

Daily Devotional, August 22, 2020

'Does God's Message to you Fall on Deaf Ears?', (Isaiah 1:2, NKJV)

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth." (Isaiah 1:2, Cf. Isaiah 1:1-31)

Have you ever had the experience of trying to communicate a message to someone, but the message is only falling on deaf ears? If so, you can understand in a small way the frustration that God experiences when His people refuse to listen to Him. The Almighty cries, *"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth"* (1:2). Even the dumbest animals such as oxen and donkeys have natural instincts (1:3). Why then do men who possess spiritual as well as natural instincts not respond to the call of their Maker? The problem is stated in the text of Isaiah Chapter One. Those who do not respond to the voice of the Lord have sick and rebellious hearts (1:4-6).

In the first chapter of Isaiah, we are introduced to a major theme throughout Isaiah, that of *the "remnant"* (1:9). The biblical definition of a remnant is 'the people who remain faithful to the true God no matter what.' God always preserves His people and His word in difficult times through a remnant. There are many specific examples of the remnant theme in Scripture. The godly line from Adam was preserved through Seth, the human race was preserved through Noah, the seed of Abraham was preserved through Isaac and Jacob, and the Jews were preserved through Esther and Mordecai. Isaiah is replete with references to the faithful remnant. Are you part of God's remnant?

We then find a description of the spiritual state of Judah. The nation is offering the sacrifices commanded by God in the law, but they are useless without a heart commitment to Him. Well did David say, *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise"* (Psalm 51:17). Let us learn this lesson: Religion without reality is useless. Before we come to worship the Lord, let us examine our motives that our communion with Him might be real and our prayers effective (Matthew 6:1-4, 16-18; James 4:3). The one who seeks to follow Christ then receives nine instructions. *"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow"* (1:16-17). Those who have gone spiritually astray in their hearts are counseled to first seek spiritual cleansing. *"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (1:18). The agent of spiritual cleansing is nothing but the blood of Jesus, for *"without shedding of blood there is no remission"*, or forgiveness, of sin (Hebrews 9:22). We must first come to Christ for spiritual cleansing. Then and only then can we properly understand and obey the other seven injunctions.

In the close of the first chapter of Isaiah, we find a dire warning. Apparently many people in the nation of Judah were practicing blatant idolatry. The terebinth tree was

at the center of many idolatrous practices and rituals in Old Testament times. Those who participate in such false worship are warned that they are in danger of hellfire. Today, our idolatry is 'more sophisticated.' We put material things, our jobs, celebrities, and even our children, ahead of God. For the believer to place any or all of these things ahead of God is a violation of the First Commandment (Exodus 20:3). Trusting in these things for one's salvation brings us to the same end as those who trusted in the ancient rituals associated with the terebinth tree.

Finally, I ask you, 'Does God's message to you fall on deaf ears?'