

God Calls a Wicked Country Back to Him

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles, if you would, and go with me to Isaiah chapter 1. In Isaiah chapter 1 and verse 18, here's the story that's going on in Isaiah chapter 1. Isaiah is a prophet. He is speaking to the country of Judah and to Jerusalem, the capital city of that country.

They have become a very wicked group of people. They have become a people, if you would look with me in verse 3, look at Isaiah chapter 1 and verse 3. The ox knows his owner, the ass his master's crib, but Israel does not know.

My people do not consider me. My people don't know me. My people don't consider me, but a donkey's got more sense than that. An ox knows who owns him, but my people, Israel, don't know me.

They have turned their back on God. The nation of Judah, the nation of Israel, has turned its back on God. In verse 6, it is so bad. If you read verse 6, from the sole of the foot to the head, there is no soundness.

But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. They're sick, they're putrid, they're stinking, they're rotten, they're filthy.

[1 : 13] They don't love their God. They have forgotten their God. God has already set judgment on them. He's done everything He can do to get them to come back to Him and to love Him. And He doesn't even enjoy their worship.

When they come to worship Him, He doesn't like their worship. He says, if you look down in verse 11, To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices? I mean, what are y'all bringing these offerings to me?

I'm full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of beasts. I am not happy in the blood of bullocks or of goats. When you come to appear before me, who hath required this? Who asked y'all to come?

What are you doing coming before me? Verse 13, don't bring me any more worthless, empty, vain offerings. Don't bring me any more of your offerings that I don't like.

I am weary in verse 14. I can't put up with them. It was a sad chapter. Isaiah, probably not going to win the Joel Osteen Award of the year.

[2 : 10] Not sure, but I got that feeling. But God is so sweet. He always is. Look if you would at verse 18. Look if you would at verse 18. Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord.

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be wool. Boy, you guys have hurt me. You guys have done wrong.

You don't know who I am. I love you. If you'll just come, I'll fix it. I don't know if you catch that.

That's the God that you serve. By the way, that's the Old Testament picture of the God you serve. Because too many people told you the Old Testament God was a mean God. They must not have read this verse. Because in this verse, he's saying to them that he loves them.

I need you to go to chapter 1 and verse 1. I need you to underline. And to remember, any time you read the book of Isaiah, any time you read any book, you need to know who he's talking to. And he makes it very clear in chapter 1 and verse 1.

[3 : 12] The vision of Isaiah the son of Amos, which he saw concerning, underline, Judah and Jerusalem. So this is not about Alpharetta and Georgia. This is not about Washington, D.C. and the United States of America.

There are a lot of parallels or a lot of things that are similar. But that's not what it's about. But God has spoken to his people. And in verse 2, I want you to go down and underline this. But his people had rebelled against him.

His people had rebelled against him. And they don't know him. Do you understand what a sad situation that is? He says, animals know their people. But my people don't know me.

And they have loved sin so much. And they have forsaken their God. And he is very angry with them. Look at verse 4. Sinful nation, he calls them. People laden, loaded down with iniquity.

You guys are full of it. You're a seed of evildoers. Your children are their corruptors. You have forsaken the Lord. You have made me mad. You have provoked the Holy One of Israel. You have gone away backward.

[4 : 15] You're totally corrupt. Your whole head is sick. Verse 5. Your whole heart is faint. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head, you guys stink. The passage is written to a nation that's gone away from God.

Even though there are still people in this nation, by the way. You'll see in a second there's still people in the nation that love God. But the nation of Israel as a whole, the nation of Judah as a whole, is turned away from God.

I'd just like to give you one little New Testament truth that I think you ought to write down somewhere. And that is Romans chapter 6 verses 1 and 2. You need to write them down. When you see a good and gracious God and you know you live in an age of grace.

And you know that God loves you and cares about you. That God is at work in your life. It is very easy to take advantage of a good God. If he were an angry God, it'd be different. If he was a vengeful God, it'd be different.

If he just striked us down when we did wrong, we'd all live in fear. The Bible tells us to fear him, but it's not that kind of fear. And none of us fear him like that. But here's what we ought to do. You know, here we are saved and we're coming to church and we're doing all this stuff.

[5 : 18] And he could be saying, I'm fed up with your offerings. I'm fed up with your worship because you're not real. You're not genuine. But how about Romans 6 verse 1? And what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? How in the world can you be born again loving God and let that porn keep living in your life? How can you love God and be his and let that bitterness keep walking in your life?

How is your walk with God? Chapter 1 and verse 7. He says to him, I have brought discipline on your country. And we don't have time to go through it like tonight.

But if you would look at verse 1, your country is already desolate. Your cities are burned. Your land, the strangers, foreigners are destroying your land. It's overthrown. Everything's messed up.

And what should be a beautiful vineyard with beautiful palaces has become a cottage. Basically, that's the shack in the field. If I took you to Prue, I could drive you by a field and you would see a little bitty house.

[6 : 18] It wouldn't hardly be much bigger than this pulpit. It would be short. It would be just long enough for a person to lay down. And you'd look at it and say, what is that? And I'd say, that's where the guy that takes care of that field lives. So there's a guy that sleeps in there.

Because at night, somebody's going to come steal the crops. He may have a shotgun in there. And here's what God said to Israel. He said, that's where y'all are now. You're not in that palace anymore. You're not big stuff anymore.

You messed up so bad that you're in really bad shape. And God can get fed up. Can I just say this before we move on? They didn't realize they were being disciplined. Do you realize when God's at work in your life?

Do you realize when God is saying, what you're doing's wrong and I don't like what you're doing. And you ought to get that right. Hebrews chapter 12 says he disciplines us. Here's the bad thing. He's already disciplining them.

By the end of the chapter, he's going to say, all right, it's going to get really bad. Not doing too good with a light discipline. The little spankings aren't working for you. Beatings are coming your way. You think it's bad. I gave you three swats. I'm fixing to beat the devil out of you.

[7 : 17] He was fed up with their worship. But there are a few believers. Look if you would at verse 9. You need to underline this in verse 9. Except the Lord of hosts had left us a very small remnant. Underline that.

And that's a key phrase to use all through the Old Testament. A very small remnant. A remnant. God always in the middle of everybody going bad. All through the nation of Israel. All through the nation of Judah.

God always said, I got a few. I got a few. I don't lose the game. I don't lose the game. I got a few. There may be a bunch. Everybody's bad. And everybody sinks from the bottom.

But he's talking to a nation there. Not to individuals. But in the nation, there were some that loved God. And if they hadn't have had some, he said, y'all would turn out like Sodom and Gomorrah. You would leave the earth.

You'd be gone. You'd be destroyed. You'd become an ash heap. God insults them in verse 10. I don't have time to go into it. Basically, he ends up saying, okay, Sodom and Gomorrah. Okay, you people that don't love me.

[8 : 13] Okay, you people that do everything I hate. Okay, you people that have had to destroy. I think somewhere along the way, and this bothers me greatly, but in Southeast United States of America, us in the Bible Belt, we in this part of the country, we worship so much like these people.

We live our lives like we want to live our lives. God doesn't have anything to do with us on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and all day Thursday. But Thursday night, we'll throw God in for a little bit. And all day Friday and all day Saturday, we'll throw God in.

The fact is, we'll skip any time we need to because God just isn't that big in our thick. But we'll keep writing our check. That's basically what he's saying here.

I won't make you mad, but I had to preach this real quick, so you're getting the highlights. Look at verse 11. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices? Well, y'all give me so many offerings.

I don't even like your offerings. Now, you would never expect a prophet of God to say that as a Baptist preacher. We say, well, God only wants you to be a cheerful giver. As a Baptist pastor, I say, yeah, but we'll take it any way you want to give it.

[9 : 18] The fact is, we'll take it at gunpoint if we need to. But we need, for TV, that was a joke. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices? In verse 12, he said, when you come to appear before me, I didn't ask you to.

You see, God's not interested in how much money you give him. God's not interested if you work in a Sunday school class. God's interested in, do you love me? He said, the ox doesn't know me.

He said, an ox knows where he gets his food. Hey, your dog's got enough sense to come home. Your cat's got enough sense to know where to come home to. But you don't know me. You're worse than a donkey.

Verse 13, he said, no more vain oblations. No more wasted offerings. In verse 14, he said, the fact is, when y'all worship me, I'll just be honest with you, it's more of a bother to me.

It's more of a, it gets me tired. It's just the words he used. Verse 14, they're a bother to me. I'm weary to bear them. Can you imagine when that offering rose up before God?

[10 : 18] It was supposed to be a sweet smelling savor. It was supposed to have a blessing to the God of heaven. When they offered those, God was supposed to go, I am well pleased with that offering. And here's what God said. Oh, brother, another one.

That doesn't mean anything to me. I'm tired. Stop the offerings down there. You don't mean it anyway. So it gets so bad in verse 15, he said, I'll hide my eyes from you.

I'm not even going to look at you. I'm not going to talk to you. I'm not going to hear you when you pray. Verse 15, he said, you lift your hands to me, but your hands are covered up in blood. You've been doing wicked stuff. I'm not listening to you.

Tonight, we ought to examine our worship. Do we come to him like lost people? Do we worship like Sodom and Gomorrah? Do we worship him from the heart or from habit?

Do we worship him right or from ritual? Why are we worshiping God? How does God feel about our worship? I think almost everybody who gets to church on a Sunday morning in eastern United States of America thinks God's up in heaven.

[11 : 22] I'm glad y'all came to church today. But if you read Isaiah chapter 1, God might have just been going, I ain't a bit happy. Because you didn't come because you love me. You didn't come because you love me.

So in chapter 1, verse 16, he says, all right, I want you to get right. Wash, put away, and stop doing wrong. You're my people, so straighten up.

In verse 17, he said, learn to do the right thing. Learn to do well. Do right. Seek the right thing. Help people that are hurting. Judge the fatherless. That means take care of widows and orphans.

Why don't y'all do right? You're rich, and you run over people, and you abuse people. Your money is more important to you than doing what I ask you to do. But our sweet and wonderful God said, and I think it's the greatest verse in the chapter, come now.

Let us reason together. As angry as he appears to be for 17 verses, you're expecting in any moment he's going to say, pull out the bazooka. I'm going to blow him away. You're expecting any moment he's going to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

[12 : 25] But instead of that, you know what he says? Hey, guys. If y'all come here, we'll talk. If y'all come here, we'll talk. He just wants them to mean it.

He just wants them to love him. He just wants them to serve him. He doesn't want them to be religious. He wants them to love him. That's what God's called them through Isaiah.

That's what he's calling his people to do. Look, if you would, in verse 19, if you be willing and obedient, you'll get the good of the land of Israel. I just want you to love me and do right.

I just want you to love me and do right. But if you won't, you need to know that I'm the kind of God that will take you out.

I didn't say that. Look at verse 20. If you refuse and rebel, the sword will come and devour you. God said it. He said, how in the world could you, my people, get to be so bad?

[13 : 28] In verse 21, he said, you remind me of a prostitute. You remind me of a harlot, a whore. You remind me of a whore. And now you're murderers. The reason he uses that word harlot there is that what was supposed to be was they were supposed to be in love with Jesus.

He compares Israel to God's wife. And Israel was supposed to love God and worship God and only think about God and live to please God because God saved them and God did a work and they're supposed to return that.

But instead of that, Israel said, put yourself on hold. And they went and found other gods and they gave his money to them. And they gave their love to them and not to them. And God said, y'all don't love me.

You love another. No man would put up with that. No woman would put up with her husband doing that. But God was having to put up with it. And he said, everything y'all do is polluted. Look, if you would at verse 22, your silver has become dross.

Your wine is mixed with water. Your princes are rebellious. Your princes, your leaders are companions of thieves. Everybody likes bribes. Everybody likes bribes.

[14 : 33] So God's given us so much grace. What are we going to do with it? Just real quickly. I want you to look at Isaiah 124. If you do this kind of thing and you mark your Bible, you should mark the I wills right here.

God says, I'm going to heal my nation. In verse 24, he says, I will ease me of mine adversaries. I will take care. You don't like me? You don't like me?

Well, I can take care of that. Look, if you would at verse 25. I will. A second. And I will. I turn my hand on you. And I will purge you away. And I will take away all this incorruption that's in the middle of you.

I will. In verse 26, he says, after I get rid of you guys that don't like me, I will, verse 26, give you good judges and good leaders. And your city will be called the city of righteousness.

The faithful city. He says, I am going to destroy those who don't like me. Who don't love me. He told the nation of Israel. This is what he's telling Judah and Jerusalem.

[15 : 37] Verse 28, the destruction of the transgressors and the sinners shall be together. They that forsake the Lord, they will be destroyed, consumed. God said, I'll take care of that.

He said, I'll tell you what's really going on. Verse 29, he said, you're going to be ashamed of your oaks. See, they went out and instead of using a temple, they planted a bunch of oak trees and they built some oak trees up there and they worship those false gods.

And he said, I'll tell you what's going to happen. You're going to figure out your little gods you made where you tried to worship. You're supposed to be worshiping me. You're worshiping them. You're going to be embarrassed. When you find out they're not real gods, but I am. When you find out I can save and nobody else can save.

When you find out I'm the real God, you'll find out. He said, you'll be confounded for your gardens. He said, your groves, your gardens, your oak trees is places where you worship. You didn't like my house, but you like that house.

Watch, it'll all fall apart. Look if you would at verse 30. He said, the oak trees, leaves will fade. The garden won't have water and the strong will be as tow. They'll turn into something you can light a fire with.

[16 : 39] You just put a match to it and it'll burn. And they shall burn together and none shall quench them. If you rebel against God, you need to understand. If you think money is your Lord, if you think money is your protector, if you think your health is what's that, if you think anything but God, he said, I will take care of that.

You'll figure out something. Before the day's over, you need to know something. I am God and there isn't another. I am God.