

**Isaiah 1: 16-20; “Come now, Let us Reason”, Sermon # 1 in a series of sermons
entitled – “Filled with Christ’s Glory”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
On February 20th, 2021, in the Morning Worship Service.**

My thoughts turned to the book of Isaiah a few days ago as I thought of what I should preach to you this Sunday. I believe that it will be of benefit to us all to see how much of Christ is found in this book which was written 700 years before Christ was born. The glory of Christ and what He has done and will do for His Old Testament and New Testament saints is proclaimed to us here in these pages. You will find much prophecy in this book; both fulfilled and as of yet unfulfilled. In many of its chapters the prophecy alternates between God’s threatening to bring great judgments upon Israel, with His intention to eventually bring to them a Savior, Christ the Lord.

You will find as you read the book, that Christ’s kingdom is often prophesied about as well; the glory of His kingdom being seen among the nations of the world; His kingdom advancing to conquer among the nations of the world. This precious book of Isaiah tells us of many people coming to Christ during the latter day glory of the church. But you will also find many plain, straightforward gospel messages given by the prophet to the people of Israel, which are still applicable to all of us here today. The word of God, the Bible, both Old Testament and New, is the book of God, the book that He uses to speak to men by, in all generations, and therefore we should hear it today, so that each of us might be saved. God says – Come and let us reason together so that you might be saved.

Saved from what, you might ask? Saved from your sins, so that you will come to know God, and so you will learn to live in the right way before Him; to learn the right way in doing anything that you will do. The righteous person will spiritually live by their faith in God and the promises of His word. They will learn from having Christ in their heart, by His Spirit, teaching them. And so, today I would like to describe for you what it means to be saved from your sins; the things that God will do for you in salvation, and the things that you must do yourself, if you really want to come to know God and to have assurance that you have eternal life. I want to bring out 3 things to you, from this text, which will bring clarity to your mind and heart if you will receive what I say and act upon it.

1st of all – In order to be saved, you must wash yourself spiritually.

Verse 16 says – “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes.” Now, these people were the Old Testament people of God, the Jews, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and yet they had not paid attention to what God wanted them to do; how He wanted them to live. Out of all the people in the world, God had set his love upon them and called them to be His people. No other nation of the world did He do this for; He only did it for them, in these Old Testament times. And yet they did not live up to all of the great blessings and privileges that He gave them, but they sinned against Him in many ways. Sin is any transgression of God’s law. It is breaking or not keeping His commandments.

And what are His holy commandments? They are basically two; that you should love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. This means that you give yourself to thinking about God continually, thinking about His word to believe it and do it, and keep it in your heart so that you will become a righteous and holy person. That is the first and greatest commandment. And then you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The way that you want to be treated, you should treat other people. You should love them in that you truly care for their highest welfare, and you seek to do them good. You are kind to them, thoughtful concerning them, and you want to see them come to know God and follow Him for themselves. That is the duty of all men, in all times.

Those two great commandments, they sum up the Ten Commandments which God gave to Moses and all Israel on Mt. Sinai when they came out of Egypt. They were given to Israel, but

they were also given forever to all mankind, as the standard of what God requires from you and from every man. God expected, that since He had brought Israel out their bondage in Egypt, that they would trust in Him and obey His commandments because He was such a good God to them. He had revealed Himself and His truth to them. But they proved over many generations to be unfaithful to Him at many points. Some of them like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Joshua, and Samuel and David, did follow God by faith in His word, but many of them did not. And so, if you will turn a page back to the beginning of chapter 1, you see an amazing description of what their sins were, from God's standpoint.

Verses 2 and 3 of chapter 1 say – “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; the ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.’” Now, you must ask yourself, if you nourished and brought up children, and they rebelled against you; you had given them many good things and given them your understanding of how to live, what was right to do; that they should follow after your lead, and keep the good rules that you had given them, for their own good, as well as the good of all the people in the neighborhood, wouldn't you be grieved and disappointed? Well, in sinning against God, it is a really a much more serious thing than that.

Because, God is the One who has made you. He has made you for His glory, and His glory is very great. God's glory is the greatness of His excellent Being; that He Himself is Holy, separate from all sin; excellent beyond all created things because He is eternal, uncreated, infinitely Wise and Righteous and Good. He is the One who upholds and sustains all of His creation, each and every day in all of its particulars. He is pure and perfect Light. He is essentially Loving and Kind and Good in a multitude of ways; full of tender mercy to all who will call upon His name. But you will notice, that even though He was all of this to Israel, that they acted worse than an ox or a donkey towards Him. An ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel did not know or consider God; that is to really consider what He was like and how they were sinning against Him.

And so, it says in verse 4 – “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.” Now, we are told in other places of the Bible that God is a God who is slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness and truth. As God, He patiently watches to see if you are taking notice of Him, if you are really considering Him as you live your life. And if, after some time of looking at you, at what you are doing with your life, if He sees that you really do not care to get to know Him or consider what He requires of you, to turn back from your sins and seek His better way, then He brings His afflictions and judgments to bear upon your life.

God had done this with Israel, time and time again, but they had turned away backwards from Him. They did not seek Him to find Him. They did not turn from their sins and seek to know His will for their lives. And so He says to them in verses 5 and 6 – “Why should you be stricken again?” “You will revolt more and more.” “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints.” “From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in I, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment.” What a picture of sin this is! What a picture of man's total depravity.

When I say “total depravity” I do not mean to give you the impression that people are always as bad as they possibly could be. I mean to say that people are totally depraved in the sense of that every part of their nature has been affected by sin. The effects of sin are seen in every part of your nature; your mind, your affections and feelings, your will, and your conscience. They are all affected by the sin which resides there as king in your heart. So, by nature, without God giving you grace and having mercy on your soul, you will revolt more and more against Him in

your heart. When you sin against God you become guilty in His sight of those sins, and He must judge you for them. You rebel against His authority over You. You, by nature, do not want the knowledge of His ways. And why do you do these things? Because your whole head is sick, and your whole heart faints. That is, your whole being is affected by sin. Sin is in many of your thoughts; possibly even most of your thoughts. And so God tells you here, to wash. To wash is to cleanse the outer man, the get the dirt off of our body from what we have been doing, what we have been working at. Before we come to Christ, we work at sin. When we would find salvation, we must repent; we must wash ourselves and get rid of those sins that are making us unclean in God's sight. We must clean up our act before Him.

But when you start thinking about God and your need of Him, it is because He is striving with you to show you your need of Him. If the Spirit is working in your heart, you will awaken to fear God and His judgments which will keep coming to you, if you do not repent. You can wash yourself outwardly by repentance, but you cannot cleanse your own heart. Only God can do that. But He promises to do that for you if you will believe in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to what He promised that He would do for the Jews who would believe in Him. Hear these words, for this is also what He will do for you through the New Covenant of Christ's grace, which Christ died on the cross to bring to all sinners who will trust in Him for salvation.

Ezekiel 36: 24-27 – “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.” “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.” “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.” This is what God will do for the Jews someday in their conversion to Christ. But He can do this for you, even now; cleanse you from all of your filthiness and from all of your idols; completely change your life, and forgive you of all of your sins, take your stoney heart out of your flesh and give you a tender heart that wants to love Him and keep His commandments.

He will, when you believe in Jesus, give to you His Holy Spirit. He will teach you a New and Living Way; that is, that you will truly know God, and He will be in your life forever. God will deliver you from all of your fears of death and hell, and give you great joy and peace in believing in Him, in serving Him, in walking in His ways and doing His will. So, in order to be saved, you must wash and make yourself clean as to what you have been doing. But God alone can wash your heart. Only He can sprinkle clean water on You and wash your heart and plant the seed of righteousness there so that you will be clean inside. Once you believe in these promises of salvation, and you come to Christ, then you will have the responsibility to cleanse yourself from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2nd Corinthians 7: 1) But you will have Christ's help in this.

2nd – In order to have assurance you must cease to do evil and learn to do good.

Now, God knows all about your works, what you do with your time and your strength with your mind and body. He knows that which is either pleasing or displeasing to Him. And since it is true that He is the One who saves you from all of your sins, you have nothing to prove to Him concerning whether you are a Christian or not. He knows for sure whether you are a Christian or not. It says in 2nd Timothy chapter 2, and verse 19 – “Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His, and ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

So we see here that it is the duty of every Christian, and everyone who would be a true Christian, to depart from iniquity; to depart from every practice and habit of sin. You cease to do evil, and you learn to do good; you seek justice (doing what is right in every situation that you find yourself. If you can, you find ways to rebuke those are trying to oppress people around

them; trying to control others, those who are trying to force other people to do what they want them to do. We defend the fatherless, and we plead for the widow. All of those children, young people, and mothers and wives that need you to look out for their needs since they do not have a father and husband in their home. All this is done to the glory of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, who is at work in your heart and mind.

When you become a Christian, you come to find the blessed reality of the truth of Philippians chapter 2, verse 13, is very real. "It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to do for His good pleasure." God is at work in you. It is He who is giving you the wisdom and the strength to do what is right in accordance with the truth of the Bible. And He is at work in you to give you strength to do what is right in such a way that He will be pleased with it. When God is at work in you, then you begin to change for the better. You will come to know this for yourself. Other people around you will see it as well. The verse right after the one that I just quoted to you from Philippians 2, says this: "Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world."

That is the way that it is in the life of a Christian; their attitude towards loving other people around them, or despising them, changes. They begin to deliberately to cultivate, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the grace of love which is now in their heart. Once you might have been a person with a critical spirit, but now you are changing. Once you looked at people around you, not in a friendly way, but in a suspicious or skeptical way, but now, by grace, you are learning to pray for them, you are learning to be a good example to them. You once always thought that you knew better than other people. Perhaps you were a controlling person. You thought that other people needed to be brought into line with your own way of thinking about things.

Now, you are learning how to be patient and kind; and to thoughtfully ask questions of others. You begin to really think about what the person that you are talking to, is going through. What is their perspective? How can you help them in a righteous way? When you think back to the way that you were before you became a Christian, you now realize that were not a kind and loving person. You saw that you needed to repent of those bad attitudes. You believed in Christ. You called upon His name and you asked Him to come into your heart and clean up the mess of sin there. Now you are learning how much you need to be filled with the love of Christ. The Scripture says – "Be being filled with the Spirit." You now know that if you are filled with the Spirit you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. This is something that you are learning. You know that you need the filling of the Spirit in order to glorify God in the things that you say and do.

But as you begin to change you come now to have a greater assurance of your salvation. How so? You had assurance of faith when you believed in the Lord Jesus and His finished work on the cross. You have no doubts of the sufficiency of His death and the power of His resurrection to save you. But now you have come to have that assurance confirmed by His work in you. You know that you are a different person from what you used to be, and you know that it has not been by your simply trying to change yourself or your outward behavior that you have become a more righteous person. You have really ceased to do evil in your heart. Not perfectly, but you are learning. And the way that you know that you have ceased to evil is because you know that it has become your greatest desire to do good.

People around you begin to understand that you are a Christian by your love which you show to them. They see the fruit of God's working in you and they understand that you really care about them. You are loving them with a Christian love. But sometimes a Christian will not have full assurance of their salvation because they do not evidence the love of Christ to others around them. I need to tell you, that there are some people who have made their decision to believe in Christ, but they do not really want to change. They do not want to confess their sin and forsake

it, but they want to hold on to it. But I can assure you from the word of God that you cannot be a true Christian and live that way. You must come to hate all sin. Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” “And such were some of you.” “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

All things are lawful for you as a Christian, but not not all things are profitable. Not all things are helpful. (1st Corinthians 6: 9-12) “But I will not be brought under the power of any.” That is, anything that could possibly be construed as sin. Some Christian people do not understand that in order to have full assurance that you have to learn to put sin to death in your heart. You have to be willing to deal with that in order to be able to go on to do what God is expecting you to do in keeping all of His commandments. Some people believe that they are a Christian because they go to church and they participate in all the activities of worship and they are even glad to interact with God’s people. And yet something is still wrong with them.

The something that is wrong, is that they are not really having personal dealings with God in terms of their repenting of their sins and their praying to be able to love the brethren and people around them. Their Christianity is very much head knowledge and not very much heart knowledge. They have not really understood this principle of repenting in their hearts and cultivating the fruit of the Spirit. They do not quite see how important it is for them, as a Christian person, to cease to do evil and learn to do good. Let me ask you now, do you do the good works that you do, out of a thankful and loving heart toward God and the people that you are trying to minister to? Or is it a legal righteousness that you are cultivating?

You know that salvation is not by your good works. It comes from your believing in what Christ has done for you the sinner; that He obeyed God’s law perfectly on your behalf. And you know that He died for you on the cross for you as a substitutionary sacrifice in your place, when you believed in Him. But even though this is true, you may still not understand what it is in your life that needs to change. Look at the list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians chapter 5. Are those qualities of righteousness being lived out in your life? Things will really begin to change, because Christ’s Spirit has taken up residence in your heart.

This is what brings you assurance that you are a true Christian. It is that you know that the Holy Spirit is helping you in your heart now to do what is right, and to bring forth good works where before there were no good works, or they were dead works; those works that you try to do please God on your own, without Christ’s righteousness being applied to them. Good works are truly good works when you are in Christ. When you are outside of Christ, they cannot be accepted by God because your motivation for doing them is wrong. You are trying to justify yourself before God, or you are trying to look good in other people’s eyes. But you do not see how perfectly the Lord sees your heart, and all your motivations. Do you do everything that you do to God’s glory, and not your own? This is where the spiritual action is.

The proof that you are a true Christian will be seen by yourself and other people when you bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in your life. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against these there is no law. But have you crucified the flesh with its passions and desires? You will love other Christians and other people around you with the love of Christ when you act upon the love of God which has been poured out in your heart by the Holy Spirit who has been given to you. You are able to show love to others, believers and unbelievers also, because God first loved You.

3rd – If you want to have a good relationship with God you will learn to reason with Him. (verses 18-20)

“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” Sometimes Christians do not take God up on His offer to reason with them. Perhaps they have a faulty view of His omniscience; His knowing all things. They think something like this: Since God knows everything I think and all of the reasons for the things that I say and do, therefore I will not interact with Him over the great concerns of my mind and my heart. This is the wrong way to look at God’s knowledge and of your responsibility to Him. God wants to reason with you and you with Him.

God is looking for obedience from you. He is looking for obedience to all that He has commanded you in His word. Christ says that this is discipleship; teaching believers to observe all that He has commanded us, and lo, He is with us always, even till the end of the age. You say, I have sinned too greatly for God to even think of saving me. Perhaps, you as a believer are saying – I am too great a sinner for God to ever really use me in His service. Ah, listen to the reasoning of God: Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. It is the greatness of Christ’s sacrifice which makes that statement possible.

Perhaps you have committed sins which are very great before the Lord. Your sins are of the deepest dye. These stains upon your soul, these blemishes upon your character, can they really be made white as snow if they are now like scarlet? Can these be like wool if they are now crimson? The answer is: Yes they all can. How can that be? You must learn to reason with God over it. If God says that He can do it, He can do it! The way that He does it is always through Christ’s shedding His blood for you the sinner. And then He washes us from our sins by means of that blood. It seems a strange way to do things, does it not; to wash sins away with blood? But you must remember how God reasons; that the wages of sin is death. Someone whose life was of infinite value must die for your sins, shed His precious blood, so that those sins could be blotted out.

This is what Christ did on the cross. Christ’s sufferings and His blood are of infinite value, and accordingly, as they are applied by God to your soul, they have the greatest possible power to be able to wash our sins away. This is why there is great doxological praise offered up by the apostle John in Revelation 1, verse 5 – “To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.” “Amen.” This is why David, after he sinned with Bathsheba, in his penitential prayer in Psalm 51, verse 7 said – “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” “Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice.” “Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.”

You see, whatever sins you have committed, they can be forgiven and washed away by the blood of Christ, if you will simply come and interact with God over them. This is what it means to reason with God; not that you can change His mind about the greatness of your sins, but it is He who can change your mind over the greatness of the sacrifice of His Son on your behalf. May it be so, for each one here today. Let us remember this, and be happy when great sinners are brought to Christ. Let us not be like Jonah who reasoned that He knew better than God that the Ninevites should not be given grace to repent. He actually became angry that God showed them mercy and saved them. God had to ask him, when He (God) caused a plant to wither that He had caused to grow up over Jonah, to wilt: Is it right for you to be angry? Let us all be willing to reason with God over the greatness of our own sins, whether we are a believer, or an unbeliever.

