

Self-Salvation vs. Salvation in Christ

Isaiah 28:1-29

I. A Fading Crown on a Drunkard vs. A Glorious Crown on the Remnant (vs. 1-6)

Isaiah 28:1-6 Woe to that wreath, the pride of Ephraim's drunkards, to the fading flower, his glorious beauty, set on the head of a fertile valley-- to that city, the pride of those laid low by wine! ² See, the Lord has one who is powerful and strong. Like a hailstorm and a destructive wind, like a driving rain and a flooding downpour, he will throw it forcefully to the ground. ³ That wreath, the pride of Ephraim's drunkards, will be trampled underfoot. ⁴ That fading flower, his glorious beauty, set on the head of a fertile valley, will be like a fig ripe before harvest-- as soon as someone sees it and takes it in his hand, he swallows it. ⁵ In that day the LORD Almighty will be a glorious crown, a beautiful wreath for the remnant of his people. ⁶ He will be a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, a source of strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.

A. A Series of Prophetic Warnings: “Woe...!!!”

1. Isaiah 28, 29, 30, 31, 33 all begin with “Woe...!”
2. A Word of Prophetic Warnings... given in these chapters to Judah
3. Hezekiah, godly king, purifies Judah, gets rid of high places
4. BUT... the constant threat to their soul is to make an alliance with Egypt against the threat of Assyria... like Ahaz (Isa. 7)
5. To TRUST IN POLITICAL SCHEMES rather than the Lord
6. So... Isaiah 28 warns of the coming judgment on Ephraim ... but Judah listened!!

7. Isaiah 29:1: Woe to Jerusalem because of the coming siege
8. Isaiah 30:1: Woe to those who go down to Egypt to make an alliance I did not command them to make
9. Isaiah 31:1: Woe to those who rely on Egypt for horses and chariots, but who refuse to look to the Lord for help
10. Isaiah 33:1: Woe to the destroyer who will destroy Jerusalem, and to the looter who will loot... when their time of destroying is over, they will be destroyed

B. The Clear Warning to Judah: the Devastating Fall of Ephraim

C. The Pride of Ephraim: A Beautiful City Set High Over a Fertile Valley

Isaiah 28:1 Woe to that wreath, the pride of Ephraim's drunkards, to the fading flower, his glorious beauty, set on the head of a fertile valley

Isaiah 28:3-4 That wreath, the pride of Ephraim's drunkards, will be trampled underfoot. ⁴ That fading flower, his glorious beauty, set on the head of a fertile valley

D. The Debauchery of Ephraim: Drunkenness

Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.

Proverbs 23:31-32 Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! ³² In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper.

1. The FADING GLORY what the people COULD HAVE BEEN vs, what they actually are
2. Judgment Day regrets: potential vs. the reality
3. glory consisting of a FADING WREATH of dead flowers

E. The Impending Judgment on Ephraim

Isaiah 28:2-4 See, the Lord has one who is powerful and strong. Like a hailstorm and a destructive wind, like a driving rain and a flooding

downpour, he will throw it forcefully to the ground. ³ That wreath, the pride of Ephraim's drunkards, will be trampled underfoot. ⁴ That fading flower, his glorious beauty, set on the head of a fertile valley, will be like a fig ripe before harvest-- as soon as someone sees it and takes it in his hand, he swallows it.

1. The Assyrian invasion will come and nothing can stop it
2. It is the LORD'S DOING: **"The Lord has one who is powerful and strong..."** The Assyrian may think he is doing what he wants to do, building his own kingdom for his own pleasure and glory... but actually it is God who is sending him
3. The invasion will be DEVASTATING
 - a. Like a hailstorm and a hurricane wind... leaving total destruction in its wake
 - b. Like a flood of water, sweeping away all the crops and flattening houses
 - c. Ephraim will be cast forcefully to the ground
4. Adding INSULT to INJURY
 - a. Not only will Ephraim be thrown forcefully to the ground with his hands, he will trample it into the mud with his feet
5. GOBBLED UP LIKE AN EARLY RIPE FIG
 - a. Fig season is usually August through October
 - b. But sometimes, a fig tree will produce an early fig in June...
 - c. So, if someone should chance upon an early fig, he usually snatches it immediately and begins eating it that instant
 - d. So it would be with Samaria... plucked by Assyria and gobbled

F. By Contrast: A Glorious Crown on the Head of the Remnant

Isaiah 28:5-6 In that day the LORD Almighty will be a glorious crown, a beautiful wreath for the remnant of his people. ⁶ He will be a spirit

of justice to him who sits in judgment, a source of strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.

1. Samaria was the crown of the people of Israel... but it was a fading crown, slipping from the head of a drunkard
2. BY CONTRAST: vss. 5-6, God promises to be a permanent crown of glory for the head of His remnant
3. REMNANT: those survivors who are left... those godly Jews who were preserved by God's grace

Isaiah 1:9 Unless the LORD Almighty had left us some survivors, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah.

Isaiah 10:22 Though your people, O Israel, be like the sand by the sea, only a remnant will return. Destruction has been decreed, overwhelming and righteous.

Romans 11:5 So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.

4. FADING BEAUTY of human pride vs. the unfading beauty of God's glory, set on the heads of His people by His grace
5. This glory would enable the remnant of the Jews to stand the tests that were to come
 - a. The JUDGE will be empowered to render WISE DECISIONS
 - b. The WARRIOR will be empowered to fight the Lord's battles

II. God Speaking Through the Prophets vs. God Speaking Through Judgment (vs. 7-13)

Isaiah 28:7-14 And these also stagger from wine and reel from beer: Priests and prophets stagger from beer and are befuddled with wine; they reel from beer, they stagger when seeing visions, they stumble when rendering decisions. ⁸ All the tables are covered with vomit and there is not a spot without filth. ⁹ "Who is it he is trying to teach? To whom is he explaining his message? To children weaned from their milk, to those just taken from the breast? ¹⁰ For it is: Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little

there." ¹¹ Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people, ¹² to whom he said, "This is the resting place, let the weary rest"; and, "This is the place of repose"-- but they would not listen. ¹³ So then, the word of the LORD to them will become: Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there-- so that they will go and fall backward, be injured and snared and captured.

A. The Key Moment: Hearing the Prophetic Word of the Lord

B. The Priests and Prophets of the Jews: Degraded Also Through Wine

Malachi 2:7 For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction-- because he is the messenger of the LORD Almighty.

1. Priests...

2. Prophets: the ones who speak God's word to the people, saying "Thus says the Lord..."

3. Vs. 8: so bad is their drunkenness that the tables at their drunken feasts are covered with VOMIT... there is not a clean spot on any table

C. They MOCK the Word of the Lord through Isaiah

Isaiah 28:9-10 "Who is it he is trying to teach? To whom is he explaining his message? To children weaned from their milk, to those just taken from the breast? ¹⁰ For it is: Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there."

1. Arrogant attitude: as though the SIMPLE MESSAGE from Isaiah was too childish for them

2. They go so far as to mimic Isaiah's words:

For it is: Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there."

Sav lasav sav lasav, kav lakav, kav lakav

Kind of like: "blah, blah, blah, yadda, yadda, yadda"

D. God's Terrifying Word of Judgment to those Who Mock the Proclaimed Word

Isaiah 28:11-13 *Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people,* ¹² *to whom he said, "This is the resting place, let the weary rest"; and, "This is the place of repose"-- but they would not listen.* ¹³ *So then, the word of the LORD to them will become: Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there-- so that they will go and fall backward, be injured and snared and captured.*

E. Two Ways to Learn a Difficult Lesson: By the Word, or By Living It Out

Deuteronomy 32:47 *They are not just idle words for you-- they are your life.*

F. The PLACE OF REST... THE PLACE OF REPOSE

Isaiah 28:12 *"This is the resting place, let the weary rest"; and, "This is the place of repose"-- but they would not listen.*

Matthew 11:28-30 *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.* ²⁹ *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* ³⁰ *For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

1. SADLY many people will not listen to Christ... they refuse to enter the shelter and be protected from the coming wrath

Isaiah 28:12 *"This is the resting place, let the weary rest"; and, "This is the place of repose"-- but they would not listen.*

Is this YOU??? You hear the gospel... you understand that the Bible says the wrath of God is coming on the whole earth for our sins; you understand Jesus is holding out His hands to you, pointing to Himself as the only safe haven, the only refuge from the storm of wrath that is coming... BUT YOU WILL NOT LISTEN!!!

III. The Shaky Foundation of Self-Salvation vs. Christ, the Solid Rock of God's Salvation (vs. 14-22)

A. The Arrogance of Israel's Scoffing Leaders: The Covenant with Death

Isaiah 28:14-15 Therefore hear the word of the LORD, you scoffers who rule this people in Jerusalem. ¹⁵ You boast, "We have entered into a covenant with death, with the grave we have made an agreement. When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by, it cannot touch us, for we have made a lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place."

1. What does this mean?

- a. In context, Isaiah is pointing to the political arrangements Judah's scoffing leaders have made with Egypt as a military ally against the threat of Assyria

2. BUT Isaiah shreds this completely: their refuge is a LIE, and their hiding place is a FALSEHOOD

Isaiah 28:17-20 hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place. ¹⁸ Your covenant with death will be annulled; your agreement with the grave will not stand. When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by, you will be beaten down by it. ¹⁹ As often as it comes it will carry you away; morning after morning, by day and by night, it will sweep through." The understanding of this message will bring sheer terror. ²⁰ The bed is too short to stretch out on, the blanket too narrow to wrap around you.

3. The Assyrian invasion will be overwhelming and effective... like an onslaught of water overflowing their inadequate preparations

B. God's Sure Foundation for Salvation: The Rock Laid in Zion

Isaiah 28:16-17a So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed. ¹⁷ I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line

1. The Sovereign Lord calls for all to BEHOLD this work, which He calls the laying of s STONE in ZION... this is a SOLID

FOUNDATION for security, for refuge, for protection from the overwhelming scourge that is coming, the flood that will rush upon the people of God

2. God's sovereign work in laying this stone is emphasized... this is the WORK OF GOD ALONE... a solid stone for a sure foundation
3. The stone is described:
 - a. A TESTED stone
 - b. A PRECIOUS stone
 - c. A CORNERSTONE
 - d. A SURE FOUNDATION stone
4. The PROMISE attached to the stone

ESV Isaiah 28:16b Whoever believes will not be in haste.

NIV Isaiah 28:16 the one who trusts will never be dismayed.

- a. Hebrew speaks of being IN HASTE... this is a picture of high distress, of confusion, of anxiety and striving to escape the coming danger
- b. Direct contrast to verse 12:

Isaiah 28:12 to whom he said, "This is the resting place, let the weary rest"; and, "This is the place of repose"-- but they would not listen.

C. New Testament Fulfillment: JESUS CHRIST

1. Three times in the New Testament, this scripture refers to Jesus
2. mentioned in conjunction with Psalm 118 and Isaiah 8

Isaiah 8:14 for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.

Psalm 118:22-23 The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; ²³ the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

3. Peter speaks of Jesus as a “living stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him...” and then quotes this very scripture:

1 Peter 2:6-8 For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." ⁷ Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," ⁸ and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message-- which is also what they were destined for.

4. Paul in Romans 9, and again in Romans 10 uses this scripture in conjunction with the idea of a STUMBLING STONE

Romans 9:30-33 the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. ³² Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone." ³³ As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

5. Paul again in Romans 10 speaks of calling on the name of the Lord:

Romans 10:9-13 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. ¹¹ As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." ¹² For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-- the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³ for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

6. Simply put, Jesus Christ is the chosen, tested, and precious cornerstone... the only sure foundation to face the terrifying prospect of death

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

7. NOTE: “Whoever TRUSTS in him will not be put to shame!!”

D. How does this apply to us?

1. Death is SURELY COMING OUR WAY... even more certainly than the Assyrian invasion of Israel

Hebrews 9:27 man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment

Ecclesiastes 7:2 death is the destiny of every man

2. Any arrangement we make with death apart from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is a LIE
3. We may fear death or we may not... we are AWARE of death as a threat, we have seen others die... so we “come to terms” with death, we enter into a secret covenant with it, so that it can no longer trouble us
4. Perhaps we make a covenant with death by denying its significance: ATHEISTS and EVOLUTIONISTS say there is nothing after death, therefore death is nothing to fear... they have made a covenant with death by saying its nothing but a cessation of biological functions

Australian atheist Keith Cornish: The simple fact is that all life-forms end in death and the elements of which they are composed return to the air and the earth to be taken up and recycled in some new organism. This natural process is universal and is beyond dispute. What is challenged by atheists and freethinkers is the claim made by purveyors of religion that humans alone of all living forms have a 'soul' or 'spirit' which survives death and carries the essential characteristics of the person to a supernatural existence in a super natural realm. ...

Anyone weighing the evidence has no trouble in discarding the notion of the everlasting soul and accepting that death is the natural end to every human life. By accepting that life is only for a finite period, short or long, the atheist is confronted by the matter of how best to spend the available time and therefore, if suitably informed, will most likely spend the time worthy of a human person. It would be difficult to imagine a more useless waste of time than that spent in

the worship of an imaginary god or preparing for a non-existent everlasting life in some mythical supernatural realm of eternal bliss.

So... here is the COVENANT WITH DEATH: "I have no fear of death because it is the natural end of all biological life and all my problems will come to an end at that point. There is no soul, no judgment day, no heaven, no hell... just here and now."

5. Muslims make a "covenant with death" by trusting in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and believing that holding to the five pillars of Islam (fasting, giving alms to the poor, praying five times a day, pilgrimage to Mecca, saying of the creed) will enable the Muslim to go to paradise after death
6. Hindus and Buddhists make a "covenant with death" by believing in reincarnation and constant cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth
7. Ethical and religious people of all types make a covenant with death by trusting in their good works and in the fact that a loving God would never send anyone to hell
8. Many people make a covenant with death by just agreeing not to think about it at all
9. The Jews' covenant with death was a LIE and a FALSEHOOD... and so are all of these!!
10. TRUST IN JESUS CHRIST, build your life on HIM, and in Him alone can you survive death and judgment day

E. Final Warning

Isaiah 28:21-22 The LORD will rise up as he did at Mount Perazim, he will rouse himself as in the Valley of Gibeon-- to do his work, his strange work, and perform his task, his alien task. ²² Now stop your mocking, or your chains will become heavier; the Lord, the LORD Almighty, has told me of the destruction decreed against the whole land.

1. God is threatening the Jews with His direct activity in warfare

2. At Mt. Perazim and at the Valley of Gibeon, David defeated the Philistines with God's direct assistance
3. Now, God will rouse Himself to fight again, but this time it will be AGAINST Israel... this is His STRANGE WORK
4. These unbelieving scoffers must stop mocking and come trust in the Lord's solid rock or judgment will be unbearably heavy

IV. The Parable of the Farmer (vs. 23-29)

Isaiah 28:23-29 Listen and hear my voice; pay attention and hear what I say. ²⁴ When a farmer plows for planting, does he plow continually? Does he keep on breaking up and harrowing the soil? ²⁵ When he has leveled the surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cummin? Does he not plant wheat in its place, barley in its plot, and spelt in its field? ²⁶ His God instructs him and teaches him the right way. ²⁷ Caraway is not threshed with a sledge, nor is a cartwheel rolled over cummin; caraway is beaten out with a rod, and cummin with a stick. ²⁸ Grain must be ground to make bread; so one does not go on threshing it forever. Though he drives the wheels of his threshing cart over it, his horses do not grind it. ²⁹ All this also comes from the LORD Almighty, wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom.

A. Parable that Teaches a Simple Lesson: GOD KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING

1. The two illustrations: Phase I: plowing/planting
 - a. The farmer doesn't plow continually; he knows when to stop
 - b. When the plowing is done, he stops and plants seeds... each crop in its proper place
 - c. Key statement

Isaiah 28:26 His God instructs him and teaches him the right way.

2. Phase II: At the harvest time, also, there is a proper way to handle the harvest

- a. Caraway is not threshed with a sledge; cumin is not rolled over with a cartwheel
- b. Instead

caraway is beaten out with a rod, and cummin with a stick

- c. After that, other technology takes over to make flour for bread:

Isaiah 28:28 Grain must be ground to make bread; so one does not go on threshing it forever. Though he drives the wheels of his threshing cart over it, his horses do not grind it.

- d. Same lesson again:

Isaiah 28:29 All this also comes from the LORD Almighty, wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom.

- 3. Simple point: God knows what He's doing in handling Israel and Assyria, Egypt and Judah... He knows exactly how far to push, how far to judge, when to STOP

B. Secondary Point: God's Initiative in Science and Technology

V. Applications

A. Understand the Dangers of Luxurious Success

1. Ephraim was a crown set on the head of a fertile valley; The fertile soil produced a rich harvest; the rich harvest produced a lifestyle of carefree luxury and ease; this resulted in moral laxity and drunkenness
2. So also America is a land of rich plenty; it is easy for us in our success to forget God and become morally lazy, self-indulgent, and corrupt

B. Understand the Dangers of Drunkenness

1. Both the nation of Ephraim and the priests and prophets of Judah were staggered (vs. 7) and made low by wine (vs. 1); their overindulgence led to tables covered with vomit (vs. 8)
2. We don't discuss alcohol much, and it is a matter of Christian freedom whether or not someone drinks wine...
3. But the Bible has many words of warning to speak to those who are careless with wine... Isaiah 28 is yet another such warning
4. It is a slippery slope to go from Christian freedom to the bondage of addiction

C. Respect the Preached Word!!!

1. The people in this passage were MOCKING Isaiah's proclamations arrogantly; mimicking him in a sing-song way and saying his message lacked depth
2. But God is very clear that the ministry of the word is the key element to spiritual health...
3. AND He has said whom He will honor:

Isaiah 66:2 "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.

4. Unbelievers MOCK and ridicule the preached word

5. And God has made it plain that to mock the word is to try to mock God... and God cannot be mocked!!
6. If we refuse to listen to the warnings of God's word, God will speak to you in daily life judgments!!
7. Example: Teens... disrespecting parents, minimizing sexual purity... warnings against fornication... God SPEAKS by His word; if you mock that word, He will speak to you in other ways not so pleasant

D. What is Your "Covenant With Death"??

1. The centerpiece of this chapter is how these Jews thought to escape the coming judgment of God by their own arrangements
2. So also we are tempted to trust in our own resources to avoid short-term trouble as well as eternal danger
3. The short-term trouble could be economic, or medical, or relational, or having to do with our possessions, or related to a natural disaster
4. The eternal danger, of course, is death, judgment, and hell
5. For the short-term: We can look to our money, or our education, or our street-smarts, or our clever scheming, or our resume, or our family connections, or our depth of experience, or our physical skills... we can look inward and trust that that
6. For the eternal: we can look to our good works, or our religiosity, or our spiritual heritage
7. What is the ONLY ROCK on which we should build our lives????
Is it not CHRIST???

Isaiah 28:16 So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.

8. The hymn-writer put it plainly

My hope is build on nothing less... Than Jesus' blood and righteousness
 I dare not trust the sweetest frame
 But wholly lean on Jesus' name

On Christ the solid rock I stand
 All other ground is sinking sand
 All other ground is sinking sand

9. When you are facing a short-term trial, you should say, "Because Jesus shed His blood for me, I know that my financial needs will all be met. If God wants to test me by taking some of my excess money or possessions, I am fine with that, because 'He who did not spare His Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also along with Him freely give us all things?'"

E. Understand that Judgment and Wrath is God's "Strange Work"

1. God does not delight in crushing the wicked except in that it cleans up His universe
2. God delights in showing the wicked amazing grace and rich mercy
3. BUT God will do His work, His strange work, and perform His task, His alien task... to clean the universe of everyone that causes sin and all those who do evil
4. God is a God of love, of gentleness, of long-suffering, amazing patience

F. Learn from the Lesson of the Farmer: God knows when enough is enough!!

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.