

IN CONFERENCE WITH GOD

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1:18.

The first chapter of this great prophecy brings us face to face with sin in all of its foulness and deadly power. Perhaps in no other chapter of the Bible is sin so clearly revealed as the deep and burning disease of the soul, for which man cannot produce a remedy.

I. The Conditions.

We have here an outline of the conditions which prevailed in Judah at the beginning of the eighth century before Christ. God explained that the people had fallen below the status of the animals. The ox recognized his master and was grateful for the provision which was made for his sustenance. In contrast with the animals, the people of Judah had become indifferent to God, had refused to recognize God as sovereign, and had refused to admit that they were responsible and accountable to God. The ox and the ass exercise more sense than does the person who rejects the love and mercy of God. The people had proved themselves ungrateful, had spurned the mercy of heaven and had loaded the national conscience down with terrible sins. Violence and crime stalked through the land unchecked; trade and industry were stagnant; agriculture was paralyzed and the glory of the country was gone. Sin had made the people indifferent, careless, callous and rebellious. Sin had deadened their consciences and had destroyed their recognition of God and His right to reign in their lives.

In the opening verses of this chapter God is portrayed as pleading with the people whom He had loved and for whom He had cared all their lives. He had lavished His tenderness and His mercy upon them. He had chastened them and afflicted them, seeking thereby to turn them back to His love; but all of His efforts had been unavailing. The people were wedded to their sins and bound in the fetters of their evil lusts.

God through His prophet Isaiah, in whose preaching were thunders and lightnings of Sinai and foregleams of Calvary, mentioned desperate types of sinners - sinners who were guilty of blasphemous sacrifices, hollow prayers and terrible wickedness that had brought them into their terrible plight. The people, whose hearts were vicious with lust and whose intellects were beclouded with illusions, had become the victims of the wizardry of sin to such an extent that they attempted to change darkness into light, bitter into sweet and evil into good.

II. The Call.

Characterizing the ingratitude and fearful wickedness of the people, God arraigned them before His bar, calling as His witnesses the heavens, the earth and the dumb brutes of creation, whose fidelity to their masters was a silent reproof to the disobedient and sinful people. Boldly, in lament and denunciation, He declared that their prayers and sacrifices were rejected; yea, they were an abomination to Him so long as their hearts were corrupt and their hands were stained with blood.

In the words "Come now, and let us reason together" the abrupt summons of God rivets our attention. What a gracious invitation! More than nineteen hundred times in the Bible God used the word "come" as an invitation. Pouring out His heart in loving mercy and compassion, God invited sinners to meet with Him in conference and talk over the matter of their sins.

Many never judge themselves to be sinners at all. Many have never seen themselves in desperate need of God's forgiveness. They have never thought of themselves as rebels and evildoers. They have been blinded by sin to such an extent that they have never seen the scarlet stains which have blotted and spoiled the pages of their lives. Some even deny the reality of sin by saying, "Sin is only a figment of the imagination." Nevertheless, sin is one of the most stubborn facts of life. In view of the plain teachings of the Scriptures, plus our observation of sin and our experiences with sin, it is the height of folly to deny its existence. No denial of sin will abolish its reality or prevent its consequences. Sin is death to conscience, to character and to career.

III. The Conference.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." Though they gave God unreasonable disregard, though they gave no heed to His truth, though they had forsaken Him, though they revolted more and more under His chastenings, though through sin they had brought ruin and desolation to their cities and land, though they had been perverse and would not comply with that which was for their own good, yet He invited all of them to meet in conference with Him and talk over the matter of their sins.

Do you know why people are not saved? There is only one reason why any sensible man is not saved and that is because he has refused to reason with God. If he had reasoned with God, he would have been saved.

Isn't it strange how men made in the image of God, men who have to die, go day by day and do not even stop to consider their sins? They do not want to consider their sins. They do not want to think about the judgment. They do not want to think about hell. God says, "Why don't you come and sit down at the council table? Why don't you draw near and let us talk this thing over. Why don't you stop and let me show you why you ought to be saved?" The reason people are not saved is that they do not consider. Isn't it strange that you who are unsaved have never intelligently considered your state, your danger, your need, your sin and your wickedness.

IV. The Condescension.

Oh the condescension of the eternal God talking and reasoning with man who spends his years as a tale that is told; the unchangeable God conferring with man who is unstable in all his ways; and the omniscient God seeking to reason with foolish man! If the Amazon River were brought to run through an inch pipe or the raging Atlantic Ocean were made small enough to sleep in a thimble, such transformations would astonish us. But more astonishing is the holy God condescending to ask sinful men to talk with Him!

Even though we cannot see the scarlet stains which have blotted and spoiled the pages of our lives, God has seen and known them, and in His love has prepared for us the precious gift of forgiveness and salvation. God has sent into the world His only begotten Son, that through His death on the cross those sins which have stained and soiled our lives might be blotted out forever. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Even those glaring sins that live in your memory, those sins that keep pursuing you and haunting you through the years, those sins that the world has never know, those secret sins that only God and you have known, may be forgiven and cleansed. There is no stain too deep for Him to wipe away, no wound too deadly for Him to cleanse, to purge or to heal.

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

E'er since by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die."

V. The Consolation.

What a joy and comfort it is to know that God wants sinners to be saved! He sent Jesus Christ to pay our sin debt, to suffer the punishment which we deserve and to render God's outraged law a just equivalent for our disobedience. All of us are responsible for what we do with His free and unrestricted offer of eternal life. If we perish in our sins, it is because of our own rejection of Christ. "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). Sometimes people, when deeply convicted of sin, feel that there is no pardon for them, that God will not forgive them and that Christ will not save them. But, in spite of all their sins and fears, Christ receiveth sinful men. All kinds of sinners are pardoned except those who refuse to come to Christ and trust Him. The vilest of the vile can be saved. Many have obtained mercy and forgiveness who were down deep in sin, high up in sin and notorious in sin, so there is hope for you. God says, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

What can be more beautiful than to look out the window on a winter morning and see a deep covering of snow on the ground! The snow is pure in its whiteness. Therefore, God used it as an emblem to picture to us the efficacy of Christ's cleansing blood when it is applied to sin-hardened hearts. God does not make any difference between big sinners and little sinners, gutter sinners and boulevard sinners, low-down sinners and highly respectable sinners. He condemns both equally on account of their attitude toward His Son. Your relation to Christ is what determines your destiny. Has the blood of Christ been applied to your heart? It is wonderful to know that your sins have been washed away, and that you are clean in the sight of God because you have been cleansed by the precious blood of Christ.

You cannot save yourself. There is no human agency or power whereby your salvation can be effected. There is no way by which you can escape the footprints of sin except through the redemptive blood of Christ. He is the only Saviour. If you will really believe on Him Who loved you and gave Himself for you, you will be saved. You may go to heaven without health, wealth, honor, learning, friends, culture and ten thousand other things, but you cannot go there without Christ. You may be right with others, but if you are not right with God through Christ, you are not ready for life, or death, or the endless eternity beyond these unrecoverable years.

A detective went into a Brooklyn drugstore, laid his hand upon the shoulder of a man and said, "You are wanted." "What do you mean?" asked the man. "You know what I mean. You were in the Albany penitentiary several years ago; you escaped and went West. You married out there, came back here and settled; and we have been on your track ever since. Now we have you! You need not deny it!" The man said, "That is true; I won't deny it; but I would like to go home and say goodbye to my wife and child." "All right!" They went to his home. He met his wife and little child and said, "Wife, haven't I been a kind husband? Haven't I been a good father and worked hard to make a living?" She replied, "Yes, what do you mean?" "I mean that I am an escaped convict from the penitentiary. Since I met you, your love for me has made a different man out of me, but I am an escaped criminal and must go back to the penitentiary."

This man was all right with his wife, child and neighbors, but he was wrong with the State of New York. His being right with his wife and child and neighbors did not make him right with the State of New York. You may be right with your family and friends and neighbors, but all wrong with God; and, unless you accept Christ as your personal Saviour you can never get right with God. The very moment you accept Him as your Saviour, He will save. Will you accept Him now?