

The Diagnosis & Prescribed Remedy

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[0:00] Isaiah chapter 1, we'll read from verse 1 through verse 20. The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah, son of Amos, son of Saul, saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Hear, O heavens, listen, O earth, for the Lord has spoken. I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know.

My people do not understand. Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption.

They have forsaken the Lord. They have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him. Why should you be beaten anymore?

Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted from the sole of your foot to the top of your head.

[1:13] There's no soundness, only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil. Your country is desolate.

Your city is burned with fire. Your fields are being stripped by foreigners right before you, laid waste as when overthrown by strangers. The daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard, like a hut in a field of melons, like a city under siege.

Unless the Lord Almighty has left us some survivors, we would have become like Sodom. We would have been like Gomorrah. Hear the words of the Lord, the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom. Listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. The multitude of your sacrifices. What are they to me? Says the Lord. I have more than enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fattened animals.

I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you? This trampling of my courts.

[2:17] Stop bringing meaningless offerings. Your incense is detestable to me. New moon, Sabbaths and convocations. I cannot bear your evil assemblies, your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts.

My soul hates. They become a burden to me. I'm weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you. Even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen.

Your hands are full of blood. Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight. Stop doing wrong.

Learn to do right. Seek justice. Encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless. Plead the case of the widow. Come now. Let us reason together, says the Lord.

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land.

[3:24] But if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Amen. For the past two weeks, we've been looking at God's prophet, Isaiah, and his call to the prophetic ministry.

Now, today we'll get a good look at the nation to which Isaiah was sent. The southern kingdom of Judah and its capital city, Jerusalem.

Now, good medicine has two components. There's first of all, the right diagnosis of the problem. And then the prescription of an effective remedy. Finding out what's wrong and then telling how to make it right.

And the great physician will do both of those things in Isaiah chapter one. Judah is the sick patient.

[4:35] God is himself the great physician. And through Isaiah, he tells Judah what's wrong with them. And then he prescribes the grand remedy.

And if we have ears to hear, we'll hear him tell us what's wrong with us and how it is that we can be made whole.

Now, Isaiah tells us in the opening verse that he prophesied during the reigns of four kings in Judah. And then verse two drops us right down into a huge courtroom.

Witnesses are being called none other than the heavens and the earth. I told you it's a huge courtroom. The witnesses are the heavens and the earth.

And God is the prosecutor and judge. And he's pressing his case, his accusation against Judah. So we have two points this morning.

[5:44] God's withering accusation. It runs from verses two through 15. That's the diagnosis of the problem. And then God's gracious appeal. 16 to 20, the prescribed remedy.

So his withering accusation. Now, this is not the first time that the heavens and the earth have been called as witnesses by God. You'll remember after the 40 years in the wilderness that Israel came to the border of the promised land.

And just before entering, the Lord entered into a covenant with Israel. It was actually a renewal of the covenant that he had made with their fathers at Mount Sinai.

And in this covenant, Moses rehearsed the Lord's commandments to this second generation of his people.

Their covenant obligations in the law. And he promised astonishing blessings would be theirs if they obeyed them.

[6:51] And astonishing curses would be theirs if they disobeyed them. And there on the plains of Moab, on the eastern side of the Jordan River, Moses said to Israel, This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing.

Now choose life so that you and your children may live. That covenant with its blessings and cursings is the backdrop of much of what Isaiah has to say to us in this book.

Indeed, it's the backdrop of much of the message of all the prophets of the Old Testament. They come as enforcers of the covenant that God made with his people.

So God had chosen Israel to bear his name. He had chosen them to be his people. To have and obey his law. To be his witnesses to the nations.

Yes, to be his faithful bride. And the heavens and earth were there that day as witnesses at the altar.

[8:10] They saw Israel say, We will obey the Lord. We will be his people. And now, almost 700 years later, the same heavens and earth are being called again to be witnesses to Israel's present state.

How is this marriage going anyway between God and his people? And God's accusations reveal Judah's condition.

They were rebels against God and they're hurting because of it. Verse 2, Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the Lord has spoken.

I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. Five times in this opening chapter, God calls them rebels. I raised them up, but they've rebelled.

In other words, God knows the pain of parents who pour themselves out in caring for and bringing up their children only to have their children thank them by turning on them and rebelling against them.

[9:20] God knows all about that, He says. He had chosen Israel to be His own son. He had freed him from slavery in Egypt. He had brought him out with a mighty hand.

He had cared for him for 40 years in the wilderness. And Judah had responded to God's fatherly kindness by forsaking Him. By dissing Him.

Spurning the Holy One of Israel. By turning their backs on Him. Now, oxen and donkeys have never had the reputation of having the highest IQ among the animal kingdom.

Yet, even they are smart enough to know who their master is and where their food comes from. And that's why the ox never wanders far from the master.

Because he knows that in the master's manger will be his food. But God's children are dumber than an ox. Dumber than an ox.

[10:22] They don't get it. It's not only sad, but it's stupid to rebel against the very one who loves you and cares for you most. Your master.

Your father. Your heavenly loving father. So they're a sinful nation loaded with guilt. Children given to corruption and doing evil.

And now they're in a world of hurts because of it. You see, you can't spurn the Holy One of Israel and escape unscathed. You can't be in covenant with Him and just walk out on Him without feeling the consequences.

And so because they turned their back on God, they were now devastated under His judgments. The curses of the covenant were falling hard and fast upon them.

Their land, once flowing with milk and honey, verse 7 tells us, now lies deserted. Deserted and barren. Their cities, they're burned with fire.

[11:34] The fields, they're stripped and laid waste by foreigners. All which God had said He would do if they ever forsook Him in His covenant. And the breadth of this devastation of Judah is seen in that Jerusalem, verse 8, the daughter of Zion, is the only city that's left.

Like a flimsy shelter standing alone in a vineyard. Isn't that a good picture? The little lean-to that was put up for the watchmen to spend the night there so that nobody made off with the grapes during harvest.

Like a shelter. That's Jerusalem. This one little shelter in the midst of this vineyard. Like a solitary hut in a melon patch. Like a city under siege brought to the brink of despair.

And all of this is just the inevitable result of turning your back and walking out on God. They walked away from the One from whom all blessings flowed.

And so they're left now with His curses. Rebellious children get the rod. And that rod is meant to wake us up and to turn us and to make us truly wise and to return to our kind Heavenly Father.

[12:56] to forsake our ways and to embrace His ways. Now the fact that there was even one hut remaining in the land, the fact that Jerusalem still was standing was due to the Lord's merciful intervention.

Verse 9 he says, Unless the Lord Almighty had left us some survivors, we would have become like Sodom. We would have become like Gomorrah.

What happened to Sodom and Gomorrah? They were totally destroyed. There was nothing left but sulfuric dust and ashes.

That was it. And that's what Judah deserved for walking out on God and that's what would have happened to them had not God intervened mercifully and spared some survivors.

Now that's the first mention in the book about this remnant idea that's found throughout the book. That there were some survivors chosen by grace.

[14:02] All of them undeserving. But because God would be true to His promises to have a people for the display of His splendor. And through those people to bring forth a Savior, a Messiah who would bring salvation blessings to the ends of the earth.

You see, the only Savior of mankind was in that hut in the melon patch. The only Savior of mankind is in that solitary city.

That remnant. Those few survivors that were spared. What we saw last week was called the stump in the land and God was not about to let His promises of a coming Messiah go unfulfilled.

And so He spared a remnant. You know how He does it. Later on you'll see. He did it by not sparing His own son. He doesn't spare him that He might spare some survivors.

So rebellious Judah is taken to the woodshed. Now you might think that if a rebellious child is spanked hard enough and long enough that he would soon or that he would learn from it and change his ways.

[15:20] But not God's child Judah. That's the point He's making here. Not Judah. God had brought down the rod plenty of times but to no avail.

These rebellious children were almost beaten to death yet they will not turn from their sinful ways. They're stubbornly persistent in their rebellion even under the most painful judgments.

They're bloodied but still unbowed. Stiff-necked. They refuse to give it up. They're rebels beyond correction. In fact, the result of their beatings is that they only persist all the more in their rebellion. Do you know any kids who when they're spanked only get madder because of it? This is Judah under God's rod. And so Isaiah asked, why should you be beaten anymore?

Verse 5. And where would I beat you? I mean, it's like there's no more places to beat them. Verse 6. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head.

[16:28] There's no soundness. There's no healthy place to strike you. We've already struck there. And so now there is only wounds and welts and open sores not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil from foot to the top of your head.

What were those sores? It's the land devastated. It's the cities destroyed. It's the people sent away into exile or slaughtered. It's all that God is doing in pouring out His curses upon them for breaking the covenant with Him and forsaking Him.

The vitals of the nation, its whole head and heart, we're told, were injured and afflicted. So why then do you go on rebelling seeing it's only going to bring more beatings?

Sin is not only sad, it's stupid. It's stupid. It's stupid. And so we come to the first lesson that God is teaching us. Forsaking God is not good for you.

Pretty simple, isn't it? Forsaking God is not good for you. It's one of the recurring themes of God's covenant. Forsaking God brings destruction. Live in harmony with God and His laws and you'll be blessed.

[17:46] Forsake Him and His laws and you'll be cursed. Now that may seem simple, it may seem obvious, but it's a lesson that most people still don't get.

And even God's own children at times seem to have forgotten it. That forsaking God is not good for you. Most believe the lie that Satan told our first parents and told Eve in the Garden of Eden when he said, you mean you can't eat from all the trees in the garden?

You mean God's holding out on you? You mean He's holding something back from you? You see, God doesn't want you to experience what He experiences and what He knows. So, Eve, you've got to put it down right now that if you want the good life, the first thing that has to go is God and His commands.

And Eve and then Adam and then all of us since then have believed the lie and turned our backs on God in search of happiness.

It's found out there away from God and His commands. We all, like sheep, Isaiah says, have gone astray. Each of us has turned to His own way. We stray from God's way, gone to our way.

[19:07] And then, what did we find? What did Adam and Eve find when they rebelled and put their desires above God's law? Did they find the good life as Satan had promised?

Oh, look at the forlorn faces on Adam and Eve as they leave the Garden of Eden, driven out. As the children's catechism asks, what happened to Adam and Eve when they sinned?

Instead of being holy and happy, they became sinful and miserable. Oh, how miserable is life lived your way instead of God's way.

The short-lived pleasures of sin were soon replaced by its miserable consequences. And that's what Judah, the covenant people of God, are now coming to find as well.

Rebellion against God leads to destruction and misery. And though that is always true, even the people of God can sometimes forget it.

[20:16] So Isaiah is saying to this devastated nation, your sins have been your downfall. You're now beginning to reap what you've been sowing. Open your eyes, look around, take stock of yourself.

self. This is what you get for forsaking God. Now, what about you?

Do you believe the prophet's word that forsaking God is not good for you? Or do you think that you will be the one exception to this rule? You'll be the first human being who has ever found that you can turn your back on God and His ways and actually find the good life.

Blessedness, ultimate blessing apart from Him. You see, there's nothing that proves the blindness, the absolute utter depravity of man more than to miss the massive evidence from Eve right on up to today that keeps showing over and over that man who turns his back on God finds that it is hard.

The way of the transgressor is hard and it gets harder and it leads to hell. Judas, a picture of you and me, if we were just left to ourselves, our whole head and heart is affected and we would have continued going on our own way, chastened by God, disciplined and we would steal ourselves and pick up our bootstraps and keep going and somehow continue in our rebellion.

[22:04] Later in the book, Isaiah will show us that our only hope is in the servant of the Lord who stood in our place and was stricken, smitten and afflicted, who took upon himself our sins and then went to the place of punishment and he got the rod of God's wrath in our place and by his wounds

we are healed.

Strange medicine this, that our wounds and welts and open sores of sin and judgments from God would be healed by the wounding of the suffering servant.

Are you continuing in any known sin? My friend, you're just asking for the rod and if you're a child of God, he will discipline you, Hebrews 12 tells us.

He will. He'll come after you. He won't let you go on in sin. If he does, you can know from that experience and that reality that you're no true son of God because he chastens everyone that he loves and he reproofs everyone that he accepts as a son.

Oh, we see Judah has rebelled against God and now they're hurting because of it. So that's God's assessment. That's the doctor looking the patient over and saying, this is what's wrong.

[23:32] This is the judge making his accusation. This is what's wrong with you. This is your sin, your guilt. You've forsaken me and so you are destroyed because of it.

But then it's as if Isaiah anticipates Judah's objection to these charges. What do you mean that we have forsaken the Lord, that we've walked out on him, that we've turned our back on him?

Well, we're still worshiping him. Look at all we do in our worship of him. And indeed they were very religious, prompt in attending all the worship services, bringing their many offerings, expensive ones, keeping up the temple sacrifices, celebrating all the religious feasts, the special meetings, and saying many prayers.

But what Isaiah shows us is that a people may be forsaking the Lord even while they are very religious. We shouldn't think, oh, Israel must have just quit all of her worship.

That would be to have a wrong idea of what it means to forsake the Lord. They've forsaken the Lord, but the religious machinery keeps on rolling. And so is Judah preening herself and trusting in all her religious activity.

[24:51] The Lord now shocks them with his own withering assessment of all that they do in worship. And so Isaiah starts by referring to them as Sodom and Gomorrah, calling them to hear God's word.

Now that would get your attention, wouldn't it? There were more flattering words to call Judah than Sodom or Gomorrah, but Isaiah knows that until they see the seriousness of their sin, they'll never come to God for cleansing.

So he calls them Sodom and Gomorrah and calls on them to hear. Verse 10, Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom. Listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah.

These two sections are connected. He has just finished the first section by telling them in verse 9, you are almost like Sodom and Gomorrah in their total destruction. You would have been like them, but God had a few survivors.

But now he says, Judah is Sodom and Gomorrah. You're not different from them, because you, like they, despise God's law.

[26:09] He calls them Sodom and Gomorrah. Now, it's a great understatement to say that God was not at all impressed with their religious life, with their many sacrifices, their offerings, their attendance at worship services, and their prayers.

What are they to me? God says. Let's add them up. Let's see what all this really is to me. I know what they are to you, but what are they to me? Well, I don't need them.

I have more than enough of them. I don't like them. In fact, I find no pleasure at all in them. I don't want them. Stop bringing them to me.

Keep your money. Keep your animals. I view your coming to worship services as trampling my courts, as ever so much shuffling of feet, of animals just desecrating the temple.

That's how I see your coming to worship. I didn't ask for this, this trampling of my courts. And I wish you would shut the lights off and leave. Go home.

[27:23] Your religion is detestable to me. I hate it with all my heart. Your meetings of worship are worse than worthless. They're evil assemblies. Positive evil is what they are.

And it's all become a burden to me. I'm tired of it. I can bear it no longer. So when you pray, I will ignore you.

Even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. I'll hide my eyes and plug my ears to your prayers. Wow.

What's the problem with their worship? Didn't God command them to do all these things? Yes, He did. Then what's wrong with it? Well, He tells them, because when you spread out your hands in

prayer to receive my blessing, they are full of blood.

The blood of your violent deeds, your oppression, maybe the hand that was a fist on Friday to smash the nose and wring blood out of your neighbor, is now being held up to God in prayer.

[28:36] Maybe it was the hand that drove the knife into some poor waylaid stranger to take his money. In one way or another, your hands are full of oppression of other people, and you cannot live that way and expect your voice to be heard on high.

Here we see the fatal flaw in all the religion. it was void of true devotion to God.

Later on in chapter 29, God is found complaining, these people come near to me with their mouth, and they honor me with their lips, but that faculty of devotion, their heart, it's far from me.

You see, that was the fatal flaw in their worship. And that heart's devotion to God is not proven by all the rigmarole of worship, the empty forms of religion, but it's proven by glad obedience to my commandments, a holy life.

That's how you prove your devotion to me. And that brings us to the second lesson in this passage, that religion that does not bring about a life of obedience to God is a farce.

[29:57] It's just a farce. Now, that's the conviction of Jesus himself who would say, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. And not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father who is in heaven.

It's the conviction of James that if anyone claims to be religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, his religion is worthless and he's deceived himself.

And it's the conviction of John that the man who says, I know him, but does not do what he commands is a liar and the truth is not in him. And Paul too speaks of those who have the forms of religion but deny the power of them.

There's no power of religion in their daily life. But oh, they've got all the forms in place. Now, that's what Isaiah is found saying here in his opening prophecy.

Religion that does not bring about a life of obedience to God is a farce. That was Judah. That was Judah. She had a great show of devotion to God in her worship.

[31:09] But not when they went home and had dealings as husband and wife and children and parent. Not when they went into the marketplace and had business dealings and were trying to rip each other off and take advantage of each other.

They were one thing in church and another thing at home and in the marketplace. It's the kind of religion that we call Sunday religion.

It only affects what they did in church. It doesn't inform and control their lives all week long. So in the worship services they gave their offerings, they prayed, they sang, they listened to the word, all confessing their devotion.

to the Lord. But the rest of the week they dishonor their mother and father. They lust, they lie, they kill, they cheat, they covet, proving that they are not devoted to the Lord, but that they have indeed forsaken the Lord and turn their back on Him.

You do to God what you do to His commands. They turn their back on His commands and God says, you can do that even in your worship and even while you worship. There was this disconnect between worship and work.

[32:38] One thing in worship, another thing at work. Between worship in the family, worship in finances, worship in what they did with their time, with their tongue. But if your heart was truly devoted to God, Isaiah is saying, it would be seen in your practical obedience to all His commands.

So God sees right through this and He says, it's a stench in my nostrils. It's not a sweet-smelling aroma that worship is supposed to be. It's nasty. I'm tired of it.

I'm disgusted. I wish it would all stop. I wish it would all And so until the heart is right toward God, until the heart bows before His will, all that we do in worship is just more rebellion, more religious rebellion, splendid sin.

Now, Judah needed to learn what the first king of Judah needed to learn. Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord?

To obey is better than sacrifice. Saul, you don't get it. Judah, you don't get it. What I'm after is not blood of bulls and beasts.

[34:00] I'm after a broken and a contrite heart for your sin that comes and cast yourself upon my mercy with a holy resolve to go and sin no more.

well, Judah had made their acts of worship a substitute for practical obedience to God, as if that's all God was after.

Just more sacrifices, thinking he ought to be pleased, while all the while neglecting the weightier matters of the law, which according to Jesus are justice, treating your neighbor in love, mercy, faithfulness.

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah. He preached to the same folks. In chapter 6, he says, what shall we bring before the Lord? What does the Lord require of us? Is it ten thousands of rivers of oil and blood, even the blood of my first one?

No, God doesn't. That's not what he's after. He's shown you, oh man, what it is the Lord requires, what it is that he's after. To act justly.

[35 : 20] You don't do that just in church, you do that out in the neighborhood, in your business dealings. To act justly, to love mercy, you do that at home, you do that with your enemies, you do that with people who harm you out there, and to walk humbly with your God.

That's what he's after. And that's where your devotion is truly seen. Think of it this way, that God sees your worship and my worship this morning as an extension of your heart and life.

That's how he evaluates it. He evaluates your worship today in the light of how you live the other six days. Your devotion in here is interpreted through the grid of your obedience out there.

God's love and love and devotion to God. That's the proof of your love and devotion to God.

It does not win his approval. Only the blood of Christ can do that. But it does prove your true love and that what you say in here is genuine.

[36 : 34] So Judah, who thought that God would be ever so pleased with their worship and ought to bless them for it, is told that all of her righteousness and all of her religion is as filthy rags. Rags.

Disgusting. Disgusting rags. Now, I say, how kind of God to expose their false hopes. Because this is what they were trusting in.

They trusted that their religion would save them from cursing. They trusted that their religion would win for them God's smile and favor and blessing.

And so the flood of God's wrath is coming. And they're holding on to their religion as if it were a life preserver. And God comes and shows them that it's really a weight that they're holding on to.

And it will sink them to the bottom in judgment. God is kind. Wake up, Judah. See that what you've pulled to your breast, your hope is a false hope.

[37 : 37] It's disgusting in my sight. Well, there's a lot of religion today that leaves hearts unchallenged and sinful behavior unchanged.

Many are happy to do church once a week, but not repent and change their sinful ways. So the prosecutor and judge has made his accusation.

There it is. There's the diagnosis. That's what's wrong. You've forsaken me. Yes, even with your worship, you still are forsaking me. And now we await the judgment.

Just as Isaiah, when he saw the Lord high and lifted up, saw his own uncleanness, he woe to me. I'm done. This is it. And we would think the same to be the case here for Judah.

But instead, Judah and we receive a gracious appeal. A call to repent and an invitation to receive forgiveness. So Isaiah is answering in verses 16 to 20.

[38 : 40] What will it take for both Judah and their worship to be acceptable in God's sight? And he tells them this is the remedy to our problem.

And in two words, it's repent and believe. But he gives it to them in short, staccato sentences and commandments. First of all, wash and make yourself clean.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded. Wash and make your remember, you've got blood guilt on your hands as you're praying. Wash, cleanse your hands and heart.

Well, how can you do that? How can you get something as vile in God's sight as the blood of murder and oppression off of your hands? How can you wash that off?

Not as easily as Pilate thought when he turned Jesus over to be crucified and he took water and he washed his hands in front of the crowd.

[39 : 41] I'm innocent of this man's blood, he said. It's now your responsibility. If only it was that easy. A little water, a little soap, my hands are clean of that blood.

A little baptism, a little church membership, my hands are clean. Look at them. Some ceremony of worship, some ritual. Jeremiah would later say to the same people, though you wash yourself with

lye and use much soap, the stain of your guilt is still before me, declares the Lord God. No, you cleanse yourself, not by any doings of yourself, but by coming and washing in that that only fountain that is open for sin and uncleanness. There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains. That's how you wash and make yourself clean. You come to Christ and receive his atonement as your only hope for you being acceptable in God's sight and for your worship as it was prayed this morning, being accepted in God's sight to the atoning blood of Jesus. That's the only way of cleansing that Isaiah knows about. That's what he had found when he saw his filthy. Ness, his filthy lips and and found that it was only through the atonement on the altar. [41 : 17] That his sin and guilt was removed. He's now calling his countrymen to the same. Fountain open for sin and uncleanness, wash and make yourself clean.

The blood of Jesus, God's son cleanses from every sin. So confess. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Confess your sin to God. Wash up. But more is required. Take your evil deeds out of my sight. Stop doing wrong and learn to do right.

Do you know there are many who are willing to confess their sins to God who are not willing to get rid of them. That won't do. Isaiah says.

Wash up and then take your evil deeds out of my sight. God says. Stop doing wrong. Learn to do right.

[42 : 19] There are those who want to continue on in their own sinful ways and yet be forgiven by God and have eternal life. So they think that if they do the rights of religion, if they practice enough church.

That they will be forgiven. They send it up all week. Go to confession. Confess to a priest. Receive absolution of sin.

Return home to send it up again. And then to go get that fix. In the confessional booth. And to go right on back to their sin.

No amount of religious activity will do them any good with such a heart towards God and his commandments. That's what. Judah needed to hear.

And, you know, there's a Protestant version of that that's just as damning. People that send it up all week and come to Protestant churches. Forgive me, Lord, with no intention of leaving their sin.

[43 : 18] And they run right back to it. But because I've said the prayer, walked the aisle, done the thing for cleansing that's supposed to be done, I'm clean.

I'm forgiven. No, you're not. Forgiveness is only granted to those who repent. Who stop doing wrong. Who take their evil deeds out of God's sight and learn to do right.

Repentance is not just confessing. It is confessing and forsaking. He who covers his sin will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will find mercy.

Proverbs 28, 13. Repentance is to stop doing wrong and to learn to do right. Repentance is stop dallying with sin and playing with it and start killing it.

Repentance is to stop lying and to start speaking the truth always to all people. Repentance is to stop stealing and to work with your own hands so that you'll have something to give to those in need.

[44 : 30] Repentance is to stop taking advantage of others and instead to seek justice, encourage the oppressed, defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow, quit using people, start serving people, start seeing the vulnerable and the helpless as God sees them, as God treated you when you were vulnerable and weak as a slave down in Egypt.

That's what it means to repent. It's a radical change of the mind, heart, will and life, forsaking the old way, your way, and embracing a whole new way of life, God's way.

That's repentance. And until you do so, your religion and all you do in God's name is detestable in His sight.

So here we stand under this instruction. Wash yourself. Cleanse yourself. Stop doing wrong. Start doing right.

Get rid of your evil. I can't do that. That's what the law is meant to teach you. Just try it sometime. And you will come and realize that you have no power, no ability.

[45 : 49] The responsibility is yours. You're being told to do this, but you have no power, ability to do it. And just as you are despairing of all hope within, the Lord says, come now, let us reason

together.

Come on. Come on. Right now. Don't linger any longer. Come right now. You come to me. The judge wants to have a talk with you. Let's reason this matter out together.

Let's talk about it. Let's look at the alternatives. Let's see what's best for you in this circumstance.

When did you last have a talk with God about your sin?

That's the call of the Lord. Come now. Let's reason together about this. Take a good look at yourself. Look what's happening.

Look what's happened to our relationship. Look what's happening to your relationships. Look what's happening in your life. Look what you're doing to my law. Let's just put it all out there. Let's talk about it.

[46 : 51] You and I. Amazing that God would want to speak to one of us. And He calls us so graciously.

Come on. Come on. Let's have a talk about this problem. And He says, with me all your sins can be forgiven.

I have a way to wash and cleanse you. And though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. And though they be red as crimson, they shall be like wool. I can do that.

The blood of Christ can cleanse from sins of deepest dye and remove the entire stain. Gone.

Forgotten. So here's your alternative. Let's talk it through.

19. If you're willing and obedient, then you will eat the best of the land. The promised land. You'll be able to stay and eat and enjoy the milk and honey of God's blessing upon you.

[47 : 50] If you're willing and obedient, you'll eat the best of the land. But if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.

There's a play on the word eat here. You either eat the best of the land or you will be eaten by the sword. So there's the alternatives.

The very outset of this commentary on the book of Isaiah, Derek Thomas says, unrepentant sinners will find no cause for joy in this book. Okay?

Chapter 1. We've got 66. Unrepentant sinners will find no cause for joy in this book. Boy, that's going to be a long study. But I want to tell you that if you are willing to repent, this book holds open, amazing possibilities and promises.

Is it not amazing that these rebellious children who turn their backs on God and threw Him the bone of their wretched worship, thinking that ought to please Him, that they are still being offered free forgiveness, full salvation, and a new life?

[49 : 13] Do you see God's heart in all of this? He does not want us to destroy ourselves. That's what they were doing. But He wants to impart His forgiveness and He will to all who abandon their trust in themselves, accept His free grace, and commit themselves to righteous living according to His ways.

So, which will it be for you, my friend? Come right now to Christ and He'll forgive all your sins through faith in the Son of God.

Turn from them, bring them to Christ to be set free, to be given a heart to hate them and to learn to do right. Come to Christ. Talk with Him. He wants to have a talk with you about this matter.

He is willing if you are. And if you come, He'll cleanse you. And He'll forgive your transgressions and remember them no more.

Let's sing that refrain from 465. 465. It's the very Word of God coming afresh to us. Have dealings with God. Talk to Him.

[50 : 23] Reason it out with Him right there in your seat. Accept His free salvation. Salvation. 465. Let's stand as we sing. Oh, Lord, it's You who call us to come to You and to reason it out with You concerning our problem.

We never would even know what our problem was if You not told us. We never would take the prescribed remedy unless You would give us such promises and work in our heart to return to You, to cast ourselves upon the promise.

Lord, we are amazed in this opening chapter of Isaiah at the greatness of Your wrath and judgment against sin. We're equally amazed at Your graciousness and willingness to forgive sin.

and we're amazed at what it cost You to be able to offer such forgiveness that You would wound Your own son that our wounds might be healed.

Oh, make Him more precious to us. Make us to go from this place not persisting in any rebellion to any of Your commands, but casting ourselves upon Your mercy to take again that free grace, full forgiveness for Jesus' sake and then to offer ourselves up.
[51:53] Here am I. Send me. Use me. We ask it in the name of Jesus. Amen.