

# God Confronts

Sept. 6, 2020

Isaiah 1:10-20

The book of Isaiah is indisputably one of the “great texts” of the Bible. Isaiah also is one of the most-cited Old Testament books in the New Testament. The Prophet Isaiah lived during the 700s B.C. In our lesson today, Isaiah had the unpleasant responsibility of confronting God’s people with the condition of their hearts and their worship. Today’s passage presents a message that is just as relevant for God’s people today.

There are three things we highlight in today’s passage. First, Isaiah confronts God’s people with an honest evaluation of where they are. Verse 7 reads *“Your country is desolate, Your cities are burned with fire...”*. Sounds like our nation and the things we are witnessing in these days. Isaiah confronted God’s people with the Word of the Lord and the truth of the condition of their hearts.

Second, Isaiah admonishes God’s people to examine their hearts and their worship. He tells Judah to examine their worship, the sincerity of their hearts and their obedience to the Lord. Could it be that often we just go through the motions as well? Worship begins when we not only read, hear and study the Word, but when we put it into practice and live it out in our daily lives.

Third, God always pursues and extends grace to anyone who would receive His love! *“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool”* (1:18). All people who humble themselves before God can enjoy the Lord’s promises of joy and reconciliation. [excerpts from Glenn Metts and Joshua Sharp]

## Empty Rituals (Isaiah 1:10-15) [Background Isaiah 1:1-9]

- Isaiah does not begin with an introduction of the prophet (this occurs in chapter 6) but rather with a stern command **“Hear the word of the Lord”**.
  - Hear is not just listening, it implies to hear and act (obey).
- The Hebrew people had a covenant with God. A covenant is an agreement but not like a business contract. A better analogy is the marriage covenant. It is based on relationship.
- In the eighth century BC, Judah had sinned against God so pervasively that Isaiah says the leaders were like those of Sodom, and the people like those of Gomorrah.
  - Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by God in judgement for their sinful lifestyle.
- Isaiah’s audience must have been surprised to hear these harsh words.
- **“To what purpose”** – God wanted to know why the people were making sacrifices to Him.
  - The people had lost sight of the purpose behind the sacrifices – a relationship with God.
- **What happened?** God no longer wanted or would accept their offerings and sacrifices.
  - The people treated God as a vending machine, they put in their sacrifices and wanted God to bless them.
- God said he would no longer hear their prayers
  - **Are we guilty of going through the motions in worship?**
  - **How can you make sure your heart is set on God in worship?**



## Repetition of Rituals can lead to Ritualism

Repetition Makes It Possible  
To Act Without Thinking

Action Without Thought  
Is Good With Some Things.

**Worship Is Not One Of Them!**

### **True Followers** (Isaiah 1:16-17)

- Worship in the form of sacrifices and offerings had become a worship-less ritual with Judah.
- In Verse 16 God (through Isaiah) gives four commands:
  - **Wash** – prepare to enter the Lord’s presence
  - **Clean** – putting away the sources of ritual impurity.
  - **Put Away** – remove the evil doings
  - **Cease** – stop behaving in evil ways.
- But it was not enough to stop behaving in evil ways.
- They were to replace the evil with positive behavior.
- In Verse 17 God (through Isaiah) gives more commands:
  - **Learn** – learn to do good (from God’s Word)
  - **Seek**– pursue just things
  - **Relieve** – seek justice for others
  - **Judge** – defend the orphans and defenseless
  - **Plead** – advocate for the widows and poor
- These positive behaviors all reflect the character of God and flow from a love for Him.
- **How does your love for God motivate you to care for others?**
- **List things you can do for others during the current COVID-19 pandemic.**

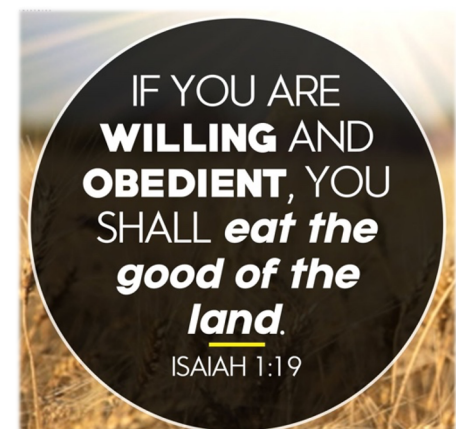
### **Repentance Required** (Isaiah 1:18-20)

- **“Come now, let us reason together”**
  - Reasoning has become a lost art in modern society. Everything has been politicized
  - **Reason** carries the idea of setting things right and ending a quarrel.
  - Isaiah let the people know they could avoid the fate that fell Sodom and Gomorrah.
- Judah, like us, had been given a chance to repent from sinful behavior
  - Judah (and the world today) lacked awareness of who God is and what He desires.
    - He wants to have fellowship with us. He wants more than empty ritual.
- Even though their sins were scarlet and red like crimson, they could be washed away by God Himself. The sins would be removed, and they would become white as snow and wool.
- Isaiah reminded the people there had to be a change of heart to settle things with God.
  - They needed to be obedient to God and His commands.
  - Instead of being punished for breaking the covenant, they would eat the good of the land.
- The Bible gives only two choices for our lives.
  - The first is to submit to God, which leads to life.
  - The second is to reject and rebel, which leads to death.
- God does not to conform to our lifestyle, we must conform to Him.
- There is no middle ground for Israel, Judah **or us** in response to God.
- **Have you ever tried to justify doing something you knew was wrong in the eyes of God? What should you do instead?**

**Biblical Truth:** *God confronts His people about the consequences of their actions.*



LEARN TO DO RIGHT;  
SEEK JUSTICE.  
DEFEND THE OPPRESSED.



“The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” Act 17:30-31