

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 17,

Audio Overview Podcast

BiblicalLearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

All right. Diving into Isaiah today, chapters 34 and 35. Big ones.

Yeah. And we're going to be pulling from a lecture by Dr. John Oswalt. Old Testament scholar, really dug deep into this.

Yeah. And these chapters are interesting because they're like looking at two different paths. Two totally different paths.

Trusting in humanity versus trusting in God and the consequences of each. Exactly. And it's amazing how these chapters lay it all out.

You know, you get chapter 34, it starts, boom, right off the bat. Intense imagery. Really intense.

Nations being destroyed. Corpses. Blood everywhere.

It's almost like apocalyptic, you know? It's a lot. Yeah. It's not exactly a light read.

No, not at all. But you know, Dr. Oswalt, he pointed out that the language that's used here, it's very similar to the language used in the judgment against Babylon earlier in Isaiah. Oh, interesting.

Yeah. And that connection, it's like super important. It highlights that when you put your trust in worldly powers, when you put your trust in anything that's all about human strength, anything that ignores God, right? It leads to destruction.

It's like a recipe for disaster. It really is. And think about it.

Have there been times in your own life when you've put your trust in something, someone, some ideology, and it just let you down in the end? Absolutely. Relationships, jobs. Yeah.

All those things. And that's what this chapter is, is really pushing us to examine. Yeah.

Where are we placing our trust? And on what are those long-term consequences going to be? Because there are always consequences. Yeah. It really makes you think.

And then Dr. Oswalt brings up this word, haram. I'd never even heard of it before. Haram.

Powerful word. It is. And it's used to describe the fate of these nations.

And it's not just about physical destruction. It's something more. It is.

Haram. It means something is utterly devoted to destruction. Wow.

It's like, think about Jericho. When the Israelites conquered Jericho, they were forbidden from taking any of the spoils. Oh, right.

Right. Because they were consecrated for destruction. They were haram.

And touching something haram brought corruption. Exactly. Anything that's so corrupted, so opposed to God's plan.

It becomes dangerous. Dangerous. Contagious, even.

So that's a good question for us to ask ourselves. I think so. Are there things in my life that have become haram? You know, things that are pulling you away from God.

Pulling me away from God, yeah. Yeah. That could be a habit or a relationship or even just a way of thinking.

Absolutely. Yeah. This imagery is really challenging.

It makes you think about what you let into your life and what you hold onto. What are you clinging to that you shouldn't be? Right. Right.

And then there's the example of Edom. Now, who were the Edomites again? The Edomites, those were the descendants of Esau. And they had this long, long history of conflict with Israel.

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Those guys, they seemed to make it their mission to oppose God's people at every turn.

Every chance they got. Refused them passage, sided with Babylon, even celebrated when Jerusalem was destroyed. Really? Yeah.

And their fate. Well, it was permanent destruction. Edom becomes this example of what happens when you actively work against God's plan.

They put their trust in their own strength, their own opposition to God's people. And in the end, that's what brought them down. It's a powerful lesson.

So, I mean, what happens when we choose to align ourselves with things that are fundamentally opposed to God? Yeah, that's the question, isn't it? It is. It's a sobering thought. But then what about when people wrong us? I mean, should we just sit back and let it slide? Dr. Oswalt talks about this idea of vengeance versus justice.

I found this part really interesting. Yeah, that's a distinction that a lot of people miss. It's crucial.

Revenge, that's about personal payback. It's that eye-for-an-eye mentality. But vengeance in the biblical sense, that's about God's justice.

God's justice. It's God's repayment for the wrongs committed against others. It's not our place to take that on.

So, like, some people would say that David, you know, he should have defended himself against Saul. How do we reconcile that with trusting God? That's a great question. And I think the example of David sparing Saul's life really speaks to that penchant.

Even though Saul was actively trying to kill him, David chose to trust God. He didn't take matters into his own hands. That must have been so hard.

Oh, absolutely. But it's about understanding that God is the one who ultimately brings justice. And when we understand that difference between revenge and God's justice, it frees us from that burden, the burden of getting even.

It allows us to trust God's timing. Exactly. And to know that he will right every wrong in his time.

You know, I struggle with that, letting go, trusting God's timing. I think we all do. It's so easy to get caught up in that desire for immediate payback or just resolution.

Yeah. Yeah. But Isaiah seems to be suggesting a different path.

He is a path that requires, well, a deeper level of trust. Yeah. And then that brings us to Chapter 35 and this image of the highway of holiness.

Yeah. After all that bleakness of Chapter 34, suddenly it's like, boom, we're in this flourishing garden, this transformed wilderness. What a shift.

It is. Yeah. It's like, it's like you step out of this dark tunnel and suddenly you're in this like incredible landscape, beautiful and full of life.

It is. But you know what's really striking? It's the same wilderness, just transformed. It is.

Yeah. This isn't about escaping our struggles. It's about God's power to redeem and restore even the most desolate places in our lives, I mean.

Absolutely. Yeah. It's about transformation.

And this idea of transformation really resonates with me. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt stuck, you know, like lost in a wilderness so to speak? Yeah. I think we all have at some point.

Yeah. And then through trusting God, things start to shift, and you see that transformation begin to happen. Absolutely.

I think those wilderness experiences, they're part of like everyone's spiritual journey, you know. Those are the times when we feel most lost and alone. But they're also the times when we're forced to rely on God in a deeper way.

Yeah. Yeah. That's when we often see the most dramatic transformation.

Exactly. And Isaiah, he even says that the glory of the Lord will be revealed in this transformed wilderness. I love that.

It connects back to that idea of seeing clearly. Remember how Isaiah's vision of God back in chapter six left the people blind and deaf? Oh yeah, yeah. And now through redemption, their eyes and ears are open.

They can truly see and hear God's glory. Even in the midst of what was once like a wasteland. It really is.

It's like getting a new pair of glasses. Suddenly you can see things you never noticed before. And that's a key part of trust, isn't it? It is.

Believing that even when we can't see the path clearly, God is still, he's still guiding us, leading us toward that highway of holiness that Isaiah talks about. Yeah. And get this, Isaiah says that even fools can walk on this highway without stumbling.

It's like he's saying that no matter how lost we might feel, no matter how messed up, God's grace and guidance are there. It's for everyone, anyone. It's a powerful reminder that this path of trust is open to everyone.

Right. It's not about being perfect or having it all figured out. It's just about recognizing our need for God and allowing him to lead us.

That's good. We've talked about the consequences of trusting in humanity versus trusting in God, but what about the how? What does it actually look like to walk this path of trust, to walk it out practically? Yeah. The how is always the tricky part.

It is. But Dr. Oswalt uses this great example from Acts where the disciples are waiting for the Holy Spirit. Oh yeah.

That's a great illustration. Think about it. The pressure they must have felt.

Yeah. I mean, Jesus had just ascended to heaven, and they were given this huge task, taking the gospel to the whole world. Wow.

Yeah. But instead of running out and trying to do it all on their own. What did they do? They waited.

They waited. They sought God's guidance, his empowerment. Waiting on God.

Hmm. That's not exactly my strong suit either. Mine either.

It's hard. Yeah. Yeah.

But Isaiah, he's suggesting that this posture of waiting- It's crucial. It's a crucial part of trusting God. Absolutely.

It's about surrendering our own plans, our own agendas. Getting in line with God's timing, his direction. And we live in this culture that's all about speed and efficiency.

Always on the go. Yeah. Right.

But God, he often works on a different timeline. A different timeline. So how do we cultivate that kind of trust, especially when it feels so, so counterintuitive? If we look back at those two chapters, chapter 34 and 35, there are some key insights there.

Chapter 34, with all its desolation, it highlights the consequences of idolatry, right? It's about trusting in things that are temporary. Things that are flawed. Human power.

Material possessions. Even our own limited understanding. So step one is identifying those idols in our own lives.

Those things that we're tempted to put our trust in above God. Those things that we cling to for security, for comfort, for control. Exactly.

It's about asking ourselves, what am I afraid of losing? What am I afraid of losing? Where do I struggle to let go? Answering those questions can reveal a lot about where our trust really lies. Yeah. That's a good way to put it.

It's about being honest with ourselves, right? Recognizing those areas where we've allowed something else, something other than God, to take center stage in our lives. Yeah. We've all been there.

We have. So once we've identified those idols, then what? How do we actually shift our trust from those things to God? Well, remember chapter 35, that points us towards the path of redemption, the highway of holiness, right? Right. It's about shifting our focus from the wilderness to the garden, from the things of this world to the things of God.

It's about, ah. Okay. So practically speaking, that might look like, what does that look like? Well, for one, it means spending time in God's word.

I mean, when we immerse ourselves in Scripture, we start to see the world differently. We see it through God's eyes. We see his faithfulness, his promises for the future, and most importantly, we see his love for us.

His love, yeah. And it's like, it's like he's giving us a roadmap, not just for navigating life's challenges, but for the journey of faith itself. Yeah.

And I imagine that roadmap includes some pretty, pretty amazing destinations. Remember those images from Isaiah: the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, the lame leaping? Those aren't just like poetic metaphors. They're not.

They're pointing to something real: the transformation that God can bring into our lives. Yeah. It's about experiencing God's healing and restoration in every area of our life.

Yeah. Physically, emotionally, spiritually. But those transformations, they don't usually happen overnight, do they? I mean, we talked about the disciples waiting for the Holy Spirit.

Right. It's a process. Sometimes trusting God means waiting, being patient, surrendering our own timeline.

And that can be hard, especially in our culture. You know, we want everything now. Yeah, we do.

Instant gratification. But there's something about those wilderness experiences. There is.

They can be incredibly refining. They strip away our self-reliance, our illusions of control, and they force us to depend on God. In a way we never thought possible.

Sometimes. It's like when you're hiking in the woods, and you get lost. You have to rely on your compass and your map.

You can't just wander around aimlessly. Great analogy. And in those moments of spiritual wilderness, God is our compass.

God is our map. He guides us. Through his word, through his spirit, through the wisdom of others who have walked this path before.

Yeah. So even in those tough seasons, those times when trust feels hard, we can choose to fix our eyes on God, to seek his guidance, and to trust, to trust that he's working all things together for our good. It's not always easy, but it's always worth it.

It is. Yeah. And to know that, to know that we're not alone in it.

That changes everything. It does. It does.

It changes everything. To know that God is with us. Yeah.

Every step of the way. It really does. Just knowing that we're not alone.

That God is with us. It makes all the difference. It does.

And remember, this whole journey of trust, this path of redemption, it's not just for a select few. It's for everyone. Dr. Oswalt, he really emphasized that.

He said even fools can walk on that highway of holiness without stumbling. Without stumbling, yeah. I mean, it's a powerful image of just how wide God's grace is, how available it is to everyone.

It really is. It makes you think about those times when you felt like a fool, when you've messed up or made bad choices, when you just felt completely lost. And Isaiah is reassuring us that even in those moments, God's grace is enough.

He doesn't wait for us to get our act together before he offers us his love, his redemption. No, he doesn't. He meets us right where we are in all our messiness and brokenness.

And he invites us to walk with him. He does. And the amazing thing is when we accept that invitation, he doesn't leave us as we are.

He starts to change us. He starts to transform us. He does.

And we see that transformation woven throughout these chapters of Isaiah. The wilderness blossoming, the blind seeing, the lame leaping. These aren't just like poetic metaphors.

They're pointing to God's power to bring about real change, tangible change in our lives. Real change. And that change isn't just about our own personal growth or happiness.

It's about becoming more like Christ, reflecting his character, his love to the world around us. Absolutely. So it's not just about escaping the wilderness ourselves.

It's about becoming part of the solution, bringing God's healing, his restoration to those who are still hurting, who are still lost. It's like we become living examples of God's transformative power. Living examples, yeah.

We show the world what it looks like to walk in trust, to experience God's redemption, and to be agents of his healing. That's good. Yeah.

And that's where trust really comes full circle, I think. When we truly trust God, we become like conduits of his grace, of his love. And we can extend that same grace, that same compassion to others, even those who maybe don't seem to deserve it.

Which, let's be honest, is probably most of us at some point or another, right? It is, yeah. We've all been on the receiving end of God's grace when we didn't deserve it. So it's about paying it forward, extending that same grace, recognizing the inherent worth in others, even in their brokenness, because that's how God sees us.

That's how he sees us. Yeah. And what a powerful legacy to leave.

To be known as someone who reflected God's love, his grace. To be known as someone who brought hope and healing to others, to those in need. What a beautiful thought.

It is. It's something to aspire to. But it all starts with that simple choice to trust God.

Simple but profound. It is. To believe that he is who he says he is.

To believe that he can do what he says he can do. And to believe that he loves us unconditionally. And to choose to trust him, not just in theory, but in the everyday moments.

Yeah, in those everyday moments. To bring him our fears, our doubts, our struggles, and allow him to lead us, to guide us, to transform us. Because ultimately it's in that surrender, in that letting go of control, that we find real freedom, real life.

It's true. So as you continue to think about these chapters of Isaiah, as you navigate all the complexities of life, just remember this. Choosing to trust God, it's choosing to step into a life of adventure, of purpose, of unimaginable beauty.

It's choosing to walk on that highway of holiness, knowing that even though the path might not always be clear, God's guiding hand will never let you go. That's a great reminder for all of us. Trust God.

He's got you.