

Trusting in God

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[0:00] Headings that I'm going to work to. First of all, talking about the Valley of Vision. There's a disaster in these chapters, so let's look at what the disaster is.

! There is a response of these people to the disaster. Let's see what it is and what it isn't. And then there's a specific example of human complacency and a specific response of human capacity. And those are the five things that I'd like us to look at as we go through this chapter. So let's look, first of all, at the heading of it. It says, The Valley of Vision.

Now, what is the Valley of Vision? Now, depending on your reading habits, you might say, oh, Valley of Vision, I know that. It's a book. It's a compendium of Puritan prayers published by Banner of Truth.

One or two of you might have it on your bookshelf and you'd be thinking, if you've got that book, you'd be thinking, what a wonderful, spiritually helpful book that is. And this is saying here about the Valley of Vision.

[1:04] But I think if you had that book, it would give you completely the wrong idea. Because this Valley of Vision isn't meant to say it's a book of prayers. It is addressed to Jerusalem.

That's God's headquarters on earth in the Old Testament. And it says it's a valley. Now, if you've been along to some of the other sermons about Isaiah, you'll know that the city of Jerusalem is actually on a hill.

And it's said to be a hill. And the mountain of the Lord's house will be raised above all the other mountains and all the nations will flow to it. And it's meant to be a high place that everybody goes up to because of the superiority and the preeminence and the bigness and goodness of going to meet God on the top of the hill.

But this says it's a valley. So I think what it's telling us is that this is Jerusalem as she didn't ought to be. This is the valley version. This is her at her low point.

And instead of being on the top of the hill and everybody going, she's down in the dumps here. She's down in the bottom, in the gloomy place. And the vision, well, it's not the vision of what she ought to be looking at.

[2:23] It's not the vision of Jerusalem as she should be, the faithful city, the holy city. It's the dreams. These are visions that are unreliable visions. I mean, what are you envisaging that you should be like this?

So, valley of vision. This chapter is not a chapter of spiritual highs. It's actually a chapter of spiritual rock bottom.

And it is like, what's the word for it? A lighthouse. They put a lighthouse near rocks to say to the ships, this is not somewhere to aim for.

This is somewhere to keep away from. And this chapter is a chapter to keep away from. It's saying, don't be like this. It's marking somewhere to avoid.

Sometimes we need those things in the Bible, like lighthouses. Don't get anywhere near this condition. Don't get near here. It's the valley of vision. So, let's look at the disaster.

[3:37] Now, I'm not going to spend time going through the history and geography as I sometimes do, but believe me, this is way back in the history, sort of 700 years before Christ, in the time when God's purposes were focused on this particular city.

And they were threatened by big nations all around them. And Isaiah foresees this disaster.

He foresees armies approaching Jerusalem. He foresees the downfall of Jerusalem. And in terms of vision or dream, it's like a bad dream that Isaiah can foresee.

This is what's happening. And he says, Isaiah 22, What troubles you now? You've all gone up on the roof. City full of commotion.

City of tumult and revelry. Your slain were not killed by the sword. Neither did they die in battle. All your leaders have fled together. And he sees in his vision of this low point of Jerusalem, all the noise and commotion.

[4:47] All the excitement. People running to and fro. They are running away. And he says, As I foresee this, you didn't even stand and fight. It wasn't a glorious battle.

Your slain were not killed by the sword. Neither did they die in battle. They were captured while they were busy trying to run away. Your leaders have fled together. You've been captured using without the bow.

All you who are caught were taken prisoner together and have fled while the enemy was still far away. They were taken captive. They were taken prisoner. And Isaiah is foreseeing this.

And there are two things about it. It's certain. And I think I'm going to say a bit about the certainty in a moment. It's a certain thing. But it's also a heartbreaking thing.

And you get this comment in verse 4. Therefore I said, Turn away from me. Let me weep bitterly. Do not try to console me over the destruction of my people.

[5:47] And it's an insight into the heart of God. That he says, Ah, so long I've spoken to you. So hard I've tried to persuade you.

And you haven't taken any notice. Time after time you've heard this, but you haven't been affected by it. And there's a sure and certain result of that, which is this judgment.

But God says, I'm not happy about that. I don't take pleasure in it in that sense. I weep over that. Why should you die? Why be so dense?

Why be so resistant? And he weeps over the destruction of his people. Jesus wept, didn't he? In a very similar situation, when he entered Jerusalem just before he was crucified.

Do you remember? And he saw the city and he knew how hard they were and how many times they'd been given opportunities and how resistant they were. And Jesus wept. And I venture to say that Jesus weeps over our society, which has had so much Christian teaching over the years and yet is so set on a course against God.

[7:11] I think we would weep, wouldn't we? Do we not weep for our city in the sense of saying, so many people, so many people in our city, so many people in our country who are set on going away from God.

It's a certain thing. If you go away from God, there are consequences to it. But please, there are tears involved in this proclamation.

What does he go on to say? Verse 5, The Lord Almighty has a day of tumult and trampling and terror in the valley of vision. Sort of a repeat of the first few verses, repeating some of the words.

But this time it said there's a day coming. And he repeats the idea of noise and commotion. And he envisages the trampled city, a day of battering down walls, of crying out to the mountains.

And then he describes the opposing armies, Elam and Kir, who are well prepared. They've got their quivers and they've got their chariots and horses and shields.

[8:17] And the enemy is preparing and advancing. And Isaiah can see this all coming. And he says, verse 7, It's going to end up like this. You're going to be full.

And it would be wonderful to say Jerusalem is full of fruit and full of good things and full of righteousness and full of justice. He says, Actually, the streets are full of tanks, full of chariots. I can see it all. How awful. The covering of Judah, the defenses of Judah, are stripped away. And he makes this very definite connection between sin and not trusting and the judgment of God. And he says, I can see it. It might not happen yet. It might happen in years to come. But there's no doubt it's going to happen because there is an unbreakable connection between sin, unbelief, and God's judgment.

That's the way it is. It's just a matter of time. And we would love to explain that to the men and women in Brighton and Hove, wouldn't we?

[9:30] But the only people I can speak to just at the moment are your good selves here. So I want to say to you as you're here, if you have come perhaps just to dabble on the edges, find out a little bit about what it is to be a Christian, let me try and urge you to see how important it is that you do become a Christian.

It's an attractive thing to be a Christian, like I was trying to say to the boys and girls. But there's also an intimidating reason to be a Christian because God says, I'd love you to come to me because you find me so lovely, but let me scare you to coming to me if that will work because the opposite, the alternative of not becoming a Christian is just so awful it doesn't bear thinking about.

Please don't go down that route of walking away from God because the end of that, well, the judgment on this city is a sort of picture of it, the awfulness of it.

Jesus would say, it's called hell. And if you are a Christian, this is a jolly good reason to be thankful. You might be saying, oh, my Christian life's not that brilliant, I missed the bus yesterday, I didn't get the exam grade I was looking for in my exam.

Well, let me just put that into a context. Jesus Christ saved you from hell. That's what your sin would certainly have led you to. And he's reached down and lifted you out and broken that connection between your sin and its judgment.

[11:15] And he said, I'll take the judgment myself. And he's lifted you out of that. I think that's something to be jolly grateful for, isn't it? Even if you did miss the bus, even if the exam went terribly wrong, but he's forgiven our sins.

He's taken that burden away from us. We no longer face judgment. He says, what you are looking forward to is actually coming home. Does that make a difference?

What's the disaster? Let's move on to the responses. Now, the next section is about the responses that Isaiah can foresee are going to happen.

So it's halfway through verse 8. He says, And you looked in that day to the weapons in the palace of the forest. And you saw that the city of David had many breaches, that means gaps, in its defenses.

You stored up water in the lower pool. You counted the buildings in Jerusalem and tore down houses to strengthen the wall. You built a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool.

[12:26] But you did not look to the one who made it or have regard for the one who planned it long ago.

Responses. What the response is and what the response isn't. Now, what the response is, well, they do what army commanders do. They store weapons.

End of verse 8, you looked to the weapons in the palace of the forest. Presumably they had a weapons store somewhere and they looked to that. We've got the weapons. Yeah, that's good. And they weren't just like sort of hippies who said, oh, you know, no problem.

It will all happen by itself. They made preparations. They looked thoughtfully at the breaches in the defences. Okay, we've got a problem in the wall there.

We've got a problem in the wall there. That's going to need so many tons of bricks. That's going to need so much sand and cement. That's going to need so many metres of barbed wire. They saw that the city of David had many breaches in its defences and they thought about it.

[13:42] And there's some walls being knocked down and some water being diverted. They prepared an emergency water supply. You stored up water in the lower pool.

You counted the buildings and tore down houses to strengthen the wall. So they sacrificed housing for defence. Now, we need so many tons of bricks to fill that.

Your house actually has got that right number of tons of bricks. Ever so sorry, but this is wartime. And they would sacrifice the housing for defence. And they thought about it. They made clever plans.

You built a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool. So those are the things that they did respond. They were active. They were, you could say, activism, meaning that's all they did. They were active. But there's a big but. And the but comes halfway through verse 11. But. But.

[14:42] you did that entirely and completely without thinking about the one who made it.

Who's the one who made it? The Lord. You did all of that. And you never once referred to your God. That's who he is.

You never once, as it were, talked to your father about this. You never once addressed him. Because he's the one who made it.

He's the one who, like a potter making a pot. He's been working on this plan and he's been building it together. And it's his plan and he's forming it and making it.

And you never once consulted him. you did not look to the one who made it or have regard for the one who planned it long ago.

[15:42] You never looked to the maker. You never looked to the one. Not the many but the one.

The one God maker of all. He formed it long ago. and you simply relied on your human resources. You were busy having meetings, planning things, looking things up on spreadsheets, sending people here, sending people there, ordering bricks from Amazon.

You were doing all sorts of things like that and you never once stopped to consult the one God who makes everything.

you look to your human resources instead of divine resources. It was the human hands that were making things rather than the divine hands who'd set up the whole thing.

[16:43] You, as the Apostle Paul would say, you put your reliance, you treat it as God, the created things, the creatures, the created things, instead of the creator.

creator. Now, this is the valley. This is the low point. This is the place you need to avoid.

This is a place of shipwreck. And I'll say Christians, just have a think for a moment. I don't know what's going on in everybody's lives, but I know one or two specifics, and I know enough about human nature to know that people will come along to church with things in their minds.

And let me just ask you, is the way you're approaching this just to get busy doing stuff or to say, hold on a minute, hold on, because there is one who has made this situation.

There is one who has created this situation, and he's the one I need to look to, first of all. What the response is and what isn't, what he says is, verse 12, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, called you on that day to weep and wail and tear out your hair and put on sackcloth.

[18:22] He said, what this was a call to do was to repent. It was a call to say, do you know, I've got this so wrong. I've been living my life in completely the wrong direction.

I have been so ignorant of God. I've left him out. I hadn't realized how, what a huge, huge omission that is, to leave God out of my life and to turn around and he says, you know, you're not supposed to be proud of what you've done.

You're supposed to weep and wail and tear out your hair and put on sackcloth. Putting on sackcloth means I'm sorry. Now, I don't think that the only way to become a Christian is to have huge emotional demonstrations of how sorry you are, but you still do need to be sorry.

You can express that you are totally out of order in a very quiet way, but you can still mean it. Lord, I've been living my life as if you weren't there.

How wrong I was. I want to turn to you and just reverse that whole situation. I want to put my life in your hands, whatever that might mean, whatever the cost or the implications, I want you to be God in my life without reservation, to turn in sorry repentance.

[19:56] And there's somebody kneeling, perhaps reading the Bible, turning in sorrow to the Lord. But what he says instead, we've got denial.

What are you doing? Verse 13, oh I can see you're having a party. There's joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle, killing of sheep, eating of meat, drinking of wine.

Let us eat and drink, you say, for tomorrow we die. What actually these people are doing is very different to taking it all seriously. They are having a party.

They're saying, well, there might not be much of this life left, let's just live it to the full while we're here. Let's just grab every opportunity. see. And the Bible would say, there is a linkage between how we view this world and its lifespan and the way we live.

So if we think that there's no, you know, just death is coming and there's no hope and that's all there is to it, it will affect the way we live. We will probably say, let's eat and drink, make merry, for tomorrow we die.

[21:09] What are we going to lose if we do that? The Apostle Paul is going to say many years later, Christians don't do that because Christians know there is something beyond death.

They know that Jesus rose from the dead and has conquered death and has sort of broken the barrier between human life for us and resurrected human life in the future and he's gone through and will take us with him and one day we will live resurrection lives.

And he says because we see that, because we know that, we're not going to say let's eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. We have a very different outlook on it.

The Apostle Paul says, he quotes that and he goes on to say bad company produces, no, that corrupts good character. In other words he's saying let's make sure we don't think just within those narrow limits that this life is all there is, because it isn't.

Let's think beyond that to the resurrection. That makes a huge difference on what we think is valuable, makes a huge difference on what we think is a good investment of time, makes a huge difference on the way we live.

[22:38] We don't just live to grab as much pleasure as possible in as short a time as possible. See what I mean? And he goes on to say, verse 14, the Lord Almighty has revealed this in my hearing, till your dying day this sin will not be atoned for, says the Lord, the Lord Almighty.

And he says if you're going to live as if there is no sin to be turned away from, and death is the end, so we might as well just fill our lives with as much as we can possibly fit in of pleasures in this world, he says if that's the way you live, that sin will not be atoned for.

Till your dying day this sin will not be atoned for, said the Lord, the Lord Almighty. There's a bit of a contrast there, do you remember earlier on in Isaiah when he saw the Lord high and lifted up in the temple and Isaiah said actually now I see the Lord, it makes me think woe is me, I'm a man of unclean lips, I live amongst the people of unclean lips, I've got it all wrong.

And the Lord sent an atonement to take away his sin, there was a fiery coal from the altar, remember an angel brought that, and he found the forgiveness of his sins.

and in this chapter he says if you continue as you are doing with your escapism and activism and never turning to the Lord, there won't be any angel that brings you any atonement, there's going to be no, nothing from the altar touching you, it's just a fearful, awful, hopeless thought, isn't it?

[24:57] Don't go near that point. Let's go on into the next section. And we meet two people who sort of give us concrete examples of the things to be avoided.

So verse 15, this is what the Lord, the Lord Almighty says, go say to this steward to Shebna, who is in charge of the palace. So let's meet Shebna.

A very accurate picture of Shebna on the screen. And the Lord says to him, what are you doing here? Who gave you permission to cut out a grave for yourself here, hewing your grave on the height and chiseling out your resting place in the rock.

And what is Shebna, this high-up official, doing? Well, presumably he's building or tunneling a suitable resting place for somebody of his grandeur and magnitude, a sort of mausoleum, a sort of memorial to the great Shebna.

And that's what he's busy doing. He has a sash of office, he's making a grand grave, something like that, and he's thinking, that's what I'm going to be remembered.

[26:21] And there's also a reference to his splendid chariots, verse 18, to give him a splendid chariot. And God says, I'm just so disgusted with you, and actually there will be for you no splendid funeral.

Verse 17, the Lord is about to take firm hold of you and throw you away, oh mighty man, mighty man. He will roll you up tightly like a ball and throw you into a large country, and there you will die. There your splendid chariots will remain. You disgrace to your master's house. I will depose you from your office. You will be ousted from your position.

You will be chucked out. You're a disgrace. So here's one person to avoid. This strong, big, rich, powerful man who is thinking, well, I know we've got a crisis going on, but how can I be

remembered?

What would be the nice architecture for my grave? And they can come and put flowers on it later and remember what a big guy I always was. So proud, so strong, so spiritually insensitive.

[27:47] Shebner, what on earth are you doing? Do you think that's the right response to the situation that you're in? I think there are many Shebners around today who, faced with the brevity of life, the constraints of conscience and so on and so on, think, well, my response to that would be I'll make as big an empire as I can.

I'll surround myself with as many chariots and luxuries as I can, and that's my response. And God says, that is a disgraceful response.

you're in my world. You should be turning to me, not bigging yourself up.

Let's look at the next example. In that day I will summon Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah. Now he is said to be my servant.

So let's meet Eliakim. He's my servant. I will clothe him with your robe and fasten your sash round him.

[29:05] So let's put the sash on him. And I will hand your authority over to him. And there's lots of good things said about Eliakim. He'll be like a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.

Well, that's very commendable. He's not going to be an exploiter. He's going to be a father. He will verse 22 I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David.

So let's give him the key to the house of David. What he opens no one can shut. What he shuts no one can open.

So he's the center of power in the kingdom of David in that sense. And he's also likened to a peg in a firm place. I looked up the word firm and the amount of homework that I did such as it is linked it to the word that we have for our men.

Firm, established, strong, dependable, that sort of idea. And there's the wall and there's the plug and the peg put into the wall and it'll be like a peg in a firm place.

[30:21] And he will be a seat of honor for the house of his father. So there he is, good man, my servant. And now we find, verse 24, all the glory of his family will hang on him.

All the glory of his family, all the weight of his family. So people are going to start ringing him up. He has the key to the house of authority.

Uncle Eliakim, I've got two children that are just finishing university and they could really do with a sort of starter job. Have got anything that you could put them in?

Like Department of Transport or something like that? Thank you so much. Phone goes down. Uncle Eliakim, I've got a couple of nephews that have just come back from overseas a little bit stuck.

Could you find him any accommodation? Thank you so much. And on and on it goes. And all the family begin, presumably maybe even the family meaning the nation, but everything gets hung on him.

[31:36] so there's lots of vessels, bowls, cooking implements!

And the whole lot gets hung on him like that. And the poor man, because he's a good man, he tries to be helpful, but he cannot take this load.

He can't do it. each little request just adds up on the next. And you can't say there was one request that was the one that shouldn't have been done, because all the requests just add up.

They're all looking to him, they're all depending on him, and he just can't manage it. In that day, verse 25, declares the Lord, the peg driven into the firm place will give way, it will be sheared off and will fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut down, the Lord has spoken.

So we've got two people, Shebna, who I don't like at all, and we've got Eliakim, I think he's a very likeable man, and my servant, says the Lord, but the things that were hung on him were just too much.

[32:48] Even he is just a man. Now then, Jack, what was it that your pastor used to say? The best of men, but men at best, or something like that?

Is that right? Good. There's wisdom in that, isn't it? Servants of the Lord, maybe the best of men, but men at best.

You can hang things on them, but they have a limit somewhere. You can't just depend totally on any human being. You can't depend on the rogues, and even the best of men are men at best. you can't put your faith in the Eliakims, that they will solve all the problems. It's the Lord who solves the problems.

The Amen peg. The one to who, on whom we should hang our lives is not Eliakim, and no other human being, no matter how strong and worthy, should be the person that we hang our lives on. [34:07] We turn to people for advice, and they'll give good advice, better advice, whatever. We can ask for help, and people will give more help, less help, but we cannot lean the whole of our, the weight of our lives on anybody other than the Lord Jesus.

The peg. So please don't put ultimate faith even in good servants, only in the Lord. There is somebody who we can hang the whole of our weight of our lives on.

Jesus never said it about himself as a peg, but he did say, the wise man hears my words. Now, what am I trying to say?

And puts them into practice. He's like a man who builds his house upon the rock. So it's not a hanging idea, hanging on a peg, it's a foundation idea and standing on.

And Jesus says, you can most definitely build your life by hearing my words and putting them into practice. You can most definitely do that. I won't let you down.

[35:17] There is no weight that will cause me to crumble. You just build your life on that. That's the place to build. So, please don't put your total trust, even in people like pastors.

There's a temptation for churches to do that. Pastors serve the church, but they don't save the church. Even in the most close of relationships, in the marriage relationships, if husband or wife, I put wives here, to lean ultimately on the Lord rather than husband.

Let's just extend that into bereavement. We miss somebody terribly, but if we had depended on that person to give our lives meaning and firmness, we were depending on the wrong person.

we should have been depending on the Lord. Let's think of the key. Eliakim was the key holder, the great unlocker of locks.

And interestingly, that quote is taken up in the book of Revelation. The words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David.

[36:45] When he opens, no one can shut. What he shuts, no one can open. And he says, I set before you an open door. This is Jesus speaking in the book of Revelation. He's the great key holder, even as he is the great firm peg.

And this is the truth. If the Lord Jesus locks something, you're not going to undo it. Just worth noticing that.

There are some things in our lives who say, oh, if only that was open. And actually Jesus says, no, I've locked that. And no amount of your troubling, trying, whatever, is going to unlock it.

It's just my plan. Now, you don't always know that that's the case, but there are such cases. And maybe let's turn that round and say there's something that is locked up and we might say, Lord, can you unlock that?

Because you're the one who opens and no one can shut. Can you open that for me? and one could also say, what doors has he opened for you?

[38:04] Perhaps there's some doors that he's closed, some doors that he's opened. He says to the people in Revelation, I've set before you an open door. It might be worth thinking, I wonder what doors the great unlocker has unlocked for me.

Well, those are the things that we've looked at. We looked at the value of vision, the low point to avoid. We looked at the disaster, the certain connection between sin and unbelief and the consequence of judgment.

We weep that there is such a connection, but there is such a connection, it will happen. We look at the responses to the pressures on life, what it is and what it isn't.

They did loads of stuff, but they forgot to turn to the maker. Let's avoid that mistake. We saw a couple of examples, the complacency of Shebna, the sort of people who would, instead of weeping and turning to the Lord, would have a party and say, well, let's just forget it, eat and drink for

tomorrow we die.

And then we saw this other response, human capacity. We can work our way through this simply by good people.

[39:25] And he says, no, good people have their limits. You still need to trust ultimately in the Lord. And let's end where we began. Jesus saying, you know, you need to trust.

Your heavenly father knows your situation. he knows what you need. And at one point he says, he knows what you need before you ask. But ask him.

Learn to trust him. Trust in God, says Jesus. Trust also in me. Don't let your hearts be troubled.

Thank you.