

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 8

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

CHAPTER 8

Theme: “The Might of the LORD is always Right!”

THEME VERSE

Isaiah 8:13 (KJV) “Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.”

INTRODUCTION

The sovereignty of the LORD has been sadly denied and ignored by God’s people today. Very often, we see our God as a localised God who has no sway or absolute control over the enemies of the believers. It appears as if he can control only things considered Christian. This is not a charge that can be proven, as no Christian would express such a fallacious teaching in black and white. However, the behaviour of many believers reflects this concept and belief.

The fact, that believers fret, tremble and doubt the protection and provision of God, speaks more loudly than words. For example, when there is a retrenchment exercise, children of God worry like their unbelieving colleagues, as if God is not able to keep their jobs for them. It appears

that their future lies in the hands of their CEOs rather than in God. The message seems to be that CEOs are more powerful than their God! It seems as though God has no control over the viruses or bacteria that afflict our bodies as we murmur and complain when our physicians break news of life-threatening illnesses.

Reactions of professing believers over global calamities have been shameful and without faith. Some have even doubted the love or even the existence of God when more than 300 thousands perished in the tsunami that struck Indonesia on Boxing Day in the year 2004. Such misperceptions of God of professing Christian leaders, who represent their many millions of followers, is unforgivable. The message they sent to the world is that there is no God but if He does exist, He is a harsh and unloving God.

Such views are distortions of the God of the Bible and Creation and are fallacious. God is definitely sovereign whether man acknowledges it or not. God does not depend on man for His existence! Man’s view of God cannot and does not alter the fact that He is still the same all-powerful, all-knowing and all-present and immutable God Almighty! This chapter demonstrates the sovereignty of God where His might is always right! Man is at God’s mercy. Whether God reveals this to man or not is His prerogative. He does not have to and is not compelled to or else it will not be considered mercy on God’s part! Sinful man and especially God’s children, must recognise that Jesus Christ was sent by the God of

the whole world to die for the sins of the whole world and that He controls the whole world! He can judge and punish any one nation and any one individual as He so desires!

If sinful man is yet to be punished, it is because of God's mercy. It is not that God is weak or blind or has gone to sleep or does not know! Man must not be so foolish to take God's mercy as weakness!

OUTLINE

1. Against the Syrians (vv.1-4);
2. Against both Israel and Judah (vv. 5-8);
3. Against the unlawful alliance (vv. 9-10);
4. Safety in the LORD (vv. 11-18);
5. Against the Idolaters (vv. 19-22).

COMMENTARY

Against the Syrians — 8:1-4

The LORD judged the Syrians even though the LORD was the God of Israel and Judah only. He sent to Isaiah the prophecy against this enemy of God and God's people. Following the word of the LORD in the last chapter, the LORD now gives the next message to Isaiah. This is very prophetic in terms of its foretelling element. The LORD will use the naming of the son of Isaiah as His message to Syria. Every time his name is mentioned, it will remind Isaiah and all who understands, that judgement upon the Syrians is nigh.

The LORD commanded Isaiah to take a great roll i.e. a great scroll for writing. Isaiah must write with a man's pen, which implies that he must write in a manner that would render the message comprehensible to every individual, regardless of his educational level. It was a very important message that concerned the issue of life and death for God's people. It concerned a son of Isaiah that was not born yet! His name was Ma'her-shalal-hash'baz i.e. "swift to the prey." The LORD explained this cryptic message in verse 4 as a message against the Syrians.

Isaiah took with him two faithful witnesses to record the prophetic message. One of them was Uriah the priest, who became a lackey to king Ahaz, and made a copy of one of the altars of Damascus as in Kings 16:10. Some have argued that he could not be the same Uriah in Isaiah 8:2. However, there is mention of only one Uriah who was also known as a priest. They also lived in the same period. Rather than denying that they could be the same Uriah, it is better to understand that this incident of his witness could have occurred BEFORE the other incident of the replica of altar. People change all the time. So, it could well be that Uriah changed for the worse in his later years.

Zechariah, the son of Jeberechiah, appears only here in the entire OT. He cannot be the Zechariah who wrote the book as he lived more than 150 years after this event and during the reign of the Persian Empire. The name might be the same and the

father's name might appear similar but they cannot be the same person. This Zechariah has to a different Zechariah and we do not have any information about him other than the fact that Isaiah called him to witness this prophecy.

Isaiah knew his wife who was called a prophetess and she conceived. She was probably not a prophetess in the strict sense of the word, but rather, being Isaiah's wife gave her the title of prophetess. He confessed that the LORD commanded him to call his newborn son Ma'her-shal'al-hash'-baz. The reason given by Isaiah was, "For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria." Very soon, the riches of Damascus would be taken away by the king of Assyria. The timing of this destruction would occur before the young son of Isaiah could cry my father and my mother.

Before he reached the age of accountability, her enemies would have destroyed Syria. The identity of her enemies was the king of Assyria, Syria's northern neighbour. Syria would have little time to repent and change. She would be destroyed by the swift military strike of the Assyrians.

Against Both Israel and Judah — 8:5-8

The word of the LORD came to Isaiah again. The identity of "this people" varies from Syria to Israel to Judah to both Israel and Judah. The identity of "this people" depends on the

interpretation of the waters of Shi-lo'ah. The water of Shi-lo'ah flows under the city of Jerusalem supplying God's people with drinking water from the subterranean passage or aqueduct. This is definitely a picture of the LORD providing help to His own people whose help is described here as "softly." However, His offer was rejected and they would rather rejoice in Rezin the Syrian king, and Remaliah's son, who was none other than the idolatrous king of Israel, Pekah (cf. 7:1). Based upon the understanding above, the identity of "this people" has to refer to Judah and perhaps, also including the people of Israel who turned to their own king whereas Judah would be charged with turning to their northern neighbour who had a confederacy with Syria.

Such a rejection of the LORD, by God's people in times of great trial and destruction, was utter folly.

Because of their rejection, the LORD warned them that He would bring upon them "the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria," This is a picture of the hordes of Assyrians that would come and conquer from the north. They would first destroy Syria, and then Israel and would march straight into Judah! Coming in all their glory will be the manner in which they would cover the land of their enemies. It was prophesied that they shall come over all his channels i.e. rivers, and will go over all their banks. No natural river would be able to stop the charge of the mighty Assyrian armies.

They would cross over all the nations like Syria and Israel and pass through Judah. Nothing would be able to stop the Assyrians. Villages and cities in Judah would fall like ten pins until they march to the door step of the capital city, Jerusalem. This is described by the phrase, “he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land.” The detailed description of this encounter between the Assyrians and Judah is found in 2 Kings 18 & 19 and 2 Chronicles 32. This message of destruction was mixed with hope. This hope was seen in the use of the name of Christ, “O Immanuel” to describe Judah, the people of God through whom the Messiah would ultimately come. The LORD spared Judah from total destruction by the Assyrians. A miracle occurred in one night when 185,000 Assyrians died by the hand of the LORD.

**Against the unlawful alliance
— 8:9-10**

The LORD, through Isaiah, warned His people against an unholy alliance. Nothing good could come out of such a godless and idolatrous alliance! However, they did not listen. They preferred the way of the world rather than that of God. Israel and Judah had forgotten that they were a spiritual people. They behaved like the Gentiles who were not given the Word of God to guide them or to protect them. Other nations were allowed to make such alliances for survival and protection but not God’s people who had the LORD to protect them.

Hence, the warning from the LORD was that God’s people would be broken into pieces. God’s people cannot depend upon evil men to help them. That would be an insult to the LORD! How could the LORD’s people who bear the name of God appeal to Gentiles and their gods for help? This was as good as saying that the idols were more powerful than the LORD! This must never be! The warning was not limited to only God’s people but it also concerned the Gentiles who made alliances with God’s people and those who tried to attack God’s people. The LORD warned them to gird themselves i.e. to prepare for war! They would be broken into pieces. This was repeated for emphasis.

The nations of the “far countries” definitely include the Syrians and the Assyrians in the current context. Anyone who hurts God’s people will have to answer to the LORD. Anyone who hinders God’s plan through His people hinders God’s work! They can plot and plan all they want but it will all come to nought. They might speak in secret, away from the ears of man, but never from God’s. There is no secret that is not known to God. Man is foolish to think that he could plot and plan in darkness and the LORD would not know and be caught off guard. God is not like man, finite and fixed by time and space.

God is not intimidated by numbers. Majority or democratic rule makes no difference to God. Right will always be right regardless of the world’s opinion. The world could do their utmost to destroy and erase Israel

from the face of the earth but they will all fail! It is like kicking against the pricks. The harder they kick, the deeper their own wound and greater the pain would be. Man can make all the speeches they desire but it will be vain words to the LORD. His words have no power with God even if they have power with man! Man's words might have power but it is only power given to him by man. It is vanity in the sight of God. Man's word against God is as effective as a man shouting at the sun and demanding it to stop shining. All his words will not stand. What he says will not come to pass. The strength of this truth, "it shall not stand" is the same as in the Decalogue.

The reason for man's impotence against God's people is not because of Israel's strength and might. It is because God is with His people. The phrase used here is "Immanuel," exactly as what is found in verses 8 and 7:14. Anybody who has the LORD on his side can never lose. That is why, whenever there is a problem, the believer must make sure that he is on the LORD's side. The only way to know this, is to make sure his side is in accordance with Holy Scripture. Thus, he can never be wrong and will always be right . . . not in the sight of man but God!

Safety in the LORD — 8:11-18

On a personal note, Isaiah testified that the LORD had spoken to him with a strong hand, which means with such great emphasis that Isaiah must obey at all costs! Isaiah must not walk in the way of these people who made alliances even though they were

God's people and he was God's prophet. Isaiah must warn them and not join them.

The people of God must never say (same strength as the Decalogue used throughout this verse) "a confederacy." Isaiah must address the ones who approve of such a confederacy! This is treason against the LORD. They must neither approve nor agree to such an alliance! It will doom God's people! The people of God must not be afraid of them. The enemies will use fear to move God's people to sin against God. The people of God must never be afraid i.e. shake terribly.

Instead, it is the LORD of hosts that Israel and Judah must sanctify! The emphasis is on the LORD of hosts! Let the LORD of hosts be their fear and not man! Shake terribly before the LORD and not man. The same word is used in v.12 (afraid) and v.13 (dread). Indeed, the fear of God is not only the beginning of wisdom but also the prevention of sinning against God. When believers fear God rather than man, they will not want to sin against Him.

When the fear of the LORD is present, the LORD will be the believer's sanctuary i.e. a place of safety and holiness. He will not sin! However, to the ones who disobey and despise the perfect Word of God, He will be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. They will find it repulsive to accept and obey God's Word. They will be greatly stumbled and offended by it. These would not be the Gentiles but the people of Israel in particular. The

behaviour and conduct of those who hate the perfect Word of God i.e. the doctrine of verbal plenary preservation and inspiration is a case in point. It will become a gin i.e. a trap to catch a bird, and a snare to the people of Judah as well! Both Israel and Judah are included here. The LORD is no respecter of persons. The fruit of the fear of man will be sin against God. The fruit of the fear of God is holy lives. The choice is simple.

Sadly, the commentary from the LORD was that many in both of these nations will stumble and fall and be broken and be snared and be taken. Please note the use of the polysyndeton in v 15. This is to emphasise every step of the consequence of sin that God's people would experience. This means that they did not fear God but chose to fear man instead. How sad that MANY would walk that path even though God had shown them the right path!

The LORD commanded Isaiah to bind it i.e. to tie it into a book and then seal it. The "it" refers to the perfect Word of God. It will be for the LORD's disciples who would listen and obey by faith! Those who reject it will be punished! Isaiah will wait for the LORD. He will not be on the side of rebellious and faithless Israel and Judah! The LORD has hidden His face from the house of Jacob. The significance of using "Jacob" here is to highlight the rebellious nature of Israel as well as to include Judah in the rebuke and condemnation of the LORD. Jacob (means "usurper") was given the new name of Israel by the

LORD in Genesis 32:24-32. The LORD hides His face means that Israel's prayer will not be heard by God. All her cries will fall on deaf ears unless she cries in repentance! Isaiah will look i.e. watch eagerly for the LORD. The LORD will never be late. His timing is always the best and perfect. Enemies will be given time to repent before judgement falls as the mercies of God would allow God's people and servants to be strengthened in the inner man as their faith in Him increases. They cannot but see the hand of God Almighty working in the lives of His people as He delivers.

Isaiah declares that the children, whom the LORD has given him, and he are for signs and wonders. These will be the spiritual children who believe God's perfect word. The manner in which they stand for God's truth, even unto death, will be the signs and wonders of God's grace and mercies. These will definitely include the ever abiding presence of Israel even after mighty nations like the Syrians and Assyrians have come and gone. Israel will remain for the Messiah who will ultimately come from Israel as an infant, born of the virgin Mary, fulfilling the prophecy of Immanuel i.e. God is with us! The LORD of hosts is the miracle Worker. He dwells in Mount Zion. It is His home! He will not allow thieves and robbers to break in and steal. His plan of salvation for all mankind will surely succeed. He has laid His reputation of faithfulness on it. God cannot lie! Israel and Judah must not be for the confederacy. It will cause their downfall. Isaiah must make the

message clear. He must take a stand and not be part of their alliance.

Against the Idolaters — 8:19-22

In times of dire straits, the temptation to turn away from the LORD and to idols for help is very real. God's people in times like these failed in their trust and faith in their God. The faithless ones would persuade Isaiah and his faithful children to seek them that have familiar spirits and the wizards that peep i.e. chirp like a bird and mutters or murmurs. Then they must reply them, "Should not a people seek unto their God? For the living to the dead?" The logic is simple. The two rhetorical questions reveal the idolatrous condition of Israel and Judah. Their turning to black magic and wizards for help instead of to God is like asking the living to ask the dead for help!

The mark of these idolatrous men is their lack of obedience to the Word of God. The measure of these wicked men is not subjective but easily discerned through God's revealed Word. That is how useful and powerful the Word of God was to Isaiah and is to us today. Those who do not know God's word have no discernment. They are blind and their loyalty would be eschewed. The Bible's indictment against them is that "there is no light in them!" This means that they are sinners and are not born again. The law and the testimony are able to expose the professing believer to be what he truly is in the sight of God.

The teaching from the Bible is "If they speak not according to this word." The Bible does not say which particular

word but just a general "this word" which would definitely mean any portion of God's perfect Word. Those who argue that the Bible has mistakes better beware, for they are skating on very, very thin ice. Beneath it is the depths of HELL! Do not meddle with God's Word. Ensure that every doctrine you believe in is understood correctly. Only fools would risk their soul in the eternity of Hell by foolishly arguing for a Bible with mistakes or casting doubts in the veracity of the Bible by saying that it is OK to believe that there could be mistakes in the names and numbers of the Bible as long as these mistakes do not affect one's salvation! However, this is not what the Bible teaches here!

The idolatrous will be severely ill-treated because of their trust in evil men and their gods. When that happens, they will go hungry and become angry with themselves. They shall then curse their king and God as well. The people in darkness will soon reap what they have sown. They will suffer immense mental, emotional and physical pain and great calamity will fall upon all including children and infants. (Trusting in the wrong person and false gods is not a game.) They will "look upward", like all men who are desperate, for some divine intervention to come and bring relief. It literally means that their faces were turned upwards. However, nothing will come from heaven to help.

They will turn to the earth for help. These nations who are called superpowers cannot be stopped. They are invincible to all men. That is why

they are the superpowers of their time. No other power on earth can stand against them. What the faithless find is darkness and trouble and dimness of anguish. The “trouble” refers to distress and tribulation. The “darkness” refers to someone withholding the light, thus keeping the persons in misery while they grope for light. The “dimness of anguish” refers to the covering of light using anguish or oppression. Instead of finding help, they would find more punishment. The end result is being driven to darkness i.e. gloominess like the setting of the sun. This “darkness” is worse than that of the previous word which is merely withholding the light. Here it is like switching off the light permanently by destroying the power plants!

PRACTICAL VALUE

Sovereignty of the LORD – This is the most blessed knowledge when it comes to facing trials in life. When this doctrine is forgotten or ignored, the price is doubt and confusion that could lead to depression. The believer becomes unsure as to who is in charge of his life. He could become a man-pleaser as he thinks his boss or the authorities governing him are in absolute control of his life. When calamities strike, he would feel alone and defeated. He could enter into a stage of jealousy when he sees his unbelieving, idol-worshipping neighbour prospering away whereas he who has been faithfully serving and worshipping the one living and true God suffering loss.

This might even lead to backsliding, resulting in a carnal way of life. However, when the doctrine of the sovereignty of God is taught and understood properly, the child of God will find assurance and peace of mind. Regardless of the strongest winds swirling around him, he will not be moved. He will have peace in his heart. God is in control of his life and not man. He will be one who pleases only His God in all things and trusts in God, no matter how difficult his life might be because he knows that nothing can happen to him without his God’s permission. He is invincible in his sojourn on this earth till it is time for him to go home to be with the LORD.

God uses all to do His will – The LORD can use anyone for His own glory. God can use a person to do his bidding whether he is a child of His or not. For His glory, the LORD can even turn the wrath of man around. He can use His people’s enemies to punish them as he wills. He can subsequently punish these same evil men who had attacked God’s people. **Psalms 76:10** (KJV) “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”

There is no one, including Satan himself, who is not within God’s sovereign control. However, it must be stated that the sovereignty of God does not diminish or vitiate the responsibility of man. Man will be judged for what he does on this earth. He has to account for every second that God has allowed him to live on this earth. There is no escape from the

judgement of God. The sovereignty of God ensures this wonderful truth.

Majority is not the basis for right and wrong – Democracy is the solve-all-and-end-all for mankind. It is a satanic concept where the majority rules. If the majority is moral and godly, they will then choose rightly. However, when the majority is evil and wicked, evil and wickedness will then become right and law. This is the death trap due to our global democratic rule. The world thinks that democracy will solve the world’s problem. Instead, it is heading toward self-destruction. What they seek through democracy will result in dictatorship.

This dictator will be the greatest of them all. Hitler, as compared to this final dictator with his evil and deadly destruction, would be like a little child. Through democracy, this evil ruler will make himself king of the world and he will usher in a dictatorship that the world has never seen before. Global rule will become a reality and not a figure of speech! The basis for right and wrong on this earth is God’s perfect Word. There is no ambiguity as far as God is concerned. God will use His Book to judge and measure this sin-sick world!

God places a limit on His grace and mercy – Sinful man is not aware of the fact that the mercy of God is not limitless. Repentance ought to be immediate and man ought not to procrastinate. He ought to realise the gravity of his sins and deal with them through the blood of Christ immediately. Tomorrow might be too late.

Those who repent and return to the LORD will live in holiness. The LORD is their sanctuary. They will love to obey God’s Word as children of God. Those who do not obey God’s word are not children of God for they have no light in them. AMEN.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 8:1-8;

TUESDAY: Isaiah 8:9-22;

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 8:1-22;

THURSDAY: Isaiah 8:1-22;

FRIDAY: Isaiah 8:1-22.

Discussion Questions

- 1. Is it fair for the LORD to use Isaiah’s personal life to become the instrument of instruction to God’s people?

- 2. Would you name a child according to an event in your life? Is it right or wrong to do so?

3. How important is it to name your child rightly? What ought to be some guidelines that could be used to name a child?

4. Why is it that sinful man prefers to turn to man rather than to God for help? Do you do the same?

5. Have you ever used the majority rule to guide your life before? Do you think that the BOE should rule by the majority or by consensus?

6. Do you think that democracy can solve the world's problem? If not, can you think of an alternative?

7. How many kinds of government do you find in our world today? List them and which one of them do you think is the best and why?

8. What is a biblical alliance and what is an unbiblical one for the individual and for the church?

9. Is it true to say that all pain and sorrow stem from a sinful life? Explain your answer.

10. How important is the Word of God to you and to the church? Can you demonstrate this importance by some practical examples? Grade each within the range of numbers between 1 and 10 according to its level of importance.

11. Can we say that the person is not a believer if he does not obey the Bible? What about someone who says he is not interested in theology? What about someone who turns back to idols for consultation?

12. What doctrines can be considered as non-essential for salvation and biblical separation? Can there be such doctrines at all?

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