

Choose To Sin, Choose To Suffer – Isaiah 9:8-10:34

Is 9:8-10:34 (p.573); This is Part 1 of two parts, which means I won't be covering the last two points on your notes; But we do have a lot to cover, so I want to get at it

Starting with **2 Thoughts:**

(1) This could be a message of conviction for some, and *should* be a message of warning for all

Conviction for those already sinning, to stop

B/c there's a definite connection between your sin and your suffering

That doesn't mean that just b/c you're suffering you've *sinned*; But it does mean that if you're sinning, you can expect to suffer

And the only way to find relief, is to repent – to admit your sin, confess your sin, and stop it; If that's you, this could be a message of conviction

At the same time, this *should* be a message of *warning*; For everyone

A warning to stay *away* from sin; A warning to avoid it like the plague

B/c if you choose to sin, you choose to suffer; Hence the title of the message

That's the first thought I want you to keep in mind as we work our way through this passage; The second, is that . . .

(2) This not only applies to you *individually*, but to *us* *collectively*

Us as a church; Us as a nation; And us as a culture

That said, the prophecy *itself* that we're going to look at, is *not* for us; At least not the vast majority of it

Despite what books like "The Harbinger" are saying these days – this prophecy is not for us

It's a massive stretch to say so, and with enough information the analogy between ancient Israel and *any* country could be made throughout history

Not to mention the fact that the prophecy is clearly written to the people and nations of Isaiah's day

Having said that, while the prophecy *itself* is not for us, the *principles* are; And there are 2 reasons for that:

1. As with the rest of the OT, it was written down for our sake

That's what Paul says explicitly in 1 Cor 10:11 – *Now these things happened to them [the Israelites of old] as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.* The principles are for us

2. They're for us b/c they *fit*

Sin is sin, people are people, nations are nations, and God is God; Looking on sin the way he always has, and dealing with it accordingly; Often times through suffering Even on *this* side of the cross; Even in the lives of those who profess him as Lord

So if it's a message of conviction for you, repent, and don't delay – for your sake and God's sake; It's the only life-changing, life-saving option available

And as a warning, be sure to apply it to *every* aspect of your life – individually, corporately, *and* as a nation as we'll see next week (**Summary**)

• That said, follow along with me starting with 9:8-12

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 [the Northern tribes], 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.

Rezin was the king of Syria (**map**), who was enemies of A-ssyria

So the *adversaries of Rezin* refers to Assyria

And then he continues with this word of *judgment* against Israel

[12] The Syrians on the east and the Philistines on the west devour Israel with open mouth [they conquer them at will; they cause them to suffer]. For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.

The point is this . . .

Choose arrogance, suffer humiliation (9:8-12; 10:5-19)

The people were saying 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."*

IOW we don't need you God; We can take care of ourselves; *We* can rebuild

Live for you? Seek you first? Get right with you? For what? We've got it under control

There's no thought of repentance; No expression of reliance; And no softness of heart Just pride and arrogance in the face of disaster and destruction

That's why God sent a word against them – a judgment against them

Which resulted in humiliation; The humiliation of being conquered at will by their closest neighbors – *the Syrians on the east and the Philistines on the west*

There's nothing worse than getting beat by your cross-town rival, and this is no different It's humiliating

• But that wasn't the worst of it; God was about to use the A-ssyrians as well, for the same purpose; Look at 10:5-11; God is speaking here, and he says . . .

Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger; the staff in their hands is my fury! [6] Against a godless nation [that's Israel] I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets [that's humiliation – they would treat them like dirt].

V7 – *But he [the king of Assyria] does not so intend, and his heart does not so think [he's not yet thinking about attacking Israel]; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few; [8] for he says: "Are not my commanders all kings? [Is it not w/in my power to conquer anybody, and promote my people? It is; I've already done it]*

[9] Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus? IOW if I conquered the second city in each pair, which he had . . .

Can I not conquer the first? Ya; He could]

[10] As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols, whose carved images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria, [11] shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols as I have done to Samaria and her images?"

And God was judging *Israel* for being arrogant? Wow

Kind of ironic, isn't it? But that's how God works sometimes

He sometimes *uses* the arrogant, to *punish* the arrogant

To break them down, and strip them of their dignity, and get them to repent

Sometimes he does that

- Other times it seems as though he takes matters into his *own* hands; And deals with the problem directly
Like when people are barriers to the work of ministry
Sometimes it seems as though God just reaches down and removes them

I'll never forget one of the pastors at Moody Church in Chicago some time ago, relating a story about an obstinate elder early on in his ministry
He described him as a man who grew increasingly bitter in his life, and got so sideways, that he began opposing every major decision they made
And grew increasingly contentious and arrogant about it

Until one day, on the eve of a very important decision they had to make in order to move forward – he had a heart attack, and became incapacitated; Unable to serve anymore

Coincidence? No such thing; Hand of God to remove him? Quite possibly
B/c this text clearly indicates that if you choose arrogance, you suffer humiliation
And that humiliation sometimes lives on well after you die; The principle applies

- And lest you think the Assyrians are an exception to that humiliation . . .
That they somehow got away with murder and their *own* arrogance
Take a look at v12-19

When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eyes. [13] For he says [the king]: "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; I remove the boundaries of peoples, and plunder their treasures; like a bull I bring down those who sit on thrones. [14] My hand has found like a nest the wealth of the peoples; and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken, so I have gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved a wing or opened the mouth or chirped." [Arrogant]

To which Isaiah responds; It's basically a conversation with himself about future events
[15] Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? As if a rod should wield him who lifts it, or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood! [Isaiah's like, hello, who's in control here – you or God?] *[16] Therefore the Lord GOD of hosts will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors, and under his glory a burning will be kindled, like the burning of fire. [17] The light of Israel [the presence of God] will become a fire, and his Holy One a flame, and it will burn and devour his thorns and briars [the fruit of his evil] in one day.*

And *there's* an aspect of this prophecy that *does* apply to us; B/c though it was fulfilled to some degree in Isaiah's day, the NT indicates there's more to come
Like in 2 Thess 1:7-8 – *when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels [8] in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus*

But in Isaiah's day, in this instance, it was limited to the punishment of the Assyrians

Saying in v18 – *The glory of his forest and of his fruitful land* [i.e. all that's good in the possession of the Assyrians] *the LORD will destroy, both soul and body* [humiliation doesn't stop with our stuff], *and it will be as when a sick man wastes away. [19] The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few that a child can write them down.* [All that he values will be a pittance compared to what he has]

That's humiliation with a capital H; First through sickness in v16, and then sudden destruction in v17, and then the removal of your stuff . . .
And then the destruction of your soul; Leaving barely a shadow of your existence

Strong language wouldn't you say? But that's what God does to those who are unrepentant in their arrogance; Whether you're a tool in his hand, or just a "tool" . . .
If you're arrogant, it's only a matter of time before you're humiliated
You're flirtn' with disaster, and living in a house of cards

That's the first warning – choose arrogance, suffer humiliation; The 2nd, is . . .

Choose rebellion, suffer rejection (9:13-17)

That's 9:13-17, and back to the Israelites

[13] The people did not turn to him who struck them, nor inquire of the LORD of hosts.
That's rebellion; They thumbed their nose at the Lord, and kept right on going about their business

*[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 [Isaiah gives us a little explanation], and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail;*
While the palm branch and reed probably denote the high and the low, the rich and the poor; In any case, they were going to be rejected – all of them
Cut off and removed, b/c they had rebelled

They didn't *turn* to the Lord; They didn't acknowledge their suffering and judgment came from him; And they certainly didn't seek his face – they didn't *inquire* of him (13)

What's more, they led the people astray, and the people themselves followed – more reasons for God's judgment of rejection; That's v16
[16] for those who guide this people have been leading them astray, and those who are guided by them are swallowed up.
They too have been sucked in; They too have succumbed to the rebellion; They too share in the sin

[17] Therefore the Lord does not rejoice over their young men, and has no compassion on their fatherless and widows; More rejection
And just the opposite of God's response toward those who *love* him; Those who *walk* in his ways; Remember Zephaniah 3:17?
He will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing; Who? Those who love the Lord and follow him
What a contrast, huh?
And just as that's true, so too is his rejection of those who spurn him, who *rebel* against him

And then Isaiah ends this section in v17b, still giving reasons for God's rejection of his people – *for everyone is godless and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly.*

Ending with his refrain – *For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.* There's more to come

- 4 Thoughts:

1. Whether you're a rebellious leader *yourself*, or *choose* rebellious leaders, or *follow* rebellious leaders by doing what they do or adopting their mindset . . .

It's only a matter of time before you're cut off; Rejected

You could be leading your *wife* contrary to God's Word

You could be leading your *business* contrary to God's principles

You could be leading in *government* contrary to God's design

You could be leading your breakfast club astray

Whatever the case, it's rebellion – whether in part or in whole; And you're facing rejection

And the same is true if you're a rebellious *follower*

You can't beg off or expect an exemption just b/c you're not the leader

Like following people in politics; Or following people in the workplace; Or in your home; And certainly in your marriage

Leader or follower – you can't thumb your nose at God, and expect him to look the other way forever; He won't; He's incredibly patient, but he's also *just*

Deserving your *allegiance*, not your rebellion; Which means you face rejection

2. The form of which could include anything from social disdain from those around you, to a lack of compassion from those who should care . . .

To church discipline if you're a believer; To sudden death; That's right, death

One of the more *extreme* examples of which happened in the Sinai desert while the Israelites were in the middle of their wanderings; Some 700 years *before* Isaiah

It's found in Numbers 16, and starts with a guy named Korah, who along with a couple of sidekicks and 250 of his finest followers – rebelled against the leadership of Moses

Complaining that he was lording it over them, and that he wasn't the only one who could approach God in the tent of meeting, the tabernacle

And after warning them, God told Moses to get away from them and separate the rest of the people from them; Which they did

And standing before their tents the very next day – Korah and his buddies were swallowed up by the earth the Bible says, *with* their families and possessions

And the other 250 were consumed by *fire* that came out from the Lord

And as if that wasn't enough, another *14k* were struck by a *plague*

Followers who decided to join the little rebellion, thinking they were exempt from such rejection

I'll say it again – whether you're a rebellious leader *yourself*, or *choose* rebellious leaders, or *follow* rebellious leaders by doing what they do or adopting their mindset . . .

It's only a matter of time before you're cut off; Rejected

3. And it's not just for their day; The NT records similar things

Like the death of Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the church about their offering

And the believers in Corinth who died prematurely for participating in The Lord's

Supper in a rebellious manner

And the church in Thyatira from Rev 2, who suffered sickness, tribulation, and the death of some of their children . . .

B/c they tolerated a woman who taught and did sinful things

It's for our day too

That doesn't mean that just b/c bad things are happening in your life or in the life of our church, that there's sin in the camp . . .

But it does mean that if you're *in* sin, rebelling against God and his ways, you can expect rejection and suffering of various kinds

4. And once again, that's not the worst of it; The worst of it is found in **Heb 10:26-27**

Which tells us to *hold fast the confession of our hope* . . .

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, [27] but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

That's the *ultimate* rejection; And the ultimate warning for rebelling against God and his ways; Choose to sin, choose to suffer

It's true on a temporal and temporary basis, as God uses it to get your attention and change your heart . . .

And it's true on an eternal basis if you don't repent (**Summary**)

It happened in Moses' day; It happened in Isaiah's day; And it happens in ours

- So whatever you do, heed the warning; And pay attention to the suffering in your life It may very well be God's response to your sin – part of his judgment or discipline, requiring repentance

Apart from which – *his anger has not turned away* [from you], *and his hand is stretched out still*

Not a position you want to be in; Not even for a moment

Pray – Show us our sin, and find us repentant; Open up our eyes to the things unseen

Break our hearts for what breaks yours; And don't let us rationalize our suffering any longer – we hear the warning, and we see the consequences; So find us even now admitting our sin, confessing our sin, and committing turn from it

And we give, Lord – to sound the alarm and spread these truths to others; For their sake, and yours