

Broken Pottery

Today's Treasure
 "This sin will become
 for you like a high
 wall, cracked and
 bulging, that collapses
 suddenly, in an instant.
 It will break in pieces
 like pottery"
 (Isa. 30:13-14).

Today's lesson is an important continuation of day 1. Take a few moments to reread our focal passage for these two lessons: Isaiah 30:8-21. As we learned from James 1:22-25, we don't just want to glance in the mirror of Scripture, then walk away and forget what we saw. We need God's Word to become the perfect law of liberty in our lives!

Based on our previous lesson, how can God's Word become our glorious liberation? Choose one.

- by obeying it by claiming it by studying it

If we study and claim God's Word but do not obey it, we will not experience liberty the Holy Spirit can bring. We must live an obedient—not perfect—lifestyle to maintain our freedom in Christ.

Reflect on day 1. We began a compilation of the common characteristics of rebellion. Complete the following sentences as you recall the first four characteristics.

1. A rebellious child of God doesn't _____.
2. A rebellious child of God isn't willing to _____.
3. A rebellious child of God prefers _____.
4. A rebellious child of God relies _____.

Draw a star beside the characteristic of rebellion that most stirred your thinking. In the margin describe why.

The fourth characteristic most penetrated my heart. Who among us wants to be attached to or feel safe with a fraud? I certainly don't! Yet, how often have we cast our dependency on something or someone incapable of taking care of us? I pray God will expose all fraudulent attachments in our lives and draw us to the light of healthy relationships with both things and people. Let's continue now with the fifth characteristic.

5. A rebellious child of God depends on deceit (Isa. 30:12). The Hebrew word for *depended* is *sha'an*, "to support oneself, lean against." Any time you've seen someone walk with a cane or a crutch, you've witnessed the word picture drawn in this phrase.

Reread Isaiah 30:12 and note the paired phrases: "relied on oppression" and "depended on deceit." They are interdependent.

Any time we attach ourselves or seek safety in a fraudulent savior we have to depend on lies to support the habit. Here's a picture tragically experienced as a reality by many:

A young Christian girl has a harsh, abusive father. She grows up with a fear and distaste for men. Satan supplies a slightly older woman who seems tender and very caring. The comforting relationship turns into a physical relationship, so the young woman assumes

she must be homosexual. In her heart she knows what she is doing is wrong, but she feels helpless without her new comforter. Soon she starts socializing with other women who are practicing homosexuality, because they will support her new habit with the lies she needs to continue. She avoids the Bible, and chooses books that advocate homosexuality. She drops all relationships except those that support the fraudulent attachment with lies.

Scary, isn't it? I used an obvious scenario to make my point, but Satan uses countless unhealthy attachments to things or people. Interestingly, the lost world enjoys characterizing Christians as emotionally needy people who use religion and faith as a crutch. How wrong they are. In John 5:8, Jesus encountered a man who was lame. Christ didn't hand the man a cane or a crutch. He healed him so he could walk on both feet! The biggest crutch of all is deceit. Satan's lies keep us walking in our chains.

Describe how these verses apply to depending on deceit:

Jeremiah 8:5-6 _____

Proverbs 15:4 _____

6. *A rebellious child of God runs from the real answers (Isa. 30:15-17).* Have you ever experienced a season in your life when you knew what would rescue you but you ran from it? Perhaps like me, you may rank these memories among your greatest regrets. You may be surprised that virtually everyone has run from the real answers at one time or another.

Why do you think we are sometimes resistant to what is best for us?

In Isaiah 30:15, the word *salvation* is not used in a strictly eternal sense. The word represents being saved or delivered from any kind of calamity or attack.

Fill in the following equation according to Isaiah 30:15:

In _____ + _____ = your salvation.

Eternal salvation requires that we repent of our sins and depend on the work of Christ. Our need of deliverance does not end, however, once we become Christians. We've been eternally saved, but we need lots of help avoiding snares and pitfalls in our earthly journeys. The same equation applies: "In repentance and rest is your salvation!"

The word returning more accurately translates the Hebrew. *Shuwbah* actually means *returning* (Strong's). The word *repentance* used elsewhere in God's Word usually means "turning from sin," but often we omit the next step! The next step is what helps keep us from going back to the same sin again after we've earnestly repented! Acts 3:19 reflects this important two-fold step. The apostle wrote: "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." If we only turn from our sins but do not turn to God, we lack the power to overcome the temptation the next time it arises! The word *returning* in Isaiah 30:15 encompasses both the concepts addressed in Acts 3:19: repenting and returning to God!

We've been eternally saved, but we need lots of help avoiding snares and pitfalls in our earthly journeys.

Now let's look at the second variable in the equation: "In returning (or repentance, NIV) and _____ is your salvation."

The word *rest* probably means what you think it does. The Hebrew word is *nachath*. Strong's dictionary gives a definition that tickles me. It says the word means "lighting down" (Strong's). I can picture my grandmother in our kitchen in Arkansas with a fly swatter in her hand and a most serious expression on her face. "Whatcha doin', Nanny?" I'd ask. "I'm waiting for that filthy fly to light down somewhere so I can smack it."

In just a moment I'd hear, "ka-WHACK!" Then she would say, "Take that, you little nuisance!" Somehow, we often believe we are like that fly. We think if we light down for a second, God's going to whack us. Untrue. We're not flies and Nanny wasn't God! God desires for us to rest in Him, to light down on His truth, and be set on Who He is.

Isaiah 30:15 is telling us that in returning to God and resting confidently in His promises and His power, we will continually find salvation. I love the Hebrew meaning of the word *salvation*. *Yasha* means "to be open, wide, or free... It is the opposite of *tsarar*, to cramp." *Yasha* draws the picture of a spacious place in which to move.

I have personally experienced the wide-open freedom of obedience to Christ! I've also known the miserable pinned-in feeling of rebellion. We all know that God wants us to return and rest, but what kind of equation would tend to more readily reflect the practices of your past? I'll give you mine so you can get the idea: In repenting plus being determined to do better on my own strength has often been my downfall.

Another equation can be found in Isaiah 30:15. Fill in the blanks.

"in _____ + _____ = your strength."

I want you to know what *strength* means in this verse. The Hebrew word is *gebuwrah* implying victory (Strong's)! I deeply desire to be a victor, don't you? Let's consider two primary elements involved in victory: quietness and trust. The original word for *quietness* is *shaqat* meaning "to lie quietly, be undisturbed,...to calm." Notice the disturbing phrase concluding Isaiah 30:15: "but you would have none of it." Can you relate to that statement? I unfortunately can!

Have you sometimes experienced defeat because you refused to calm yourself in the presence of God and trust Him? Yes No
If so, share an example.

The exact Hebrew word translated *trust* in this verse appears only once in the Old Testament. The word *bitchah* means "there is nothing more that one can do." Once we've obeyed God, we can do nothing more. We then wait on Him to bring the victory, knowing that the consequences of our obedience are His problem and not ours.

Read Ephesians 6:13. Which phrase in this Scripture applies to the obedience that precedes standing confidently in God in times of warfare?

Our human nature is to run when we're in trouble, but we've learned two very important precepts from Isaiah 30:15:

- To flee from God's salvation is rebellion.
- To flee from God's strength is to flee from victory.

*A*s we approach our conclusion, please write all six characteristics of rebellion in the spaces provided: A rebellious child of God...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Now, let's do a little necessary introspection. Remember, I'm doing this, too!

*P*lace a star by any of the above characteristics that have been your tendencies in your history with God. Now, draw an unhappy face by any of the characteristics that are present struggles for you.

In the margin write a brief prayer, confessing any tendencies toward rebellion or areas of rebellion based on the six characteristics we've noted.

God wants to respond to you. His response is already recorded in Isaiah 30:18. He "longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion." We can picture God being merciful and forgiving when we accidentally get ourselves into a mess, but we almost cannot imagine how God can be compassionate when we're outright rebellious.

Oh, what a disservice we do when we try to humanize God by imagining Him as the best of humanity rather than all-together God! God's compassion demands that He reach out to us even in our rebellion, but His righteousness demands that He bring painful chastisement if we don't grab His reaching hand and return to Him wholeheartedly.

*A*s we end today's lesson, read Isaiah 30:12-14. What happens if we continue in rebellion, rejecting God's Word, relying on oppression, and depending on deceit? Explain the outcome in your own words.

*H*ow does God want you to respond to what He showed you today?

The figurative walls of protection around our lives will crumble like pottery broken to pieces. Those who are Christians will not lose salvation, but we stand to lose a significant amount of protection. The bottom line of lessons 1 and 2 this week is this: Clay that insists on acting like the Potter will inevitably end up in pieces. Thank goodness, God still loves cracked pots! Let's not wait until we're in pieces to return and trust.