

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 15, Audio Overview Podcast

BiblicalLearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

All right, diving right in today, we're tackling Isaiah chapters 30 and 31. Ooh, a bit of a weighty one. Definitely a lot to unpack there, but that's what we're here for: to go deep.

Absolutely. Unpack all those layers of meaning and see what we find. Yes, exactly.

And in these chapters, it's all about what happens when, well, you don't wait for God's guidance, especially when things get tough. Oh yeah, when that fear kicks in. You've got it.

Picture this, you know, the mighty Assyrian empires on a rampage and the people of Judah, they're next in line. Talk about pressure. Can you imagine that feeling of knowing you're in the crosshairs? Yeah, it must've been terrifying.

And what's fascinating is how they react. But before we get into that, we've got to set the stage a bit. We're in this larger section of Isaiah chapters 28 to 33, and it's packed with these pronouncements of doom, you know, like woes to those who choose to go their own way instead of seeking God.

It's more than a slap on the wrist. That's for sure. No kidding.

These are some serious consequences we're talking about. And the interesting thing is they're directed at specific groups. First up, the leaders of both the northern and southern kingdoms.

Let's just say they weren't exactly winning any most responsible leader awards. Yeah, not exactly the role models you'd hope for in a crisis. Drunken leaders trying to steer a nation through an invasion.

Not exactly a comforting thought. Not at all. And then there's that third woe in Isaiah 29.15-16. This one shifts focus.

It's targeting those who are hiding their plans from God, making decisions in secret, thinking they can outsmart him. It's like they're trying to use God instead of seeking his actual guidance. Exactly.

Dr. Oswalt, the biblical scholar we're leaning on for this deep dive, paints this really vivid picture. Imagine people huddled in a basement, all hush hush, swearing each other to secrecy as they make their plans. Oh, wow.

Like some kind of spy thriller. Totally. Except it's not a thriller.

It's their reality. And the kicker is, they're completely oblivious to the fact that God sees everything. Nothing can be hidden from him.

It's a pretty powerful reminder that we can't outsmart God, right, no matter how hard we try to hide. Nope, not a chance. And this whole scenario, this secrecy, it sets the stage for the central tension we see playing out in these chapters.

It's humanity's desperate attempts at self-preservation versus God's call to simply trust him. The battle between human striving and divine rest. I like that.

And it all comes to a head when the people of Judah face this impossible choice. What? What do you do when a terrifying enemy is at your doorstep? Right, what do you do? Well, they turn to the strongest ally they can find. Makes sense, right? It's Egypt.

The only power that might stand a chance against the Assyrians. Seems logical. On the surface, yeah, it makes sense.

Ally with the strong guy to fight the even stronger guy. Strength in numbers, right. But here's the thing.

God, speaking through Isaiah, flat-out condemns this alliance. And it wasn't necessarily Egypt itself that was the issue. The problem was the people went ahead and made this decision without even consulting God.

They just assumed they knew best. It's that we got this thanks anyway attitude. Yeah, we'll handle it ourselves.

Putting their trust in human strength and wisdom. But what does God say? What's his response to all this frantic military planning? Well, this is where things get interesting. His response is totally counterintuitive.

He says, in returning in rest, you shall be saved in quietness and in trust shall be your strength. Isaiah 30.15. Whoa, hold on. Instead of, you know, building more weapons, fortifying your cities, it's relax and trust me.

It's almost like he's saying, chill out, guys. I've got this. That's wild.

Not exactly what you'd expect to hear when you're facing an invasion. It's like he's saying surrender. Yeah.

And the craziest part: the people's response is just flat-out no. It's one of the few times in the Bible where God's people straight up refuse to listen. So they're like, nope, not doing that.

We've got our own plan. But why? Why were they so resistant to what God was telling them? What made them think they could handle this on their own? Pride? Fear? Maybe she's not really getting who God is. That's a great question.

Dr. Oswalt points out something really interesting. He suggests that often God waits until we've completely exhausted ourselves, tried everything we can do before he steps in. So it's like we have to hit rock bottom first.

In a way, yeah. It's only when we realize we can't do it on our own, when we've come to the end of ourselves, that we can truly recognize his power and give him the glory he deserves. It makes you wonder: had they truly experienced God's power before? If they had, maybe their response would have been different.

It's easy to forget the miracles, especially when fear takes over. It's so human, isn't it? We scramble for control, try to fix everything ourselves, only to find ourselves even more messed up. I wonder, is that why God often lets us reach that point of exhaustion? There's definitely a lesson to be learned in those moments.

It's in our weakness that his strength really shines through. And it's when we surrender our own efforts that we become open to his guidance, his way of doing things. So the people have said no to God's plan.

What happens next? Where do they go from here? Well, Isaiah doesn't sugarcoat it, you know. He really lays out the consequences of rejecting God's counsel. And he uses some powerful imagery to get the point across.

Yeah, the metaphors in these chapters. A bulging wall about to collapse, a potter's vessel shattered beyond repair. It's like he's giving us this visual representation of how fragile, how temporary our own solutions really are.

Right. Like, we think we're building this strong foundation, but it's all going to crumble eventually. Exactly.

Basically, when we rely only on ourselves, on our own strength, we're setting ourselves up for failure. And it makes you think, doesn't it, about our own lives. Are there areas where we're putting our trust in things that can't really deliver in the end? That's a good question.

Like our jobs, our positions, even our own talents. What happens when those things inevitably let us down? Where do we turn then? It's something we all need to consider. And it brings us to another important point, you know, waiting on God doesn't mean just sitting around passively accepting whatever happens.

It's not about giving up, right? It's about like active trust, surrendering, but still actively seeking God's will. You got it. It's about aligning our plans with his purpose.

Having confidence that he's working, even when we don't see it. That idea of shalom, you know, not just the absence of trouble, but that deep flourishing under God's care. Flourishing under God's care.

I love that. It's beautiful, but also probably pretty hard to actually live out. It is.

It is. Because it goes against our natural instincts. You know, we're all about taking charge, fixing things ourselves.

But these chapters in Isaiah, they're teaching us something different. Yeah. They're saying real peace, real strength.

It comes from letting go. Surrendering to the one who actually holds everything together. That tension between human striving and divine rest, it's all over these chapters.

But even in the midst of all the turmoil, God doesn't abandon his people, right? No. He promises to be there to guide them, to deliver them. There's that amazing verse in Isaiah 30.20, Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teacher will not hide himself anymore.

Even when things are hard, when it feels like we're wandering in a desert, he's still there. Right there with us, offering guidance. He's not some distant, uncaring God.

He's a personal God who walks with us through it all. It's like in those tough times, are we even making space to hear from him? With all the noise and distractions in life, it's easy to miss those whispers of guidance. It's tough, but it's so important.

If we want to live in God's will, we need to learn to listen. And speaking of God's will, we can't forget the climax of this story, right? That showdown with the Assyrians. Things get pretty intense.

Oh yeah. God steps in. He assures Judah that he will deal with the Assyrians, and compares himself to a lion protecting its prey.

Isaiah 31.4, this fierce protector. Wow, it makes all of Judah's frantic military prep seem kind of ridiculous, huh? They're relying on chariots and horses, and God's like, hey, I'm the Lord of Heaven's armies. Remember.

It's a good reminder, right? Their fear was making them forget who God really is, what he's capable of. And then we get that bold prediction. The Assyrian will fall by a sword, not of man.

He will flee from the sword, Isaiah 31.8-9, foreshadowing that crazy story in 2 Kings 19 where an angel wipes out the entire Assyrian army. Single-handedly. Talk about an unexpected outcome.

It's a powerful reminder that God's ways, his power, are beyond anything we can understand. It's in those moments of surrender when we trust his timing, his methods, that we really see those miracles happen. Absolutely.

That's the beauty of these chapters. They remind us that waiting on God, it's not passive. It's this active posture of trust and surrender.

Letting go is how we find our true strength. It's how we experience his power working in our lives. We've covered a lot in this deep dive.

The dangers of self-reliance, seeking God's counsel, the power of waiting on him, even when things seem impossible. It's a masterclass in trusting God, and I think we could all use a little more of that. But what keeps coming back to me is this.

If I were standing in Judah's shoes, facing this unstoppable enemy, would I have been able to trust God's plan? Would I have let go of my own plans and embraced that stillness? Yeah,

it's a tough question, isn't it? Would we have that kind of faith? And I think that's what makes these stories so powerful. Even thousands of years later, they force us to look inward. They challenge us, right? Right.

To really examine our own hearts. Exactly. And ultimately, they point us back to God, to remembering who he is, what he's capable of, even when we can't see the full picture.

We get so caught up in our own limited perspective, our own understanding of how things should work. And we forget that God's ways are so much higher than ours. Isaiah 30 and 31 are a masterclass in trusting God.

And who doesn't need a little more of that? Right. We're wired for self-reliance. We want to be in control.

But these chapters teach us that real strength, real peace, it comes from surrender. Surrender to the one who actually holds everything in his hands. It's kind of paradoxical, isn't it? The more we let go, the stronger we become.

The more we trust, the more we see God working in our lives. It reminds me of that C.S. Lewis quote. He said, the great thing, if one can, is to stop regarding all the unpleasant things as interruptions of one's own or real life.

The truth is, of course, that what one calls interruptions are precisely one's real life. Oh, that's so good. Those interruptions, those difficult things, those are the things that change us, shape us.

They force us to grow. And I think that's the invitation in these chapters, in all of Isaiah, really, to step out of our little self-made fortresses, the ones we build out of fear and anxiety. And into that wide open space of God's grace, where he can work.

So as we wrap up this deep dive into Isaiah 30 and 31, I hope we can remember these lessons. Resist that urge to jump into action, to try to fix everything ourselves. Quiet our hearts, listen for his voice, and trust that he has a plan, even when we can't see it.

That's good stuff. And these two chapters, they're just the tip of the iceberg. There's so much more to discover in Isaiah.

A whole tapestry of truth waiting to be explored. I encourage everyone to keep digging in, see what else you uncover. It's amazing how relevant these ancient words still are today.

Absolutely. So thanks for joining us for this deep dive. It's been a good one.

And as you go about your week, keep exploring, keep questioning, keep seeking that wisdom that only God can give. We'll see you next time.