

Behold Our God
A Light in Thick Darkness

June 26, 2011

Text - Isaiah 7-10

Scripture Reading - Isaiah 8:11-9:7

Backsliding defined

- To move backward rather than forward in your relationship with God.
- Though I do not believe that a true, Holy Spirit filled, born again believer in Jesus Christ can backslide all the way out of their saving relationship with Him, I do believe that because of their sin, they can move backward rather than forward in their relationship with God, sometimes even for extended periods of time. If you've ever been in this place, you know how dark it can be.
- For those who have yet to yet born again, it is possible to backslide into such a dark place with God that you never get out.

In Isaiah 7-10 we see that King Ahaz and the people of Judah had backslidden into a very dark place.

- A place of distrust and even rage against God. The same place we see many of our friends and loved ones in today, and the same place we could find ourselves in if we're not careful.

Judah's backslide did not begin with King Ahaz, but with King Solomon 250 years earlier.

- Solomon inherited a very healthy kingdom from his father David and ruled it for 40 years (from about 970 to 940 A.D.).
- Everything started out great...
 - o **1 Kings 3:3 (ESV)**
³ Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father,...
 - o **1 Kings 2:46 (ESV)**
⁴⁶ ...So the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.
- But then...

o **1 Kings 3:1 (ESV)**

¹ Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt...

o **1 Kings 11:1-4 (ESV)**

¹ Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ² from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. ³ He had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. ⁴ *For when Solomon was old* his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.

o **1 Kings 11:9-13 (ESV)**

⁹ And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice ¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the Lord commanded. ¹¹ Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, "Since this has been *your practice* and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. ¹² Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son (Rehoboam). ¹³ However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen."

I noticed just how subtle backsliding can be just the other day.

- Convicting coffee with a brother
- GOT Life
- Fatherhood

David's role in Solomon's backslide

- According to the Bible, fathers play a critical role in raising up healthy kids
 - o **Proverbs 1:8 (ESV)**
⁸Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching,
 - o **Deuteronomy 6:4-7 (ESV)**
⁴"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵
 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.
 - o **Ephesians 6:4 (ESV)**
⁴Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
 - o **Proverbs 22:6 (ESV)**
⁶Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.
 - Not a guarantee, but a strong encouragement

- David was arguably the greatest king of Israel and a man after God's own heart, but he was also human just like us. He was not without faults, and I believe one of his faults was the job he did as a father.
 - o Though David set a great example for his kids in many ways, such as his dedication to, love for, and trust in God, and his humility, for the most part he did not set a good example for them in relationship to women.
 - Multiple wives and at least 10 concubines
 - Bathsheba
 - His sons seemed to follow in his footsteps
 - Solomon, Abnon (Tamar), Absalom (David's 10 concubines)
 - o But perhaps even more detrimental than his poor example in this area, was David's unwillingness to discipline his sons and bring correction.

- We see this in the difficulty David has in disciplining Absalom, but we see it stated directly in 1 Kings 1:5-6.
 - **1 Kings 1:5-6 (ESV)**
⁵ Now Adonijah the son of Haggith (Absalom's younger brother) exalted himself, saying, "I will be king." And he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. ⁶ *His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, "Why have you done thus and so?" ...*
- A challenge for fathers
 - o As father's we need to not only set a good example for our kids, but we need to be willing to displease them and tell them no.
 - An encouragement for fathers
 - o It's never too late to start being a good father.
 - o God wants you to be a good father and will honor your efforts.
 - o God is bigger than the mistakes you've made.
 - Ahaz and Hezekiah

Judah's backsliding continued after Solomon

- *A lot of ups and downs* (typical of backsliding)
 - o Two bad kings (Rehoboam and Abijam)
 - o Two good kings (Asa and Jehoshaphat)
 - o Two more bad kings and a bad queen (Jehoram, Ahaziah, and Athaliah)
 - o Four medium/ok kings (including Uzziah and his Jotham)
 - o And then Ahaz (arguably the worst Judean king of all)

Though Judah's backsliding continued after Ahaz, it culminated with him

- **2 Chronicles 28:1-4 (ESV)**
¹ ... And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his father David had done, ² but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even made metal images for the Baals, ³ and he made offerings in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom

and burned his sons as an offering, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. ⁴ And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

- **2 Chronicles 28:5-8 (ESV) - God is not afraid to discipline**

⁵ Therefore the Lord his God gave him into the hand of the king of Syria, who defeated him and took captive a great number of his people and brought them to Damascus. He was also given into the hand of the king of Israel, who struck him with great force. ⁶ For Pekah the son of Remaliah killed 120,000 from Judah in one day, all of them men of valor, because they had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers. ⁷ And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, killed Maaseiah the king's son and Azrikam the commander of the palace and Elkanah the next in authority to the king. ⁸ The men of Israel took captive 200,000 of their relatives, women, sons, and daughters. They also took much spoil from them and brought the spoil to Samaria.

- **2 Chronicles 28:16-21 (ESV)**

¹⁶ At that time King Ahaz sent to the king of Assyria for help. ¹⁷ For the Edomites had again invaded and defeated Judah and carried away captives. ¹⁸ And the Philistines had made raids on the cities in the Shephelah and the Negeb of Judah, (taken several of them, and settled there) ¹⁹ For the Lord humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had made Judah act sinfully and had been very unfaithful to the Lord. ²⁰ So Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him. ²¹ For Ahaz took a portion from the house of the Lord and the house of the king and of the princes, and gave tribute to the king of Assyria, *but it did not help him.*

- **2 Chronicles 28:22-23 (ESV)**

²² In the time of his distress he became yet more faithless to the Lord—this same King Ahaz. ²³ For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus that had defeated him and said, "Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me." But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel.

- **2 Chronicles 28:24-25 (ESV)**

²⁴ And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God

and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, *and he shut up the doors of the house of the Lord*, and he made himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem. ²⁵ In every city of Judah he made high places to make offerings to other gods, provoking to anger the Lord, the God of his fathers.

It's not that Ahaz and Judah were without warning

- The Law
- History
 - First generation Israel, period of judges, bad Judean kings (Rehoboam and Ahaziah), Israel's demise
- The Prophets
 - Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Isaiah
- God's specific warnings to Ahaz and Judah through Isaiah
 - **Isaiah 7:17-22 (ESV) - Assyria the real enemy**
¹⁷The Lord will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah —*the king of Assyria.*"...²¹ In that day a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep, ²² and because of the abundance of milk that they give, he will eat curds, for everyone who is left in the land will eat curds and honey.
 - **Isaiah 8:5-8 (ESV) - Judah will fall to Assyria**
⁵The Lord spoke to me again: ⁶ "Because this people have refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and rejoice over Rezin and the son of Remaliah, ⁷ therefore, behold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory. And it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks, ⁸ and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel."
- We too are not without warning.

Nor were Ahaz and Judah without hope

- **Isaiah 7:1-9 (ESV) - Judah will be protected**
¹ In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage

war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it. ² When the house of David was told, "Syria is in league with Ephraim," the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind. ³ And the Lord said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son (*a remnant shall return*), at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field. ⁴ *And say to him, 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands,...'* ⁷ *thus says the Lord God: "It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass.* ⁸ *...(Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken to pieces so that it will no longer be a people.)*

- **Isaiah 7:10-16 (ESV) - Israel and Syria will fall**

¹⁰ *Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz,* ¹¹ *"Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven."* ¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test." ¹³ And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ *For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.*

- **Isaiah 10:5-19 (ESV) - Even Assyria will fall**

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 eyes. ¹³ For he says: "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding... ¹⁵ Shall the axe boast over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? ...¹⁶ Therefore the Lord God of hosts will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors, and under his glory a burning will be kindled, like the burning of fire...¹⁹ The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few that a child can write them down.

- We too are not without hope.

But instead heeding the warnings and taking hold of the of the hope that was offered them, Ahaz and Judah further hardened their hearts and became angry with Him instead.

- **Isaiah 8:21-22 (ESV)**

²¹ They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, *they will be enraged* and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward. ²² And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.

- We too can turn away from God and become enraged

But even in the midst of this thick, thick darkness, God offered hope.

- **Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (God with us).

- **Isaiah 9:2 (ESV)**

² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.

- **Isaiah 9:6-7 (ESV)**

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Jesus is that hope.

- **Matthew 1:22-23 (ESV) - Jesus fulfills 7:14**

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

- **Matthew 4:12-16 (ESV) - Jesus fulfills 9:1-2**

¹² Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³ And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and

Naphtali, ¹⁴ so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ¹⁵ "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— ¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned."

- **Luke 2:10-11 (ESV) - Jesus fulfills 9:6**

¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

Jesus is the light.

- **Luke 1:78-79 (ESV) - John the Baptist's father Zechariah calls Jesus...**

⁷⁸ ...*(the) sunrise... from on high* ⁷⁹ (who will) give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide (their) feet into the way of peace."

- **Luke 2:32 (ESV) - Simeon called Jesus...**

³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to (His) people Israel."

- **John 1:5-9 (ESV) - John calls Jesus...**

⁵ The light (that) shines in the darkness, that the darkness (cannot) overcome...⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, (that) was coming into the world.

- **John 8:12 (ESV) - Jesus says of Himself...**

¹² ..."I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Do we believe this?

- **Isaiah 7:9 (ESV)**

⁹ " ...If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.' "