

ISAIAH, PART 2 (COMFORT FOR HIS PEOPLE)
PROGRAM 43 (#911158)
WEEK 9 (#911332) (Guest Teacher David Arthur)
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The following is an actual transcript of the PRECEPTS FOR LIFE Broadcast. For the purpose of filling transcript requests quickly, they have received only light editing. If you have questions concerning the material covered in this broadcast, Kay has published a number of books explaining the Scripture in depth. These books may be ordered by contacting the telephone number or address printed above.

SERIES: Isaiah, Part 2 (Comfort For His People)
TITLE: Program 43 – Compromising The Truth
(Guest Teacher David Arthur)

WEDNESDAY

INTRO

Kay: When John wrote his third epistle to Gaius he said I have no greater joy than knowing that my children walk in truth. And I want you to know I'm old enough to say to you I have no greater joy than hearing you walking in truth. The emails that you send me are such an encouragement. And I have no greater joy than introducing to you our son David Arthur. He's your teacher today and he's a man that walks in truth.

OPEN

David: Does God get angry? Can we, as humans, provoke God to anger? Today we are gonna look at that question. From the Bible, we are gonna ask the text: What provokes the Almighty to anger and to wrath? Join us today on "Precepts for Life," and we'll explore this question together.

PART ONE

David: Interesting question isn't it? Can you provoke God? Now I don't want to in any way, degrade God in His divinity by acting like He's one of us. By acting like His passions can be swayed, that He can simply be turned on and be turned off by a couple of small issues. But is God a completely emotionless God? Well all throughout Scriptures we see God being provoked. For example, in our text today, Isaiah chapter 65, picking up in verse 1: **"I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me...;"** here we have God speaking. **"...I permitted Myself to be found by those who [do] not seek Me. I said, 'Here am I, here am I,' to a nation which did not call on My name. I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts."** (Isaiah 65: 1-2) You see the visual image here: God is saying, [Here I am. I have stretched out My benevolent, divine arms to these people, and I said, 'Here I am. You must simply just come and turn to me. Here I am. I'm waiting for you.] (PARAPHRASE, Isaiah 65:1-2) But it says the response of the people, even though He spread out His hands all day long to these rebellious people, He says, [they continue to walk in their own way.] (PARAPHRASE, Isaiah 65:2] I wonder if that's part of our issues today, is that when we think about God, we want just enough of God's instructions to kind of make ourselves feel righteous, and to make ourselves feel good about our lives, but we don't want to simply lay down our own agenda and take up His, even though His arms are spread out to us. Look what He says in verse 3. He calls these people: **"A people who continually provoke Me to my face...."** (Isaiah 65:3) Now how do they do that? What are the actions that would be described that would provoke the anger of God against His own people? Here comes a list, beginning in verse 3, we see first, they were **"...offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks."** (Isaiah 65:3) These "offering sacrifices in gardens," if you know much about the Old Testament, there were specific sacrifices that God

Himself had designed for His people. They were the means by which God would reconcile the people back to Himself when they had sinned against Him, and He describes these very carefully in the book of Leviticus. But these sacrifices weren't something that you did any time or anywhere or any way you wanted to. It's much the way I think about worship today in some churches. A lot of churches, their perspective on worship is, basically, "Look, if it brings in more people; if it gets us more," quote, "excited about God, then it's fine. We can," and I've heard this, "worship God any way we want to." Well here the first thing that we see that provokes the anger of God against them is they have taken the sacrificial system and they've customized it. They've, in a sense, made it their own. They've altered it. It says that they're "offering sacrifices in gardens," not at the Tabernacle or not in the Temple as God had so deemed them to do in Leviticus. But they're choosing their own places now, and not just sacrifices, but they're beginning to burn "incense on bricks." The second thing we see is in verse 4: **"Who sit among graves and spend the night in secret places; who eat swine's flesh, and the broth of unclean meat is in their pots."** (Isaiah 65:4) Here we have two different things being described. The first thing is that "they sit among graves and they spend the night in secret places." Okay, what does that mean? Well we're not real sure, but it looks like that they have some kind of life that they keep secret. And you must understand this, My Friend, about sin. Sin loves secrecy. Sin loves the darkness. If you take a sin and you hide it and you keep it away from your brothers and sisters in Christ, you will find that sin growing and seeking to devour you. It says they took and they went and sat at the graves and they had a secret ceremony. Again in verse 4 it says they ate **"...swine's flesh, and the broth of unclean meat is in their pots."** (Isaiah 65:4) Swine's flesh—you know this—they don't eat pork. That pork was one of those animals that God had deemed as untouchable in Leviticus. It was unclean food. But they began to reason in their own ways and they say, "Yes, we are followers of God." Okay, "Yeah,

we are the people of Israel and of Judah, but listen, we want to, we want to change some things up.” Where do they get these ideas? Where do these ideas of the secret events, these offering sacrifices in gardens and these other things, where are those ideas coming from? Well they’re coming from the nations that surround them. In our context, they’re coming from the world the body of God here has allowed the world could come in and introduce its ways; its devices. And instead of keeping it pure and clean and saying: “No! This is the way God says that we must worship Him, that we must bring sacrifices to Him—what we must, and what we must do.” Instead of just keeping it pure like that, they began to say, “Can’t we blend some of these things together? It seems to work for them?” In the early part of Isaiah, we read about a king named Ahaz. And in 2 Kings chapter 16, we read that Ahaz began to do this very thing. He began to blend in what he saw around him in the pagan nations, with what he knew to be God’s ways and God’s will. It said that it got so bad, this is in 2 Kings 16, it got so bad with Ahaz that he even made his children pass through the fire. (See 2 Kings 16:3) That’s right. Child sacrifice had become a way—a pattern—for the people of God. They had decided, “Oh, it works for those that follow the gods of Molech and Marduk,” and “Yes, they sacrificed their children. They will put their altar in order to gain the favor of this pagan deity and it seems to work for them. They seem to be prosperous. It seems to have some kind of good impact. So why can’t we do it? Why can’t we blend it in with ours? That’s what they do. They’re not monotheist. They’re polytheist. They have multiple gods. Why they’re tolerant. They’re inclusive.” Does any of this sound familiar to you? Does any of this kind of reasoning or logic sound like what we hear in the culture too today? How would God respond if we said, “Listen, we want to worship. But we want to take the, quote, ‘good things of the world’ and bring them into our worship and blend it all together.” In other words, “Why can’t we have more entertainment in our worship? Why can’t we bring in some of these comedians and bring them and make them

part of our worship service? And if it brings more people into the seats of the church, aren't we successful? Isn't that how we'll measure if we're really doing a good job, is by having more people in attendance here? I wonder if there's a message for the church today from Isaiah 65? Now let's go back to verse 5. It says in 65, verse 5: "[They] say [who], **'Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am holier than you...!'**" (Isaiah 65:5) This is how God describes them. Look what it says in verse 5. These people **"...these are smoke in My nostrils, a fire that burns all the day."** (Isaiah 65:5) These people that proclaim to be "holier than thou," these people who eat the "swine's flesh," who "sit among the graves," who offer "sacrifices in gardens;" these people who customize their religion, who blend in the outside things of the world, He says, [They're smoke in My nose; I smell them, I hear them, they're right there before Me.] (PARAPHRASE, Isaiah 65:5) They're like **"...a fire that burns all the day."** (Isaiah 65:5) And so this is His response in verse 6: **"Behold, it is written before Me, I will not keep silent...."** (Isaiah 65:6) Umm. There's the answer. Back to 64, verse 12, remember they finished off their prayer, saying, **"...LORD...will You keep silent and afflict us beyond measure?"** (Isaiah 64:12) Verse 6 says: **"Behold, it is written before Me, I will not keep silent, but I will repay; I will even repay into their bosom, both their own iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers together," says the LORD.**" (Isaiah 65:6-7) And here's why. Verse 7 states: **"Because they have burned incense on the mountains and scorned Me on the hills, therefore I will measure their former work into their bosom."** (Isaiah 65:7) Verse 6 is the answer to what we saw up in chapter 64, verse 12, when the question was asked, "Will You, God?" **"...Will You keep silent and afflict us beyond measure?"** (Isaiah 64:12) God answers it in verse 6: **"...I will not keep silent, but I will repay...."** (Isaiah 65:6) How will God repay? He says quite basically, "I will take the very sins of you and your fathers, and I will come, and I will lay them into your bosom." (See Isaiah 65:6-7) There's a

Hebrew picture there of bringing them into your lap. Why? “Because,” He says, “You have scorned Me in worship. You have decided to burn incense on the hills and with that I will let you play. I will” literally, “give over to you those sins.” (See Isaiah 65:7) Will God keep silent when we sin against Him? He says, “No.” Can we provoke God to anger? Of course, it’s very clear in the text that when we decide to blend His ways with the ways of the world and the ways of iniquity, He says, [“I will not keep silent. I will repay those sins and I will place them into your bosom.”] (PARAPHRASE, Isaiah 65:6) My Friend, God can be provoked to anger.

PART TWO

David: Hi and welcome back! My name is David Arthur and I’m so glad you are studying with us on “Precepts for Life.” If you would like to download a free study guide that you can use to help you study along with us on this show, please go to preceptsforlife.com. Also let me encourage you. Gather some friends together and do this study as a small group. I guarantee you’ll find, as you study together, that the Holy Spirit brings in different people and different voices into the study that will only enrich your time together as you study the Word. Now we’re picking up in Isaiah 65, and we’ve left off in verse 7 with some very somber words where God has said, **“...Therefore I will measure their former work...,”** or their “iniquities,” **“...into their bosom.” (Isaiah 65:7)** Is that how God leaves it? Has God just simply put the stamp “condemned” on His people? Look at verse 8. It says this: **“...As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one says, ‘Do not destroy it, for there is benefit in it,’ so I will act on behalf of My servants in order not to destroy all of them.” (Isaiah 65:8)** Here He’s giving a little parable, and He says, just as there’s new wine that can be found in the cluster, you don’t destroy it. Why? Because you can get wine out of it; even the remnants of the grapes you can get wine out of. Here he says, **“...So I will act on behalf of My servants....” (Isaiah 65:8)** This is a phrase you’ll

want to mark in this text; it shows up a couple of times in different ways. “My servant,” and “offspring,” “chosen ones.” Let’s keep on reading. Verse 9, how will He do it? He says, **“I will bring forth offspring from Jacob, and an heir of My mountains from Judah; even My chosen ones shall inherit it, and My servants will dwell there.” (Isaiah 65:9)** Now this is very different than what we read in the first paragraph of chapter 65 where God says, “I will repay them according to their sins. I will repay them according to their iniquities even of their fathers and place it into their bosom.” (See Isaiah 65:6-7) Here He says, **“...I will act on behalf of My servants....” (Isaiah 65:8)** “My offspring, My heir, My chosen ones,” He says. (See Isaiah 65:9) Then in verse 10 He says: **“Sharon will be a pasture land for flocks, and the valley of Achor a resting place for herds...,”** for whom? **“...For My people who seek Me.” (Isaiah 65:10)** This is God’s nature. God does not say, “I will simply wipe out the nation because of their sin, but for those who seek Me, I will bring forgiveness and restoration and inheritance.” Look what He says in verse 12: **“I will destine you for the sword, and all of you will bow down to the slaughter. Because I called, but you did not [hear]; I spoke, but you did not hear. And you did evil in My sight and chose that...which I did not delight.” (Isaiah 65:12)** Now wait a minute. How do we wrap these two together here? It seems like He’s, in one sense, talking out of one side of His mouth saying, “I am bringing judgment, complete and utter judgment.” And then the other side of His mouth it appears as if He’s saying, “No! I will act on your behalf and I will bring inheritance not judgment.” So let me ask you a question: Does the text help us see where the line is drawn there? Who are the ones that will receive God’s judgment? And who are the ones that will receive His inheritance. In other words where’s the hinge in this text? Well it’s in verse 10 and verse 11. Verse 10 ends that He will bring “a pasture land for their flocks,” and a “valley,” a “resting place for the herds.” For whom? Look again, verse 10. **“...For My people who seek Me.” (Isaiah 65:10)** Verse 11 then gives a

term of contrast. **“But you who forsake the LORD, who forget My holy mountain, who set a table for Fortune, and who fill cups with mixed wine for Destiny, I will destine you for the sword....” (Isaiah 65:12)** You see, the hinge pin, the dividing point is there at the end of verse 10. For those who are His people that will seek Him, He promises an inheritance; a rescue. **“But for [those] who forsake the LORD...,”** He says, **“...I will destine [them] for the sword....” (Isaiah 65:11-12)** Now there’s a very clear line in the sand drawn here; there’s a very sense in which God is saying, “Either you’re for Me or you’re against Me.” And I wonder if that is the direction that Christianity is going in our time. Have we decided that we need to be tolerant of other religions? Have we decided that we need to take the best of what the world has to offer and replace some of the ingredients of what God has designed to be pure and unadulterated religion? Have we somehow watered down the gospel of Jesus Christ? When’s the last time you heard a sermon about the wrath of God? When’s the last time you heard that God can be provoked to anger when we decide to forsake Him and His ways? I wonder if we compared those sermons to the sermons of how God wants you to be so happy, how God wants you to be so blessed and all the great benefits that come from being a son or daughter of the King. Have we lost the words of Jesus when Jesus said, “He who follows Me must first deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me”? My Friend, in those words are described a life that is willing to lay down before God our agenda that is against Him and His ways. In that call is a life that is saying, “I am willing to suffer for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” Why? “Because I want to follow Jesus.” There’s a sense in which this imagery, picked up in Isaiah chapter 65, of a God who is being provoked and a God who is going to repay according to their sins. There’s a sense in which we need this message back. We need this message today in our own church. My fear is that we have somehow gotten soft. We’ve somehow figured out, we can’t talk about the hard things of Christianity. We must somehow keep them away until you

work your way up into levels of maturity in Christianity. Then we'll show you the demands of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There's a sense in which the church seems to be filled with people who don't understand what it really means to honor or to dishonor a holy God. God says here, "But those who seek Me, I will grant them an inheritance." (See Isaiah 65:10) And He calls them His servants. He calls them His offspring, and He says, "For My offspring, I will act on their behalf." (See Isaiah 65:9) What a great promise. And so the question we must ask ourselves of this text as I sit here in modern-day time, as I evaluate how God has described who He is and who I am, and how God has described what He wants from us specifically when it comes to worship. I mean, there comes a point to which we have to re-evaluate, doesn't there? There comes a point when we have to re-evaluate: Are we really worshiping God for who He is? Or are we worshiping God to gain something only for ourselves—combining things, letting certain things go away. As we look at the church today, there seems to be just as much entertainment as there is preaching and teaching. It's not uncommon today for Bibles not even to be open during a worship service, for folks to not even bring the Scriptures with them to the church. Why? Because the church is not gonna hear the Word of God. My Friends, at Precept Ministries, we want to teach people who God is through His Word. We want to show them through "Precepts for Life," that they can understand that God has a design that must be followed. And that when we follow Him, and that when we seek Him for who He is through His Word, we recognize who He really is. We recognize His power and His glory, and we find His favor.