

GOD'S APPEAL TO REASON

"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.

A court scene is portrayed in this startling passage. George Adam Smith said, "It is a crown case, and God is at once the Plaintiff and Judge. The people of Judah are the defendants. The charge against them is one of brutish, ingrate stupidity." In concluding the trial at the bar of justice, the Judge takes the place of a supplicant and pleads with the culprits to give a rational consideration to the issues involved.

In the opening verses of this great prophecy we are brought face to face with sin in all its foulness and deadly power. Perhaps in no other passage of the Bible is sin so clearly revealed as the deep and burning disease of the soul, for which man cannot produce a remedy. God's people had proved themselves ungrateful, spurned the mercy of heaven, and loaded the national conscience down with terrible sins. Sinister days dawned upon Judah and Jerusalem. Violence and crime stalked through the land unchecked; trade and industry were stagnant; agriculture was paralyzed; Israel was devastated and its glory gone. Sin had made the people indifferent, careless, callous and rebellious. They were not conscious of God's presence and of their accountability to Him. Sin had deadened their consciences and destroyed their recognition of God and His right to reign.

I. The Call.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." In this first chapter Isaiah mentions desperate types of sinners—sinners who were guilty of blasphemous sacrifices, hollow prayers, and terrible wickedness. The people were the victims of the evil wizardry of sin and they attempted to change darkness into light, bitter into sweet, and evil into good. Sin had made the nation an open sore and kept that sore in a festering state.

In these opening verses the Lord is seen pleading with His people. He had loved them and cared for them all their days. He has lavished His tenderness and His mercy upon them. He has chastened them and afflicted them, seeking to turn them back to His love, but all without avail. They were still wedded to their sins, and still bound in the fetters of their evil lusts. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward." Isaiah 1:2-4.

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

Here we behold sin as God sees it and suffers through it. His Word states that there is less reason and less understanding in the heart of the sinner than in the beasts of the field. There is more sense in the beast than in the man who rejects the love and the mercy of God.

II. The Conference.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." Thus God invited sinners to meet Him in conference and talk over the matter of their sins. God's loving heart poured itself out in mercy and compassion. Though they gave God unreasonable disregard, though they gave no heed to His truth, though they had forsaken God, 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 all were invited to meet God in conference and talk about their sins.

Do you know why people are not converted and saved? There is only one reason why any sensible man is not saved and that is because he had refused to reason with God. He never did reason it out. If he had, 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 face the fact that death is coming. 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 think 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.

Consider the fleeting joys of sin. You turn down Christ because you want to drink, or you want your own way, or you want the pleasures of sin of one kind or another. Well, isn't it strange that you never stop to consider that all these will soon be gone? How much better it would be for you to stop and consider before you go any farther in sin!

Sin is not simply corrupting; it is blinding. Sin so fastens its hold upon us that we can not even recognize the Lord Who made us. We cannot feel the wounds which sin has torn within our hearts. We cannot see the scarlet stains which have blotted and spoiled the pages of our lives. But God has seen; God has known; and God in His love has prepared for us the precious gift of His forgiveness and salvation. God has sent to 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. Our text is a message for "sinners of the deepest dye." It is the declaration of God's love for the lowest and the worst. There is no one beyond the reach of His love, no one who has gone too far in sin to be reached and saved by Him. Many have never judged themselves to be sinners. Many have never seen themselves in desperate need of God's forgiveness, many who shall come in the last day and shall seek entrance to the Father's Kingdom only to find that the door has been closed.

III. The Condescension.

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Though you be the worst that you could ever be, God's love is deep enough and rich enough for you. Even those dazzling and glaring sins that have made you bow your head and stoop your back, even those sins may be wiped away and blotted out in the mystery of redeeming love. Even those 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 known, those secret sins that only God and you

have known, even those sins may be lost forever in the clouds of His glory. There is no stain too deep for Him to wipe away, no wound too deadly for Him to cleanse, to purge and 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."

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 men who is unstable in all his ways; and the omniscient God seeking to reason with foolish man! Christ came from the heights of deity to the depths of humanity to live with and to die for sinners, He came from the honors of heaven to the horrors of the cross, from the throne of heaven to the tree of calvary "to bear our sins in His won body on the tree"— "to die the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

IV. The Consolation.

What a joy and comfort it is to know that God's love is universal, God's propitiation for sin is universal and God's offers for salvation is universal! God's willingness is that all men should be saved. God sent Jesus Christ to pay our debts, to suffer the punishment we deserve, to balance the books and to write down to our credit in His own blood in the books of God the value of His own life lived and His life laid down. And all of us are responsible for what we do with this free and unrestricted offer of eternal life. If we perish in our sins, it is because of our own rejection of God's call. "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 Jesus Christ will not accept them. But in spite of all their fears and their sins, Christ receiveth sinful men. All kinds and conditions and degrees of sinners are not only invited but pardoned, except those who will not come. Though you may have wallowed in gutters, if you will come to Christ and ask mercy He will absolve you from all sin. The vilest of the vile can be saved. None need despair. Many, down deep in sin, high up in sin, notorious in sin, have obtained mercy and forgiveness. So there is hope for you. God invites you, saying, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Jesus says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "There is no respect of persons with God." God makes no 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 will determine your eternal destiny.

You can be saved if you want to be. God will forgive you if you repent and believe. If you really believe on Him who loved you and gave Himself for you, God says you are saved. You may go to heaven without health, without wealth, without honor, without learning, without friends, without culture, without ten thousand other things; but you

cannot go to heaven without Christ. You may be all right with everybody in the world, 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 you. Will you accept Him now?