

Text: Isaiah 3:1-26

Title: "The Lord's case against corrupt leaders and arrogant ladies"

Time: 3/30/2025 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: This month our nation's President designated the Venezuelan illegal immigrant gang called Tren de Aragua as a foreign terrorist organization and had its members deported to a prison in El Salvador. In response, the ACLU and a group named Democracy Forward filed a lawsuit that asked for a restraining order on the deportation of these gang members, claiming that the 1798 law under which they were deported was not applicable because a declaration of war from Congress was lacking.

Ruling on the lawsuit, Obama appointee James Boasberg, chief judge of the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., issued a 14-day restraining order on the deportation of the gang members and demanded that the prisoners be returned. Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley, the Republican chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, published a statement about the judge's decision on X: "Another day, another judge unilaterally deciding policy for the whole country, this time to benefit foreign gang members. If the Supreme Court or Congress doesn't fix, we're headed toward a constitutional crisis."

Isaiah warns Israel of a national crisis in our chapter this morning. The prosperity then enjoyed by the nation is evident in the chapter, but their future was not bright according to the foresight of God's prophet. Two crises concern the prophecy: (1) corrupt leaders and (2) arrogant ladies. These are listed in chapter 3 as reasons Israel must cease from man and return to the Lord (2:22; 3:1 begins "For").

In our own nation, we have seen how both the corruption of government power and the corruption of women's role in the home have undermined our freedoms and our families, threatening the survival of our civilization. This much our nation has in common with Isaiah's nation of Israel.

But as we read of the destruction caused by these two crises, Isaiah reminds us, as he reminded his fellow citizens, that the Lord, Yahweh of Hosts, is standing up with His lawsuit against these destructive forces (v. 13). We are not left to the leftist leanings of human judges. We need not walk the broad road of women's liberation that leads to destruction. We can take confidence that Isaiah's God is in control. He is counsel for the righteous and judge and jury for the nations. He shall someday execute judgment, but in mercy He begins with rendering a verdict and calling for a confession. He seeks in this chapter the repentance of corrupt leaders (vv. 1-15) and of arrogant ladies (vv. 16-26).

I. The Lord calls for corrupt leaders to repent (vv. 1-15).

Illustration: William Frederick Rowland was a 1781 graduate from Dartmouth. At the age of 29, he became the pastor of the First Church in Exeter. It was there that, on June 2, 1796, Rowland preached an election sermon to a gathering that included New Hampshire's Governor John Gilman, the General Council, the Senate, and the members of the House of Representatives. In response to the message, the state legislature voted to "return him thanks" for "his ingenious Discourse" and asked him for a transcript, which they had published in the press.

Rowland's text that day was 2 Samuel 23:3-4, "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me: 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he

shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.”

Rowland explained the purpose of the June 2nd gathering: “It is both pertinent and laudable, and must be considered so by all good men, to enter on the public business of legislation, by the presentment of the rulers and officers of government before the Lord in His sacred courts, to hear the words of His law, and to supplicate His presence and aid.”

Rowland reminded state officials from where their authority came: “It is the will of God that government should exist among men. . . . Their power, it is true, they derive from the people.” He reminded them of the purpose of their authority: “That form [of government] is best, which most effectually secures their rights and rational liberties.” And he called for his fellow citizens to respect that authority: “when they [the people] have invested them [their government] with authority, they should pay due submission to and place confidence in them.”

Rowland spoke of the qualifications of a good ruler: “The word of God teaches the necessary qualifications of a good ruler. To this he will look for instruction in his duty. . . . It teaches him to reverence God as the Supreme Ruler of nations, his dependence on Him for light and direction, and his accountableness to Him for all his actions. . . . The good ruler will therefore engage in public life, not to gratify his own ambition, consult his own ease, or obtain the applause of men; but from a sense of duty.”

Application: The leaders Isaiah addresses in our passage are the opposite of the kind Rowland called for in his

sermon. When a nation lacks good leaders, inexperienced fools are given power to destroy the nation (vv. 1-4).

Israel had experienced this kind of tragic leadership in their past. Solomon ruled over the zenith of the nation, but his successor, Rehoboam, followed the counsel of youthful advisors instead of the elders that had served with his father, and he lost the ten northern tribes to a revolution. His father too had begun his ministry as king as a young man, but he was a young man who understood the limitations of his youthfulness. He prayed, "And now, O Lord my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" That prayer pleased the Lord.

Corrupt leaders are God's judgment on a corrupt and sinful people (v. 5). Under these conditions it is difficult to find qualified men to run for office (vv. 6-7). The core of the corruption of the people is that they had rejected what is true and right and beautiful in the glorious eyes of the Lord (v. 8). Their sin was not only corrupting, but brazenly so. They celebrated pride month and hung out rainbow flags in defiance of their Creator (v. 9). They pointed to their prosperity as evidence of their righteousness (v. 10), but God's woe indicates that their prosperity was only leading to the ripening of their sin for judgment (v. 11).

The Lord laments as He judges (v. 12). Motyer: "With the cry, *O my people*, outrage becomes concern and we sense the Lord's heart of love for his own." Those who suffer under these conditions shall be vindicated by a just God. This will

not be a case of the survival of the fittest in a god-free world, but rather of the survival of justice in the Creator's courtroom (v. 13). Those who stole from the poor for their own personal gain, crushing them like they were grain between two millstones, shall be held accountable (vv. 14-15). Our leaders steal from the poor today through inflation, and they make the future of our children poorer through their deficit spending.

What is our duty as God's people, whom He has made citizens of this great nation, which faces crises like these? Young: "How good God is to give a nation worthy rulers. May we ever appreciate such and constantly render our gratitude to Him for them. May we pray that He will spare us from the calamity of unworthy and unable rulers. Prayer must always be made for the officers of state. . . . Good government is one of God's best gifts to a sinful race. How great then is the sin of those who refuse to concern themselves with their responsibilities as citizens of the state."

We must pray for the protection of good leaders and the removal of bad ones. We must put away our celebrations of the sins God hates. We must care for the poor. We must repent and confess our need for God's forgiveness and help. And we must determine to be citizens of the state, not subjects of it. The Lord calls not only corrupt leaders, but also their people to repent, for His just judgment is coming.

II. The Lord calls for arrogant ladies to repent (vv. 16-26).

Illustration: In her book, *Feminism Against Progress*, Mary Harrington describes her recovery from the women's liberation critical theory she was taught in her university days. After the birth of her first child, she found that the advantages of feminism she had been promised did not bring her the happiness that being a good mom and wife did.

She wrote: “The idea of mutual love coexisting with hierarchy is alien to a modern perspective, in which all such asymmetries are treated as exploitative by definition. . . . Christian teaching [by way of contrast] held that higher rank implied not simply a relation of domination and control, but one of service and sacrifice” (32-33). “The feminist movement adopted a vision of personhood defined in opposition to interdependence – and thus settled the feminist debate decisively against care, and in favour of autonomy” (30).

Application: In Isaiah’s day, the failure of men to lead in a caring, serving, sacrificial, and loving way led to the loss of virtue among the daughters of Zion (v. 16). The problem described here is first a heart problem – pride. Each of the problems of an immoral life is first a heart problem, and pride is usually that problem.

In the words of Harrington, these women of Jerusalem and Judah had decided against care in favor of autonomy. We read nothing about their care for their homes and children in this passage, only about the abundance of their outward adornments.

The problem is not the adornments themselves. This is indicated in two ways by the passage. First, God calls all these things that He is going to remove from these women in judgment their *beauty* (v. 24). In addition, the third item mentioned in verse 22 (KJV, *wimple* is a shawl) is worn by godly Ruth in Ruth 3:15.

God is not upset with the things that make a woman beautiful. It is not his will that every woman have this beauty taken away from them. Quite the opposite is true. Removal of this beauty is an act of His judgment.

But these godless women had replaced inward beauty with outward beauty. Inwardly, God saw their ugly pride. That pride caused them to emphasize an exhausting array of outward things to make themselves beautiful. But God truly treasures the inward beauty of a woman: “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works” (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

In our age of social media, the temptation to emphasize outward beauty to the neglect of inward beauty is even more dangerous. A 2023 CDC study found: “Recent data indicate that approximately 95% of high school-aged youths use a social media platform, with approximately one fifth reporting ‘almost constant’ social media use. Associations between frequent social media use and poor mental health outcomes among adolescents, including depression and suicide risk, are being increasingly documented. . .

“In sex-stratified analysis, female students who reported frequent social media use were more likely to experience bullying victimization at school . . . . Female students who reported frequent social media use were also more likely to report persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness and having seriously considered attempting suicide” [<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/su/su7304a3.htm>]. Ladies need to be humble enough to care little what social media says to them or about them.

Isaiah warns both the daughters of Zion and the daughters of New Boston that this obsessive pride about their outward appearance leads ultimately to mourning, emptiness, and loneliness (vv. 25-26). In mercy, the Lord calls these ladies to humble repentance.

Conclusion: In verse 15, God asked the leaders of Jerusalem and Judah a question: “What mean ye?” I believe He asks that question sincerely and mercifully. He wanted this nation, both its corrupt leaders and the corrupt people they led, to answer His question from the heart. He asks it from the heart – “What mean ye?” “What are you thinking?” “What are you doing?” “How could you do this?”

The Lord asks the same sincere question of every sinner who sins against Him. Ezekiel put the Lord’s question this way: “Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (18:31).

The only proper answer is, “Lord, I repent of all my transgressions. Make me a new heart and a new spirit. Please let me live.” Because Jesus died for your sins and rose again, the Lord promises to do exactly that if you ask by faith.

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*