

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
SINGAPORE**

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 9
THE BOOK OF ISAIAH
CHAPTER 9**

Theme: “When will God’s People ever Learn?”

THEME VERSE

Isaiah 9:6 (KJV) “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

INTRODUCTION

The patience of the LORD is clearly demonstrated in this chapter. In the midst of very strong rebuke, the LORD stretched forth His hand of peace. If only His people would repent! There is no lowering of the standard of holiness that the LORD demands of all who bear His blessed Name. To do anything less would surely hurt the unrepentant sinner and at the same time, nullify the Word of God.

Hope is a very precious commodity. Without it, many lives are ruined. Some have even contemplated and others have actually, committed suicide because they felt hopelessness

in their lives. The object of our hope is important to keep our hope alive. If our hope is in money and when our money is taken, our hope would be taken as well. If our hope is in our insurance, our hope would also collapse when the insurance company collapses. If our hope is in man, when man dies our hope dies with him. In short, there is no hope in anything that can rust, be eaten by moths, be taken by thieves or die. The object of our hope must be free from such attacks and decay!

The only object of our hope that qualifies is the LORD Jesus Christ Himself. He lives forever in the heavens. He never dies. He has redeemed us from the bondage of sins by His life, death and resurrection. Jesus Christ is the believer’s hope! Jesus Christ is the living Word and the Word of God is the written Word. To know the living Word is to know the written Word. They cannot be divorced from each other. Israel and Judah were at odds. Both of them were idolatrous. However, Israel was the aggressor. Israel wanted Judah destroyed. He joined hands or made alliances with heathen nations to destroy their southern neighbour.

The LORD intervened in the person of Isaiah and through the message that Isaiah brought. The message was a mix of chastisement and a call to repentance through the promise of a great light. The LORD will never give up on His people. His people must learn never to give up on the LORD! To backslide is one thing but to become an apostate and deny Christ is another!

OUTLINE

1. The hands of pain and pleasure (vv.1-7);
2. The LORD did not give up (vv. 8-12);
3. The LORD did not give up again (vv. 13-17);
4. The LORD did not give up again and again (vv. 18-21).

COMMENTARY

The Hands of Pain and Pleasure

— 8:1-7

Continuing from where He left off, the LORD sent Isaiah to rebuke Israel and at the same time gave them an eternal hope. The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali were located around the Galilee region. The dimness i.e. darkness that would befall the northern part of Israel would not be such as was in her (the Land of Promise) vexation i.e. distress. It was a vexation that was continuous. However, this time round it would be interjected by the promise of hope in the coming of the Messiah.

The first distress was from the King of Assyria called Tiglath-pileser (cf. 2Kings 15:29) and more grievously in the future by another King of Assyria called Shalmanezzer (2 Kings 17:6). The sea referred to here would have to be the Sea of Galilee as the Assyrians would come from the north passing through Galilee into Jordan. Shalmanezzer captured and destroyed Samaria in 722 B.C. Then the Assyrians came again later in the 14th year of Hezekiah led by their new king,

Sennacherib, to encircle Jerusalem (cf. 2Kings 18:13).

The people that walked in darkness refer to the people of Israel and Judah who were now in spiritual darkness because of their sins. A great light had shone in their midst. The tense used here is perfect which means describing a past event. However, there is such a usage called the prophetic perfect where a perfect actually means a future event. However from the perspective of the LORD, the event is as good as done. This often demonstrates the certainty of the event. This is a common device used in the Old Testament. There is an example when the LORD encouraged Israel who were wandering in the wilderness and told them about happenings when they enter the Promised Land. This was spoken in the perfect tense as if they were already in the Promised Land even when Israel was still in the wilderness.

This light refers to the presence of the LORD in delivering Jerusalem from the Assyrians during the time of Hezekiah. It could also include the time of Christ as mentioned by Matthew in Matthew 4:16. This is called a typology rather than a prophecy. Isaiah 7:14 was a prophecy whereas here, it is a typology. The Word of God and the deliverance that came through the promise of the Word of God is the light that shone in the time of Isaiah.

Isaiah 9:3 has the negative. Many of the modern translations such as the NIV, NASB and ESV, have the negative removed. This removal changed the meaning of the verse

entirely. There is no justification for the change. What is written in the text cannot be changed arbitrarily since there is no manuscript to justify this change. The side margins contain notations of the scribes where they make their comments like the way we write our notes on the side margins. These modern versions adopted the margin notes and changed the main text. This is unacceptable. We are warned never to tamper with God's perfect Word.

Interpreting Isaiah 9:3 as translated in the KJV, its meaning is that the LORD will increase the population of the people of Israel and Judah but not their joy, for their joy was carnal. Two illustrations are used to show why the LORD will not increase such carnal joys. The two illustrations of the type of joy they had are the comparisons with the joy of harvesting and with the joy of dividing the spoils of war. The people of Israel must not diminish or die off like Gentile nations that could easily be assimilated into other nations. Israel was the nation designed by God for the coming of the Messiah. It must remain and not be destroyed. The LORD has to preserve Israel. Hence, the increase of people in the nation.

The LORD will deliver Israel from her burden and yoke. The comparison with the Midianites brings us back to the time of Gideon in Judges 7 and 8. The deliverance was total and complete. The conquest brought physical deliverance but not spiritual, as Gideon later led them into grievous sins of idolatry. This

comparison is significant as this will also be true of Israel in Isaiah's time when the physical deliverance will come but Israel and Judah will remain in idolatry still.

Immediately following this promise is the prophetic revelation of Jesus Christ. The well known Isaiah 9:6 which says, "*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*" The phrase that needs explanation is "the everlasting Father." The titles, except for one, are self-explanatory. How could Christ be called "the everlasting Father"? Actually, its literal translation is "the father of eternity." It means that eternity is in His hands. Jesus Christ controls time.

The government of Jesus Christ is forever; it has no end unlike all the governments of man. Jesus Christ will rule forever; it will be of the lineage of King David. This is a very strong encouragement to all in Judah and Israel. This is also prophetic evidence that the Messiah must be able to trace his roots to King David if He is to be the real Messiah. Matthew 1 and Luke 3 are very significant in proving Christ's lineage to King David. This will be by "the zeal of the LORD". It has nothing to do with man or man's faithfulness or rather, the lack of it. The word "zeal" has the idea of "jealousy." This means that the LORD will definitely ensure its realisation. His Name is on the line. He

cannot fail and this prophecy shall surely be fulfilled.

The LORD did not give up — 8:8-12

The LORD sent a word to Jacob and it had fallen upon Israel. Why did the LORD use the name Jacob and then Israel in the same breath? Jacob means “usurper” which refers to an unrepentant and stubborn people. Whereas Israel means “the prince of God” referring to a repentant and obedient people. This is a description of the condition of Israel then and what the LORD wants it to become after the Word of God has been sent upon it.

Israel’s sin was one of self-confidence. They depended on their own abilities and strength instead of on the LORD. The LORD said that He would deal with Israel so that she would know for sure that they were proud and arrogant. Ephraim was the most dominant tribe out of the ten tribes. This usage of Ephraim was used as a metonymy to refer to the nation of Israel. Samaria was the capital city of Israel. The usage of it means that if the capital city hears it, then all the rest of the cities would have heard it too! Not all the Israelites but only the ones who “say in the pride and stoutness of heart” would know. These were the proud ones. How proud were they?

The next verse explains it. They said that bricks were fallen down but they would build with hewn stones. To be able to rebuild with hewn stones means that they had money, time and skill to rebuild whatever it took to re-establish themselves. When the sycamore trees were cut down, they

said that they would replant the area with cedars. Sycamore (or Sycomore) trees are less magnificent and less valuable than the cedars. The former grow to heights of about 50 feet whereas the cedars to between 70 and 80 feet. The girth of the cedar is larger and the cedars grow in high mountains to be seen by all whereas the sycamores cannot take the cold but grow only in the plains. To be able to replace the sycamores with the cedars means that if they were destroyed they would not only rebuild but will rebuild bigger and better than before. Such arrogance will be cut down by the LORD.

The manner in which the LORD would do that was to send the Syrians led by Rezin against Israel. The enemies of Israel would also join forces against Israel so that Israel would not only be outnumbered but would be alone and could find no help from all her neighbours. The Syrians would attack from the front and the Philistines from the rear. Israel would be boxed in. They would devour Israel at will “with open mouth”. They would swallow everything wholly and speedily.

The LORD’s anger will not be turned away. However, His hand is stretched out still for Israel to return to Him. The LORD’s message was one of restoration rather than destruction. No matter what sin Israel might have committed and how rebellious Israel had been and how hopeless she might appear before all men, the LORD’s hand would always be stretched toward His people. His chastisement

was aimed at Israel's repentance. To this end, Israel experienced the mercy and compassion of a loving God.

**The LORD did not give up again
— 8:13-17**

Sadly, Israel did not turn back to the LORD. The purpose of the chastisement of the LORD was to bring sinful Israel back unto Himself. His patience and longsuffering is not infinite. There is a limit. This means there would be one final act of chastisement and then the cut-off would fall upon her. This was what happened to Israel. The LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush i.e. marshy pool. This means that the LORD will destroy her from top to bottom. The LORD will cut off Israel from the nobles to the beggars in the land. There is no one who will be exempted. The description in verse 15 explains who the head and tail are. The head refers to the ancient and honourable who would be the wise and powerful men. The tail refers to the prophets who taught lies. The LORD regards them as the scum for they pandered to the whims and fancies of the kings and declared the false words of God according to the itching ears of their masters. They bore the name of God in their titles but they were seers who spoke lies to deceive.

The ones who caused them to err such as the kings and the false prophets, and those who listened to them would all be destroyed together. The conclusion of the matter was that the LORD finds no joy or delight in their young men. Youthful zeal and energy can delight the LORD when

they are used to please God. However when they are used to indulge in sin, the LORD rejects them. The LORD will also not have mercy on their fatherless and widows. These groups of helpless people were commonly protected by God because they had no one on earth to care for them. However, the sin of Israel had become so evil and the patience of the LORD had been so tried by Israel that even these poor Israelites would receive no mercy from God.

The LORD described them as hypocrites and evildoers. Hypocrites are people who pretend to be godly but are not. They present an image of piety when in reality, their hearts are darker than charcoal. The evildoers are people characterised by evil. They speak and act evil. Evil is their constant companion. They cannot do anything that is good. What comes out of their mouths is folly i.e. villainy. The word for folly here is the word for "nabal." He is not a fool in the sense of being of weak mental capacity or having a low IQ. This is a character flaw where his folly hurts and harms others. They commit such follies with premeditations.

Despite these sins, the LORD says that even when Israel is cut off and ceases to be a nation, and His anger is still burning hot against Israel, all Israel has to do was to repent and the LORD would take her back. The LORD's hand is still stretched out toward Israel even as Israel experiences the judgement of God for her numerous heinous sins.

The LORD did not give up again and again — 8:18-21

The intensity of the chastisement of the LORD is described here. But first the sins of Israel have to be highlighted to demonstrate the justification of the LORD's intense judgement. Israel's wickedness burns like the fire. When fire burns, it spreads very fast and covers a vast area rapidly. It devours the briars and thorns in its path. These describe the lowest part of Israel and the thicket of the forest refers to the high society in Israel. Wickedness caught hold of everyone in Israel.

For this spreading of wickedness, the LORD of hosts sent His wrath upon Israel. There was no escape. The land was darkened. The destruction of the wrath of the LORD scorched the Land till it was darkened. It was the fire of the Lord versus the fire of wickedness of the people. There is a direct confrontation pictured here. The people will be the fodder for the fire of the wrath of the LORD till all are destroyed.

Anarchy will set in. No man shall spare his brother. Everyone will seek their own safety only. If destruction of another could ensure one's safety, so be it! Famine is not referred to here but rather, intense violence. They would snatch i.e. cut off the right hand of others to prevail but that would still not be enough. They would cut off the left hand of their enemies as well. The purpose is to render their enemies completely helpless so that they would get what they want. This would still not satisfy them. They will then turn on

their own relatives and loved ones! Killing strangers to survive is bad enough but to turn on your own loved ones to survive is unthinkable. Israel is turned into a wild beast! "Manasseh and Ephraim, and Ephraim and Manasseh" refers to their alliance against Judah. These were the sons of Joseph whom Jacob had adopted as his own. The adoption allowed them to own parts of the Promised Land and to have the land named after them. While they fight and devour one another they would gang up against Judah at the same time.

However, the hand of reconciliation remains stretched out by the LORD even as His wrath is poured down on such a wicked and hopeless nation like Israel!

PRACTICAL VALUE

Light continues to shine in darkness – No matter how dark the hour, the LORD's light continues to shine. This light is the perfect Word of God. Israel was plunged into great darkness but the LORD still sent His prophet Isaiah to give them His holy Word. The Word was not simply about the present situation and how they must repent and return back unto the LORD. The Word was one of hope in the coming Messiah. The future events revealed by the LORD on the attributes of Christ are significant. Christians ought to do likewise when dealing with those who have sinned and remained in sin, calling themselves Christians yet refusing to live the life of a Christian.

The Word of God is crucial in counselling. The world cannot use this approach. The believers are the best counsellors for they have the most powerful weapon, which is the Word of God, to guide them.

The Names and Titles of God – The LORD's names and titles reveal the character of God. It tells us who He is and how this encourages our hearts! The more one knows the LORD, the easier it is to trust and obey Him. Isaiah 9:6-7 are very wonderful verses given to us by the LORD to help us trust Him more.

As a Counsellor, He will always be there to guide us along the right pathway of life. We do not need to walk alone. All we need to do is ask and He will answer and counsel. He is the all-powerful God. He is able to do all things. There is no one more powerful than He. There is no one who can stop God from accomplishing what He wants in your life. The LORD is the father in control of eternity. There is nothing or anyone who can outwit Him or outdo Him. He is never surprised by anything. As a child of God, we are so well protected that nothing bad can ever happen to any of God's children.

In the midst of wrath there is always mercy – The sins of Israel got from bad to worse. This is to put it very mildly. They were filled with the sin of pride where self-reliance had replaced God. Normally, the destruction of properties and calamities in the lives of man would cause man to think and see what he has done wrong. Such self-reflection has brought many back to the LORD. The Israel in the days of the

Judges is a case in point. When the LORD sent oppressors to persecute Israel and made their lives like Hell, they repented of their sin and turned back unto the LORD.

However, the Israel in Isaiah's time was hardened in the heart! They refused to turn back to God. They rebuilt their destroyed lives without God's help. They built them even better than before, thus adding more fuel to their fire of pride that burned in their hearts. The LORD promised to punish Israel for her gross sins against Him. She would be severely destroyed from the top to the bottom of their society.

Chastisement is to restore – We must remember that whenever there is chastisement, it is for the purpose of restoration. It is not meant for one to gloat over or to feel humiliated by. The basis is not our own perfection but holiness. While The LORD kept on dealing with sin, His other hand is stretched out to receive sinners back unto Himself through repentance. This is a picture that must be etched onto our hearts.

Not to discipline sinners is a great travesty of justice. To ignore sins is to condone sin and to encourage sinners to sin more. This is happening worldwide in our age. Sins have been transformed by way of euphemisms, making them desirable and charming. Many foolish ones have fallen prey to seductions of sins and have been destroyed. The end of such sins and deception is always death. Chastisement must be found in every biblical and healthy church. AMEN.

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 9:1-7;

TUESDAY: Isaiah 9:8-21;

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 9:1-21;

THURSDAY: Isaiah 9:1-21;

FRIDAY: Isaiah 9:1-21.

Discussion Questions

1. List three uses of the Word of God?

2. How has Isaiah 9:6-7 impacted your life?

3. How do you feel about being a citizen of the kingdom that has no end?

4. Do you depend upon the LORD to build your life or not? How do you know?

5. How have you responded to calamities in your life? Are you happy with your response?

6. Is chastisement from the LORD the only way to know that one is not walking right with God?

7. How would you respond to someone who says to you that his family is healthy and wealthy, how can God be displeased with him? He also calls himself a Christian and you know that he has sinned a very public and grievous sin and you have confronted him with it.

9. What are the symptoms of a church that has been cut off by the LORD? Does it mean that the church will be empty with no people?

8. Have you chastised anyone before? How did it turn out? Did you help turn the person back to the LORD?

10. Do you feel that our world is very wicked? Give reason for your answers.

11. Has Singapore changed into a wicked country? Will it ever get worse? What is the cure? How do

you protect your children against this wickedness?

12. Do you find this statement hard to accept and understand . . . *“For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still”*?

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