



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 30-31

“Politics and Faith: or the Folly of Trusting in Horses and Chariots” TRANSCRIPT

[End of prayer]...and spiritually as we listen to the word. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] We have come to the 30th chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah or as one of my old teachers used to say the Prophecy of Isaiah and tonight we are going to try to cover the 30th and 31st chapters, and fortunately the theme of these two chapters is largely the same and the 31st goes over very much the same material that the 30th does. And there is one great theme that seems to pervade both of these chapters and that is of course the folly of trusting in men. The subject is “Politics and Faith, or the Folly of Trusting Horses and Chariots.”

Now let's for just a moment review the historical situation because it is essential to an understanding of the things that Isaiah is writing about in these chapters. Outside the land, Judah was threatened by the great empire of Assyria. The Assyrian king was warring with both Babylon seeking to subdue them because there had been rebellion as he came to the throne, and he also had an enemy to the south, the country of Egypt. Sennacherib was the great king of Assyria, and we are going to be reading a lot about Sennacherib or hearing a lot about him in the next chapters of the Prophecy of Isaiah. Inside the land, Judah now has as its king, Hezekiah.

Hezekiah was one of the great kings of Israel and I read Second Kings chapter 18 in verse 5 I think last time in which it is said concerning him he trusted in the Lord God of Israel so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. And I must confess as I did last time, I have had a little difficulty with that because I always thought that Hezekiah was not the king that David was or even that Solomon was, but we read here that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah. Perhaps the author of the kings refers to the kings of Judah alone, but at any rate he was a great king. Uzziah was greater as a conqueror, Solomon was greater in wisdom, David was greater in genius, and in the length, breadth and depth and height of human nature someone has said, but none trusted in the Lord God and followed Him as faithfully as did Hezekiah.

Hezekiah’s name means “God is might.” Hezekiah, by the way, he was the son of Ahaz, one of the worst kings that Judah ever had and he was the father of Manasseh, and if Ahaz was not the worst king that Judah ever had, Manasseh was. Now this is an interesting thing. He is either the son of the second worst king and the father of the worst or he is the son of the worst and the father of the second worst, and yet he himself is the best. Now you know there is a text in the proverbs that goes like this “train up a child in the way in which he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

And I think sometimes I am puzzled about that text in the light of the fact that Manasseh, that evil wicked king, was the son of Hezekiah, the great king. And the only way in which I can see that text as having a sense is the fact that near the end of Manasseh’s life after he had lived this wicked life, there was a form of reform in his life that some Bible teachers call conversion and if so, it may be one of the greatest illustrations of that text in all of human experience, because Manasseh was certainly a wicked king. I am sure that Hezekiah brought him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and perhaps that was the ultimate end of it.

But now Hezekiah has come to the throne following Ahaz and at the beginning of his reign, he was under the influence of the Egyptianizing party. Now you see I said that word tonight without any trouble at all, but let’s see what happens when I try to pronounce it again. Anyway the Egypt party was troubling the State of Judah. In other words, to put it in modern language, the State Department of Judah was not a really patriotic state department. They were having trouble with their state department in those days as we often have trouble with our State Department in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. They were going around saying something like this perhaps. Now we must be very careful how we trust Assyria because we don't want to upset them you know and so let’s be careful. Perhaps we ought to make some alliances with Egypt, and let’s not disturb Egypt because we are going to know them, and the idea of doing what was right, the idea of doing the will of God is utterly lost amid all of the patriotic maneuvering that the state department was engaged in.

In other words just as in our country, the State Department of Judah dwelt in Foggy Bottom. Now against this faithless politics and the resultant falsies, Isaiah was hurling his bold prophecies and if you don't think that Isaiah suffered for this, just become a prominent man and criticize the State Department. Just become a prominent man in the United States and criticize some of the policies of our government over the past few administrations, and quite a bit of invective will be hurled at you, but if you were to stand up in the midst of this country and were to say that the policies that we are following are the policies of Satan and not of God, well you can imagine that you would probably not be very popular in the United States.

In fact, the chances are you wouldn’t be popular with anybody in the United States whether conservative or liberal, and that was Isaiah's position. I think that one of the most unpopular men in all of Judah must have been the Prophet Isaiah. And there are evidences of it in this book that that was true. And Hezekiah is in the beginning of his reign under the influence of this Egypt party and Isaiah is attempting to lead him away

from that which he regards as an evidence of faithlessness in The Jehovah, the God of Judah.

One of my favorite characters in history is Hugh Latimer. Latimer as you remember was a martyr for the truth and he was a crusty kind of fellow and he didn’t mind saying what he thought and that’s why he ultimately was martyred in England with Ridley, but Hugh Latimer once said something he preached for the king and he said something in one of his sermons that offended the king, and the king said, “Hugh Latimer, come and apologize for what you have said,” and Latimer said I will. And so they appointed a day on which Latimer was to appear before the king and to apologize, and of course all the people in England were very happy that the king was bringing Hugh Latimer under his jurisdiction and was actually going to force him to apologize. And so the lords and others came from everywhere to hear Hugh Latimer apologize after all the things that he had said and everybody wanted to be there.

So it was packed. Latimer came in and he stood up to speak beginning his sermon by saying these words. Hugh Latimer, “Bethink thee, thou art in the presence of thine earthly king who can destroy the body, but bethink thee Hugh Latimer that thou art in the presence of the king of heaven and earth who can destroy both the body and soul in hellfire. O king curseth be thy crimes!” [Johnson laughs, laughter]

Well that’s the man of God who knows that he is in touch with the living God and he says what God tells him to say, and that is Isaiah. He was very unpopular but he said the things that needed to be said and later on, we are going to see that these words of Isaiah were the means of a conversion of Hezekiah to the following of the word of God. But now Isaiah in chapter 30 and chapter 31 is inveighing against the policy of leaning upon Egypt in their struggle with Assyria.

Now here we are coming to the fourth and fifth woes. Remember we have had five woes against the chosen people. Chapter 28 and Verse 1 we had a woe that was addressed to Ephraim. And then in chapter 29 Verse 1, we had a woe against the City of

Jerusalem under the name of Ariel or the hearth of God and then in chapter 30 and Verse 1, we have woe to the rebellious children. I should have given you one other in chapter 29 Verse 15 “Woe unto those who seek deeply to hide their counsel from the Lord” and here woe to the rebellious children saith the Lord, and chapter 31 the last of the five against the chosen “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help.”

So we are in the Book of Woes and Roman 1 in our outline the uselessness of the treaty with Egypt. Chapter 30 verse 1 through verse 14. Now up to this point Isaiah has hinted at the policy that he is attacking but he has not identified it specifically, but in chapter 30 he identifies this policy now as alliance with Egypt. That’s the thing that disturbs him that Judah, the theocratic people, should rely upon a human nation for protection from another human nation. It's a contradiction in terms. If you really trust God, are you going to rely upon Egypt? If you say that you are the chosen of God, are you going to lean on horses and chariots?

You know this has such a tremendous practical application in the Christian life. In every sphere of life, you believe in God, don't you? You put your trust in Jesus Christ and through him you have everlasting life. Well now do you know that if you’ve really put your trust in the God, who is the father of our Lord Jesus and He is the one who rules the heavens, then can you not trust Him in the daily affairs of life? Is it necessary for you to scheme and to struggle and to work? Why not rest in the faithfulness of God? Why not rely upon Him? Why be disturbed by worry and anxiety and wondering about the future? If you have really put your trust in the God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the true God, and you believe that through Him, you have everlasting life, you have entrusted yourself to Him for eternity, well is He not the God of eternity, the God of the hour also? So why must we lean upon Egypt?

Now in the local church, it's an amazing thing to me you know that we can stand behind the pulpit and we can proclaim salvation through the only true God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, His son, and we can say that this is the only God and this is the only

way of salvation and we trust in Him and then we beg the people for money. Why do we do that, why do we do that? We say we trust the Lord of heaven and earth and so we have a pledge system in our churches. I don't believe we do trust the Lord. I think we think that the church would go broke if we didn't beg, if we didn't have people pledge. You see this is something that touches all of our lives, our talking to theological students and it has tremendous application to them too.

It's amazing how our Christian institutions which stand for the truth and they do, many of them, but in the little practical everyday matters in the Christian life, they abandon the great principles upon which they trust and if you talk to them about it, you are just as much of an oddball as Isaiah was in his day. They don't even understand. Well now let's look at it. Isaiah says as he denounces international alliances, “Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord who take counsel, but not of me; and who cover with a covering.” Now if you have a marginal note, you will notice it says make an alliance; who make alliances but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin. All of our little schemings in order to accomplish what we think God ought to do for us, becomes sin added to sin.

Now just relax and trust in the God who is saving your soul for eternity. Why should you worry? Why should you be upset? Why should you make yourself miserable? If He can save you for eternity, He can surely save you for tomorrow. And so relax and rest. But Judah was not doing that. If you had come to the leaders in Judah, Hezekiah particularly, and if you had said Hezekiah do you believe in the true God, O I do believe in the true God. Do you believe that Jehovah is your God? O yes, Jehovah is our God. Is He the only true God? O yes, He is the only true God. Then Hezekiah why lean on Egypt? Notice the second verse “Who walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!” Now look at that expression in the strength of Pharaoh.

Now will you take your Bibles and turn with me to the sixth chapter of The Epistle to the Hebrews? In the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, this is what Paul says. Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord. Strengthen yourselves in the Lord and in the power of His might, put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Ephesians chapter 6, Verse 10 and Verse 11. What did I say? That’s all right. I am just still living in the past, yesterday. I am surprised you couldn’t find that. Ephesians chapter 6 verses 10 and 11. Just notice the contrast. They strengthened themselves in Pharaoh and they trusted in the shadow of Egypt instead of being strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. By the way, a shadow can help you in no way, can it? The shadow of Egypt.

Now he continues, “Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion.” God loves to do this you know. When we are not willing to trust Him, do you know what He does? He frequently makes the thing that we trust the means of our stumbling because it's the wrath of men to praise Him, and so when you scheme and when you maneuver and when you try to bring about in your own power the will of God, He will often use that very thing to be the thing to cause you to come to confusion. That’s what happens here. “Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. For his (that is the king of Judah) For his princes were at Zoan.” These are two places in Egypt and the Israelites had already had some secret negotiations. Some of Judah's CIA had already been down there, well some of the State Department had already been down there and it had been carrying on some negotiations.

It's like it is today you know. We discover two years later what we did two years ago when it's too late. Now we know what happened at Yalta. We didn’t know then. Now we know what happened in various times in our history. Then we did not know, but Isaiah knows they’ve been there. He says “For his (Hezekiah’s) princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes.” Now the text in verse 5 says they were all

ashamed. It should be in the future, and you should render that they shall be all ashamed of a people who could not profit them, or be an help or profit, but a shame, and also a reproach. In other words, the time is coming when Egypt instead of being a help to you is going to be a shame to you and the very fact that you have made this alliance with Egypt, that very fact is going to be the occasion of your confusion.

I think I could give you illustrations from my own life as well as from the lives of ones I have known who have tried to maneuver and scheme to bring about God’s will and in that very process, they fail. Now that is what he is saying here. When we study history, we discover that the twenty-fifth dynasty of Egypt was headed by a man named Shabaka. He ruled from 714 to 700 B.C. and Isaiah says he shall be no help. He shall be a shame. In fact if he were to put it in our language, he will say he’s a fink and by the way history says that’s really just about what he was too.

Now then in the sixth verse, he further speaks of the futility of international alliances. He says “the burden of the beasts of the south” -- now what he pictures here of course is an embassy that is on the way to Egypt with a lot of gifts for the Pharaoh of Egypt in order that they may get some privileges from Egypt. Foreign aid you might say. “The burden of the beasts of the south (or the Negev) into the land of trouble and anguish, from where come the young and old lion, the viper and the fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the humps of camels, to a people who shall not profit them. For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose, therefore have I cried concerning this, their strength is to sit still.”

Now what Isaiah means by this is that Judah is willing to pass through all of this peril and in those days it was peril. They had to pass through the land where we had the young and the old lions, the vipers and the fiery flying serpents in order that they might make an alliance with Egypt. They are willing to go through all of this peril in order to get some support from Egypt and it's all for nothing. And Isaiah I know he was



unpopular because in the last part of verse 7, he really ridicules them. He actually puts words in the Hebrew text which are like this. I am going to transliterate these words. Or may be I will just put the Hebrew up there just to impress you. This is really what it says. It says something like this. [Johnson writes on board]

Now this means literally *rahab* because in Hebrew you read from right to left this way. *Rahab*, they, because this is a term for the nation of Egypt and this is a noun or perhaps an infinitive, grammarians are not quite sure because the forms are the same, but it means something like this, “to sit still.” Now *rahab* is a word that means arrogance. It means bluster. It means braggadocio, and so really what Isaiah is saying is in Verse 7 “The Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose, therefore have I cried concerning this big mouth do nothing.” That’s right. [Laughter] That’s exactly what that means. This is what Isaiah is saying about Egypt. They are a big mouth but they won’t do you any good. They are arrogants, but they sit still.

Now Egypt remember was an old country at this time. It had a great history and the ancient world respected Egypt for its past and they knew it, and consequently Egypt made a lot of promises based on the dignity in which they were held in the ancient world, but they did not live up to them and that’s what Isaiah is referring to. They are just a big mouth do nothing. There is a lot of blustering inactivity as far as Egypt is concerned. Don’t you know this was popular in Jerusalem when Isaiah said this and in those days when you said something in Jerusalem, everybody in Judah knew it and Isaiah was well known and with the men, the state department down in Egypt, he is saying they are a big mouths do nothing. *Rahab baim shabeth* -- that’s the way it sounded. It sounds terrible, doesn’t it?

Now Verse 8 and here, he speaks about the people because you see in the final analysis, a country’s policy is the people’s policy. You see if in the United States, you are unhappy with Washington, it’s possible of course that you are genuinely unhappy and can do nothing about it, but you cannot say that of the country as a whole. You might be a

liberal, and a conservative in the office in Washington, and you can do nothing about it or as is probably more likely in this company, you might have a liberal in Washington and you are conservative and you can do nothing about it. You may try to do everything that you possibly can, but you just cannot influence Washington. You are just too small. You are like a speck of dust.

But you cannot say that of the country as a whole. The country as a whole elects its government and it is responsible for it, and of course this was even more true in Judah in those days. They were responsible for the policy of leaning upon Egypt and in the final analysis, it is the people whom Isaiah attacks too. Notice what he says in the eight verse. “Now go, write it before them on a tablet, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of the Lord.”

You see if they had risen up against this policy of the State Department and of Hezekiah which he was supporting at this time, then there would have been tremendous pressure upon the king and upon the State Department, and they might well have changed the policy, but the fact that they had not changed the policy was evidence of their own guilt. That’s what Isaiah is saying. And he said I want you to take this and I want you to write it on a tablet, note it in a book.

Now what is he talking about? Well actually he is talking about this statement. He has made it as a kind of epigram. Big mouth do nothing. Put it on a tablet, write it in a book so everybody in Judah will see it, just see that epigram. And I think in the modern day, he would say put it on posters. Put it on the telephone poles. Put it by the side of the road. Ladybird’s not in office any longer. Stick them up and let everybody see it ‘Big mouth do nothing.’ This is Isaiah’s advice.

Now you see the prophet was quite an important man in those days. So he says write it that is this epigram. I have just said write it in a book, write it on a tablet, note it in a book. And here it is by the way that it may be for time to come for ever and ever,

and we had been reading it down through the centuries ever since. I wonder if Isaiah knew that. Now then let's see what the people say.

Isaiah knows of course ultimately you see that their politics is based on their spirituality. I think it's possible for a man to have bad politics and good religion, using religion in the common sense for just a moment. It's possible for a man to be altogether wrong in his politics and altogether right in his relationship to the Lord, but generally speaking they are somewhat related. And of course the reason that they were leaning on Egypt was not because it was good statesmanship. The reason they were leaning on Egypt was because they were not willing to trust the Lord. That's why and so you see their false politics was grounded in false theology.

Now in the United States, we are not a theocratic nation. You cannot apply these things to the United States. You cannot say that our government's politics is bad because its theology is bad. Oh yes you could really in the ultimate sense but we are not a theocratic nation. We are not a Christian nation. We never had been a Christian nation. We have been a nation which has recognized the existence of God. We have been a theistic nation, but not a Christian nation. There is a difference between believing in God and believing in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Quite a bit of difference.

Now you see their theology was bad and because their theology was bad, their politics was bad. Now what were they doing theologically? Well listen. They were saying “who say to the seers, see not.” Now who were the seers? Well the seers were the prophets who had visions which they brought to the people in the name of Jehovah and what were they saying. Don't see. Don't bring us any of those visions you have been bringing us. We don't like them. And to the prophets “Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits.”

Now that isn't really what they were saying. They were not saying don't prophesy unto us right things. What they were saying was don't you prophesy unto us Isaiah but what he was prophesying was right. They said we don't like those things that you are

saying Isaiah and Isaiah interprets that as we want smooth things, we want deceitful things. You don't want the truth. Hezekiah was a man who outwardly would have honored God. He would never have said prophesy unto us deceits. He means don't tell us what you are telling us and Isaiah says if I don't tell you what I am telling you from the Lord, then you want me to prophesy to you things that are not the Lord; smooth things, deceits.

Now listen. That is just as modern as 1969. So what we stand enough open and we talk about the fact that men are lost outside of a knowledge of Jesus Christ and they say ah he is a fundamentalist. He is a prophet of doom. He is always talking about hellfire and damnation. Have you ever heard people say that? I hear someone say that at least once or twice a month and they are not talking about me because they don't listen to me, otherwise they would never say it of course, but they don't think I am that kind of person. And I have had them in conversation with me say you know he is one of those preachers that is always talking about hellfire and damnation. And after they have finished saying that, I say well you know I think that's true to the Bible. I get some interesting looks on faces when I say that you know, but that really is the truth and that's what they were saying. Don't see, don't prophesy unto us right things, and then the climax of it.

Notice the 11th verse. “Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.” Do you know what they are saying? They are really telling the Lord to get out of the way. Don't bother them. That's really what they mean. You talk about telling preachers what to preach. Now most of you are not preachers in this audience of course, but preachers get a lot of advice on what to say. I will never forget my first real experience with this.

I was preaching Sunday after Sunday in a church in which there was a kind of a division in the church. I think the majority wanted to hear the Bible, but there were some that were a little disturbed. One elder came to me and said Lewis, I am disturbed about

these people that are bringing in their Bibles. This was really an elder in an evangelical church. He said I am disturbed about these people who are bringing in their Bibles. He said they are bringing in notebooks and they are sitting down in the chairs and they are opening up these notebooks and Bibles, and they are taking notes and they are embarrassing other people who come in the congregation. So can you not give the kind of message that does not require the use of the Bible?

Now he did not for one moment mean that I should not preach the Bible. He wanted me to preach the Bible. He just didn’t want me to preach it in such a way that it would embarrass those who came in without a Bible and he didn’t like it, but the fact that the church was filling up with people who opened up the Bible with their notebook and were taking notes.

And then I had a wife of one of the elders come to me and give me some similar advice. Very nice, very gentle a person. It took her thirty minutes to get around to what she wanted to say. Thirty minutes of smooth things that she said to me until finally she got around to what she had been there for all along and that was to tell me not to preach the Bible, but to preach messages that contain the truth of the word, but don't open up the Scriptures and expound from them. Now this is the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This is the Christian church. This is in evangelical churches. So I think Isaiah I understand what you are talking about. “Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.”

Now what do you think God does with something like that? How do you think He reacts to that? Do you think He comes in and holds your hand and say now really you shouldn’t think that way? I know you are nice and kind and gentle and you don't really mean this, do you? Now listen to the words from the Lord. “Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel.” I love that you know. They say “Get out of my way Holy One of Israel wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because you despise this word, and

trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them; therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall.”

Now this iniquity is that embassy that went down to Egypt to make an alliance and in effect He says because you have told Me to get out of the way, I am going to give you just a little bit of advice by way of prophecy. That embassy that has made its way down to Egypt is going to be like a breach in a wall and you know it's just as if you and I were to look over here at the south wall of this auditorium and we should suddenly look up there and we should hear a crack and then the wall began to lean out like this, and I know Mr. Warden and the rest of you would jump up immediately and get out of this auditorium, wouldn't you because that wall would collapse on you.

That's what God is saying. That's precisely what He is saying here. “Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly in an instant. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd (Now a sherd was just a little piece of pottery) to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit.” In other words there is going to be such a destruction as a result of the fact that you have turned away from me that when you look around in the rubble afterwards, you cannot find a piece of pottery big enough to go over to a fire and take a few coals in it or dip up a little water out of the pool. It's a serious thing to despise the law of the Lord. It's a serious thing to pay no attention to the word of God. And for you who are Christians, it is a serious thing to not know the word of God so that you will not be led into trust in man instead of in Him.

Well we must hasten on. They wanted to dismiss him, but he will not be dismissed. You can be sure of that. Roman 2, the needlessness of the treaty with Egypt, chapter 30 verses 15 through 33. Now someone might have said to Isaiah well Isaiah give us an alternative and he gives us an alternative here. Here is one of the, I think one of the grandest of the Oracles of Isaiah and in essence it is as George Adam Smith said a

long time ago, it is not as he put it not alliances but that's B-U-T reliance. Not alliances, but reliance. Notice the 15th verse. “For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and in rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.”

What does he mean? Call those people back from Egypt immediately. Get them back in the city. Stop all of your alliances. Stop all of this state department negotiation and trust in the Lord Jehovah. In returning and in rest, shall be your salvation. Stop the schemings. Stop the maneuvering. Trust in God. That's salvation. In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. Reliance is not weakness, it is strength. Now you know Christians, one of the reasons that we have so much difficulty and so much misery is just because we won't learn that simple lesson right there. In quietness and in confidence is our strength. In returning and in rest is our salvation.

And so when the trials of life come, rest. When the troubles come, be confident in Him. When the perplexities of life are disturbing you and decisions are to be made that are significant and important and you don't know which way to turn, rest. And He will show you the decision to make. That's tremendously important. How are you saved? How did you become a Christian? That's very simple. You heard the preaching of the Cross. And you heard that Jesus Christ had taken all of your sins and what did you do? Join the church, be baptized, pray through, do good works, reform. No, all you did was say thank you Lord. You accepted that message. You believed it and God gave you new life. You became a new creature. You had personal experience with Jesus Christ. You became a Christian. You were born again. Everybody knows it. You were forgiven, justified, sanctified in the biblical sense. Son of God, child of God, priest of God, all because you believed.

Now in the Christian life, it's just as simple. The just shall live by faith and so the life of the Christian is life by faith. Jesus Christ is not on the cross, he is on the throne, and so you just trust him who is on the throne. That's all. It's not of works our salvation

lest any man should boast and it's not of works our sanctification lest anyone should boast. So Isaiah's word is of tremendous practical significance.

Look at Abraham and Hagar and Sarah. God gave Abraham a promise of Isaac, didn't he? A son. What did he do? He waited and he waited and he waited, and then Sarah got anxious and so did Abraham. And so what happened? They would try to fulfill the will of God. They would get Abraham a son by Hagar, the Egyptian handmaiden. Just a little scheming, just a little maneuvering. God promised a son. I am past the age of having a child, fast coming to it. Abraham said we better do something quick. Cannot wait. And so Ishmael is born and Ishmael is a problem from that time on and down through the centuries Ishmael has been a problem until finally the situation is hopeless and God does His impossible thing.

Now that is practical Christian living. Abraham had to learn the hard way. Judah is going to have to learn the hard way. And so are most of you if you haven't already learned the hard way, but that's the truth of God. And the word of God is given in order that you might not have to pass through those experiences of learning the hard way.

Now let's hasten on. I want to read the comfort of the remnant that is given in the following. So let's read beginning with verse 16. “But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee.” That's right. You said we are going to get on our horses and flee. Well you are going to flee alright but not the way you think. “We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall those who pursue you be swift. One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one; and at the rebuke of five Assyrians shall all of you flee till you be left like a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and like an ensign on an hill.”

And what's going to happen? Well the Lord is going to have to wait until you learn to wait. That's right. That's what He will do with us too by the way in our Christian life. He will just wait until we learn to wait. “Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of justice (He will not go contrary to His principles) blessed are



all they that wait for Him." Isn't that a wonderful text? You know when you get old and the body begins to decay and corrupt and trials come, struggles come, we have struggles when we are young. They are just different kinds. It's a wonderful thing to know that we have a God whose salvation is available to us if we will just wait on Him. Just believe Him.

And He is waiting to bless the church on the same principle. "For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; thou shalt weep no more. He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers." He is talking about the blessing that is to come in the future. "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." And I think that's one of the most wonderful pictures of obedience.

The picture that Isaiah uses is of a beast of burden and Judah is likened to the beast of burden, but now she is obedient. And the man who is, now I am not a farmer, I don't know how to put this in the right kind of language, but I just know that the man who is sitting on a wagon and who is responsible to direct the horses or the oxen is the one who does direct them and when the animals are obedient to the voice of the master, they go in the direction that he wishes them to go and that's what it means when it says thine ears shall hear a word behind thee saying when you are obedient, this is the way, walk ye in it, when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left. Obedience means the blessing of the guidance of God. "Ye shall defile also the covering of thy carved images of silver and the ornament of thy molten images of gold. Thou shalt cast them away as a unclean cloth; thou shalt say unto it, 'Get thee hence.'"

Well the remainder of this section is comfort for the remnant and then in the latter part of the chapter there is judgment upon Assyria. Before we close tonight, we have a couple of minutes. I want to say something about chapter 31 and this is roman 3, the

foolishness of the treaty with Egypt, chapter 31 verses 1 through 9. Now this is really chapter 30 in brief again. In fact, Luther says that the prophet repeats the same thing almost to boredom. I like Luther. He is always frank and says exactly what he felt. It seemed like boredom to him that he should go over the same material again. But here is the last of the woes and again it's on the inadequacy of Egypt's help. Listen to it. “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong.”

It's like the United States you know. By the way, I believe in having everything that we can possibly have in our arsenal. I don't like to inject much politics in the Prophecy of Isaiah, but it's very difficult not to say anything, but I am kind of glad we have a different Secretary of Defense. I hope he turns out to be what I would want him to be. I don't know whether he is or not. I am worrying about the President myself, but nevertheless I believe in having everything that we possibly can have by way of protection, but then we are not a theocratic nation remember.

In Judah's case, it was different and I know that as far as the United States is concerned, the greatest protection that we could ever have as a country is that we should turn to the true God. Chariots and horsemen are not really going to help us even though they are very strong, but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord. To look unto is to gaze unto with interest. It's like looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. And Isaiah said woe to those who are trusting in horses and chariots when you could put your eyes upon the Lord in heaven and trust in Him and have that security.

And what are they saying? Oh we got to be wise. We've got to use common sense. Have you ever heard people say that to you? I think there is a sense in which this is true you know that the work of faith is not irrational. It's just sometimes you do not see the rationality of it, but there are a lot of people who say it's not good business. Was it not good business? This is the word of God. It may or may not be in accord with

business. We must follow the word of God. But they will say it's not good common sense. It's foolishness, it's stupidity, it's irrational, it doesn't make sense and that's what they said to Isaiah. Isaiah listen, we are trusting in Jehovah. We are just trusting in those horses and chariots too. We think it's wise. It's good common sense Isaiah.

And notice what he says. Yet He also is wise. He also is wise. You are talking about wise policy. I want to remind you that He also is wise and I think that's the understatement of the Bible. He also is wise. He is as wise as Foggy Bottom. He is as wise as big mouth do nothing. What an understatement! He is the wisdom. He will bring evil. And will not call back His words, but will rise again against the house of the evil-doers and against the help of those who work iniquity. Now the Egyptians are men and not God and their horse is flesh and not spirit. They are weak and evanescent, but He is divine and permanent and powerful.

Now here is the principle of walking by the spirit. I wish I had another 45 minutes to talk about walking by the spirit. For that's the New Testament counterpart. You know we are told in the New Testament walk by the spirit. Remember that. Now to walk by the spirit is simply to look unto Jehovah in the affairs of life. Well our time is up. We want to make ourselves miserable so we won't do it. You manufacture your own misery by not trusting in Him. Well he talks about the adequacy of divine help and he likens God to a lion here. It's very interesting. He likens God to a lion who has his prey in his claws like this. You know you can just see a great big lion with an animal, a sheep, a lamb, and the lamb is not dead, but the lamb is in the claws of the giant lion and what do the shepherds do? Well they call out over the hills and they get far enough away so they are not in danger and they shout at the lion to scare the lion so that the lion will leave the prey.

Isaiah says He won't leave it. He won't be afraid of the Egyptians. He won't be afraid of all the ambassadors from Foggy Bottom, but He has His own in His mighty lion-like claws and He will preserve them, and Isaiah of course is talking about those who do

trust in Him and to them He is a lion. And then he says He is like a bird, a mother bird hovering over its nest for when the hawk comes, the mother bird flutters over the nest in order that the hawk when he looks down will not see the young in the nest and so Jehovah is like that. He flutters over us, passes over us, and protects us.

It's the word that was used in the Passover by the way. When I see the blood on the doorpost, I will pass over. That did not mean I will pass by and go into the next house. It meant that when I see the blood, I myself and all of my power will hover over the house of the one who put the blood on the doorpost so that the destroying angel cannot enter that house because the destroying angel does not have the power of God, and so He is wise and He is a lion who preserves us and He is a mother bird who loves us and protects and keeps us. Isn't it wonderful to trust in the Lord? Why should we trust in horses and chariots? Let's close the prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank thee for Thy word. May it speak to our hearts in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. For Jesus' sake. Amen.