

**[Isa 3- 4:6 NKJV] 1 For behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, Takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah The stock and the store, The whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water; 2 The mighty man and the man of war, The judge and the prophet, And the diviner and the elder; 3 The captain of fifty and the honorable man, The counselor and the skillful artisan, And the expert enchanter. 4 "I will give children [to be] their princes, And babes shall rule over them. 5 The people will be oppressed, Every one by another and every one by his neighbor; The child will be insolent toward the elder, And the base toward the honorable." 6 When a man takes hold of his brother In the house of his father, [saying], "You have clothing; You be our ruler, And [let] these ruins [be] under your power," 7 In that day he will protest, saying, "I cannot cure [your] ills, For in my house [is] neither food nor clothing; Do not make me a ruler of the people." 8 For Jerusalem stumbled, And Judah is fallen, Because their tongue and their doings [Are] against the LORD, To provoke the eyes of His glory. 9 The look on their countenance witnesses against them, And they declare their sin as Sodom; They do not hide [it]. Woe to their soul! For they have brought evil upon themselves. 10 "Say to the righteous that [it shall be] well [with them], For they shall eat the fruit of their doings. 11 Woe to the wicked! [It shall be] ill [with him], For the reward of his hands shall be given him. 12 [As for] My people, children [are] their oppressors, And women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause [you] to err, And destroy the way of your paths." 13 The LORD stands up to plead, And stands to judge the people. 14 The LORD will enter into judgment With the elders of His people And His princes: "For you have eaten up the vineyard; The plunder of the poor [is] in your houses. 15 What do you mean by crushing My people And grinding the faces of the poor?" Says the Lord GOD of hosts. 16 Moreover the LORD says: "Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, And walk with outstretched necks And wanton eyes, Walking and mincing [as] they go, Making a jingling with their feet, 17 Therefore the Lord will strike with a scab The crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, And the LORD will uncover their secret parts." 18 In that day the Lord will take away the finery: The jingling anklets, the scarves, and the crescents; 19 The pendants, the bracelets, and the veils; 20 The headdresses, the leg ornaments, and the headbands; The perfume boxes, the charms, 21 and the rings; The nose jewels, 22 the festal apparel, and the mantles; The outer garments, the purses, 23 and the mirrors; The fine linen, the turbans, and the robes. 24 And so it shall be: Instead of a sweet smell there will be a stench; Instead of a sash, a rope; Instead of well-set hair, baldness; Instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth; And branding instead of beauty. 25 Your men shall fall by the sword, And your mighty in the war. 26 Her gates shall lament and mourn, And she [being] desolate shall sit on the ground.**

**Isaiah 4:1-6**

<sup>1</sup> And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, "We will

eat our own food and wear our own apparel; Only let us be called by your name, To take away our reproach." <sup>2</sup> In that day the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious; And the fruit of the earth *shall be* excellent and appealing For those of Israel who have escaped. <sup>3</sup> And it shall come to pass that *he who is left* in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy-- everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, <sup>5</sup> then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there *will be* a covering. <sup>6</sup> And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.

Losses that prepare for the gains

I want to start with a quote by CS Lewis

CS Lewis-

*Imagine yourself living in a house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what he is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is he up to? The explanation is that he is building quite a different house from the one you thought of—throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage; but he is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it himself.*

This morning we are going to look at what God does to a nation that is obstinate and proud. But what he does to this nation of His people is not a whole lot different than what He does in our lives. We will see him pruning off people in our text. In our lives he prunes out the **areas of our lives** of resistance and disobedience and self dependence.

Many of us came to Christ initially because we wanted something he offered us. For us who were raised in Christian families, many of us simply did not want to go to hell. That fear was the beginning of our wisdom and it led us in the right direction. Maybe we wanted our lives to have a meaning and purpose. Maybe we longed for love or forgiveness. Maybe we wanted help in our lives.

But who of us came to Christ because we wanted to die to ourselves and live to Christ? No. Most of us thought we could use God to make our lives better. And then the pruning starts. Then pieces of us are taken captive and hauled off, sometimes kicking and screaming. We find out what we thought was our first love really wasn't much love at all. It may have been emotionally charged, but it could not be counted on to obey when obedience threatened what we thought would make us happy.

So God begins the process of preparing us for eternity. Along with the things that look like blessings come blessings that look more like tortures than blessings. We begin to experience losses in our lives. And they are often losses that we don't welcome. They are losses of things we hold dear. In fact, we think **we must have those things** or our lives won't be worth living. Yet off they go, dragged off in chains and there isn't a thing we can do about it. Our thoughts about what God was going to do for us die in that dust pile. But it is just like CS Lewis says. It is there that we begin to see that **God has bigger and better plans in mind**. He isn't repairing a shack, He is preparing a mansion. His intent is not to create a happy lifetime. His intent is to create a **glorious eternity** with us in it. What we see is not that God will take away and then give us back what He took. He takes away and gives us something new, something He creates. Now there are a lot of losses required before we will be ready for that. The losses hurt. But in eternity we will thank God for them. We will see the plan. We will see that it was perfect for making us what He wanted us to be. And we will praise the wisdom that pulled such a thing together.

So- the losses that prepare for the gains.

**1 For behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, Takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah The stock and the store, The whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water;**

John Calvin said this:

**the clause that the words are found in means "God will take away every help and assistance by which you think that you are upheld, so that nothing whatever may be left to support you."**

Expositor's Bible Commentary, The - The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Volume 6: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel.

Look at what God is doing here. This wasn't figurative to these people. It was soon to be literal. The Babylonians were going to surround the city and starve them out. When that happened they would have nothing to keep them alive. They would need to rely upon God to get anything they needed.

The Lord is taking away *everything* that stabilizes the corporate life of Isaiah's generation: "*all* support of bread, and *all* support of water."

Sometimes the measures God must go to to really make a point in our lives are very extreme. In fact, if we didn't trust the nature of God we would deem them as cruel. He strikes at the things we feel we must have. Have you ever had God do that to you? Have you ever had him threaten something so central to your life that **you felt you wouldn't survive**? We have got to understand something. The souls of His people are so important to God that He will do anything to have us get the point. He will do anything that is needed to prepare us for what He has in mind for us.

We often make the process more severe than it has to be. But we need to understand, it isn't unlike God to threaten the very core of **the things we depend on** that **keep us** from depending upon Him. He will bring us to our knees if on our knees is where we need to be.

So God takes away the food and water. God takes away their sustenance.

Now what else does God take away?

In verses 2 and 3 we watch as God takes away good leadership. He took away their military leaders, their civil leaders, their teachers of morality and wisdom, men who were moral, men who could give good counsel, people we would go to for advice.

How often have we wished we could get rid of the people who tell us what to do? We don't want the government to interfere, we don't want leaders to interfere, men don't want bosses to tell them what to do. Wives don't want husbands to tell them what to do. Children don't want parents to tell them what to do. Well, what does God do when He wants to discipline us? He gives us our wish. He sees to it that the people he has **sat in place to lead us** are removed. He takes away the people who want to know what we are doing and why we are doing it. He takes away those who critically look at what we do and what we think. He takes away the nuisances to our happiness, at least that is how we sometimes see them.

Don't we often scorn that which God says He has given us for our good? Don't we often focus on the negative side of the authorities that God has placed over us? We look at the cost but we completely miss seeing the benefit.

In this case God had all the pillars of their society hauled off. Look at this.

Everything they needed for physical protection, for justice between people, for wisdom to lead their lives, for spiritual guidance, for truth. All of it is gone now. Not only don't they have food and water. They don't have anything left to build a society on.

And what does God give them in their place? Kids, and unqualified men, and women in the place of leadership. Let's look at the kids first. That is less likely to get stones thrown at our heads in this society of ours.

**4 "I will give children [to be] their princes, And babes shall rule over them. 5 The people will be oppressed, Every one by another and every one by his neighbor; The child will be insolent toward the elder, And the base toward the honorable."**

Remember what happened often when children took over as kings of the land? Or even young men. Remember how Solomon's son chose the advice of his foolish young friends over the wisdom of the aged counselors. Most young people are not qualified to rule much because they have **not lived long enough to learn enough**.

They haven't tasted the results of enough of their mistakes. They haven't seen enough lives falling apart from bad decision making. It isn't their fault. They simply can't be much wiser than their years allow. Now this doesn't mean that age equals wisdom. There are plenty of old fools. But there are no young sages.

Our culture worships youth. Old people have cosmetic surgery until their faces look like plastic with the desire of **clinging to that which gives them value**. But we, as a society are just stupid. Or maybe we can just see better than we can think. What Isaiah is picturing is a complete breakdown of society. Children rule and treat the elders with disrespect.

Then look what happens next in verses 6 and 7. Look at what their qualifications for leadership have been reduced to. The crowd grabs a man and tries to make him

a ruler **because he has clothes**. That is pretty bad when your only qualification for leadership is that your leader has a pair of pants. And then look at the person chosen. **He doesn't want to lead**. He basically says that he really doesn't have clothes or food. Jerusalem used to be full of splendor with lots of gold and beautiful robes. People fought to be the king. It was highly desirable. Now God has seen to it that the country is so bad that no one wants to be called leader. In 8-11 we see the core problem. What the people say and do. And what do they say and do? They say and do things against the Lord. They do things to provoke God. They know they will provoke Him before they do them. They are brazen in their sinfulness.

**9 The look on their countenance witnesses against them, And they declare their sin as Sodom; They do not hide [it]. Woe to their soul! For they have brought evil upon themselves.**

We have all seen people who all it took was a look on their faces to know what was in their hearts. Rebellion sometimes is so much a part of a person's life that it registers on their countenance. That is where Judah is now. They don't even try to hide their sin. It is bad in our lives when we sin and then try to hide it. It is far worse when we no longer even try to hide it, when we are no longer even ashamed of it.

I have been listening to a book on CD on the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He describes how Hitler shaped the Reich church of Germany into just another arm of the government. He eventually had all the so called pastors pledge their obedience to Hitler, to anything that he said. Many of the leaders mocked the belief in the Bible. They stated that Jesus was a refreshing infusion of Nordic blood. They weren't at all ashamed of their sin. They didn't even try to hide it. This is how Judah had become.

And Isaiah says Woe to the soul. They have brought their judgment upon themselves. They have invited the wrath of God, and they were sure to get it. And here it comes.

**12 [As for] My people, children [are] their oppressors, And women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause [you] to err, And destroy the way of your paths." 13 The LORD stands up to plead, And stands to judge the people. 14 The LORD will enter into judgment With the elders of His people And His princes: "For you have eaten up the vineyard; The plunder of the poor [is] in your houses. 15 What do you mean by crushing My people And grinding the faces of the poor?" Says the Lord GOD of hosts**

What a state these people are in. Children rule. Children oppress. Women rule. These are fighting words in our culture. But it can't be ignored. It is never a blessing in scripture when no qualified men are found to lead so women are chosen to do so. Does this mean that there are no women who can do a good job? I don't think that is the point. I think it is that manhood is to be used to provide protection and security. When men refuse to take that responsibility things will soon fall apart. That is true in our countries and in our families.

Now back to our text. Even the rulers Judah gets that are willing **to take the job** lead in wrong directions, bad directions.

So the Lord stands up to judge. When the Lord stands He is usually about to take action.

Now what is the problem that God is so upset about?

You have eaten up the vineyard, plundered the poor, crushed my people and ground the faces of the poor. Essentially the sin is that they have exploited the powerless. They have used power to serve themselves at the expense of those they were supposed to serve.

We really need to register this. If God gets **this upset** about **this sin**, we better do everything we can to make sure that it isn't found among us. Leaders are to be servants, just as Christ was. He saw himself expendable for the good of those He served. And He clearly taught us that this is what he expects from us.

Now, where do we have authority over anyone? The elders are to be the servants to this body of believers. Husbands are to be servants to their wives and children. Wives are to be servants to their children. Now think about this.

First, is there any way that we are not carrying out our obligation to those we are responsible for? Is there anything God tells us we are responsible to do for them that we are not doing?

Then second, what are the ways that we have laid the responsibilities that are ours on them to make our loads lighter. What work have we shifted to them that we should really be doing?

And last, what have we taken from them that **robs them** in order to **make us richer**? This isn't always straight forward. We can do this relationally, psychologically. We are very tricky. I would like to think that we would never oppress those who are under our care. But I have come to see that if it can be done, it is likely that we have done it in one form or fashion. We need to look at this hard. God really hates this stuff. If we are in any way underserving or exploiting those under our care, we would do well to make some changes.

Now let's look at verses 16-24

What we see here are the women in Judah acting in a way that they shouldn't act. The details here are not all that important. Every culture does this a bit differently. But what is clearly seen is that these women are doing is advertising their availability. They are flirting with something that should be reserved for their present or future husbands. They are making themselves as attractive sexually as they can to lure in some desired man. And they have picked up the tools of their culture that are most effective. And we notice the money they must have spent on all these tools of their trade. They have stolen from the poor in order to buy these trinkets of sin.

If ever there was an error to avoid, here is one. Women, be careful what you are advertising and why. Know your hearts. Don't assume that your motives are good. Question them before God. Always ask why you are choosing to wear what you wear. Ask why you are responding to men the way you are responding. We

are very very good at camouflaging our motives. It is so easy to lie to ourselves about why we do what we do.

Ask yourself this. Single women. Do I trust God to provide me with a husband of his choosing? Or do I feel that I should trust my wiles to provide me with what I want? Do I feel that it rests on my shoulders to impress him and to win him with my wiles?

Married women. Am I doing anything or wearing anything in hopes of impressing any man other than my husband sexually? When you are around other men, do you hope to get sexual strokes, sexual approval? Don't assume your motives are proper. Know it by examining them. Examine what you do and say and wear. The only thing that has changed between Isaiah's Judah and today are the name brand names. Women have always been tempted to trust their appeal instead of their God. One look at the internet and we know that nothing has changed in that regard. Know your heart. Guard it. If your husbands or fathers are uncomfortable with something you are doing or wearing, listen to them. Don't be defensive. Ask yourself the hard questions. It may save you from mistakes that last a lifetime. Then this text goes on to show us the hard reality. All of this allure can end very suddenly. Look at the women in this text. They go from all their finery and the thrill of the hunt to being destitute.

**Instead of a sweet smell there will be a stench; Instead of a sash, a rope; Instead of well-set hair, baldness; Instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth; And branding instead of beauty.**

In Isaiah's day this is going to happen suddenly. It will happen when Babylon raids Judah. In our day it may take more time. But having been a young man who is now close to 60 I can assure you it happens. Age is destined to take away your allure. Women who are 90 are very pretty, but only to those who love them for who they are and what they represent. Only to those who see past the skin and hair. Beauty is fleeting. Enjoy it, but don't depend upon it. It will never give you what your soul needs. Only God can do that.

Look at the fate of these women. These women who were at the top of their game. These women who thought they controlled their fate by their wiles.

**25 Your men shall fall by the sword, And your mighty in the war. 26 Her gates shall lament and mourn, And she [being] desolate shall sit on the ground.**

**4:<sup>1</sup> And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, "We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; Only let us be called by your name, To take away our reproach."**

At the end of the day, we are all subject to our circumstances as God provides them. We do not have nearly as much control as we would like to think. If we are in a good spot, it is not due to our excellent decision making as much as it is by the grace of God. There are a million circumstances that, had God allowed them to happen they would have destroyed us. They would have left us in a life of misery. If we are in a bad spot, we should learn what we can and trust God to have a purpose in our suffering.

Here we see these wanton women brought to their knees. Later in Israel's history, when Rome sacked Jerusalem in 70 AD the whole event was depicted by an image of woman sitting in the dust like verse 26 says.

A commentary made an interesting observation of our text. It said:  
**The desperation of these tragic women in [4:1](#) stands parallel with the desperate men of [3:6](#). A man takes hold of his brother in a pitiful attempt to escape social chaos, and women take hold of a man in a pitiful attempt to escape personal shame. Both images merge in [3:25, 26](#), where Isaiah describes a metaphorical lady, Jerusalem herself. God has taken away her "support and supply," with all her finery, and "empty, she shall sit on the ground" ([3:26](#)).**

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

And here are the women who had life by the tail now showing their true colors, their true desperation. They just desperately longed for someone to love them and take care of them and to give them validation for their pathetic selves. They wanted someone to take away their reproach. And look at the deal they cut. We are to assume that this is not a good deal, so young women look at this carefully. **"We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; Only let us be called by your name,**

I can't help but laugh when I read this. Young women now **fight for this position**. They think that anything different is an offense. They want to be married. But they want to maintain their self reliance. Being provided for by a man is offensive to them. And they think that is an honorable thing, a good thing. But here it is shown for what it is. It is settling for something less than it should be.

These women were foolish, but they were not as foolish as women in our culture. They at least knew that a man taking care of them is how it is supposed to be. They understood at least that their sexuality could be used in a transaction whereby a man was willing to commit his life to have this thing of great value. Marriage was an economic arrangement whereby access to her body won the lifetime commitment of a man to provide for her.

Women, please get this. Save yourself for the man who will take care of you. Look at marriage from God's point of view. Accept nothing else.

Now, in our text we have seen the failure of leadership. We have seen the failure of personal strategies. We have seen the failure of the society. We have seen the lack of the fear of God bear its terrible fruit. And we have seen the consequences these people experienced due to their sin. We have seen the losses.

But what was it all for? What is God going to accomplish through all this ugliness? Where are the gains we talked about when we started our look at this text?

<sup>2</sup> **In that day the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious; And the fruit of the earth *shall be* excellent and appealing For those of Israel who have escaped.** <sup>3</sup> **And it shall come to pass that *he who is* left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy--everyone who is recorded among the living in**



**Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, <sup>5</sup> then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there *will be* a covering. <sup>6</sup> And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.**

What we have here is a word picture of the blessing of God. This is what God allowed the suffering for. These people have gone through the fire and come out the other end refined. They are no longer dependent upon the things they used to depend upon. Their wealth is gone, their status is gone, their allure is gone. All that is left is them and their God. Look at this closely. These people don't have any of the things that their former selves would have said that they needed in order to be happy. No trinkets. No idols. No wealth. No splendor. Just God and the things they really need to live, water food and shelter. And what does it say about the people? It says <sup>3</sup> **And it shall come to pass that *he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy***

There it is. It is no secret, but lots of Christians act like it is. This is what God wants. He wants a people who are Holy. He wants a people who are weaned from this world and only want now what God wants for them. He wants a people who love Him and trust in Him to provide for them everything that they need. It isn't complicated at all. All the losses that the people of God experience are to accomplish this one all surpassing gain. To be longing for and prepared for the presence of God. To be Holy.

When we look at this whole text we must see a few things.

There are very serious consequences associated with sin. God put up with it for a long time, but it was always leading to the judgement he would finally dish out on Judah.

And we must see that there are people in that fray that are going to be changed. They are going to be rescued. But they will not be allowed to continue in the same state they were when they began. This brought to mind a good closing scripture.

### **Colossians 3:1-8**

**<sup>1</sup> If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. <sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ *who is our life* appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. <sup>5</sup> Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup> Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. <sup>8</sup> But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.**

Sing 409 Trust and Obey