

“The Lord’s Greater Salvation”
Isaiah 30:18-31:9
by Pastor Jason Van Bommel

The LORD Will Be Gracious

*18 Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you,
and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.
For the LORD is a God of justice;
blessed are all those who wait for him.*

19 For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. ²⁰ And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. ²¹ And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it,” when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. ²² Then you will defile your carved idols overlaid with silver and your gold-plated metal images. You will scatter them as unclean things. You will say to them, “Be gone!”

23 And he will give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground, and bread, the produce of the ground, which will be rich and plenteous. In that day your livestock will graze in large pastures, ²⁴ and the oxen and the donkeys that work the ground will eat seasoned fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork. ²⁵ And on every lofty mountain and every high hill there will be brooks running with water, in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. ²⁶ Moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day when the LORD binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.

*27 Behold, the name of the LORD comes from afar,
burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke;
his lips are full of fury,
and his tongue is like a devouring fire;
²⁸ his breath is like an overflowing stream
that reaches up to the neck;
to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction,
and to place on the jaws of the peoples a bridle that leads astray.*

29 You shall have a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one sets out to the sound of the flute to go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel. ³⁰ And the LORD will cause his majestic voice to be heard and the descending blow of his arm to be seen, in furious anger and a flame of devouring fire, with a cloudburst and

storm and hailstones. ³¹ The Assyrians will be terror-stricken at the voice of the LORD, when he strikes with his rod. ³² And every stroke of the appointed staff that the LORD lays on them will be to the sound of tambourines and lyres. Battling with brandished arm, he will fight with them. ³³ For a burning place has long been prepared; indeed, for the king it is made ready, its pyre made deep and wide, with fire and wood in abundance; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of sulfur, kindles it.

Woe to Those Who Go Down to Egypt

¹ Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help
and rely on horses,
who trust in chariots because they are many
and in horsemen because they are very strong,
but do not look to the Holy One of Israel
or consult the LORD!

² And yet he is wise and brings disaster;
he does not call back his words,
but will arise against the house of the evildoers
and against the helpers of those who work iniquity.

³ The Egyptians are man, and not God,
and their horses are flesh, and not spirit.
When the LORD stretches out his hand,
the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall,
and they will all perish together.

⁴ For thus the LORD said to me,
“As a lion or a young lion growls over his prey,
and when a band of shepherds is called out against him
he is not terrified by their shouting
or daunted at their noise,
so the LORD of hosts will come down
to fight on Mount Zion and on its hill.

⁵ Like birds hovering, so the LORD of hosts
will protect Jerusalem;
he will protect and deliver it;
he will spare and rescue it.”

⁶ Turn to him from whom people have deeply revolted, O children of Israel. ⁷ For in that day everyone shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which your hands have sinfully made for you.

⁸ *“And the Assyrian shall fall by a sword, not of man;
and a sword, not of man, shall devour him;
and he shall flee from the sword,
and his young men shall be put to forced labor.*

⁹ *His rock shall pass away in terror,
and his officers desert the standard in panic,”
declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion,
and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.*

- Isaiah 30:18-31:9, ESV

Do you remember when “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition” first aired? I loved that show. It was unbelievable! A deserving family would be sent away for a vacation while a team of dozens of home improvement contractors would completely renovate their home in astounding ways. They always had some amazing surprise, too – some over-the-top unexpected extra that no one saw coming and that blew everyone away.

Sometimes, the family would have tried and failed to renovate their home themselves or sometimes they had some terrible thing happen to them recently. They were often frustrated and lacking hope. Then, the “Extreme Makeover” team would come the rescue and would do so much more than just fix their home. They would give them some much-needed time away together and a blessing that would last for years.

Well, in Isaiah 30, you can’t really say that Jerusalem and Judah are a deserving family going through a rough time through no fault of their own. No. They aren’t victims, really. They’re guilty of turning their backs on God and His promises and seeking help from other gods and other nations. But they were in trouble, and they were going down a road that was helpless and hopeless.

They thought they knew exactly what they needed: They needed a nation and army powerful enough to stop or at least deter the Assyrians, so they would turn around and go back home. That’s pretty straight-forward. That’s also woefully short-sighted and inadequate. They had such deeper and more eternal needs. But even if they were right to be so narrowly focused on the Assyrian threat, their assumption that they needed a nation and army large enough to send Assyria home was badly misguided, and their hope that the Egyptians would provide such an army of chariots and horses was a misplaced hope.

What does any of this have to do with us? Well, everything. First of all, we need to see ourselves as those who are as foolishly and selfishly faithless and undeserving as the people of Jerusalem and Judah. We have our own idols and our own stubborn defiance of God’s word. Secondly, we need to see that we also get locked into a

narrow, short-sighted tunnel-vision when it comes to seeing and understanding what our real problems are. We have much deeper and more eternal needs than we realize most of the time. And finally, for the immediate and seemingly pressing needs right in front of us, we so often turn to help that's not really helpful and we miss how much more powerful the Lord is than whatever situation we're facing.

Salvation Now & Forever, vv. 18-26

The Lord is so good and so great. It's easy to say that and to say "Amen" to that here on a Sunday morning in worship, but it's so much more true than we grasp. In verses 18-26 of Isaiah 30, the Lord is promising to save His people, but He's promising to do so in a way far greater than they could even begin to imagine. Don't miss the astounding language here in these verse and the way God has kept these promises and intends still to keep these promises:

*18 Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you,
and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.
For the LORD is a God of justice;
blessed are all those who wait for him.*

19 For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. 20 And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. 21 And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. 22 Then you will defile your carved idols overlaid with silver and your gold-plated metal images. You will scatter them as unclean things. You will say to them, "Be gone!"

23 And he will give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground, and bread, the produce of the ground, which will be rich and plenteous. In that day your livestock will graze in large pastures, 24 and the oxen and the donkeys that work the ground will eat seasoned fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork. 25 And on every lofty mountain and every high hill there will be brooks running with water, in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. 26 Moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day when the LORD binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.

God promises that he will be gracious to His people and will show them mercy. But ultimately, this is going to be so much more than just sending the Assyrians running home with their tail between their legs, which He WILL do. No, He's going to be

more gracious and more merciful than that. He's going to forgive all of the sins of His people and wipe away all of their enemies forever. In verse 19, He promises, "you shall weep no more," and He doesn't just mean that their weeping over the Assyrian invasion will end. No, God has something so much better planned for His children:

Revelation 21:1-4 says –

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." (ESV)

When God promises, "You shall weep no more," He means exactly that. Forever.

Then, in verse 20, the Lord promises: "And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher." This promise is so astounding that the people of God refused to believe it when God kept it. God Himself, the Teacher of Israel, came down in human form, not hiding Himself any longer, but walking among us, and they refused to accept or believe that Jesus was in fact God the Teacher in the flesh, despite numerous miracles validating who Jesus was and is. Well, one day, Jesus will return in the flesh and every eye will see Him. You will see Your Teacher with your very own eyes. Do you believe that?

I believe verse 21 is referring to the fact that, after Jesus came and accomplished salvation for us, He sent the Holy Spirit to live in every believer and convict us of the truth and to lead us in righteousness. The Holy Spirit so writes God's Law on our hearts that we hate our idols and want to be rid of them. However, the full and final cleansing of our hearts from all idolatry will come when Jesus returns and makes a final end of all evil, including the most subtle idolatry of our hearts.

And so, verses 23-26 are painting a picture of a life so perfectly blessed and bountiful that we will experience the fullness of this blessing only in the new heavens and the new earth, in the glorified creation Christ ushers in when He returns. This is especially clear in verse 26:

Moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day when the LORD binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.

In fact, the Lord tells us that, in the end, we won't even need the light of sun and moon, for the Lord Himself will dwell among us and be our light. And we will be fully and perfectly healed forever, body and soul. This is the glorious, greater salvation that far exceeds our expectations and what we think we need. It is so much greater than just "Get the Assyrians out of here!" or whatever immediate crisis we're facing in our lives. The solution, the Lord's salvation, is far greater than we know!

Destruction of Enemies Now & Forever, vv. 27-33

Included in this salvation is the final destruction of all of God's and our enemies, as described in verses 27-33. Verse 31 specifically references the Assyrians ("*The Assyrians will be terror-stricken at the voice of the LORD, when he strikes with his rod.*"), but the deliverance from enemies and the destruction of fire here is bigger.

Look at verse 33: "*For a burning place has long been prepared; indeed, for the king it is made ready, its pyre made deep and wide, with fire and wood in abundance; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of sulfur, kindles it.*" What is this burning place long prepared? Well, Jesus references it several times in His teachings (more than anyone else in the Bible, in fact), and it's finally revealed in Revelation 20 as the lake of fire and sulfur. In Rev. 20:10, we read, "*the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*" And then in verses 12-15, we read this –

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (ESV)

The final and eternal punishment of all of the enemies of God and of God's people is a central aspect of our final deliverance and our great, eternal salvation. In the end, those redeemed by the Lord will be freed from all temptation, torment, harassment, persecution, rejection, and hatred, and all those who have hated and rejected God will be punished. This is all the part of the eternal, glorious, and just salvation of God.

Egypt's Help is Woefully Inadequate, 31:1-3

When we get to chapter 31, which is fairly short, we're brought back to the present situation with the people of God, Egypt, and the Assyrians. In other words, we come back to the immediate threat and the hoped-for immediate help.

Let's get real for a moment: It's easy to say we trust the Lord for our eternal future, for the forgiveness of our sins, for our eternal destiny. Those things seem a bit far away and abstract, and it seems safe enough to say that God is definitely going to take care of that. But what about the financial crisis, the medical emergency, the broken relationship, the conflict at work, or the haunting depression we struggle with right now, today, right where we are?

Do we really think God has the power to save us from eternal condemnation and bring us eternal joy, but we're not sure whether or not He can get us through this next week or month or year? Remember the story of the paralyzed man whose friends lowered him down through the roof so he could get in front of Jesus? What did Jesus say to the man? "Son, your sins are forgiven." Jesus said that because that's what the man most needed. And then, to prove that He had the authority to forgive his sins, Jesus told him to get up and walk. What the man most needed was not what he thought he most needed. His need for forgiveness was far more urgent than his need for physical mobility. But Jesus restored His ability to walk, so he and everyone else would know that Jesus could, in fact, forgive the man for all of his sins.

Now, hear this: If Jesus had chosen not to heal the paralyzed man physically, he would still have been forgiven, and thus his greatest need would still have been met. His physical healing would have eventually come, and it would have come forever.

Jesus has taken care of the most important needs you have. You can trust Him to care for your lesser needs, too. If He withholds something you think you need, He knows what He's doing and has good reasons.

What makes no sense and what does us no good whatsoever is to only trust God for eternal things and then try to grab control of the temporary things and try to force them to work out according to our design. That's about as useful as sending our treasure to Egypt for horses and chariots.

When the Lord in His sovereign care decides we need deliverance, He will bring it swiftly and powerfully.

The Lord's Help is Mighty & Freeing, 31:4-9

*⁴ For thus the LORD said to me,
"As a lion or a young lion growls over his prey,
and when a band of shepherds is called out against him
he is not terrified by their shouting
or daunted at their noise,
so the LORD of hosts will come down
to fight on Mount Zion and on its hill.*

*⁵ Like birds hovering, so the LORD of hosts
will protect Jerusalem;
he will protect and deliver it;
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⁶ Turn to him from whom people have deeply revolted, O children of Israel. ⁷ For in that day everyone shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which your hands have sinfully made for you.

*⁸ “And the Assyrian shall fall by a sword, not of man;
and a sword, not of man, shall devour him;
and he shall flee from the sword,
and his young men shall be put to forced labor.*

*⁹ His rock shall pass away in terror,
and his officers desert the standard in panic,”
declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion,
and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.*

We can trust the Lord. We must trust the Lord. Our own wisdom and planning is not wiser and more clever than His. Our own resources and indeed all the resources of the world are pathetic compared to His. So, let's stop sending our treasure to Egypt, and let's give it all into the hands of the Lord!