible says that the Lord will control the state of the rulers of the world like clay. He says that in Isaiah 41:25. Well, there is much to say about the potter and the clay. In Jeremiah 18:6, he says, "Can I not O house of Israel deal with you as this potter does, declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the Potter's hand so are you in my hand O house of Israel." There is nothing more wonderful than to be in the hands of the Potter as he shapes and as he forms, as he holds you in his hands, as he presses you here to shape you there, how he pushes you down and then brings you up. This is how God works with his people but he's shaping the clay. He doesn't make any pot the same. He doesn't press any pot in the same place. He doesn't lift every pot to the same place. He forms it for his own glory. This is the wonderful doctrine of the potter and the clay. The sovereignty of God over his creatures.

Then after describing this community of the autonomous, after exposing the ridiculousness of their perspective, after exposing what they say and how stupid it is, he speaks of a transformation. He actually prophesies it that there can be transformation. He speaks of this in verses 17 and 18. There are five miraculous transformations that you can extract from verses 17 through 19 so instead of the darkness, instead of the autonomy, instead of thinking that you can hide, he says, "No, there's something better for you." The first of these five transformations is that Lebanon will become a fruitful field. We read it like this in verse 17, "Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, And the fruitful field be esteemed as a forest." Now, this is connected to verse 14 where God says, "I will do a marvelous work among this people. A marvelous work and a wonder." And that marvelous work is brought about by the power of the cross because he says, "For the wisdom of the wise shall perish and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden." This is exactly what the Apostle Paul said was the work of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, "For the wisdom of the wise is destroyed." Man relinquishes his own wisdom and takes on the wisdom of God, loves the wisdom of God rather than his own wisdom.

But here with Lebanon, just like the man who has his wisdom replaced with the wisdom of God, now you have Lebanon and what was a forest becomes a field. It's a radical transformation. If you've ever turned a forest into a field, you know how much work it is and how long it takes to get that field to begin to produce once you take the trees out. But it's a radical transformation and it happens in an instant here. He will do this. The same language is in Isaiah 35 and I'd like you to turn there to see it. We're on our way to Isaiah 35 but this prophecy in 29 is speaking of the exact same thing of Isaiah 35. What happens here is that you get a vision of what God desires for his people. You get a glimpse of the

goodness of the Lord and the kind intention of his will and what he desires to do for people. Isaiah 35:1, "The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them." Do you remember when your life was like a wasteland? "And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." This is a picture of Jesus Christ in your heart. "It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, Even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, The excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, The excellency of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, And make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, 'Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, And the thirsty land springs of water; In the habitation of jackals, where each lay, There shall be grass with reeds and rushes. A highway shall be there, and a road, And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, But it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, Shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, Nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it; It shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there, And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Everything changes. One of the most wonderful things about the gospel of Jesus Christ is that it banishes the sorrows of this world and it replaces them with the joy and the gladness of Jesus Christ.

So this first transformation is a transformation from trees to a field, a field where there is fruit growing. The sun sees it instead of the darkness. The sun is there. Instead of it being like a desert, there is water there. That's the first miracle that takes place here in this passage. Then the second miraculous transformation is the deaf shall hear. Verse 18, "In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book." There are those words again "in that day." So he's speaking of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the redemption of sinners and in that day, they shall hear the words of the book. They shall hear the words like they never heard before. Maybe they read it over and over again. You know, in the last month I've taught you probably three or four atheists who said they've read the Bible three to five times after they became atheists but they read it and they read and they just don't get it. It's just not hitting their heart. They're like Teflon and it's not being heard. But here they will hear and what do they hear? They hear the words of the book, that's what they hear. Hey, pray for the atheists who are reading the Bible. Pray for them that they will hear the words of the book, that God will have mercy on them and when they tell you that they've read the Bible three times, you tell them why and pray for them that God would open up the words of the book that it could be that there would be a day when they hear the words of the book. Tell them that God can do it. He can open it up to them.

You know, my own father, his hearing has been declining and he's tried different things to improve his hearing that work fairly well but then he got some hearing aids and I'll never forget the day when he got the hearing aids tuned up and working right. I said, "Hey Dad, how is it?" He said, "I heard the birds for the first time today." There is



something so wonderful about being able to hear: to hear the birds; to hear the song of the shepherd; to hear the voice of God and his consolation and his loving kindness; to hear it and believe it and to cry out even for more of it. This is the picture here. It's a miraculous transformation.

They will hear the words of the book. You know, the Lord Jesus Christ made many people to hear in his ministry. When you go home today, read John 9:1-7. It's a beautiful story of a deaf man being made to hear. Why did Jesus do that? Why did he heal the deaf ears? Why did he do that? To give you a picture of salvation. To show you what it's like to finally hear the birds that you never could hear before, the sweet sounds, the beautiful sounds in the morning and in the afternoon and in the evening. Those birds singing in your ear, teaching you of the goodness of Jesus Christ comforting you, helping you with your fear, showing you how to abandon the things that are destroying you, to turn from sin. The songs. The words of the book coming into your mind. Why should you memorize Scripture? So that the words of the book would fall onto your ears and you would hear. How many times has God turned you around through a word of Scripture? How many times? Here's how I'll tell you it is with me: the only times I've been turned around is by the words of the book.

The third miraculous transformation, the blind shall see. "And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness." So that you could say that, "I was blind but now I see. Amazing grace. How sweet the sound." The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it. Your whole perception is changed when you see. The whole world becomes a different place when you see.

Then the fourth miraculous transformation is that the humble shall rejoice. In other words, the ones who have been downtrodden, humbled. The ones who have had reason to be humbled, humbled by their own inadequacies, humbled by the foolish things that they have said, the wrong things that they have done. They have reason to be humbled. They don't have any reason to lift up their heads. They come to the Lord and what does he do? He lifts their heads. He is the lifter of your head. He is your glory and the lifter of your head. He lifts up your head. You can hardly hold your head up for who you are and what you know about yourself and about what you've done and you know that you have every reason to hang your head and he lifts up your head. The humble shall increase their joy. They lift up their heads and they declare the joy of the Lord. This is the fruit of salvation. It says, "They shall increase their joy," so it's something that grows. It's an ever increasing joy. It's just like the Lord Jesus Christ turning the water into wine and when he does that, he brings the best wine last. In other words, there is an escalating goodness that you experience in salvation. It's not over.

The fifth miraculous transformation is that the poor rejoice. When you've lost all of your money, you're down to your last two cents or maybe you're in negative 500,000 cents. Maybe you're just in way over your head. You are poor. You are truly poor. It just always hangs over you, doesn't it? You're thinking about it all the time and it's discouraging. It's all over you. You're poor. Everybody else isn't. But here the poor among them shall rejoice in the holy one of Israel. I don't think he's talking about material poverty but I

think he uses this terminology to sort of give us a feel for what happens to you when you are in poverty and then your poverty is revealed, there is a lightness about you. You do feel differently and the poor shall rejoice. I believe he's talking about the poor in spirit, those who don't think so much of themselves and what God does as he blesses the poor who are in spirit.

So there are five miraculous transformations. Just to get our coordinates in this text, the first two verses is a picture of darkness, of denying the presence of God and then the sun opens up and there's this disclosure of what God does. There is a transformation that's prophesied and it's a prophecy of the transformation that comes as a result of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When you believe in the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ and you've repented of your sins and you've turned to Christ as your only hope, this is what you get. These are the transformations of the gospel. This is why we should always preach the gospel. It's such a wonderful thing. But then after preaching this wonderful gospel, Isaiah reminds us of the grim reality. He affirms it in verses 20 and 21 so that we don't forget that there are sheep and there are goats. There are the repentant and the unrepentant. There are the believers and the unbelievers. There are the fruitful and the unfruitful. He comes back to remind us that he also glorifies himself in the damnation of the wicked. Those whom he created who say, "I don't care about you." They've committed a terrible transgression. They've despised the one who created them and gave them a life and gave them breath and food and friends in a world like this as a gift and yet they say, "We would rather walk in our own way." Because God does punish those who want to walk in their own way. Yes he does.

Verse 20, "For the terrible one is brought to nothing." These are the ruthless, the mighty, and the ones who trust in their own life, the ones who want to go in their own way. These are the terrible ones. If that's you, God calls you terrible. He is going to deal with you. "The scornful." Notice there are several descriptions here. He first of all talks about the terrible, the ruthless, the mighty, the self-driven, the self-made man. He takes on those first and then secondly the scornful. He says, "The scornful one is consumed." The scornful one is the one who scorns the wisdom of God. We learn from Psalm 1 what happens to the scornful but we should never be surprised when we are confronted with the scornful, with people who scorn the word of God, who scorn the people of God. We should never ever be surprised when that happens. He is speaking of those people here who actually despise what God has said. You know, the corners are everywhere in our society: they are in our government; they are in our educational system. Do you remember just recently Gov. Mario Cuomo was commenting on the super conservatives and he's talking about the super conservatives are those who would like to see an end to abortion, who would not like to see same-sex marriage legalized. Here's what he said, "These people can get out of this state. Let them leave New York." This is the scornful. The scornful are everywhere and they will tell you to leave. They will tell you to leave when you try to speak of this. Even just yesterday ours who were preaching at the abortion clinic, those who did a counter protest lifted up a gigantic black wall and held it between us and the abortion clinic and then they would hold large moving quilts to shield the message. It's scorning the salvation that's in Jesus Christ. It's scorning the call to come and be saved and be delivered from all of your sins and your fears. It's the call to stop

your fornication's. It's the call to stop your immoralities and your thefts and to turn to Jesus Christ. It was so scornful that they literally held up a black wall maybe 100 feet long or more. The scorners are everywhere. Get used to it and keep proclaiming the word of God.

The third explanation here that Isaiah gives is, "And all who watch for iniquity are cut off." So there are those who watch for iniquity. You know, first of all, the terrible are brought to nothing, the scornful are consumed and then thirdly those who watch for iniquity are cut off. In other words, those who are trying to catch the people of God in a mistake; those who are looking for every little word to discredit them. They are just watching, waiting to belittle the people of God. One slip of the tongue, one word that could be attacked in order to discredit the message. And they are cut off.

This is what God will do. Those three things God will do: he will consume and he will bring to nothing and he will cut off. These are the things that men do, verse 21, the enemies of God, "Who make a man an offender by a word." These are the things that man does. God has already said what he will do. They will make a man an offender by a word and they will condemn the righteous. This is fulfilled in many ways. It was probably fulfilled explicitly in the time of Jesus when the Pharisees were trying to catch him at his every word. In Matthew 22:15 we read this, "Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk." This is what the unbelievers always want to do, they always want to entangle you in your talk and that's what they did with Jesus Christ. I think Isaiah is prophesying Jesus' interchanges with the Pharisees. In Luke 11 we see a similar thing, verses 53 and 54, "And as the Lord Jesus said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him." So they make a man an offender by a word. This happened to the Lord Jesus Christ and it will happen to all of his disciples thereafter.

The second thing that men will do is that they will lay a snare for those who reprove. You know, Jesus was reprovng at the gates. He clears the temple and do you know what the next thing that we read that the scribes and the Pharisees did? They plotted to kill him. He cleared the temple, they plotted to kill him. That's a direct fulfillment of this verse that they will lay a snare for those who reprove. There is nothing more difficult in this world than to be a reprover by the word of God. Make sure that your reprovng is by the word of God and not your own.

The third thing that they do is that they turn aside the just by empty words. They lie. They use empty words. The scorners, those who walk in darkness, do not care about the truth. They only want to promote their own thoughts so they lie and they'll do anything they can to promote the lie. That's why the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified and Barabbas was set free, it was because of a lie.

Then there is a new community that's described after this grim reality is presented. There is a new community here that is described in the final verses of this chapter, verses 22 through 24. Here he speaks of the redemption of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now you see the word "therefore" and it calls to mind everything that's been said before and it explains why all of this is happening. Why is it that some are found walking in darkness? Why is it that there are some who cut off the truth? It's so that some might be saved. It's so that there might be a church, a place, a heavenly place where the love of Jesus Christ rules and reigns. It's a picture of salvation by faith. The faith of Abraham. It's being redeemed by the redemption that is by faith and by faith alone as it was in Abraham. The prophecy of Abraham is that, "In you all the families of the earth would be blessed." This is the salvation of Abraham. Verse 22, "Therefore thus says the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob." We know who Abraham is. What is the house of Jacob? This is the church. This is the whole body of believers. He's referring to those who were blind but now they see. He's referring to the fact that God is supplanting, God is saving the Gentiles, that God will take a people like Jacob, remember what Jacob did? Jacob was the supplanter; he was the replacement. And here the Gentiles are prophesied as the replacements of the corrupt Israel that's being condemned right here in this prophecy.

What will happen to these people? What will happen to them? If you turn to the Lord, what will happen to you? If you're considering turning to the Lord, your heart has been tugging at you, what will happen to you? What will happen to you if you turn to the Lord? What will become of your life? This is one of the greatest fears of the unbeliever who is considering Jesus: they fear what will happen to them. They fear that they'll miss out on something good. They fear that somehow some good thing that they desire will be withheld from them or they may fear that some evil thing may be withheld from them, that they don't get to do the evil stuff. But what will happen to you? You know, some of you have just recently turned to the Lord Jesus Christ, what will happen to you? What is your future? Well, here it is right here: first, Jacob shall not now be ashamed. God will take away your shame. He'll give you no reason for shame because Jesus Christ has cleansed you from all of your sins and your shame. Now, I've said this before but I'm going to say it again because we're getting ready to take the Lord's Supper: let's make sure that as we enter into the Lord's Supper, that we've not despised the body and the blood of Jesus Christ and have just walked in shame and make the time of the Lord Supper just a time of shame. It should be a time to examine yourself and perhaps bear the weight of some of your shame. That's appropriate but you should never stay there because Jesus Christ paid for your sins and you can hold your head up because he lifts your head. You'll not be ashamed. You don't have to carry around shame for the rest of your life. All the things you did, you don't have to carry your shame around. You may have mental assent to the shame and remember how terrible that was, that's one thing because that will help you to turn away from sin for the rest of your life and that's a good way of thinking about the shameful things that you did but recognize that Jesus Christ has covered your shame. This is why Jesus Christ in the Garden when Adam and Eve had sinned and they tried to cover their own shame with their own ways, God came and he covered them himself. He covered their shame. You can't cover your shame. You can't do enough to cover your shame. Jesus Christ can cover your shame. For the rest of your life: your past sins, your present sins and your future sins.

So what is ahead? What is ahead for you? You'll not be ashamed. Secondly, "Nor shall his face now grow pale." So your face won't grow pale. This is a progression of growing more and more pale. Have you ever met people who you thought were a lot older than they really are? They've had a lot of road wear. You walk away saying, "This person has been through a lot." Their faces has grown pale. Sin does take a great toll on your body, on your emotions. It takes a toll on everything. But here your face doesn't grow pale. When we were discussing this on Tuesday I said, "Is there a doctor in the house? What happens to you when you're growing pale?" Our beloved doctor said it's that your circulation is impaired. Perhaps your blood has been drawn. You may be white with fear but just before you faint, you grow pale. That's what happens with sin. Just before you faint, you grow pale. You're growing pale, you may be getting ready to faint, turn to the Lord Jesus Christ before you faint.

Thirdly, they will hallow his name. Verse 23, "But when he sees his children, The work of My hands, in his midst, They will hallow My name, And hallow the Holy One of Jacob, And fear the God of Israel." What does it mean to hallow? It means to make much of. It means to adore. It means to say, "That is wonderful. That is so good. That is better than." When you hallow something, you are making much of that thing. So if you turn to the Lord, what is ahead for you? What is it going to be like? God will give you something to adore. He will give you something that will thrill your heart. It will lift you out of the darkness. You will hallow his name.

Fourthly, verse 24, they will come with understanding. What do you have to look forward to? "These also who erred in spirit will come to understanding." In other words, God is going to clean up all your dumb thoughts. He's going to make you think right again. It will take your lifetime. He's going to dismantle your false doctrine maybe one week at a time. He's going to bring you to understanding. You will come to understanding. This is the refreshing hand of the Lord. You know, God is so kind to rescue those who erred in spirit. This phrase "erred in spirit" is important. It indicates your whole thinking. Your spirit, the whole of you being out of kilter. The way that you were thinking wrongly contrary to God, contrary to his wisdom, you filled up your own brain with your own thoughts and those around you and you've picked up stuff from everywhere you went and you've picked up a lot of garbage. You erred in spirit. It's like it ran through you. Here's the problem: it still runs through you. Here we are in this church, all of us if you've turned to Christ, even if you turned to Christ 30, 40, 50 years ago, you still find the impurities in your spirit and the Lord is so kind, he's patient. The Lord is long-suffering with his people and he takes time with them.

The fifth thing, they will learn doctrine. "Those who complained will learn doctrine." What does it mean to complain? It means to murmur. It means to not believe. It means to resist God. It means to quench the Holy Spirit. It means that you think that your thoughts are smarter than God. You were a complainer and now you're a learner. You're learning doctrine. You're a disciple. What is a disciple? It's a learner, a person who is learning, a person who says, "Oh Lord Jesus, put your yoke upon me. I want to learn from you. I realize now that your ways are pleasant ways, that you are gentle and humble in heart and that I'll find rest for my soul."

So the text begins with those who are walking in darkness, they are raging, they think they know everything and at the very end we find a people who are learning doctrine. There they are clothed in their right mind before the Lord Jesus Christ learning of him because he is so good.

Do you scorn anything that God has said? Take note. God has sent a spy into your life that's called your conscience to spy out anything that's in darkness. He sent his word that you would open up the book and hear it and he would begin to cleanse you of your wrong thoughts. But he's so good. For all that darkness, for all that raging, what does he do? He makes a field with the sun on it and the water. He makes a deaf man who can hear. He takes a blind man and makes him see. He takes a proud man and gives him joy. He takes a poor man and gives him happiness. He takes the shamed and he takes away their shame. He takes the pale face and he makes it brighter and brighter. He makes one who hallows his name. He makes the errant understand the truth. He turns the complainers into the learners. This is the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Will you pray with me?

*O Lord, we adore your wondrous grace, the heights and depths unknown. O, the pardon bought with blood. O Lord, we thank you for your amazing grace. Amen.*