

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 30

ISAIAH

CHAPTER 30

Theme: "Turning to Heathens for Help to do God's work!"

THEME VERSE

Isaiah 30:12-13 (KJV) "Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant."

INTRODUCTION

God's people do not seem to learn very well from history and their own mistakes. There is no help from the arm of the flesh. The arm of the flesh seems strong and able to help at times but the true help comes from the LORD. The arm of the flesh might be used by the LORD to help His people but not when His people live in idolatry and ignore and repudiate His offer of help. Such arrogance and carnal approach to life's adversities by God's people is very reprehensible.

This is more so because the LORD has always been faithful to Israel. He has kept His side of the

covenantal agreement all the time since Israel came out of Egypt in the days of Moses. However the same can not said of Israel from day one. Israel has been rebellious and there were more idolatrous days than godly days. The spiritual life of Israel in the days of Isaiah was not much better. Israel faced many problems especially from the new up and coming super power, the Assyrians. Israel faced impending destruction through this northern violent and merciless neighbour.

If there was land to be had, superpowers like Assyrian would not hesitate to kill and conquer. Might to such despots was right. But Israel was not like any other nation of the world. Israel was God's people. Israel has biblical guidelines to follow in situations like these. Israel could not turn to foreign powers for help like other nations of the world. To do so was an insult to God. God can look after His own people whom He has called out of darkness into His marvellous light. By going to heathen nations for protection or provision is to say that Israel's God was not able to protect and provide for His own.

Such "man-centred and God insulting" theologies are very much alive in our world today too just as it was prevalent in Isaiah's days. Israel has failed the LORD once again. This time it was turning to heathen nations like Egypt for help instead of turning to God. Israel cannot look to Egypt and to the LORD at the same time for help. The LORD is a jealous God. Such a farce is rejected by God categorically. If Israel turns to God for help then to God alone must she lean upon and not

man. There is no half measure with God. This chapter teaches us the lesson of never to insult God by turning to heathens for help.

OUTLINE

1. Egyptians will Help in Vain (vv.1-7);
2. Costly Price of Rebellion (vv. 8-17);
3. Condition of Return (vv.18-26);
4. Assyria will be Beaten Down (vv. 27-33).

COMMENTARY

Egyptians Will Help in Vain

The LORD is no respecter of person and nation as evidence by His warning and rebuke of Israel. This new chapter of Isaiah began with woe to the rebellious children of God. What a tragedy that the LORD has to use such strong but sad commentaries about His own people. What was the nature of their rebellion? Israel took counsel but not from the LORD. Israel took cover with a covering (i.e. protection over her safety and welfare) but not of the Spirit of the LORD. What Israel has done is to add sin to sin. This was a serious indictment against Israel by the LORD. The sin of Israel was to turn away from the LORD and turned to heathens for help! This was rebellion in the eyes of the covenantal keeping LORD.

To whom did Israel turn to for help? Israel went down to Egypt, her southern neighbour to help her fight against her northern enemy! This

seems logical as Egypt would be more than willing to help for she probably knew that after Israel was destroyed, Egypt would be next. Israel ignored the LORD and did not bother to pray and seek the LORD's help first! Israel went to see Pharaoh, the king of Egypt in order to strengthen herself in the strength of Pharaoh. Israel leaned on Egypt for support in her time of great need. The LORD described her action as trusting in the shadow of Egypt. The meaning of shadow here has to refer to the power and might of Egypt. In the eyes of Israel the gods of the Egyptians as well as the armies of Egypt were more potent than the LORD!

The LORD declared that the strength of Pharaoh would become Israel's shame. Israel's trust in the shadow of Egypt would become her confusion (i.e. disgrace or dishonour). The meaning of the two statements is similar. Israel would be betrayed by her trust in Egypt. Egypt would not be able to protect her from destruction and captivity. Turning to Egypt for help would bring disaster instead of help. For God's people to put their trust in heathens is like trying to stand on water and not sink and be drowned.

The detail description of this shame and humiliation is cited below from verses 4 onwards. Apparently the princes and ambassadors of Israel were sent by the king of Israel to Zoan and Hanes respectively for help. These were probably cities where the leaders and counsellors of Egypt were located (see Isaiah 19:11-13). The impact of their visit was stated by the LORD in verse 5. "They were all

ashamed of a people *that* could not profit them, nor be an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach.” In what way could these Egyptians with their mighty army not profit to Israel? Even if Israel were able to defeat the Assyrians with the help of the Egyptians Israel would find herself deeper in sin and idolatry. Her victory with the arm of the flesh of the Egyptians was in itself already a defeat of the worst kind. Israel wrestled against principalities and spiritual forces, and not with flesh and blood. For Israel to turn to the Egyptians for help was a no win situation.

Verse 6 is a cryptic way to describe the poor rebellious Israel and her futility in seeking help from Egypt. Ridiculing and pouring contempt on Israel and her rebellion, the LORD described the prince's journey to the south (i.e. Egypt) as foolhardy. It is land of trouble and anguish. From this land comes the young and old lion, the viper serpent. These are destructive and poisonous creatures of the wild that hurt and harm anyone who would go near them. Israel was entering into a den of poisonous creatures by her foolish escapade into Egypt. Israel will spend costly riches to buy help from people who were impotent to help them. These riches were carried upon the shoulders of young asses and their treasures upon bunches of camels. The use of young asses and camels imply a large and heavy amount of riches and treasures.

The Egyptians shall help in vain. And the help they render will come to nought. It is better for the princes of Israel to sit still and do

nothing instead of making the journey southward to seek help from the helpless.

Costly Price of Rebellion!

Isaiah was commanded by the LORD to write in a table (i.e. tablet of stone or wood) and to note (i.e. to engrave) in a book the rebellion of Israel. This must be recorded for posterity forever. The content of the writing is given in verses 9 to 11. “That this *is* a rebellious people, lying children, children *that* will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits: Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.” What a frightful record of the dastardly deeds of the people of God in the days of Isaiah.

They were described as rebellious. If that was not bad enough, the LORD called them lying children that will not listen to the law of the LORD. The Word of God was given to them but they just would not heed the warnings. They replied to the seers and commanded them not to see. They warned the prophets not to prophecy the right things. They told them to speak to them only smooth things (i.e. things that flatter) and to prophecy deceits. The prophets were told to say what the people wanted to hear so that they could carry on in their sins and idolatry. The prophets were told to prophecy lies so that their future would be presented beautifully even though in truth they were heading to

Hell. What a tragedy to deliberately live in delusion and not want to face the truth even though the truth was only an ear shot away! The prophets who told the truth were chided to get out of their way and not try to stop them. The LORD was called the Holy One of Israel and He too was told to get out of their sight as they wanted to do whatever was in their wicked and sin-filled hearts!

The reply from the Holy One of Israel was clear and direct! Those who play with fire will surely be burned. "Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water *withal* out of the pit." (vv.12-14)

Because Israel has despised God's Word by ignoring it and casting it aside, and turned to oppression and perverseness, remaining without any desire to get out of it, the LORD will destroy Israel. This iniquity would be Israel's destruction. Israel would be destroyed as a breach ready to fall. It will come suddenly and swiftly. Israel shall be broken like one who dashed a potter's vessel into many pieces. The destruction would be so through that Israel would be rendered completely useless. Israel would be broken into

tiny pieces that even if someone were to try and find a small piece to take fire from the hearth or to take water out of the pit, they would even find one large enough to do it.

The only way out for Israel is to repent of all her sins and return back to the LORD. Learning to be still before the LORD and trusting in Him will Israel find safety and security. This path of repentance was so simple for Israel to become strong again and yet Israel would spurn it and would not return. Israel declared that she would not return! Israel preferred to flee on horses (i.e. to trust in the arm of the flesh for help). The LORD said that the enemies would run faster and will surely catch up to Israel and destroy her. One enemy would be able to destroy one thousand Israelites. The rebuke of five would be able to destroy an entire nation! Israel would be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain and as an ensign on a hill as an example on a once powerful people of God now left in ruins for all to see.

Condition of Return!

The LORD said that He would wait patiently for Israel to return. The patience of the LORD is remarkable. It appears as if no matter how sinful a state Israel finds herself in, the LORD will discipline with one hand and reach out with the other for her to return. The Bible says that the LORD would wait in order to show grace to Israel. This was the way the LORD could be exalted by showing mercy toward Israel. The LORD is a God of judgement as He demonstrates how He tempers justice with mercy. Blessed are all who wait

for the LORD. AS the LORD waits patiently for Israel to return to Him, will Israel be wise enough to wait and turn back to the LORD. All Israel had to do was to stand still and stop her waywardness and return back unto the LORD. The LORD was prepared to wait patiently, but would Israel return?

The next few verses describe what could have been for Israel if only she were to return to the LORD. "For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee. And *though* the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This *is* the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." (vv. 19-21)

Israel could return and live in Jerusalem her capital city. Israel would stop weeping. The LORD would be very gracious to Israel by blessing her. All Israel had to do was to cry to the LORD. The LORD will hear and take immediate action to bring relief, restoration and blessings aplenty. Yes the LORD gave to Israel the bread of adversity to consume and the water of affliction to drink, but it was for Israel's own good. What kind of father would reward and bless his own children when they are rebellious? Only a derelict and bad father would do something so foolish. It would only encourage his rebellious children to rebel further if they were blessed for

rebellion. These adversities and afflictions were meant to stop Israel from sinning and so that Israel might return back to the LORD and walk the path of righteousness.

The teachers whose duty was to guide and instruct would not be removed and placed in a corner that they cannot be found. Instead they would be easily found to lead and guide Israel back to the LORD. Then Israel will hear their teaching on what is the way back to God and what is the right way. The teacher will guide Israel and help her to know when to turn to the left and turn to the right. These are right directions in life that we all need especially after we have gone astray. Steps on how to get right with God are crucial in every believer's life.

The return to the LORD must be conditioned by a repudiation of all idolatry. Every object and place of idol worship must be gotten rid of if Israel were to return to the LORD. This was how firm the LORD's requirements were regarding the destruction of idolatry in Israel. "Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence." (v.22) The idols must be utterly destroyed and cast away like a piece of menstruous cloth. This menstruous cloth is considered one of the most unclean and filthy material in their way of life. Israel was to regard the idols like this piece of cloth!

When all the above is done in Israel's spiritual life, then blessings would be poured down from heaven in

abundance. As Israel was a nation married to her land, the blessings of Israel upon her return to the LORD were both spiritual and material. "Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures. The oxen likewise and the young asses that ear the ground shall eat clean provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan. And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers *and* streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." (vv.23-26)

Material blessings would flow copiously in Israel. The animals would be greatly blessed by the LORD with great abundance. Famine and drought would become a thing of the past. The mountains would be like a life giving source of refreshing water. The day of the great slaughter when the towers fall probably refers to the enemies of Israel who would be dealt with by the LORD. On that day Israel would be a fruitful nation, both materially and spiritually. The light of the moon will shine like the sun. The sun would shine seven times brighter than normal. It is compared with seven days of brightness! This has to refer to the brightness of Israel's great spiritual testimony of the grace and mercies of

the LORD in her national life. The LORD would heal the people of Israel. Israel would be one with the LORD again.

Assyria Will be Beaten Down!

The transition from Israel to Assyria is seen by the use of the word "Behold" in verse 27. The LORD will deal with Assyria for her arrogance and attack of God's people. The Name of the LORD comes from far, burning with anger against Assyria. The burden of the LORD is very heavy against Assyria. The LORD's lips are full of indignation. His tongue is as a devouring fire. The word of the LORD is all powerful. When it is described as a devouring fire it means that whatever He says will surely come to pass and anything that stands in its path would be destroyed by this devouring fire. The LORD will unleash His wrath against Assyria.

The LORD's breath is like an overflowing stream. This means that the LORD will sweep aside any resistance against Him. It will drown anything in its path. The LORD would sift the nations (i.e. Assyria and other nations that would ally with her against the LORD) with the sieve of vanity. In ordinary sifting, the chaff is removed and the wheat is retained. In this case nothing would be retained. Everything would be cast away. In other words there is nothing good in Assyria and any nation that would help her. Everyone would be destroyed by the LORD as long as they are with Assyria. The LORD would bridle the jaws of the people so that what comes out of their mouths would only be evil causing them to err. This would justify

the punishment of the LORD against them. The people will utter words of arrogance and evil and will be justly punished by the LORD (see 2Kings 18, 19; 2Chronicles 32).

Israel would rejoice when it happens. This was how the LORD described Israel's rejoicing. "Ye shall have a song, as in the night *when* a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the mighty One of Israel. And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of *his* anger, and *with* the flame of a devouring fire, *with* scattering, and tempest, and hailstones." (vv.29-30) Israel will be singing in the night like one who has kept a holy solemnity (i.e. a Jewish fest.) The one who kept a holy solemnity is one who is right with the LORD and he knows it. He is very elated and delighted in his soul to know that he is well in his soul and the LORD is pleased with him. There is gladness in his heart like one who goes with a pipe climbing up the mountain of the LORD knowing that he will be meeting the mighty One of Israel. He is confident that the LORD will not cast him aside but will receive him as he ascends the mountain of God in worship. Such confidence was rare in Israel. Is it also rare today in our church?

The LORD will make sure that His voice was heard throughout the Land. He shall show lightning out of His arm when He judged so that all

who see will have no doubt that it was the LORD who punished Assyria and no one else. The LORD would do so with indignation where His anger would be clearly seen. This will be accompanied with devouring fire scattering and there would also be tempest and hailstones. This is a picture of the devastation that would come upon the Assyrians. Entire armies could be destroyed by such calamities sent by the LORD.

The voice of the LORD would destroy Assyria, the mighty super power at that time. No army would be needed. No angel would be necessary. The LORD would just simply speak and Assyria would be no more! Why would Israel turn to Egypt when the LORD who is so powerful can be easily reached through repentance and turning back to Him in humility. "In every place where the ground shall pass" refers to every inch of ground where the wrath of God touches would be destroyed. The battle against Assyria would be won not by using instruments of war but by using musical instruments. Tabrets and harps would be instruments of rejoicing which Israel would be using while the LORD destroys Assyria. In other words Israel does not need to lift a finger and Assyria would be destroyed.

Finally the LORD said that Tophet was ordained of old for a time such as this. Tophet comes from the Hebrew word "toph or taph" which means "to burn." Tophet was a place of cremation. The king of Assyria will be burned in Tophet. The place of

Tohet is deep and large, capable of burning a large number of people. There is a pile of fire and a lot of wood which makes a large fire to consume everything that was thrown into it. The breath of the LORD will kindle it and keep it burning for the Assyrians. It will be like a stream of brimstone, burning extremely hot like the temperature of Hell!

PRACTICAL VALUE

Help From Heathens!

Seeking help from heathens to do the work of God insults God. This action is as good as saying that the gods of the heathens are better and more able to help God's people to do God's work than God Himself! This is the sad state of affairs in many churches today and BP churches are not spared. Like Israel of old in Isaiah's time, Christianity today has become idolatrous. Courting heathens by borrowing their way of singing is as good as saying that God's people are bankrupt and their God is not able to help them compose new songs and hymns for worship.

When will we ever learn from the mistakes of Israel? Probably not! History is repeating itself over and over again. Local churches are self-destructing because they are turning to idolatry and to heathens to do God's work. Have discernment when we enter into a church nowadays because not all churches are godly. In fact the opposite is probably true. Most churches are ungodly. Do not support Satan and his work by becoming a minion of Satan. You are doing exactly

that when you worship and serve in a church that leans on the heathen gods to do God's work. What a shame!

The Arm of the Flesh can Never Help!

Believers never wrestle against flesh and blood but against principalities in high places. This means that going to heathen and asking them for help is like trying to put out the fires of Hell using the tap in your own home! When a believer or a church is in trouble he must look up and cry to God for help. He is the only One who can help. The reason is that it is spiritual warfare. Even if the heathens can appear to help and get things "done," God's people have failed the LORD by their compromise. They have just declared to the world that the LORD is not as powerful as the gods of the heathen through whom the help came.

Believers must never forget that the warfare is never of flesh and blood. It is always spiritual and therefore he must pray and lean on God all the time. Never stop praying and leaning on God for the real battle is never carnal but always spiritual. When FEBC was used by Life BPC it was spiritual warfare. The battle was not defending FEBC but the ministry of FEBC, that was to defend the Word of God. Even if FEBC were to win in the court of man but do so by lying and cheating, FEBC would have already lost. However if FEBC were to lose in the court of man but hold on to its stance of a perfect Bible, FEBC has won in the court of God for it has not

compromised or sinned against God in any way.

No Heathen Will Ever Escape God’s Justice!

To think that man can escape the justice of the Almighty God is the height of foolishness. He has a better chance hiding from the heat of the noonday sun while standing in the middle of the desert. The destruction of Assyria is the LORD way of telling us that everyone who goes against the LORD will be dealt with by God. There is no escape. The judgement would be final and there is no reprieve. This will come true on the last day of man’s existence on this earth. Every single human being will stand before God in judgement. There is no excuse and escape.

When the Lord Jesus Christ returns He comes again as the Judge of all judges. He will no longer be the Saviour then. The moment He returns in the clouds of glory on His white horse, the world will see Him for who He really is, the perfect Son of God and Son of Man. The world cannot cry to Him “Save me!” It will be too late. He will judge and condemn all who do not have the mark of Christ on them. This chapter of Isaiah 30 reminds all readers of this impending and sure judgement. The evidence was that Assyria was judged exactly as the LORD described in Isaiah. AMEN.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 30:1-17

TUESDAY: Isaiah 30:18-33

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 30:1-33

THURSDAY: Isaiah 30:1-33

FRIDAY: Isaiah 30:1-33.

Discussion Questions

1. Is it biblical if a church seeks help from non-Christian organisation to buy the church van or help with building fund or money for mission work? Would it be a serious sin, if it is unbiblical? Please explain your answer.

2. Would asking a heathen for help to do God’s work be considered an insult to God? What if we pray and nothing happens and then we turn to heathens for help, would that be OK then? Please explain your answer.

3. Should believers demonstrate the same degree of patience with their enemies the way that the LORD dealt with Israel in her waywardness? Do you find restoration difficult to do between you and another person? What normally stands in the way of repentance and restoration of relationship? Please explain your answer.

4. Are the blessings of the LORD upon Israel of old the same as the blessings He promised to the saints today? Please explain the difference if any.

5. What kind of blessings do you seek from the LORD? If God were to grant you one wish like He granted Solomon, what would you wish for yourself and for your family?

6. Is the LORD pleased with you right at this moment? Do you have a song on your lips as one who has kept a holy solemnity with the LORD? How was your worship of the LORD this morning? Please explain your answer.

7. What lessons can you learn from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?
