

“Are You A Seasoned or A Seasonal Saint?”

Isaiah 7:1-9

5/11/10

Introduction: When we hear words like perennial and annual, different kinds of plants come to mind. Annual refers to plants that grow in spring and summer, surviving for one season in good weather. They need to be replanted every year. On the other hand, perennials take root and produce flowers and fruits year after year. They go dormant during winter when the weather is hard, but they later return without having to be replanted. Often we find saints (Christians) with perennial or annual characteristics. Perennial saints last longer even through the tough seasons of life (**2 Corinthians 4:7-9**) (**Proverbs 24:16**). They are seasoned saints. But, annual saints last only when things are going well. In today’s passage, we are going to see how King Ahaz’s problems caused him to react with doubt. This lesson today will cause us to take a look at ourselves to see if we are seasoned or seasonal saints.

Verses 1-2

The Confrontation

In the first two verses, we are shown the confrontation between Ahaz, Rezin and Pekah. The text tells us that Syria and Israel had joined forces against Judah. History tells us that Judah was one of the twelve tribes of Israel (Jacob). After Solomon’s reign, 10 of the 12 tribes rebelled and came to be known as Israel (“Ephraim”) and the remaining two tribes (Benjamin and Judah) came to be known as Judah. Why were these kings against each other? Do we display similar discord within the body of Christ? When we allow **jealousy**, backbiting, gossip, and discord within the church, we are acting just like the ones in the text and God **hates** that kind of behavior (**Philippians 2:2-4**) (**Proverbs 6:16-19**). Pekah (king of Israel) aligned with Rezin (non-Jew) in a desire to harm Ahaz (a fellow Jew). The Bible tells us not to collaborate with non-believers and to resolve our issues with other saints (**1 Corinthians 6:1**). Even though it was two against one, it was an unsuccessful invasion. Nevertheless, this threat to Judah’s security brought great fear to the king and the people (**2 Timothy 1:7**). Like Ahaz (and the people), do we act according to the **season** (of life) we are encountering? When things are going well, we respond with happiness. But, as soon as we face hardship, we get scared. Also, history tells us that Ahaz had disobeyed the Lord in the past. We need to examine our behavior and check whether our past **practices** are causing our present problems. Let us put confidence behind our convictions. We should know that suffering is a part of the Christian life (**2 Timothy 3:12**).

Verses 3-6

The Communication

In these verses, God sends the prophet Isaiah to communicate words of **encouragement** to Ahaz. Despite Ahaz's disobedience, we see a compassionate God acting on the king's behalf. Isaiah's message to the king is one of reassurance, indicating that the two invading kings will not prevail (vs. 4). They would be like the tails of firebrands that have already burned out and are now left with more smoke than fire. In other words, these kingdoms will not last long. Likewise, despite our faults and blunders, God displays His **compassion** towards us (**Romans 5:8**). That does not mean that we should make light of or take God's patience (with us) for granted (**Romans 6:1-2**). God gives very specific instructions to Isaiah. He was told where to go, who to meet, and what to say. Therefore, we should not be surprised when we are given specific instructions from God. God does not intend to play hide-n-seek with His children. He clearly wants His child to **know** His will. The more time we spend with Him, the more His will for our lives will become clear. We see no hesitation on Isaiah's part. Even though, Ahaz was in spiritual rebellion, Isaiah does not question God's command (**2 John 6**). We need to follow his pattern. He probably had to lay aside his perception (of Ahaz) and obey God. God wants Ahaz to be careful ("heed"), be calm ("quiet"), and not be fearful. God conveyed similar messages to Moses and to us (**Exodus 14:13**) (**John 16:33**). No matter what we face, we can learn to be a seasoned saint if we **internalize** the Words of the Lord.

Verses 7-9

The Confirmation

These verses display the confirmation from God to Ahaz. God says "it shall not stand..." Why is that? Because God is **with** Ahaz, his enemies will not succeed in their mission (**Hebrews 13:5**). We are promised the same (**Psalms 91:7**) (**Romans 8:31**). In verses 7 and 8, God is saying the capital ("head") of Syria is Damascus and the capital of Ephraim is Samaria. These are the only countries that Rezin and Pekah will be allowed to reign in. Their territory will not be enlarged. Furthermore, Ephraim will be carried as captives in the future ("within threescore..."). The future is revealed to Ahaz to encourage him regarding his present **condition**. No matter what the present looks like, we have a hopeful future, as well (**1 Corinthians 2:9**). In verse 9, God is giving a warning. Distrust in God will lead to **distress** for self (Ahaz). Trust (in God) will bring triumph in our lives (**Proverbs 3:5-6**). How do we respond when trouble comes our way? Do we complain about our issues? Do we make up excuses about not having the things we think we should have? If we answered yes to these questions, just maybe we are **seasonal** and not seasoned saints.