

## **Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 13, Isa. 26-27**

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This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Isaiah. This is session number 13, Isaiah chapters 26 and 27.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for all of your provisions for us. We thank you for the rain that waters the earth. What a marvelous, marvelous order you have made so that the rain goes down to the oceans, through the rivers, rises into the clouds, and comes back to water the earth. Forgive us that we complain. If it's too sunny, we complain. If it's too rainy, we complain. If it's too cold, we complain. If it's too hot, we complain. We are inveterate complainers. Forgive us, please. Help us, O Lord, to receive all your gifts and to receive them gladly and joyfully. And as always, we receive your second-best gift. Your best gift was Jesus. Thank you. And your second best gift is your written word. Thank you. Thank you for the privilege of spending this next hour in the study of your word. Help us, Lord. Help me. Help those who listen. Help us together.

Help us to be inspired by each other's love for you and desire for your word. Help us, O Lord, to grow deeper. Help us to be less and less like those people that are described in chapter one of Isaiah, stupider than a donkey, not knowing where the manger is.

Thank you, Lord, for the level of discernment you've given us that we do know where the manger is and we've come to it tonight and we expect you to feed us by the power of your Holy Spirit. Thank you. In your name, amen.

Someone was asking, since, as they said, you wrote the New Living Translation, which is not quite correct, why don't you use it? Well, I don't use it for this kind of study because the New Living Translation is best for reading big sections. It is so readable. It is so immediate.

And so, I say to my students, and as I will be saying to the Isaiah class that I'm offering this spring, you really need two Bibles. You need one that is a kind of a literal translation, like in this case, I've been using the English Standard Version for verse-by-verse, section-by-section study. You also then need the New Living Translation for reading big sections and getting a feel for the flow.

It's hard to get a feel for the flow when you're reading a literal translation. But so use both and we'll use a more literal one for this kind of close work, but not because it's better than a thought-for-thought translation. In many ways, I use the New Living all the time for my devotions.

In many ways, a thought-for-thought translation is a better translation in that it catches the thought. Sometimes literal translations may be word for word for word, and you really miss the thought. So, people say, well, what's more accurate? What's accurate? And by the way, there are no literal translations.

None. Exodus 34, 6. We talked about this during the Exodus study. God is slow to anger.

Literal translation? Hardly. What the Hebrew literally says is God has a really long nose. Because when you get mad, your nose gets hot.

And God has a nose that is about six feet long. It takes a long, long time for the heat to get all the way out there to the end. Now, I say there are no literal translations.

No translation in the English world translates that thing literally. It says, what was the thought behind that imagery? Oh, the thought is patience. The thought is slow to get angry.

So, we'll give you the thought. Oh, I thought this was literal. So anyway, we're talking about Isaiah 26 to 27 tonight.

Some of you have been in and out, and that's fine. And some of you have been here and in and out. But I've been there, done that.

So let me remind you where we are. We're in that section. We're in the larger section, 7 to 39, trust the basis of servanthood.

Within that section, we're in chapters 13 to 35, lessons in trust. King Ahaz failed the test. He did not trust the Lord.

He trusted Assyria against his two neighborly enemies. So having failed the test, we go back to the books again. And we've looked thus far at 13 to 23, don't trust the nations.

The various messages of judgment against the nations. All of them are under judgment, and some of them are going to be trusting your God. So why in the world would you trust them? Now, I said last week, that's particular, dealing with particular nations.

Now, in this section that we're looking at last week, and this, we have a more general treatment. Both of them speak about God's Lordship. This one in relation to particular nations, this one in relation to the world.

Also, as I said last week, the focus here in 13 to 23 is on the nations. And you could get the impression that Yahweh is just a reactor. The nations, choose their actions, and God says, well, let's see now, what shall I do about that, I wonder.

No, the point is made here that behind it all stands God, and God is the sovereign actor at this stage of history. So last week, we looked at chapters 24 and 25. We saw in chapter 24, sort of a summary, a general summary of what's said here.

All the nations are going to be destroyed. The city of earth is going to be broken down, and the drunken songs that they once sang are all going to be brought to silence because the Lord alone is going to be exalted on that last day. That's chapter 24.

Chapter 25, God is going to have a feast on his holy mountain. Oh, yes, obviously, a feast for us winners. No, it's a feast for the whole world.

Now, we're talking about Semitic hyperbole here. The whole world is destroyed, and he makes a feast for all the peoples of the earth. They're all dead.

Well, you're trying to make a point. Nobody is going to escape judgment, and on the other hand, everyone has the possibility of redemption. That's the kind of point that is being made here, and he's going to have a feast on that great mountain, and on that mountain, he is going to pull away the shroud that covers the face of humanity.

He's going to raise us from the dead, and we'll have songs, songs in the night, because of what he has done for us, but that doesn't mean that the arrogant are going to escape. Moab, proud, and arrogant, is going to be pushed down, so many people are attracted by the doctrine of universalism. That is the idea that everybody is going to be saved in the end.

That's very attractive. You think of the doctrine of hell, and it's a very frightening, grievous doctrine, especially if you have lost loved ones. So, it's very tempting to think, well, somehow or other, God's going to pull it off.

You know, when we come to the end, and everybody is there in heaven before the judgment seat, and God says, do you want to go to heaven? Why, of course, everybody's going to say, I want to go to heaven. No. C.S. Lewis, in his wonderful little book, *The Great Divorce*, really gives the lie to that.

If you've not read that book, I urge you to do it. It's a parable. It's these people who are in hell get to take a bus trip to heaven, and when they come to heaven, they discover that they've been living in the vapors and the mists, and now they've come to reality, and reality is frankly scaring them to death, and they are all met by somebody they knew on earth who is now transformed into a king or a queen, and

that's scary too, and in Lewis's telling of the story, everyone but one decides to go back to hell, because they would have to give up something that is dear to them in order to enter heaven, and they can't bear it.

So, Isaiah, in this wonderful statement of the resurrection in chapter 25, closes that chapter with those frightening verses about Moab being pushed down into a manure pile because they chose their own pride at all costs, and I think that's important, it's poetic, but I think it's an important teaching of fundamental doctrine. God is not going to save anybody against their will, and in the end, our will can trump God's will, and again, that's pretty frightening. Okay, tonight we're looking at chapter 26.

Again, notice how we begin. In that day, what? A song. Uh-huh.

This is tying together this section 24, 25, excuse me, 24 to 27. One of the themes that ties it together is song. Now, over in verse, chapter 25, verse 5, the very end of that verse, what kind of a song is being sung there? The song of the terrible ones, or this version says the song of the ruthless ones.

So, yes, there's a song, a song of victory, a song of oppression, a song of terror. What's the song here in 26? Praise. Praise.

Praise. And praise for what? Verse 2, well, verses 1 and 2. Praise for what? A strong city. A strong city.

Here again is the contrast. There's the city of earth in all of its power, power built on oppression, power built on human strength, and it has been flattened, but we have a city, and that city is a cause for singing. Right through the Bible, it's interesting, we move from a garden to a city.

Now, frankly, having grown up in the country, I think it ought to go the other direction, but I'll take God's plan any day, but it's that idea. We're headed toward the city, the city, and what are the city's walls? Salvation. Yes, yes.

It's a city without walls from one point of view, but from the other point of view, it's a city, and we're secure inside those walls of God. And, you know, we, in the Wesleyan tradition, we don't believe in entire sanctification. Excuse me, yes, we do.

Entire security, eternal security, I'll get it right yet. We don't believe in eternal security. Many of us believe in eternal insecurity.

Oh dear, I wonder, I wonder, oh my, I wonder if God didn't plan for us to live that way. The good news is there's only one person in the world who can take you out of God's hands. You.

Again, I'm so glad God has made it possible for me to be married. I've learned so much theology from marriage. I can stand here tonight and tell you that I'm a perfect husband, but Karen is here.

So, if I do something wrong, something that hurts her, is the marriage over? No, no, because her love is stronger than that. But suppose I keep on doing that arrogantly, proudly, demanding that she forgive me. It's possible for me to take myself out of that love.

It's the same, it seems to me, in salvation. Oh, His walls are strong enough to hold you in. You may fall short, you may at times break His heart, but as long as you truly want to be there in His arms, not in heaven, as long as you want to be in that relationship with Him and are willing to repent and confess and to change your ways of living, there's nothing that can take you out of that city.

And that's good news, friends. That's good news. We have a security in Him that we can live with confidently.

All right, let's move on. Verse 3 and 4, of course, famous, famous verses, and I think they're occurring right here, sort of in the midpoint of this unit, reminding us what it's about. Now, I want you to notice, I said there were three characteristics of the people who come into this city.

Actually, there are four. What are they in verses 2 and 3? Yes, I think I heard the first one, righteous. Okay, these are people who are committed to doing what is right.

Whether it's to their advantage or not, they are committed to doing the right thing. Okay, what's the next? Yes, one version says, keep faith. Or they are faithful.

That is, they're reliable. They are dependable. And remember that in the biblical way of thinking, truth is not sort of an abstraction out there somewhere.

Truth is a way of living, to be true, be true to one another, to be true to your word. So, these are people who are committed to doing what is right. They are people who keep faith with one another and with God.

All right, what else? Before that, steadfast. Yes, their mind is fixed on you. They have a fixed focus.

I know what I want. I know why I'm living. And so help me God, that's what's going to happen in my life.

It seems to me, I've seen this so many times across the years of teaching. A student who starts out a course in a great flurry of excitement. Oh, this is the most wonderful course in the world.

I'm just going to learn so much. And somewhere along about the third or the fourth week, you see their focus beginning to dissipate. And they get attracted to that and they get attracted to this.

And when they come to the end, they haven't learned very much because they've lost focus. That ability, you know, this is what Paul is talking about in Philippians. This one thing I do, I've got my eye fixed on the tape, the tape at the end of the race.

I've never forgotten the story of the miler Jim Ryan, a great runner. And in one race, he just knew he was 30 or 40 yards ahead of whoever was second. And as he came around the backstretch into the final stretch toward the tape, he said he just could not get out of his head.

I wonder how far ahead I am. And he looked back. And when he did, his toe caught the cinders and he went head over heels.

He was so far ahead that when he picked himself up and ran, he still finished third. But he lost his focus. He lost his concentration.

And in our world, it seems to me that's one of the primary things the devil does to us. He gets us focused on a thousand different things. Sometimes he gets us focused intently on one wrong thing.

But I think more often than that, he just dissipates our focus. So, we're focused on this and then that and then the other thing. Paul says one thing, the tape.

And I like what he says in Philippians. And I know this is Isaiah, not Philippians, but he says, for the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. What in the world does that mean? I think it means this.

God has planted a vision of Paul in Christ and Christ in Paul. And that thing, that thing is the tape for which I'm running. This one thing I do.

All right. And then the last, of course, is the one we've talked about. Several of you mentioned trust.

There it is. And what's the result of that kind of living? It is, as I say in the background, shalom, shalom. We try again, no literal translations.

We translate that perfect peace. But the text doesn't say perfect peace. It just says the peace of peacefulness.

Perfect peace is not a bad translation at all. I think that's the idea. But the point is, it's not just shalom, it's shalom of shalom.

Now I've said to you before, say it to you again, shalom can be translated as peace. But that's not a very full translation of the concept. Peace is about that big.

Shalom is about that big. One aspect of shalom is what we think of as peace, the absence of conflict. But shalom is to be put together, to be made whole, to have all of the disparate parts of your life pulled together into one.

I will never forget a man who at Taylor University, he was about three years older than the rest of us, and had been in the Navy band. He was a drunk. He said, you know, we learned on cold days that the only way to keep your tuba from freezing up was to imbibe about a fifth of a whiskey before you started playing.

But the navigators got to him, and through the navigators, Jesus got to him. And he'd been converted soundly. I will never forget in a prayer meeting with some of us guys in the dorm, hearing Dick Berenzi say, oh God, just gather up my life into one big snowball and hurl it at the target of Jesus.

That's shalom, shalom, folks. He doesn't promise us the absence of conflict. He says if you follow him, you'll probably get nailed to a cross.

I don't think that's the absence of conflict, personally. But he says, I can put you together. I can make you whole.

That's good stuff. That's good stuff. John, I think the piece we miss so often, at least I have, I won't blame anybody, God has just sort of dropped this perfect piece on us.

You know, Lord, here's your terrible situation, here's your perfect piece. But the truth of the matter is, the piece comes about when we embody these characteristics. And I thank you for really making that clear to me.

Yes, yes, yes. Absolutely right. Absolutely right.

God does miracles, no question about it. But God is also deeply committed to cause and effect. And if we have not fulfilled the causes, we really don't have a right to ask for the effect.

All of us, well again, I ought to follow Bonnie here and say I won't talk about you, I'll talk about me. But it's very easy to ask God to do this stuff when I have not met the

conditions. And God says, well, I'd like to, John, but you're not in any place to receive what I can do for you.

All right. Well, half an hour for four verses, that's not bad. Yes, great.

I like a comment that this Bible, my study Bible here about that verse is that it's such a reliance that it precludes double-mindedness. Good. About who you serve, there's no doubt, no doubt at all.

It's such a reliance that it precludes double-mindedness. That's a good thought, a good thought.

Yes, yes. All right. So, what has happened to the other city in verses five and six? This is this theme we've just seen all through the book, isn't it? I try to exalt myself and what's going to happen? God's foot is going to land squarely on my sand castle.

He has humbled the inhabitants of the height, the lofty city. Yeah, there's the secure city and the lofty city. I think I'll take the secure city.

He lays it low, lays it low to the ground. All right, let's push on. The path of the righteous is level.

I've said to you before, I'm sure I'll say it again before we're done in June, but this book is a symphony. One of the characteristics of a symphony is themes come forward and you say, oh yeah, I heard that back in the Andante, and now here it is in the Allegro. A little different key maybe, but it's the same theme.

And then a little later, oh here it comes again. And one of the joys of listening to a symphony is being able to intellectually react to it and hear those things coming in and out. It's one of the things I owe to a fine arts course at Taylor University a long time ago when a country boy who mainly knew guitar and ukulele had to take a fine arts course.

I didn't like it at the time, but it was time well spent. Okay, so here's one of these themes that's coming up again. The path that is level.

Remember in chapter 40, he's going to say God is coming. Fill in the valleys, level the mountains, a straight road for God to come to us. And here it is, a straight road that he gives us in our lives.

Yes, there are hills and there are valleys. You're going to have them, I'm going to have them. That's part of life.

But God is a great earth mover who in the middle of the valleys and the hills can make a straight path for those whose mind is fixed on him. Here again in verse 8, in the path of your judgments, O Lord, we wait for you. Remember what I've said in the Bible, in the Old Testament, trust and wait are synonyms.

It's not just sitting on your hand and saying, well, Lord, sooner or later, I guess you're going to do something here. But it is that confident expectation. I'm not going to run ahead of you and solve my problem my way.

I'm going to let you solve my problem in your way. And I just can't wait to see how you're going to do it. It's confident anticipation.

And that's called trust. You don't trust the Lord, you have to run ahead of him and solve your problem your way. If you trust him, you can say, I don't care how long I have to wait.

I'd rather have it your way than my way. In the path of your judgments, we wait for your name. Remember again what I've said about name, it's not his label, it's his character, his nature, his reputation, your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul.

Here it comes again. Lord, I want your name to be glorified through me no matter what. I want the world to remember who you are and what you've done because of what they see in me.

My soul yearns for you in the night, my spirit within me earnestly seeks you. Now, these next two and a half verses I ask you to think about. When your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.

If favor is shown to the wicked, he doesn't learn righteousness. In the land of uprightness, he deals corruptly. He doesn't see the majesty of the Lord.

Oh Lord, your hand is lifted, but they don't see it. Let them see your zeal for your people and be ashamed. Let the fire for your adversaries consume them.

Now, in your own words, what does that say? Okay, the opportunity is there, but the wicked person doesn't lay hold of it. All right. What doesn't Isaiah want God to do too quickly? Well, I think it's the other way around.

I think he doesn't want him to do good things for the adversary too quickly. If favor is shown to the wicked, he doesn't learn righteousness. You agree with that? I know it's the Bible, but you could disagree with it.

It'd be all right. Do you agree with that? They don't want. Yeah.

They're not given the opportunity to consider what's going on here in my life. Yeah. Oh, I think this is our desperate condition in America.

God has been so good to us for 200 years. We think we deserve it. We think we've earned it.

We see it as an affirmation of what we're doing and being right. That's right. That's right.

That's exactly right. Isaiah says, God, you need to give these folks a dose of judgment. I wonder if that's what he's saying in heaven right now about us.

God, how long are you going to wink at what they're doing and the way they're living? They're not learning righteousness. They're learning wickedness. So that's a, that has always been a pretty grim two or three verses there for me because when I look at it, I have to say that's right.

That's right. And so, well, a little later on, I'll call you to another verse here. Okay.

So he's saying, Lord, we're waiting. We're trusting. We're believing.

But God, unless you bring your judgment upon the wicked, they're going to just keep on doing what they're doing. Uh-huh. In the meantime, we might join them.

Yes. Yes. But again, and as I've said to you before, the Hebrew prophets are so flexible at one point he's speaking for God.

Another point he's speaking to God. At one point he's speaking to the people. Another point he's speaking for the people.

And it's just so interesting to see the way he goes back and forth here. Verse 12, Oh Lord, you will ordain Shalom for us. You have done for us all our work.

That's a person who is pretty far down the road to spiritual maturity when they can recognize that whatever has been accomplished in my life, Lord, ultimately, it's your work. You've done it. It's hard to be very arrogant if you really believe that.

Oh Lord, our God, other Lords beside you have ruled over us, but your name alone we bring to remembrance. Yeah. Been a lot of Kings and rulers, some good, some bad, some indifferent, but in the end, it's your name that we want to be written over us.

Your name we want on that medallion on the forehead. Remember what Jesus said? As often as you do this, do this in remembrance. Remember, remember whose you are and who has made you who you are.

Don't forget it. So, then he goes on. Verse 16 says, Lord, we haven't done it.

We haven't accomplished in the world. Verse 17, like a pregnant woman who rises and cries out in her pangs when she's near to giving birth. So were we because of you all Lord, we were pregnant.

We writhe, but we have given birth to wind. We have accomplished no deliverance in the earth and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen. Again, that's Isaiah speaking for the people.

We haven't delivered the world to righteousness. We haven't condemned the world for its wickedness. If the salt shall lose its savor, it is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled into the earth.

We haven't brought deliverance. We haven't brought condemnation because we've been just tepid. I can never get away from the letter to the church at Laodicea.

You're neither hot nor cold. You're just lukewarm and I'm going to spit you out. Oh God, let our focus be so firmly on you that our deliverance will be manifest to anybody.

And being such, it will be the savor of death to those who are lost. Remember that's what Paul says. He says it's going to be the same smell.

It'll be the smell of life to those who are living, but it'll be the smell of death to those who are being lost. So, God does a work in us so that our deliverance will be unmistakable and so unmistakable that it will condemn those who are not delivered. Not by us saying you're bad and you're going to hell.

Now that may need to be said to some folks, much more than many of us have the courage to say, but more than that it needs to be why aren't I like that? What's the matter with my life that I'm not that kind of person? There's something wrong with me. They are condemned by the very presence of deliverance in our lives. I want to be that delivered.

Again, God help us, not well, God has done a wonderful work in my life and if you try hard like I have, he could do that for you too. That is the smell of death. No, no, no, no.

But a Mother Teresa who can kneel down in the filth and the death and the shame and not be touched by it. God has a good promise though in verse 19. Your dead shall live, their bodies will rise, and you who dwell in the dust awake and sing.

There it is again, singing for joy. For your due is the due of light, the earth will give birth to the dead. Yes, yes.

In the end, in the end, every one of us, unless Jesus comes first, is going to die. But God says that's not the end of the story. Your shortcomings, your failures, that's not the end of the story.

The end of the story is the resurrection. Thank God, thank God. He doesn't grade on the curve, he grades by one standard.

Have you taken the blood of Jesus as your covering? Do you remember Elmer Parsons? Yes. Yeah, he always used to say he was a missionary in Japan and he said he found out one thing about those people. He says you got to help them say thank you before you can ever help them say I'm sorry, I repent.

I think that's what you're saying, you know if you're righteous out there, but if you radiate like Mother Teresa or that life, it just like makes people drool, makes them hungry, and that's what draws them in. Not, you know, you better repent or you're going to hell. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I don't want to, I don't want to minimize the necessity to make the alternatives clear, but, but still the point that both you and I are making is that if he has wrought deliverance in us, that in fact will become the condemnation and Isaiah is saying we're not delivered and therefore we haven't brought any sense of condemnation on those who are lost.

You can get a big argument on that. Yeah, right. There, there are many scholars who will say these chapters have to have been written a hundred years before Christ because nobody believed in the resurrection before that.

We don't know that. So, we, we, the real answer is we don't know. We know that by the time of Christ, the Pharisees believed in resurrection and the Sadducees only accepted the first five books, Moses denied resurrection and Jesus played the two off against each other and Paul did too.

Kind of interesting how they did that, but so we, we really do not know how far back. As I've told you, I think the Bible tells me that Isaiah wrote this book and that means that this idea is at least as old as 700 BC, but whether it was just totally shocking to everybody who heard it at that point, which I think it probably was, or whether maybe it was somewhat more widespread at that time, we really don't know. All right.

Let's look at verse chapter 27. I told you in the background that all over the Near East, there was, there were versions of one, I do not like to call it a creation story because they didn't believe in creation, something brand new that hadn't existed before. They believed in origins.

Now the pagans believed essentially what modern godless scientists believe. We haven't gotten very far in 5,000 years and that is matter has always existed. Matter is eternal, nothing else.

The pagans believed that this matter existed in a chaotic watery form because they were creating the invisible world from this world. And you look at this world and what, what begins birth? The water bursts. You look at the soil and the soil is dead unless you pour water on it.

So, in the beginning was watery chaos. And in most cases, it was a woman because all of us here came from a woman's body. Unfortunately, she was not a nice lady.

She was basically a monster. The gods came from her. She gave birth to them in various more or less pornographic tales of the account.

But, and this, you just have, you just have to love this. They all, these crazy gods, got to horsing around and partying and having too much fun and making too much noise, and the old lady decided to kill them all. Every parent has been there one way or another.

Would you turn that thing off? So, the gods are terrified and they finally end up creating a kind of a superhero who kills the old lady and in one way or another out of her body brings this ordered world into existence. In the Canaanite version of this story, in this case, it's, the chaos figure is male. But in the Canaanite version of the story, the chaos god was called Leviathan.

So about six or seven places in the Old Testament, there is an allusion to that story. Now, I say allusion. That's a very important word here.

To allude to something is to refer to it. And I use the illustration here. I say of somebody, wow, look at old Ron Smith.

He is a real Hercules. Oswalt, you believe in Greek myth. No, I don't.

I alluded to the myth, but I don't believe in it for a minute. Now, it's the same thing the Hebrew people are doing. They don't believe this story.

And one of the reasons I can say they don't believe it is they're not talking about God defeating the monster to bring order out of chaos. They're talking about God

defeating the monster to bring salvation out of sin. Over and over again, when that allusion occurs in the Bible, you'll see it.

When did God defeat the sea monster? When he led his people across the Red Sea. Well, no, that's not what the pagan believes. But they're using this kind of language that would be familiar to people to make a point.

That's what's going on here. Now, the question is, why do you think that would be used here? Why has Isaiah pulled that in at this point? All right. All right.

Yes. And it's a parable demonstrating what? God's power, God's power to save sin has brought chaos into the world. That's so different from the pagan.

The pagan says in the beginning was chaos. And somehow or other, these gods imposed some degree of order on this chaotic world. And you've got to tell the myth every year to make sure that he does it again.

No, God made an orderly world. And we, our first mother and father, humans brought chaos into the world. But God in his saving grace can come into the chaos of sin and redeem us.

I, a friend told us about a book, it's entitled Unbroken. And I dare not get too involved here. I'll tell you the whole story.

And we'll be here till midnight. But in the Second World War, an Olympic runner was a bombardier in an aircraft in the South Pacific, the plane went down, he and the pilot spent 47 days on a raft. It's the longest anybody that we know of survived on a raft.

They landed on a Japanese island. They were taken to prison camp, and they were slated to be killed. But the Japanese realized that this guy was an Olympic runner.

And they thought they could turn him and use him as a propagandist. So they sent him and the pilot to an unregistered camp. Red Cross knew nothing about it.

So, they could do whatever they wanted to there. And they did. From there, he was sent to another camp.

And the disciplinary officer was a psychotic who would beat people senselessly and then cry over them because they were hurting. He picked out this guy, Louis Zamperini, on purpose. Because, number one, they were trying to break him.

Number two, because he thought he was such a big tough guy, this Olympic guy. They didn't do it. And ultimately, this was interesting, there was a kill order out.

August 22nd, 1945, all of the prisoners of war were supposed to be killed and their bodies disposed of. The atomic bomb saved their lives. He came home, and just went into the pit.

These horrible nightmares. He married. One night, he woke up with his wife on the floor, sitting on her chest, strangling her, thinking he was strangling this Japanese guy.

Alcoholism, is just awful. One night, his wife went to a tent meeting. 1950, Los Angeles, Billy Graham.

She got converted. She had been planning to divorce him. She had left him, had come back with the purpose of finishing the divorce papers, went there, she came home, and told him, I'm not going to divorce you.

I want you to go hear this guy. He fought it, fought it, finally, finally, he went sitting in the back row, furious over what Billy Graham was saying. Came out when they were giving the invitation, dragging her behind him, going to go out the back, and all of a sudden, when the plane was going down, he was underwater covered with wires.

He blacked out when he came to, the wires were gone and he was bobbing to the surface. On the raft, they had, at one point, they had been without water for eight days and they were dying. And he prayed and said, God, if you'll send us rain, I'll serve you all my life.

Six hours later, a rainstorm came. A Japanese bomber found them, made three strafing passes, and 48 bullet holes in their raft. None of them were touched.

They were taken to Kwajalein. Everybody who went to Kwajalein died. They didn't, etc.

He was standing there. He'd had all these flashbacks for now five years. Standing there, he felt rain on his face.

And the author says this was the last flashback he would ever have because instead of going out the door, he went down the aisle. God can turn the chaos of sin into order. Louis Zamperini became an evangelist.

He spent the rest of his life working with kids. When he was 92, in 2008, he was up in a tree with a chainsaw cutting off a limb. His brother screamed at him and Louis said, well, God will take me whenever he's ready.

And his brother said, then why are you trying to help him? God can transform the chaos of sin into order. That's what this is saying. And so, then he talks about the vineyard.

Remember, we saw the vineyard in chapter five? Was the vineyard of bitter grapes. God had planted it so carefully and all it yielded was bitter grapes. And God says we're going to tear it down.

We're going to call in the wild animals. Now then, a pleasant vineyard, sing of it. I, the Lord, am its keeper.

Every moment I water it, lest anyone punish it. I keep it night and day. I have no wrath.

Would that I had thorns and briars to battle. I would march against them. I would burn them up together.

Let them lay hold of my protection. Let them make shalom with me. Let them make shalom with me.

He goes on to say, if I have punished you, just remember this. I haven't punished you nearly as severely as I've punished those who punished you. How true it is.

Israel exists today. Babylon has been gone for 2500 years. And this is where then I referred you to Hebrews, where Hebrews says, God disciplines those whom he loves.

Never forgotten a football coach who said, if I'm yelling at you, there's hope for you. Start worrying when I stop yelling at you. I've given up on you.

And Hebrews there in that 12th chapter, if you haven't looked at it, I would urge you to. Hebrews talks about the discipline that is born of love. I don't know about you, but it's very hard for me to actually believe that.

When I'm going through hard times, I tend to say, well, you're punishing me for something. Or you hate me or, or, or. There's a difference, not technically, but, but I think in practice, there's a difference between discipline and punishment.

Punishment simply says you did wrong and I'm going to make you suffer. Discipline says you did wrong. I'm going to allow you to take the consequences in order that.

So, as I've said numerous times, and we'll say numerous times, more times destruction is never God's intended last word. And that's what he's saying here. You're my vineyard.

You're never going to stop being my vineyard. Maybe, destruction will be my last word, but it's not my intended last word. My intended last word is to get those wild grapevines out of there so that the good grapevines can indeed come and bear fruit.

Some 30-fold, some 60-fold, some 100-fold, if I could mix up my parables. Let's pray. Thank you, Lord, that we are precious to you.

Thank you that you wish there would be some enemy that would come around that you could go beat him up. Thank you. Help us, oh Lord.

When we have done wrong and you are disciplining us, not to distrust you, not to fear you in the wrong sense, but help us, oh Lord, to receive your discipline, knowing that it comes from a hand of love. Thank you, Lord, for the ways in this room that you have transformed chaos, the chaos of sin into the order of salvation. Thank you.

Help us, oh Lord, help me to be so delivered that anyone who sees will say, God has done something for that guy. May that be true of all of us, I pray in your name. Amen.

Thanks so much. Chapters 28 and 29 next week.

This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Isaiah. This is session number 13, Isaiah chapters 26 and 27.