



Study 3 : "Why Do You Persist In Rebellion?"

(Isaiah 1:2-9, 16-20)

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BULLEEN BAPTIST CHURCH

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Introducing the Study

Paul sums up the position of EVERY person before God:

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. **Romans 3:23**

The Psalmist agrees:

The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside ... there is no one who does good, not even one. **Psalm 14:2-3** (quoted by Paul in Romans 3:10-12)

Given that we humans fail to live as God requires, it is no surprise to find that even those who were in a Covenant relationship to God as his people rebel against him or that the prophets' message includes judgement on them: For example, Isaiah:

The LORD has spoken: "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand."

Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him. **Isaiah 1:2-3**

A. ISAIAH'S QUESTION

Why do you persist in rebellion? **Isaiah 1:5**

A good question. Why is sinful behaviour so INGRAINED. Why is it, for example, that we need to spend so much time "educating" people to do right, but we need spend no time or effort teaching anyone about wrong?

Isaiah has already hinted at the answer: from the verses reproduced above, consider this phrase:

... children given to corruption... **from Isaiah 1:4**

Consider also this confession from King David:

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. **Psalm 51:5**

The Bible's answer to Isaiah's question is that our fallen human nature has a BIAS towards choosing the wrong. We all readily identify with Paul's dilemma:

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ... For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do. **from Romans 7:15-19**

Paul's conclusion is logical: I am ... a SLAVE to sin. **Romans 7:14**

B. THE NATURE OF GOD'S COVENANT RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL

Given that human sin is inevitable, what provision did God make for forgiveness under the Covenant he formed with ancient Israel?

1. A REMINDER FROM LAST WEEK

Last Study, we saw that there were 3 features of the Covenant agreement between God & ancient Israel. The 3rd feature was the promises made. By God, that he would honour & bless the Nation in a unique relationship. By the people that they would be faithful and obedient.

You have declared this day that the LORD is your God and that you will walk in his ways, that you will keep his decrees, commands and laws, and that you will obey him. **Deut26:17**

2. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PEOPLE'S PROMISE. Moses clearly unpacks the implications:

For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

But if... you are not obedient ... I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

Deut30:15-18

The promise is to be OBEDIENT.

The consequences of breaking the promise: JUDGEMENT

3. THE PROPHETS STRESS THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE COVENANT

Back to Isaiah Chapter 1 again. What does Isaiah call Israel to do in order to be restored?

Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.

"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 as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the LORD has spoken. **Isaiah 1:16-20**

These verses are often mistaken as an offer of FREE forgiveness.

When, in fact, they repeat the REQUIREMENT of the Covenant to be obedient.

Back to the question asked at the beginning of this section. What provision did God make under the Covenant for forgiveness - effectively, NONE! Why? Because if obedience is required, but sin is inevitable then forgiveness (on these grounds) is IMPOSSIBLE.

C. THE BASIS OF FORGIVENESS

1. THE LOVE OF GOD

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. ... It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realise it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them. **Hosea 11:1-4**

Disobedience means that God is no longer OBLIGATED by the Covenant.

It is only his COMPASSION that stays his hand in judgement.

My people are determined to turn from me ... "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? ... my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger.

Hosea 11:7-9

2. THE NEED TO REPENT

Return, faithless Israel, ... for I am merciful,' declares the LORD, 'I will not be angry forever. Only acknowledge your guilt - you have rebelled against the LORD your God, **Jer3:12-13**

3. THE FREE GIFT OF GOD'S GRACE

Say to (the Lord): "Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously." ... "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them." **Hosea 14:2-4**

4. KING DAVID'S INSIGHT

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. **Psalms 51:1-2**

The basis for David's request is not the Covenant, but God's CHARACTER

D. THE NEW TESTAMENT PARALLEL

no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. **Romans 3:20**

The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. **Gal.3:24**

You were dead in your transgressions and sins ... we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ ... For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith ... not by works ... **from Ephesians 2:1-9**