

# An Appeal to a Christ-neglecting People

Isaiah 1:1-20

*Halifax: 15 February 2009*

## **Introduction**

Today we begin a new sermon series in the book of Isaiah.

- Isaiah is a very helpful book for us as heirs of the Protestant reformation living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
  - Let me explain.

Five centuries ago in the western branch of the world-wide church of Jesus Christ,

- a great division began to emerge...
  - On the one side, were those ministers and people who were being awakened to the miserable, Christ-neglecting condition into which the church had fallen...
    - They saw the idolatry, they saw the corruption of the leaders, they saw the ignorance of the people about the truth of God...
    - and like the prophets of old, they arose to protest the error and to seek the reformation of the church.
      - They wanted to reform the church according to the Word of God.
      - They wanted to follow the in the train of those before them in the church who had followed the scriptures.
  - On the other side, there were those who were not awakened to the corruptions.
    - Many of them were leaders in the church who actually benefited from the keeping the people in ignorance.
      - They would not even allow people to read the Bible.
      - They wanted everyone to suppose that salvation came from them rather than from Christ.
    - Instead of following those before them who followed the scriptures,
      - they appealed to the traditions of those who had deviated and claimed that they were the true church.
      - The corrupt pope was on their side because his wealth depended on the people's ignorance—
        - For example, as long as he could keep them believing they needed to pay to get people out of purgatory, the revenues would continue.
  - The result was, the church was divided in almost every western nation between the Protestant Reformers and the Papists or Roman Catholics.
    - Both parties claimed to be continuing the true apostolic church.

- The Protestant Reformers,
  - reforming the church according to Scripture, were able to lead many people back to the Lord Jesus Christ for life and salvation.
    - There was a reformation of doctrine and a reformation of life because many people began to turn to Christ.
    - The great majority of Christians in our city who are not Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox are heirs of the Protestant Reformation.
      - But sadly, in the last century or two, there has been a great turning away from Jesus Christ and His Word among Protestants.
      - We were given such marvellous privileges,
        - but we are turning away from our heritage.

In many ways, this is parallel to what had happened in Judah in the time of Isaiah the prophet.

- As it says in verse 1, he lived in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah which covered a period of 81 years from 767 to 686 BC.
  - Isaiah did not actively minister for 81 years, but began his ministry toward the end of Uzziah's day, and, if the traditions are correct,
    - he outlived Hezekiah and then was sawn in two by Hezekiah's son Manasseh, as an old man.
- But how were the people Isaiah ministered to like us, as Protestant Christians?
  - Well, if you have read the Old Testament, you know that in the days of David, there had been a great reformation.
    - Israel, under David's leadership and by God's grace, had returned as a nation to the true worship of God and to purity in doctrine.
    - Their faith and their morals had been reformed according to God's word.
    - They had returned to Jesus Christ as He was promised to them at that time.
  - But Israel did not continue in this reformation.
    - First, in the days of Rehoboam, David's grandson, there was a political division between Judah (David's tribe) and the ten tribes of Israel in the North.
      - After this, you had the southern kingdom called Judah or Jerusalem and the northern kingdom of the ten tribes called Israel or Samaria, or sometimes Ephraim because Ephraim was the principle tribe.
      - But after this division, Jeroboam stopped worshipping God at Jerusalem as He had commanded for political reasons and let the people into idolatry.

- His worship was very much like Roman Catholic Worship—it did not follow Scripture.
- So the division left Judah with scriptural worship, at least in form, and Israel with idolatrous worship, though still the worship of Jehovah.
- Judah was privileged to have Christ, the Promised One, revealed to her in her worship while He was obscured in Israel's worship.
  - but Judah began, like Protestants today, to squander her inheritance more and more...
  - She was neglecting Christ as He was revealed and turning from His way.
- In Isaiah's day, things had reached a crisis point...
  - God had brought judgement against Judah and had caused their enemies to overrun them to the point that they were reduced to a tiny remnant in Jerusalem.
  - Isaiah comes to them in these days to show Judah clearly that this is God's judgement and that it is going to get worse because of her impenitence,
    - He calls her to return to the Lord...
    - and he speaks comfort to those few who were still seeking the Lord,
      - assuring them that the Lord would not forsake them but would bring to them all that He had promised in time.
      - There would be captivity, but even though all that,
        - the Lord would preserve a remnant through whom the Messiah would come to bring salvation to the world.
        - The effect of Isaiah's ministry is to preserve the remnant through these difficult times.
- We are, it would seem, at a very similar time in our history as heirs of the Protestant Reformation.
  - We need to same rebukes and encouragements that Judah needed in Isaiah's Day.
    - We need to see how far we have departed—how we have squandered our inheritance...
    - We need to be earnestly called to return to the Lord...
    - And we need to be encouraged with the fact that even though the LORD may greatly reduce us, He will not forsake us but will bring to us all that He has spoken.
    - And of course for all we know, (unlike Isaiah), it may be that He will cause there be a great return to the LORD in our day.

- I think you will see as in the first chapter of Isaiah (where we begin today)
  - how relevant Isaiah's message is to us.
- It is a message to a Christ-neglecting people.
  - We will look first at how the Lord charges His Christ-neglecting people.
  - Then we will look at how the LORD graciously appeals to His Christ-rejecting people, even calling them to return.
  - We will look at the first 20 verses today.

TRANS> So first of all,

### **I. See how the Lord brings a charge against His Christ-rejecting People.**

- **For their wickedness (v. 2-4)**
- **for their incorrigibility (v. 5-9)**
- **and for the vanity of their worship (v. 10-15).**
- The charge opens with the words,
  - "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!"
  - The LORD is calling heaven and earth to bear witness against His people and against what they have done.
- This refers to back to the last days of Moses' ministry when,
  - just before his death, he had warned the people against departing from the LORD.
    - He had solemnly warned them that if they did depart, the Lord would bring His curses upon them as a judgement.
  - At that time, Moses had appealed to the heaven and the earth as witnesses...
    - Moses knew that in future days, Israel would depart from the Lord.
      - He knew that he would be gone when God's judgements fell upon them for their apostasy to remind them that he had duly warned them about all this...
      - But the heaven and earth would still be around, so he called them as witnesses!
    - This is what Moses said in Deuteronomy 31:28-29:
      - Deut 31:28-29: Gather to me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call heaven and earth to witness against them. For I know that after my death you will become utterly

corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands.

- Now, in this first chapter of Isaiah, Isaiah picks up on that.
  - He opens his book by appealing the heaven and earth as witnesses that Judah is experiencing the very curses that Moses had warned them about.
    - In His covenant, the LORD had faithfully warned His people and had admonished them...
    - Now they are experiencing the very calamities He had warned them about if they departed from Him!
      - They may not have remembered, but the heaven and earth would remember and would witness that it was so.
  - It should also be noted that by appealing to Moses for the foundation of his prophecies,
    - Isaiah shows that he is not bringing forth some new doctrine, but that he is, for all intents and purposes, an expounder of Moses as even the apostles themselves were.

TRANS> Well then, let's examine the three charges the Lord brings through Isaiah

A. First, see how the LORD charges His Christ-neglecting people for their wickedness.

- This charge is levelled against them in verses 2-4.
- 1. Their wickedness is seen primarily in that the LORD had been very gracious to them, even a Father, and they had turned away from Him.
  - a. He says,
    - "I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me."
  - 1) Oh brothers and sisters, just think what the Lord has done for us, His people!
    - He has adopted us as His very own children!
    - He has given us His Spirit and Word to nourish us so that we might know Him and learn to live in His house as His children.
    - He has promised us the full forgiveness of our sins through Jesus Christ.
    - He has separated us out from all the peoples of the earth for unspeakably marvellous blessing—
      - a life abounding with His grace!

- a life as His very own children, a people in whom He delights and who are a praise to Him in the earth!
- All this grace is held out to us in Jesus Christ...
    - We are called to look to Him and be saved!
    - Whenever we open our mouth wide to receive His grace, He fills us—fills us with treasures of grace beyond all that we could ask or think.
- 2) But look at what we have done in response to all this grace!
- What do His people do after years of being nourished and brought up by Him?
    - They rebel against Him!
      - “I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me.”
  - How could it be?
    - How could it be that we could ever rebel against such gracious treatment from the God before whom we deserve to die?
      - From the God who has adopted us and promised us an inheritance through Jesus Christ?
- b. Surely this is the very height of stupidity!
- 1) Even brute beasts show more sense—verse 4...
- “the ox knows its owner and the donkey its master’s crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not consider.”
  - Now from what I have been told, oxen and donkeys are not known for the intelligence...
    - but even they do not walk away from the one who feeds them!
    - Even they will not starve themselves in contempt of their master!
    - Even they know where to find the nourishment their master provides for them.
- 2) Here God has set before us Jesus Christ crucified in His crib—his feeding trough—for us...
- Jesus is the bread of God that gives life...
    - He is the fountain of life that in drinking, satisfies our thirst forever...
    - He is the word of life; the way, the truth and the life,
    - He is the door by which we enter and find life.
    - He is the One upon whom the whole church exists.

- And we do not recognise our Father's provision for us.
    - We do not come and feed upon the Father's provision...
    - We go to eat the corn cobs and the slop of this world!
      - We fill our hearts and minds with malice, fornication, and covetousness!
      - What fools we are!
2. See how the LORD justly describes such a people in verse 4!
- a. First, He fires off four ways they have abused their privileges!
- 1) By His grace, they would have been a **great** nation, but now they are a **sinful** nation...
    - The word **sin** here speaks of missing the mark—of coming short of what God called them to be.
    - Do you not see this in the church?
      - We are here for God's glory,
        - but instead we bring reproach upon the name of our Saviour...
        - we are no different in the way we speak, the way we run our businesses, in our integrity, in our love, even within our families....
      - We come short of the greatness to which God calls us.
  - 2) By His grace, they would have been His people, but now they are a people laden with iniquity...
    - The word **iniquity** speaks of crookedness and twistedness...
      - It could be used to refer to a crooked stick or a crooked road, but here it refers to crooked people.
    - Such a life begins to weigh you down with guilt...
      - It brings about fear and anxiety and depression.
      - Instead of being the people of God, we become a twisted people.
  - 3) By His grace, they would have been a holy seed, but instead they are a brood (or seed) of evildoers.
    - God designed that His covenant blessing should be imparted from one generation to the next...
      - I will bless you and your children, I will be God to you and to them.
      - They were to be nourished up in Jesus Christ from their youth.
    - But instead Judah has become a seed of evildoers...

- Instead of nourishing their children up in Christ, they were nourishing them up in evil—
    - they actually teach their children how to live in the covenant and all the while to neglect Jesus Christ!
  - Isn't this what we see today?
    - Whole generations growing up in the church and never even knowing the gospel!
    - To what depths we have fallen!
- 4) By His grace, they would have been children of edification, but instead they are children who are corruptors or destroyers...
- Listen, we are called to make disciples of the nations!
    - To tell them of Christ and to teach them all that He commanded...
    - We are also called to build one another up in the faith...
  - But what do we see instead?
    - We have become corruptors...
    - Do we not see protestant churches actually promoting every form of perversion?
  - They who might have benefited their brothers and sisters in the faith,
    - who might have encouraged them in God's ways...
    - who might have helped them to understand and follow...
    - instead spread corruption and lies...

TRANS> What wickedness it is to be so privileged...

- to be made a great nation, God's own people, a holy seed, and children of edification...
    - and for our neglect of Christ to become a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, and children who are corruptors!
- b. See how the Lord fires off three incredibly wicked things (unconscionable things) they have done in the second part of verse 4...
- 1) They have forsaken the LORD—
- imagine it—
    - He who adopted them—they abandoned Him.
  - Understand that in God's covenant, there are two ways that a person can be said to have forsaken the LORD...

- First, a regenerate person is said to forsake Him when that person turns away from following Him for a time—but if he is truly regenerate, he cannot utterly forsake Him.
- Second, a person who is in the covenant but is not regenerate is said to forsake Him because he has Christ outwardly and does not receive Him.
  - As a member of the church, Christ is His, but as an individual without faith, he forsakes Him.

TRANS> The charge that follows is not surprising!

2) They have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel...

- How could they not provoke Him, forsaking Him when He had been so merciful and gracious to them!
- It is one thing to provoke a recalcitrant, testy, grumpy one...
  - But they have provoked the Holy One of Israel!
  - The One who is pure and holy—in whom there is no corruption or defilement—the one who is slow to anger and plenteous in mercy.
  - No punishment could be too great for such persons!

3) Finally, He says that they have turned away backward...

- Indeed they have!
  - By Christ, they were set to go forward—to come to the Lord and to go forward as His people...
  - But they turned and went the other way.

TRANS> See how the LORD charges them with their wickedness!

- What could be worse than to be presented with Christ and to neglect Him!
  - To die when you were the people in all the earth who were called out to live!

B. Second, see how the LORD charges His Christ-neglecting people with incorrigibility.

- A person is said to be incorrigible when he will not be corrected...
  - An incorrigible child is one who is disciplined for the same thing over and over never learns...
- While the LORD might cut us off for our wickedness as soon as we stray from Him—for it is such a great wickedness to spurn His grace and His Son—instead He chastens us.

- He even continues His chastisement for generations, bearing long with us even after we have forsaken Him.
  - But if we receive this chastisement and still do not repent,
    - we add to our guilt even more!
      - That is what verses 5-9 are all about in Isaiah 1.
1. In verses 5 there is a frustration with Israel as God's incorrigible child...
    - He says,
      - "Why should you be stricken any more?"
    - In other words,
      - "Why don't you repent so we can end this series of one chastisement after another!"
      - In His great love for His people, the Lord has chastened them until they are black and blue all over—
        - there is hardly another place to strike them...
        - but still, they will not repent.
      - Instead they add to the guilt they already have by their incorrigibility—by their ongoing refusal to yield...
        - The LORD says, "You will revolt more and more."
        - Instead of the chastisement humbling and correcting them as chastisement is designed to do,
          - it makes them more and more stubborn and hardened!
  2. Isaiah describes how great their chastisement has been...
    - a. He speaks of the extent of it...how thorough and far reaching it has been!
      - 1) It has been brought against the leaders—
        - "The whole head is sick..."
        - The very leaders no longer have the joy of the Lord—they no longer have harmony in their communities...
        - The economy is in trouble.
      - 2) It has reached to the very heart—
        - "The whole heart faints..."
        - Everyone is restless and dissatisfied, full of fear and bitterness.
          - They sought pleasure, but they have reaped sorrow.

- 3) It has reached from the lowest to the highest members of the society...
  - “From the soul of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores.”
  - No one is exempted, from the poor to the rich, from the common man to the princes...
  
- b. Further, it is seen to be without remedy...
  - The end of verse 6 says the wounds and sores
    - “have not been closed or bound up or soothed with ointment.”
  - Because God’s people will not repent, they are never relieved!
    - Instead, one chastisement is added to another...
  
- c. And besides all this, God’s people are almost completely wiped out!
  - 1) Their enemies have come in to overthrow them so that the picture is one of almost complete devastation...
    - Verse 7 describes Jerusalem as like a booth in a vineyard...
      - a hut such as was used during the harvest by the watchman as a makeshift temporary shelter.
      - In Isaiah’s day the cities of Judah were destroyed such that only Jerusalem remained.
    - Look, brothers and sisters,
      - look in our day at how the church of Jesus Christ has been reduced to a tiny remnant!
      - The great city of God has been reduced to near non-existence because of our unfaithfulness!
        - Many have been turned over to go in their own way...
        - They have been turned over to Satan.
        - They have been turned over to destruction.
    - Just look at all the churches where Christ and His glorious gospel used to be proclaimed...
      - where He was served and honoured and worshipped according to His commandments...
      - Where godliness flourished...
        - Now they are graveyards...
          - a barren wilderness with no life.
  
- 2) But look! There is still mercy!

- Verse 9 explains that even though they, by forsaking Christ, had become no different than Sodom and Gomorrah,
  - The Lord had preserved a people for Himself!
  - Now you know that Sodom and Gomorrah were those wicked cities that the Lord completely wiped out in the day of Abraham.
- That is what God’s covenant people fully deserve—perhaps even more than Sodom and Gomorrah!
  - Jesus once told the Jews in His days that Sodom and Gomorrah would have repented if they had seen what Israel had seen!
  - But still, you see that verse 9 says the LORD has left a very small remnant in Judah.
- This was all His doing...
  - It was all of His grace to His covenant people that He had not utterly destroyed them.
  - He never utterly forsakes His people, but always retains a remnant according to the election of grace.
    - If you are in fact serving the Lord today,
      - that is the reason—
        - because **He** has kept you—
        - because **He** has preserved you.
      - If He had not, you too would have been cut off as a Christ-neglector.
    - But alas, what a small remnant remains!
      - Let us plead to God for mercy that He might increase us!
      - That many might return to Him who have foolishly forsaken Him!
      - That we might be humbled by His chastening hand.

TRANS> So you see how the Lord charges His people, first with wickedness in forsaking Him, and secondly with incorrigibleness for not responding to His correction.

C. Third, see how the LORD charges His Christ-neglecting people for their vain worship.

1. You can be sure that when His charge came,
  - there would have been many that would have taken refuge in the fact that *they* were still His worshippers.
    - a. In Isaiah’s day, they would have said,

- “We have not forsaken you.”
    - “**We** bring our sacrifices to your altar and **we** keep all the feast days and **we** make many prayers to you.”
  - And in our day, they would say,
    - “**We** have not forsaken you. **We** go to church and **we** sing praises to you and **we** have our devotions and **we** lift up many prayers to you.”
    - And of course every one finds something to boast in...
      - The ones who don’t go to church boast that they say their prayers at home...
      - and the ones who don’t say their prayers at home boast that they go to church from time to time...
      - and the ones who neither go to church or say prayers at home boast that they live a good honest life...
- b. But in verses 10-15, the LORD takes away this hypocritical refuge!
- 1) He shows them that He never asked Sodom and Gomorrah to offer sacrifices to Him,
    - and as we have seen, He considers Israel who forsakes Christ to be no better than Sodom and Gomorrah—perhaps even worse!
    - In verse 10, He addresses them as Sodom and Gomorrah.
      - and then He asks them why in the world they are offering all these sacrifices to him and keeping all these feasts!
      - Why would Sodom and Gomorrah do such a thing?
  - 2) They’ve got it all wrong!
    - a) God does not ask impenitent sinners to come into His courts with sacrifices!
      - He appointed sacrifices to be offered by those who had been redeemed!
      - Those who had come to Him for His salvation!
      - Those who were feeding upon Christ in order that they might live by His grace in communion with their heavenly Father.
    - b) The order that God established for Israel and for us was this...
      - (i) First redemption...by which we obtain forgiveness and new life from Jesus Christ.
      - (ii) Second, the moral law...by which we are told how to live in God’s house now that we are redeemed...

- (iii) And third, the ceremonies of worship... by which we give thanks to God for His grace to us and in which we look to Him for more grace to go on with Christ.
  - c) These worshippers of Sodom and Gomorrah—these Israelites who were no different than Sodom and Gomorrah—
    - were coming to Him as if He would accept them just because they were engaged in acts of worship!
    - They had neither been redeemed, nor were they observing His law.
2. The Lord tells them on no uncertain terms that He is not impressed with such worship!
- Rather, it is loathsome to Him—it is a weariness—it is only adding to their guilt!
  - a. At the end of verse 13, He tells them that He “cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting.”
    - The two simply do not go together!
      - How can they possibly come before Him to give thanks for His salvation when they do not even look to Him for His promised salvation?
      - How do you expect to be received if you come as one praising God for redemption when you haven’t even bothered to be redeemed?
      - It is all a great mockery!
    - You cannot come rightly before God unless you come in Jesus name...
      - as one who trusting in Him and has been redeemed by Him!
      - as one who has no pretence about your own righteousness, but who is resting in His righteousness alone for your acceptance with God.
      - Until your iniquity is cleansed by Christ,
        - your worship does nothing else but annoy the Lord.
  - b. The same is said in verse 15 about prayer...
    - How do you expect Him to hear your prayers if you come with blood-stained hands before Him?
      - Bloodstained hands are hands that have done violence...
      - If you come as one who commits acts of violence and you have never been washed of these sins, how can you expect to be received?
      - What are you going to ask for?
  - c. Oh but I tell you, this happens all the time!

- Just look around our city today and you will see many people enthusiastically worshipping Him who have no interest in His salvation...
  - They have no real desire for Jesus Christ...
  - They have no real interest in walking with the Lord during the week...
  - They are not abiding in Christ and living in the life that He gives to His own.
- No, they are feeding themselves at the devil's table...
  - They are filled with covetousness...
  - They are hungering for fornication and adultery...
  - They are not interested in following Christ and laying down their lives for Him and His people.
  - They are destitute of gratitude...
    - But at Christmas, there they are, trampling God's courts as His worshippers!
    - And there they are on Sunday, singing His praises and communing at His table as if they expect Him to receive them!
      - He hates it all!
      - He never commanded Sodom and Gomorrah to worship Him!

TRANS> And so you see what a serious charge the Lord brings against His people!

- As neglecters of Christ,
  - Their wickedness, incorrigibility, and offensive worship are all exposed...
  - But our gracious Lord does not leave it there!
    - No, not Him!

## **II. See how He graciously appeals to His Christ-neglecting People**

A. The solution is very simple.

- In verse 16-17 He essentially calls those who are neglecting Christ to come to Christ.
  - There are nine commands brought in rapid succession, and they all have to do with coming to Christ...
- 1. The first three are a call to come to Christ for cleansing...
  - He says:
    - v. 16: Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doing from before my eyes.

- Now how are you going to do this?
    - How are you going to put your sin away from God's eyes?
  - Well of course there is only one way to do it—
    - through the atonement that He provides...
    - For Israel, it was the atonement He had promised to provide that would take away their sins...
      - and for us it is the atonement that He has already provided...
      - Jesus Christ, the righteous one, who shed His blood for our sins on the cross.
  - There is no other way to cleanse yourself than by baptism in Him...
    - You can wash and scrub and scour all day long—you can do penance and whip yourself—
      - but until you have spent eternity in Hell, your sins will still be clinging to you.
      - They will pollute you and defile you until you come to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world...
        - He bore the pains of hell for His people on the cross...
        - God has provided Him for His people,
          - and it is the height of wickedness and folly to have Christ so near to you—held out to you in God's word...
            - and to avoid Him!
    - Come to Him and be cleansed!
2. Secondly, the LORD calls you to come to Christ to be changed...
- a. He says,
    - v. 16-17: "Cease to do evil, learn to do good;"
  - b. But how does one do that?
    - Well, you must be taught of God who, in teaching you, changes your heart.
    - It is by coming to the Lord who tells you that He will circumcise your heart and give you a heart of flesh...
      - He will baptise you with His Spirit and cause you to delight in His law from within so that you will walk in His ways.
      - He will raise you from the dead and cause you to live.

- This is not something you can do in your own strength!
    - No, you are dead, but Christ is held out to you!
      - God's promise in Christ is before you and He calls you to look to Him to be saved!
      - You are to feed upon His grace as the source of your constant strength—
        - You are to be looking to Him for the abundant life He promises...
          - to nourish you as a vine nourishes a branch...
          - to cause you to live by the same power that raised Him from the dead.
3. And thirdly, having had your heart changed, you are to actually begin to follow Him... everyday...
- a. This is brought out in the last four commandments—
    - Seek justice [what is right], rebuke the oppressor, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.
  - b. In other words, stop taking advantage of everyone you are able to take advantage of,
    - and start loving them instead!
    - The widow and the fatherless represent those who are weak and unable to defend themselves—
      - those you might have an opportunity to take advantage of...
    - But you are to follow Jesus Christ and love your neighbour as yourself!
      - He is the One who came to us when we were helpless and laid down His life for us!
      - He gave all for the weak and helpless, and He calls you to give all for the weak and helpless.
        - This is to happen in your home, in the work place, in the church, in the community!
          - You are to give your life for your neighbour!
            - You are to become a giver instead of a grabber!
            - You are to look for what you can do for others rather than for what you can get from others...
  - c. And this you will do if you have come to Jesus Christ for forgiveness and for new life...

- because this is the new life that He gives you...
- and because you will be so full of gratitude for what He has done for you that you will love others as He has loved you.

TRANS> Yes, the solution is very simple...

- If you have been neglecting God's provision in Jesus Christ,
  - Then stop neglecting it and receive Him at once!
    - Be washed, be forgiven, be changed—become alive in Jesus Christ.

B. In verse 18-20, the LORD shows you that it is the only reasonable thing to do!

1. In verse 18, it says,

- Isa 1:18: "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."
- Don't you see?
  - This is something the Lord does for those who come to Him!
  - You did not die on the cross—
    - You have no means by which you can wash the blood stains from your sins—the selfishness and the greediness and all the guilt that it has left behind.
- But even though you are stained with blood,
  - The LORD who is seen in a vision as seated on His throne with a garment as white as snow and with hair like pure wool is the one who redeems you.
  - He is the One who came into this world to shed His blood so you could be clothed with the white robes of His righteousness...
    - He is the one who washes away your sins.
      - Don't be so foolish as to go another day without it...
      - Don't be so foolish as to go sniffing around in the garbage bins of this world when you have a Saviour to feast upon!
        - Why would you have this Saviour and keep on neglecting Him?
        - Open your mouth wide to Him and He will fill you with the fullness of His salvation and blessing.

2. Verse 19-20 assure you that there are only two ways to go...

- a. Either you come willingly and obediently to Christ and eat the good of the land, or you go on refusing and rebelling and are devoured by the sword...

- Either you have life with God or you have death...
    - There is either a blessing or a curse.
  - It says:
    - Isa 1:19-20: 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.
- b. Now you need to understand that when it speaks of the land, of course it refers to the land that was promised to Israel in the Old Testament...
- but you need to understand what the significance of the land was!
    - All the nations had their lands!
    - But Israel had the land where God had chosen to make His abode.
      - When they were blessed in the land, they were blessed in happy communion with God as their God.
      - They had all good things from Him.
  - Now in those Old Testament days before the coming of Christ, this blessing was tied to the physical land of Palestine to a certain extent,
    - but even then not entirely so...
      - for when Israel was taken into exile, the remnant still had communion with God under His blessing even though the temple was destroyed and the they were taken from the Land...
        - They still had the essence of what was promised...
        - And they had the hope of the everlasting inheritance when they would at last be brought to live in God's presence more openly and more fully... forever and ever.
  - That is what it is all about to be blessed in the Land...
    - It is to live in God's presence and to behold His glory!
      - We, who live in the New Testament can do that much more than Israel ever could because we have a much fuller revelation of the glory of God in Jesus Christ!
      - We see much more of what God is like and we are brought much nearer to Him than they ever were.
        - We see His wisdom and His love revealed in Christ!
        - We see His purity and justice revealed in the cross!
        - We are given a greater measure of the Spirit than ever were.

- And so as their blessing was to walk with Christ as He was presented to them in the land...
  - our blessing is to walk with Christ as He is presented to us as crucified and raised to sit at God's right hand...
  - They fed upon Him in the land at the temple, and we feed upon Him at His table...
    - Oh brothers and sisters,
      - Don't be so foolish as to feed at the table of demons when you have Christ crucified so near to you!
  - God assures you that He is there, provided for you if you will have Him!
    - His mouth has spoken.
      - He has given you His promise.
    - Come to Him for life and live—live fully—live abundantly.
      - That is God's sure promise.
      - But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword of His wrath!