

Isaiah 9:8-10:4

Good morning, everyone! We'll be picking up right where we left off in Isaiah 9 starting with verse 8, and reading all the way up until chapter 10 verse 4. And I shall read that all for us.

8 The Lord has sent a word against Jacob, and it will fall on Israel; 9 and all the people will know, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, who say in pride and in arrogance of heart: 10 "The bricks have fallen, but we will build with dressed stones; the sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place." 11 But the Lord raises the adversaries of Rezin against him, and stirs up his enemies. 12 The Syrians on the east and the Philistines on the west devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.

*13 The people did not turn to him who struck them, nor inquire of the Lord of hosts. 14 So the Lord cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed in one day— 15 the elder and honored man is the head, and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail; 16 for those who guide this people have been leading them astray, and those who are guided by them are swallowed up. 17 Therefore the Lord does not rejoice over their young men, and has no compassion on their fatherless and widows; for everyone is godless and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still. **(next)***

18 For wickedness burns like a fire; it consumes briars and thorns; it kindles the thickets of the forest, and they roll upward in a column of smoke. 19 Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts the land is scorched, and the people are like fuel for the fire; no one spares another. 20 They slice meat on the right, but are still hungry, and they devour on the left, but are not satisfied; each devours the flesh of his own arm, 21 Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim devours Manasseh; together they are against Judah. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.

1 Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, 2 to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey! 3 What will you do on the day of punishment, in the ruin that will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth? 4 Nothing remains but to crouch among the prisoners or fall among the slain. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.

Alright, so in our passage today, we see Isaiah condemn Israel for not only their continued sin against the Lord, but their arrogance in refusing to turn back to Him. It's bad enough that Israel has been diving headfirst into their iniquity and debauched and idolatrous behavior, but they're so far gone that they fail to even recognize how desperately they need to turn back to the Lord.

Even as the Lord punishes them and sets against them many adversaries so that they might see the error of their ways and return to Him for salvation, Israel doesn't do that. Chapter 9 verse 13 says, "the people did not turn to Him who struck them, nor inquire of the Lord of hosts". Through Isaiah's prophetic words against Israel, I think we can gather just how dark the hearts of the Israelites have turned at this point. It would have been one thing if they were stuck in this revolving door of sinning and repenting, sinning and repenting, kind of like they were doing in the wilderness during the Exodus. But at this point, we see that they've completely abandoned repenting altogether. Forget the revolving door, they've decided to just up and leave the building, deciding that it's better to be outside than try to stay indoors.

I think when it comes to faith, arrogance can be one of the most dangerous things, because it means that we are unwilling to change. Whether we think we're in the right, or even if we don't but we just don't care enough to do anything about it, arrogance leads us to reject the offer of grace that God so wonderfully gives us. When we have arrogance in our hearts, we see the bad things that happen as consequence for our sin not as signs to turn back, that things aren't the way they should be, but as attacks by a God

who is against us and not for us. We cross our arms and turn up our nose, and we decide that we know better than the Lord. That we can do things the way we want, and somehow be convinced that this ends in any other way than complete ruin.

Arrogance is a scary thing, and chapter 9 verse 20 is a really harrowing but, I think, accurate portrayal of someone caught in arrogance. It says, “they slice meat on the right, but are still hungry, and they devour on the left, but are not satisfied; each devours the flesh of his own arm”. Isaiah compares the arrogant Israelites to a person who eats meat on the right, and they aren’t satisfied. So they eat meat on the left, and they’re still not satisfied. And instead of realizing that the meat is not what they need, they resort to eating the flesh on their own arm.

When we’re arrogant, when we’re lusting and chasing after things that are poison to us, we often never stop and realize that they aren’t what they need. Look at our own temptations and abusive relationships with money, sex, food, pleasure, etc. If we fall into addiction, we become more and more resistant to changing, and instead put these things on the throne of our hearts and chase after it over and over again until we destroy ourselves.

For you and me, if we find ourselves like the Israelites, caught in arrogance and idolatry, choosing to keep running to the things that poison us rather than God, what can we do? We obviously need repentance, but how do we turn around to the point where we even desire repentance?

Well, we pursue the opposite of arrogance. We pursue humility. To humble ourselves is to lower ourselves, and with that to lower our desires and ego on the scale of priority. We say, “God, you are more important than anything I could hold dear to me. I want to choose you instead.”. And if that’s too hard, we say the classic prayer, “Lord, help me to want to want you!”. The pursuit of humility, to me, doesn’t seem like being perfect in placing God above ourselves. That’s the goal, but the reality is that we are so prone to forgetting His majesty and authority and instead hoisting ourselves up. The pursuit of humility is recognizing that it is better for

someone else to be on the throne. Recognizing that, as much as we desire certain things or want to choose certain paths, as much as the temptations wrack our hearts and minds, that Jesus is better.

This morning, can we choose to pursue the Lord? Can we choose to turn from the many things that are vying for our attention, and instead pray, "Lord, help me want to want you!"?