

Isaiah 5:18-30
February 11, 2018

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

We are continuing our study of the specific SINS the Israelites committed. You will recall that Isaiah started with a song describing a vineyard that he prepared for them on a fertile hillside. He built a watchtower, cleared all the rocks and stones and cut out a winepress. He set them up to produce good fruit, but instead the vineyard (Israelites/God's chosen people) produced bad fruit. Last week we started looking at what SINS represented "bad fruit" and got through two of them.

Transition: Our goal today is to identify the other SINS that were committed that is bringing God's judgment on the. And while we go through this study, I want us to consider that **all of us CAN honor God BY avoiding the SINS that the Lord's covenant people committed.**

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.18:

- **Woe to those who draw sin along with cords of deceit, and wickedness as with cart ropes,**

V.19:

- **to those who say, "Let God hurry, let him hasten his work so we may see it. Let it approach, let the plan of the Holy One of Israel come, so we may know it."**

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.18: What are the SINS identified in this verse? [Deceit and Wickedness – It reinforces the doctrine of original sin that says we are sinners by nature AND by choice. This verse illustrates sinners "choosing" to blatantly sin.]

Q V.19: This verse can be a head-scratcher. What do you think this verse is really saying? [Isaiah is describing people who are bound by sin and yet speak flippantly of the Lord and His warnings. Or, perhaps they wanted God to deliver them even though they did not want to give up their sinful practices.]

Q: What's the problem with that? [Deliverance, both personal and national, does not work that way. A spiritual change must be made before God will save His people from destruction.]

Q: What is the "spiritual change" that needs to happen? [Repentance]

Transition: Let's look at more SINS. Someone read v.20-23

V.20:

- **Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.**

V.21:

- **Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.**

V.22:

- Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and champions at mixing drinks,
V.23:
- who acquit the guilty for a bribe, but deny justice to the innocent.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V. 20: What is the next SIN that you see? [perverting good and light to evil and darkness]

Q: Who defines what is good and what is evil? [God]

Q: What are some examples of perverting good based on prior passages in Isaiah? [See v.23 - Judges acquit the guilty for a bribe, but deny justice to the innocent.]

Q V. 21: What is the next SIN that you see? [Pride; self-sufficiency – the sin is seeing ourselves as wise rather than seeking God’s wisdom]

Observation: Pride is in the Lord’s list of things He considers “detestable.” Prov 3:5-6 says “Trust in the Lord *always*, and lean NOT on your own understanding, but in ALL your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

Q: How do you overcome self-sufficiency? [Let people engage]

Q V.22: We’ve already seen this SIN, but what do you think Isaiah means by “heroes at drinking wine?” [Continued drunkenness. They were more interested in cocktail parties than fair trials, and making money (bribes) than promoting justice.]

Q V.23: What is the next SIN that you see? [Judges who acquit the guilty for a bribe and deny justice for the innocent. Sin corrupts human court systems.]

Transition: Let’s see what the consequences are for these SINS. Let’s read v.24-30.

V.24:

- Therefore, as tongues of fire lick up straw and as dry grass sinks down in the flames, so their roots will decay and their flowers blow away like dust; for they have rejected the law of the Lord Almighty and spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel

V.25:

- Therefore the LORD’s anger burns against his people; his hand is raised and he strikes them down. The mountains shake, and the dead bodies are like refuse in the streets. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.

V.26:

- He lifts up a banner for the distant nations, he whistles for those at the ends of the earth. Here they come, swiftly and speedily!

V.27:

- Not one of them grows tired or stumbles, not one slumbers or sleeps; not a belt is loosened at the waist, not a sandal thong is broken.

V.28:

- Their arrows are sharp, all their bows are strung; their horses' hoofs seem like flint, their chariot wheels like a whirlwind.

V.29:

- Their roar is like that of the lion, they roar like young lions; they growl as they seize their prey and carry it off with no one to rescue.

V.30:

- In that day they will roar over it like the roaring of the sea. And if one looks at the land, he will see darkness and distress; even the light will be darkened by the clouds.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.24: What did the people reject? [They Law and God's Word]

Q V.25: How does God respond to people who disregard the Bible? [He will strike them down. There will be dead bodies in the streets looking like refuse]

Q V.26-30: God's judgment doesn't pass away quickly. What else will happen? [He would summon the Assyrian army from afar and use it to chasten His people (5:26–30). The Northern Kingdom of Israel would be destroyed, and Judah, the Southern Kingdom, would be devastated but eventually delivered, only to go into Captivity in Babylon a century later.]

LOOK:

God is always serious about sin, and especially those who profess to follow God. His covenant people blatantly disobeyed and perverted good to evil. Since they would not repent and accept His offer of pardon (1:18), then all He could do was send judgment. Let's evaluate our own heart and make sure that we are not engaging in similar sins.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Comforted* (pp. 26–28). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Carelessness (Isa. 5:18–19). Isaiah describes people who are bound by sin and yet speak flippantly of the Lord and His warnings. “They even mock the Holy One of Israel and dare the Lord to punish them” (v. 19, TLB). The name “Holy One of Israel” is used twenty-five times in Isaiah, but these sinners had no respect for that name. We have skeptical scoffers today who speak lightly of the Lord and think they will get away with it.

Deception (Isa. 5:20). Moral standards were destroyed by new definitions of sin (see Amos 5:7), people using God’s vocabulary but not His dictionary. Like today’s “doublespeak,” this kind of language made it easy to deceive people and avoid a guilty conscience. In today’s world, increased taxes are “revenue enhancements,” and poor people are “fiscal underachievers.” Medical malpractice is not the cause of a patient’s death; it’s “diagnostic misadventure of a high magnitude.” (See *DoubleSpeak* by William Lutz.) The *Jerusalem Bible* translation of Psalm 12:2 says it perfectly: “All they do is lie to one another, flattering lips, talk from a double heart.”

Pride (Isa. 5:21). Instead of listening to God, the leaders consulted with one another and made decisions based on their own wisdom. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:22; see 1 Cor. 1:18–25). “Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil” (Prov. 3:7, NKJV).

Injustice (Isa. 5:22–25). The judges who were supposed to enforce the law used their authority to free the guilty and punish the innocent. They were more interested in cocktail parties than fair trials, and making money (bribes) than promoting justice. Isaiah warned these corrupt politicians that the fire of God’s wrath was coming and would burn them up. They were like cut flowers that had no roots, beautiful for a time, but destined to die and turn to dust.

The phrase in verse 25 about God’s anger is repeated in 9:12, 17, and 21; and in 10:4. His hand was raised in judgment and would not come down until He had completed His work. He would summon the Assyrian army from afar and use it to chasten His people (5:26–30). The Northern Kingdom of Israel would be destroyed, and Judah, the Southern Kingdom, would be devastated but eventually delivered, only to go into Captivity in Babylon a century later. God was serious about the nation’s sins. If they would not repent and accept His offer of pardon (1:18), then all He could do was send judgment.

Martin, J. A. (1985). *Isaiah*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 1034–1036). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

d. Woe to the doubters of God (5:18–19)

5:18–19. Perhaps Isaiah referred here to people who were genuinely questioning whether God was in control of the nation. Though attached to **sin** and **wickedness** by **CORDS** and **ROPES** (i.e., deeply involved in sin) they wondered if God could save their nation. Apparently they wanted **God** to deliver them even though they did not want to give up their sinful practices. They wanted to **see** God act (**let Him hasten His work**) without any spiritual change on their part. However, deliverance, both personal and national, does not work that way. A spiritual change must be made before God will save His people from destruction.

e. Woe to those calling evil good (5:20)

5:20. Some people lead others astray by their perverted values. **Evil**-for example, adultery, idolatry, materialism, murder, and many other sins forbidden in the Scriptures-is often held up as being **good**. Those who say such things are under the threat (**woe**) of God's judgment.

f. Woe to conceited ones (5:21)

5:21. Thinking themselves **wise** and **clever**, some people were not relying on God's power to deliver the nation. They thought they could protect themselves.

g. Woe to the drunken bribe-takers (5:22–23)

5:22–23. Rather than being **heroes** and good government authorities, many leaders were known for their heavy **drinking**. They were ready to be bribed, not caring for the people they were ruling. They were more concerned for their own pleasure than for the rights of **the innocent**. Therefore *they* (those leaders) would be judged.

h. Further results of Judah's lifestyle (5:24–30)

Isaiah had already mentioned a number of the judgments to come on the people because of their sins (vv. 13–17). Now he spoke again of the consequences of disobeying the covenant stipulations.

5:24–25. These people Isaiah had been writing about would be burned like **straw** and **dry grass** and their **flowers** blown **away like dust**. This was because they had deliberately disobeyed God's Word (on **the LORD Almighty** see comments on 1:9; on **the Holy One of Israel** see comments on 1:4). Because of **the LORD'S anger** many would die **in the streets** of Jerusalem. **His** raised **hand** (cf. 14:27) suggests His executing punishment; **the mountains** shaking from an earthquake speaks of His awesome presence (cf. Ex. 19:18; 1 Kings 19:11; Jer. 4:24; Hab. 3:10).

5:26–30. When God's judgment would come on Judah, the **nations** of Egypt and Assyria (7:18), and later Babylon would respond as if God had raised **a banner** as a signal for war. Those nations would seemingly come from **the ends of the earth**, a phrase Isaiah used frequently to suggest people everywhere (5:26; 24:16; 40:28; 41:5, 9; 42:10; 43:6; 45:22; 48:20; 49:6; 52:10; 62:11). The soldiers, responding **speedily**, would be vigorous (5:27) and well armed. Their chariots would be fast (v. 28). Ferocious like **lions** (v. 29) they would completely devastate Judah (v. 30). They would cover Judah like **a sea** and blot out the sun like **the clouds**, a picture of **distress** and gloom.