

Isaiah 65:8-16 (NKJV)

⁸ Thus says the LORD: "As the new wine is found in the cluster, And *one* says, 'Do not destroy it, For a blessing *is* in it,' So will I do for My servants' sake, That I may not destroy them all.

⁹ I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, And from Judah an heir of My mountains; My elect shall inherit it, And My servants shall dwell there.

¹⁰ Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, And the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down, For My people who have sought Me.

¹¹ "But you *are* those who forsake the LORD, Who forget My holy mountain, Who prepare a table for Gad, And who furnish a drink offering for Meni.

¹² Therefore I will number you for the sword, And you shall all bow down to the slaughter; Because, when I called, you did not answer; When I spoke, you did not hear, But did evil before My eyes, And chose *that* in which I do not delight."

¹³ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, My servants shall eat, But you shall be hungry; Behold, My servants shall drink, But you shall be thirsty; Behold, My servants shall rejoice, But you shall be ashamed;

¹⁴ Behold, My servants shall sing for joy of heart, But you shall cry for sorrow of heart, And wail for grief of spirit.

¹⁵ You shall leave your name as a curse to My chosen; For the Lord GOD will slay you, And call His servants by another name;

¹⁶ So that he who blesses himself in the earth Shall bless himself in the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Shall swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My eyes.

We have problems in dealing with people that God does not have. And one of those problems is that we see from the outside in. We are left to read evidences in a person's behavior to determine **what source** the behavior is coming from. 1 John is chock full of this truth. Over time, what we do reveals what we believe. We can't peg that in a single moment of time. But we can see it in the trends of what we do. That is the world we live in. That is the process we are engaged in when we are engaged in **encouraging each other to keep doing the right thing** or to **start** doing the right thing.

This makes us dependent upon honest communication. And the problem with **that** is that we all have a dishonest streak that wants to cover and defend our behavior. And we all have a dishonest streak even about our own motives when we are involved in each other's lives. So we can see right from the start

we can see that the **church** living as the **church** is not going to be some Garden of Eden. There is imperfection and sin dwelling at every turn. Sometimes people won't get through to us because we won't tell the truth about ourselves to ourselves. Sometimes we won't get through to others because they won't tell the truth about themselves to themselves. Our level of successful ministry to each other depends upon love, humility, and the work of the Holy Spirit who creates each of those in us.

So what does that have to do with our text?

God is not **limited** in dealing with us **like we are limited**. He does not see us from the outside. He sees us from the inside. He knows what is really going on inside of us. That is why he can look at a person like David, who **we** might want to run out of town on a rail when we find out about his sin, and God says he is a man after my own heart. And that is why he can look at some of the Pharisees who were amazingly devoted and extremely disciplined in the things of God. These guys would be like the preachers who quote scripture from memory when they preach. They were impressive. Their spiritual accomplishments were great. But Jesus called them whitewashed tombs because, with all of their spiritual adornment and accomplishment, they were dead inside.

Now we can be thankful for this. While **we** might be **wildly misunderstood**, while our actions may be perceived in the worst light, while we may not be thought of accurately, God knows. He knows exactly who we are and why we do what we do. Sometimes even when we don't.

But there is another side to this truth. If we deceive ourselves about ourselves, and then we deceive each other, we do not accomplish anything of value. In fact, our deception is often damaging. I can lie to you to get you off my case. I can lie to my wife and make her believe it. But it has not changed what I did or what I thought. I might feel like I got away with it because I got away with it **relationally**. I did not have to pay a relational price for that sin. But I did not get away with it. The God that knows me from the inside knows my guilt. And that is the real me. No matter what anyone else thinks, God knows the reality. **To the degree** that we see ourselves and our thoughts and our behaviors **as God sees them**, and we represent that same truth (as appropriate) to others as we inter-relate, it is **to that degree** that we will have life transforming conversations and relationships with each other in the church. We can fool ourselves and we can fool each other all day long, but we cannot do so and get and give what we need from each other in the body. We are to orient with the fact that God sees and knows. And then we go from there. And that is where our text starts this morning.

⁸ Thus says the LORD: "As the new wine is found in the cluster, And *one* says, 'Do not destroy it, For a blessing *is* in it,' So will I do for My servants' sake, That I may not destroy them all.

This is the imagery. Someone comes out of the vineyard with a cluster of grapes. These grapes were picked for a purpose. They were to be used to make wine. But the cluster is a mixture of **good and bad grapes**. So the person carrying the cluster is about to throw them all away. But then someone says, "Don't throw them all away. There is good in the cluster that must be salvaged". There must be a selection process gone through for the good to be separated from the bad, the useful separated from the useless, those that bring pleasure must be separated from those that bring displeasure.

We see the picture of the same kind of thing in Matthew.

Matthew 25:31-46 (NKJV)

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats.

³³ And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;

³⁶ I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

...

⁴¹ Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

⁴² for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink;

⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

We can't help but notice that the selection in Matthew is based on behavior that reflected a changed life. They were not selected because they **earned** their salvation by what they did. But their salvation was evident **by the choices that they made**.

We see a separation between the chosen and the rejected by a criteria that is accurate. And oddly enough, the believers didn't know when they were doing

the thing that revealed their love for God and the unbelievers didn't know when they were doing the things that revealed their distaste for God. But God saw the inside. He knew exactly what was going on, even though others may have thought one was just like the other.

We also have the parable of the wheat and the tares, and the internal wolves and the sheep. There is nowhere in scripture where the church in this age is presented as something pure. True and false are expected to be living out this church experience together.

The implication here is that simply identifying with Christian stuff is not enough. Looking like a grape and being in the cluster is not enough. It is the difference between being **in Christ** and **not being in Christ**. It is the difference in being saved or not being saved. It is the difference between having the life changing power of Christ Resurrection in us or not having it in us.

Looking like a Christian is not enough. Doing the things **that Christians do** or following the rules **that Christians follow** is not enough. Having a faith in Christ that affects everything we do and think in such a way that it does not matter who is looking. That is the difference.

Now Isaiah is about to describe the difference between the good grapes and the bad grapes.

First the good grapes-

⁹ I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, And from Judah an heir of My mountains; My elect shall inherit it, And My servants shall dwell there.

¹⁰ Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, And the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down, For My people who have sought Me.

Then the bad grapes-

¹¹ "But you *are* those who forsake the LORD, Who forget My holy mountain, Who prepare a table for Gad, And who furnish a drink offering for Meni.

¹² Therefore I will number you for the sword, And you shall all bow down to the slaughter; Because, when I called, you did not answer; When I spoke, you did not hear, But did evil before My eyes, And chose *that* in which I do not delight."

How do we know the good from the bad grapes? How do we know which we are? Isaiah describes the difference here.

The difference is between **those who sought God** and **those who forsake God**.

Look at the first group. They are described as people who have sought God in verse 10. And then we see that they are people who are **enjoying that which**

God has given them. They are people enjoying the fruit of the relationship with God. But we might say, wait a minute. Who wouldn't enjoy all that good stuff. The bad grapes would enjoy the same thing wouldn't they? Well the contrast of the bad grapes helps us understand the nature of the good grapes a little more clearly.

First they forsake their fellowship with the true God.

Second they prepare. They pour themselves into the worship of foreign Gods

Third- they did not answer or hear. They were non responsive to the call of God

We can assume that the true believers did just the opposite. So this helps us understand the difference.

Remember how God describes Himself as saying **Here I am, Here I am.**

Here is the response of an unaffected heart. If ever there is an example to avoid, this is it.

First they forsake their fellowship with the true God. They know where the temple is. They know where God's presence is. But they have no time for that. They know their history. They know what the one True God had done for them. But they have no time at all for Him. Anything is better than pursuing a relationship with Him, submitting to Him, worshipping Him, obeying Him.

Is this a danger for us? Well let's look. Where would you say you most come before God's presence in worship? Where do we come before Him to fellowship with Him, to commune with Him, to hear from Him?

Would it be reading His Word? Praying to God? Being with His people in Worship?

OK. How much time do we have to spend that is not spoken for? And how quickly do we use it on something like this? Remember, God is looking at the inside of us grapes. **Pretending** to want to be with God and **wanting** to be with God are two different things. This is a question worth asking. Are we practicing forsaking our Lord? How can we change that? Will we? I saw a quote this week, I think from Sproul, that said something like if Christ has a complaint it would be that His bride never talks to Him. How true is that about us. Do we pursue fellowship or forsake it for other things?

Second they prepare. They pour themselves into the worship of foreign Gods

Now why would they do such a thing? The words in verse 11 might give us some insight here. Gad means **fortune** and Meni means **destiny**.

So it could be translated-

But you who forsake the Lord,
who forget my holy mountain,
who set a table for Fortune
and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny,

I think it is safe to say that there is not a person here who finds it easy to trust God for what we need. We like to use the word stressed, but often it is really a synonym for worry. We do not like being in a fragile situation where we cannot control what will happen.

When Carla drives I notice that I am continually wearing out the carpet on the passenger's side. And while we may have different styles of driving, I know those different styles aren't really the issue. I cannot control what the car is doing and I want to. She has never rear ended anyone. I have. She has never backed into a moving car. I have. She has never crashed a car due to driving too fast. I have. But I still trust my control more than hers.

Why? Because it is mine.

We naturally want to control our circumstances. We want to provide the things we need. We want to see it on paper for how we will give ourselves everything we need and protect ourselves from everything that can go wrong. Isn't that what we are like?

Now, who does scripture say is driving our car? God. Has He ever forgotten anything? No. Has He ever missed a deadline? No. Has He ever faced a difficult thing beyond His power? No. Has He ever run short of resources? No. Has He ever been fickle in His relationship toward us? No. Now tell me again. Who do we want to trust? Us.

Now that is just plain stupid. It is stupid when I do it. It is stupid when you do it. It is stupid. But that is the default setting of sinful human beings.

Now how were the bad grapes dealing with this temptation?

They were picking specific idols to meet their specific needs. They were picking the idols of Fortune and Destiny so that they would have some control over their Fortune and Destiny. When you have a so called god devoted to such a thing, you can believe that if you do the prescribed behavior you will get it. So these people were, in a sense, taking their own control for their fortune and destiny. By golly they were going to have this for themselves no matter what the one true God might have in mind. That is the idea here.

And what did they not have? Trust.

How often do we do the same thing? How often do we put our hope in something that promises to deliver those things that we most want in life even though there is no evidence that they can deliver on their promises? Money

cannot do it. Relationships cannot do it. Full cupboards cannot do it. Human effort cannot do it. These are all the horses and chariots of man and they fail to deliver us.

Oh our hearts **really are** idol factories. We create them at every turn.

You know it would be really interesting if we were to sing hymns based on what our lives say we really believe. Suppose God would intervene and make the hymns we are singing fit what we really apply.

A mighty fortress is our God, as long as we have enough money and a good job. Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus as long as you are getting what you want, than to trust and obey.

Do you see what I mean.

WE DO NOT GET TO PICK AND CHOOSE WHAT A SOVEREIGN GOD HAS DETERMINED IS BEST FOR US. WE CAN ONLY CHOOSE IF WE WILL TRUST HIM OR IF WE WILL NOT.

That is what faith decides. Everything else is not faith. Everything else is flesh. Everything else is sin.

Romans 14:23 (NKJV)

²³ But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.*

When we begin to tell God what He must do for us we are sinning the same sin these bad grapes were sinning. We are going outside His will, outside His fellowship, to secure for ourselves the thing that is more important to us than God. We do not like to add it up that way. But scripture has no difficulty doing so.

At the core of our problem is that we are afraid if we really trust God and surrender to His will, he will ruin our lives. That is a lie straight from hell. But our flesh still believes it and runs to it and gravitates around it. And faith tells the tempter- you lie. God loves me. I will trust Him.

Third- they did not answer or hear. They were non responsive to the call of God

Because, when I called, you did not answer; When I spoke, you did not hear, But did evil before My eyes, And chose *that in which I do not delight.*"

Here I am. Here I am. Says the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, all loving God of the universe. And His creation says- huh? Did I hear something? If Trust is the core issue, unresponsiveness is the symptom. These people suffered from selective ignorance.

Sometimes people suffer from true ignorance. They want to know what God wants, but we have no way of discovering it. There are believers all over the

world with this kind of ignorance. They do not have a Bible or access to a Bible.

Or they have a Bible but the thing they need to understand is complex. A simple reading of the Bible would not reveal it.

But much of the time our ignorance is selective. It is right there to be had by anyone with a normal intelligence and minimal effort, but we don't want to know it. Because if we admit that we know it, we will have to submit to it. And the real issue is not one of ignorance. It is of selfishness. We want to do what we want to do and we don't want God messing up the desirable things we want to keep as options.

These people knew what God was saying. But they did not open their ears. They would not even respond. They would not even admit the voice was saying something. Because they were committed to the solution for providing for themselves and they were not about to submit it to the Lordship of Christ. The **actual problem is the thing that they trusted** to provide for themselves what they wanted. The **symptom** was that they were unresponsive to God's interaction, God's direction, God's provision. We like to see it the other way around. We like to think that the problem is that **we didn't understand what God wanted**. But usually the problem is **we didn't trust Him enough to submit**. We trusted our foreign gods, the ones promising things they cannot deliver.

So how about us? Do we respond when we read God's Word and it addresses our lives directly? Do we seek out His Word to know how to respond to our situations? Do we trust God to provide us the best of all lives in order to prepare us for eternity, even if that involves suffering that we do not particularly prefer?

It is all about trust. When we resolve **the trust issue** in our lives, everything else is set to fall into place. If we **will not resolve the trust issue**, nothing else will ever be what it should be.

If we will trust God, we will worship Him and gradually conform our lives to the worship He most desires.

If we will not trust God, our lives will be full of impotent idols we call upon that we feel compelled to serve because we need something to take care of us. That is just how it is.

13 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, My servants shall eat, But you shall be hungry; Behold, My servants shall drink, But you shall be thirsty; Behold, My servants shall rejoice, But you shall be ashamed;

14 Behold, My servants shall sing for joy of heart, But you shall cry for

sorrow of heart, And wail for grief of spirit.

15 You shall leave your name as a curse to My chosen; For the Lord GOD will slay you, And call His servants by another name;

16 So that he who blesses himself in the earth Shall bless himself in the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Shall swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My eyes.

I want to quote our brother Ortland here.

God is holding his hands out to us, but they aren't weak and helpless hands. God loves authenticity, wherever he finds it; he hates hypocrisy, wherever he finds it. However mixed his people are now, God will make his own judgments unmistakably clear and final and powerful. And Isaiah's argument ("Therefore") is that who we are now will count forever.

Each one of us is standing at a fork in the road with only two eternities possible, either Heaven or Hell, and there will be no self-deception in either place. What is Heaven like? It's like eating, drinking, rejoicing, and singing for gladness of heart forever. What is Hell like? It's like hunger, thirst, shame, crying out in pain, and wailing in brokenness of spirit in despair forever.

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

I would also like to sum up something else our brother brought out in the text. There is an idea out there that God would not send any sincere worshipper of Him to hell just because he had the wrong information about God. But brother Ortland points out that this completely misunderstands the Gospel. The Gospel is not about God saving human beings who have the moral goodness to win God's favor by their God seeking sincerity. No. God makes it clear that He does not save **good** people and He certainly does not save people **because** they are good. He came to seek and save sinners. So this idea of God being in a bind due to human sincerity is simply a misunderstanding of man's position and God's salvation.

We need to look at verses 13 through 16 and make sure that we are those who will be eating and drinking and rejoicing with joy. And we need to make sure that we are quick to tell those who are choosing the alternative that there is still time to repent. There is a way to make things right. And it is only by the single name of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son.