

WARM-UP

- What was the last invitation you received?
- Have you tried making dirty white shoes white again? Did it work?
- What is something you can't start the day without?

WORD *"Come now, 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 become like wool."* **ISAIAH 1:18**

(Read also **ISAIAH 1:1-17, 19-20.**)

If the book of Isaiah were a movie, then chapter 1, the opening act, would be a courtroom scene. God was presenting a case against the people He loves, and this was His charge: *They have rebelled against me* (Isaiah 1:2). To understand the gravity of this offense, it is important to know that there is a covenant relationship that exists between God and the people of Israel. The rituals mentioned in this chapter, like sacrificing burnt offerings and celebrating appointed feasts, were expressions of that covenant relationship. This is much like a promise given to someone as an expression of love, like a child's desire to honor his or her parents even in adulthood, or a husband's promise to be faithful to his wife as each year passes. Today, we will look at God's covenant relationship with His people and how His great faithfulness is revealed in spite of our unfaithfulness.

1 | God has a covenant with His people.

²Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD has spoken: "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. ³The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand."

ISAIAH 1:2-3

A covenant is an agreement made between two parties. One example of this is a marriage covenant, where two people vow to love each other for the rest of their lives. Any covenant demands faithfulness. God intentionally began a committed relationship with Israel, and Scripture reveals that God is continuously faithful to the people He loves. He initiated bringing them into a covenant relationship and has continued to shower them with His care and love. How have you seen God's love expressed toward you? How has He pursued you?

2 | God's people were unfaithful to the covenant.

*⁴Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged. ⁵Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. **ISAIAH 1:4-5***

In these verses, God calls out the unfaithfulness of His people. They had forsaken the LORD and rebelled against Him. Externally, they continued doing required acts of love, like bringing offerings and sacrifices, but there was no love for God in their hearts (Isaiah 1:11–14). Because of this, God declared that He hated the appointed feasts and couldn't

endure their assemblies. While acts of love for God are important, they become empty rituals if our hearts are far from Him. As a follower of Christ, when did you realize that God is after your heart and not what you can do for Him? How did this affect your relationship with God?

3 | God was inviting His people to return to Him.

“Come now, 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 become like wool.” ISAIAH 1:18

We see in this passage that God brought this case against His people not to cut His relationship with them, but to draw them closer to Him. He gives them the assurance that no matter how unfaithful they have been, He will wipe away all traces of their unfaithfulness and make them as *white as snow*. God is saying that He will still honor His part of the covenant, but He wants His people to repent and return to Him. In the same way, He is calling us to have a real relationship with Him, not an empty one masked by religiosity. Though we are unfaithful, He will remain faithful. How can we extend God’s invitation for people to draw closer to Him?

APPLICATION

- What is your response to the covenant God made with His people? What should your response be to His faithfulness?
- Are there empty rituals that you may be performing? How do you think this needs to change? Pray about what you can do differently to deepen your relationship with God.
- What can you do this week as an expression of your love for God? How can you help draw people back to a loving relationship with Him?

PRAYER

- Thank God for His covenant with His people and making a way to have a deep relationship with Him. Thank Him for His faithfulness in spite of our unfaithfulness.
- Ask God to reveal to you areas in your life where you may still be unfaithful to Him. Pray for His grace to remain faithful as you walk with Him every day.
- Acknowledge that without God, it is impossible for us to fix ourselves. Thank Him for His invitation to make our sins as white as snow, and for the opportunity to share this with others.



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