

GOD'S OUTSTRETCHED HAND

Isa. 9:8-10:4

Intro: We come to a passage in Isaiah tonight which is obviously very important. This can be said because of the arrangement of this section. There is nothing else in all of the prophecy of Isaiah quite like it. Cf. Delitzsch, I, 256. Repetition is always worth noticing in the Word. It always is there for emphasis.

The emphasis here is found in what becomes a rather ominous refrain: "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still" (9:12, 17, 21; 10:4).

The emphasis on this goes back to Moses' day. When God called him, He said, "And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof; and after that he will let you go" (Ex. 3:20).

Clearly this speaks of judgment.

We have also had it once before in Isaiah's prophecy. Cf. Isa. 5:25,

"Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them; and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."

Therefore, we can say, first of all . . .

- I. IT MEANS JUDGMENT. And, regardless of the form it takes, the judgment comes from God. It is God's hand, and He is stretching it forth.
- II. IT IS ~~UN~~NECESSARY JUDGMENT. This is the reason for our passage tonight. The Lord is telling Judah why it has been necessary for Him to come against them with wave after wave of judgment. It would be bad enough to read it once, but for it to be given here four times is what gives it such a dreadful sound.

Now we must believe that this has all been written for us--that is, for us to learn something from it. Fortunately, most of the judgments of God in Scripture are more severe than we usually see today (or perhaps, greater than we recognize), but one problem about this is that we often feel that it does not apply to us because we do not experience some major catastrophe! But

such judgments should never fall upon the Lord's people in any day, especially in ours! We have all of Scripture to profit from, plus about 2,700 years of history which even the people in Isaiah's day did not have. There was no excuse for them, but there is less excuse for us.

But do not just think of the major judgments; think of the little things which happen in your life and in mine which may be an indication that the Lord is seeking to speak to us.

What displeases Him so as to make Him move against us in judgment? Our text states four reasons:

- A. A refusal to pay attention to the Word. Cf. Isa. 9:8.

This is evidenced by an attempt to work our own way out of our difficulties, without prayer, without seeking the Lord, as an evidence of the pride that is in our heart.

So a refusal to abide by the Word, to go on the Word alone, is evidence of pride--one of the things which the Lord hates.

- B. A refusal to go to the Lord first in any time of trouble. Cf. Isa. 9:13.

From chapter 1 we learned at the beginning that this was the basic sin of the people. See Isa. 1:4. How often we go to the Lord only after we have exhausted every other means of escape, instead of turning to Him first.

- C. Because of sin. Cf. Isa. 9:18.

How do you become sensitive to sin?

There is only one way--that is through the Word. If I am neglecting the Word, then a growing paralysis sweeps across my heart, making me more and more insensitive to the things that displease the Lord. It never starts (or rarely starts) with something big, but just little things that begin to grow until they get bigger and bigger.

- D. Finally, we begin to re-write the Word of God. Cf. Isa. 10:1.

We would never confess to doing such a thing, but we

for all practical purposes, are doing just this!
 Our Lord charged the Pharisees with doing just this:
 "Making the word of God of no effect through
 your tradition, which ye have delivered; and
 many such things do ye" (Mark 7:13).

As you look back over these things, see if there is any evidence of this in your own life:

- 1) How do you feel about yourself? Can you read Isa. 1, or Romans 1, or Gal. 5:19-21 and say, That is a picture of me?
 How does Prov. 3:5, 6 impress you? Do you ever stop to think about whether or not you are leaning on your own understanding?
- 2) How important is the Word to you? You would not deny it. Your doctrine is straight on the inspiration of Scripture, but do you read it? Do you read it every day? Do you feel that you must have the Word even if you do not have time to eat your other food?
- 2) And what about prayer? How much do you pray? Do you enjoy it? Is it a blessing? Do you believe that you can pray if you want to, or do you feel that you have to pray.
 What kind of excuses do you use?
- 4) And what about your use of the Word in your life? Do you feel that obedience to the Word is an option with you, or do you look upon every suggestion that you can get from the Word as a way in which you can show the Lord how much you love Him?

This is the kind of preaching that Isaiah was doing. And the people knew it. But, because they were not really applying what they were hearing, the Lord was bringing things into their lives that they should never have had to experience IF they had been walking with Him.

All of this means that God's judgments were . . .

III. REASONABLE JUDGMENTS.

God has reasons behind what He does. Those reasons are not always punitive, but many times they are.

If you know what the Word has to say about the hand of God, you know that His hand can mean blessing as well judgment. Cf. Isa. 59:1, 2,

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden

his face from you, that he will not hear."

These words should never have been written, and would not have been written if the children of Judah had been paying attention to the Word of God.

— IV. IT WAS AN INESCAPABLE JUDGMENT.

Cf. Isa. 14:24, 27. This is spoken against Assyria, but note the principle involved--which applies also to the child of God:

"The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand . . . For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall annul it? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"

Or take Isa. 43:13,

"Yea, before the day was, I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand; I will work, and who shall hinder it?"

V. IT WAS A LOVING JUDGMENT.

God judges His people because He cares for His people! "Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth" (Heb. 12:6).

Cf. Isa. 1:25,

"And I will turn my hand upon thee, and thoroughly purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin."

Also, Isa. 8:11,

"For the Lord spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people . . ."

And, finally, to the glory of God, we can say that . . .

VI. IT WAS AN EFFECTIVE JUDGMENT (Isa. 12:1).

Note:

"And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou was angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me."

See also Isa. 40:1, 2, the beginning of that great latter part of Isaiah's prophecy. What does it anticipate?

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity

is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sin."

And then that great climax in Isa. 53:10,
"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

Concl: It is more evidence of the depravity of our hearts that we would ever want to stray away from the Lord, and even more that such a passage should ever have to be written. May the Lord use these warnings to cause us to search our own hearts in His presence that we may escape those things which should never become a part of our spiritual history!