

Speaking to the soul



God's disappointment

The nation of Israel is the vineyard of the LORD of Heaven's Armies. The people of Judah are his pleasant garden. He expected a crop of justice, but instead he

found oppression. He expected to find righteousness, but instead he heard cries of violence. Isaiah 5:7

There is only one reason why you would plant a vineyard: because you were wanting grapes. You certainly wouldn't plant one for the vines' natural beauty or because you want to make use of their wood, which struggles to burn. This chapter poignantly describes God's desperate disappointment with his people. They were planted to be fruitful and he had gone to great lengths to prepare his vineyard. He planted it on a fertile hill. He ploughed the land, cleared its stones and planted one of the best of the vines.

However, the outcome had been appalling – the exact opposite of what God had been looking for. Instead of the justice that he longed to see, he saw oppression, and instead of righteousness, there was murder. God had given his people free will and they'd chosen to use it to oppose him rather than to obey him. He had given them every opportunity to thrive and they had thrown it all back in his face. Amazingly, he didn't give up on them.

The prophecy of Isaiah is an amazing study of the love and faithfulness of God. Disappointed as he clearly was, he didn't reject his people but looked for new ways to bless them. We may feel that we haven't acted as badly as the nation of Israel, but we have all sinned. We have all been a disappointment to God. He has given us every advantage and time and again we have ignored him and gone our own way, but God doesn't give up on us. In Isaiah chapter 40, we see a beautiful picture of the persistent and gentle love of God for his people. "He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his

heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young” (v11). That’s our God! He loves us so much that he has high expectations for us. He longs to see us being fruitful. However, he doesn’t give up on us when we fail, but looks for every opportunity to shower us with his love.

QUESTION

In what ways do you think that you have disappointed God’s expectations?

PRAYER

Loving God, thank you that you never give up on me. I confess my sins and ask you to help me to live closer to you day by day. Amen

Photograph - Bellaghy

