

THE INVITATION TO CLEANSING

Key Verse: Isaiah 1:18

Key Thought: God wants to cleanse us whiter than snow!

The prophet Isaiah ministered during a turbulent time in Israel's history. The nation had abandoned the way of the Lord and were living in open sin and idolatry. The people were openly rebellious against the Lord. They refused to acknowledge God and, spiritually, they were not very wise. They had forsaken the Lord and had provoked Him to anger. They had refused to respond to the Lord's attempts at discipline. They were sick spiritually and they desperately needed help. Violence filled the whole land. In many ways, they had become as wicked as ancient Sodom and Gomorrah. Their religious services were an abomination to the Lord. The only thing that held the nation together was a small remnant of faithful Jews.

It sounds as though these events could have been lifted straight from the headlines of today's newspapers. We are in as bad of spiritual shape as ancient Israel was.

During this sad commentary, we see an amazing scene acted out. These people had been blessed by the Lord in many wonderful ways. Israel should have been seeking God and they should have been looking for ways to mend their relationship with Him. Instead of that, we see the Lord seeking His people and inviting them to make things right with Him. This fact underscores a truth we encounter throughout the pages of the Bible.

People will not seek the Lord until they are first sought by the Lord.
People will not love the Lord until they are first loved by the Lord,
1 John 4:19.

God always makes the first move in this thing called salvation.

After all, man is “*dead in trespasses and sins*” and cannot seek the Lord, *Ephesians 2:1*. Jesus came to the world for the sole purpose of “*seeking and saving that which was lost*”, *Luke 19:10*. I know that we want to elevate man in these days. No one wants to believe that man is totally depraved and cut off from God. Most folks hold to the idea that man contains within himself “*a spark of the divine*” and at some point, the good that is in man will begin to seek the good that is in God. The Bible is very clear in this matter. Man is a wicked sinner and there is not good in him at all, **Romans 3:10-18; 23**. Man will never come to God unless God first comes to man, **John 6:44**.

What we see in this passage are dirty, vile, wicked people who need to be cleansed. They are approached by the Lord and invited to come to Him for the cleansing they so desperately need. We can also see a principle that is still true today. God is still inviting dirty, sinful people to come to Him for the cleansing they need.

I want to take this passage today and point out the *principles* contained in *The Invitation to Cleansing*.

I. THE INTENSITY OF THIS INVITATION

The word “come” is an “imperative”. It is a command. God is reaching out to a wayward, sinful people and He is calling them back to Him. This is amazing because God knows how they have been living. He knows how they have treated His Law. He knows the wickedness and the depths of their sins. He knows how sinful they have become. Yet, He still loves them and reaches out to them in love, to extend grace and mercy to them, if they will repent.

The blessing in this verse is the fact that this invitation still stands! God knows all about the sins in your life and mine. He knows how far down into the cesspool of sin we have sunk.

He knows that we are wicked, evil and utterly depraved. Yet, He loves us, despite our sinful condition and He calls us to come to Him.

Listen to the Lord's voice as He calls lost people to come to Him.

***“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest.”***

Matthew 11:28

Have you heeded that invitation? Have you come to the Lord for the salvation you so desperately need? Have you received Jesus as your personal Savior?

God understood Israel's condition better than they did. They thought they were doing all right. They were playing on both sides of the fence, and they were happy. But God knew that they were in deep trouble, so He reached out to them to call them home.

The same is true in our lives as well. God knows our condition better than we do. You take that lost sinner. He thinks he is doing his own thing and living life on his own terms. He does not realize that he is nothing but a pawn in the devil's hand. He is being driven from sin to sin by forces that he cannot control,

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.”

Ephesians 2:1-3

God, however, knows the true nature of man's condition and God has moved to do something about it. When Jesus died on the cross, the door of salvation was opened, and now God invited all those trapped in sin to come.

II. THE IMMEDIACY OF THIS INVITATION

God's command is for them to come "*now*". There must be no delay! God could see what Israel could not see. He could see where their rebellion and sin were leading them. He could see the judgment that was about to fall upon them. He could see their condition and their condemnation! Based on what He could see, He presses them to make a change in their lives *now*.

It is the same with those who are not right with God today. All they can see is the next step that lies before them. All they can feel is the pleasure of their sins. All they can think about is the here and now. They give no thought to what is awaiting them down the road.

If wayward people could see down the road, what they would see would terrify them. If they could see what lies just around a few more bends in the road, they would repent of their sins and run to Jesus for cleansing.

That person who is lost would see an eternity in Hell. They would see themselves in a place of eternal torment, where they will forever be separated from family, friends, peace, hope and God. They would see themselves damned, doomed and destroyed in Hell,

“And the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.”

Revelation 14:11

That saved person who has walked away from God would see the scolding of God unleashed on his or her life, and they might even see themselves filling a premature grave. They would see the terrible consequences that are going to be suffered by their families because they refuse to get right with God.

God knows how bad it is going to get. He knows the pain and suffering that is coming. He knows about the judgment that is about to fall, so He calls the wayward ones to come to Him. He calls them to come now, without delay, for He knows that delay is dangerous.

If you are not right with God this day, the time to come to Him is now!

III. THE INTIMACY OF THIS INVITATION

The invitation is “*Come now, let us reason together*”. The phrase “*let us reason together*” is legal terminology. It means “let’s settle this matter before a court of law; let’s try our case in court”.

The people of Israel had broken their covenant with the Lord. They had failed to hold up their end of the contract and God has initiated legal proceedings against them. He is bringing them up on charges. He declared His case against them, (*v. 1-17*), and He now invited them to defend themselves. They are in serious trouble! God has the goods on them, and they are called to answer for their sins.

However, the phrase “*come now*” is an invitation for these people to “walk with the Lord”. He is not inviting them to a debate. He is not opening the matter up to negotiations. He is inviting them to come to His way of thinking. He is inviting them to agree with Him, giving them an opportunity to say, “You are right, and we are wrong. We are sorry and we are ready to go your way.”

He is offering them a chance to settle their case out of court. If they will be reasonable and honor their covenant with the Lord, He will drop the charges and restore them to a place of fellowship. If they will repent of their sins and change their ways, God will receive them and restore them.

This is an intimate invitation to Israel to change their ways and to get in line with God. He is saying, "Let's Walk together, and we can work this thing out." That is grace!

God's invitation to follow Him is still an intimate thing! God does not call groups to come to Him; He calls individuals to come to Him. His call is personal, individual and intimate. When He calls, He always points out the areas of disagreement and He invites the wayward one to come to a place of agreement with God. That is the very nature of Holy Spirit conviction,

"But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

John 16:7-13.

It is a very intimate thing.

People sometimes leave church saying, “That preacher was preaching to me! Who told him what I had been doing?” That is simply God trying to get your attention. The preacher doesn’t know anything about you at all; but God does! And He extends an intimate invitation to you to come to His way of thinking. He is offering you a chance to settle your case out of court. Because, you see, if your case ever goes to trial before Him, you will lose.

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15

Have you ever heard that intimate, individual call to come to Jesus for salvation? When that call came, did you respond by coming to God? Have you settled your case out of court? It’s not too late! God is still inviting wayward souls to come to Him and to His way of thinking. If you come, He will receive you and save your soul!

IV. THE INCREDIBILITY OF THIS INVITATION

God’s promise to Israel, if they will come to Him, is that all their sins will be washed away. *Verse 15* tells us that their hands are stained with blood. They are dirty and unclean in the sight of the Lord.

But, if they will just come to Him, and heed His invitation, He will cleanse them completely.

The words “*scarlet*” and “*crimson*” refer to dye that was extracted from both shellfish and a certain type of insect. When white garments were dyed with these colors, they could never be made white again. These colors were both colorfast and indelible. Once they were dyed no human means could ever return them to their pure state.

God describes the sins of Israel as being like a garment stained scarlet and crimson. They were dirty and nothing they could ever do would take the stain away. In ancient times once a garment was stained, it could never be made perfect again. Yet, if they would just respond to Him and repent of their sins, He had the power to make them “*whiter than snow*”, and as pure as “*wool*”. He had the ability to take the stain of their sin away and make them clean again!

Their rituals would not make them clean. Their religious observances would not make them clean. The only hope these people had was to accept the Lord’s invitation. If they would just do that, He would make the stain of their sin disappear forever!

This invitation still stands! There is nothing you can do to take away your sins. At best, you and I are dirty and filthy in the sight of the Lord,

***“All of us have become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;
we all shrivel up like a leaf,
and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”***

Isaiah 64:6

We cannot cleanse ourselves by religious deeds or rituals. When we try to erase our sins by our own efforts, all we succeed in doing is making the stain deeper!

But if we will listen to His call and come to Him by faith. God has the power to cleanse away forever the stain of our sins! He can take our sins and put them away from us as “*far as the east is from the west*”, **Psalms 103:12**. He is able to wash us in the precious blood of Jesus and declare us holy and clean! He can cleanse us from **all** sin, **1 John 1:7**. He is able to deliver us from condemnation and the threat of Hell we were under. He can make us perfectly, utterly, eternally clean, through the blood of His Son!

Do you know for sure that your sins have been washed away? When God looks down at you, does He see your sins, or does He see the righteousness of His precious Son?

In Closing, I want you to see that this is an incredible invitation! I remember the day when I heard Him call for me. He invited me to come over to His way of thinking. He promised me a cleansing, salvation and eternal life if I simply came to Him. My sins were so vile; I was headed to Hell, and I knew it, yet His invitation was so sweet that I had to answer it. I came to Jesus by faith, and I am saved today. My sins have been washed away and I am whiter than snow. Though I was dirty, vile and guilty, God has settled my case out of court, and I am saved today.

I am glad that I took advantage of His invitation. I am glad that He gave me the faith to say “**Yes!**” when He called. What about you? Have you heard Him calling you? What have you done about His invitation? Some of you have answered it and you are saved today. Some have heard Him calling you to come back to Him and you have answered that call and come back to Him. You have been restored.

Some of you can hear that call today. God is calling you to be saved right now. PLEASE heed the invitation and come to Him. Notice in *verses 19-20*. If the people came to God at His call, He promised to bless them. If they refused to come, then all they could expect was His judgment.

What will it be for you? The blessings of the Lord, or the all-consuming judgment of God? It all depends on what you do with the invitation.

If He is calling you, then you need to come. **Come today and settle your case with God out of court.** Get it settled now and never worry about it again!

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 am

Date: July 21/2024

After Service Song: Give Us Clean Hands