

Isaiah 30:1-17

¹ "Woe to the rebellious children," says the LORD, "Who take counsel, but not of Me, And who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, That they may add sin to sin;
² Who walk to go down to Egypt, And have not asked My advice, To strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, And to trust in the shadow of Egypt!
³ Therefore the strength of Pharaoh Shall be your shame, And trust in the shadow of Egypt Shall be *your* humiliation. ⁴ For his princes were at Zoan, And his ambassadors came to Hanes. ⁵ They were all ashamed of a people *who* could not benefit them, Or be help or benefit, But a shame and also a reproach." ⁶ The burden against the beasts of the South. Through a land of trouble and anguish, From which *came* the lioness and lion, The viper and fiery flying serpent, They will carry their riches on the backs of young donkeys, And their treasures on the humps of camels, To a people *who* shall not profit; ⁷ For the Egyptians shall help in vain and to no purpose. Therefore I have called her Rahab-Hem-Shebeth.
⁸ Now go, write it before them on a tablet, And note it on a scroll, That it may be for time to come, Forever and ever: ⁹ That this *is* a rebellious people, Lying children, Children *who* will not hear the law of the LORD; ¹⁰ Who say to the seers, "Do not see," And to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits. ¹¹ Get out of the way, Turn aside from the path, Cause the Holy One of Israel To cease from before us."
¹² Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel: "Because you despise this word, And trust in oppression and perversity, And rely on them, ¹³ Therefore this iniquity shall be to you Like a breach ready to fall, A bulge in a high wall, Whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant. ¹⁴ And He shall break it like the breaking of the potter's vessel, Which is broken in pieces; He shall not spare. So there shall not be found among its fragments A shard to take fire from the hearth, Or to take water from the cistern." ¹⁵ For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." But you would not, ¹⁶ And you said, "No, for we will flee on horses"-- Therefore you shall flee! And, "We will ride on swift *horses*"-- Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift! ¹⁷ One thousand *shall flee* at the threat of one, At the threat of five you shall flee, Till you are left as a pole on top of a mountain And as a banner on a hill.

What has God done for you that is bad?

When you retell your history, what part do you look back on and say, oh this was very bad. I did what God said. I followed everything His word said to do. And oh boy, what a mistake that was. I wish now I had never done what He said. I wish I would have never said "no" to I wanted and "yes" to what He wanted. I just wish

I had gone by my plan and not His. I wish I had followed my heart instead of His word. Where do we say that?

Nowhere. As believers we live to see that **quickly doing what God says because He says it** has led to blessing, even if that blessing is sometimes paying a very heavy price for identifying with Christ. Believers do not look back on following God's Word as a bad thing. There is no regret in obedience.

We come to our fellowship times and we are very thankful towards God and what He has done for us. And that is all well and good.

But if all that is really true, why are we so quick to forget what **God did in the past** when a **threat looms in the present**? Why are we so quick to scurry to find **human answers** to the things that God has handled **supernaturally** in the past? Why are we so dense? Why? Sin. That is why.

That is also why the word "remember" is one of the most used imperatives in the Bible.

Judea has Assyria knocking on their door. The threat is real and it appears imminent. Fear strikes the hearts of these people. And they fall back on the resources they really trust. Which is very much different from the resources **they say** they trust.

They were just like us. They would say that they trust God. They would make much of all the glorious and wonderful things that God did in their past. But when the wolf knocks at the door, their impulse is to find their brother pig with the strong brick house. They want to trust in human strength and human reason. Their theology was better than their walk.

God designs our lives to show us what is true about ourselves. He has to. Because none of us **know** or **would be willing to tell ourselves** what is **really true**. We have to see it to believe it. We would say, it isn't so. No, I would never do that. No, I would never be like that. No I could never think that. Our pride shields us from any accurate self assessment. But God isn't fooled. He knows what is true. And He will gradually, in His own perfect timing, show us the truth **about that which He wants us to know about ourselves**. Fortunately He doesn't do it all at once. That would undo us. And sometimes He graciously does not show us what even those around us know about us because there are other issues in us that are more important to Him than those. But God is using your life situations to show you what you are. He will show us what we **really** believe. He will show us what we **really** trust. He will show us where we **really** run for help. He is doing that in your life this morning. What do you think God is showing **you** about **you** today? Think about your life this week or this month or this season of your life. What pressures is He putting on your life? What stuff is spewing out? Is it good stuff or bad stuff?

There is no point in blaming the bad stuff on anyone else. If it is coming out, it is coming out of you. If it is bad stuff, this is an opportunity that God is providing. If you blame it on others, you are throwing away the glorious opportunity God is giving you.

What force is knocking on your door making you want to run to a human resource instead of to God? What temptation are you under that is making you want a human resolution rather than a spiritual one? This isn't a coincidence. This isn't a mistake. This is divine opportunity. Don't waste it. Don't lie about it. Don't blame the trouble you are having on someone else. Don't think there is no purpose. We all have our Egypts that we want to run to for help, for comfort, for relief. But God has a better plan. And He will work on His people until they pick it. That is what we will see this morning.

¹ **"Woe to the rebellious children," says the LORD, "Who take counsel, but not of Me, And who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, That they may add sin to sin;**

² **Who walk to go down to Egypt, And have not asked My advice, To strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, And to trust in the shadow of Egypt!**

³ **Therefore the strength of Pharaoh Shall be your shame, And trust in the shadow of Egypt Shall be *your* humiliation.**

What do you think when you see a rebellious child? Do any pleasant or admirable thoughts run through your brain? None go through mine. I usually consider things that might fix the attitude. But do you notice that it usually only the rebellious child who thinks the behavior is suitable? Everyone else around thinks the behavior should stop. But the child thinks the behavior is called for and appropriate.

Have you ever considered this when you react rebelliously against God? When you throw your tantrum, however it is that you might express it? It would be good for us to see that is **only us** who can't see how unfitting that attitude is and how much it needs to change.

Well God sees what His leaders are doing as a bunch of rebellious kids. And what are they doing?

First- they are taking counsel. The word for counsel is often used for the advice given by sages and astrologers. These leaders are looking to the best of the world for counsel. They are clinging to the words of the experts. How does that look today?

If you want to grow a church, how do you do it? You talk to skilled marketing people. Use their counsel to grow your numbers.

If you want to live a happy life, consult the world's experts and fill your life with all the things that are correlated to happiness.

If you want people to do what you want them to do, consult the experts who will tell you how to get what you want in the world of people.

That is the kind of thing Judea was doing. They were going by what the experts say about how you defend yourself against a greater power. Create an alliance with a competitive power.

Isn't this just being smart? Well, no. It is being rebellious.

So they are taking counsel. They are also devising plans. The word used for **devise plans** also has the meaning of **covering**. Many think that it is akin to wrapping one's self in a warm blanket. It is the process of finding for one's self comfort and security in the world's advice. How often this happens. How often we run after the world's devices to find for ourselves comfort and security, warmth and safety. Maybe it is in acquiring money or things. Maybe it is romantic relationships. It can be any number of things where we think we can meet **our** needs **our** way. And the world will tell us how to do it best. And we show, like a rebellious kid, that **we want what we want more than we want what God wants**.

Where are we doing this? Where do we feel that we have deep needs that need to be met, and by golly we are going to take care of meeting those needs. We are not going to wait for God for anything. Is there a place in your life like this? If so, today would be a very good day to repent of it.

It is interesting that these people are taking counsel and devising plans. Like I said earlier, they were probably also talking about God in very glowing terms. I learned a long time ago that my good intentions were often a ruse I could use in my own mind to cover my bad behavior. When I look at my good intentions I can imagine myself to have the best of reasons for what I do. But my behavior tells the truth in a second that my imagined intentions could never see. When I was a young man I dated young women. I never intended to hurt any of them, but hurt them I did. Why? Well I did not intend to hurt them emotionally, but I did not intend to not hurt them whatever the price. I did not intend them at a big price to myself. I did not intend to love them. Our good intentions just hide our selfish intentions. Our hearts are so very tricky. But our behaviors reveal the real us. These leaders were talking one way and acting another. God focusses, not on what they are saying but on what they are doing.

Notice verse 2 where it says, "They have not asked my advice". Why? They didn't want it. Look a little further down.

Isaiah 30:9-11

⁹ That this *is* a rebellious people, Lying children, Children *who* will not hear the law of the LORD; ¹⁰ Who say to the seers, "Do not see," And to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits. ¹¹ Get out of the way, Turn aside from the path, Cause the Holy One of Israel To cease from before us."

We are back to the rebellious lying children again. The problem is not that they want to hear from God so badly but they just can't get direction from God, or that they can't understand the direction. That is very rarely the problem. Look through the pages of scripture to find someone who just longs to know something from God, someone who is more than willing to do it if they just knew what it is. Look for someone like that that God does not move swiftly to provide what they need in order to obey Him. That is very very rare. The problem is rarely that God won't give us the resource we need to obey Him. It is rare that God won't move heaven and earth to get His word to the person who just wants to obey Him. Far more often we simply don't want the resource right now because it will interfere with our plans. We would prefer that God would be silent about this or that area of our lives so we can continue to enjoy them.

These people want God to shut up. They don't want to hear what God says. Because they have no intentions of doing what God says. If the truth were told, we all have had times in our lives where we wanted God to shut up. And we all have found a way to make that happen, even if it is to refuse to think about what He says, where we click in a mode that, for the time being, we are not going to care what God thinks. We will distance ourselves until we have done what we wanted to do. I know I am guilty of doing such a thing. I suspect I am not the only one.

What snout nosed brats we can be at times. When we say- "God, I don't want to hear about what **you want** right now. I want to hear something that helps me to avoid the person I really am and the things I am really doing."

That's what these leaders were doing. They wanted God to shut up so they could enjoy the path they had chosen.

³ Therefore the strength of Pharaoh Shall be your shame, And trust in the shadow of Egypt Shall be *your* humiliation.

The word for shame here means the feelings of guilt, disgrace, and embarrassment persons experience because of unfortunate acts or words committed.

Complete Word Study Dictionary, The - The Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament.

Oh what a wealth of application we have here. Have any of us had feelings of guilt, disgrace and embarrassment? I assume that is universal. And how often were they not **the direct result** of our attempts to get something in the world through our own means. Maybe we wanted to be impressive to the crowd we were speaking to and made a fool of ourselves. Maybe we did things to gain things we wanted so badly and paid a terrible price to do so. Maybe we did things to protect ourselves that now we just terribly regret. Maybe we used people. We are capable of doing so many **things trying to meet needs we think we can meet**

however we think of doing it. Shame, yes that is a good word to describe the outcome of so many of the plans we took into our own hands.

Then humiliation- This means embarrassment. When you were young did much embarrass you? I look back and I think **that I was so stupid** I was **too dumb** to be embarrassed. I look back and I am embarrassed about so much that I **did not have the sense to be embarrassed** of at the time. Ages 13 to 16 would rank very high in the embarrassment rating for me.

Well this dependence upon Egypt by Judea was going to be something the Judeans would be embarrassed of.

Why so? In verses 4-7 we are going to see how this wonderful, well thought through strategy by the experts was going to work out. Please read it for your yourself.

Egypt regards Judea as a peon, a nobody. They are just a people **to be used** and they aren't even all that useful. Have you ever powerfully wanted something from someone who treated you like a peon, like someone to be used? That is a very bad spot to be in. And that is where Judea is. They think **they need Egypt** far more than **Egypt thinks they need them**. So what is sure to happen? The peon will pay a far greater price in that relationship than the big shot will. We find that true in our personal relationships. We also find it true in countries.

Desperation in a relationship is a very dangerous thing. It causes you to pay prices you should not be willing to pay. It is good that we recognize that in ourselves. Those strong feelings of feeling like we need something and this person is the source of it should raise a red flag in our minds. Look out. There is danger here. The tides might carry me out from shore. Just like Egypt, often these sources really have nothing of value to offer us. So we should not be willing to pay anything for it.

The picture in verse 6 is very interesting. It is a lament, like a song, about the poor pack mules on their trip to Egypt. Earlier we saw an oracle concerning Babylon. It was very serious and solemn. Now we have an oracle about the poor mules carrying treasure to Egypt. It is as if the only things God pitied in this whole process were the donkeys and the camels. They were the only victims in this story. And not only do they need to carry all that weight. It is going to accomplish nothing. Nothing at all.

You talk about embarrassment. The Judeans paid a tremendous price for help that never came. I paid \$300 for an auto part that I never got. I was ripped off very adeptly by a career criminal. I was embarrassed. I bought insurance once and took out a loan to get it. It was a rip off. But that was not nearly as embarrassing as this transaction, paying so very much to receive nothing. The mules and camels were wore out carrying something that would gain no benefit for the people they carried it for.

Isn't that a picture of what happens so often when we try to impress those with power and influence and status and resources in our little worlds? Don't we find that we want something they have so bad that we will pay a terrible price in the hopes of getting something we want, and what we find at the end of the day is that we really don't get a single thing of value? Isn't that embarrassing? Some things never change.

The word Rahab-Hem-Shebeth is interesting. It means Rahab Do Nothing. The Judean leaders would appeal to Egypt as Egypt my Savior. God refers to them as Rahab Do Nothing.

Do we see the picture that is being painted here for us? The world does not have the solution to our problems. The world cannot meet our deepest needs. The world's resources cannot fix our greatest problems. Only God can. Only God can protect our lives. Only God can supply for our needs. Only God can grant rest and peace and hope and joy and protection. The world does not have that to offer. They pretend to sell those products all day long. Look at advertisements on tv. They are almost always selling more than their product. They are selling how their product can make you desirable, or safer, or more secure financially. They are often advertising that they will provide for you what only God can provide. The tired camels are hauling money to purchase all those products. But they don't work. They don't deliver. People in the 1920's were flying out of windows like pigeons when the stock market crashed. These people all thought the world was the answer. But their poor mules were doing a futile job. The world didn't deliver then and it never will. Moth and rust **does** destroy and they will **continue** to destroy as long as life goes on as it is.

Then we go on to verse 12

¹² Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel: "Because you despise this word, And trust in oppression and perversity, And rely on them, ¹³ Therefore this iniquity shall be to you Like a breach ready to fall, A bulge in a high wall, Whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant. ¹⁴ And He shall break it like the breaking of the potter's vessel, Which is broken in pieces; He shall not spare. So there shall not be found among its fragments A shard to take fire from the hearth, Or to take water from the cistern."

These leaders were not making a simple honest mistake. They wanted God to shut up. They wanted the prophets to lie to make them feel better. They did not want to face their guilt. God responds and tells them what the price tag of such a thing is. And it is more than simply a failure of their Egyptian savior to show up with troops.

But look at what these leaders **did trust**, instead of God and His word.

Oppression and perversity. Oppression is the friend of these rulers. They use their power to gain things for themselves at the price of the powerless. They

abuse their positions of authority. God hates that and we can tell how much He hates it by how many times He brings it up. God expects His leaders to serve those they lead. They are to be ministers. It has been a long time since Judea knew that kind of leadership.

And then the perversity is in their choosing crooked ways to accomplish their ends. Nothing is straightforward. Nothing is clearly described and delineated. The leadership is sneaking around making back office deals to carry out their political ends. Again, there is nothing new under the sun.

So, because these leaders trusted what **they could do** instead of **God**, God was going to show them what **He could do**. He would have rather shown off what He **could do FOR them**. If they don't want that, He will show what **He can do TO them**.

The walls are going to come crashing in. And when it is done it will be so complete that there won't be a useful piece left of what was broken. It would be like a pot that is broken so badly that none of the curved pieces will be left big enough to carry any water in.

The country will be useless when God is done with them. So not only did the plan to trust Egypt not help them, it really destroyed them. So much for the help of the experts.

¹⁵ For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." But you would not, ¹⁶ And you said, "No, for we will flee on horses"-- Therefore you shall flee! And, "We will ride on swift horses"-- Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift! ¹⁷ One thousand shall flee at the threat of one, At the threat of five you shall flee, Till you are left as a pole on top of a mountain And as a banner on a hill.

Isn't this the thing we have seen about God in every one of our lives? He always gives us a way back to Him. He gives us a way where we can receive His forgiveness. He gives us a way to come back into a restored relationship with Him. He always offers salvation to us. And oh that is so good. Because what we need is **not improvement**. What we need is not **better behavior**. What we need is not a **10 step plan to success**. What we need is **complete and utter salvation**. We need a **restoration**. We need a **miracle**. We need a changed heart. And that is what God offers His people.

But how does it come. How do we lean into what God is doing? How can we get with the program?

"In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

If we have ever found ourselves in a situation like the prodigal son, what is it that got us back into proper fellowship with God? Isn't it always a coming to our

senses and saying, my way is not working. What I am choosing is not getting me what I so desperately want and think I need. And it is distancing me from God. It is all backwards. It is all headed in a bad direction. I thought I was making an improvement to my life. I see now it is just the opposite. I am destroying my life. There has got to be something better than feeding the pigs. There has to be something better than this cycle of futility. I have to stop running. I am thinking wrong. I will stop today. I will stop running from God. I will turn around, face Him and run to Him.

That is what returning is. That is what repentance is. It is the realization that we are wrong and God is right. We agree with God at that point. And we make a move in His direction. And just like the prodigal son, when we make that move we will find that God **runs** in our direction. We cannot understand it. We know that we are just unlovely peons. The world has convinced us of that. **But God wants us.** He will move heaven and earth to provide whatever the repentant soul needs.

And rest. Oh how our souls need rest. And how we resist rest. Because the rest provided in God only comes through trust. And that trust requires relinquishment of our right to control our lives. We naturally prefer our own effort to rest, even if we are lazy. Because we do not want to trust God. That is why our lives are often so chaotic.

Jesus made no bones about it. He said this:

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸ **Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

²⁹ **Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.** ³⁰ **For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light."**

Do you see the quietness and confidence that Isaiah was talking about here? Do you want to stand in the greatest strength that can be found on planet earth? It will not come from trying hard. It will not come from wearing yourself trying to gain for yourself the world's resources. **In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."**

There is only one way to have the strength of God at our disposal. Judea could have had the God of the universe fighting **for** them. There would have been **no power on earth** that could have prevailed against the one true God. They could have had that. But they **would not trust**. They would not resort to the one thing that would have worked. They would not choose to **believe God** to the place that they could simply relax and be confident as they sat back and watched God do His stuff.

Isn't this a backward kingdom? How do you gain strength? Try harder. Get more desperate? No. Just the opposite. Do the things that display trust. Quit

worrying. Quit acting as if it all rests on your shoulders. Get quiet. Be still. And be confident in God. Choose your dependence to **only rest upon one thing**, not many. And let that one thing be the character of God. If you are going to obey, do it only **based on trust**. Trust that God is going to do this thing. And then work so that you can play a part in what He is going to accomplish.

That is exactly how we should work in evangelism. We don't have to change a single soul. We can't. So we might as well stop trying. We can, in quietness and confidence proclaim God's word. Then we have the strength of God's Holy Spirit doing the work God himself wants done.

What a wonderful position we have as Christians. All the heavy lifting is on Jesus part of the yoke. We just have to get with the program and trust and cooperate with what Jesus is doing. That is true spirituality. That is how we are to live.

Is it easy to do this. No. We make it look so very hard. Because it is easier to fret than to trust. Flesh will fret all day long rather than believe the promises of God. It is our default heart condition. Rebellion comes easier than submission. It seems stupid, but that is how we are.

Don't believe it? Look how the Judean rulers responded.

." But you would not,¹⁶ And you said, "No, for we will flee on horses"-- Therefore you shall flee! And, "We will ride on swift horses"-- Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift!¹⁷ One thousand *shall flee* at the threat of one, At the threat of five you shall flee, Till you are left as a pole on top of a mountain And as a banner on a hill.

Trust in God? Absolutely not. We are going to run away on fast horses. Does that look like the response of a rebellious child or what? We won't rest. No. We will run. And we will run faster than anyone. Isn't that so often our typical response? Aren't we doing this same exact thing when we worry? Trust? No I can't trust. I will worry myself sick before I trust in the promises of God.

Well, according to Isaiah our alternate strategies aren't going to be too successful. **God's horses are always faster than ours.**

And look at what happens when we will not fear God. When we won't fear God, we are left fearing just about anything and everything else. Our fear of God brings us peace and security and safety and rest. But if we will not fear God we will fear man's rejection, the world's catastrophes, our soul's safety, our life's enemies, and we can go on and on and on. And all that fear will result in our own destruction. **Our fear of God cannot help but save us. Our fear of anything else can't help but destroy us.** So, will we take Christ up on His deal?

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸ Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in

heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light."

Looks like a pretty good deal to me. Let's help each other submit to the terms of Christ and live in dependence upon Him instead of Egypt.