

Notes

The Futility of Human Strength (31:1–9)

- Instead of trusting the LORD, Judah's leaders looked to Egypt for protection. Their failure was not simply choosing the wrong political ally; they had placed their confidence in human strength instead of the LORD.
- Isaiah 30 highlights Judah's rebellion and God's gracious call to return and wait upon Him. Isaiah 31 emphasizes the futility of human strength and the LORD's power to defend His people. We can easily trust modern equivalents of Egypt's horses and chariots - money, career, education, possessions, or our own abilities. These things may have their proper place, but they can never provide the security only God can give. Egypt had horses, chariots and horsemen, but Judah had the LORD - and the LORD was more than enough.

1. The Folly of Trusting in Egypt (31:1–3)

- Isaiah begins with a stern warning: *"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help...."* (v1). From a human perspective, Judah's strategy seemed sensible. Egypt had horses, chariots, and horsemen. But Isaiah exposes their fatal mistake: *"They look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD"* (v1b). Their greatest failure was therefore not military but spiritual - they failed to seek the LORD.
- Judah measured security by what she could see - the number of Egypt's horses, the strength of its chariots, and the power of its army. God had already warned Israel's kings not to multiply horses or return to Egypt (Deut 17:16). Judah ignored God's Word because Egypt's military power appeared more convincing than God's promises. Assyria was a real threat, but Judah's deeper problem was a lack of faith (Ps 20:7).
- Judah thought her political strategy was wise, but Isaiah reminds Judah that true wisdom belongs to God: *"Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil"* (v2). What appeared to be political wisdom was actually rebellion disguised as prudence. Isaiah further describes Judah as *"the house of evildoers"* and Egypt as *"them that work iniquity,"* showing the spiritual compromise involved in seeking security from a nation that did not know the LORD. Nothing this world offers can provide the security of knowing and trusting the LORD.
- Egypt might have appeared powerful, but Egypt was still only human: *"Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit"* (v3). Egypt might have appeared powerful, but its soldiers were

mortal and its horses were merely flesh. Against them stood the eternal and sovereign LORD. Egypt could offer military assistance, but God alone was Judah's true Deliverer. When the LORD stretched out His hand, both the helper and the one seeking help would fall together. Wise planning, responsible preparation, and legitimate resources are good, but they must never replace God Himself (Ps 118:8; cf. Isa 2:22).

2. The LORD's Power and Protection (31:4–5)

- Isaiah directs Judah to the only true source of security - the LORD Himself. He gives 2 pictures of God, revealing His irresistible power & tender care.
 - The LORD as a Mighty Lion. V4: *"Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey."* A lion standing over its prey is not frightened by shouting shepherds. In the same way, when the LORD rises to defend Jerusalem, no enemy can intimidate Him or prevent Him from accomplishing His purpose. Faith sees the danger but looks beyond it to the God who is greater than the danger.
 - The LORD as a Protective Bird. V5: *"As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem."* The lion reveals God's strength; the bird reveals His tenderness, watchfulness, and care (Ps 91:4). Isaiah uses four expressions to describe God's protection: defend, deliver, pass over & preserve. Judah's security rested not in her own righteousness or military strength, but in God's character and covenant faithfulness.
- Like a lion, God is fearless before His enemies. Like a bird, He is tender toward His people. Judah did not need stronger allies; she needed deeper faith in the LORD (Ps 91:1).

3. The Call to Repentance (31:6–7)

- After revealing Himself as the mighty Defender and tender Protector of Jerusalem, the LORD gives His people a gracious invitation: *"Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted"* (v6). Judah needed to return to God. Repentance is more than feeling sorry for sin; it is a decisive turning away from sin and self-reliance and a turning back to God in faith and obedience. Judah's greatest problem was not the Assyria outside Jerusalem but rebellion within her own heart. Judah's rebellion was not a momentary lapse but a persistent pattern of unbelief. Yet God still called His people to return: *"Turn ye unto him."* The God who rebukes sin is the same God who graciously invites His people back to Himself.

- True repentance produces visible change: *"For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold"* (v7). Judah's idols were made by human hands and could neither protect nor deliver. We may not bow before statues of silver and gold, but idols are still found in the human heart. An idol is anything that takes the rightful place of God in our lives.
- Before announcing Assyria's defeat, God first called Judah to repentance. Her greatest need was not merely deliverance from an enemy but restoration to her God. We often ask God to change our circumstances, while He may first want to change us through those circumstances - teaching us to trust rather than panic, pray rather than worry, obey rather than compromise, and cling to Him rather than our substitutes for Him.

4. The LORD's Victory over Assyria (31:8–9)

- The LORD Himself would bring about Assyria's downfall: *"Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man..."* (v8). Isaiah 37 records the fulfillment: *"Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand"* (37:36). God accomplished what Judah could never have accomplished for herself. Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, where his sons later killed him while he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god (37:37–38).
- The army that terrified Jerusalem would itself become terrified: *"And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign"* (v9). Their fortresses, commanders, and military might could not protect them from God's judgment. The real battle was not Assyria versus Judah; it was Assyria against the LORD. Isaiah concludes: *"Whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem"* (v9b). Fire in Scripture often represents God's holy presence and consuming power. Here the picture emphasizes His holiness and judgment. The same holy God who protects His people also judges those who oppose Him. God's patience should never be mistaken for weakness.
- Our greatest security is not found in what we possess, whom we know, or what we can accomplish, but in the God whom we trust. We should work hard, save wisely, prepare for the future, seek wise counsel, and make sensible decisions. But none of these things can bear the weight of our ultimate trust: *"The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD"* (Prov 21:31). Our confidence is in the sovereign LORD. He alone is able to save, protect, sustain & accomplish His perfect purposes.