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Sermon Notes

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Stand Firm in Faith, or Don't Stand at All

Isaiah 7:1-25

One of the biggest questions in life: what are you trusting? On what are you relying? What is your truest source of confidence for the dark future?

On most days, this question never really comes up. We live day to day in a comfortable bubble, able to handle whatever comes our way because we've done it many times before. We don't ask, "What am I trusting in?" as we pour milk on cereal... or as we answer a ringing cellphone... or as we sit on the couch in our living room... or as we lay down to go to sleep at night. All those activities and countless others are so completely ordinary, we assume we can do them ourselves, with no outside assistance... so we feel we don't need anything to trust

But this is a grave misunderstanding!! The fact is, at every single moment of our lives, we are trusting in something... our minds are assessing a situation and casting about for resources; if we feel confident we can handle that situation ourselves, we are trusting in OURSELVES...

This is the most devastating state we can be in spiritually

People can trust in all kinds of things, depending on the circumstances:

- A good student can trust in his high IQ, his study skills, and his diligent preparation to pass his final exam
- A man walking down a darkened city street late at night in the roughest section of town can trust in his black-belt karate skills and in the gun he's got hidden in his coat pocket
- An excellent athlete can trust in the hours he's spent practicing in an empty gym... or in the excellent coaching he's gotten from his Hall of Fame coach... to win the national championship
- A Fortune 500 Business executive can trust in his business acumen, his ability to close the deal, his marvelously-balanced retirement portfolio, and other financial bulwarks to guarantee his future happiness

Proverbs 18:11 The wealth of the rich is their fortified city; they imagine it an unscalable wall.

- A nation can trust in its military prowess... its multitrillion dollar defense budget... its aircraft carriers and state of the art fighter jets

What you're trusting in is most clearly revealed during a crisis...

In order to prove this to us, God brings trials and circumstances that will jar us from our comfort zones... and sometimes, He will bring extreme suffering to cause us to lose ALL other sources of trust than God Himself

So it is in Isaiah 7... the lesson of Isaiah 7 is, stop trusting in yourself, and stop trusting in your alliances... and throw yourself on God alone

In our passage today, the little kingdom of Judah is led by a faithless king named Ahaz... Ahaz, was a descendent of godly King David, the very man to whom the promise had been made that the Messiah would come from his descendents.

Now Judah was facing a crisis... and that crisis revealed what Ahaz was truly trusting in—his own military alliance with Assyria, rather than Almighty God

Ahaz's trust in Assyria, like all false trusts, would eventually destroy him and much of Judah as well.

I. Crisis Reveals True Faith (vs. 1-2)

A. Ahaz: David's Faithless Descendent

1. Historical Setting

- a. The Jews had been divided because of Solomon's idolatry... the northern Kingdom of Israel had ten tribes, the southern kingdom of Judah had two
- b. Israel, Judah, Aram, Edom, Moab, etc. all small kingdoms, minor players in the great game of geo-political strategy
- c. Similar to the small nations of Serbia and Belgium in pre-WWI Europe
- d. The big monster swimming in that small pool... Assyria
 - i) Superpower of the ancient Near East
 - ii) Violent, ruthless, brutal...Called the Nazis of the ancient world
 - iii) Assyria: Poised to gobble up all these minor nations like a lion devouring scraps of meat

2. Ahaz: Uzziah's grandson... but none of Uzziah's faith

2 Kings 16:3-4 [Ahaz] walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and even sacrificed his son in the fire, following the detestable ways of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. ⁴ He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places, on the hilltops and under every spreading tree.

a. God gave him over:

- i) Because of his sins, “God gave him over to his enemies”
- ii) Plain connection between the king’s false religion and his defeat by both Israel and Aram on the battlefield
- iii) Because of Ahaz’s sins...

2 Chronicles 28:5-6 Therefore the LORD his God handed him over to the king of Aram. The Arameans defeated him and took many of his people as prisoners and brought them to Damascus. He was also given into the hands of the king of Israel, who inflicted heavy casualties on him. ⁶ In one day Pekah son of Remaliah killed a hundred and twenty thousand soldiers in Judah-- because Judah had forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers.

b. Sadly... Ahaz didn’t learn the lesson

- i) If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em... Pragmatic religion... what works the best

2 Chronicles 28:23 He offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus, who had defeated him; for he thought, "Since the gods of the kings of Aram have helped them, I will sacrifice to them so they will help me." But they were his downfall and the downfall of all Israel.

- ii) he took everything out of the Temple and gave it away... then he shut the door of the Lord’s temple; then he began setting up altars to Aram’s gods in the streets of Jerusalem

So, God brings out a crisis to show him the emptiness of his heart and to give him opportunity to call on the name of the Lord

B. The Crisis: A Scary Alliance

As Isaiah 7 opens, two of these small nations, Ephraim (Israel) and Aram were allying themselves against one—Judah

Isaiah 7:5-6 Aram, Ephraim and Remaliah's son have plotted your ruin, saying, ⁶ "Let us invade Judah; let us tear it apart and divide it among ourselves, and make the son of Tabeel king over it."

C. Fluttering Like a Leaf

vs. 2 "... so the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind..."

1. No solid foundation in the Sovereignty of God... so they flutter

II. The Sovereign Lord Intervenes, Promises and Warns (vs. 3-9)

A. The Sovereign Lord Intervenes

1. God is not an idler, standing passively by on the sidelines of human history
2. God is not rooting for the proper outcome... he brings it about
 - a. He is sovereign in deciding what will happen on the stage of history
 - b. He moves His little fingers and the nations convulse
3. BUT God's real desire... that His people would trust in Him
4. In order for them to trust, He must SPEAK to them, make promises to them
5. This He does through Isaiah the prophet
6. Isaiah goes out to confront Ahaz as he makes preparations for battle

Isaiah 7:3 Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out, you and your son Shear-Jashub, to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman's Field

B. God's Command: Don't Be Afraid... Only Believe

vs. 4 Say to him, 'Be careful, keep calm and don't be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood-- because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and of the son of Remaliah

C. God's Promise: The Secret Plans of Man Will Fail

Isaiah 7:5-7 Aram, Ephraim and Remaliah's son have plotted your ruin, saying, ⁶ "Let us invade Judah; let us tear it apart and divide it among ourselves, and make the son of Tabeel king over it." ⁷ Yet this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "It will not take place, it will not happen

D. "Man Proposes, God Disposes"

1. God's sovereignty over the ebbs and flows of human history a central lesson of the Bible
2. Many verses teach the absolute sovereignty of God in daily life

Proverbs 19:21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails

3. Others plainly teach God's direct sovereignty over the rise and fall of nations

Daniel 4:17 the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.

4. some verses even discuss directly the plots and plans and schemes and lies political leaders make, and how sovereign God is over all of that
5. God Decrees Failure for the Alliance

Vs. 7 Yet this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "It will not take place, it will not happen

- a. Here faith must find its resting place: the sovereign power of God; He decrees what will and will not happen
- b. Tragically... Ahaz will not listen, but will flee into the arms of the monster Assyria
6. Judah's enemies are merely human... how can they stand against the power of God??

Isaiah 7:8-9 Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people.

Isaiah 40:22-25 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. ²³ He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. ²⁴ No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff. ²⁵ "To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

E. The Warning: Grave Danger for Unbelief

Isaiah 7:9 If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all."

1. Along with the promise comes a grave warning if they do not believe this word
2. The greatest danger in the universe: unbelief... for then it makes this Sovereign Lord our enemy!!
3. Here I perceive the same issue of the gospel

Romans 1:17 "The righteous will live by faith."

Those who refuse to believe in Christ will be destroyed... and by the things they trust in!!

Ahaz trusted in Assyria, and Assyria destroyed Judah

Unbelievers trust in false gods and false good works... and they will prove the greatest enemies of their souls on Judgment Day

III. The Sovereign Lord Gives a Sign: Immanuel (vs. 10-17)

A. Stooping to Our Weakness

1. Amazing how patient God is in dealing with weak sinners like us
2. He knows Ahaz's heart is terrified and faithless... God wants to give him a sign to help him
3. Isaiah basically hands him a blank check with God's signature on it... ask for anything you want as a sign and I will do it

Vs. 11 "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."

- a. Notice the language: "The Lord YOUR God..."
- b. An invitation to trust in the God of His father, David... the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob... his heritage of faith
- c. And notice the graciousness of the command... ask for ANY sign... even an extreme one up to the heavens!!!
- d. Joshua had asked the Lord to extend a day so he could finish the battle

Joshua 10:12-14 On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel: "O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon." ¹³ So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies... The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. ¹⁴ There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a man.

- e. God can do anything... He was willing to give a sign that He was still fighting for Israel

B. Ahaz's Transparent Hypocrisy

1. Ahaz hands the blank check back to Isaiah with a surly answer

"I will NOT ask. I will not put the Lord to the test."

2. Quoting Deuteronomy back to God!!

Deuteronomy 6:16 Do not test the LORD your God as you did at Massah.

3. Holier than God!! But it is wrong... it is not testing God to do the very thing God commands you to do
4. The fact is that God was actually testing Ahaz... Ahaz had no interest in a sign from the Lord; he didn't want to ask the Lord for anything at all
5. He wanted to solve his problems his own way; He would not call on the name of the Lord, or ask him for anything
6. Notice Isaiah's sharp reply from the Lord:

Isaiah 7:13 Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also?"

- a. Note the shift from "your God" to "my God"
- b. This is a decisive moment in Ahaz's life... he refuses the grace and help the Lord will give
- c. Judah will be saved, but not Ahaz

C. The Sign: Immanuel

Isaiah 7:14-16 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. ¹⁵ He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right. ¹⁶ But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

1. God will give a sign... but he will choose it
2. Note: the sign is given to the whole nation, not just to Ahaz... the word "you" is plural
3. This sign is a word, a child who symbolizes the word: **IMMANUEL**... God with us

D. Three Issues with the Sign

- 1. Was there an immediate sign in Ahaz's time?**
- 2. Does this verse teach the virgin birth?**
- 3. What is the significance of the word Immanuel?**

1. Was there an immediate sign in Ahaz's time?
 - a. Absolutely yes

- b. Christian prophecy: shadow and reality; type and fulfillment
 - i) Something acted out imperfectly in space and time illustrating some aspect of Christ's future coming
 - ii) Christ then perfectly fulfills that shadow with the bright light of His life and ministry
- c. In Ahaz's day, a child was born and given this mysterious name Immanuel
- d. Immanuel was a normal child, growing up in the normal way
- e. His development was like a time clock for the total erasure of the military threat to Judah from Ephraim and Aram

Isaiah 7:15-16 He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right. ¹⁶ But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

The sign was the name and the fulfillment was seeing Ephraim and Aram in smoldering ruins in the short time it took for a little boy to know right from wrong... five or six years

2. Does this verse teach the virgin birth?

- a. We recognize that Matthew picked this verse as a prediction of the virgin birth

Matthew 1:22-23 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, "God with us."

- b. BUT the virgin birth was utterly unique in all of history... we can't imagine that the child born in Ahaz's day was born from a virgin
- c. So Isaiah uses a Hebrew word "almah" which always refers in the OT to a virgin but which does not emphasize her virginity
- d. Luther's quote:

Martin Luther offered 100 gold coins to anyone who could show that *almah* ever referred to a married woman... in characteristic fashion, Luther also added that only the Lord knew where he'd get the 100 gold pieces if someone could meet his challenge!

- e. This Hebrew word is admirably suited for BOTH purposes... for Ahaz's sign and Mary's virgin conception and birth of Jesus

3. What is the significance of the word "Immanuel"?

- a. The word literally means "God with us"

- b. Here in Ahaz's day, it meant that the true source of Judah's safety was the fact that Almighty God was protecting her

***Isaiah 8:9-10 Raise the war cry, you nations, and be shattered! Listen, all you distant lands. Prepare for battle, and be shattered! Prepare for battle, and be shattered!
¹⁰ Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us.***

No nation, no matter how mighty, can defeat God's people while God is fighting for them

Deuteronomy 32:9-11 For the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance.... He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions.

Immanuel means God is with us to defeat all our enemies

- c. Deeper significance of Immanuel comes with the birth of Christ... more in a moment

IV. False Faith Proves Ruinous: Assyria is Coming! (vs. 17-25)

A. Both God and Ahaz Summon Assyria

1. Amazingly, both Almighty God and faithless king Ahaz summon Assyria to come
2. BUT for very different reasons!!

B. Faithless Ahaz Turns from God to Assyria for Help

1. Despite the sweet promises of protection from the Lord, Ahaz turns away in unbelief
2. He has no faith in the Lord and must save himself
3. He makes a fatal alliance with Assyria... the tragic story is told fully in 2 Kings 16

2 Kings 16:7-9 Ahaz sent messengers to say to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, "I am your servant and vassal. Come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel, who are attacking me." ⁸ And Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the temple of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it as a gift to the king of Assyria. ⁹ The king of Assyria complied by attacking Damascus and capturing it.

4. In honor of his liege lord, the King of Assyria, Ahaz changes the worship patterns of Judah

- a. He sees an Assyrian altar in Damascus and sends plans back for the altar to be built according to that pattern... he offers sacrifices on that new altar according to his own religion and seeks guidance from it
 - b. He took more things out of the temple of the Lord and sent them in honor of the King of Assyria, but that did not help him (2 Chronicles 28:21)
 - c. He eventually shut the doors of the Lord's temple entirely and set up altars at every street corner in Jerusalem and worshiped false gods after the pagan pattern of Assyria and the other nations
5. All of this came from the turn in Ahaz's heart... "I will NOT ask the Lord; I will save myself"
 6. BUT this foolish act would eventually destroy most of Judah

One commentator: turning to Assyria to protect him from these two smaller kingdoms of Aram and Ephraim was like a mouse, threatened by a rat asking the ravenous cat for help

Assyria would be all too glad to come rescue Judah... then devour her

C. God Predicts and Brings Assyria

1. Amazingly, God also brought the King of Assyria... but for an entirely different purpose
2. God's sovereign rule over all nations is a major theme of Isaiah... so also is God's searching of hearts for motive
3. God's motives in bringing Assyria are to deport faithless Israel (the northern kingdom) and to chastise faithless Judah

Isaiah 7:17-20 The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah-- he will bring the king of Assyria. " ¹⁸ In that day the LORD will whistle for flies from the distant streams of Egypt and for bees from the land of Assyria. ¹⁹ They will all come and settle in the steep ravines and in the crevices in the rocks, on all the thornbushes and at all the water holes. ²⁰ In that day the Lord will use a razor hired from beyond the River--the king of Assyria-- to shave your head and the hair of your legs, and to take off your beards also.

4. God does not merely predict that Assyria will come
5. He actually BRINGS them to do his bidding
 - a. Note the clear language of verse 17: He will BRING the King of Assyria

- b. He whistles for them like a master bee trainer... the bees and flies will come at his bidding
 - i) They will swarm all over the land
 - ii) They will pour over their banks like a swollen river in a flood and sweep on into Judah...
 - iii) But the two kings you dread will be totally destroyed!!
 - c. Verse 20: He hires them like a razor to shave (humiliate) His people
6. Bottom line: what you trust in, if not the Lord, will ultimately destroy you
- a. Assyria came not to save but to destroy... seize loot, take plunder, and trample all other nations down like mud in the street
 - b. If Ahaz had trusted in the Lord, I believe, God would have brought Assyria to the border of Judah but not allowed them to invade and sweep into the land
 - c. But now, God will whistle for bees and flies and they will swarm over all the land and destroy it
 - d. He will hire Assyria like a razor to shave the hair from Judah's body, bringing total humiliation
7. The final result... the land will be destroyed... a cursed land

Isaiah 7:23-25 In that day, in every place where there were a thousand vines worth a thousand silver shekels, there will be only briars and thorns. ²⁴ Men will go there with bow and arrow, for the land will be covered with briars and thorns. ²⁵ As for all the hills once cultivated by the hoe, you will no longer go there for fear of the briars and thorns; they will become places where cattle are turned loose and where sheep run.

V. The Immanuel Sign Fulfilled: Christ is Born

A. The Virgin Birth

1. Centuries later, God remembered the sign he promised Ahaz...
2. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit
3. This is the clear testimony both in Matthew 1 and Luke 1

After Mary was told by the angel what would happen to her, she yearned to understand

Luke 1:34-35 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" ³⁵ The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

4. But it is Matthew that links the virgin birth with this particular prophecy

After Joseph, Mary's fiancée was told of her miraculous pregnancy, we resolved to divorce her quietly... BUT

Matthew 1:20-23 an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, "God with us."

B. "God With Us"

1. Literal fulfillment... Jesus Christ was God in the flesh... He came to earth as a human being, walked on the earth, lived on the earth, suffered on the earth, died on the earth

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Hebrews 2:14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity

2. He was "God with us", enduring what we endure

3. More than that, however

a. "God on our side"... God contending on our behalf, fighting our enemies, seeking to bless us eternally

Romans 8:31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Even more powerfully than He was "with" Israel in their military struggles, He is "with" Christians now in all their struggles

Hebrews 13:5 God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

b. "God walking alongside us" in our trials and suffering

i) The trial of temptation

Hebrews 4:15 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin.*

ii) The trial of suffering

Hebrews 2:18 *Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

iii) The trial of death

Hebrews 2:9 *he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

c. "God empowering us" to fulfill our mission

Exodus 3:11-12 *But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" ¹² And God said, "I will be with you.*

Matthew 28:19-20 *go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

C. The True Deliverance

1. "God with us" in Isaiah's time meant God there to deliver her from her military enemies
2. But a far greater danger threatened us... the danger of eternal damnation in hell for our sins
3. Christ came to be "Immanuel", God with us to defeat our sin, our condemnation and our death
4. By His death on the cross, Jesus is the ultimate picture of "Immanuel", defeating that which would have sunk us in the lake of fire forever

D. The Final Fulfillment: Eternally with God

1. Heaven: the perfect fulfillment of "Immanuel, God with us"
2. Jesus' deepest desire

John 17:24 *"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory*

3. Heaven's perfect fulfillment

Revelation 21:2-3 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

VI. Central Lesson: In What Are You Trusting?

A. How Do You React During Trials?

1. Trials reveal character... they also reveal faith... what you're really trusting in
2. When bad news comes, how do you react? Like Ahaz??

Isaiah 7:2 the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind.

3. When you are facing a dread illness, like cancer, what does it show about your belief system?
4. When your plans fall through and you face grave disappointment, what does it show about what you're really trusting in?
5. Christ is saying

Isaiah 7:4 Be careful, keep calm and don't be afraid. Do not lose heart

B. Even More Poignantly, What About Your Soul??

1. When you anticipate your own death and you consider standing before God and giving an account of every careless word you have spoken, what are you trusting in to enable you to survive?
2. Is it the finished work of Christ on the cross... or is it something else?
3. Jesus says plainly

Isaiah 7:9 If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all."

4. Or as Paul put it in Romans

Romans 1:16-17 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

- Shikoku vine bridge... looked flimsy, but had carried travelers across the gorge for centuries

That is an illustration of faith in Christ. Like the vine bridge, Christ and Christ alone must support my entire weight, my soul's state before Almighty God. And faith in Christ means having no additional means of support... just Christ alone. If I rig myself up with a rappelling rope and harness while crossing the vine bridge, I am really not trusting in that to support me. The hymn "I Will Arise and Go to Jesus" captures this element of faith with striking vividness:

Lo, the incarnate God, ascended,
Pleads the merit of His blood:
**Venture on Him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude!**

I will arise and go to Jesus,
He will embrace me in His arms;
In the arms of my dear Savior,
O there are ten thousand charms.

Saving faith involves "venturing out" onto Christ, venturing "wholly," entrusting our eternal well-being in His trustworthy hands. It also involves a certain jealous protectiveness over that venturing: "Let no other trust intrude." Like another lover wanting to share in the deep embrace of a husband and wife, so would any other trust than Christ be an intrusion. We must forever reject our own righteousness in getting us into a favorable standing with the Thrice-Holy God, and we must equally reject our own efforts at keeping us there. Here the jealousy that God felt over Israel in the Old Testament is focused like a laser on our own soul, with the probing question: "On what are you relying to get you to heaven?" No other trust may intrude than this: the perfect work of Jesus Christ on our behalf.