

## Choose To Sin, Choose To Suffer (Part 2) – Isaiah 9:8-10:34

Introduce; Welcome; Thanksgiving; Continue to worship – Is 9:8-10:34 (p.573)

This is Part 2 of a message I started last week, titled – Choose to Sin, Choose to Suffer  
And I started 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 who are continuing in sin, to stop

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

And a warning to stay *away* from sin; B/c if you choose to sin, you choose to suffer

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

Us as a church; Us as a nation; Us as a culture

B/c while this *prophecy* is not for us, the principles are (**Summary**)

The first of which, we saw last week, is . . .

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

The people were basically saying – we don't need you God; We can take care of ourselves

There was no repentance for sin, no expression of reliance, and no softness of heart

Just pride and arrogance in the face of disaster and destruction

And God humiliated them; First through the Syrians and Philistines, and then through the

A-ssyrians – all tools in God's hand to carry out his judgment of humiliation

To which, we'd do well to pay attention

B/c 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

Second, was . . .

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

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 can't thumb your nose at God, and expect him to look the other way forever

Choose rebellion, suffer rejection (**Summary**)

It was a principle true in Isaiah's day, and still applies in ours

Which brings us to v18-21, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> principle of application

#### **Choose evil, suffer strife (9:18-21)**

After warning the Israelites of impending *humiliation* in v8-12, and then *rejection* in v13-

17 – Isaiah gives yet another reason for God's judgment; V18

[18] *For wickedness [evil] burns like a fire* [it's out of control]; *it consumes briers and thorns* [things that are bad]; *it kindles the thickets of the forest* [things of opposition], *and they roll upward in a column of smoke* [they're destroyed]

Not only does *righteousness* overcome evil as we saw last week (10:17) . . .

But so does evil – *evil* overcomes evil; That's what he's saying

*Wickedness burns like a fire; it consumes briers and thorns*; It consumes things that are bad; It's self-destructive; It has a boomerang effect

Destroying the bad as *well* as the good sometimes

- How many times have you seen *that* happen? Where the evil someone perpetuates comes back to haunt them?

Think no further than the playground bully who gets a dose of his own medicine from a *bigger* bully one day; Or the drug dealer who becomes an addict himself

Or the local gossip who's always talked about; Their sin is their very downfall

And the same is true here of the Israelites – that's who Isaiah's talking about

This isn't the evil of the Syrians, or the Philistines, or the Assyrians – it's the wickedness of the Israelites themselves

Wickedness that consumes them from the inside *out* in fact; Look at v19

- [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 [they have plenty], but are still hungry, and they devour on the left [they eat plenty], but are not satisfied;* [and as if that's not bad enough] *each devours the flesh of his own arm* [meaning that], [21] *Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim devours Manasseh;*

Manasseh and Ephraim were two of the 12 tribes of Israel named after the sons of Jacob

Except they were the sons of Joseph – *grandsons* of Jacob

Who inherited his portion of the land way back in Joshua 16-17 – shown on this **map** (ESV Study Bible p.416)

Despite that, despite the bonds of family, despite the shared experiences, despite their divine blessing – they hated each other at this point in Israel's history

Hence the devouring Isaiah speaks of

And the only thing that even remotely held them together, was their mutual hatred for

Judah, another tribe – *together* [Isaiah says in v21] *they are against Judah*

They hated them

So no matter how you cut it, it was dog eat dog; Civil war; *Strife* at its worst\*\*\*\*\*

From self-inflicted hardship where they reaped what they sowed (18-19) . . .

To a low view of life where they treated people *like fuel for the fire* (19b) . . .

To utter selfishness where no one spared another (19c) . . .

To complete desperation where they metaphorically ate their own *flesh*, family that they were

They chose evil, and suffered strife – internal *and* external; That's the point; Choose evil, suffer strife; But it doesn't just apply to nations; It's also true of families

- Like *extended* families where someone gets mad and holds a grudge – they end up suffering strife

Or how about *immediate* families when someone has an affair – two people choose evil, and everybody suffers

And then there's *church* families, when people nitpick or let a bitter root grow . . .

And *nations* of families who fight civil wars for no good reason

If you choose evil or sin, you'll suffer strife and hardship

And the principle applies to individuals as well

From those who suffer the *relationship* strife of fornication . . .

To the *emotional* strife of homosexuality . . .

To the *public* strife of sinful leadership – like President Nixon suffered with Watergate;

Or President Clinton with *his* indiscretions; And countless religious leaders over time

Nobody's exempt; If you choose evil, you choose strife; Individually *and* corporately

It's unavoidable; At least apart from repentance

- Which is why Isaiah ends this section just like the others

*For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.* (21b)

It's the 3<sup>rd</sup> time he's said it, b/c by the time this comes to pass, nothing will have changed on their part; There's no repentance

How about you? Are you suffering b/c of your sin?

If so, you need to understand something – unless you stop, it's not going to get better

Unless you repent – it's here to stay

- Something Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni definitely understands

On the occasion of their 50th anniversary as a nation recently, he publicly repented of their national sins in a prayer; Listen to what he said

"I stand here today to close the evil past, and especially in the last 50 years of our national leadership history . . . I stand here on my own behalf and on behalf of my predecessors to repent. We ask for your forgiveness."

"We confess these sins, which have greatly hampered our national cohesion and delayed our political, social and economic transformation. We confess sins of idolatry and witchcraft which are rampant in our land. We confess sins of shedding innocent blood, sins of political hypocrisy, dishonesty, intrigue and betrayal."

"Forgive us of sins of pride, tribalism and sectarianism; sins of laziness, indifference and irresponsibility; sins of corruption and bribery that have eroded our national resources; sins of sexual immorality, drunkenness and debauchery; sins of unforgiveness, bitterness, hatred and revenge; sins of injustice, oppression and exploitation; sins of rebellion, insubordination, strife and conflict."

"We want to dedicate this nation to you so that you will be our God and guide. We want Uganda to be known as a nation that fears God and as a nation whose foundations are firmly rooted in righteousness and justice to fulfill what the Bible says in Psalm 33:12: Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. A people you have chosen as your own."

Apart from that, apart from repentance, both nationally and individually – suffering is here to stay; Choose evil, suffer strife

And then last, the last warning, is . . .

**Choose oppression, suffer defeat (10:1-4, 20-34)**

Not just humiliation, or rejection, or strife; But outright defeat

It happened to the Israelites (1-4, 20-22a, 28-34); It happened to the Assyrians; And it happens now; Let's look at each of those in turn, starting with the Israelites; 10:1-4

*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!*

If that doesn't describe the oppression of abortion, and those who write and enact the laws allowing it and perpetuating it, I don't know what does; Read it again (v1-2)

*Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees* [sinful decrees], *and the writers who keep writing oppression*, [2] *to turn aside the needy from justice* [like the needy who are unborn or unheard] *and to rob the poor of my people of their right* [their right to life in the first place, or the right of those in poverty to be treated fairly], *that widows may be their spoil* [apparently in Isaiah's day the widows were being taken advantage of as well], *and that they may make the fatherless their prey* [now we're right back to the unborn, and those who write, interpret, and uphold the laws that kill them]!

That's our country; That's our laws pertaining to abortion, and those who write them – woe to them; And here's why – v3

- [3] *What will you do on the day of punishment, in the ruin that will come from afar?* Remember, *this* prophecy is not for us, but others just like it are; Prophecies like Mt 24, and 2 Pet 3, and 2 Thess 1 that speak of The Great Tribulation and the day of ruin . . . That's yet to come

But here, Isaiah is talking about the ruin from Assyria in the near term

*To whom will you flee for help* [where are you going to find any security], *and where will you leave your wealth?* IOW there's going to be no safe place for it, no haven

It's going to be lost or taken; That's the idea

And the principle applies to us just as much as it applied to them

Choose oppression, and the defeat of wealth is not far behind

- Now, does that mean that as believers we shouldn't bother saving for emergencies, or investing for the future in order to provide for our families? Not at all  
But it does mean we should hold *loosely* to it  
And it does mean we should invest as much as we can in *eternal* things – the things of God, the work of ministry, the church, people's lives  
Things that don't show a *percentage* return, but a *spiritual* one  
Things that aren't without risk themselves, but certainly include reward

We should hold loosely to what we have, and invest in eternal things – b/c there's going to come a day when the earthly stuff is either taken or lost  
Especially in a nation where the sin of oppression is so prevalent, and on the rise

- And for those who choose such oppression, for those who participate in it and perpetuate it – there will come a day Isaiah says in v4, when . . .  
*Nothing remains but to crouch among the prisoners or fall among the slain.*

Like many of our soldiers did who were involved in the Bataan death march of WWII  
After suffering the single greatest defeat in American military history to that point – those still alive were forced to march such distances, under such cruel conditions . . .  
The only available option many times, was to fall among the slain  
The very end facing those who participate and perpetuate oppression

The defeat won't stop at your possessions

And yet, Isaiah says in *their* day – *For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still.*

Apart from repentance, and bearing the fruit of it – judgment remains

It's a problem and reality we face as a nation, just as much as ancient Israel did

Ruin is coming; The form may be different, but not the reality

- For the Israelites, it came in the form of war with the Assyrians  
Which Isaiah describes in v28-32 with stunning detail

But before I read it (**Map – ESV Study Bible p.1236**), remember that Assyria was the dominant world power at the time

Swooping in from the north, they would conquer Syria first, then Samaria, and then march south toward Jerusalem

And I want you to watch this **map** (ESV p.1261) as Isaiah describes it – v28

*He* [the king of Assyria] *has come to Aiath; he has passed through Migron; at Michmash he stores his baggage; [29] they have crossed over the pass; at Geba they lodge for the night; Ramah trembles; Gibeah of Saul has fled. [30] Cry aloud, O daughter of Gallim! Give attention, O Laishah! O poor Anathoth! [31] Madmenah is in flight; the inhabitants of Gebim flee for safety* [scholars don't know exactly where those are]. *[32] This very day he will halt at Nob; he will shake his fist at the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.*

Pretty amazing and pretty detailed; To drive home the point that defeat is coming – *ruin* is on the way (10:3)

- And then he summarizes it all in v33-34, still speaking of the defeat of the Israelites, and using a logging metaphor\*\*\*\*\*

*[33] Behold, the Lord GOD of hosts will lop the boughs with terrifying power; the great in height will be hewn down, and the lofty will be brought low.*

It's a metaphor that would have torn at their hearts, b/c much of Samaria was covered in dense forest at that time

It would be like a prophecy in our day predicting the downfall of our greatest cities

In any case *[34] He* [God] *will cut down the thickets of the forest with an axe, and Lebanon will fall by the Majestic One* [by his own doing].

From which, look at the next verse – *will come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse* –

11:1; God will bring his people to ruin for their oppression, leveling them like a forest

But *there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots* [his lineage] *shall bear fruit* [shall bring life].

Which makes this summary in v33-34, a bridge to hope; But for now, it's defeat; That comes first; Choose oppression, suffer defeat

It happened to the Israelites, and secondly, it happened to the Assyrians; Look at v22b

- *Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness* [affirming that God is right and good in all he does]. *[23] For the Lord GOD of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of all the earth* [all this suffering will come to a close].

*[24] Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: "O my people, who dwell in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrians when they strike with the rod and lift up their staff against you as the Egyptians did. [25] For in a very little while my fury will come to an end, and my anger will be directed to their destruction* [their defeat].

*[26] And the LORD of hosts will wield against them a whip, as when he struck Midian at the rock of Oreb* [a victory of God's people found in Jdg 7]. *And his staff will be over the sea, and he will lift it as he did in Egypt.*

Referring to God's perfect timing in destroying the Egyptians when they entered the Red Sea, and the waters came crashing down on them

Just as he did it *then* in his time, he'll do it now to the Assyrians, Isaiah is saying

*[27] And in that day his burden* [the burden imposed by the Assyrians] *will depart from your shoulder, and his yoke from your neck* [speaking to the Israelites]; *and the yoke will be broken because of the fat* [b/c of the blessing of God]. "

- Choose oppression, suffer defeat; It happened to the Israelites, it happened to the Assyrians, and it happens now  
You need look no further than Nazi Germany; Or WWII Japan; Or more recently the breakup of the Soviet Union; And East Germany; And Iraq; And Egypt; And Libya  
Choose oppression, suffer defeat; It's just a matter of time

And b/c of some of the things going on in our country, b/c of the sin that's being condoned and even promoted, and the oppression that's already happening . . .  
We're at risk as well; We're at risk of defeat; We're at risk of downfall

Oh, it may not be a military defeat, but it very well could be a financial one  
Or a physical defeat along the lines of shortages and hardship  
Or a defeat of influence, as we lose our prominence in the world  
Or a defeat of solidarity and unity as we become more and more splintered  
As long we choose oppression, in whatever form – we're at risk of defeat, and the suffering that goes along with it

- The *good* news is, is that it's not without hope; And never has been  
There's always been a faithful remnant, and always will be – v20-22a  
*In that day* [the day when Assyria is punished and defeated] *the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.*  
Which ought to sound familiar; Like when Jesus said in Jn 4:23 that the Father is looking for people to worship him in spirit and in *truth*

Isaiah goes on – *[21] A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. [22] For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return.*

In the midst of God's judgment and the suffering of his people due to their sin – only a remnant would remain true; Only a few would remain faithful

Returning to him physically, *and* spiritually

Physically from the bondage of their captors, and spiritually fr the bondage of their sin

And it's still *happening*; Among both Jews *and* Gentiles; It's an aspect of this prophecy  
that *does* apply to us directly  
People are turning and re-turning to God in truth, all over the world  
Leaning on *his* everlasting arms, instead of someone else's  
Not all, but some; And you can too, if you repent (**Summary**)

- You too can avoid the suffering caused by sin, if you repent of it, and trust your life to  
the arms of Jesus  
It's the only life-changing, life-saving option available . . .  
And the *only* way to change the course of our nation

Pray – Give us ears to hear the warnings, and eyes to see our sin – individually and  
collectively; And find us responding accordingly – with repentance in the face of  
conviction, and courage in the face of oppression

Use our tithes and offerings to spread that word more and more; To sound the alarm to  
more and more people – who need to hear it and heed it, just like us