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CALLOUSED BELIEVERS

Mario Dučić,

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„The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the

days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; The ox knows its owner And the donkey its master’s crib; But Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” (Isaiah 1:1-3)

Having read this passage recently, I felt God wanted to show me the situation of the church today in Croatia and around the world; the condition of believers whose hearts become hard as they have turned away from God and are living in sin. The consequence of living in this condition is God’s judgment for living a

life outside of the law and this judgment is manifested in the withdrawal of His blessings and life-giving glory.

Although the prophet Isaiah primarily addresses Judah’s southern kingdom, which sinned against the Lord by torturing the poor, turning to idols, and relying on their own strength to save them, I believe that these prophetic words have eternal principles that can be applied to our lives today. The apostle Paul clearly confirmed this with the following words: *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine...” (2 Tim 3.16)*

★ **Calloused believers are not believers who have not known the Lord.**



► **1. CALLOUSED BELIEVERS DO NOT KNOW GOD; THEY ABANDON HIM AND LIVE IN BONDAGE TO SIN.**

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me; Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward." (Isaiah 1:2, 4)

Hebrew word used by Isaiah for "turned away backward" is "pasha", and we translate it: "to break the relationship or covenant (with righteous authority), to rebel, to violate". The main idea here is an aggressive breach in a civil or religious relationship between two parties.

Calloused believers are not believers who have not known the Lord, they are those who have been saved or were raised to understand righteousness; they may be God-fearing pastors who have witnessed

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God's touch and glory; however, somewhere along the way they lost their relationship with Him, stopped being obedient to His Word, and chained themselves with worldly pleasures of sin. Simply put, they have broken their relationship with God.

They commit the same sins as the Israelites did by willingly refusing to invest in their relationship with God. While outwardly, they perform religious duties their hearts contradict their actions as they break their relationship with God by violating their moral and spiritual covenant, bringing a curse on their lives.

In Deut 28, Moses and the elders of Israel clearly explained to the people how to live, saying: *"Keep all the commandments which I command you today." (Deut 27.1)* If they, as God's people, obeyed *"the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments..." (Deut 28.1)* they would be blessed, if not they would be cursed.

Calloused believers and those churches that reject the Word of God by disobeying the Lord will not grow in God's blessings instead they invite curses upon themselves. Although they may retain an outer form of religion, as the Israelites in Judah did, God will not be with them and whatever they do will be void of God's glory and success.

The Scriptures say that they may continue

to go to church, praise God, or pray, but God will hate all their external worship and “will not endure them.”

“To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?” Says the LORD. “... I do not delight in the blood ... when you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, to trample my courts. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you.” (Isaiah 1:11-15)

▶ **2. CALLOUSED BELIEVERS ARE UNDER GOD’S JUDGMENT, WHICH IS MANIFESTED IN FAILURE, DEFICIENT MEANS, AND LACK OF PERSONNEL.**

„ Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; Strangers devour your land in your presence; so the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a hut in a garden of cucumbers.” (Isaiah 1:5-9)

Such believers and churches have little or no success in spite of their efforts. They may organize evangelistic events, various seminars, or send out missionaries but their desire to see their church grow and see people come to Christ remains unfulfilled because the people have rejected God in their hearts.

It is obvious that they are far from God’s blessings as the church continues in its crippled state. They seek positions in God’s Kingdom while desiring human glory and recognition. Because of the curse the church fails to grow, drawing the same number of members for years because they are self-appointed, not called. If, by chance, they have an increase in membership, these people are either constantly ill, dysfunctional, or bound by bad habits and never released from the power of sin. Most often, such believers, along with their pastors, are addicted to hidden sins and the church itself completely bound by darkness unable to move and free these people.

In Deut 28, we read about the curses, God promised to those who do not obey “the

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voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments...” (Deut 28.15)

Such will not have clear guidelines in their life; confusion, blindness, and disobedience will bring about failure: *“The LORD will send on you cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me.” (Deut 28.20)*, they will not have strength to resist the enemy; evil spirits will influence them: *“The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies.” (Deut 28.25)*; and they will fail in their efforts to bring people to Christ or retain new believers in their churches: *You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in, for the locust shall consume it You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity.” (Deut 28.38, 41)*

Such believers and churches will actually be marked, as if stamped, by which they will be recognized as disobedient to God. The Lord will not manifest in their lives.

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God’s joy will not be on their faces, nor they will be willing to serve Him with their goods. They will be caught by the enemy of their soul, and serve sin: *“Moreover all these curses shall come upon you and pursue and overtake you, until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. And they shall be upon you for a sign and a wonder, and on your descendants forever. Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything....” (Deut 28.45-48)*

God’s judgment on the calloused believer will be manifested not only in failure but also in the deficiency of financial support, godly leaders, and people of understanding. In their place, inadequate and ungodly people will rise up whom, due to lack of character and anointing, will give foolish counsel and guidance.

Political plots and mutual disagreements will mark such churches and believers, destroying peace and harmony in the

family and the church. Authorities will not be honored and the order of righteousness in their homes and churches will be overturned.

In Isaiah 3 we read the prophecy given to Judah's kingdom: *"For behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, Takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah The stock and the store, The whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water; The mighty man and the man of war, The judge and the prophet, And the diviner and the elder; The captain of fifty and the honorable man, The counselor and the skillful artisan, And the expert enchanter. I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. The people will be oppressed, every one by another and every one by his neighbor; the child will be insolent toward the elder, and the base toward the honorable... As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths."* (Isaiah 1:5, 12)

This is a typical example of churches that are falling apart. Believers stop giving their tithe and offerings because of their rebellion. Even general support for the church and its ministry is lacking. Consequently, the church cannot go forth, many of the projects are discontinued, and finances are insufficient for the church to function.

Because of such, factions take place and divisive leaders seek to put their men in positions of leadership. These divisive leaders are not dealt with and rather than repenting, they turn on each other accusing one another and in despair cry out: *"You have clothing; you be our ruler, and let these ruins be under your power."* (Isaiah 3.6)

Such people even establish their own churches; appointing pastors and leaders whom they can manipulate according to their own agenda while lying and rebelling against God. Often "children", immature people, rise to power, seeking positions to feed their wounded ego. Women lead their home and have important positions in the church while their children remain undisciplined and their men obediently follow because of spiritual and psychological manipulation.

True spiritual leaders and pillars of the church have disappeared, the godly and wise are scattered, and true husbands rarely exist. Such families and churches often appear

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dysfunctional, insane, and in disorder. All this is under the banner of faith but in reality, God's judgment on them.

In Isaiah's prophecy, we also see special opposition to the women of Judah kingdom. These women were preoccupied with clothing and jewelry rather than God. They dressed in a way that people would notice them, be attracted to them, or was fashionable. Due to the callousness of their hearts they neglected their primary role. Rather than caring for the poor and those in need they put themselves first and served themselves. (Isaiah 3:14-15)

How much time do women today spend on clothes, jewelry, make-up, and their hair? I am not against it and it is nice to see, but it would also be good to compare all this time and money to the time and money spent for preparing our hearts and offering envelopes.

Today people buy everything on credit, even just one piece of clothing, but when it is time to give to God's kingdom they find that they do not have anything to

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give or they give grudgingly for the sake of their conscience. God's blessing in money or position is not given for our own pleasure but to be a blessing to others, not to impress people but to help in widening God's Kingdom.

Calloused believers and churches are not concentrated on widening God's Kingdom; they want to widen their goods and reach high positions in society in order to please themselves rather than to bless others. The prophet Haggai describes such people really well: "People say, *'The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built'* Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, *'Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?'*... You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough" (Haggai 1.2-6)

► **3. THE ONLY SOLUTION FOR CALLOUSED BELIEVERS IS TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S JUDGMENT AND IN REPENTANCE JOIN IN FELLOWSHIP WITH THE REMNANT.**

"When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, then the LORD will create above

every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering. And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.” (Isaiah 4.4-6)

The only solution and hope for such believers is to recognize God’s judgment and in repentance join the holy remnant of believers who are despised by the world. Such calloused believers, however, often despise normal lives, those families, pastors, authorities, or churches filled by Holy Spirit, saturated in the fear of the Lord, and faithful to His Word.

I believe that the universal Church exists, the body of Christ, a spiritual movement that does not belong to one denomination or church, a Body that does not bow to the lust of this world, and which is completely faithful to Lord and His Word. Such a body is often persecuted and despised by large denominations and believers who are not faithful to God. When calloused believers turn to God, they must join this remnant, those who have God’s glory on them.

When in Isaiah 1:9 God speaks of the remnant, those who were spared during

destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, who were faithful, and those same cities the apostle Paul talked about in Israel when he said: *“Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, We would have become like Sodom, And we would have been made like Gomorrah.” (Rom 9...)* he was probably thinking of faithful believers and churches, on which God’s blessing dwelt, which was promised by God in Deut 28.

Such will be blessed: *“Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. “The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. “The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you...The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season...” (Deut 28.2-13)*

In other words, they are believers and churches free from sin; the enemy is defeated and God multiplies their deeds. The signs that will follow them will be

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their holiness evident to all from their sincere desire to be obedient to God.

And not only this; what is most important is that God's glory is upon them, His presence, as it is only with such faithful a remnant. This Glory will be a shelter to them in times of persecution and temptation, while the calloused believers will not be able to endure pressure without this glory. They will joyfully serve and trust in Him: *"the remnant of Israel, And such as have escaped of the house of Jacob, Will never again depend on him who defeated them, But will depend on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth."* (Isaiah 10.20)

Only the pure church, without defect, will be able to wait for its bridegroom and go with Him to heaven, while the others remain left behind. It is therefore, important to join this holy remnant, which God has raised up around the world.

If we repent, awake, and turn to Him one thing is certain: *"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1.9)

This is the only way to become blessed and to avoid the judgment that is waiting for those who do not want to join the remnant. Even if our desire to change is small, God will help us by giving us the grace to change and become a part of Him: *"Surely the Lord GOD will help Me Who is he who will condemn Me?"* (Isaiah 50.9a).

„Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion; Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city! For the uncircumcised and the unclean shall no longer come to you. Shake yourself from the dust, arise; Sit down, O Jerusalem! (Isaiah 52.1-2a)

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