

## Isaiah 1:2-9

<sup>2</sup> Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: " I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me; <sup>3</sup> The ox knows its owner And the donkey its master's crib; *But* Israel does not know, My people do not consider." <sup>4</sup> Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward. <sup>5</sup> Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faints. <sup>6</sup> From the sole of the foot even to the head, *There is* no soundness in it, *But* wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; They have not been closed or bound up, Or soothed with ointment. <sup>7</sup> Your country *is* desolate, Your cities *are* burned with fire; Strangers devour your land in your presence; And *it is* desolate, as overthrown by strangers. <sup>8</sup> So the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, As a hut in a garden of cucumbers, As a besieged city. <sup>9</sup> Unless the LORD of hosts Had left to us a very small remnant, We would have become like Sodom, We would have been made like Gomorrah.

We ended with this verse two weeks ago.

**I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me**

The Bible is not a book that portrays people **pursuing God and truth** and God responding **by granting that truth** to them that they so desire. That is how we see ourselves. That is how the world sees itself. But that is not how God sees it. The perspective of the Bible is clear from cover to cover. It is a book about how men run from God and how God draws them back.

The default position is Adam's position. We sin, we run, we hide, we lie, we blame, we make excuses. We don't, by nature, often come clean. It usually takes something drastic before we will do that. We don't often see ourselves in absolute truth, the way that God sees us. Part of coming to Christ is the process of that very thing. We begin to see ourselves as rebellious children. We begin to see that our problem is us. It isn't God's fault that we run from Him. It is ours. Confession of sin is ultimately saying to God, "Yes, you are right about me. Yes, I agree this action is wrong and evil." It is truth in the inmost places.

In Isaiah, he was talking to a group of people who had been singled out by God. God had literally made them a nation. He had made them His children. He had nourished them for years. They all knew the manual. They all knew their history and were proud of it. They were God's people. They had been given the closest thing to a garden of Eden that this world avails. And how did this people respond?

Rebellion.

To rebel means to sin, but the sin involved is one of revolt or rebellion in nearly every case. It indicates rebellion against various parties

Complete Word Study Dictionary, The - The Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament.

This means that the sin is more than one done in ignorance. It is a sin that one knows is a sin. And it is not a single failure. It isn't even multiple failures.

Rebellion is the act of casting off the yoke of God. It is committing to a course that one knows is wrong. Christians can commit all kinds of sins when they fall into a weakness. It is awful the things we can do. But rebellion reaches the point where it says I don't care what God says. I am going to do what I want to do. And I am going to keep doing it as long as I like.

Not all sin is rebellion. And not all repentance is experienced the same way. We talked about that last week.

The people Isaiah was ministering to had rebelled. They knew what God said. They knew God meant it. But they had committed their lives in a different direction anyway. They were going to do what they wanted to do. They had thrown off the yoke of God.

This is where we start. This is the ministry that Isaiah was called to. He had a ministry to rebels. That is a very hard ministry.

But before we go too far, what about us? Are we rebels? Are we trying to cast off the yoke of God? As soon as we ask that question we move into our world of intentions. We think, no, I love God. I would not rebel against Him. But what about when He commands us? What about when we know what is wrong but think the decision doesn't matter? A rebel says, I don't care what God says about this specific instance in my life, I am going to do what I feel like doing. I am going to do what I feel compelled to do. I am going to do what I want to do.

Is that not rebellion? And what has God done to inspire that? He has taken care of us. He has provided for us. He has nurtured us. He has given us Bibles. He has given us freedom to worship Him. He has given us a body of believers. He has given us as many books and dvds as we may want. He has given us teachers. When God watches us live, when He watches as we decide what to do, is this His evaluation of us? Would He describe some of our behavior as rebellion?

**I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me**

True faith does more than intend...it does! We must obey. We must respond as grateful children, not willful rebels. If intentional sin categorizes our days what we need is to repent. We must repent of our rebellion. We need to call it what it is so we can take the proper medicine. We need a change of mind that results in a change of direction.

Isaiah goes on making the same point.

<sup>3</sup> **The ox knows its owner And the donkey its master's crib; But Israel does not know, My people do not consider."**

Now, we need to remember here that these Judeans were proud of being Judeans. They saw themselves as being the ones who remained true to their Bible. They did not split from their worship in the true Temple that God had commanded. They didn't split like the rest of the northern tribes of Israel did. So these guys were the purists, the conservatives.

So they aren't going to take this insult from God lightly. But God was making it none the less.

The ox and the donkey aren't the geniuses of the animal kingdom. They aren't like porpoises or border collies. Isaiah's point is that these stupid animals show better sense than the Judeans. They at least recognize who it is that feeds them. They recognize where it is that they get fed. And they have some appreciation for it, some meager loyalty toward it.

But Judah on the other hand just doesn't get it.

The word for know is much like the English word for know. It is an understanding of facts as well as a relational connection. It is the most common word used for know in the OT.

The donkey knows more than Israel knows. It knows where it has it good. It knows who owns it. It knows where it gets its sustenance from.

The Israelites were turning to idol worship to get what it is they longed for. But aren't we too, much like these Israelites? Aren't we often like the stupid sheep, always looking at **what we wish we had** instead of thanking God for **what we do have?** How often is it that **what we need most** is a kick in the butt by someone who loves us, someone who will tell us to get our heads back on straight.

Someone who will tell us **where we have it good** and where we receive **the truly good stuff** from. Hollywood isn't going to tell us that. It is going to tell us that we are fools to put off any pleasure for eternity's sake. Our education system won't tell us. It will tell us about all the wonderful potential we have. The business world won't tell us. It will define us in terms of how much money we make. We need to hear the truth from our friends. We need to hear the truth from God's Word. We need to hear that where God placed us is good. What He has in store for us is good. The marriage relationships we are in is where we should stay. Any threat to leave them apart from clear instructions from God's word is an insult to the God that commands us. Our relationships with God and with His people are where we have it good. It is God that we get our sustenance from. It is He who owns us. It is He who has the right to use us as He wills.

When will we choose to believe that the Lord **really is my shepherd and as I follow Him I will not want for that which is most crucial to life.** He leads us to the stuff we really need. When will we choose to believe that? It will be obvious

when we do. We will learn to be satisfied **where we are** and **with what we have**. Our satisfaction is always found through trust in our Provider. If we are not satisfied with our situation at this current moment, and if that situation is not sinful, then we are **not satisfied** because we **do not trust our provider**. We can blame it on what we want. But that is the core of our discontent. And it is the solution to our discontent. Trust your Lord. Recognize where you have it good.

**<sup>4</sup> Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward.**

Hear as the prophet expresses God's emotion on the matter. He laments. He starts with "alas". This is a heartbreaking condition that is being portrayed. These people started as the children of God, dramatically called and dramatically sustained and protected over the years. They were called into a relationship with God superior to anything offered to any other people. And look at what they have become. Look how the children have grown up.

They are described as a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evil doers. He starts with them being **loved chosen children**. But this is what they have become by following their own plans, by forgetting who their Lord is, by forgetting where they have it good. They have pursued other ways of getting things that seemed to be good to them. And what are they now?

They are now a nation of people who are categorized by their sinful condition. They aren't holding out light to anyone. They are darkness walking.

Then the description goes further. They are laden with iniquity. Laden with iniquity. We are so slow to get this. Sin is sold as the freedom to please one's self. But sin is really the heavy weight that accompanies serving any God but King Jesus. Sin doesn't set us free. It just weighs us down. It doesn't matter how many times the world flaunts sin as being delightfully free of restraint. At the end of the day the weight of sin will crush most of the people who live to indulge their appetites. The weight of sin is too heavy for the human being to long endure it. It promises much but delivers little.

A brood of evil doers. These are offspring. We saw a nation, then a people, now a family. And what is this family producing? People who do evil. There is little that is more sad to a Christian parent to see his or her child living for themselves, living by their own rules, abandoning the teaching they were given. That is heart breaking. It is heart breaking to God to see the offspring of His people all turn out to be evil doers. What a terrible label- people who everything they do is evil.

**Children who are corrupters!**

The word for corrupters is A verb meaning to spoil, to ruin, to destroy, to pervert, to corrupt, to become corrupt, to wipe out. The verb is used to denote the action of the world and ultimately the reason for God's flooding it

Complete Word Study Dictionary, The - The Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament.

Look at the progression. First you have a nation that is sinful. Then that sin has weighed down the people with its heavy weight of oppression. Then the offspring are described as people who are continually doing evil things. But look at where it results. These people are no longer just experiencing sin, being oppressed by sin, committing sin knowingly, now they are spreading sin's influence. That was bound to happen. You cannot live in sin without spreading its influence. Anyone who follows you will follow your example more than your words. So these children were spreaders of this sin disease. They were spreading ruin, destruction, perversion just by living their lives. They were no longer victims of sin, they were no longer just participants of sin. Now they are evangelists of sin. We cannot play with sin. We can't trifle with it. Because it will not trifle with us. If you give it an inch it will take a mile. That is the nature of sin. Do anything you must do to see to it that you don't end up like these Judeans. This is a terrible pronouncement of their fallen state. From loved children to corrupters. Now, we have seen what happened to them. But what was the real problem behind their fall. Why did this happen?

**They have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward.**

What was the problem with the Lord's children? They had forsaken the Lord. That means that they had separated themselves from the Lord. They had abandoned Him. They had gone a different direction. They had left God. Nothing good will ever come of leaving God. It is almost a comedy to see how desperately our world wants joy, peace, protection, love, and the things that only God can offer but it has forsaken the only source of those things. Our world exhibits all the signs of frustration that comes from looking for love in all the wrong places.

Obama didn't provide it. Trump won't provide it. No government will or can. No matter how big of a wall we build to keep our enemies out, the enemies in our souls will sabotage every effort to **produce by idolatry** what only God can accomplish.

There are lots of sins. And those sins are a big deal. But there is no bigger deal than forsaking God. That robs us of all opportunity to get what it is we really want and need.

It goes on to say that they have turned away backward. When I looked at the Hebrew words what it looked like to me is that these people have gone astray as bad as is possible. They have turned aside in such a way that their back is toward God. They have made it impossible to see God or to know of His evaluation on their lives. They turned their back on God.

What a dangerous thing to do.

No wonder it says that they have provoked the anger of the Holy One of Israel. Suppose you are a parent. You feed and nurture your child. You try to teach that child. You do most everything right. And yet that child still tells you they want nothing to do with you. They reject your influence. They reject your way of life. They reject your provision. And the last thing you see is the back of their head when they leave you forever.

That is what this is describing. Along with sadness, would that not provoke anger even in us? We might second guess ourselves. We might focus on where we failed. But with God, He does not need to waste time in those exercises. He can receive the insult as it truly is. These people are evil fools who are rejecting God without cause.

What sin it is when we turn our back on God, even for a moment. He has given so much and He has paid so much to give it. How can we shut Him out to do our own thing, even for a second? God should never see the back of our heads in this sense. He should only ever see our faces looking to Him for all good things.

**<sup>5</sup> Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faints. <sup>6</sup> From the sole of the foot even to the head, *There is* no soundness in it, *But* wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; They have not been closed or bound up, Or soothed with ointment.**

Why should you be stricken again? What God is saying through Isaiah is, aren't you tired of the consequences yet? Aren't you tired of life apart from God yet? It is just beating you to a pulp. Is that what you want? Is running from God really that attractive to you?

I can't tell here if God is saying why should I bother to discipline you because it has no effect. Or if He is saying why do you keep choosing this path because it is only going to keep beating you up.

Either way, God knows what these people are going to do. They are going to keep doing what they are doing. They will revolt against God and they will keep revolting.

God gives us the assessment of these people. They have spiritual mental illness and heart disease. They are beat to a pulp. Sin has pounded them. And maybe **consequences God has added** have pounded them. From God's perspective they are like a person who has been beat up thoroughly and nothing good has been done to remedy it.

It is very likely that these people would not have described themselves as God describes them. Because they have turned their backs on God, they are no longer privy to His opinions about them. They are no longer reliant upon Doctor Jesus to diagnose and cure their ills. They no longer care about His assessment.

When we chose to live in sin this is our condition. Sick from head to foot. We may feel just fine. We may actually be proud of our lives. We may think we are doing wonderfully. But from where God sits, this is our diagnosis. Sick and sore. It also helps to know that this describes the world around us. We may look at evil people and think they have everything we want. But we do well to see their medical chart from God's perspective before we jump to that conclusion. He says, they are sick in the head. They are sick in the heart. Their whole medical condition from head to toe is compromised. They are not healthy and going down hill fast. They are full of open wounds and sores. And they aren't getting any better.

Think of that the next time you see the epitome of the world's famous stopping for a photo shoot at some event where they honor each other. You will never see the caption in any magazine that reads, "sick from head to toe." But that is God's assessment, none the less, unless they are living for Christ.

**<sup>7</sup> Your country *is* desolate, Your cities *are* burned with fire; Strangers devour your land in your presence; And *it is* desolate, as overthrown by strangers. <sup>8</sup> So the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, As a hut in a garden of cucumbers, As a besieged city. <sup>9</sup> Unless the LORD of hosts Had left to us a very small remnant, We would have become like Sodom, We would have been made like Gomorrah.**

This is probably not the literal situation yet for Judea, but it will be. God is telling them **what they are like internally** and secondly, what **life will actually be externally**. They think things are going fine. They are enjoying their sin. They don't feel like a person beat up from head to toe. They don't feel like they need a spiritual doctor. But they do. They just don't know it yet.

Now God tells them that they are like a country left desolate. That is their spiritual state. That is what they really are from God's perspective, no matter how good unemployment and the GNP are at the current moment.

Here are a people saying, we are fine. We are good. God is blessing us. All is well.

But God says, "Your country is desolate." There is no one left. All the cities you worked so hard to build and were the source of your security are burned to the ground. Look around and strangers have taken over. There are none of God's children here. The strangers have taken over. In fact, it is so bad the most secure place you have left is a shack in the middle of the field, the temporary shack you would use while doing your farming. That is now your home.

That is life apart from God. That is the church when the church turns its back on God. That is us when we turn our backs on God.

We are living in huts because we have abandoned our trust in God. We are watching as everything is being destroyed that matters. Then Isaiah says this:

**<sup>9</sup> Unless the LORD of hosts Had left to us a very small remnant, We would have become like Sodom, We would have been made like Gomorrah.**

Look at what this is saying. Isaiah is saying, "Do you know why we will survive?" "It is because God will reach out and save a very small remnant". By this statement Isaiah condemns mainstream religion. The masses won't cut it. Most people aren't going to make it. Everybody slapping themselves on the back about how wise and successful they are won't make the cut. The country will almost be wiped out like Sodom and Gomorrah. But not quite. God will call a people to Himself and He will save them. They will go against the current. They will not benefit by being mainstream. They may even suffer for their beliefs. But they will remain. They will be a remnant of the true pulled from out of the false.

This would have been hard for these guys to believe. Why shouldn't God save us all? We are good? That is what they think. But they refuse to see themselves the way God sees them.

I think we can make some good application from our text this morning.

It is dangerous and foolish to turn our backs on God, even for a moment. He is the source of all the good in our lives. None of the temptations laid in front of us are for something good. They lead to us being spiritually beat up and bruised from head to foot. They lead to us being like a city that has been ravaged and has nothing left to sustain us.

Why is that so hard for us to believe? Why is it so hard to believe that even when something is incredibly difficult for us to do, that if it has come from God's hands, it is worth doing. He will make it worth our while. Even when something is incredibly appealing to our flesh, it is worth resisting. Even when we feel like we need something that God says we cannot have, it is worth accepting the lack. How many examples do we need to see before we will say "Yes Lord" at the point of temptations? How many ruined cities and bruised bodies do we need to see before we will trust and obey?

We are always fools when we run from, disobey, or turn our backs on the one who Nourishes and Sustains and Brings up His children. Surely we are at least as smart as a donkey. What are we looking to provide something better for us than what God has for us? If we can find that seed in ourselves and tell the truth about it we will have gained a lot this morning. If we refuse to do business at this level, we will gain very little.