

STABILITY IN FEARING THE LORD

Isaiah 33: 6 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

10th Annual Conference of the Intermountain West District – EFFC

Saturday Morning, April 24, 2021 – 10:30 AM

God alone is the stability of our times. In crises, we are more secure than ever. In the face of inadequacy and despair, in the face of life's despondency and meaninglessness, God is here, and He is the stability of our times. Our text today is Isaiah foretelling the coming of Messiah, in the face of Israel facing a terrible threat. The passage is set around 713 BC when Judah was facing a national threat from Assyria. The ten northern tribes of Israel had already been taken captive by Assyria in 722 BC. As Assyria drew near to Jerusalem, the people of Judah were unsure of what to do. Some believed they should surrender to Assyria, while others considered forming an alliance with Egypt. The prophet Isaiah was sent by God to warn the people to do neither. Isaiah was sent to tell the southern kingdom of Judah to fear the Lord—that is our treasure as believers. Isaiah spoke clearly about the folly of allying with Egypt in Isaiah 30: 1-5. Then in Isaiah 37: 14-20, we hear King Hezekiah's prayer. Then God spoke in Isaiah 37: 21, 33-38, saying in essence, "Fear Me, I will be your treasure and stability. I will be your conquering army. I will be your resource. In Isaiah, 26: 3-4, Isaiah spoke to God saying, "You keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in You." Then Isaiah spoke to the people saying, "Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord is an everlasting rock. In Isaiah 30: 15, God told Isaiah to tell God's people, "In quietness and confidence/resting in the Lord, shall be your strength."

God never changes through time. He has been, He is, and He ever will be the stability of His people no matter what we face. Hebrews 13: 8 is our treasure. "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever." Our hours of trial may be intense. But God keeps a firm grip on each of us through the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ living in us. If God has been teaching us anything at this conference, and if we are taking in the Word as we have been, He has been saying, "Quit letting the national news from any channel be your baseline on what to fear. Fear Me. In Southern California, I am sure Gus and Karen have been on the road that goes straight from San Dimas, at the Big Dalton Canyon, to Highland, just east of San Bernardino. It is called Baseline Road, and it is 38 miles long. It follows the baseline used in the original survey of that area of California, a straight line that has not moved or changed in over 150 years. The Dictionary defines a baseline as "a line serving as a baseline for measurement, calculation, or location." When the fear of the Lord and of God's Word is the baseline for our lives, we have a reference point that does not shift, no matter what the circumstances. God is the reliable baseline, foundation, and the stability that will always make sense out of any confused and conflicted problem that arises in our lives. If the fear of the Lord is Zion's treasure, and it is, then God highly values as a treasure when we as God's people, fear Him. We are the Bride of Christ, the very Israel of God, Galatians 6: 14. When we join Abraham in our faith and fearing God, we stop trembling.

For a few moments on this last morning of our 10th Annual IWD-EFFC Conference, before we share the Lord's Supper, God the Holy Spirit is calling us to His final means of giving us stability for our times. We have heard powerful messages that this stability for our volatile days is God's salvation, His wisdom, and His knowledge. Now let's examine for a few moments, how the fear of the Lord is God's means of giving us stability for our times. The Word of God teaches 5 brief but powerful priorities, that God uses to lead us into a true fear of the Lord.

FEARING THE LORD BEGINS WITH AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM THAT IS EVER GROWING. (I.) Turn with me to Isaiah 41: 10.

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. Behold, all who are incensed against you shall be put to shame and confounded; those who strive against you shall be as nothing and shall perish. You shall seek those who contend with you, but you shall not find them; those who war against you shall be as nothing at all. (In essence, I will fight for you.) For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, “Fear not, I am the one who helps you.” All true fear of the Lord develops out of a personal relationship with the Lord when drawn to Jesus by God the Father, we repent, believe, and receive Him. When we speak of the fear of the Lord, it is more than unbelievers, and even the devil and his angels, who fear and tremble before God. James 2: 19 declares, “Even the demons believe—and shudder.” How does this intimate relationship grow? It most often comes in times of tests and trials. The doctor says, “There is no hope.” Don't be afraid. God says, **“I am with you, I will help you, I will fight for you.”** How does this work? We get the hospital bill, and we don't know how we will ever be able to get the money to pay the bill. God says...Our marriage runs into a desperate situation and we say, “I don't know what I am going to do if he/she leaves me.” God says...We face a situation at work that it looks like we will lose our job, or it looks like we aren't going to get a job again. God says...This week I was told that if our country goes broke, our bank or banks can seize our accounts and all we own will be lost. God says...We say, “One of my teenagers is angry and won't even talk to me.” God says, “Don't be dismayed, I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. I will keep a firm grip on you. Don't be anxious. Don't fear what man can do to you. Fear Me.”

The hymn writer, Oscar C. Eliason (1902 - 1985), was a Swedish American pastor. He served also as an evangelist in the Assemblies of God. Oscar was a prolific poet and composer. He composed over 50 hymns and gospel songs. Oscar and his brother Paul were both diagnosed with tuberculosis. Both men were hospitalized at a sanatorium in Minneapolis. After the death of Paul in 1929, and the collapse of Oscar's right lung, Oscar was very depressed and discouraged. Though he was still sick, Oscar continued to pastor. In 1964, a visiting Presbyterian pastor prayed for him and Oscar was healed. Yet, in the middle of his sickness, Oscar wrote a hymn in 1946, that Cliff Barrows and the Billy Graham Crusade Choir began to use in their crusades. Graham crusade in Minneapolis. which was attended by Eliason.

This hymn shows how Oscar Eliason coped with tuberculosis, and never lost his fear of the Lord, but grew in that reverence. Here are the words: "I've learned to know a name I highly treasure. O how it thrills my spirit thro' and thro'! O precious name, beyond degree or measure, my heart is stirred whene'er I think of You! Chorus: My heart is stirred whene'er I think of Jesus, that blessed name which sets the captive free --The only name thro' which I find salvation. No name on earth has meant so much to me. (2) That name brings gladness to a soul in sorrow. It makes life's shadows, and its clouds depart -- Brings strength in weakness for today, tomorrow, that name brings healing to an aching heart. (3) That name still lives and will live on forever, while kings and kingdoms, will forgotten be." Thro' mist or rain, 'twill be beclouded never. That name shall shine and shine eternally." Intimacy with the Lord is reserved for those who fear him" David said in Psalm 25: 14, "The secret or the friendship of the Lord is for those who fear Him." Secondly,

FEARING THE LORD COMES FROM HOW WE SPEAK OF GOD

DIFFERENTLY AND NEVER DISRESPECTFULLY. (II.) Notice Isaiah 41:1 "Listen to Me in silence, O coastlands; Let the peoples renew their strength; Let them approach, then let them speak; let us together draw near for judgment. The coastlands have seen and are afraid; the ends of the earth tremble. They have drawn near and come." One of the greatest examples of fearing God in the Bible is Job. We read in Job 1: 1, "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil." Job lost his family, (7 sons and 3 daughters) his wealth, his health, and his own wife told him to curse God and die. Yet, we read in Job 1: 21-22, that Job tore his robe, shaved his head, fell on the ground, and worshipped God saying, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Listen even to fellow believers. I sadly hear believers when things go wrong, curse and swear.

How we speak about God is a priority that must always prevail. The last prophet in the Old Testament, Malachi, in Malachi 3: 13 spoke to the people saying, "Your words have been hard against me," says the Lord. In Malachi 3: 15-18, God gives us the definition of what makes us as believers stable in our times and it includes how we speak of Him. We read, "Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a Book of Remembrance was written before Him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed His name. "They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him. When we say, "Excuse my French or we let it rip, whatever vulgar words or curse words come out, we demonstrate at those moments that we do not fear God as we should. What's in the well, will come up in the bucket. "What the heart is full of, the mouth speaks." -- Luke 6: 45. In Romans 3: 18, Paul quoted David in Psalm 36: 1, saying of the unrighteous, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Thirdly,

FEARING THE LORD ALWAYS MEANS WE HONOR HIS WORD. (III.)

When we begin to speak of the need for stability in our times, this third priority is paramount. Fearing God mean we give great reverence to His Word. Isaiah speaks of this in a verse that makes chills go up and down my back when I think of it. Isaiah 66: 1-2 is powerful speaking of God as Creator, and it speaks of our Creator and Redeemer's response to us who fear Him. We read, "Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool; what is the house that you would build for Me, and what is the place of My rest? All these things My hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my Word." God fearers never take one Word of the Lord lightly, but God-fearers are quick to do what the Word of God says.

Our very destiny is tied to how we respond to the Word of God. Jesus' words in Matthew 7: 24-27 give us the choice for our destiny. Jesus said, "Everyone then who hears these words of Mine and does them, will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." If we ignore God's word, our destiny will be that we fall. If we honor God's Word, we take time to read it daily. We cannot honor God any higher than when we obey His Word. We hear God's Word and we do it. What a rebuke Jesus gave to his family in Luke 8: 21. It was not until after the cross of Jesus and His resurrection, that His family believed in Him. Listen to what happened in Luke 8: 19-21. "Then his mother and his brothers came to Him, but they could not reach Him because of the crowd. And He was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You." But He answered them, "My mother and My brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it." Are we reading God's Word and doing it? That's our stability for today. Fourthly,

FEARING THE LORD IS CHARACTERIZED BY LIVING A HOLY LIFE.

Notice (IV.) Notice Isaiah 8: 11-13. "For the Lord spoke to me with His strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying, "Do not call conspiracy, all that this people, calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread, But the Lord of hosts, Him you shall honor as holy. Let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread." In Isaiah 35: 8, the prophet further tells us that the path of the those fearing the Lord is the Highway of Holiness. The apostle Paul in II Corinthians 6: 16—7: 1, agrees with Isaiah, saying, "What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and

daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty.” Since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, **bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.**” Because we fear God, we should endeavor to perfect holiness or to say it plainly, we should get rid of sinful habits in our lives, in the fear of God. How do they do this? Paul tells us that we must cleanse ourselves from **all** filthiness—from every defilement.” We should never tolerate any known sin in our lives, no matter how small. This doesn’t mean that we separate ourselves from unsaved sinners. The Lord desires that we share the Gospel with all people. To do that, means that we cleanse ourselves from all sinful thoughts, words, and actions and that we hate what God hates and only do those actions that please God. When we fear God, we strive daily to live holy lives. 5thly

FEARING THE LORD IS DOING EVERYTHING GOD COMMANDS US.

(V.) This means whatever God commands us in His Word or we know He is prompting us to do, we will obey, whatever it is. We read, in Isaiah 50: 10, **“Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the voice of His servant?”** God links fearing Him with obeying Him on all counts. Abraham, the father of faith, was tested by God and told in Genesis 22: 1, “Abraham!” And Abraham answered God, saying, “Here am I.” And God said, “Take your sons, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one the mountains of which I will tell you.” This child of promise given to Abraham at age 100 and Sarah 90 was to be offered as a lamb on an altar, slain, and set on fire to burn before the Lord. Abraham was obedient, and just as he was about to kill Isaac; the angel of the Lord stopped him by saying, “Abraham, Abraham,” And Abraham said, “Here I am!” And God said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me. Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me” (Genesis 22: 12) Abraham’s radical obedience to God demonstrated he feared God. God is looking for this kind of radical obedience in you and me. God may allow us to go through certain difficult tests to see if we have this special treasure in us, “the fear of the Lord.” Isaiah was speaking of this treasure of radical obedience in our text, when He said, in Isaiah 33: 6, “And He will be the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is Zion’s treasure.”

The fear of the Lord that obeys whatever He asks of us, is an extremely valuable treasure in each of our lives when we fully surrender to God, as Abraham did. A pastor from India by the name of Dr. Stuart Pattico is the pastor of Joy Community Church in England. As I came to this fear of the Lord being a doing of whatever God asks of us, I found these words he wrote. “What if God spoke to you and asked you to give up the thing that was most valuable to you? Would you give it up? Perhaps God has been speaking to you to give up something. See to it that you obey Him, for then you will demonstrate what is most valuable to God – the fear of the Lord. If we fear God, then we will do what God tells us to do, no matter what it is. Has God spoken to you about something? Has He called you to do a particular work for Him? No matter how hard it seems, it is so important that you obey Him. Radical obedience is the virtue that characterizes those who fear the Lord.” As I close and we take the Lord’s supper, do you have in your life the stability of the fear of the Lord? (1,2,3,4,5) Amen! Would you bow your heads?