

Choose the Soft, Gentle Leadership of God

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[0 : 00] I want you to go with me to Isaiah chapter 8 and verse 6. If you write things down, this is a very long title, but choose the soft, gentle leadership of God.

That's what I want you to look at in chapter 8. Choose the soft, gentle leadership of God. Now, I'll just be honest with you. Isaiah is one of those books of the prophets. You know, the prophets are harder reading than most.

Daniel is probably the easiest for most people than Isaiah. And I'll be honest, in Isaiah chapter 8, I would have told you, I would have had little to say about it, but I've lived in it for several days.

And I just want you to read some of the most beautiful things in the world. I've got to go quickly. I've got about 20 minutes, but would you look? Verse 6, this people refuses the waters of Shiloh that go softly.

Underline that. That's Jerusalem's water. That's God's city's water. And the prophet is using a metaphor. He's using an illustration.

[0 : 58] He's trying to help them see it. And he said, God's people are refusing the water God provides. And they rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son. That's Assyria.

That's a wicked king, a godless king, an atheistic king, an idol-worshipping king. And so, therefore, the Lord brings upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, in all his glory.

And he shall come up over all his banks and channels and go over all his banks. Tremendous lesson. I want to give you five things you can take home.

And we should be able to get it done if you'll follow along quickly. Number one, it starts off in Isaiah chapter 8, verses 1 through about 4. And Isaiah is going to have a kid, and the kid's name is going to be Mahershalabasha.

It's the longest name in the Bible. And I have no idea if I said it anywhere near right. It's like four names all hooked together, according to Bible scholars. And the name was a warning.

[2 : 02] The name meant quick to plunder, swift to spoil. So God was letting Isaiah have kids, and one message is, God's going to let this army come against you because you've chosen that.

And that army will be quick to plunder and swift to spoil. His other son, by the way, is going to be named Emmanuel, God with us. You can have what the world offers, or you can have what God offers.

You can have what God would do for you, or what the world would do. And he said, you're going to find out that the world is an oppressive tyrant. God's loving and sweet and gentle and kind, but the world is hard and will hurt you.

The system of sin and rebellion against God will rob you and mistreat you. Look at verse 4. All your stuff will be taken away before the king of Syria. There's a warning about the consequences of sin in those first verses.

None of us in this room can deny that God's Holy Spirit has warned us about what sin will do to us. The word of God warns us about what sin will do to us. Almost every one of you, if you were honest, would say, when I do wrong, something inside of me tears me up.

[3 : 12] I know I'm doing wrong. That's not the preacher talking to you, and that's not your little conscience talking to you. The Holy Spirit of God is saying to you, this ain't right, and you're going to get hurt. This ain't right, and you're going to get hurt.

We know that we ought to choose God and his word over the world and their word. We have been warned. He loves us. He does not want us to hurt. He doesn't want to hurt us, and he doesn't want to see us hurt.

But sin has consequences. Look at verse 6. If you choose the world, you'll get the world in excess. If you choose the world, you'll get the world in excess.

It says here, the people refused. God had put them a beautiful river that was sweet and soft and gentle flowing into their city.

And yet they wouldn't trust God who put that river. They went to seek a false king, a king who didn't love God. They needed his help because they didn't feel like they could trust God. The waters of Shiloh are God's leadership.

[4 : 12] God's guidance. God's protection. The sweet, gentle, kind, meek, and lowly. This God that we serve forces us only with love.

The love of Christ constrains us. He's not hard. He's not mean. He's not beating on us. But they refuse his leadership. They refuse his leadership. And they choose Assyria, a pagan nation, instead of God.

And so that, in verse 7, is going to overflow the banks. I've got a gentle flowing river coming your way, going to meet your needs. But if you choose the world, when Assyria comes, she'll climb out of her channel.

She'll climb out of her banks and you will get hurt. We were in Arequipa. I don't know. It might have been. I think it was 1989. And somehow, up in the mountains, we have one main river that feeds the entire city.

And that one river is really almost what, in the country, we would have called a creek. It's not a big river. And somehow, they blocked it off in the very top of the mountain. And somehow, it broke loose and came down.

[5 : 19] It came up out of its channel, crossed over its bank, and went up to the second floor in all the houses in the avenue along the street. People were drowning. Houses were destroyed.

That's a perfect example. He said, you don't choose God. You don't choose God. Let me explain to you. Sin won't stay where it's supposed to. Sin's not controllable. Sin's going to come up out of the banks, and it's going to flood over, and it's going to destroy you.

But then he says, in a nice way, in chapter 8 and verse 8, he said, but I'll still be there because he's sweet. He's sweet and gentle and kind. Look, if you would, in verse 8, he said, it'll only get to your neck.

Look at that. He said, yeah, it's going to be bad. And stuff's going to be tearing up, but it'll reach even to the neck. And then it uses the words that's going to stop the water.

Oh, Emmanuel. God with us. They chose to reject God and his rulership. They chose worldly alliances over God. They chose a world system that hated God.

[6 : 21] But God will not let sin win. It never wins. It may win against you, and you may get hurt. You may even destroy your family. But God says, if you attack my people, he's talking about Judah.

He's talking about Jerusalem. He said, if you attack my people, you will get destroyed. By the way, that's one of the reasons that those of us who are Bible students tend to like to pray for Jerusalem and pray for Israel and believe in them because God's pretty big on taking care of them.

In chapter 8 and verse 9, he said, associate yourselves, O you people. You guys all get together over there, Assyria and all you foreign kings that think you can beat up on my little people in my little town and you think you can destroy them.

You will be broken in pieces, all ye of far countries. You shall be broken in pieces. You shall be broken in pieces. You do not attack God's people.

He will take care of God's people. Aren't you glad you're God's people, amen? Aren't you glad the water's going to get to your neck? It doesn't have to get there. Why don't you choose the soft waters of Shiloh?

[7 : 24] Why don't you choose the general sweet love and direction of our God? Isaiah says, Emmanuel, God with us, he will win the victory. Look at verse 10.

He said, take counsel. It won't do you any good. Speak the word. It will not stand for God is with us. Bring all your attacks. Fight us, king of Assyria. Bring it on.

It won't happen. If you choose to attack God's people, you choose your own destruction. If you choose, you'll choose your own destruction. I'll quickly, because I'm skipping Isaiah 54, verse 17.

He said to them, Isaiah says, no weapon formed against thee shall prosper. God will take care of Judah. God will take care of Jerusalem. God will take care of his people.

That's a beautiful promise even for me, isn't it? That the devil can attack me and the devil can destroy me. And if I choose wrong, isn't it amazing? Even when I make wrong decisions, God's like, I'm going to let you hurt, buddy, but I'll stop it at the neck.

[8 : 26] I love that. You're not going to go to hell. Might get the holy mess knocked out of you. Everything in your life might fall apart, and the storm waters may tear your house down, and you may be taken captive, but I'll never leave you.

I'll never forsake you. I'll never depart from you. You are my people. Look what he says to his people, if you would, in chapter 8 and verse 11. Don't go along with those people.

Don't go along with those people. Look at verse 11. For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying.

So the Holy Spirit of God speaks to Isaiah. He has his hand on him. He's saying, I'm talking to you, boy. Listen to me. And the Holy Spirit of God is saying to him, there's a way of these people, these that attack me, these that don't believe in me, these that don't trust me.

Stay away from them. Don't do what they do. God's people are to live obeying the word of God. You should underline in verse 11, the Lord spake. That was kind of interesting.

[9 : 30] I hear Robert preaching. I'm like, man, a psalm ought to go with this. The Lord spake. Underline that in verse 11. The Lord spake. And he didn't just speak. He spoke with a strong hand.

He said, hey, listen to me. I'm in charge. I'm telling you what to do. And look at that. He instructed me. He instructed me. So he instructed them about what they were to do. And they weren't to think like those people.

Look at chapter 8 and verse 12. It wasn't a conspiracy. Isaiah wasn't leading a conspiracy against the king. Isaiah wasn't doing anything to try to cause problems.

He was just telling them, you guys ought to get a hold of who you're afraid of. You ought to get a hold of who you respect. You ought to honor and respect our God. He's the one with real power.

The king of Assyria has no real power. The giants in the land aren't bigger than our God. God, like Joshua and Caleb said, they are pan comido.

[10 : 27] They are bread that's been eaten. They are no defenses. They can't win. Our God is greater. Our God is bigger. Look, if you would, in verse 12. Neither fear ye their fear.

Don't you be afraid of them. Don't you be afraid of them. You don't have to be afraid of the devil. You don't have to be afraid. I was in Haiti, the first country I ever visited, way back in the early 80s.

As I was riding a horse across a stream, this lady was yelling at me. I couldn't understand her. She was speaking in Creole. The guy with me said, she says she's a witch and she's going to turn you into a frog.

I said, just tell her I'm a man of God, belong to Jesus, and she can't do nothing to me because greater is he that's in me than he that's in the world. I am not afraid. You do not need to be afraid. You don't have to be afraid of devils.

You don't have to be afraid of demons. You don't have to be afraid of anything because you belong to Jesus. He says in verse 13, you're to fear God, not man, not a foreign king.

[11 : 29] Verse 13, sanctify the Lord of hosts himself. Put your heart on God. Think about him. Think about who he is. Think about his power. Think about what he can do.

And then he says, let him be your dread. Let him be your fear. I tell you, y'all are worried about the wrong one. What did Jesus say? Don't fear a man. Take your life.

Fear somebody could take your eternity. Get a hold of who you're afraid of. We know our God. We know our God. And our God has a sanctuary where he is.

In verse 14, he shall be for a sanctuary. And those who rise up against our God and attack our God and try to hurt our God, he said, I'll be a stone of stumbling.

In verse 14, a rock of offense, a jinn and a snare. In verse 14, if they attack, I will. You know, see, God can protect you or destroy you.

[12 : 26] God can block you or bless you. And he said, but for a stone of stumbling. And Jesus is that stone of stumbling in the New Testament. So many people go to hell because they won't trust Jesus.

They'll trust themselves. They'll trust their intellect. They'll trust others, but they won't trust Jesus. And many, verse 15, shall stumble and fall and be broken, be snared and be taken.

We don't follow the world's logic. Can I get an amen there? You do not need to know what Oprah has to say about anything, really. You don't need to know what any other television, you don't need to know what Fox News has.

Let me just tell you, let me tell you how worried I am about North Korea. I am not. I really am not. I haven't lost an ounce of sleep. Don't plan on it. You say, well, I'm worried about our president. I'm not. I've got somebody bigger than a president.

You say, I don't know if I can trust our president. I don't trust our president. I don't trust any president. I trust the God of heaven. You ought to get a hold of who you're looking at, who you fear, who do you believe in? We have a God.

[13 : 27] We fear God and what he can do, not man and what he can do. We run to God's instruction and listen to God and not the world's wisdom. In the verse, there's just some sweet verses that just jump off the page.

Look at verse 17, if you would. You ought to wait looking for the Lord. And this verse is, I don't know, maybe I feel like it's a little humorous. Because God's like, y'all need to trust me and you need to look at me.

But then he hides. I just think that's funny. Look at it in verse 17. I will wait upon the Lord that hides his face from the house of Jacob.

See, God's like, you're not paying attention to me. You're not listening to me. I'm not going to be that easily accessed because you just use me and abuse me. You're not in love with me. You want me to give you money. You want me to give you kids.

You want me to work in your life. You want me to do everything, but you'll love me. And he says, so I'm not here that accessible to you. Because God is not here to be your genie in a bottle.

[14 : 27] Can I get an amen there? God's not here to meet your needs. God's here for you to love him and serve him. God's not here for you to serve you. You're here to serve him. I love what it says.

I'll wait on the Lord that hides his face. I will look for him. Do you? Do you? Do you? Do you? Think back 45 years ago.

45 and a half years ago. I saw this girl that I liked very much and I thought she was really special. But I had to chase her. She's too prestigious for me.

She told her mama I was a redneck. I was like, you don't even know what a redneck is. Because I didn't know what a redneck was. When you are one, you don't recognize one.

Say amen. And she told me what a redneck was. I said, ain't a redneck. That's somebody I know. I don't know anybody like you. You know what I did? I was looking for her. You know what?

[15 : 26] The God of heaven is looking at you and saying, you love me? Won't you look for me? Isn't it amazing how he makes himself like a person in this verse? It's kind of like when Jesus said on the road to Emmaus, he got through talking to him and he said, he acted as if he would go on.

And they said, would you keep talking to us? He's like, I thought you'd never ask. He wants to talk to you. He wants to love you and spend time with you. So they were told to hold on to what's true.

Verse 16, bind up the testimony. Verse 17, I will wait on the Lord again that hides his face. Verse 18, God made these people to be signs and for wonders.

He made his people. That's who I am. That's who you are. The God of heaven is wanting to prove his great power and he's using us to be his show and tell. He's like, watch what I can do.

I got this piece of clay that ain't all that good and I'm fixing to do something big with it. He said, seek me. Lost people are seeking the black arts. Verse 19, the lost people are going to familiar spirits and wizards that peep and mutter.

[16 : 26] I think that's funny as I'll get out. But that's Isaiah making fun of the sounds they make when they go in there and do the Ouija board and all that other junk. And Isaiah 19 says, should not a people seek unto their God?

Should not a people seek unto their God? Let's look for God. Verse 20 says, to the law and the testimony. If they speak not according to this word, there's no light in them.

It's only the word of God. Anybody says anything else? A preacher stands up, opens his Bible, starts to speak. If he doesn't say what the word of God says, no light.

He can be a far better speaker than another guy. But some ignorant guy, some guy that never did anything but believed the Bible stands up and talks to you and just tells you what the Bible says, there's light there. Your Sunday school teacher probably has more light than Dr. Bottle Stopper who graduated from the majority of places.

Because he learned what he thinks. When you don't need what you think, we need what God says. So here's some lessons. The world will try to crowd out the things of God. And we push God off to the side because we let this world become our life.

[17 : 31] We choose for ourselves and we choose what we want and we reject the truth of God and his sweet leadership. And it leads to the mastery of sin. Some of you guys are dealing with pornography.

And God's so sweet and gentle. And he wants you to have a wonderful marriage. And he wants you to have a wonderful life. And he wants to bless you. And he said all this stuff for that. But you're like, oh, that's just too hard.

I'll just, I'll control my pornography. I'll control my adultery. I'll control this junk. It'll stay in the banks. It'll never take over my life. It'll never ruin me. And God said, you better pick.

Because if you pick them, it will come out of the banks. And it will hurt you. And it will destroy you. You can have my sweet leadership or watch how the waters rage when the wicked come against you.

If Christ isn't our king, then a mob of passion and sin will be. Doesn't take long to become a slave to your lust. Sin may have a pleasure for a season, but it will destroy you in the end.

[18 : 34] What the devil tells you is freedom is really slavery cloaked. You know, people come to church and they're like, I don't know, man. Serving God, you got so many rules. Really? The truth of the matter is, the truth of the matter is, the devil tries to make you think that me having to love my wife and no other women is limiting my freedom.

But in all honesty, it's giving me the greatest freedom in the world. Choose today to humble yourself before God and enjoy his sweet leadership instead of the tyranny of sin.