

BEING REASONED WITH

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: Isaiah 1: 12-20.

We can mistakenly think that spiritual things are too profound and mysterious to be capable of being putting into words. But God disagrees. He uses words and reasons with us. The Bible is a book full of words, God's Word, that reasons with us at every turn. It has proofs, principles, examples and descriptions, persuading us of the glory of God and persuading us of our need of salvation. He compels us to hear the truth and be reasoned with by Him. He does not speak to us in code or in riddles. His reasoning with us does not lack clarity but sets out to us clear choices and options. It is sin that objects to being reasoned with and is stubborn. So we have to be ready to be reasoned with and have a meek spirit.

1. There is something for the Christian to hear.

The passage in Isaiah 1 comes at a time when the spiritual life of Jerusalem was at a very low ebb. Verse 18 is a great call to us if we are not Christians to understand that we are sinners, and that we need to be cleansed and receive the righteousness of God. Sin's effects, like something stained red, is impossible to miss. It is so visible, and it is also the kind of stain that refuses to come out, despite our best efforts to scrub it clean. This is how our sin appears before the all-seeing, all-knowing eye of God. It cannot be overlooked. The consequences of our breaking the law cannot be ignored or passed over. They cannot be erased unless the Lord is willing that mercy should triumph over judgment. His mercy tempers the expression of His justice. His Son answers for our sin and, by the shedding His blood, gives us His righteousness. We then appear before God as white as snow or wool. We are converted by being reasoned with when we see the glory of the Son of God in giving Himself at the cross so that we can be forgiven.

But this reasoning is also something we need to keep applying to ourselves throughout our Christian life. We are apt to forget it.

2. Too good to be true?

The gospel means 'good news' but we sometimes forget this. What the Lord has shown us in the gospel of His Son proves to us that we are in a good place in His sight. It also tells us that the Lord is not going to vary the terms and condition, as if there was small

print that we had failed to see, and which will catch us out one day. It is the devil who invents ‘small print’ and tries to destroy what the Lord has shown us in the gospel.

The devil would try to persuade us that we are stupid and that we have not properly understood what the Lord has done. Yet see what it says in Romans 8: 31-34 and how the Lord reasons with us, as Christians, to show us that this salvation is complete and that there is no condemnation to fear. All our sins can be forgiven in Christ. This we also see in Psalm 103: 1-5.

Or the devil will tell us that we ought not to believe it is such good news because it will spoil us. He tells us we will become careless and not follow His laws. He makes us believe that the best motivation for holiness is fear. This is not true. Believing the good news is the best help that there is for holiness.

3. Do not lean on the devil for help.

Sometimes, as believers, we can unwittingly lean on the devil for help. He is not our advocate and our defence team, yet we end up employing him as such. We forget we already have an Advocate, our Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 John 2:1-2). But the devil reasons against us and takes what is white as snow or wool, and makes it scarlet and crimson again in our sight.

He enlists an over-sensitive conscience and invents stains that rob us of peace and leave us worrying that we are not really Christians. He creates fictional stains and then invents works to atone for them. He makes us, in effect, try to atone through works. This will leave us without joy or peace. He will make us mistake our guilty thoughts for piety, and reason with us that these are good signs. So we make a virtue of feeling guilty. We should not lean on the devil for help for he is a liar and no help to us. Sometimes we are relying upon him without even realising that we are.

4. Do not let the past hold you captive.

We should not allow the past to hold us captive and leave us feeling guilty all the time. If we are held by the past, it is again a place where the devil can work to rob us of assurance and joy. We are familiar with buildings having blue plaques where someone famous was born, lived, or died. We can be surrounded by red plaques where different places speak to us about our past sins, and send us back to those experiences whenever we see them again. This again can result in a loss of peace and assurance.

We should repent of past sins but then believe that, in the Lord’s sight, they are now white as snow or wool. We should not allow them to live with us and overpower us with feelings of guilt. The Lord would reason with us on the basis of the finished work of His Son on the cross. We should not be obstinate against what He has shown us and instead be reasoned with by Him.