

# They're Only God's Instruments

Isaiah 10:5-34

*Halifax: 28 June 2009*

## **Introduction**

We are constantly inundated with news of disaster...

- We heard of another death in Quebec on Friday related to swine flu
- We have read recently of mounting tensions in North Korea
- We have constant reports about our failing economy
- And there is always news of another terrorist attack
- We of tsunamis, floods, chemical spills, famines, wars, hurricanes, epidemics, fires, earthquakes, riots, fires, plane crashes, and more.

How are we to think of all of these things as Christians?

- Does God have nothing to do with these things?
- Does He simply **allow** them to happen?
  - I hear Christians say that all the time.
- Or does He actually **send** them?

That is what the Bible constantly affirms...

- that the LORD actually **sends** these things for His own purposes...
- Am 3:6 asks the rhetorical question:
  - "If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done it?"
- Here are just a few of the many examples that could be given:
  - In Deuteronomy 28:20, the Lord tells His people what He will do if they forsake Him in the land:
    - Deut 8:20: The LORD will send on you cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me.
  - In Haggai 2:17, the Lord says:
    - Hag 2:17: 'I struck you with blight and mildew and hail in all the labors of your hands; yet you did not turn to Me,' says the LORD.
  - In Jeremiah 32:42, we read:
    - Jer 32:42 "For thus says the LORD: 'Just as I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will bring on them all the good that I have promised them.
  - In Revelation, we read of God sending famines and plagues and earthquakes and all sorts of things.

The Bible tells us that such things are the expression of God's wrath against human sin.

- God began to send these things in response to the fall of mankind into sin and he continues to send them to this day.
  - Before sin was in the world, there was no death or suffering of any kind.
- But there are many today who claim that all the terrible things that happen in the world show that there is no God...
  - And I will be first to admit that if the god referred to is the safe god that would never hurt anyone that our society has made up in our own imagination,
    - all these things certainly do call in question his existence.
    - I will be the first to say that they are not consistent with such a god.
- But if we are talking about the holy God who made heaven and earth and who is revealed to us in the pages of scripture,
  - these calamities are in perfect harmony with the existence of Him.
  - He is the true God who is known to us all but for our constant suppression of the truth about Him.
- For this reason, you do very well to fully and unquestionably accept the testimony of scripture about our Lord that He is the One:
  - Eph 1:11: who works all things according to the counsel of His own will.

But what about those calamities that are brought about by human agency?

- Many of the calamities I have spoken of are things over which human beings have no control—hurricanes, famines, tsunamis, and such...
  - And some, although often the result of human error, are accidental—such a plane crashes or economic collapses...
  - But what about those that are deliberate—like terrorist attacks, genocide or military attack?

How are we to look at these calamities that are the direct result of human agency and especially when they are the result of wicked human agency?

- Are they also something that God sends?
- And if they are, does that mean that the human agents are pleasing God by their actions and will be rewarded for their “obedience”?

These questions are marvellously answered in Isaiah 10, the passage that we come to today in our sermon series.

- I can remember when I first studied this passage as a young believer and how it opened my eyes to the way that God raises up and uses wicked powerful human agents in history.

- It taught me to recognise without any doubt that every calamity including those that involve the wicked acts of wicked men is from God.
  - Yes, it even includes those wicked acts that are done against His people by wicked men.
- Once I came to accept this, it opened up so much of God's word to me that had been unclear before...
  - It taught me what the Lord means when he tells Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar that He is the one who raised them up to power...
  - and it taught me that in everything that befalls me and my people,
    - I must first of all see the hand of my gracious Lord and humbly respond to Him with child-like trust.
    - Over the years, this doctrine has brought tremendous comfort to me.
  - May God use this marvellous text with the same effect on each of us today.

First of all, then, I want you to...

## **I. See how God uses wicked men as His instruments to punish His people.**

A. He tells you here that He is the one who sends them for His purposes.

1. You can see this expressly stated in verse 5-6!

- Isa 10:5-6: "Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, And against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, To seize the spoil, to take the prey, And to tread them down like the mire of the streets.
- a. Do you see what this is saying?
  - Assyria was a very proud and wicked nation that worshipped idols...
    - And God here calls them the rod of His anger.
      - They are like the sort of rod that is used to beat a fool with so that he will learn wisdom.
      - Or a rod that is used for the correction of a rebellious child.
    - God is going to use Assyria as His rod to severely punish those He calls "the people of My wrath."
      - The blows will be very heavy...
        - He will use them, as it says,
          - "to seize the spoil, to take the prey and to tread them down like mire in the streets!"

- b. By now (if you have been with us for this series in Isaiah) you should know who the “ungodly nation” is that God is getting ready to punish!
    - It is His own covenant people—Israel, who, as a whole, had spurned His grace and broken His covenant.
      - We know from the context that they are the ungodly nation who are the people of His wrath.
        - From chapter 7 on,
          - the LORD has been telling them that He is going to send judgment upon them from the hand of Assyria because of their apostasy.
    - But if any of you are unsure that the ungodly nation God is sending Assyria against is Israel,
      - then just look down at verse 12.
        - There is expressly stated that God is going to use Assyria as His rod to
          - “perform His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem.”
        - They are the ones who will be trodden down by Assyria like mire in the streets.
          - This is what Isaiah has been declaring again and again.
2. And I want you to notice how the LORD refers to Assyria as His rod of correction.
- a. He tells us (and them) that they are only a rod in His hand.
    - This is very clearly stated,
      - but a more literal translation makes it clear that Assyria is not only the rod in God’s hand, but also the one who holds the rod of God’s anger in their hand.
    - Verse 5 can more literally be translated like this:
      - "Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger And the staff in *their* hand is My indignation."
      - This is consistent with what we find in the rest of the passage where they are both the rod and the bearer of the rod.
  - b. And you see how the LORD shows Himself to be the one who actually **sends** them and who **charges** them to bring calamity upon his people.
    - The LORD does not present Himself as passive in this matter!
      - He does not say that He will **allow** the Assyrian to do these things to His people!

- He says that He is **sending** him and **charging** him to do these things!
    - Assyria is carrying out **God's** work.
    - Assyria is God's instrument.
- B. But the Assyrian does not acknowledge that he is God's instrument.
- Instruments seldom acknowledge this...no,
    1. The Assyrian is very arrogant in the success that God is giving him...
      - a. He is having a great time conquering one nation after another.
        - vs 7 says,
          - "it is in his heart to destroy and to cut off not a few nations."
        - He had in his eye the domination of the whole world...
          - and with the exception of Egypt and Tyre and a few other places, he almost reached his goal.
      - b. You see how he makes his boast...
        - 1) In verse 8, he boasts of the kingdoms that he has conquered.
          - He describes them as princes who are really more like kings...
            - making himself to be the king of kings...
        - 2) In verses 9-10, he claims his power over the nations and their gods—whose idols, he says, excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria...
          - In other words—none of the gods of the nations could stop him—
            - so neither can the God of Jerusalem!
          - It is interesting that he mentions this—for surely he knows the history of Israel's God...
            - But already he has taken Samaria (the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel)
              - so why not Jerusalem also?
          - He does not see himself at all as the one whose strength and success is given to him by the GOD of Jerusalem
        - 3) Look at how his boast is further described in verses 13 and 14...
          - "By the strength of my hand I have done it and by my wisdom for I am prudent."
            - He attributes all his success to his own strength and wisdom.
          - In the arrogant Assyrian style (as evidenced by Assyrian inscriptions that have been found) He speaks of the ease with which his conquests have come...

- vs 14: My hand has found like a nest the riches of the people, And as one gathers eggs that are left, I have gathered all the earth; And there was no one who moved his wing, Nor opened his mouth with even a peep."
    - He has not even met up with as much resistance as a bird might give if he were robbing her nest...
    - He does not acknowledge that his success is from the LORD.
2. But see how the LORD mocks Him...telling him that he is only His instrument and so has no grounds for his boasting!
- a. Look at verse 15
- Isa 10:15: Shall the ax boast itself against him who chops with it? Or shall the saw exalt itself against him who saws with it? As if a rod could wield itself against those who lift it up, Or as if a staff could lift up, as if it were not wood!
  - The Assyrian is nothing more than an instrument in God's hand that can be put away or destroyed if God wishes...
    - He has no existence and no success without God.
      - Only His wickedness is His own, but his wisdom and his success and his opportunities are all from the LORD.
- b. Understand that this is true of every human being and every nation!
- They have nothing—not even their very existence—apart from the LORD.
    - It is God that raises one up and puts another down...
    - There are no grounds for boasting in the creature.
      - What we have is what we have been given—only our sin is our own.
- c. Oh how we all need to learn this brothers and sisters!
- Whether we are God's willing instruments who seek to do His will or His unwilling instruments who do His will despite ourselves,
    - we are but instruments.
      - It is He that has made us and not we ourselves!
      - Any strength I have is from Him.
      - Any wisdom I have was first His wisdom.
        - There are no grounds for boasting.
  - Let us learn from the Apostle Paul who said:
    - 1 Cor 15:10: I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

- Of himself and those who ministered with him he says:
  - 2 Cor 3:5-6: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant.
- And to those He ministered to he said
  - 1Co 4:7: For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

C. And now I want you to see what God does with boasting instruments...

1. He punishes them for their pride once He has finished with them!

- Look at verse 12...
  - Isa 10:12: Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks." For he says: "By the strength of my hand I have done it—[and so forth]."
- God punishes the proud!
  - This is the great offence of man—that he became proud...
    - God made us to humbly serve Him, to find our delight in His glory and to live our lives to manifest His glory...
      - and in our pride we took it upon ourselves to pursue our own purpose as if we made ourselves and have something that God did not give to us!
      - Satan forgot that he was a creature whose being is from God and then he deceived us so that we also forgot that we are creatures
  - As I told you last week,
    - There is no better way to provoke God than to presume that you cannot get along just fine without Him...
      - that it doesn't matter if you are reconciled to Him or not...
      - that if your brick house is torn down, you can build it back with stone!
  - What God says He will do to the Assyrian is what He will do to all who boast:
    - "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his haughty looks." For he says: "By the strength of my hand I have done it..."

2. Isaiah describes how the LORD will humble Assyria...

- He does this in verses 16-19...
- a. He begins by declaring who God is... multiplying His names...
  - He calls Him “the Lord”—*Adone*—which means master and sovereign—
    - As such, He is the one to whom the proud Assyrian must answer!
  - Then he calls God “the LORD of Hosts” which refers to Him as the God of armies or battles who decides the outcome of every battle!

TRANS> His names show Him to be far superior to the Assyrian.

- b. Next Isaiah declares that this Lord who is the Lord of Hosts is going to send leanness among His fat ones...
  - He is the One who made the Assyrian fat and strong, now He is going to kindle a burning fire under him to consume him...
    - Isaiah uses the imagery of a burning forest whose glory is consumed by the flames...
    - and of a sick man wasting away.
  - The God who raised him up will cause him to waste away.
    - And note well that God Himself is the fire that will devour the Assyrian’s glory!
      - verse 17 says,
        - “The Light of Israel will be for a fire, and His holy one for a flame!”
      - This is none other than the LORD Jesus Christ, the One to whom all judgment is given!
        - He is the Light of Israel! He is God’s Holy One!
        - To His people, He is light,
          - but to Assyria, He will be a devouring fire.
- c. And the result will be the reduction of great Assyria to a tiny remnant that even a child could count...
  - So verse 19!
    - God will reduce him in all his glory from greatness to pitiful weakness!

TRANS> So you see here how our God uses wicked men as His instruments to humble His people.

- Do not suppose that this is an exceptional case either...
  - This is the consistent teaching of the scripture.



- Not a hair of your head perishes apart from the Lord,
  - and that included the hairs that an enemy pulls out!
- Not a sparrow falls to ground without your Father,
  - and that includes a sparrow that is shot down by man.
- Yes my brothers and sisters,
  - the scriptures are clear and consistent.
    - not a finger is lifted up against God's covenant people apart from His sovereign agency.
  - Whenever there is any persecution, any attack, any onslaught,
    - you need not question if it has come from the Lord.
    - He is very careful of His people and there is nothing that ever comes to you that is not carefully orchestrated and designed by His hand.
      - Whenever calamity comes,
        - You can always be sure that He sent it.
        - Nothing comes to you by mistake.
        - Nothing is random.
- **And now, secondly,**

**II. See how the Lord comforts us, His people, with the fact that He uses wicked men as His instruments to punish us.**

- Because He sends them, we can be sure that He has a purpose in sending them that He will accomplish...
  - And then once His purpose has been accomplished, He will remove them.
  - Let us now examine these comforts...
- A. First, He comforts us with the assurance that He sends wicked men to punish us as a way of preserving us as His people.
  - This involves two things...
    1. First, He sends wicked men against us to cultivate true faith in us.
      - a. You can see in verse 20 that the finished work of the Assyrian affliction will be true dependency upon the Lord.
        - Look at verse 20
          - Isa 10:20: And it shall come to pass in that day That the remnant of Israel, And such as have escaped of the house of Jacob, Will never again depend on him who defeated them, But will depend on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

- 1) Foolishly, even those among God's covenant people often depend on something other than the Lord.
  - Sometimes, they depend on themselves—their own strength and wisdom or even their own goodness.
  - Sometimes, they depend on riches or on philosophy.
  - And sometimes they will depend on some great nation—like Assyria.
  
- 2) And that is what Israel had done.
  - You will remember from chapter 7 how Ahaz had refused to trust in the Lord and had instead put his trust in Assyria.
    - He was terrified because Syria and Ephraim had formed a confederation.
      - He decided that the best thing to do was to turn to Assyria for help!
  - And of course many of the people followed Ahaz in this confidence in Assyria.
    - There is always that danger—if the people around you are all depending on something, or if the leaders are depending on something, it is easy to just follow along.
      - How many congregations will blindly follow ministers who begin to question the integrity of scripture—
        - or even ministers who deny the atonement—
        - and those ministers are usually following someone else—their seminary professors or some theologian they have been reading...
  - It is a terrible thing when this happens and this is just what happened to Israel.
  
- b. But you see in verse 20 what God's chastisement did!
  - 1) God sent the very Assyrian that they had put their trust in against them to destroy them!
    - Wasn't that a great idea!
      - They quickly realised that they most certainly could not depend on Him!
      - HE was not faithful to his promises.
    - We are told that at the end of it all, the house of Jacob will never again depend on him who defeated them!

- This was true because when it was all done, there was nothing left to trust in...
- But it was also true because of Assyria's unfaithfulness.

TRANS> See how our Lord destroyed their reliance on Assyria!

2) This is what the LORD so often does...

- When we start to trust in something—
  - like our government or our education or our works or our riches...
  - God turns these things against us to destroy us...
    - We realise that we cannot trust them.
- Take education as an example...
  - About a hundred years ago, there were a whole lot of books written about the benefits of public education—
    - and how through it, we could create model citizens and bring about a utopian society.
      - There was so much excitement in the air!
    - There are still some people who are holding on to this hope,
      - but to most of us it is clear by now that the experiment has been dismal failure!
- Take works righteousness as another example...
  - I mentioned this last week—
    - that in the 50's there were a lot of people who thought they could be moral and good without relying on God...
      - But now we are finding ourselves in desperate moral decay and degradation...
      - Not everyone is willing to admit it, but God is making it clear that it is so.

3) The result of chastisement for His elect is that we stop depending on Assyria

- or whatever else we were depending on
  - and depend, as it says in verse 20,
    - “on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth!”
- a) To depend on Him *in truth* is not just to **say** that we depend on Him the way nominal church-members do...
  - It is to put our lives in His hands...

- To realise that we are lost and helpless sinners unless He saves us...
  - To realise that we cannot deal with our sins without Him...
    - that we cannot atone for them, nor can we free ourselves from the grip they have on our lives.
    - We realise that without Him, we cannot even keep our souls alive.
- b) And you see here that the one we are to depend on is called *the Holy One of Israel*...
- You know who that is!
    - It is Jesus Christ!
  - Verse 21 confirms this when it says,
    - Isa 10:21: The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, To the Mighty God.
    - You remember in Isaiah 9:6 that the Messiah was referred to as the Mighty God who would come to save His people.
      - He is the one in whom our trust is centered.

TRANS> What a wonderful thing God accomplishes through the chastisement of His people!

- We would have gone on trusting in vain things that cannot save!
    - How thankful we should be for His chastening hand that sends Assyria against us to produce true faith in us!
    - This is how He preserves us as His people...
  - But His chastisement not only produces faith in His elect,
2. He also uses chastisement to purge out those who are among us who are not elect.
- a. You see, as the church goes on through the ages, it tends to become overgrown with unbelievers...
    - so much so that there are times when it is predominately made up of unbelievers.
    - This not weakens the faith of the elect by association, but it also destroys the testimony of the church in the world...
      - The world sees little difference in God's covenant people because there isn't very much difference—at least not in our corporate testimony.

- Let's face it, when outsiders look at the church,
    - they do not see the little congregations here and there who are faithful—
    - they see the church as a whole and the church as a whole is apostate in our day just as it was in Isaiah's day.
- b. So the chastisement comes—the Assyrian comes—
- 1) And the result is that many of the nominal covenant people are destroyed.
    - They cease to be covenant people...
      - Many in Israel, after the conquest of Assyria, simply assimilated in with the other nations and lost their identity as God's covenant people.
    - When this happens, the result is that the corrupt body is purged and refined—it is purified as by fire.
      - Let a good persecution come through North America and it will become easy to see who really means business with God!
    - Those who do not have true faith will quickly disappear!
      - In this way, God destroys covenant people who are not genuine and strengthens both the life and the testimony of the church.
        - In our day, we are seeing more and more people drawn away from the church as it becomes less and less fashionable to be a Christian...
          - And you have people like Oprah Winfrey with her religion class who draw nominal Christians away from their profession in the church...
          - Many of God's covenant people are destroyed!
            - and this is a good thing—
            - it is good because such people don't really belong in the church!
  - 2) Isaiah points out in verse 22-23 that God's use of chastisement in this way does not at all violate His promise to make His people like the sand of the sea in number...
    - a) He says that this destruction of His people actually overflows in righteousness...
      - In other words, in doing it, God is seen to be faithful—
        - righteous in keeping His promise.

- b) But how can the reducing of His people be in keeping with His promise to multiply them?
- Well think about it...
    - The promise to make Abraham's seed like the sand of the sea is not a promise to merely give him sons and daughters according to the flesh!
    - Oh no!
  - The promise is to give Him a people who have faith like he has—
    - a people who blessed with God's salvation...
    - a people with a true heart for God who look to Christ in truth.
  - By chastening His people,
    - God brings forth a remnant that has this true faith.
    - Without chastisement, the whole church would have fallen into decay and unbelief.
    - God brings forth a remnant through election, and it is that remnant which is like the sand of the sea.
- c) This means that when you see trouble coming against the church—
- and you see the atheists drawing people away—
    - and you see covenant people going after new age religion and cults or just dropping out of their faith for secularism...
    - you must not think that God has forsaken His people!
  - The destruction has a determined purpose!
    - And that purpose is to bring forth a faithful remnant according to election!
  - Paul explains this in Romans 9 where he quotes these verses from Isaiah...
    - He explains how the Jews' rejection of Christ for their own works religion was not God's forsaking His promise to Israel,
      - it was a fulfillment of His promise to bring forth a remnant according to election.
    - Out of the mass of the apostate nation, it is God bringing forth a multitude of people for Himself!
      - Thus Isaiah says:

- “The destruction decreed shall overflow with righteousness, for the Lord GOD of hosts will make a determined end in the midst of the land.”

TRANS> So the outcome of God’s sending of Assyria is the cultivation of true faith in the elect and the purging away of those who are not elect.

- God comforts His people under chastisement by showing them that this is His way of preserving them.
  - Now let us look at the second way he comforts us...

B. Secondly, He comforts us by telling us not to be afraid of the enemies who come against us.

1. Look at how graciously He speaks to us in verse 24:

- Isa 10:24: "O My people, who dwell in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrian.
  - a. How many times are these very same words heard from the lips of our LORD!
    - Luke 2:10: Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people...
    - Luke 12:32: Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.
  - b. And how encouraging these words are when we consider that they are spoken by the Lord GOD of hosts...
    - the One who raises up nations and uses them to His own purposes!
    - He is the One who tells you, His people, not to be afraid of those enemies He sends against us.

2. But note well, He does not tell us that these enemies will never afflict us!

- Just the opposite!
  - He has already told us that they are the instrument of His wrath that He is sending against His people!
- In verse 24 He goes on to say,
  - Isa 10:24-b: He shall strike you with a rod and lift up his staff against you in the manner of Egypt!"
  - We have already been told that many in Israel will be destroyed by the Assyrian—
    - Egypt struck Israel for 400 years, putting them to hard labour!
    - Assyria will strike Israel severely as Egypt did...
      - and so will many other adversaries—shall I call them Assyrians?—all through the ages!

- And Israel will be helpless before them!
  - In verse 28-32 we have a very graphic description of terror and destruction coming upon the cities of Judah...
    - I will not go into all the detail,
      - but suffice it to say that each of the 12 cities listed in one step closer to Jerusalem...
      - The Assyrian invasion will come right up to the city gates and Israel will be shut up instead the walls of Jerusalem in helplessness.
      - And as it comes, it will destroy many cities in Judah.
  - But despite all this, Jehovah of Hosts says “do not be afraid of the Assyrian!”
3. The question is, “Why not? Why not be afraid?”
- a. We have already seen one reason why...
- Because the Lord will use the affliction not to destroy but to preserve His people in true faith...

TRANS> But now another reason is given

- b. It is because the indignation will cease!
- God’s indignation.
- 1) That’s what it says in verse 25:
- Isa 10:25: "For yet a very little while and the indignation will cease, as will My anger in their destruction."
  - Isn’t that a great promise?
- a) Assyria will only afflict them as long as the Lord’s anger remains.
- And the LORD promises that there will be an end to His anger!
    - It will not rest on His covenant people forever!
    - The indignation will cease.
- b) That’s the best news you could ever hear!
- As we saw last week, God has every right to be angry with us because of our sin...
    - There is nothing we can do, nothing we can bear, that will bring His anger to completion...
    - But that is what Jesus does!



- Jesus comes to bear the wrath of God for all His people!
  - He is the servant of the LORD by whose stripes we are all healed!
- c) And it is for us, when the covenant people go astray, to also partake of the sufferings of Christ in this life...
- As long as the world stands, the LORD will chasten His covenant people to preserve them...
  - His judgment begins with the house of God...
- 2) But God's indignation will cease...
- a) In this world, it comes to end when He restores peace to us from time to time...
- and on the last day, it will come to a complete end...
  - We need not fear—His indignation will not last forever for us as it will for the wicked...
    - His judgement begins with the household of faith,
    - but it will not remain on the household of faith.
- b) He explains that He will bring the Assyrian down just as He brought Egypt and Midian down in the days of old...
- (i) Verse 26 and 27 say: And the LORD of hosts will stir up a scourge for him like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; as His rod was on the sea, so will He lift it up in the manner of Egypt.
- The Rock of Oreb is the place where Midian brought a final end to the princes of Midian when they tried to flee...
  - It was at the Rock of Oreb that they were slain...
  - And of course it was by the sea that Egypt came in pursuit of Israel...
    - Egypt was God's rod for 400 years, but it was by the sea that Egypt felt God's rod when He opened the sea to let Israel escape and then brought it down upon the Egyptians.
- (ii) The LORD will do the same to Assyria—
- We have already seen that after He is finished with them, He will destroy them...
  - And this is repeated again in verse 33-34,
    - again with the analogy of the forest...

- This nation that was so lofty and so proud and so invincible will suddenly be brought to ruin...
- Even as our arch enemy Satan who has raged against us for centuries will at last be crushed under the feet of Christ.
  - And just as all those who are league with Satan and who come against the church from age to age!

(iii) Hear what it is says, dear child of God, for your encouragement:

- Isaiah 10:33-34: Behold, the Lord, The LORD of hosts, Will lop off the bough with terror; Those of high stature will be hewn down, And the haughty will be humbled. He will cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, And Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One.
- God has left Satan and all who are in league with Him to chasten us His people until the last day...
  - but then His indignation will end and they will be destroyed!

3) The marvellous result is described in verse 28:

- Isa 10:28: It shall come to pass in that day That his burden will be taken away from your shoulder, And his yoke from your neck, And the yoke will be destroyed because of the anointing oil.
- a) The day will come when we, as God's people, will have no more affliction to bear!
  - The burden will be completely removed and we will be free.
- b) And I want you to look at the reason given at the end of verse 28—
  - “because of the anointing oil...”
  - There are some Bible versions that translate this as “because of the fat”
    - but the word is most often translated “oil”
    - They render it “because of fatness” which is not really a translation as much as an interpretation...
      - In the original, it is because of the oil with reference to the oil that was used for anointing.
  - This being so, the Targum (the Aramaic translation of the Old Testament by the ancient Jews) sees this as referring to the Messiah.
    - The idea is that Israel was the nation where God's anointed prophets, priests, and kings were.

- It was the one place where God's Word was heard,
  - where proper sacrifices were offered,
  - and where His government was found—
- And it was the place where God's anointed One (the Messiah) would come from when God sent Him to save the world.
  - It was for this reason that Israel could not be ultimately destroyed.
    - This was the nation where the anointing oil was to be found!
    - Not that the oil was magical, but that God had appointed them to be the place from whence the Messiah would come.
  - And of course it is because of the Messiah's work that the God's wrath is turned away from His people!
    - It is from Him that we have the only sacrifice that can take away sin...
    - The yoke of affliction is removed and shall be removed because of Jesus Christ...
- As long as the church remains in this world, God will send enemies against us...
  - But if you are in Jesus Christ, you do not need to fear these enemies!
    - They will not destroy us but rather be used by God to preserve us.
      - This is how God works for those who are in Jesus Christ.
    - Thanks be to God for His care and preservation of His church!