

The Indictment and the Promise

Texts: Various

Date: 5-31-20 Outdoor/Drive-In Service

Isaiah opens with an indictment from God on the southern tribes of the Jewish nation, Judah. Jerusalem was the capital and the nation was thriving economically. Spiritually the nation's decline came in the form of religious ritualism and formalism, greed, contempt of the poor, and false worship. Judah's conditions were similar to Samaria (Israel) as recorded by the prophets Amos and Hosea in the north and Micah in the south. The nation had both internal corruption and external pagan influence.

1. The Case that God Makes (1:2-3).

God's accusations against Judah reiterate His perfect standard and show how far Judah has strayed from it. God's very own loved children had transgressed at the giving, grace-filled hand of God Himself. Israel continually despised His covenant and disobeyed His commandments. Yet Judah, God's chosen people, created in His image, does not recognize nor know God and has wandered away.

The indictment therefore was divinely ordained, just, and legitimately delivered from God Himself. God speaks and all will listen. Those who do not obey God will suffer a great punishment. Those who obey God will be saved.

2. The Nation's Condition (1:4).

They were not just a sinful nation, but individually they had made sin a habit.

God had done everything to know and care for this nation, yet the nation chose to disregard Him, just like a parent who loves and cares for their child in a myriad of ways yet the child turns his back and walks away. When we transgress God's law, as His children, we do the very same thing.

"It is a sin to mock at anything good; it is a far greater sin to mock at God, the Holy One. But the sin is still greater when Israel, the nation upon which God has fixed His love, mocks at Him" (Young 47). They were purposefully defiant in attitude and action. What an indictment!

3. The Consequences (1:5-15).

A. Physical Destruction (vs. 6-9)

The picture in verse eight shows temporary structures that would be easily attacked and overcome. One attack that came on Judah by Assyria was in 701 during King Hezekiah's reign. While Assyria and Sennacherib were divinely defeated, the attack left Judah decimated and the country never completely recovered.

Yet in the face of such hopeless news, God provides hope: The nation would survive God's judgment. Unlike the utter annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah, some true believing people would survive.

The grace of God is clearly evident in leaving these survivors.

B. Spiritual Depravity (vs. 10-15)

Question: What was the big deal? They were doing the right things, correct? **Right actions done with the wrong attitude make for evil worship.** Even prayer can be done wrongfully and hypocritically (1:15). The issue was sinful hearts (1:4). God would not listen to the calls for help because they were asked from a guilty heart.

Application: A person cannot just keep certain laws and neglect other matters of obedience. Specifically, we cannot make outward observance equal to inward contrite chance. We must live with a holy, humble walk before God, righteous actions, and treating the poor with compassion.

4. The Cure (1:16-20).

God never hides the correct actions that the faith-follower is to follow.

God's Word always makes it clear how we need to act in order to please God. **And behind the wrath and judgment of God is a heart that longs to love and show mercy to the penitent.**

Wash yourself – This is a physical cleansing that refers to a metaphor for genuine spiritual repentance or cleansing. The words of Psalm 51:2 come to mind. This is the cleansing of the heart and mind from sinful actions (James 4:8).

Cleanse yourselves – Refers to an inward cleansing. A person often finds it much easier to conform to the outward standards and skip the inward repentant needs of his heart. "Justice and compassion can never be replaced by religious orthodoxy" (Buksbazen 106).

A godly person will be not just one who refrains from sinful actions but one who is inwardly cleansed from sin.

God longs to deal with the sinner as a Father to His child. The idea of *come and reason together* is always conditioned on a heart of repentance first. God gives the command, and we must choose to follow it. Reason is not derived from a meeting where the ground rules are set by both parties. This word implies that God is the standard and He sets the ground rules of the actions. This is not a meeting of the equal parties, but a command of God to His people that must be followed. But the invitation using the word *now* shows though that this is a loving and gracious invitation from God. God always invites the sinner in this manner (Matt. 11:28). The word *reason* is a judicial term that is used of arguing, convincing, or deciding a law case or legal dialogue.

The bottom line was that idea of *reason* was to convince the people that God was right and they were wrong about their lifestyle. If they were willing to accept God's grace-filled terms, He would lovingly and whole-heartedly forgive them. The basis for God's forgiveness is not on our merit but on the very loving, gracious hand of God. When we decide to change our conduct the Father will greet us with total forgiveness.

5. The Cry

Isaiah ends this impactful indictment with a clear representation of the total depravity that encompassed the city. The leaders led by their rebellion and wickedness. They were in cahoots with the professional thieves or the mafia of the day.

6. The Conclusion (1:24-31).

First, the only option left for God was judgment.

Second, God's judgment served a very specific purpose beyond judgment. **Judgment served to turn the nation back to God.**

How does Isaiah 1 apply to me?

- 1) God's promises will be fulfilled no matter what. This applies to both judgment and freedom. Where we live our lives we must trust that God will always act in our best interest and according to His greater plan.
- 2) God has the solution to man's sin. Your sin can be forgiven today, but it will always be on God's terms.
- 3) Sinful actions did not pay in Isaiah's day and nothing has changed in 2020.
- 4) The cost of sin is always a steep price. We must recognize that our sin not only cost Jesus His life, we lose the blessing and reward that could be ours by living according to God's Word (Ps. 119:9-11).
- 5) In God's justice, we always see His heart of love for His people and the world.
- 6) How many chances have we received from God? How many times have we repented? Have we thanked God for His forgiveness when you sin?

What does this passage reveal about the character and nature of God?

1. God is always the Just Judge (v. 24).
2. God has a heart of compassion and care for His people (vs. 9, 18).
3. God desires obedience because He is the standard and sets the standard for all men to obey (v. 19).
4. Amidst the threat of judgment, we find the longsuffering nature of God (v. 18).

What are some call-to action truths from Isaiah 1?

- 1) We must be continually aware of what our sinful actions do to God.
- 2) Humility is always the path to God's forgiveness.
- 3) God doesn't call us to the easy life, but He does call us to an obedient life.
- 4) God desires a single-focus on His ways. Divided allegiances are an affront to the character of God.