

99-02-28c

If you look at the words of the Lord in Ezekiel 22, and you see the results manifested in the victims. These are the departure from the Lord, they have forgotten the Lord. It is the mothers and the daughters, it is the women, if you look in verse 7, you have made light of father and mother in your midst, they have oppressed the stranger in you, they have mistreated the fatherless and the widow.

This, and if you want to use an anthropopathism for God, this gets God's dander up. It is one thing to be evil and wicked, it is something else to have it create victims, and to spill over, and it is fascinating to go through the word of God and trace what God says about the fatherless and the widow, the widows and orphans. And even altruistic people, even people who aren't Christians and just think they are moral, tend to wave the flag for orphans, and you have UNICEF and Feed the Children, and all these other things that are a lot of times secular organizations that are trying to help orphans and those who are impoverished in third world countries and so forth.

But the blindness in our hearts can reach the point that we don't even see who we are hurting. You set up an idol in your soul, it causes you to stumble into iniquity. These people would never characterize themselves this way, would they? They would never characterize themselves as abusing.

It is their viewpoint. They have inured themselves. Their conscience has been seared with a hot iron that doesn't even occur to them that they are making a victim out of their wives, out of their daughters, out of these people who are not able to defend themselves, who by virtue of where they are in the scheme of things have to suffer at the hands of these others.

Behold, therefore, in verse 13 of Ezekiel 22, I beat my fists at the dishonest prophet which you have made and at the bloodshed which has been in your midst. Can your heart endure? Can your hands remain strong in the days when I shall deal with you? I, the Lord, have spoken it and will do it. I will scatter you among the nations, disperse you throughout the countries, and remove your filthiness completely from you.

You shall defile yourself in the sight of the nations. Then you shall know that I am the Lord. He goes on in the rest of this chapter to talk about refining silver.

And when he heats up Israel, all that comes to the surface is dross and dross and dross and dross. He can't find even a remnant. And as he heats it hotter and hotter, it's just more and more dross.

It's the tin and the lead that comes up. In verse 20, as men gather silver, bronze, iron, lead, and tin into the midst of a furnace to blow fire on it, to melt it, so I will gather you in my anger and in my fury and I will leave you there and melt you. These are not the

words you want to be hearing from the Lord God.

It's a lot better to be hearing the kinds of things Abraham hears in chapter 18 of Genesis. Look at verse 25 and 26. You have the prophets and the priests in the land of Israel coming under double condemnation from God because they are in a position of leadership.

They are stewards of the word of God. They are not communicating it. Their princes are like wolves tearing the prey to shed blood to destroy people.

Look at verse 28. The prophets plaster them with whitewash. That's literally what it says.

The prophets, the ones who are supposed to be proclaiming the word of the Lord, are plastering the people with whitewash. Telling them you're okay. Seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying thus says the Lord God when the Lord has not spoken.

That just makes you want to not even turn your TV on anymore. Much less turn it to the Christian networks. Divining lies.

Saying thus says the Lord when the Lord has not spoken. The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy. And they wrongfully oppressed the stranger.

Now look at verse 30. So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it. But I found no one.

Therefore I have poured out my indignation on them. I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath, and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads, says the Lord God. We need to spend less time observing the faults and the failures in our culture, in our society, in our government, in our families, in our co-workers, in those around us, and spend more time making sure that we don't fall under this kind of condemnation from God.

That's the message of Romans chapter 1 and 2. You, O man, who are so quick to find fault and to judge others, are doing the very same thing. It's almost comical, if it wasn't so tragic, to read Judges 19 through 21, isn't it? And see that these people who sally forth in their righteous indignation are more guilty and receive a greater judgment from God. They consult, they cry before the Lord, they offer offerings, and send up smoke, and oh God.

But they assume that God is on their side, don't they? They never ask, O Lord, what should we do about this problem in Gibeah? They decide what they're going to do. They mount the campaign. They rally together.

They encourage one another. The only thing they ask God is, which one of us should go first, Lord? Which one of us should go up against the land? They sack the city of Jabesh Gilead, killing the women and children who are the victims in this kind of society, and never give it a second thought. It's a powerful reminder to us.

Lot himself, when he stands outside his doorway, offering his own daughters to the crowd, who is he thinking about? They've come under the protection of my roof. I've extended my hospitality. My reputation is on the line.

My standing with these noble visitors is on the line here. Take the daughters, but don't harm the messengers. I don't want to get in bad with the messengers.

He doesn't heed the word of the Lord. They have to drag him and his family out of the city. He disobeys.

They tell him to go to the mountains, and he won't go. Is this us? Do we disregard the word of the Lord? Do we only consult God when it's convenient? It forces us to ask ourselves the question, what kind of people are we? What is our calling? Are we called to go forth and make an impact on others, sit in the city gate like Lot, or are we called to be transformed, to knock down the idols that sit on the threshold of our inner temple that cause us to stumble into iniquity, to put those things that cause us to stumble out of the way so that we can see. We can be as blind.

You see the men outside Lot's house unable to see what they seek, unable to see the door of the house. And you have Lot unable to see the horrible flaw in his own soul that he'll offer his own daughters to this crowd. He is as blind as the crowd because he lives with them.

He has put something in his life that he refuses to depart from. He has to be dragged, and the only reason he's even dragged out of the city and not consumed is because God remembered Abraham. It's a powerful reminder of how much God honors his own righteousness.

It has long coattails. It extends to Lot. It extends to Lot's wife and Lot's daughters, who by all rights should have been in the city.

You look at what the daughters are about to do. You look at the wife coming around and becoming a pillar of salt. It's the grace of God to Abraham that Lot is spared.

But because of that sparing, there's going to be trouble with the descendants of Abraham. And when we get to the last half of chapter 19 of Genesis and we find out what happens with Lot and his two daughters, we're going to see that it would almost have been better had Abraham not pleaded for Sodom and Gomorrah. Because God's grace in remembering Abraham and sparing Lot is going to cause Abraham's descendants no end of grief because you're going to have the Moabites and the Ammonites who will be a

thorn in the flesh of Israel from that time forward.

Let's close in prayer. Father, we thank you for the powerful ways that your word communicates to us and like a sharp sword cuts to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit and the joints and the marrow and is a judge of our thoughts and our intentions. We pray that the Holy Spirit will be able to take these things and take away the blindness from our eyes so that we can see the areas of our soul that need cleansing, that need purging.

We pray that we will undertake the responsibility for our own heeding of your word, our own obedience and become those who follow the path of Abraham, the path of faith and not the path that constantly is looking at others and running ahead of your will and your purpose. We thank you for your provision and grace. We thank you for your patience with us as we slowly learn and seek to be conformed to the image of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who died to deliver us out of this present evil age and to present to himself a glorious church that is without spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that is holy and without blemish.

We pray that our meditation on your word will move us closer to that goal and we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.