

Isaiah 10:1-19
April 22, 2018

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: It's time to jump into a time capsule. When was the last time your father disciplined you? How old do you think you were? [Let people engage]

Q: When did you believe you were no longer under the authority of your father and became independent, making your own life choices without fear of your father's discipline?

Q: As adult children, do you ever consider whether you're honoring your earthly father? If yes, is there an example you can offer on how that looks?

Transition: I found myself pondering this because as Christians, there is not a stopping point in which we can ever declare that "I no longer have to worry about being disciplined by our heavenly father. As long as we are in a relationship with Him, He will discipline us out of love when we are disregarding Him in some way. As we go through today's lesson, I'd like for us to consider that all of us should honor God in our faith journey because none of us are immune from His judgment when we turn away from Him. Let's look for EXAMPLES of WHO he judges and the WAYS He will demonstrate His wrath with those who have an unrepentant heart. Let's start with the first four verses of Chapter 10. Let's begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.1:

- Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees,

V.2:

- to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless.

V.3:

- What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches?

V.4:

- Nothing will remain but to cringe among the captives or fall among the slain. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.1: WHO is the target of God's anger [Israel's leaders; more specifically, these leaders made unjust laws and issued oppressive decrees.]

Q V.2: Who was harmed by these unjust laws and oppressive decrees? [The poor ("feeble," "weak," "helpless"); the oppressed people; widows; and the fatherless]

Q: Why do you think God found these acts repulsive? [Because the Israelites were supposed to care for each other as members of God's people redeemed from Egyptian slavery.]

Q: What do the poor, the oppressed, the widowed, or fatherless have in common? [They were victims of the Israelite leaders who took advantage of their inability to defend their rights.]

Q V.3: HOW will the Lord choose to deal with these Israelite leaders? [God will bring about “disaster from afar (Assyria)"]

Q: And when this disaster strikes, what will NOT be available to them? [People to help them; nor will they have financial resources to help them.]

Q: What reaction are you having as you read “Where will you leave your riches?” [Let people engage. I have lived with the understanding that the Lord knows how to move around His resources to those who are faithful to Him. (Luke 16:10-11, “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches.”)]

Q V.4: What should these Israelites ultimately expect? [Nothing will remain; they will either cringe among the captives or die.]

Q: We also see a repeating refrain from last week’s lesson. What is it? [“Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.” This is the 3rd time we read it. We said last week that this repetition heightens the effect of God’s intense anger and underscores the certainty of continued judgment.]

Transition: So we just learned that the Israelite leaders were one of God’s target of anger and the commensurate judgments to come. Would someone read 10:5-19 to introduce us to God’s next targets of anger?

[Read 10:5-19]

V.5:

- “Woe to the Assyrian, the rod of my anger, in whose hand is the club of my wrath! (God can use our enemy as a source of discipline.)

V.6:

- I send him against a godless nation, I dispatch him against a people who anger me, to seize loot and snatch plunder, and to trample them down like mud in the streets.

V.7:

- But this is not what he intends, this is not what he has in mind; his purpose is to destroy, to put an end to many nations.

V.8:

- ‘Are not my commanders all kings?’ he says.

V.9:

- ‘Has not Calno fared like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad, and Samaria like Damascus?’

V.10:

- As my hand seized the kingdoms of the idols, kingdoms whose images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria—

V.11:

- shall I not deal with Jerusalem and her images as I dealt with Samaria and her idols?””

V.12:

- When the Lord has finished all his work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, he will say, “I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes.

V.13:

- For he (Assyrian king) says: “***By the strength of my hand I have done this, and by my wisdom, because I have understanding.*** I removed the boundaries of nations, I plundered their treasures; like a mighty one I subdued their kings.

V.14:

- As one reaches into a nest, so my hand reached for the wealth of the nations; as men gather abandoned eggs, so I gathered all the countries; not one flapped a wing, or opened its mouth to chirp.””

V.15:

- Does the ax raise itself above him who swings it, or the saw boast against him who uses it? As if a rod were to wield him who lifts it up, or a club brandish him who is not wood!

V.16:

- Therefore, the Lord, the LORD Almighty, will send a wasting disease upon his sturdy warriors; under his pomp a fire will be kindled like a blazing flame.

V.17:

- The Light of Israel will become a fire, their Holy One a flame; in a single day it will burn and consume his thorns and his briers.

V.18:

- The splendor of his forests and fertile fields it will completely destroy, as when a sick man wastes away.

V.19:

- And the remaining trees of his forests will be so few that a child could write them down.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.5: WHO is God’s next target of wrath? [Assyria]

Q: How is God using Assyria? [Assyria is the rod of His anger, His club of wrath.]

Observation: We processed this last week, but we observed that God can use our enemies to discipline us. The sovereign God uses wicked nations and people to discipline and judge His disobedient people.

Q V.6: WHO is God targeting with Assyria as His “rod of anger?” [The Israelites, a “godless nation,” a “people who anger me.”]

Q: WHAT judgments are coming? [Their resources will be looted and snatched, the people will be trampled down like mud in the streets.]

Transition: Though Assyria was a tool in God’s hands, he clearly was NOT pleased with Assyria. Let’s see if we can pick up on why God wasn’t pleased in verses 7-11.

Q V.7: What was the king of Assyria's mindset? [He was about destroying and putting an end to many nations.]

Q V.8-11: Why were the Assyrians so confident about their ability to destroy and end all nations? [They present a "resume" of sorts: their conquests included the Aramean cities of Calno, Carchemish, Hamath, Damascus, and Samaria. Consequently, they thought they could easily take Jerusalem – especially in light of v.10]

Q V.12: What attitude brings God's judgment? [Pride and haughtiness]

Q V.13-14: What belief does Assyria have of all of their conquests? [It's all about them. It's me, me, me. "By the strength of my hand I have done this, and by my wisdom, because I have understanding." They were pretty high on themselves. They could take wealth from other countries as easily as one could reach into a nest and take eggs.]

Transition: The Lord is not pleased with the Assyrians pride and attitude. Let's look at the WAYS the Lord will judge them in verses 15-19.

Q V.15: Because the Lord used Assyria as His "rod of anger," He poses rhetorical questions to make a major point. What is it? [The instrument (Assyria – the rod) is not above the one who uses it. Therefore, Assyria, though used by God, was not above Him. Said differently, no person has a right to boast, for God is always in sovereign control.]

Q V.16-19: What are the WAYS he will judge Assyria? [He will send a wasting disease on sturdy warriors; He will destroy the land by fire.]

Q: What analogies does he use to help us picture these two judgments? [The Holy One will be a fire and consume in one day all the thorns and briars; the splendor of forests and fertile fields will be completely destroyed like a sick man wasting away; the destruction will be so devastating that even a child will be able to count the number of trees remaining.]

LOOK:

God's loving purpose in chastening is that we yield to Him; but if we harden our hearts, then chastening becomes judgment (See Heb 12:1-11). He always disciplines in love. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb 10:31)

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Comforted* (pp. 39-40). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

In 10:1–4, Isaiah denounced Ephraim for its *injustice*, especially toward the poor, the widows, and the orphans. Unjust laws and oppressive decrees robbed these people both of their meager possessions and their God-given rights (Deut. 15:7–8; 24:17–18). The prophet's three questions in Isaiah 10:3 ought to be pondered by every person who wants to be ready when the Lord comes.

If God cannot bring us to repentance through His Word, then He must lift His hand and chasten us. If we do not submit to His chastening, then He must stretch out His hand and judge us. God is long-suffering, but we dare not tempt Him by our careless or calloused attitude. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).

The Lord will judge the enemy (Isa. 10:5–34). "Woe to the Assyrian!" is the way this section begins (see NIV). Though God used Assyria to chasten Judah, He would not permit His "tool" to exalt itself in pride. Assyria was His rod, club, axe, and saw (10:5, 15, 24); but they treated the Jews like mud in the streets (v. 6) and plundered the land like a farmer gathering eggs (v. 14). God's purpose was to discipline, but the Assyrians were out to destroy (v. 7). They boasted of their conquests (vv. 8–14; see 37:10–13) but did not give glory to God.

Because of their arrogant attitude, God would judge Assyria, for the worker certainly has mastery over His tools! Like a wasting disease and a blazing forest fire, God's wrath would come to this proud nation and its army. He would cut them down like trees in the forest (10:33–34). In the days of Hezekiah, God wiped out 185,000 of the Assyrian soldiers (37:36–37); and the great Assyrian Empire ultimately fell to Babylon in 609 B.C.

In spite of Assyria's conquest of the Northern Kingdom and its intention to destroy Judah, God would save a remnant so that "the twelve tribes" would not be annihilated (Acts 26:7; James 1:1; Rev. 21:12). "The remnant shall return" (Isa. 10:21) is the translation of the name of Isaiah's older son, Shear-jashub.

In verses 28–32, Isaiah traces the advance of the Assyrian army as it invaded Judah and marched toward Jerusalem. But God's word to the people was, "O My people that dwell in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian!" (v. 24) Isaiah gave the same message to King Hezekiah when the Assyrian army surrounded Jerusalem in 701 B.C. (37:1–7). God used Assyria to discipline His people, but He would not permit this godless nation to go beyond His purposes. God may use unbelievers to accomplish His will in the lives of His people, but He is always in control. We need never fear the disciplining hand of God, for He always disciplines in love (Heb. 12:1–11).

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. 1054–1056). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

d. Woe to unjust people (10:1–4)

10:1–4. The corrupt leaders in Israel were perverting the cause of justice and righteousness, in contrast with the Messiah's justice and righteousness (9:6–7). So Isaiah pronounced **woe** (see comments on 3:9) on those people. The readers should have realized that this woe would befall them if they followed their leaders' wicked ways. Israel's leaders were guilty of six things: They were (a) making **unjust laws** and (b) issuing **oppressive decrees**. These actions were repulsive because the Israelites were supposed to care for each other as members of God's people redeemed from Egyptian slavery by their God. Also they were (c) depriving **the poor** (*dal*, "feeble, weak,

helpless”) **of their rights**, (d) taking away **justice**, (e) hurting **widows**, and (f) **robbing the fatherless**. These actions, which involved taking advantage of people who could not defend their rights, violated God’s Law (Ex. 22:22; 23:6; Deut. 15:7–8; 24:17–18; cf. Isa. 1:17). Because of this behavior, the nation would go into captivity (10:3–4). In **disaster ... from afar** (i.e., from Assyria) no one would **help** them, as they had refused to help those in need. In **anger** God’s judgment would fall (see comments on 9:12).

4. ASSYRIA’S FALL AND THE GREAT KINGDOM’S RISE (10:5–12:6)

In this section Isaiah again contrasted two kingdoms: the Assyrian Empire and God’s millennial kingdom. Assyria would fall because it dared to defeat God’s People. Even though God used the Assyrian Empire to punish Israel, He did not like the attitude Assyria displayed. (Isaiah picked up that theme again in chaps. 13–23.) God’s glorious empire will come after the fall of Assyria though not immediately afterward. Isaiah was merely contrasting the two.

a. The fall of the Assyrian Empire (10:5–34)

(1) Assyria’s fulfilling of God’s will (10:5–11). Isaiah described Assyria’s mission (vv. 5–6) and her motives (vv. 7–11).

10:5–6. God had commissioned Assyria to chasten Israel as **the rod of His anger** and **the club of His wrath**. Because Israel was **godless** and had angered God with her sin, Assyria would **plunder** her cities and ruthlessly **trample** her people. God often uses unlikely instruments to accomplish His purposes in the world (cf. His using Babylon against Judah, which puzzled Habakkuk, Hab. 1:6–17). Isaiah was not claiming that Assyria was godly or that the empire even knew that God was using it to do His bidding. In His sovereignty He directed Assyria to be His tool for vengeance.

10:7–11. Though Assyria was a tool in God’s hands (vv. 5–6) God was **not** pleased with her. She had the wrong attitude in conquering Israel. Discounting the greatness of Israel’s God, Assyria assumed that Israel and Judah were like any other nation. Assyria had conquered the Aramean cities of **Calno** (the same as Calneh, Amos 6:2), **Carchemish ... Hamath ... Arpad, Damascus**, and Israel’s capital **Samaria**. So Assyria thought she could easily take **Jerusalem**. Since these other conquered cities had greater gods, in the minds of the Assyrians, than did Jerusalem, that city could be taken more easily (cf. the Assyrians’ similar boasting in Isa. 36:19–20; 37:12). Though God was using Assyria, her motives were purely political and expansionist.

(2) Assyria’s punishment (10:12–19).

10:12–14. After using Assyria to punish **Jerusalem**, God would then **punish Assyria** because of the king’s **willful pride** evidenced by his **haughty look** (cf. Pss. 18:27; 101:5; Prov. 6:17; 30:13). The words of the Assyrian **king** in Isaiah 10:13–14 express the empire’s haughty pride. The king felt that what had been achieved had been done by his **strength** and **wisdom** (six times he said **I** and three times **my**). He took other nations and their wealth as easily as a person takes **eggs** from a **nest**. No one was able to oppose his military might.

10:15–19. Because of Assyria’s pride, the Lord said He would judge the king of Assyria and his empire. The instrument (**ax** or **rod** or **club**; cf. vv. 5, 24) is not above the one **who uses it**. Therefore Assyria, though used by God, was not above Him. **The LORD** said He would destroy the Assyrian army by **disease** and **fire**. God would destroy Assyria’s soldiers like trees (cf. v. 33–34) consumed by a forest fire. **The remaining trees** (soldiers) would be so few that even **a child could** count them. In 701 B.C. 185,000 Assyrian soldiers surrounding Jerusalem were killed

(37:36–37). Then in 609 B.C. the Assyrian Empire fell to Babylon. The fall of the Assyrian Empire is a prototype of the fall of all who oppose God and His plans for His covenant people.

(3) The remnant of Israel.

10:20–23. In spite of judgment on **Israel**, a **remnant** will return to the land and trust in (**rely on**) **the LORD** (not on Assyria; cf. Hosea 5:13; 7:11; 8:9). **In that day** often refers to the last days when the Lord will punish the wicked and set up His righteous kingdom (cf. Isa. 4:2). However, here it seems to refer to the more immediate judgment on the Northern Kingdom by Assyria (cf. 10:27) and the return of a remnant from that empire. Though Israel had many people **like ... sand** (cf. Gen. 22:17; 32:12; 2 Sam. 17:11), **only a few** would **return**. **Destruction**, though **overwhelming**, would be fair (**righteous**) and would be on **the whole land** (the Northern Kingdom).

(4) Assyria's yoke to be lifted.

10:24–27. Isaiah then assured his readers that the Assyrian burden would be removed from Judah. They need **not be afraid of the Assyrians**. After God had used them to accomplish His purpose against Israel, He would turn His **anger against** Assyria and punish her (cf. 37:36–37). This would be like His destruction of the Midianites by Gideon (Jud. 7:1–24; cf. Isa. 9:4) and the two Midianite leaders **at the rock of Oreb** (Jud. 7:25). God would destroy Assyria (figuratively called **the waters**; cf. Isa. 8:7) **as He** destroyed **Egypt**. God promised to **lift** the Assyrian **burden** and **yoke from** Judah (cf. 9:4).

(5) Assyria's defeat (10:28–34).

10:28–32. The route the Assyrian invaders would take in trying to defeat Judah in 701 B.C. was from the northern boundary of Judah at **Aiath** (another name for Ai), about eight miles north of **Jerusalem**, southward to **Nob**, about two miles north of Jerusalem. The sites of 8 of the 12 towns are known (all except **Gallim ... Laishah ... Madmenah**, and **Gebim**).

10:33–34. Assyria would not succeed in its plan to take Jerusalem. **The LORD Almighty** is the One who cuts down **the lofty trees** (the Assyrian soldiers and leaders; cf. v. 18). Isaiah had already reminded the people that they need not worry about the Assyrian aggression because He was on their side (vv. 24–27). Even **Lebanon**, known for its thick **forests** of cedar trees, would fall before God. Certainly, then, Assyria should not think it could escape.

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (p. 1007). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

10:5–7 The Lord summoned the Assyrians to perform His work of judgment against Judah during the Syro-Ephraimite War, while at the same time proclaiming His “woe” upon the northern enemy, whom He will punish for its arrogant acts (v. 12) in despoiling Judah. God appointed Assyria to a specific task, but that nation failed to follow His plan (v. 7), became proud (vv. 8–14), and boasted about its false gods (v. 10). Therefore, even the instrument of the Lord's judgment came under that judgment.