

Text— Isaiah 1:2-15

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Our sermon text is taken from the book of the prophet Isaiah, a man who preached the Word of God some sixty years. Isaiah's book opens with the following words: "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." (Isaiah 1:1) Hence, Isaiah prophesied during the reign of four different kings who ruled over the Israelite people of Judah.

Regarding king Ahaz, we learn in 2 Kings 16:2-4, "Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD his God, like David his father. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire [offered him as a burnt sacrifice], according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree." Thus, Ahaz was a wicked king whom the people of Judah by-and-large followed.

However, when Hezekiah became king he instituted some necessary reforms, for we read in 2 Kings 18:1-5, "Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did. He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan [meaning, a piece of brass]. He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him

was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him." Unfortunately, the people for the most part did not repent of their sins and hold fast to the Lord as did king Hezekiah. Our Scripture selection makes it clear that Judah continued on a downward course like Israel had done before them.

We have entered the Lenten season which is a time for penitential reflection; so, we can learn from the history of the Israelite people as our text informs us of:

"THE NEED FOR TRUE REPENTANCE"

With that as our theme may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) What widespread conditions indicate a need for true repentance
- 2) How the Lord responds to those who go through the motions of worship while lacking true repentance

-1-

Verse 2, ----- (Isaiah 1:2)

Think of it: the Lord had graciously chosen the children of Israel, the Hebrew people, to be His own. The Lord cared for His chosen people with a powerful hand and mighty miracles when He delivered them from bondage in Egypt, brought them into the promised land and gave it to them as He rendered them victorious over their enemies. The Lord provided His chosen people with an abundance of food and with defense against their enemies. The Lord gave His people a God-fearing king in the person of David, and subsequently in David's son, Solomon. But then, by the end of Solomon's reign the people began leave the Lord and take to the themselves the false gods of their pagan neighbors, for even, "Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father," reports 1 Kings 11:6.

After king Solomon's death, the children of Israel split into two groups known as the divided kingdom— the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah. Israel was pagan while for a time Judah remained faithful to the true God. Unfortunately, Judah eventually also drifted away from the true God for the most part, as is evident in our Scripture selection.

Consequently, our text opens with the following words: *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.* Indeed, the Lord was so gracious and merciful to the Hebrew people, making them His children and caring for them in many ways, and yet they rebelled against Him.

Romans 3:1-2 relates, "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." Yes, the Hebrew people were given God's Word, the Holy Scriptures. Furthermore, the apostle Paul writes in Romans 9:3-5, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." Think of it: the Messiah, Christ Jesus the Lord, came from the Hebrew people according to the flesh, for Jesus' mother Mary and foster-father Joseph were both descended from king David. Yet sadly, the Jewish people for the most part rejected the true God, which indicated a need for true repentance.

Now think about people in our own day— people who were brought-up in the Christian faith but have rejected it and turned their backs on the true God and His true Word. My friends, we read in Galatians 3:26-28, "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There

is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." But sadly, there are many believers who throw their faith in Christ away as they chase after false gods such as self, the things of this world, and man's science falsely-so-called. Yes, there are people "which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away," as Luke 8:13 reports. There is surely a need for true repentance!

Verse 3, ----- (Isaiah 1:3)

The beasts of burden have more sense than many people that have been blessed by God, for the Lord says: *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.* Israel, for the most part, threw the true God aside; and, many a person in our modern world has done likewise as they fail to really think, which indicates a need for true repentance.

Verse 4, ----- (Isaiah 1:4)

Notice the children of Israel were not only corrupt, they were corrupters— they continued to foster evil in forsaking the Lord, provoking the Lord to anger by their wickedness as they went backward to the way things were before the Lord had called them out of darkness to be His people. The people needed to truly repent.

Again, if we are honest we must see a parallel in the people of our own nation, for America was once a predominantly Christian nation, and yet we now see pagan religions flaunted and a fake Christianity pushed which condones and promotes all sorts of sin as if the Lord God is merely some sort of shy smiling being who approves of anything and everything. The people are gone away backward as the true God and His true Holy Word has been cast aside. True repentance is necessary!

Verses 5 & 6, ----- (Isaiah 1:5-6)

No matter what punishments the Lord brought upon the people, they failed to repent. Wars,

weather events, and plagues did not move the people to repent. Hence, the Lord compared the people of Judah to a sick and disgusting human body when He said: *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.* Yes, the ointment of God's Word was rejected by the majority of the people, despite the fact that men like Isaiah preached it. Oh, there was a dire need for true repentance.

Again, looking at modern-day America, and many within our country who call themselves Christians, what do we see? A lack of repentance, as so-called Christian churches promote the sins of gambling, homosexuality, lesbianism, lying and cheating. Even wild weather events and the plague of COVID have not brought people to their knees. Furthermore, the ointment of the true Word of God is not widely sought after or made use of. There is certainly a need for true repentance. And what about you and me? Do we always highly value the true God and His true Word? Do we gladly and regularly worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth? We certainly should, for Psalm 29:2 instructs: "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness."

Verses 7 & 8, -----. (Isaiah 1:7-8)

The country of Judah and its main city of Jerusalem had been invaded and burned by intruders. The once beautiful main city was nothing like it had been formerly, for the church of true believers was shrunken to but a few.

Our beloved America has lately been invaded, so to speak, by folks who have not come in legally but illegally. Wicked leaders have opened our nation wide to pagans, such as militant Muslims. In the past immigrants came into our country and were required to learn the English language and the

basic history of our nation and its laws; then, they became citizens. Nowadays, people come in and refuse to learn English as they cling to their native language, usually Spanish; consequently, we see dual language instructions on many products and on road-signs in various parts of the country. Legal citizens are often pushed aside as preference is given to illegals, and such things are done by politicians who smear the name of God on their actions. True Christians grow smaller and smaller in number. Thus, the need for true repentance is indicated.

Verse 9, -----. (Isaiah 1:9)

It was by God's grace alone that there was a small remnant of true believers remaining in Judah, for if the Lord had not preserved the faith of a few, the entire populace would have been destroyed as was Sodom and Gomorrah.

Likewise, it is by God's grace and mercy that there is yet a remnant of true Christians remaining in America, and the country has not yet been wiped out. Yes, fellow Christians, let us never forget the words of Lamentations 3:22, "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." There is certainly a need for true repentance in our day just as was necessary in Isaiah's day, for the same widespread conditions prevail now as did then.

We read in 1 John 1:5-9, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Let us therefore daily and sincerely repent of our sins, and let us place and keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord, for, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other

name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

-2-

As we ponder the remaining verses of our text, let us see how the Lord responds to those who go through the motions of worship while lacking true repentance.

Verse 10, -----. (Isaiah 1:10)

The Lord applies the label Sodom to Judah’s civil and religious rulers while applying the label Gomorrah to Judah’s people, for their sinfulness is extreme as was the sinfulness of those wicked cities upon which the Lord rained fire and brimstone . Yes, with the exception of a very small remnant of true believers, the rest of the people were hypocrites as will become more apparent as we continue with our text.

Verses 11 & 12, -----. (Isaiah 1:11-12)

The people multiplied animal sacrifices of all kinds as they made appearances in the Lord’s house in Jerusalem; however, what they did was just for show and without their hearts, as was plainly evident from their sinful manner of living.

The behavior of the hypocritical people in Judah is like that of many modern-day church-goers who put on a pious appearance on Sunday morning but live like the very devil the rest of the week. To such people the Lord says, as it were, I’ve had it up to the full with your phoney worship; I’m fed up with your lies, *who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?* Thus, the Lord responds with disgust toward impenitent hypocrites, for Psalm 51:17 declares, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” The Lord desires penitence from the heart, a heart that beats with true love for Him and His Word.

Verses 13 & 14, -----. (Isaiah 1:13-14)

Notice that the Lord was not duped by the people of Judah who were impenitent hypocrites going through the motions of worship while their hearts were far from the Lord. Empty sacrifices displeased the Lord, and the incense the people burned was an abomination to the Lord. All the supposed worship-days celebrated by the hypocrites the Lord hated and recognized as sinful. The feigned worship troubled the Lord and He was weary of bearing with it. Oh, the Lord is longsuffering, but He finally becomes very disgusted with those who go through the motions of worship while lacking true repentance. So it is today.

Look around in modern-day America and you see many church buildings, fancy edifices, in which weekly services are held. Nevertheless, the vast majority just make a show while the true God and His true Word is nowhere to be found in such places as the majority of people “will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts” they have heaped “to themselves teachers, having itching ears,” as 2 Timothy 4:3 foretold. However, we can be sure that the Lord is very disgusted with those who go through the motions of worship while lacking true repentance, for John 4:24 states in no uncertain terms, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” Hypocrisy does not impress the Lord. True repentance is necessary.

Verse 15, -----. (Isaiah 1:15)

Observe that the Lord would not hear the prayers of the impenitent people of Judah since their hands were full of blood— the blood of the true prophets whom they treated with contempt and frequently murdered. In Matthew 23:29-32 we read that Jesus said, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.” Hence, we

see that hypocrites often appear outwardly quite pious, and yet they hate God's truth and those who preach it; therefore, the Lord will not hear their prayers. Yes, to this very day, take it to heart that the Lord will not hear the prayers of hypocrites since they are unbelievers who fail to truly repent of their sins.

Indeed, the Lord responds to those who go through the motions of worship while lacking true repentance by being disgusted with such people, and by refusing to listen to their prayers, for prayer is an act of worship which must flow from a heart that trusts and confides in Christ Jesus as one's personal Savior and Lord, for Jesus promises in John 16:23, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."

Let us therefore daily and sincerely repent of our sins; let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord; and, let us go forward remembering the need for true repentance, genuine contrition and faith, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18) Amen.

m.e.l.