

The God of Mercy

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Preacher: Pastor Andrew

[0 : 00] I would like you to turn in your Bibles this morning to Isaiah chapter 9 and at the outset!

Format that's going to press it together into several central and critical themes. As we begin our study of the Word of God, it goes without saying that the foundation of our study is the Word and we are undeniably dependent upon prayer to make it effective that I speak as one who has been appointed by God to do so and that your hearts are prepared to hear it and then to apply it practically.

Let me make this point clear at the very beginning. The purpose of preaching is ultimately to put us on the spot of saying yes or no to God. The Word is given to us and it is valuable for life and godliness.

And it's there for our instruction, for our edification, for our correction. And I have no doubt that there are individuals here today that need to hear explicitly what God's Word has to say today.

I would appeal to you to be a good listener and to depend upon the enabling of the Holy Spirit to hear that Word and to apply it to your life in practical terms that you may grow in godliness and grace.

[1 : 39] Some of you are here and do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm not certain of all who is not here as a believer, but I look at the group that God has put here together and I recognize that there are some today that need the Savior and they need to come to faith.

And so I would appeal that as you listen, you say, Lord, I would rather hear it now than in eternity. And I'd rather respond now than later.

I want us to begin by looking at this passage in broad terms and kind of summarize it this way. As we look at Isaiah chapter 9 and move our way through the remainder of the text that we're going to look at this morning, one of the things that I want you to start with is recognizing this, that God is the judge of the whole earth and He can be trusted to deal with sin.

Have you ever found yourself kind of frustrated that God hasn't dealt with others a little more rapidly than He has, actually? I mean, I'll give you an illustration that kind of resonates with me.

I'm one of those people that for the most part likes to follow the rules, particularly when you're driving. And nothing irks me more than when I am stopped in traffic and somebody takes it upon themselves to use the berm to move on down the road because they have to go somewhere much more important pace than me.

[3 : 05] And so I'm hoping, you know I'm praying at that time? I'm praying that they will run right into the back of a squad car that is parked in the berm and be stopped, smack, and then get rid in a ticket and I can drive on by going, ha, ha, ha, ha, you know.

We'd like God to deal with sin, right? Particularly with other people. The fact of the matter is, is that God will deal with sin. And as we look at this passage, what we are going to see is that God will deal with nations.

He will deal with individuals. Sin will not go unpunished. And we do well to allow God to be the one that takes revenge rather than to set ourselves up as the judge and jury instead of trusting Him.

For another thing, what we are going to see in this passage is that a loving God does keep His promises. He does His work in those He calls. And you may be sitting here this morning as someone who has actually come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but you have drifted away.

You have become indifferent to the blessing of your salvation. And let me tell you something. If you are a child of God, you will not stay comfortable in that disobedient place you are presently.

[4 : 30] Here's what it says in Hebrews. Whom the Lord loves, the Lord disciplines or chastens. And His purpose in doing that is to bring you back to Him to display His love and to bring about godliness and holiness in your life.

And so in terms of the big picture, what we're going to be looking at this morning is that God does deal with sin. And I've got to tell you this. I would rather be the one that God is disciplining than be the one that God is using to do the discipline.

If it's to be thought of, I would rather actually be the one who learns from watching God deal with other people in discipline rather than be the one that God has to discipline. How many of you follow that?

Listen carefully. A fool doesn't learn even from repeated strokes. I remember dealing with an individual once in a car with me. We were driving somewhere.

I'd pick the guy up. I wouldn't volunteer that this is what you should do. But I picked him up on the side of the road. And I was taking him somewhere, just helping him out in the rain and all that kind of stuff. And we got to talking.

[5 : 38] He was talking about how messy his life was. And so I asked him a question. I said, do you need any more evidence of how hard your life is in the path that you are on? That's a practical question, isn't it?

The individual said no. I said, then what would keep you from making a change and repenting and turning towards Christ? Later on, several days later, the individual called me and needed help. And we were in the flow of things again. And I said, hey, do you need any more experience to teach you that the path you're on is not a good one? No. Guess what I said next?

Well, would it be wise, knowing what you do about what sin produces in your life to change direction? What we're looking at this morning is a very, very clear passage in which we see that God deals with sin.

And so I want you to look with me here, beginning in Isaiah chapter 9, verse 8. And let me read a portion to you. Have it locked into your mind. And then we'll work our way through it.

[6 : 44] The Lord has sent a word against Jacob, and it will fall on Israel, and all the people will know. Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, who say in pride and arrogance of heart, the bricks have fallen, but we will build with dressed stones.

The sycamores have been cut down, but we will put cedars in their place. For the Lord has raised the adversaries of resin against him and stirred up his enemies.

The Syrians on the east and the Philistines on the west devour Israel with an open mouth. What we're looking at here is sober warning to Israel.

And I want you to understand that this warning is different than the prophetic cautions and the prophetic words of appeal that had come earlier.

When Isaiah speaks in this case, he is letting them know that God has come to the place that he is not going to let Israel go any longer, and he is going to deal with them very, very firmly.

[7 : 46] The fact that it says this is a word is different than, well, these are words. This is God saying, I'm done. I'm going to deal with you, and there's going to be no turning back.

And what we find here is that God is giving through the prophet a word of judgment that is going to come on the nation. And I want you to recognize that Isaiah, remember earlier when we were looking in Isaiah chapter 6, we understood that Isaiah was given this very sober responsibility of communicating the judgment of God against a very hard-hearted people.

They didn't care in the least what God thought. And here comes the prophet and says, let me tell you, God is going to deal with you. So as you work your way through this passage with me, I want you to recognize here in Isaiah chapter 9, beginning there in verse 8 and carrying on down to Isaiah chapter 10, verse 2, we're going to see four different indicators of what God was really troubled and offended by in the nation of Israel and what he was going to deal with.

For one, Isaiah had this sinful self-reliance. You look there in verse 9 and 10, and here is a people who say, well, okay, you're going to knock down the bricks, but guess what we're going to do? We're going to build up with cut stone. And cut stone referred to stones that had been carefully manufactured and put together, and they were much harder and larger.

[9 : 18] And when you built with cut stone, it was something that would last much longer than bricks. Furthermore, they made the statement, not only we're going to build with cut stone, but okay, you're going to knock down the sycamore, but we're going to build with cedar.

And that was an incredibly expensive wood. It's a little bit like in our day saying, okay, okay, we built this with pine, but we're now going to build it with solid oak.

It's going to be so much stronger. All right, so you knocked it down, but we're going to do it right, and we're going to put it together. And here are these people full of themselves saying, you know, we're not the least bit bothered by the hardship you bring to us.

We'll straighten it out. We'll do it our way. We also see there in verse 14 and 15 a very sinful trust in flawed and frail leadership.

So the Lord cut off from Israel head and tail, palm branch and reed. In one day, the elder and honored man is the head, and the prophet who teaches lies is the tail.

[10:21] You know what one of the problems was in Israel? They had people who were in positions of leadership, even in the priesthood, that really had completely compromised the Word of God and had no interest in making the Word clear.

They were interested only in appealing to the hearts of men rather than being obedient to Christ, obedient to the Word. And so here were people who, when they stood up to preach, when they stood up to speak, when they gave direction, they were primarily interested, and so what are people looking for?

I'll give that. I'll give that. And I want you to understand that here is God saying, these dishonest individuals are going to be cut off. And mark what it says here, verse 16, for those who guide this people have been leading them astray, and those who are guided by them are swallowed up. Do you recognize what's happening? God is letting the nation know that those who they had been listening to in all of that falsehood that had been propagated in that day, it was going to come to heartache and destruction in the lives of those who were listening to them.

Like prophet, like the people, like the priest, like the people, and this connection, flawed in its understanding, frail in its disobedient heart was going to end up causing heartache in abundance.

[11:49] As a side note, let me encourage you to know this, that I would encourage you to never trust in the word of a pastor, to never trust in the word of an evangelist, to never trust in any word that is not directly connected to the word of God.

Does that make sense? It is the word of God that is settled and lasts forever, and at the end of the day, you should be able to track what I say back to the passage itself, and that is something that will protect you in the days to come.

We live in a day and age where all kinds of people propose that they have something to say of significance, and it's legitimate to ask ourselves, well, where does their significance come from? Later in Isaiah, it makes it clear, unto the law and to the testimonies, if they speak not according to this, it's because there's no light in them. Trust the word, not the person.

I want you to also look, if you will, at verses 18 through 21, and we're going to find here that the nation had this sinful, selfish self-interest that was causing great heartache.

[12:57] Let me read the passage to you. For wickedness burns like a fire and consumes briar and thorns. It kindles the thickets of the forest, and they roll upward in a column of smoke.

Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts, the land is scorched, and the people are like fuel for the fire. No one spares another. They slice meat on the right, but are still hungry.

They devour on the left, but are not satisfied. Each devours the flesh of his own arm. Isn't that an interesting picture? Here is God describing what's happening in the nation of Israel, and without question, what you see is this picture of an incredibly selfish people that in their selfishness end up robbing, harming, lying, cheating one another, and as a result, they are consuming each other and actually consuming themselves.

Does that kind of sound a little bit like our day today? Does that sound like the world we live in? Everybody interested in their own self-interest and interested primarily in what they're going to get for themselves.

The other day, I walked in to drop off a little bit of dry cleaning, and I walked into the dry cleaning store over there on Broad Street, and I saw this sign that says, no longer accepting blue jeans over \$100.

[14:26] Now, guys, I do wear blue jeans. I wash my own. Well, my wife, my bride, 47 years, she washes them. But if I can't get them on the Internet or I can't get them over wherever, it's like, I don't buy them.

And I looked at that sign. It was the first time I'd ever crossed my mind that there were actually blue jeans that cost \$100. I looked at that sign, and I said to the lady who was writing on my ticket, I said, are there jeans that cost \$100?

She says, oh, yeah. There are blue jeans that cost, are you waiting? You're all seated. I'm standing. There are blue jeans that cost \$1,200. Hello?

I'll say that slowly so that you don't miss it. There are blue jeans, denim, you know, dyed with indigo or whatever else it is, blue jeans that cost \$1,200.

I looked at her. My jaw dropped. I said, you are kidding me. Who buys those kinds of blue jeans? You know what she said?

[15 : 38] She said, the only people that can afford those in this neighborhood, it's a west side, are drug dealers. And that's why we have that sign there.

We're not going to cater. And we're not going to be cheated. Because when you have a \$1,200 pair of blue jeans and you bring them in for dry cleaning and you are a snake to begin with, it's amazing how easy it is to find a spot on your blue jeans that then have trashed your \$1,200 blue jeans and guess what happens?

I thought to myself, the misery that drug dealers cause in the lives of other people for the sake of a \$1,200 blue jean. Here in the passage, God is saying, let me tell you, that sinful selfishness that is so characteristic of the people during that day ends up being a disease that devours both the people around and the people that are engaged in it.

And so here we end up seeing in this passage that the wicked end up consuming one another in their greed and their selfishness. You know what? Sin may get it over on somebody else, but in the end, the sinner is the one who's consumed by their own sin.

They're harmed. They're consumed. And here as God speaks to the nation of Israel, He says, listen, let me tell you something. I'm not going to put up with this spirit that I see in you.

[17 : 16] I'm going to deal with it. We find one other thing that Isaiah is talking about there in Isaiah chapter 10, verse 1 and 2. Let me read it. A sinful government. Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees and the writers who keep writing oppression to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right and the widows may be their spoil, that they may make the fatherless their prey.

It is not Washington that is the first place that ungodly government and leadership has been involved. And as Isaiah was writing to the nation or he was prophesying to the nation there in Israel, he was saying this, listen, God's done.

He is going to judge what's going on and he's had it with this spirit that is interested in passing legislation that harms other people and benefits a certain class or a certain group of people and yet for the most part is destructive.

He says, let me tell you something. The issue of seeking to pass legislation that benefit those who are pushing for the legislation and harm the poor, it's not the way God wants it done.

Incidentally, why has God ordained government? We find over there in Romans chapter 13, for one, it is to bring order, it is to bring safety, it is to bring benefit, and we are to pray for those who are in government that those who are in government would lead in an upright and righteous way and bring about peace and equity.

[18 : 59] That didn't happen during Isaiah's day and we find there that God through his prophet made it clear and I am going to deal with this problem. I have to tell you that as I read through this four-fold indictment of Israel, I couldn't help but think about where we are here in the United States of America today.

We are a country that has a tremendous amount of self-reliance to the extreme of confidence in our own might and our own power and we'll do it ourselves.

We also trust in flawed and frail leadership. It was very interesting. Yesterday, it was my privilege to preach Roger McBrayer's funeral and one of the things that you as a congregation know is that I always have looked at weddings and funerals as a golden opportunity to make, guess what clear? The gospel. And I had a number of individuals come to me and say, you know, pastor, I really appreciate the fact and I could always tell, you can tell when you're preaching, you can tell who really likes to hear what's being said and those who really would prefer being somewhere else. And here's the difference. You know, it's like, yeah, and there you go. So, I had people say to me, you know, I gotta tell you, the gospel was, what should you preach at a funeral?

[20 : 26] Does anybody have an idea besides that? I mean, the gospel should be clear. And here we are, we're in a day and age where those who are in positions of spiritual leadership have gone out of their way to accommodate the passions of self-centered people and not bringing the hope of the message in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I gotta tell you, when I think about where we are as a nation here in the United States, history has never seen a nation rise to this level of ascendancy and blessing faster.

And I'm afraid, unless there is genuine revival, that history will never record a more precipitous, rapid decline. But that brings me to another central piece in this message about God's judgment. He is going to, or he would punish rebellious Israel, but he was not going to let those that he used get away with being his instrument.

So let's look now, if you will, at Isaiah chapter 10 and we're gonna kind of step through a number of different pieces of text here. And I'm going to rely primarily on dealing with the very first one that we find.

[21 : 52] Before we actually look at this extended passage, I want you to turn back in your Bibles for a moment to a text in Genesis chapter 12, verse 3. Genesis chapter 12, actually verse 1 through 3.

By the way, so that you know where I stand on this issue, I believe fully that God keeps his promises and that he will keep his promise to the nation of Israel.

The Abrahamic covenant he has not abandoned. And over in Genesis chapter 12, verse 1 through 3, now the Lord said to Abram, go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

And I will make you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse and in you all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

God made a covenant with Abraham and his covenant still stands. Those who bless the children of Abraham will be blessed and those who curse the children of Abraham will be cursed.

[23 : 00] And history is full of examples of God dealing with that fact and making his promise clear and true. Our extended passage going back to the passage in Isaiah covering from Isaiah chapter 10 to 34 and I want you to know that next week pastor's going to preach the enthusiastic hope filled message of hey God does punish but he also offers mercy.

Right pastor? That's where we're going next week. So he's kind of slicing in some pieces. I'm the one. Is that a bad cop good cop kind of thing? I'm the bad guy. Hey, don't mess with God.

You got that? Say it to yourself and you can kind of pack out and leave. Don't mess with God. Next week pastor's going to God is merciful. God is merciful. God is merciful.

Okay. So here we are and as we work our way through we are going to see that God will deal not only with Israel for their sin against him but he's also going to deal with those that he would use to chase in Israel.

Assyria, Babylon, Philistia, Moab, Cush, Egypt, Tyre, Sidon. Did you remember all those? I'll give you a quiz. No.

[24 : 13] Every one of them that ended up causing Israel harm God would punish. Now let's look at Isaiah chapter 10 verse 5. Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger.

The staff in their hands is my fury. What follows in verse 5 all the way through 14 is a little window into the thinking of the Assyrians as they saw themselves in this position of being the instrument of God and they took it to heart and thought they were really full of themselves and in supreme power. You look down there and it says against a godless nation verse 6 I send him and against the people of my wrath I command him to take spoil and seize plunder to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

but he does not so intend and his heart does not so think but it is in his heart to destroy and to cut off nations not a few for he says here is Assyria being used by God to discipline his own beloved people and they were entirely blind to the fact that God was using them.

They didn't understand what God was doing. Furthermore we understand from verse 7 that actually they were being driven by their desire for power and to assert themselves and they figured out hey if I can take it it's mine and might makes right and that's exactly what they did.

[25 : 54] In verse 13 and 14 what we find is that Assyria is persuaded that they were able to do what they were to other nations simply because of their own power and their own brilliance.

13 for he says by the strength of my hand Isaiah chapter 10 verse 13 by the strength of my hand I have done it and by my wisdom I have understanding.

Have you ever bumped into people that were pretty full of themselves and thought that the reason they were in the position they were in and asserting the power that they had was really just because

they were smarter than the rest of everybody else and they were kind of full of themselves.

Here is Assyria displaying that kind of attitude and it's very interesting because as you work your way through Isaiah chapter 10 one of the things that you're going to see is two different pictures in what is going on in the very same time.

We can see in this passage the wicked hearts of the Assyrians and the wise and sovereign heart of God. Now is that hard to put together? It is.

[26 : 57] The wicked hearts of the Assyrians are thinking I am powerful and I can do exactly what I want and nobody's going to stop me. Disciplining the nation of Israel.

And God at the very same time is saying I am using you but when I'm finished using you I am going to discipline you for your own arrogance and your own hardness.

Kind of track with me as we work our way through and see this. In verse 5 God says woe to Assyria the rod of my anger. Hey you think you're in your position of authority and you are asserting it for your own pleasure and your own satisfaction and your own anger and God says hey back up I am using you to accomplish a purpose and don't let it go to your head.

Verse 12 when the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem he will punish the speech of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the boastful look in his eye.

You ever remind yourself of what happened in history particularly to the nation of Germany and their hatred of the Jews back in the 40s?

[28 : 17] God dealt with that nation in an unbelievably harsh way and I want you to understand that he has not changed his hand and his way of dealing even though he is incredibly patient in dealing with disobedient and hard-hearted people the day comes when he will do it.

So ask yourself the question why is God so patient and long-suffering? Two reasons. Ecclesiastes chapter 8 verse 11 says this listen because sentence for an evil deed is not speedily executed the heart of man is fully set in him to do it.

What's it saying? Because God is patient he lets your sin come right out in the open where you can't argue when he nails you and you can't say well I didn't really mean it.

Reminds me years ago watching a little class where the teacher stepped out of the room and one of the boys who was kind of the class clown you know every class has one this boy took it upon himself while the teacher had stepped out of the room to kind of give a little display for the audience now the teacher knowing the boy had stepped around the corner and she immediately took a different location and she watched this boy in full display as he pranced around at the front of the class it's like a fifth grade boy you know it's like full of all kinds of energy and foolishness and he had his back to the door wise decision and he was putting on a show a little dance and move and all that kind of stuff and the teacher kind of slowly stepped back into the door and the rest of the class realized the teacher was there before the boy and suddenly the class that had been laughing at the boy's behavior suddenly got quiet but the boy didn't read the signals because he was quite full of his energy and he was taking advantage of the moment and he was just full bore!

so when the teacher finally called his name and I won't mention that this morning the name he couldn't say I didn't mean it God in his patience is letting some here today fully display the hardness of their heart and when he brings judgment you will never be able to say to God you didn't give me a chance in verse 15 of Isaiah chapter 10 it says this shall the axe boast over him who hews with it or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it God's point was this is that I am using Assyria as an instrument of punishment in my hand against people that I love but need to be disciplined and when that instrument takes it upon themselves to be fully invested in their own attitudes and their own arrogance the day of vengeance is coming so let me say this in practical terms when you find yourself in a place of being used by

[31 : 40] God to correct and admonish other people let me encourage you to be very very careful that you do so with humility you know why listen up God hates pride he also hates a vengeful spirit when you are in the place that God has you dealing with another person your heart should be broken and should be sympathetic even when you exercise the responsibility that he has given you by the way it's also a dangerous thing to be in a place where you decide to be one who gets vengeance in place of God passage in over in Romans chapter 12 says this vengeance is mine I will repay hand it over to God let him deal with it now there's a larger picture that I want to come to here as I close off and I want to put it this way there's another point that follows through this entire passage this morning and we've looked primarily at Isaiah chapter 10 and not the rest of the other chapters between 10 and 34 and mind you

I pointed! different countries there's woe woe woe woe because God would use various ones to deal with the nation of Israel the thing that we find is that God willingly used these wicked people as instruments of judgment but he also held them responsible for their dealing with the nation of Israel so that kind of puts us on the spot of coming to grips with the fact that God is sovereign and man is responsible God is sovereign and man is responsible so how do you put those two truths together I'm going to introduce you to a theological term that you can use on each other in the car home okay are you ready antinomy antinomy I don't know if I had that in the notes or not but it's fact an antinomy is two seemingly opposing laws two seemingly opposing facts the Bible actually has a number of different antinomies that are hard for us to understand and so let me have you kind of connect with a couple of them that you probably are more comfortable with than the idea that God is sovereign and that man is responsible here's one that we most of all bought into that is the fact that God is triune what does that mean how many remember singing the classical little piece of song where God in three persons what blessed trinity we know that's a theological fact how easy is that to put together anybody here have it down no well let's try another one that actually took the church the early church about 450 years to get their head around do you know which one it was the absolute humanity of Christ and the absolute deity of Christ do those two pieces fit together

I remember at one point in the first ministry that I was in one of the senior deacons explained to me that Jesus was 50% man and 50% God and I was at that point like about 34 years old and I had the wisdom to at least bite my afterwards I said could you help me find that in the Bible that's always a good question to ask anybody you know so where is that in the Bible see God has many truths that are hard for our little minds to get our hands entirely around I have a little fluffy white dog that actually thinks she's pretty smart you know and I we left the house Judith is away quilting today and and Faith I said honey please lock your door Faith is visiting from Egypt she's on her anybody here interested in being a teacher in Egypt just let Faith know she's ready to and and my dog has a very limited vocabulary come here that means go you know it's like the one thing she understands without question

I don't know how she's got it figured out but when the refrigerator door opens she thinks that's dinner and so you know just go open it and shut it again Phoebe's brain could be matched up in comparison and it's a poor comparison but to my brain in relationship to God very very limited in my compatibility to figure out all these facts but here's the truth the Bible says here in this passage God is going to use wicked men to do his work and to discipline a hard hearted nation that he made a promise to and he is going to punish that nation for being the instrument that he chose I remind you of what we find over in the book of Acts remember where Peter was preaching the sermon of [37 : 25] Pentecost and he said you did exactly as God had foreordained and knew was going to happen when you crucified the Lord of glory according to the plan when did the plan of salvation come into being was it as Jesus was walking towards the cross and God well see if I can work something out here good there are actually theologians that propose that God is entirely dependent upon us working it out in such a fashion and well he'll no God is sovereign and man is responsible we kind of look through this passage in Isaiah chapter 10 in particular one of the things that I want you to understand is this is that God can be trusted to keep his promises promises and if you're sitting here and you're a believer who has trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation the matter is settled for all eternity your salvation is the work of

God it's not you interesting opportunity earlier to talk with an individual about the matter of salvation I said how did you come to faith! well he saved me well the fact of the matter is the same one who saved you is also the one who keeps you God can be trusted to keep his promises that brings me to one other point that I want to settle in your minds this morning and I don't want you to miss it God will deal with sin God will deal with sin we have a tendency because God is patient to think that he is indifferent to sin I want you to turn as we close over to passage in Luke chapter 13 during the time that Jesus was on the earth there was kind of a predominant theory that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people do you got that one good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people and so when something bad happened it was fair to speculate well they must have been doing something bad

Luke chapter 13 there were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices and he answered them do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered in this way hey

going into the temple to sacrifice and getting butchered was not a good thing to have happen to you right and Jesus says are you sitting here thinking that that happened because these people were worse than others look at the next one no I tell you verse three unless you repent you will all likewise perish or those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem no no I tell you unless you repent you will all likewise perish so let me close off by bringing it down in very practical terms I would appeal to you who are here today and know Christ as your personal savior that you not take sin in your own life carelessly I want to make this point clear the way God deals the way God deals with sin in the believer's life is different than the way God deals with sin in the unbeliever's life the believer can be assured of discipline and chastening in this life and can I tell you something I can tell you from 69 years of experience God is not someone to mess with one of the advantages of being as old as I am is I have plenty of scar tissue and every now and then when I go on one of my stubborn stupid streaks he kind of taps not going there again how many of you are with me I don't need another round

I'm convinced God deals with believers as it says in Hebrews he chastens whom he loves that we may be partakers of his holiness isn't that an encouraging fact when he puts the heat on Tim Kenoyer his goal is my progressive sanctification I like that I just as soon not have to have the heat. [42 : 14] When God deals with sinners, in this life, for the most part, his intent is to draw you to the cross.

It goes back to that boy that I had in the car with me. And after he'd shared part of his life with me, I said, so how much more evidence do you need that a disobedient and sinful life doesn't work out well?

Is that a fair question? And there's some of you here this morning, as one who has been appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ to plead with you for the sake of the gospel.

Be practical. Be realistic. I'm reminded of what a man named Harold Platinga said. He said, sin, hold on to this, sin is an opportunistic virus that always destroys its host.

Sin is an opportunistic virus that always destroys its host. And if you sit here this morning with a stubborn and hard heart towards God, and you are resistant to the sweetness of the offer of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, it will only get harder until the day comes that you have no opportunity because you have died in your sins and lost the hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[43 : 53] And so it is fitting, it is fitting, for one who tells you about the fact that God judges sin to also tell you that God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to take the full burden for our wicked, dark hearts and to pay for that on the cross that whosoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.

And I would plead with you this morning, do not delay in trusting Him. Let's close in prayer. Our Father God, Your Word is clear.

You are a God who is holy and just and will not overlook sin. You will punish it. We thank You that You have sent the Lord Jesus Christ as full payment for our sins, and whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

And my plea this morning is that Your Spirit would bring people to the cross. Not because they simply have made an excellent decision, but because this morning the Spirit of God is convicting them and breaking through the hardness of their heart and bringing them to the point of seeing there is no hope apart from Christ.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.