

Looking for Help In All The Wrong Places

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[0:00] Isaiah chapter 30, verse 1. Woe to the obstinate children, declares the Lord,! To those who carry out plans that are not mine,! Forming an alliance, but not by my spirit, keeping sin upon sin, who go down to Egypt without consulting me, who look for help to Pharaoh's protection, to Egypt's shade for refuge.

But Pharaoh's protection will be to your shame. Egypt's shade will bring you disgrace. Though you have officials in Zoan, and their envoys have arrived in Hanes, everyone will be put to shame because of a people useless to them, who bring neither help nor advantage, but only shame and disgrace.

An oracle concerning the animals of the Negev. Through a land of hardship and distress, of lions and lionesses, of adders and darting snakes, the envoys carry their riches on donkeys' backs, their treasures on the humps of camels, to that unprofitable nation, to Egypt, whose help is utterly useless.

Therefore I call her Rahab the do-nothing. Go now, write it on a tablet for them, and scribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness.

These are rebellious people, deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to the Lord's instruction. They say to the seers, see no more visions.

[1:49] And to the prophets, give us no more visions of what is right. Tell us pleasant things. Prophecy illusions. Leave this way. Get off this path and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel.

Therefore, this is what the Holy One of Israel says. Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression, and depended on deceit, this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly in an instant.

It will break in pieces like pottery, shattered so mercilessly that among its pieces not a fragment will be found for taking coals from the hearth or scooping water out of a cistern.

This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, Israel says. In repentance and rest is your salvation.

In quietness and trust is your strength. But you would have none of it. You said, no, we will flee on horses. Therefore, you will flee.

[2:58] You said, we will ride off on swift horses. Therefore, your pursuers will be swift. A thousand will flee at the threat of one. At the threat of five, you will all flee away till you are left like a flagstaff on a mountaintop, like a banner on a hill.

Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you. He rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him.

O people of Zion who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help. As soon as he hears, he will answer you. Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more.

With your own eyes, you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, this is the way.

Walk in it. Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold. You will throw them away like a minstrel cloth and say to them, away with you.

[4:13] He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. In that day, your cattle will graze in broad meadows.

The oxen and donkeys that work the soil will eat fodder and mash spread out with a fork and shovel. In the day of great slaughter, when the towers fall, streams of water will flow on every high mountain and every lofty hill.

The moon will shine like the sun and the sunlight will be seven times brighter like the light of seven full days when the Lord binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted. Man is a dependent creature. He's not self-supporting. He's not self-sustaining. He's not in any way self-sufficient.

In fact, he's so dependent that unless his next breath is given, he'll die. He's just that dependent. And we were intentionally designed this way to need help and then to find our help in God, our Creator.

[5 : 29] Life was never meant to work without God at the center and without us drawing from Him life and breath and everything else that we have need of.

But the opening chapters of the Bible tell us man has rebelled against God. They've rejected His Word and His wisdom for life and have struck out on their own, declaring their own independence. We don't need you, God, and we don't want you or your Word. So now we're really in trouble. Now we're really in need on top of all the rest of our dependency upon God.

Now we're lost and condemned. Now we're on our way to hell. We're without God and without hope in the world. We're really in need of help.

And in the Gospel, God comes to us, rebels that we are, and offers us just the help that we need. Salvation from sin and hell.

[6 : 38] Forgiveness. A new start. A new heart. A relationship with God. in which He provides strength for every day, power for every duty, comfort in our sorrow, protection, a shelter from the storm, a shade from the heat.

Everything that we could need He offers in the Gospel. But here's the dirty little secret. Man's sinful heart would rather find help anywhere else than in God.

Because we like our own way. And we will find help in ourselves and what seems right to us rather than finding it in God.

You see, to find help in God would mean that we would have to humble ourselves and come back to Him and repent of having sought help elsewhere. It means that we would have to come back to the one that we had spurned, whose help we said we didn't need.

We'd have to own how foolish we had been and how wicked we had been. And we're just too proud for that. So man looks everywhere, everywhere else, for help, trying to make life work without God.

[8 : 05] Men will look to alcohol and pills, to lovers and money, to appearance and influence, to other people, to man-made religion, to their own strength, their own wisdom, their own goodness, their own righteousness, and all this when only Jesus can do helpless sinners good.

He perfectly suits all the needs that we sinners have. And yet He remains the neglected Jesus.

Now, here in the nation of Judah, we have a picture of ourselves looking for help in all the wrong places, seeking alternative helpers, substitute saviors.

Isaiah 30 will show how futile it is, how wicked it is, and how unnecessary it is. When we have the one true helper who stands ready to be all to us that we could ever need, savior, protector, provider, friend, wisdom, strength, righteousness.

Now, nothing sends us running for help like trouble. So when trouble comes, where do you turn for help? You choose your helper dozens of times each week, I'm sure.

[9 : 32] Judah had this same choice before them here in chapter 30. Trouble was at their door. It was called Assyria. And Assyria's undefeated army was on a roll and it was coming right for Judah.

No one could stand before her. Everyone had been destroyed. That they had fought against. The situation's desperate. Where should we turn for help?

What should we do? We've got to do something. And fast. Panic had struck. They were running out of options. So, let's consider their options.

On the one hand, they could trust in the Lord, their covenant God. God. The one who had already redeemed them out of Egypt with a mighty hand, all those supernatural plagues, opening up the Red Sea and closing it.

The God who had already fought for them in so many battles. There were times when God just sent hailstones down and killed more with hailstones than had been killed with swords.

[10 : 42] There were times he just shook the walls of a city down and down they came so that Israel's soldiers could rush in. There were times that God put such a panic on their enemies that they were disoriented and started killing off each other.

Other times they just took off running and Israel pursued behind and just cut down these running, scared soldiers. In so many ways, the Lord had been their help in trouble. Now, they could trust in him. But then on the other hand, there's the nation of Egypt to the south of them. I mean, they're pretty strong. Maybe they could help us. After all, they've got war horses and chariots and mighty horsemen. These were the smart bombs, the drone planes and the stealth bombers of their day. We could trust in them. So there are the options, God or Egypt. Let's vote. All for trusting in God. OK.

[11:49] All for trusting in Egypt. OK. Egypt's got it. We'll send an ambassador down there immediately to seek their help. Now, what's wrong with this picture?

Why in the world would Judah ever choose Egypt to be their help when they had the almighty supernatural God who was committed to them to be their help?

Well, there's perhaps several reasons. I can think of one that they were they were walking by sight and not by faith. They're not walking by faith. God's invisible.

God cannot be seen with outward eye. And so to look to him for help would require faith, trust. And Judah didn't have that trust in God.

God's help seemed to them like imaginary help. It seemed like it was not the real thing. It's not the kind of help we need.

[12:49] You know, God's good for some things, but these Assyrians have got real chariots and they're coming after us and they've got their war machinery. We need some real help.

And so when they opened their eyes, they looked down to Egypt and there's the chariots and the horses and mighty horsemen. That's that's what I'm talking about.

Real practical help. And so they live by sight rather than by faith. But there's another reason they chose Egypt over God.

And it gets back to that dirty secret about men's hearts. They were too stubborn to seek the Lord. They were set on going their own way and the way that seemed right to them.

Verses one and two. Woe to the obstinate children. Ah, there's the problem. They were obstinate. They were stubborn headed. They were pig headed. To those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my spirit.

[13:54] Heaping sin upon sin, who go down to Egypt without consulting me, who look for help to Pharaoh's protection, to Egypt's shade for refuge. You see, they're going to do it their way.

They don't need God. That's stubbornness. Now, Judah had suffered defeats in the past when God did not come to their aid.

And the prophets came to them and told them why. It's because you have forsaken the Lord. If you want God to fight for you, you must remain true to him. And so they knew that to have God's help, they must repent of their own sinful ways.

And they were too stubborn for that, so off to Egypt they trot. Now, Isaiah is first out to show us the futility of it all.

Their misplaced trust is so futile. Verse 3, but Pharaoh's protection will be to your shame. Egypt's shade will bring you disgrace.

[15:02] And verse 5, everyone will be put to shame because of a people useless to them who bring neither help nor advantage, but only shame and disgrace. Now, this is ironic.

We have a situation which is the exodus in reverse. They had just been saved by the Lord years earlier from Egypt when the Lord brought them out.

And now here they are going right back for help to the very ones that once enslaved them. how foolish, how futile.

Yes, they've got horses. Yes, they've got chariots. But what happened to their horses and chariots at the Red Sea? Have you forgotten? God made a graveyard for Egypt in the Red Sea.

Why would you trust them instead of your God? Can't you see you're seeking help and advantage where none is to be found? It'll only lead to shame and disgrace.

[16:03] Now, chapter 31 is a short version of chapter 30, and it begins with these words, Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or seek help from the Lord.

Verse 3, but the Egyptians are men and not God. The horses are flesh and not spirit. And when the Lord stretches out his hand, he who helps will stumble, he who is helped will fall and both will perish together.

If you're going to go down to Egypt for help, and it's like you're piggybacked on them and they're carrying you, when the Lord stretches his hand out and they stumble, what will happen to you? You too will fall and both of you will perish together. You're going to live to regret it if you seek help here, God is saying. It's helpless help. And then Isaiah points to the animals.

Kids, you've been to the zoo. Here's some animals, and it's interesting that Isaiah points them out. As they're going down to Egypt for help, they've got to go through the Negev, they've got to go through the desert region again.

[17 : 17] And Isaiah is pointing out the animals along the way as this caravan of ambassadors are heading down there to buy off the help of Egypt.

And they're going through a land of hardship and distress, of lions and lionesses, of adders and darting snakes.

and they've got their donkeys' backs and their camels' humps loaded down with riches and treasures, hoping to buy Egyptian protection.

And Isaiah is pointing this whole scene out almost from the animal's perspective and showing that Judah is seeking help at great danger, at great difficulty, and at great cost.

And what do they get for it all? The services of misdo nothing. You see the jab of Isaiah here?

[18 : 20] What are you getting? You're wearing yourself out with your helper that you're seeking and in return you get nothing. Men spend a lot for their God substitutes.

And it's all for nothing. Why seek help from a substitute savior? It's so futile to do so. Give us aid against the enemy for the help of man is worthless.

Psalms 108 12. So it's futile. Any substitute help we seek rather than God is not going to help us in the end.

Secondly, it's so wicked. It's so wicked. Misplaced trust is sinful. It's not only foolish and futile. It's also wicked. To give to Egypt what we should give to God is sin.

It's adding sin, heaping sin upon sin. Now that's what Israel had done. When the trouble was the two nations to the north, what did they do? Instead of trust God, they trusted Assyria.

[19 : 28] And now Assyria has come and not only helped them by destroying their northern neighbors, now they're coming to destroy us. And rather than confessing their sin, they heap sin upon sin. And now they go down to Egypt for help, rather than trusting in the Lord.

And at bottom is this obstinate refusal to hear God and his word. If they turn to the Lord for help, they know that he'll confront them with their sins. And they don't have an appetite for any more of that.

Verse nine, they're rebellious people, they're deceitful children, they're children unwilling to listen to the Lord's instruction. In other words, they don't want the help God gives them in his word.

God's word comes bringing help to them, giving them wisdom, giving them the way of salvation. They don't want God's help as it comes to them from his word.

Oh, they want to be safe from Assyria, but they don't want to be safe from their sins. Do you know any people like that? They want to be safe from their trouble. They want to be safe from hell or the problems that they're up against, but they're not willing to humble themselves and repent, to turn from their sins.

[20 : 49] That's Judah here. They don't want any more of that message that God has been sending through his prophet Isaiah. And Isaiah says, if what you are thinking would come out of your mouths, this is what you would say.

And he writes it down for us so we can read their very thoughts. This is what they're saying in their hearts. Verse 10, they say to the seers, see no more visions, and to the prophets, give us no more prophecies of what is right.

No more visions of what's right. Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions, And stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel.

One wonders how many people in churches across our nation today, if they spoke what was in their heart, would be saying the same thing that Isaiah's hearers were saying in their hearts.

Quit preaching the law of God to us. No more of this commandment stuff. Setting God's absolute truth before us.

[21 : 59] What's always right. What's always wrong. We're tired of that stuff. We don't like it when you hold up God's standard of what's right and what's straight.

And you come and you press that up against our life and you hold it up against that which is crooked in our lives. And it makes us feel uncomfortable and you're stepping on our toes and then you tell us that we need to repent and to align our crooked lives with his straight.

commands. We don't want that. We don't like that. No more of that. Tell us pleasant things. Tell us what wonderful people we are.

Tell us about our value and worth and how important we are to God. Tell us how well we're doing. Tell us things that will bolster our self esteem and will encourage us.

Tell us more about God's love. Tell us more about his grace, forgiveness, his mercy, his kindness. Set the promises of God before us.

[23 : 05] Tell us those good things that are coming our way, the health and the wealth and the prosperity, all the covenant blessings that are ours. But quit talking about the curses of the covenant.

Quit talking about his wrath and justice. Quit talking about judgment that's coming. We want to hear the pleasant things and that's all. That's all.

None of this gloom and doom stuff. Now, there are many pleasant things in the word of God. But you know, if you've read very far, that's not all that's in the word of God.

And it's a wicked thing to say, that's all I want to hear. Just tell me pleasant things. And as for the rest that God says, I don't want to hear it.

Now, there are preachers today who will do just that. They'll only tell you pleasant things. They will not preach the law. They will not set your duties before you, your commands that you owe to your fellow man, that you owe to God.

[24 : 14] But Isaiah was not one of them. Prophecy illusions, they say next. Go ahead and lie to us if you need to.

Just make it all sound good. That's what's in their hearts. That's what they're really wanting. Tell us peace, peace, even though there is no peace. Tell us everything's fine between us and God.

Tell us that we all go to heaven when we die. Men would rather believe a lie than the truth that tells them they must repent or perish.

And now, you see, they're pulling their preacher aside and they're giving some advice to Isaiah. And they're saying he's got to change his current method of preaching.

He needs to get with it. He needs to get off this current path that he's on, leave this way, stop doing things like this, and most of all, stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel.

[25 : 15] We don't like it when you lift up the Holy One, so stop it. stop telling us how Holy He is, and that we must be holy because He is holy.

It exposes us, it makes us feel terrible. Well, Isaiah knew exactly how it made them feel. Remember how he felt in Isaiah 6, when he saw the Lord high and lifted up, and he saw his holy, holy, holy nature, and he cried, I am ruined, it's over, I'm undone, it's finished, because I'm an unclean, unholy man.

He knew what it felt like, but he also knew that until a man sees that he is unholy, he will never seek the remedy that is found only in Jesus, which was there in chapter 6, symbolized by that coal, blood-soaked coal taken from the altar that touched his lips and cleansed him.

it's by the law that the knowledge of sin comes. You've got to know you're hopelessly lost before you'll ever throw yourself upon the only savior for sinners.

As long as you think that you just need a little boost and you're basically okay, you'll never come and throw all your weight on Christ and you must or be lost forever.

[26 : 42] You'll be fine with other helpers. you'll be fine with your own help, your own strength, your own righteousness. But once you come to see how holy he is, you will see that it's hopeless and the only hope is to be found is in Jesus who does helpless sinners good.

What after all is Isaiah? What after all are the prophets and the preachers that God sends? but his mailman just delivering the word that he sends?

So what Judah was rejecting was not Isaiah but the holy one of Israel himself. His word. We don't want that kind of help. They were saying to God.

They were rejecting the only savior of sinners and is anything more wicked than that. So here's a question for you.

Put yourself into Isaiah shoes. What what is Isaiah to do? What what does Isaiah do to people who don't want to be confronted anymore with the holy one of Israel? Well in the very next verse he confronts them with the holy one of Israel.

[27 : 57] This is what the holy one of Israel says. He comes right back at them. You see it's not that easy to escape the holy one of Israel. Is it? The reality is that in him we live and move and have our being.

so you might shut your preacher up but he's still there. And the reality is that because you've rejected him judgment is coming and that's what he tells them.

This is what the holy one of Israel says because you've rejected this message and you relied on your oppression and deceit. This sin will become like a high wall cracked and bulging that suddenly collapses in an instant.

the message in short is it's not safe to reject God's word. Derek Thomas is a seminary professor in Mississippi and he has a commentary on Isaiah and at this point he tells of a storm that blew into town and two men were in a van and the winds picked up ferociously and they sought shelter behind a tall wall.

but the winds were stronger than the wall and it collapsed on their van and killed them both. And he says that's what Isaiah is saying because you've rejected me your shelter and refuge and you're depending on lies and your own helpers you're going to find that this sin will be like a tall wall bulging but cracked and what you trusted in to save you will actually be the thing that destroys you.

[29 : 42] Now that's the way it had been with Assyria. They sent off for help to Assyria the first time around and Assyria was now knocking on the door ready to smash them. And he says that's what's going to happen as you trust now in Egypt you'll find that your alternative savior will be your undoing.

they may look strong they may seem like the right thing to trust in but in your time of need they will prove helpless and will lead to your destruction.

Trusting in Egypt was not God's plan of salvation. And now Isaiah tells them what God's plan of salvation was in verse 15. Here it is the holy one gives you his plan of salvation in repentance and rest is your salvation in quietness and trust is your strength but you would have none of it.

Repentance and trust has always been God's plan of salvation. And that's why it's never been the popular thing to do. Right up front it meets you with repentance.

I must stop going my own way. I've got to stop playing like I'm God and and stop leaning on myself as if and all my ways of trying to help myself I've got to come empty handed and and and repudiate my sin and trust in God to be my savior.

[31 : 16] Every other trust must go. You must rest on God's mercy. rest in what Christ has done for sinners. There's no rest when you're resting on a substitute savior.

You never know when you've done enough. Remember Martin Luther resting on his own good works and he never had any rest ultimately did he he never knew if he'd done enough to satisfy God. But when we rest on Christ and his finished work we find true rest peace calm quietness none of this frantic panicky gotta do something.

No. All that he is for all that I need. Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you what? Rest. Well God's recipe for Judah's national security was the same.

Repent and trust. Replace your alliance with Egypt by reliance on God. But they would have none of it.

No. You said no. We will flee on horses. Therefore you will flee. In fact a thousand of you will flee at the threat of one and at the threat of five you will all flee away.

[32 : 36] That's a reversal of God's promised blessing. If they remained faithful to God one of the promised blessings of the covenant was that before just a couple of them thousands would flee.

But now it's reversed. The curses are coming upon them because of their rejecting God going their own way. Now you all will flee. A thousand of you will flee when just one is chasing.

I'm going to strike your hearts with panic so that if just five are chasing you you'll all run away. and he's speaking here of being taken away into exile and leaving the land deserted.

So God came offering himself to them as their salvation and strength and instead of choosing him they chose horses. Is anything more wicked than saying no to God and yes to horses?

Well because of that Judah is to find out what it's like to not have God as their helper but to have God as their opponent and to only have horses as their helpers.

[33:47] So instead of the peace and joy that God would have given them they'll experience his judgment and curses. And so with judgment heavy and the consequences of their turning to false helpers pouring out upon them we come to verse 18 which is a turning point in the whole chapter.

And Isaiah rejoices to tell them that in spite of your obstinate rebellion in spite of having rejected the Holy One of Israel as your helper in spite of dishonoring him by looking to Egypt for help and in spite of your refusal to repent.

Yet yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you. the Lord longs to be gracious to you to be gracious to show his favor to the undeserving to shower free favor on the one deserving wrath.

He longs to do that with you. That's the same heart that we see beating in the Lord Jesus as he speaks to Jerusalem in his day.

Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you with with my message to repent and believe. How often I longed.

[35:08] There's that word. I long to gather you to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings to protect them. But you were not willing.

The picture we have is that even while they were not willing, he was longing to be gracious to them. That's what Isaiah is saying. Even while you're obstinately rebelling against him, going to your false saviors, yet he longs to be gracious to you.

In fact, he rises to show you compassion. Now this is amazing grace that he's still willing to be your savior savior, even at your last resort.

When you've looked to all other substitute helpers and plans and efforts to save yourself and they have all failed you miserably and brought shame and disgrace upon you.

When your idols fail, when your beauty fades, when your money runs out and your circumstances reduce you to helplessness, even then he's willing to receive you.

[36:23] Now is that grace or what? Not you made the bed, now lie in it. Not you leaned upon your idols, now let them help you. No. Yet he longs to be gracious to you.

You know, it's when what we leaned upon falls apart and we're broken, that we come to our senses and we see where he has been all along.

Offering to be our savior, our helper. Rising to show us compassion. It's not like he's just sitting down saying I'll help you if you come to me.

He's actually on his feet. He's ready. He's ready to run to our help. How gracious he will be when you cry for help. As soon as he hears, he will answer you.

What's he waiting for? Just this, your broken, repentant cry for help. Mercy, Lord. Pity, Lord. Give me what I don't deserve, Lord.

[37:33] Be gracious to me, Lord. And that was the very thing Israel would not do. You would have none of that. But when you do cry to him, he will spring into action for your deliverance.

Now I say with such a willing and able savior as this, can you see why I say all substitute saviors are so unnecessary? Why even go there?

They're not only futile and wicked, but you don't need them. With such a God who's so willing and ready to bless whenever you are.

Can you see you yourself are your own worst enemy holding back the blessings of grace that could be yours? Cry out to him at once and he says he will save you.

He will save you. So though Judah's misplaced trust in Egypt would bring them to shame and judgment, yet in the future God is going to save them because he had promised to do so.

[38:43] It's a promise that went right back to the garden, that he would work salvation to those who did not deserve it. It's a promise he made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And so a time will come when he will bind up the bruises of his people and heal the very wounds that he himself inflicted. Yes, they're wondering, they're refusing to repent, they're stiff-necked, they will not repent, they will not come to God, but a day is coming when they will.

They must go through great suffering and affliction and wounding and bruising, but then the Lord will heal them. He'll save them. He's promised to do so. And the rest of the chapter spells out the blessings of that great salvation that God is going to bring to them.

Now it's fulfilled in part by what Judah experienced when they were delivered out of exile and brought back into the land. But that's just a small fulfillment of what is pictured here.

This reaches into the future of Messiah's age when the Savior would come. And here we have his so great salvation that he brings both at his first coming and some of it even stretching into his

second coming.

[39 : 56] It's pointing this to the salvation that Jesus Christ gives to hell-deserving sinners. Now, five things very briefly about this great salvation that he brings to these rebels, these obstinate people.

first of all, no more tears. Verse 19, O people of Zion who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. He's telling them that his salvation will bring joy to his people, joy unspeakable and full of glory, the joy of knowing that my sins are forever forgotten as to God bringing them up against me. forgiven all of them. What joy, the joy of sins forgiven, of peace with God, of fellowship with him, of eternal life to come.

O weeping from God's judgment and his discipline may endure for a night, but joy is coming in the morning, God is saying, you will weep no more. And we look forward to a day when Jesus returns, when forever we will weep no more.

When gladness and joy will overtake us and sorrow and sighing will flee away. No more tears.

Secondly, no more walking in the darkness.

[41 : 22] He says in verse 20, although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, it's coming. This judgment is coming upon you, yet your teachers will be hidden no more with your own eyes.

You will see them. Who are these teachers? They are Isaiah. They are the prophets who brought the word of God to them and they despise them. So what did God do? He took them away from them. Your teachers will be hidden no more.

They will be restored to you and you will treasure them. And once again, they will guide God's people in the right ways of God's word. And that word of God will be so at work at you in you that whether you turn aside to the left or to the right, you will hear the voice of the teacher saying, no, this is the way walk in it.

And no longer will you be obstinate, but you will walk in his ways. No longer walking in darkness. God's word will be to you a lamp to your feet and a light to your path.

Thirdly, there will be no more idols. Verse 22. When the Savior is seen for who he is and the brilliance of his gracious salvation, all idols will be forsaken.

[42 : 39] Those saved by sovereign grace will defile their idols. They'll regard them as something unclean. They'll throw them away. They'll say, get away, away with you. All these God substitutes that they leaned on, they were expensive.

Talks about all the gold and silver that that overlaid these items, these idols. But in that day, they'll be seen for the worthless things that they were.

They can't help. And so they'll be thrown away like a piece of trash. No more idols. No. The Lord himself will now be everything to them.

He's all I need. He's all I want. And all rivals are despised. Are you turning from your idols to serve the living and true God?

That's the salvation that Jesus brings. No more idols. Fourth, no more famine. Back in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, there were both curses and blessings.

[43 : 44] If Israel obeyed, they had the blessings. If they rejected God and went their own way, they had the curses. One of the curses was that God would turn the land of milk and honey into a barren land that did not produce food.

And he would shut off the heavens and the rain would not come down, but dust would come down. And the heavens would be as brass and the earth beneath them would be as hard as stone and the soil will not yield its crops, nor will the trees of the land yield their fruit.

But when God visits them with salvation, when God comes and graciously saves these rebels and gives them a new heart so that they repent of their sins and they trust in the Savior, all that will change.

And now that land that was once so barren will bear fruit again. And that's the pictures that we have here from verses 23 to 26. He will also send you rain for the seed you've sown in the ground and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful, great fruitfulness of the land.

The moon will shine like the sun and the sunlight will be seven times brighter. Now that's to be taken figuratively, I believe. If the sun was seven times hotter, none of us would live, folks. But what it's saying is that the whole creation has now been neutered.

[45:05] It's been put under the curse. It's frustrated and it leads to decay and it's under bondage. But all that is good will be incredibly better in the new heaven and the new earth without any traces of the curse left.

Yes, there will be no more famine in the land and lastly, there will be no more Assyrian threat. That was the thing that got the whole ball rolling in the first place.

Why did they run down to Egypt? Because the Assyrians are coming. The Assyrians are coming. And how does this chapter end? No more Assyrian threat. The Lord is coming with burning anger, with lips full of wrath and his tongue a consuming fire, not to consume Judah.

But in grace to consume her enemies. Remember what we've seen in Isaiah? God saves his people by destroying their enemies. Verse 31, the voice of the Lord will shatter Assyria.

With his scepter, he will strike them down. It won't be Egypt. It won't be your worthless, do-nothing Egypt, and her horses and chariots. No, it will be me, the Lord Almighty, saving you from sins that were too great for you to defeat.

[46:31] From hell, from Satan, from enemies that were too great for us. What a promise. What a wonderful salvation that the Lord promises even to his rebellious people.

It's coming. It's coming. It may not be in your generation. You may die not tasting a thing of it, but I'm going to save my people. And that is a picture of spiritual salvation.

God would save them physically from the Assyrian threat, and it's a picture of spiritual salvation.

He's going to save every one of his people, even though we're so obstinate and self-seeking and leaning on the wrong helpers.

He's going to save his people and he'll get all the glory. So Judah is being told ahead of time, even while she's got her back to God, she's being told what God is going to do in the future.

He's going to save. What's the purpose of this? Do you sense why he's telling these obstinate people about this coming great salvation? Oh, Judah, if that's true, if I am going to do all of these things and I will strike down Assyria, why in the world would we you run down to Egypt?

[47:44] Why in the world would you trust anything or anyone but me? Turn to me. Come back into my arms longing to be gracious to you right now. even though you've disobeyed long and looked elsewhere for help, I'll save you even if I'm the last resort you have and all your other helpers flee.

Come to me and I'll save you. What a gracious Savior. Now, these idols have a way, don't they, of crawling back into our hearts and hiding out in our lives and going undetected.

But we need to realize that part of this great salvation is to identify them and to reject them and constantly throw them out like an unclean thing.

let me share with you just four brief ways, places where I have found these idols hanging out in my life.

Number one, you can sometimes find them by noticing the first place you turn to when you come into some trouble. Is it God? See, the first place you run, the first person you tell, or is it someone else?

[49:08] Might be that there's an idol replacing God. Sometimes you might find them hiding behind misplaced priorities.

I found them there often. When seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and his church and his word is relegated to second and third and fourth places and squeezed out, very often the thing's squeezing it out.

is something that's replaced him. It's an idol. Another place I've often found idols hiding out is under little compromises that I make with God's commandments.

Not blatantly, openly, defiling a commandment, but just once, just this little thing. and what it is that trumps God's authority in my life is very often an idol that needs to be thrown out and rejected.

Sometimes, fourthly, our idols are found by seeing what steals our joy. Idols are joy stealers.

Jeremy Lynn is the overnight sensation of the New York Knicks, and he's a professing Christian.

[50:31] And in a testimony he gave in a church last year, he said that when he first made it into the NBA the previous year, he felt on top of the world. But that feeling didn't last very long, because in the very first of the training camp, his teammates completely outperformed him, and he was sent down to the development league to work on his game.

He was humiliated, he was depressed, all joy had gone from his life, such that he was wishing that he had never pursued a career in basketball.

Now, he did have a degree from Harvard, he could have done something else, he's now regretting that he ever pursued basketball. He says, quote, my happiness was dependent on how well I played.

And he came to see that that was an idol. The thing that stole his joy was an idol. He was to find joy in the Lord himself, and instead it was in this leather ball full of air, and how well I bounce it and shoot it and pass it.

It's not right, he said, and he turned back to the Lord. He says, it's crazy for me not to trust God with my future. He was trusting in basketball when he should have trusted in God.

[52:00] And one of the signs that showed that basketball had grown to an idol was it robbed him of his happiness when he was playing so poorly. Yes, our idols can steal our joy.

Maybe my joy is all wrapped up in whether that boyfriend or girlfriend notices me and how things are going in that relationship. Maybe it's your appearance, maybe it's your health, maybe it's your job, your business, your retirement portfolio.

Is it all working well? If that steals your joy when that goes, it could be a sign that there's a substitute savior you're leaning on and you're seeking to draw from it what you should be drawing from God, your joy and your delight.

Now, I say this that we see in Isaiah 30 is something that faces us all week long. I'm sure all week long, your life is full of constant challenges and temptations to shift our trust from God onto other trusts.

Some God substitute for joy, protection, provision, meaning, value, perhaps even for salvation.

Some Egypt that at the time seemed so more real in practical help than our unseen God.

[53:21] Isaiah 30 is saying we need to see that misplaced trust as futile, as wicked, and so unnecessary. Have you been leaning on things and people instead of God?

It's my joy to say with Isaiah, he longs to be gracious to you. He's on his feet to show you compassion. How gracious he will be when you cry for help.

As soon as he hears, he will answer you. happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is the Lord his God, the maker of heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them, the Lord who remains faithful forever.

Some trust in chariots, some trust in horses, but we will trust in the name of the Lord, our God. Turn to number 702 with me.

When we come back to the Lord, having leaned on other saviors, what we find is a grace that is greater than all our sins. So as we sing about this wonderful grace of Jesus, let's lay down all our idols at his feet and trust afresh in this wonderful grace.

[54:38] Number 702, let's stand as we sing. We have been praising you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for this wonderful grace that we find in you.

That's just the kind we needed, the kind of help we needed, grace that is greater than all of our sin. We thank you that you come offering it to us again this morning.

I thank you that there's no child too young who can hear and understand the gospel, but that they might even now taste and see that the Lord is gracious.

I thank you that there's none who is too bad, none who has walked too long in their own ways, but that may find this morning new life in Christ and full forgiveness of sins.

And thank you that this grace meets us who are your people day after day, week after week.

Pardon us for all the ways that we have leaned on the flesh, on other saviors, and show us again the beauty of your grace and how unnecessary and wicked and futile are any other substitutes.

[55:53] Come and work in us what we cannot do for ourselves as we turn to you in Jesus' name. Amen.