

JUDGMENT or GRACE – IT IS YOUR CHOICE

TEXT: Isaiah 1:2, 4, 7

Isaiah 1:2: 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 Lord].

Isaiah 1:4: 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 1:7: Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.

When Isaiah was still a young man (in about 740 B.C.), God gave him a special commission — an awesome assignment — to be God’s mouth-piece (to speak for God) to the rulers of Judah. It was a heart-breaking assignment, for God allowed him to understand that his labors of speaking against sin and rebellion would be fruitless.

When people need to be warned of imminent danger, you call out the warnings, even when you know they will not heed the warning. It is a form of caring and loving in the words of stern warnings in which you can detect the fervent love of the Father.



A SINFUL NATION

The Chosen People – A Covenant Nation

Privilege is coupled with responsibility.

➤ Privilege is coupled with responsibility. Where much is given, much is required.

ILLUSTRATION: A boy with aptitude for athletics must undergo rigid training not required of non-athletes if he is to excel. A person with musical ability must devote many hours to disciplined practice if their talent is to be used properly.

Is it worth all the trouble?

Ask the young man who wins the decathlon at the Olympics.
Ask the fellow who makes a winning touchdown for his football team.
Ask the woman who finishes a concert at Carnegie Hall and stands to receive applause of an appreciative audience.
Ask the young lady who becomes a pianist in her church, bringing blessings to the congregation.

ILLUSTRATION: If a nation is given the rare gift of freedom, that freedom must be protected against slipping into extremes of loose affections and lusts. We must crucify the flesh and its affections and lusts.

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Galatians 5:24: And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

- Selfishness, greed, and rebellion of the chosen people hindered them from being God's instruments in the world.
- Willful disobedience needs harsh discipline and is necessary for training and growth. Judah was to learn:
 1. The discipline of famine
 2. The discipline of humiliation
 3. The discipline of suffering

GOD'S CALL TO REPENTANCE

Repentance is more than being sorry.

Repentance is more than being sorry. It is turning from sin.

Isaiah 55:7: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

Ezekiel 33:9: Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

Ezekiel 33:11: Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Ezekiel 33:14: Again, when I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right.

Ezekiel 33: 19: But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.

Hear His Word spoken through the prophet Isaiah, “Cease to do evil; learn to do well.”

Isaiah 1:16: Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil.

Isaiah 1:17: Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

➤ Seek judgment

- This means justice, not only for oneself, but for others.
- This means look for ways to bring about equal justice. Seek it!



➤ Relieve the oppressed

- Actively help the poor — don't just sympathize with them. Relieve them — become involved with their burden.
- This also refers to those oppressed by sin. Relieve them — witness to them of the forgiving, redeeming, regenerating power of the Lord. Judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Befriend the helpless courageously. “Put shoes under your prayers.”

AN OFFER OF FORGIVENESS

All have sinned — sometimes by deliberately rebelling against God's law, sometimes by neglecting our duty.

Hebrews 2:3: How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him.

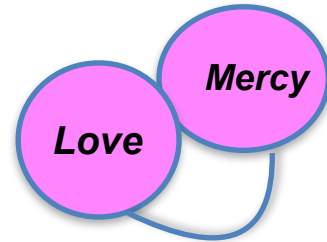
There are sins of omission just as there are sins of commission. We are worthy of judgment and punishment.

1 John 5:16: If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto

death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

Hear God's declaration of love and mercy.

Isaiah 1:18: Come, now, let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.



1. Words to a nation that had sinned
2. Words to a people God knew would reject His call to righteousness
3. Oh – with what matchless love could be so mistreated

CONCLUSION:

How can a perfect and just God Who commands obedience — yet is deliberately rejected by His children — not destroy them under the terms of His warning? He has said the punishment of sin is death!

Bishop Hazen G. Warner, of the United Methodist Church, has told this story which illustrates the point:

A small boy was always late to the dinner table, even after repeated warnings. One night he was later than usual. He arrived at the table to find the others waiting. Each member of the family had chicken, potatoes, etc. but at his place there was only a slice of bread and a glass of water.



He realized the judgment was correct, and although he was hungry and the food of the others made his mouth water, he sat down to eat the bread with a tearful streaked face. At this point, his father reached over and took the boy's plate, substituting his own well-filled plate. Without another word, he ate the bread, leaving the chicken, potatoes, etc. for his child.

Could that boy ever forget his father's loving gesture? Yet God said:

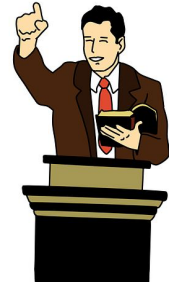
Jeremiah 2:32b: Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number.

Jesus Christ, as foretold by this prophet, Isaiah, came to earth, took upon Himself the burdens and consequences of the sins of the people, and tasted death and

separation from God. Now, like the little boy at the table, we have before us a banquet, because Christ Jesus cared enough to take our due punishment. That boy accepted the sacrifice his father made with humility and gratitude; and the loving fellowship in that family was restored. Like that boy, we, too, can accept or reject the sacrifice that was made for us.

CLOSING

We need a prophet to speak to America as Isaiah spoke to Judah. As a nation, we need to repent, stop sinning, and do good! We need preachers to speak to individuals and say, "You are sinning! Repent! Receive forgiveness!" God's willingness to pardon throws the blame of judgment on us. God is in earnest about the salvation of the world!



Isaiah 1:19-20:

19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat of the good of the land:

20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

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