

## “Taking the right fork in the road”

### Isaiah 64:1-9 NIV

“Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! <sup>(2)</sup> As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you! <sup>(3)</sup> For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.

<sup>(4)</sup> Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. <sup>(5)</sup> You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved?

<sup>(6)</sup> All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. <sup>(7)</sup> No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have



hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins. <sup>(8)</sup> Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. <sup>(9)</sup> Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look upon us, we pray, for we are all your people.”

### Scholars call Jeremiah the weeping prophet.

Jeremiah saw his beloved country fall, and he wept over its capital city’s destruction in 586 BC.

### The prophet Isaiah lamented often, too.

He lived a century before Jeremiah, yet the Lord helped him foresee the country’s demise.

### Israel fell for a reason.

### Many of us remember September 11, 2001.

New York City suffered a gashing wound.

### Fear and anger dazed people.

Some preachers asserted that the immorality of New Yorkers caused 9-11.

Apologizing like naughty little boys, those preachers later ran from their claims.

**Were some of the 9-11 New Yorkers immoral? Sure.**

**Yet probably no more immoral than citizens of many other cities of the world.**

**We can't make assessments like that because we can't see into the hearts of others.**

We don't know all of God's judging standards. To Capernaum the town of his later residence, Jesus said: “It will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.”<sup>1</sup>

**For two reasons, Isaiah and Jeremiah viewed from a privileged vantage point.**

**A) God gave those prophets special visions of the future.**

**B) They knew the standards God gave Israel.**

**The Lord explicitly wrote Israel's laws.**

**Israel received the Law 800 years prior, and God often reminded them of its requirements.**

**I refer to the Law of Moses—the first of them being the 10 Commandments.**

Scores of prophets like Nathan, who counseled King David,

Elijah, who warned King Ahab, Elisha, and many others cautioned kings and commoners about keeping the Law.

**Israel heard countless warnings and reminders.**

**Think of a county road with warning signs concerning a stop ahead and sets of grooves that make your tires go “zip,” “zip,” “zip” before you reach the intersection.**

None of those sounds or signs makes you stop.

**Israel knew the laws.**

**They heard many cautions.**

**Israel saw stop signs, and they heard and felt zip, zips, but they ignored all of the warnings.**

**They still flouted God's laws.**



**The Lord brought the punishment he'd promised for centuries.**

**It came as deadly serious as He warned.**

**Foreign armies began marching through the land. On 9-11, foreign men crashed airliners into tall buildings killing workers in New York.**

**That was scary and humiliating.**

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 11:24 NASB

Enemy troops invaded Israel, taking over farms and houses, pillaging, plundering, raping women, and enslaving children.

**Consider two aspects of this today:**

1. For God to directly punish you is one thing. For Him to use your enemy to punish you is quite another.

**It would be tough to take, wouldn't it?**

I'm sure none of you hates anyone else.

But think of the person you'd least like to be with.

**Imagine that the Lord uses that person to punish you for your sins.**

That galled Israel.

**It stunned Habakkuk the prophet.**

He couldn't understand why God would use the despised Babylonians to plunder and punish his country, Israel.

Compare that to God using, North Korea, Iran, China, or Russia, to punish the U.S. for its sins.

**God should use the good guys, not the bad ones to punish us, we think.**

2. Consider a second point.



**This country and most of its Christians stand at a big fork in the road.**

**Folks seem confused about what God wants. Every preacher and about every church or religious group pulls us in a different direction.**

**How do we choose the right direction?**

It's important to remember that we have no righteousness to plead.

**Here's what Isaiah said to the Lord:**

“You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved? <sup>(6)</sup> All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”

**We're guilty.**

**Our righteous acts are worthless as filthy rags.**

**We can't claim any righteousness of our own.**

To get on the right road:

- A) We confess our wrongs;



B) We depend on God’s mercy in Christ;

C) **We follow Jesus’ word.**

“He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.”<sup>2</sup>

**We’ll be judged on knowing and conforming to God’s Word.**

**I’m not advocating Bob’s way or any denomination’s teaching, only Jesus’ way.**

I pray that that you will spend time in God’s Word, especially, the New Testament.

*You may think that it’s hard to understand.*

**It’s difficult for two reasons:**

**A) Most denominations avoid certain sections or overemphasize certain parts of the Scripture. I challenge you to read these five short *New Testament* letters: *1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, and Titus* this in the next two weeks.**

Compare the teachings in God’s Word with what your church practices.

**Did you know that the Lectionary covers less than half of the content of these books – 45% according to my calculations?**

**Of Titus, only 17%.**

**Considering the fact that these letters contain a lot about church organization and procedures, is it any wonder that churches leaders neglect these letters?**

**Church leaders avoid these letters so they can do what they want.**

**B) Consider one strong reason God preserved Scripture for us—not the only reason, of course.**

Years ago, one of the active members in Hollywood spent several days in the hospital.

**He had spoken at length about the Lord with one of his nurses.**

**Hoyt asked if I would try to speak with her. She was a bright, pleasant nurse from Iran.**

**“See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it,”  
Deuteronomy 12:32 NIV**

<sup>2</sup> John 12:48 NASB.

We arranged to meet for coffee at Dupar’s Restaurant in Farmer’s Market.



Hoyt had deeply impressed her, she seemed interested in learning about Jesus, but she was thinking about moving away from L.A.

**This sincere young woman reached a critical fork in her life-road.**

**During our conversation, I prayed silently a lot asking God’s wisdom and help.**

Toward the close, knowing I might not have further opportunity to speak with her, I offered her a new Bible I brought for her.

**She seemed offended, saying:**

**“You want me to read a book?”**

I prayerfully responded asking her if there were someone, whom she deeply loved.

**Her eyes immediately filled with tears, and then I asked:**

**“What if that person you love wrote you a love letter? Would you want to read it?”**

**“Give me the book,” she said, as she reached across the table and took that Bible.**

Your Bible is God’s love letter to you.

**Please know the powerful love God has for His creation of which you are a special part.**

**“Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand”**

If you feel indecisive about what to do:

- Acknowledge sin and repent of it.
- We remember that God is our father—our real father, who loves us very much.
- Read his love letter to you.
- Know that His son died for you; feel the joyful security of his enduring love.
- Faithfully follow his Son Jesus and the road of love he took.

Bob Blair

PO Box 176

Cleghorn, IA 51014

[www.robertblairbooks.com](http://www.robertblairbooks.com)