

How To Make A Mess Of Your Life – Is 30:1-18

I'm thankful for those who preached in my place while we were away, both here on the main campus, and at the west campus

For those of you who worship/serve at the West Campus – I want to commend you for your perseverance during these hot summer months, and encourage you keep on

➤ That said, I'm eager to get back to our study of Isaiah – Is 30:1-18

I want to talk to you about how to make a mess of your life; An obvious tongue-in-cheek sort of way to *keep* you from such a thing . . .

Or jar you out of it if it already applies – if your life's already a mess

B/c it doesn't have to be; And it shouldn't be; Especially for believers

So whether this is a warning for you not to go there, or a rebuke if you already are – I hope you'll take this to heart, and follow along *with* me, starting with v1-7

➤ [1] “*Ah, stubborn children,*” declares the LORD, “*who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; [2] who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!*”

The background here (**Map #7 ESV Study Bible**), is that God is speaking to his people ~700BC, when the Assyrians were threatening to attack Judah, the Israelites And instead of seeking the Lord and his help, they went to Egypt and tried to *buy* theirs

[3] *Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation. [4] For though his officials are at Zoan and his envoys reach Hanes* [a couple of significant cities at the time], *[5] everyone comes to shame through a people that cannot profit them, that brings neither help nor profit, but shame and disgrace.*”

And then, with a bit of biting sarcasm, Isaiah says this

[6] *An oracle* [a judgment] *on the beasts of the Negeb* [referring to the couriers that were transporting the payment through the Negeb desert between Israel and Egypt, to get the Egyptians to protect the Israelites against Assyria]. *Through a land of trouble and anguish, from where come the lioness and the lion, the adder and the flying fiery serpent* [adversaries, whether literal or poetic I don't know], *they* [the couriers] *carry their riches on the backs of donkeys, and their treasures on the humps of camels, to a people that cannot profit them. [7] Egypt's help is worthless and empty; therefore* [Isaiah says] *I have called her “Rahab who sits still.”*

Rahab was a mythological sea creature in those days, that was considered to be mighty in power and influence; So when Isaiah calls Egypt, “*Rahab who sits still*” . . .

He's basically saying they're no better than a myth, and a powerless one at that

A great big bump on a log, that does absolutely nothing*****

And the first kind of life that God points out here, complete with a recipe for such a mess, is a shameful one

If you want a shameful and humiliating life . . . (v1-7)

One as v3 says – turns to your *shame* and *humiliation*; Or as v5 says – leads to your *shame* and *disgrace*; If that's what you want in life . . .

• **Set your own agenda (1a)**

Just like it says in v1 – *carry out a plan*, but definitely not God's; *Whatever* you do, *don't* get on his page; *Don't* do what he says

Don't order your *life* around his plan, don't fulfill his *purposes*, and don't serve his people; Just forge your own way, set your own agenda, and do your own thing

Sure, you can take his “suggestions” into *consideration*, but by all means, don't feel like you have to get on board; Don't feel like you have to toe the line just b/c *he* said it I mean, who knows better than you when it comes to your life anyway?

If you want a shameful and humiliating life, that's the first step; Second is to . . .

• **Get in bed with those you shouldn't (1b,2b)**

For the Israelites, it was the Egyptians – with whom they made *an alliance* [there in v1], *but not of my Spirit* God says; IOW he didn't approve, and they added sin to sin Egypt looked good on the outside, but on the inside they were irreverent and ungodly And it led to shame and humiliation for the Israelites

And the same will happen to you if *you* get in bed with those you shouldn't Whether it's a boyfriend or girlfriend; A one-night stand; A business partnership that has nothing to do with sex; The wrong kind of friends; It doesn't matter If God doesn't approve, it's going to lead to a shameful and humiliating end And the Bible says you're a *fool* if you *continue* on that path, and think otherwise

That's why Paul said in **2 Cor 6:14** – *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?* None; The partnership will never be what it could . . .

And the fellowship will be skin deep*****

Get in bed w/ those you shouldn't, and shame and humiliation is yours; And then 3rd . . .

• **Leave God out of it (2a)**

Just go about your business like the Israelites there in v2, who went *down to Egypt without asking for* [God's] *direction*; That'll do it – just ignore him

Or, act like he doesn't care – you know, declare yourself an agnostic

Or better yet, convince yourself that he doesn't even exist

But whatever you do – don't seek him, and don't ask for his help

That might actually *mitigate* the shame and humiliation you're looking for

That's the *first* way to make a mess of your life (**Summary**)

➤ The 2nd is found in v8-14, where God says . . .

[8] *And now, go, write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever.*

Which is one of the reasons this applies to *us*, just like it did to them

B/c what he's saying here through the pen of Isaiah, is meant to be a witness to future generations, *forever*

Inscribe it in a book he said . . .

[9] *For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the LORD; [10] who say to the seers, “Do not see,” and to the prophets, “Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions,*

[11] *leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.*” [12] *Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, “Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them, [13] therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out, and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant; [14] and its breaking is like that of a potter’s vessel that is smashed so ruthlessly that among its fragments not a shard is found with which to take fire from the hearth, or to dip up water out of the cistern.”*

That, is a broken and shattered life

One that collapses like a falling building, and is broken like a clay pot; Leaving nothing of any use; It’s shot; Just useless; And if that’s what you want . . .

If you want a broken and shattered life . . . (v8-14)

The recipe is pretty clear in these verses – starting with rebellion; Just . . .

- **Rebel against God and his way of living (9a)**

That’s the idea of being a *rebellious people* in v9

It’s the mindset that says, “I don’t care what you say, God, I’m going to do whatever I want; I know it’s wrong, but I’m going to indulge anyway”

And you basically spit in God’s face

You could be directly disobeying his Word and commands; You could be acting contrary to the impulses of his Spirit

You could be opposing those that God has placed in positions of authority in your life, just b/c you don’t like to follow

Whatever the case, it’s rebellion; And if you want a broken and shattered life – just keep doing it; Keep disobeying your parents . . .

Keep undermining your boss’s leadership; And keep bad-mouthing those in authority

And while you’re at it . . .

- **Lie through your teeth (9b)**

That’s apparently what the Israelites were doing, b/c God calls them *lying children* in v9
Just lie as a matter of course

And not just *explicitly*, but implicitly – make sure you’ve got both in your arsenal

Make sure you lie *explicitly* by just saying it every now and then; Just lie outright

But more importantly, and most of the time, make sure you lie *implicitly*

Just lead people to believe or think something that’s not true – by innuendo, or silence, or intentionally withholding part of the truth; That’s *implicit* lying

It would be like pulling a co-worker aside, and saying something like . . .

“Hey, you know our boss? I just had a conversation with her the other day, and, well, let’s just say it wasn’t the best”

“She kind of said some things . . . Well, I’m not going to bad mouth her”

When in all actuality, the conversation was perfectly fine; But b/c *you* don’t like your

boss, you don’t want anyone else to like her either; So you lied by implication

Leaving your co-worker thinking something negative about her, that’s not really true

Which is no better than *explicitly* saying she’s a dirty, rotten scoundrel – but if you do it *implicitly*, you don’t look as bad while making a mess of your life

But either way, it’s lying; And based on this passage, it leads to a broken/shattered life

3rd here, is to . . .

- **Stay away from church (9c)**

Be *unwilling* like it says in v9c – to even hear the instruction of the LORD; Just don’t go

If that means scheduling a regular tee time, or going to the office, or feigning sickness, or over-committing to sports, or a combination thereof – do it

By any and all means, don’t expose yourself to the instruction of the Lord, don’t listen to people who have, and definitely don’t open your Bible

That could mess up *everything* as you make a mess of your life

Rather, make sure you . . .

- **Listen to people who tickle your ears (10-11)**

If you want a broken and shattered life, you need to surround yourself with certain kinds of people, especially leaders

Like the ones in v10 who *do not see* – as in, they have no vision; And who withhold the truth by not speaking *what is right*; Find people like that

Find teachers/pastors who utter *smooth things* that are easy to hear and stroke your ego

And who *prophesy illusions* by always telling you what you *want* to hear instead of what you *need* to hear

And *whenever* possible, find those who *leave the way* as he says in v11; Those who *turn aside from the path*

Oh, not blatantly of course – you want them to practice a *form* of religion, don’t give that up; But make sure it’s not life-changing and God-glorifying

Look for those who dabble in the sin of the world, and accommodate its way of thinking
Saying little about the *holiness* of God, and the implications for your life

Rebel, lie, and stay away from church – unless they tickle your ears

That’s the *second* way to make a mess of your life (**Summary**)

➤ The 3rd, is found in v15-17, where after *warning* us of that broken and shattered life, Isaiah writes . . .

[15] *For thus said the Lord GOD* [indicating that this is the reason for such discipline and punishment; namely, that I told you this in the past, you knew this], *the Holy One of Israel, “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.” But you were unwilling, [16] and you said, “No! We will flee upon horses”; therefore you shall flee away; and, “We will ride upon swift steeds”; therefore your pursuers shall be swift. [17] A thousand shall flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you shall flee, till you are left like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain, like a signal on a hill.*

That’s a lonely and fearful life; Where a thousand flee *at the threat of one*; And one will flee *at the threat of five*; It’s fear through and through

And lonely; *Like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain*; Or a smoke signal on the top of a hill; If that’s what you want . . .

If you want a lonely and fearful life . . . (v15-17)

If you want to ensure that fear grips you and loneliness plagues you . . .

- **Refuse to repent (v15b)**

Just flat out refuse; B/c as God says in v15 – *In returning and rest you shall be saved*
In repentance that is – returning *to* God, and turning *from* your sin and rebellion . . .
And by resting in him and his *grace*, his presence – you’ll be *saved* from a messed up
life; And defeat your purposes completely

But if you *refuse* to repent, you won’t be saved from *anything*; Fear will grip you, and
loneliness will plague you; No matter how many people you have around you; 2nd . . .

- **Refuse to trust (v15c)**

If you want a lonely and fearful life – refuse to trust the God who saved you
B/c in so doing, you’ll forego the *strength* he offers to overcome that fear – *In quietness
and in trust* [he says] *shall be your strength*
IOW your strength to endure the fear of a fallen world and the powers of darkness,
comes from your trust in God; That he’s got you; No worries
And your strength to remain when people leave you, comes from your trust in God
Your strength to weather the storms of life, comes from your trust in God
If you want a lonely and fearful life – just refuse to trust; And 3rd . . .

- **Take matters into your own hands (v16)**

Just say *no* to repentance and trust, and take care of things yourself; Just like the Israelites
in v16; God is speaking there, and says . . .
*You said, “No! [as in we’re not going to trust you for protection] We will flee upon
horses”*; And a little later – *“We will ride upon swift steeds”*
IOW “we don’t need you God; We’ll take care of ourselves thank you very much”

And God basically says, “Fine; You want to take matters into your own hands, you want
to make your own bed? Then you’re going to lie in it”
Your enemies will get you, your fear will grip you, and your loneliness will plague you
Not a good way to live (**Summary**); But if that’s what you want, have at it

3 ways to make a mess of your life; But . . .

If you want a blessed and fruitful life . . . (v18)

If you want a God-graced life; If you want God-sustained life; If you want a God-
awesome life, as opposed to a God-awful life . . .

- **Wait on the Lord who waits for you**

[18] *Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to
show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait
for him.* This is incredible – not only for what it *does* say, but what it doesn’t say

You’d think God would get to this point, and say – “I’m done with you; You’ve made a
mess of your life, *therefore* to heck with you”; Or literally, to hell with you
That’s what seems logical; But what we find is just the opposite

Isaiah says that it’s *b/c* of our sin and wayward life that God waits for us to return to him
“You’re making a mess of your life, *therefore* I’m waiting for you”

That’s the essence of the entire passage up to this point

He actually *waits* for us to come home, to repent – and wait for him to work in our life
and act on our behalf, with grace upon grace
He waits for us to wait for him that way
And if you want a blessed and fruitful life, keep him waiting no longer; And . . .

- **Live for the Lord who blesses you**

Blesses you by showing you *mercy*; As in withholding the punishment you deserve, even
while you’re living for yourself and making a mess of your life
He does that; All the time; And in so doing, he exalts himself

It’s like a parole officer who spares a convicted criminal of further punishment on
occasion, even though he’s violating the terms of his release
He doesn’t *have* to do that; But in doing so, he sure does *exalt* himself
He sure does stand out b/c of his kindness

And the same is true of God; He exalts himself and blesses *us*, by restraining his justified
anger toward our sin, and withholding the punishment we rightly deserve
He won’t do so forever, but he does so now – *For the LORD is a God of justice* (18b)

IOW the reason he waits to show grace, but doesn’t to show mercy – is b/c he’s just
Never failing to . . . Care for his own; Forgive those who ask; Keep his word to a
thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments
Be slow to anger and abound in steadfast love (Ex 34:6); That’s justice (**Summary**)

➤ Which is all the more reason to live for him; And wait for him; And turn to him even in
the midst of your worst sin; A blessed and fruitful life awaits
The only question is, do you want it?

Prayer – Thank you for the life you’ve given us; And for the mercy you extend to us; And
the grace you so freely give us
So receive our tithes and offerings now; *We* give, b/c you gave