

# No Trace of Dye Left!

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[ 0 : 00 ] Together let's turn briefly to Isaiah chapter 1 and the words we find in verse 18. Isaiah 1 at verse 18 Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord.

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. When you read through chapter 1 of Isaiah, it's virtually impossible as a Christian not to seek to find in it many details that are applicable to and reminders of the situation that we face in our world today.

Because as you go through it, you hear the words speaking to Israel, to Judah in the days of Isaiah, about how he had himself told them about himself, taught them his ways.

And yet in verse 2 there, children I have reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. That's how we are as a people, as a nation. God has taught us over many generations and yet we are bent on turning away from him, backsliding away from him.

And all the way through you find various details there that are so applicable and so relevant to our own society today. Verse 4 there, the despising of the things of the Lord.

[ 1 : 28 ] Verse 7, you find desolation spiritually in many parts of our country today. Verse 8 there, you find the church, the people of God, the daughter of Zion, so small and so vulnerable compared to the massive amount of unbelief, of humanistic thinking, of ungodly thinking and behaviour that's around us.

We are besieged, he says here, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city, a small dot on the map of humanity. And then you go through the chapter and verse after verse you really find things which are again like that, so applicable.

There is also in verses 11 through right to 16 there, an indication of religion in its formal sense, a formality of religion, just going through the motions, lots of sacrifices, lots of things which appear to be just what God requires.

But there's no heart in it, there's nothing really there of any substance whatsoever, there's nothing there of any meaningfulness. And God is saying, I'm sick of all this, I'm sick of all of the ungodliness, I'm sick of all of the so-called religion that you have, it's worthless to me because your hearts are devoted to the things of idolatry and sin.

And God is calling the people to appear before him in court.

[ 3 : 03 ] He has a case to put against them, that's really the background to verse 18. But instead of hearing a pronouncement of judgment and condemnation, though there is that element all to the book of Isaiah, but in this picture of God summoning the people, these people that he's described all the way through verse 1, with all of these wrongs and these iniquities and these things that he is himself so tired of, instead of hearing this verdict of the judge saying, that's it, I've had enough, I condemn you.

They hear instead an appeal to come and reason with him. An appeal to come and talk over the problem that's come between them. Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord.

And not only is that an invitation to come and reason things with the Lord, come and enter into a dialogue with God over this sin, over this problem, that is, he says also, the wonderful assurance of forgiveness, of pardon, of cleansing.

If we come, if you come, he says, and confess your sins and forsake them. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

Now, of course, the problem for ourselves, or the danger rather for ourselves, is that, yes, we can apply all of these things and see some of these elements in the conditions that we live amongst, in the kind of society that we've become as a people or as a nation.

[ 4 : 43 ] The danger is that we will lose ourselves individually in that generality. That we will not find ourselves in the crowd when God describes conditions like this.

And what we have to do is look at how these things actually come to bear upon our lives personally. And there's another danger as well that we could assume today that because we're already Christians, those of us who are Christians or confess to be Christians, that we would say, well, this is just entirely for those who have not yet come to the Lord, whose sin is still not forgiven.

When you go to Psalm 51, you know that the possibility of sinning against God is not confined to those who have not yet come to have their sin forgiven.

David was a believer. David was a man of God. David had been following the Lord from his youth. Yet it's that David, the mature believer, who has to come before God with that great confession, that prayer and repentance.

Lord, create in me a clean heart. It doesn't matter how long we've been Christians. It doesn't matter whether we kind of think that the major part of sin and the workings of sin is now behind us.

[ 6 : 15 ] The fact of the matter is, because our heart is the problem, as we said to the children this morning, we need constantly to come to God for his grace, to work in our hearts, that it will flow through then to our actions.

And whenever we have sinned to come to confess to God, to come with, to God to confess, we meet this wonderful text. Come now, let's reason together.

Whenever we've done something that we know is wrong, whether we've gone away from the Lord, whether we have become cold in our hearts, whether we're reluctant to come back to him, or whether we may be even afraid today to come to face the Lord with our sin and make out confession, the wonderful thing is, we've got this grand assurance from the Lord, and this appeal by way of invitation from himself.

Come now, let's reason together, says the Lord. So let's look at this appeal, and let's look at the assurance that God gives along with it.

God's appeal, first of all, come now, let us reason together. Now, the first thing about it is, it's surprising. It's surprising because of all that you read that leads up to it in the chapter, and everything else in the book of Isaiah that fits in with that.

[ 7 : 38 ] It's surprising because the last thing you expect to hear from the lips of God, from the mouth of God, towards people who have rebelled against him, and sinned against him, and continue to sin against him.

It's surprising because of all that is set out in the chapter by way of sin, and immorality, and rebelliousness against God. The last thing you expect to hear is God saying to such people, come now, let's reason together, let's go over this together, let's actually have this out.

That's what God is constantly saying to us through the gospel, because that is the gospel. And indeed, it gives us the opportunity every time we come to think of those issues, and to deal with those issues, it comes, it gives us the opportunity to admire the grace of God.

It is one of the, if not the most wonderful thing in all existence. The undeserved favor of God. That's the grace of God.

And you come to admire it by setting it against the one thing that shows it up in all its brilliance. And that is the seriousness, and the grotesqueness, and the ugliness, and the darkness of our sin.

[ 8 : 58 ] That's what this chapter, if you like, is really like. If you think of everything that leads up to verse 18, as a very, very dark cloth, something like what a jeweler uses to actually show off the sparkle of jewels like diamonds.

He takes, they take a dark cloth, let's call it a dark velvet cloth, and on that dark velvet cloth, he brings out these marvelous sparkling jewels.

And as the jewels are placed on the cloth, the darkness of the cloth itself serves to bring forth the luster and the contrast in the beautiful diamonds or jewels that are set out on it.

Well, we're not gloating in our sin. We're not saying our sin is a good thing. Far from it. God will not have us believe that. But when you come to consider the grace of God, what the grace of God is like, what the love of God in Jesus Christ really looks like, when you come to want to admire that, what do you do?

Do you just treat sin lightly? Do you say, I don't need to consider my sin in order to understand the grace of God and to see it in all its sparkle and all its luster. No. You actually bring your sin with you just like Isaiah is doing in this chapter.

[10:12] You set your sin out as a dark cloth and you put the love and the mercy and the grace of God on top of that and then you see how it shines. Because it's grace to the undeserving.

It's grace to what is very opposite to itself. though your sins are like scarlet, though they are red like crimson, nevertheless, God is saying, let's reason together.

There is grace showing itself in its beauty, in its magnificence against the background of our sin. Have you ever yet really come to hold out the darkness of you?

See, if we don't accept the Bible's teaching on this really, really important issue of what we are ourselves in our hearts and what we really are as God tells us deep in our souls and all the sins that actually come from that, unless we really have accepted that and say, yes, that's a picture of me, we're not really going to be in a position to appreciate the grace of God.

But when you come to say, Lord, it doesn't matter how dark a picture you paint of my sinfulness, I know that that's true of me. I know that that's what I'm like inwardly.

[11:33] I know that that's my natural state and I know that this is the kind of person you're speaking to when you say, come now, let's reason together.

And you see, God is not just giving us this surprising appeal. God's appeal is surprising in that sense of it, but thankfully it's a great surprise and a pleasant surprise.

But it's also sincere. When God is making his appeal, there is no question of insincerity. There are no catches in other words. God is not saying this to us, but something else is hiding underneath that he's going to come in with and then catch you out and apply to you so that you'll find there's a dark side to the whole thing.

There's nothing like that. There are no catches. There are no dark things involved as well. Come now, let's reason together and then comes the assurance as we'll see in a minute. Doesn't matter though, your sins be as scarlet, colored with a blood red color that represents the seriousness of them.

They shall be white as snow. Isn't it strange in some ways that we know there are no catches with God.

[12:49] There are no hidden agendas. There are no aspects to his appeal of insincerity or duplicity or any sort of play on words like that.

And yet, we are so reluctant to come to him and so reluctant to accept his word and so reluctant to take him at his word. Why is that? It's not because there's any fault with God.

We needn't have any fear or any suspicion that something is lurking behind the scenes or beneath the words as they appear. No, we have to take him at his word.

Absolutely, 100% genuine is this appeal of the Lord. He is sincere and genuine in everything he says, including this incredible thing, that though our sins be as heinous as you can possibly describe them, yet in God's forgiveness they're wiped clean.

And when he says reason together, it is in a sense a courtroom scene. God is appealing to the prisoner accused and found guilty at the bar of the court and instead of applying the sentence he's making this appeal, well, you have an opportunity instead of being condemned, though that would be just of me, the judge is saying, instead of that I'm making an appeal to you, let's reason together, let's deal with this in a way that can take your guilt away and establish a relationship between us of friendship and companionship from now on.

[14:31] That's basically what he's saying. We mustn't think that it's as if we are equal to God. When he's saying come now, let's reason together, that's a kind of facilitator approach, isn't it?

You don't really take sides in acting as a facilitator, you just kind of represent both sides at the same time, but there's a bit of give and take on both sides because you treat them essentially as equals.

God is not saying I'm treating you as an equal when I'm calling you to appear before me and bringing my case against you, you're not my equal, I am God, I am your superior, but I'm giving you the opportunity of reasoning with me, of going over the ground of what's come between us.

And the fact that he's using the word reason, it's a word of course that includes the application of your mind because we're constantly being accused by those who don't accept the Christian way of life, who don't accept the teaching of the Bible, who don't accept any of these issues that we're dealing with today and don't accept the Bible's view of sin and of the human condition as sinful, we're being told that all you're really doing is acting blindly, you're acting without using your minds, you're not really giving your attention to things, if you did, you'd be a humanist or an atheist.

And God is saying, let's reason together. In other words, yes, he's calling for our repentance and our turning from sin and our confession of sin and going over all that with himself through his word and between us in our relationship with God, between us and God individually, yes, personally, yes. [16:15] but he's saying, it's not as if you're not going to use your mind in this. It's not as if you're not going to really think about what you're doing or think about where you are in relation to me or think about who I am or think about what my word is saying.

God is really saying, let's reason together. In fact, the problem is not that we don't use our mind as Christians or becoming Christians.

The problem is we're not using our mind and becoming atheistic or humanistic. The greatest application and use of your mind is when you come to reason together with God.

When you let the light of God's truth come into your mind so that you actually accept what God is saying and you're fond by coming to him and reasoning together with him.

All of you who are Christians today know very well that when you came to God, when God started in your life, when you knew that God was speaking to you through his word, when you had whatever you have in providence that brought you to think about God, that's precisely it.

[17:35] You began to think about God and to think about his demands and to think about your soul and to think about eternity and to think about his word. You didn't actually leave your mind behind you.

Come now he says, let us reason together, says the Lord. Apply your mind, he's saying to Israel to this. Don't go through the things that you're doing here unthinkingly or don't imagine that what I require of you is an unthinking repentance, a leaving behind of rationality and thought.

No, he's saying it's the very opposite. Give your minds completely, wholly, seriously to the relationship between us. That's his appeal, surprising and sincere and calling for our reasoning in our coming to him and dealing with this issue.

And then he gives us this assurance, though your sins are like scarlet they shall be white as snow, though they are red like crimson they shall become like wool. The first thing you deal with there is the stain of sin.

Now these words, scarlet and crimson, they do describe colours. You see something that's crimson or something that's scarlet, a bright coloured red, it's a vivid colour, it catches your attention and you say that's a magnificent colour, that's a beautiful, beautiful colour.

[19:10] But it's not just dealing with the colour, what is actually here is the way that clothes or fibres were dyed with the colour of crimson or scarlet.

It's talking about something that's been dyed red, dyed bright crimson. And that makes it all the more remarkable as an illustration of God's forgiveness, God's dealing with our sins, God's assurance of what will happen if we bring our sin to him in confession.

Think of our sin as a spiritual dye. If you think of well it's using the word wool there at the end of the verse. And if you think of a sheep with its fleecy coat of wool, when you go and prise it apart you can see very often how dense that wool is and as you go towards the skin of the sheep you will find that really dense fibers.

You think of that animal and it going through a dip or whatever filled with red dye. Every single fiber of that fleece is going to be colored by that dye.

And what God is saying to us is that our sin has not just affected part of our human being. Every fiber of our being has come to be affected adversely by sin.

[20:38] When we say we are sinful it doesn't mean that this is something that theologians reformers of the past used to describe this doctrine as the total depravity of man.

And some people have mistakenly taken umbrage at that thinking in fact that what is meant is that we are as bad as we could possibly be. Well we're not.

None of us are as bad as we could possibly be. If God lifted away his restraint if God put us where there were no restraints at all on his part through his word or through his providence or through our conscience if God lifted all of that away then we would become as bad as we could possibly be.

What total depravity means is that every single part of us has been affected by sin, by our fallenness. There isn't any part of our being that has been left unaffected.

The dying of sin has run right through to all our faculties. It doesn't matter where you think of the faculties of your soul, let's say your conscience, your will, your understanding, your emotions, all of these things of your soul have all become affected, they're all died with the stain of sin.

[ 22 : 01 ] They're not functioning properly since we became sinners. And it's the same in respect to your body. Yes, well, sin doesn't begin with our body, like we're saying with the children, it begins in our soul, that's the root of it.

But our bodies are used in the service of sin. How you see things with your eye, the lust that's in us, can really show itself through what we actually see or hear or even taste.

And these become the servants, if you like, of sin, as sin is within us. And so God is saying that our sins are like scarlet.

They are like that. He's not saying, though your sins are like scarlet, as if that was not the case.

What he's really saying is, this is what I find, this is what you are like, this is indeed the case with your sins are like scarlet dye or crimson dye, deep red, into every fiber of our being.

Sin has made its way, it's there in every single fiber of our being. And that's why, really, it's putting it in another picture, what you find there in verses 5 and 6, is a picture of somebody really seriously ill, and virtually every part of their body has become affected by the illness, the whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint, from the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds, they are not pressed out or bound up or mollified with oil, it's a picture of somebody desperately or somebody really so ill that they are approaching death, and the disease has become rampant and affect every part of them, it's a picture of the people of Israel, and that's true of us individually as well, that every part, has come to be infected and affected with sin, but then it comes to the removal of it, though your sins are like scarlet, see the danger is that we would focus so much on our sinfulness that we would just do nothing else, and that we'd come to despair, and we'd come to have that sort of gloomy and black outlook on life, that would just go through life bemoaning the fact that we're sinners, and sometimes in fact you find some Christians still doing that, the major emphasis in their lives is on sin, as if it had never been forgiven, as if things had never really changed from the way that they entered the world, what God is saying to us, yes your sins are like scarlet and they're like red, like crimson, but this is my appeal to you, and through my appeal I'm giving you this assurance, that though your sins are like this, they shall be white as snow, in my forgiveness

[ 24 : 52 ] I will take care of every aspect of your sin, I will remove the dye from every fiber of your being, think of how difficult it is, indeed how impossible it is for us to think of the dye of sin, the red, carlet, crimson, whatever color of dye it is with which a fleece has been dyed, how do you get every single, every single drop, or draughtlet of that dye out of these fibers, well, I don't know, maybe it can be done by re-dyeing some other dye of white, but what this is saying is taking away that dye and taking the fleece back to its original condition, that's what God is set on, in the forgiveness of our sins, in dealing with our sinfulness, and that means the removal of sin remains the removal of three aspects of our sin, the sin is made up of these three aspects of sin, it's guilt, it's power, it's presence, and God takes away all aspects of sin, these three aspects of sin, sin, that's if you like, the totality of what sin is,

God deals with each of them precisely, and conclusively, and permanently, it takes away the guilt of our sin in justification, that's one of the great doctrines of the Bible, we are justified by faith in Christ, what justification basically means is, here we are at the bar of God in court, this appeal is coming to us instead of the condemnation, and forgiveness means that God is taking away the sentence that he has placed on the record book against us, and instead of that he is placing righteousness, acceptance, completely accepted instead of being completely rejected and condemned, the record, in other words, while it began with the stain of sin, and the record against us, it's wiped clean, and there isn't a single trace left of what was originally there, when God wipes a record clean, he wipes it clean, he doesn't leave even a pin prick or a dot on the record that was against us, it's all wiped clean, now how different, if you compare in David's land, let's come back to

David in Psalm 51, and we'll mention it in a minute as well, the great prayer of David, the great concern of David in Psalm 51 is Lord creating me a clean heart, and all the other things that he says in that chapter, in that prayer, are to do with God removing every trace of sin from his record, from his life, from his practice, sin, but he deals with the guilt of sin there, deliver me Lord from blood guiltiness, take away the guilt of my sin, you compare that with 2 Samuel chapter 11, you can do this an exercise later at home if you like, in 2 Samuel chapter 11, we have David's incident with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, David's arrangement of the death of Uriah, so that he could take Bathsheba, and she would become his wife instead, and the great concern of David in 2 Samuel 11, is how to cover his tracks, how to actually make sure that nobody really finds out about

this, he wants to cover his sin in a way that it doesn't become public, it doesn't become something that bothers him in the future, he's trying as far as possible to cover his tracks, all the things that he arranges there as the king are designed to actually cover his wrongdoing, to obliterate his tracks, in Psalm 51, the concern has been completely reversed, he's not their concern to cover his tracks, he's concerned to expose them and to bring them out before

God, and he's concerned that God will obliterate them, that God will wipe them clean, that God will take them away, why the change, how come there's such a change, from the man in 2 Samuel 11 to the man in Psalm 51, the change is that he's come in repentance, that he's come to reason together with God, and that he's come in that to see that covering his tracks is not the way out, but for God to obliterate the tracks and forgiveness, to bring him back to the whiteness that he desires, that's the answer, that's the answer for you, and for me too, our justification wipes the record clean, our sin is forgiven, we are given righteousness instead, secondly, the removal of the power of sin, that happens in our sanctification, God's work of making us holy, because we need to have this root of our sin actually dealt with, our soul is really,

John Calvin, in regard to idolatry, this is how he put it, the soul of man is a factory that produces idols, and you can say that of our sin in general, our soul is a factory that keeps on producing sin until something happens, actually to deal with that factory and to change its working systems, and what God does in his grace and in the power of his spirit is to give us a new heart, he goes right to the root of our being, he doesn't say, well, it will be enough if I just give this person something that will help them to tidy up their life outwardly, that will help them to live and conform to my standard formally, in how they do things outwardly, and the outward things that are seen in their life, that will be enough, God is saying, no, I've got to get to the heart of the matter, I've got to deal with this person at the root of their being, so what does he do, what is grace about, what is salvation, where does it begin for us personally, in our experience of it, in our personal entering into the conditions of it, it begins in our regeneration, salvation, you who were dead in trespasses and sins, said Paul to the

[ 31 : 51 ] Ephesians, you has he quickened, you has he brought to life, you has he changed, that's why David is saying, Lord, create in me a clean heart, make this factory of my soul produce the things it ought to produce, not what it is presently producing, in sinful thoughts and actions, we need a new heart, that's exactly what God gives us, he deals with the power of sin, from the production factory of our souls, he renews us inwardly, he gives us a new heart, and until we have that new heart, it's useless trying to tidy your life up outwardly, because that still remains, leaves the factory untouched, it still keeps, the production line is still going, that produces sin, and somebody might say, well, yeah, but I've come to

God, I believe that my sin is forgiven, the Bible encouraged me to believe that, I've confessed them, I walk in the ways of the Lord, I seek to serve the Lord every day of my life, but there's something here that I don't understand, sin still troubles me, I still have sin, I'm conscious of sin in my life, how can that be if God has touched the root of my being, if he's changed the factory of my soul into one that produces good works, why am I still aware of sin, why do I still have such a thing as sin in the way that I go through my day, why do I still need to come to God daily, and ask him, Lord, forgive my sin, well let me just try and answer that by something that I came across, the story of a young woman, who had come to the Lord and had given her life to the Lord and had accepted Christ as her saviour, and she applied for communicant members, she applied to come to take communion in the Lord's supper, and when she came to be interviewed by the elders, one of them asked her, were you a sinner before you received the Lord Jesus into your life? She said, yes sir, I was, and then the elder said, well, are you still a sinner then?

And she hesitated a bit, and she said, actually, I just, I feel actually that I'm a bigger sinner than I ever was to begin with. Well, he said, how then can you say there's been a real change in your life? Yeah, that's the case. And she said, well, sir, I really can't explain this, but it's a bit like this, before I was saved, I used to be a sinner running after sin, but since I've been saved, I'm a sinner running away from sin.

[ 35 : 13 ] You see, she still knew sin in her life and practice, but she wasn't running towards it and welcoming it, she was running away from it. She knew it was something that she didn't like, and that she needed to be rid of, and was wanting God to help her do it.

That really, I think, brings us to the crux of the issue. It's not that sin disappears from our consciousness when we come to have it forgiven. It's that we have a new relation to it. It's not the dominant thing in our lives. It's not something we're now willing to serve. It's not something we're running towards, as that young woman put it. It's something we're running away from, that we seek God's help with.

But God is saying, I will indeed make it as white as snow. The power of sin I will deal with in a way that gets to the core of your being. So that thirdly, even the very presence of sin finally, will be dealt with.

Because somebody who's really whiter than white, you don't have such a person in this life. But there are such people, there will be such people in the state of glory.

[ 36 : 28 ] Put it this way, the removal of our guilt in justification, the removal of the power of sin in our sanctification, the removal of the presence of sin in our glorification, in the final state after the resurrection of all God's saved people.

There will be no sin. There will be no guilt of sin. There's no guilt of sin anyway in this life. It's been forgiven. There's no power of sin because there's no presence of sin.

It just isn't there in the state of glory. If you think of these great images in the book of Revelation, chapter 7 and chapters 21 and 22, who are these in chapter 7, John has asked, that are clothed in white garments, and palms in their hands, these are those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore, they are before the throne of God. They've been made white. They're whiter than white. There's no presence of sin in glorification.

That's where resurrection also fits in for us. when we die, our souls go to eternity. As Christians, they go to be with Jesus.

[ 37 : 59 ] Our bodies return to the dust. And as 1 Corinthians puts it, it is sown in corruption. corruption. It's a body that we knew in this life that was a servant to sin.

But when it's raised, it will be raised incorruptible. There will be no sin attached to it or no sin through it practiced.

The presence of sin will be gone. Who would not want to be a Christian? All of that is because of Jesus Christ.

For, as Paul put it to the Corinthians, God made him who knew no sin to be or to become sin for us so that we sinners could become the righteousness of God in him.

Our gracious God, we thank you for the transference of our sin to our Redeemer, the transference of his righteousness to us in our justification.

[ 39 : 23 ] We bless you for the promise that you will deal with our sin finally and conclusively and that the future for your people is bright because there is no sin in it, bright because the darkness of sin has been entirely removed.

Blessed be your name that this is what your salvation provides for us. Accept our worship now, we pray, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.