

**What Keeps us from Walking in God's Way?  
Isaiah 30:1-21**

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**Introduction to Text:** Our Vacation Bible School students and teachers should recognize our text this morning. It was the theme verse for this year's Bible School. I want to begin with this one verse, set the stage a little bit for the context of this verse, and reach back to the beginning of chapter 30 to show you what God says leading up to this verse.

**Text:** and whenever you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear this command behind you: "This is the way. Walk in it."

**Introduction:** Isaiah 1:1 indicates that Isaiah preached these prophetic messages contained in the book during the reigns of Uzziah (also called Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Second Kings 15-20 gives us a reference point for the time of Isaiah's prophecy. The years covered are 740 B.C. to at least 701 B.C. Some would say that there is evidence that Isaiah's prophetic ministry lasted until nearly 680 B.C. We must remind ourselves that this time frame puts us in the midst of the divided kingdom (Israel in the North, Judah in the South). In fact, even though Isaiah's prophecy is focused on Judah in the South, the fall of the Northern kingdom would have happened during his ministry.

"Judah faces extinction at the hands of the cruel Assyrians. In this crucial hour of national emergency, God sends Isaiah—a unique man with an unpleasant message. The nation of Judah is rotten to the core and ripe for judgment. Her habitual sins of idolatry, hypocrisy, injustice and corruption have not escaped the notice of her holy God. His righteous wrath will soon fall upon king and commoner alike, that all might learn that the Lord Almighty cannot and will not be mocked."<sup>1</sup>

That background sort of sounds something like the time in which we live. That is exactly what makes Isaiah as well as all of the prophets of the Old Testament so applicable to us.

I had the occasion earlier this summer to do something that it has been awhile since I have done—ride some roller-coasters. I am not what you would call a roller-coaster enthusiast. I was thinking how for a lot of people, riding a roller-coaster is an interesting sociological experiment. First, you have the wait and the reading of warning signs as you wait. Then, finally, it is your turn. For me, there is that moment when I am asking myself, "Is this a good idea?" But, then you reach another phase in the experiment. You come eventually to that place where you are committed. You are buckled in and it starts. And, then it is too late. And, at some point, I usually reach the point where I am thinking "This was not a good idea!" And, finally, I come to that place where I am saying, "Make it stop!"

I wonder if that is where we are as a nation. What will it take to say "Make it stop!"

Here's the message of Isaiah 30:21!

**God always reveals His way, but He always gives us a choice whether to follow His way.**

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<sup>1</sup> *The Daily Walk Bible*, p. 809.

I have no reservation in saying that God has revealed His way to our generation. I have no reservation in saying that God has revealed His way to America. God has revealed Himself to us through His son. In fact the writer of Hebrews begins his letter by saying, “Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. <sup>2</sup> In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son.” God has also spoken to us through His revealed word—the Bible. When you think of it, we live in a glorious era. We have both the Word made flesh as John called Jesus and we have the Living Word of God—the Bible.

But, I have no reservation in saying that even though God has revealed His way, many have chosen not to follow His way. Like Israel, the result of this departure from God’s way has been disastrous for us, is disastrous for us, and will continue to be disastrous for us. We are in desperate need of a revival in America that will tilt us back toward God and His ways.

So, what keeps us from following God’s ways? As we reach back into chapter 30 and see God’s indictment against Judah, we see what keeps us from His way. The very things that kept them from following His ways are the very things that keep us from following His ways.

### **What keeps us from walking in God’s way?**

**We decide that we know better.**

Now, that is interesting and arrogant. How could we ever think that we know better than God? But, that is what we read in the text. Look with me at Isaiah 30:1-8

Woe to the rebellious children!

This is the LORD’s declaration.

They carry out a plan, but not Mine;

they make an alliance,

but against My will,

piling sin on top of sin.

<sup>2</sup>They set out to go down to Egypt

without asking My advice,

in order to seek shelter under Pharaoh’s protection

and take refuge in Egypt’s shadow.

<sup>3</sup>But Pharaoh’s protection will become your shame,

and refuge in Egypt’s shadow your disgrace.

<sup>4</sup>For though his princes are at Zoan

and his messengers reach as far as Hanes,

<sup>5</sup>everyone will be ashamed

because of a people who can’t help.

They are of no benefit, they are no help;

they are good for nothing but shame and reproach.

<sup>6</sup>An oracle about the animals of the Negev:

Through a land of trouble and distress,

of lioness and lion,

of viper and flying serpent,

they carry their wealth on the backs of donkeys

and their treasures on the humps of camels,

to a people who will not help them.  
<sup>7</sup> Egypt's help is completely worthless;  
therefore, I call her:  
Rahab Who Just Sits.

Part of the rebellion against God was to trust in Egypt instead of God. The reality is that Egypt could not save them. In fact, God uses an interesting phrase in verse 7, "Rahab who just sits." Now, Rahab had been instrumental in earlier days of Israel's history. It was Rahab that provided cover for the spies who went into the Promised Land when the first wave of Israel entered that land. But God is now saying, Egypt will be like a "Rahab who just sits."

They have a plan, alright, but it is not God's plan. The reality is they are just "piling up sins."

Many in our country have said, "I know better than God." The reality is "we are just piling up sins."

In U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, the magazine of the Naval Institute, Frank Koch illustrates the importance of obeying the Laws of the Lighthouse.

Two battleships assigned to the training squadron had been at sea on maneuvers in heavy weather for several days. I was serving on the lead battleship and was on watch on the bridge as night fell. The visibility was poor with patchy fog, so the captain remained on the bridge keeping an eye on all activities.

Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing reported, "Light, bearing on the starboard bow."

"Is it steady or moving astern?" the captain called out.

The lookout replied, "Steady, Captain," which meant we were on a dangerous collision course with that ship.

The captain then called to the signalman, "Signal that ship: 'We are on a collision course, advise you change course twenty degrees.'"

Back came the signal, "Advisable for you to change course twenty degrees."

The captain said, "Send: 'I'm a captain, change course twenty degrees.'"

"I'm a seaman second-class," came the reply. "You had better change course twenty degrees."

By that time the captain was furious. He spat out, "Send: 'I'm a battleship. Change course twenty degrees.'"

Back came the flashing light, "I'm a lighthouse."

We changed course. (Max Lucado, *In the Eye of the Storm*, Word Publishing, 1991, Page 153.)

How dare we say we know better than God?

**We deceive ourselves with other voices.**

Look please, now, at verses 9-15.

They are a rebellious people,  
deceptive children,  
children who do not want to obey the LORD's instruction.

<sup>10</sup>They say to the seers, "Do not see,"

and to the prophets,

"Do not prophesy the truth to us.

Tell us flattering things.

Prophesy illusions.

<sup>11</sup>Get out of the way!

Leave the pathway.

Rid us of the Holy One of Israel."

<sup>12</sup>Therefore the Holy One of Israel says:

"Because you have rejected this message

and have trusted in oppression and deceit,

and have depended on them,

<sup>13</sup>this iniquity of yours will be

like a spreading breach,

a bulge in a high wall

whose collapse will come in an instant—suddenly!

<sup>14</sup>Its collapse will be like the shattering

of a potter's jar, crushed to pieces,

so that not even a fragment of pottery

will be found among its shattered remains—

no fragment large enough to take fire from a hearth

or scoop water from a cistern."

<sup>15</sup>For the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said:

"You will be delivered by returning and resting;

your strength will lie in quiet confidence.

But you are not willing."

First, we make the mistake of not caring what God says. Then, we come to the place where we do not even want to hear what God says. We replace what God says with what we want to hear. Let me make you a promise. If you want to find someone to agree with you on a matter that is contrary to God's will, you can find that individual. If you want to find someone to agree with your interpretation of God's Word, you can find that person. They will be smooth in their delivery. They will be convincing in their argument, but just know that doesn't make it right.

This is why Paul wrote to Timothy as is recorded in 2 Timothy 4:1-5—

I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of His appearing and His kingdom:<sup>2</sup> Proclaim the message; persist in it whether convenient or not; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear something new. <sup>4</sup> They will turn away from hearing the

truth and will turn aside to myths. <sup>5</sup> But as for you, be serious about everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

The reality of listening to other voices other than the truth of God is sudden and devastating consequences.

I love to tell the story that Tim Hansel tells in a book titled, *When I Relax I Feel Guilty*. He tells about two men walking in downtown New York. One is an American Indian. Suddenly, he stops and says, "I hear a cricket."

His friend laughs and says, "You are crazy."

"No, I'm sure of it." He begins to look for the cricket. He finds the cricket across the street in one lone shrub in a cement planter.

Astonished, his friend asks, "How did you do that?"

The Native American says, "It all depends on what you are listening for. Here let me show you." He took out some coins and dropped them on the pavement. Every eye turned toward the dropped coins.

What are we listening for? We need to get away and hear God's voice for our lives.

### **We dodge the consequences.**

Here's the third reason we stop following God's ways. We dodge the consequences. Look at verse 16 and 17.

You say, "No!

We will escape on horses" —

therefore you will escape!—

and, "We will ride on fast horses" —

but those who pursue you will be faster.

<sup>17</sup> One thousand will flee at the threat of one,

at the threat of five you will flee,

until you alone remain

like a solitary pole on a mountaintop

or a banner on a hill.

They thought they would escape. Verse 16 references the escape they will make right into exile. We dodge consequences only as the result of God's mercy, but His hand of mercy is not forever promised.

### **So what?**

Let's end where we started. God reveals His way. We are so fortunate to live in a time where we live on this side of Jesus. He has revealed Himself through Jesus. And, He has revealed His will through His word.

Do you care what God says? Some don't. That is a precarious place to be. But if you care, the next question is....

Do you know what God says? If not, this is the plea to find God's Word.

Will you do what God says?

Before this is a national question, this is a personal question.