

Sunday, September 2, 2023 am

A BED TOO SHORT & A COVER TOO NARROW

Isaiah 28:20

Have you ever tried to sleep in a bed that is too short, or perhaps in a situation where you have covers but they are not enough to keep you warm? When we sleep we want accommodations that are comfortable and adequate for our needs.

For the bed is too short to stretch out on, And the covering so narrow that one cannot wrap himself in it. (Isaiah 28:20). Isaiah was a prophet of God who witnessed the fall of Israel and the deliverance of Judah (at least temporarily). The book of Isaiah was a prophecy of judgment against Israel and Judah as well as the world around them. God's nation had been rebellious for centuries following idolatry and living evil and self-serving lives. Prophets were sent to warn them to repent and return to God or face His wrathful judgment. As he writes, he exposes their corruption and doom because of their refusal to repent. The people were corrupt, but so were the leaders.

Our text is in the midst of a condemnation of these leaders who had led the people astray from God. Interestingly, leading up to our text in vs. 16 we find a prophecy, *Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act hastily.* (Isaiah 28:16) Quoted in 1 Peter 2:6 it is a reference to Christ Jesus being a solid foundation that man can rely upon, and the ultimate deliverer from judgment. But sadly, He was rejected by many, as 1 Peter 2:7 quotes other OT passages where Jesus is this stone, but He was rejected by many, especially the Jews. Peter quotes from both Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14 which noted that the LORD would be a sanctuary to some, *"but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."*

Back to our text, while God would eventually provide Jesus as a deliverer, yet He was still going to judge Israel for their sins. Why? Because everything they had done was not enough. First, they had relied on the wrong sources (such as the armies of other nations or their own resources and armaments). Second, what little they had done in the name of the Lord was inadequate – because it was less than total obedience it was not enough. Therefore they would face the wrath of God.

It is this concept that I want to address in our lesson today – inadequacies. There are many today who profess to follow after God. They do much of what God commands them, but they fall short of complete obedience. Let us notice a few examples.

I. Thinking that morality alone will save

- a. We are living in a time when more and more believe they are in a right condition with God, even though they are not religious, or just nominally religious. They look at the things they do not do (steal, murder, lie, commit adultery, possibly drink or gamble, use profanity, etc.). They might appeal to the good works they do. They are moral people, especially when compared to the world. Some today make a distinction between being "spiritual" and religious". They might declare, I am spiritual (meanings vary, but usually it means "I am in touch with who I am and what I believe"), but not religious." But is that enough?
- b. Understand, if we are to be saved, we need to be living a moral life. And furthermore, we need to let God's word determine what that standard of morality is. Romans 1:16-17 notes that the gospel is God's power to be saved and within it "the righteousness of God" is revealed. Romans 6:13 describing our conduct of life notes that we are not to be instruments of unrighteousness, but instead presenting our members as instruments of righteousness. Romans 10:3 expressed Paul's concern for his erring Jewish brethren because they sought to establish their own righteousness and were thus rejected. NOTE: God's moral standard is righteous and it is PART of our righteous life.

- c. But we must also understand that we cannot earn our salvation, no matter what we do. Ephesians 2:8-9 clearly emphasizes this. Titus 3:4-6 also notes that is *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...”* NOTE: This does NOT mean that we do not have to do anything. More on that in a moment! But if morality alone or “being good” alone saves us, our salvation is very much meritorious.
- d. Acts 10:1-2 – consider also the example of Cornelius – He feared God, prayed, was benevolent and devout. But he was NOT saved until Peter came and told him what to do, and he obeyed. (Acts 10:47-48)
- e. The truth is, we are all sinners – Romans 3:23, and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Therefore, the only way to be saved, is to have our sins removed. John 14:6 – Jesus noted that He is the ONLY way to God. See also Acts 4:12. Ephesians 1:7 – we have redemption through His blood.
- f. To trust in morality or righteousness alone is insufficient!

II. **Thinking that all one has to do is believe to be saved**

- a. All you have to do is believe –
 - i. We hear quite often about “faith alone” being all man has to do to be saved. And while there are a number of passages that point to the importance of faith (and only mention faith), there is NO passage that teaches or implies “faith only” saves us.
 - ii. We have noted that “faith” or “believe” can be an all-inclusive term for man’s part. Ephesians 2:8-9 is an example of this. Acts 16:31-33 gives us an example of this as Paul teaches the Philippian jailer.
 - iii. Hebrews 5:8-9 notes that Jesus is the author of salvation to all who obey Him.
 - iv. Romans 6:17-18 – they “obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine...”
 - v. James 2:19ff declares that faith without works is dead. Our faith needs to act. Abraham is the perfect example of this. Notice also James 2:24 which clearly declares we are justified by works and NOT by faith only.
- b. God’s plan of salvation clearly teaches there are several actions we must take that lead to our salvation –
 - i. We must hear the gospel – Romans 10:17. Every account of conversion in the New Testament involved the gospel being taught to an individual.
 - ii. We must believe - Mark 16:16, Romans 10:9-10, John 8:24
 - iii. We must repent – Acts 2:38, 3:19, Luke 13:3, Acts 17:30-31
 - iv. We must confess Him – Romans 10:9-10, 1 Timothy 6:12
 - v. We must be baptized – Acts 2:38, 22:16, Romans 6:3-4, Mark 16:16, 1 Peter 3:21, etc.
- c. Which step of God’s plan of salvation can we leave out and still be saved? To leave out ANY step is to “short-sheet” yourself.

III. **Thinking the church is not necessary**

- a. There are many, even more so today, who have no problem accepting that they need Jesus to be saved, BUT they do not think that being part of the church is important.
- b. We have VERY recently addressed this. Be reminded that:
 - i. The church is the body of Christ and He is the head – Ephesians 1:22-23, Matthew 16:18
 - ii. The church was a part of God’s eternal plan – Ephesians 3:10-11 (this includes the local church)
 - iii. Acts 2:47 – the church is the body of the saved, Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, Ephesians 5:23
 - iv. There are acts of worship that are to only be fulfilled in the church – when we assemble together – Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, etc.
- c. When you study the importance of the church as described in the New Testament, you can see how to dismiss its importance is to “fall short” of the glory of God.

IV. Preaching MOST of the truth

- a. There are many who in their teaching cover most of what God's word says. But perhaps they teach or endorse error on some specific subject. Perhaps they teach without addressing a specific topic because it is a lightning rod. You do not even need to be teaching error to fail to preach the full gospel of Jesus. And there are churches that are silent on certain issues because of the troubles it might stir up. E.g., I have heard congregations when studying through Matthew 19 perform a quick "Passover" as they deal with MDR. They do not teach an erroneous view, but they are SILENT on what God's word actually says. Other churches have grown silent on the subject of discipline.
- b. But God expects us to declare the whole of His word. To leave out anything is to preach an insufficient gospel.
 - i. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 notes that "all scripture is inspired of God" and makes us complete. By implication, if we neglect a portion of His word, we are doctrinally incomplete.
 - ii. Revelation 22:18-19 – we find a warning to not add to or take away from His word. Specifically, John is dealing with Revelation, but the principle would apply to all of His word (cf. Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32).
 - iii. Jeremiah 26:1-2 – a prophet sent to Judah as they faced Babylonian captivity. The message of the LORD to him, *"Thus says the Lord: 'Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord's house, all the words that I command you to speak to them. Do not diminish a word.'*
 - iv. Isaiah 30:8-11 finds the LORD's judgment against Israel and Judah as they demanded that Isaiah and other prophets cease warning them of their impending doom. We read, *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: That this is a rebellious people, Lying children, Children who will not hear the law of the Lord; 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. Get out of the way, Turn aside from the path, Cause the Holy One of Israel To cease from before us."*
 - v. Corinth was rebuked because, among other things they failed to address the adulterous relationship in their midst (1 Corinthians 5:1-2). Pergamos (Revelation 2:12-15) was rebuked because they tolerated some practicing and holding to doctrinal error. Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-22) allowed false doctrine to be taught and practiced but did not refute it. All these were told to repent.
 - vi. 2 Timothy 4:2-4 finds Paul's admonition to Timothy to preach the word and ALL of it! Because a time was coming when men would not endure sound doctrine, but seek teachers who would "tickle their ears" telling them what they wanted to hear.
 - vii. Acts 20:26-27 – Paul speaking to the Ephesian elders made it clear that he had presented to them "the whole counsel of God."
 - viii. Galatians 1:6-9 finds Paul's disdain with a "different gospel". When we take away from God's word (or add to it for that matter) we are preaching a gospel that is INSUFFICIENT to save us and keep us saved.

V. Failing to live a godly life

- a. Matthew 23:23 – in His scathing rebuke of the corrupt Jewish leaders, Jesus said, *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone"*. A study of Jesus' interaction with these leaders throughout His ministry finds how they were very religious and did many things that the law taught. BUT, regularly they corrupted themselves by manipulating God's plain truths and living immoral and unjust lives. Jesus exposed some of that in this text.

- b. Many today may be very religious and devoutly faithful outwardly. They may read their Bibles regularly and attend all the services of the local church. They may pray and participate and put on a front, but inside they are corrupt engaging in immoral conduct.
- c. Consider what Jesus told the corrupt leaders in Matthew 23:24-28.
- d. This was a major failure of Israel and a cause that led to their spiritual downfall and captivity. Even in our text we find leaders, including the priests, engaged in drunkenness. Isaiah 28:7-9 finds their deplorable behavior that HINDERED them from teaching clearly (I contend both in word and example).
- e. The Christian life is to be one of purity and devotion. 2 Corinthians 7:1, *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*
- f. 1 Peter 2:11, *Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.*
- g. The Christian life needs to be one that is different. If we do not live clean and pure lives, we are insufficient.

VI. Putting off obedience

- a. Finally, there are many who know where they are and what they need to change in their lives. But they put it off, often intending to address it in the future.
- b. Acts 24:25 as Paul reasoned with Felix about righteousness, self-control and judgment, he was afraid and told Paul that he would call for him later. If he did, it is not recorded. Likely, it is implied that he did not obey – Acts 24:27, after 2 years when Festus assumes his position, Felix keeps Paul in prison (show little to no remorse about his lifestyle).
- c. 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 tells us, For He says: *“We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*
- d. Good intentions will be inadequate when we stand before God in judgment. We will not be able to say what we planned to do, when we kept putting it off to keep pursuing the ways of the world. Hebrews 9:27 warns us that we are going to die and after that the judgment.

And thus we can see that some ways that our plans are inadequate to prepare us for eternity. But, we have also seen that none of these matters cannot be addressed. The truth is, we can change whatever it is that is standing in our way of being right with God. What about you? Have you fully obeyed God, OR is your “bed too short”? Think about it!