

Isaiah 1:16-20 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE
To go directly to that verse

Isaiah 1:1
Isaiah 1:2
Isaiah 1:3
Isaiah 1:4
Isaiah 1:5
Isaiah 1:6
Isaiah 1:7
Isaiah 1:8
Isaiah 1:9
Isaiah 1:10
Isaiah 1:11
Isaiah 1:12
Isaiah 1:13
Isaiah 1:14
Isaiah 1:15
Isaiah 1:16
Isaiah 1:17
Isaiah 1:18
Isaiah 1:19
Isaiah 1:20
Isaiah 1:21
Isaiah 1:22
Isaiah 1:23
Isaiah 1:24
Isaiah 1:25
Isaiah 1:26
Isaiah 1:27
Isaiah 1:28
Isaiah 1:29
Isaiah 1:30
Isaiah 1:31

Isaiah 1:16 **Wash** yourselves, **make** yourselves **clean**; **Remove** the **evil** of your **deeds** from My **sight** *. **Cease** to do **evil**.
([NASB: Lockman](#))

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): Wash you, be clean; remove your iniquities from your souls before mine eyes; cease from your iniquities;

Amplified: Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes! Cease to do evil, ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

NET: Wash! Cleanse yourselves! Remove your sinful deeds from my sight. Stop sinning! ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: wash, make yourselves clean. Take your wrong-doing out of my sight. Cease doing evil. ([NJB](#))

NLT: Wash yourselves and be clean! Let me no longer see your evil deeds. Give up your wicked ways. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: Wash ye, make ye pure, Turn aside the evil of your doings, from before Mine eyes, Cease to do evil, learn to do good.

Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;;

- Job 11:13,14; Psalms 26:6; Jeremiah 4:14; Acts 22:16; 2Corinthians 7:1; James 4:8; Revelation 7:14

In Isaiah 1:16, 17, 18, 19a Jehovah says that what Judah needed was not to continue to multiply sacrifices, prayers, etc, but a new heart which would be the source of new attitudes and new actions (toward evil, good, justice, ruthlessness, orphans, widows) that truly honor God. A broken and contrite heart (Ps 51:17) that yields its rights and will to the rights and will of the Most High God and brings forth fruit in keeping with such a change in thinking (repentance) is what constitutes real worship (real sacrifices, celebrations of feasts, prayers, etc) to God.

In Jeremiah we read a similar charge given to faithless, apostate Jerusalem (representative of all Judah)...

Jeremiah 4:14 **Wash** (Imperative mood - a command; Heb = **kabas** not **rahas** - it means to trample = this is how clothes were washed in ancient times) your heart from evil, O Jerusalem, that you may be saved. **How long will your wicked thoughts lodge within you?**

Comment: Application: Let us read that last phrase in Jer 4:14 again - may we allow the Holy Spirit to search our hearts (Ps 139:23, 24-note) **with this question. It is a good question to ponder periodically.** And praise God there is a perfect and perfectly thorough cleansing agent available - the blood of Jesus which will cleanse us from **ALL** unrighteous thoughts, words and deeds (1Jn 1:6, 7, 8, 9, cp Col 1:13-note; Acts 26:18, 1Pe 2:9-note; Ep 5:8-note, Ep 5:13-note, 1Th 5:5-note). It is good to take a bath (spiritually) each day beloved (cp Jn 13:10)!

Remove... cease - These verbs following **wash yourselves** make it clear that the washing Jehovah is calling for is a spiritual cleansing from the filth and stain of sin.

Wash (07364) (**rahas**) means washing as with water to make clean. God commands them to carry out this action, speaking of course of making themselves spiritually clean. **Rahas** was used of ritual washings and therefore most of the uses are in Leviticus, for example as when...

Moses had Aaron and his sons come near, and **washed** them with water. (Leviticus 8:6)

Rahas - 71v in OT - Ge 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; 43:24, 31; Exod. 2:5; 29:4, 17; 30:18ff; 40:12, 30ff; Lev. 1:9, 13; 8:6, 21; 9:14; 14:8f; 15:5ff, 10f, 13, 16, 18, 21f, 27; 16:4, 24, 26, 28; 17:15f; 22:6; Num. 19:7f, 19; Deut. 21:6; 23:11; Jdg. 19:21; Ruth 3:3; 1 Sam. 25:41; 2 Sam. 11:2, 8; 12:20; 1 Ki. 22:38; 2 Ki. 5:10, 12f; 2 Chr. 4:6; Job 9:30; 29:6; Ps. 26:6; 58:10; 73:13; Pr 30:12; Song 5:3, 12; Isa. 1:16; 4:4; Ezek. 16:4, 9; 23:40.

The **NAS** render **rahas** as bathe(25), bathed(6), bathing(1), wash(24), washed(13), washed away(1), washing(2).

Rahas is used of literal washing as on that fateful night in King David's life...

2 Samuel 11:2 Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman **bathing**; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance.

And in Psalm 51:2 we hear King David's plea to God...

Wash (In the bold imperative mood of command! Heb = **kabas** not **rahas** - it means to trample = this is how clothes were washed in ancient times) me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin. (Ps 51:2)

Rahas is used by David in Psalm 26...

Psalm 26:6 (David declares) I shall **wash** (**rahas**) my hands in innocence, and I will go about Thine altar, O LORD

Spurgeon: I will wash mine hands in innocency. He would publicly avow himself to be altogether clear of the accusations laid against him, and if any fault in other matters could be truthfully alleged against him, he would for the future abstain from it. The washing of the hands is a significant action to set forth our having no connection with a deed, as we still say, "I wash my hands of the whole business." As to perfect innocence, David does not here claim it, but he avows his innocence of the crimes whereof he was slanderously accused;

there is, however, a sense in which we may be washed in absolute innocence, for the atoning blood makes us clean every whit. We ought never to rest satisfied short of a full persuasion of our complete cleansing by Jesus' precious blood.

So will I compass thine altar, O LORD. Priests unto God must take great care to be personally cleansed; the brazen laver was as needful as the golden altar; God's worship requires us to be holy in life. He who is unjust to man cannot be acceptably religious towards God. We must not bring our thank offerings with hands defiled with guilt (cp Mt 5:23, 24-note). To love justice and purity is far more acceptable to God, than ten thousands of the fat of fed beasts (cp Micah 6:8). We see from this verse that holy minds delight in the worship of the Lord, and find their sweetest solace at His altar; and that it is their deepest concern never to enter upon any course of action which would unfit them for the most sacred communion with God. Our eye must be upon the altar which sanctifies both the giver and the gift, yet we must never draw from the atoning sacrifice an excuse for sin, but rather find in it a most convincing argument for holiness. (The necessity of personal holiness in order to acceptable worship.)

Rahas is used in **Isaiah 4** where the prophet records...

When the Lord has **washed** (rahas) away the filth (Lxx = rupos = dirt, filth, used of sealing wax and even ear-wax!) of the daughters of Zion, and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning (Isa 4:4)

In **Proverbs** we see another use of **rahas** in the sense of spiritual washing...

There is a kind who is pure in his own eyes, yet is not **washed** (**rahas**) from his filthiness. (Pr 30:12)

Comment: The first phrase describes the self-righteous person, who like the Pharisees of Jesus' day were ostensibly clean on the outside like whitewashed tombs but inwardly they were full of moral, spiritual, and behavioral uncleanness. The KJV translates the Hebrew word "filthiness" as **dung** in 2Ki 18:27 and Isa 36:12! However it should be pointed out that the NAS uses a different Hebrew word [heres - 02716] in both instances.

Note that here in Isa 1:16 God commands the sinner to **wash**, whereas in Ezekiel 36:25, God speaks of cleansing that He will carry out. He alone is the only one Who can give the hard hearted sinner a new heart that desires to obey God. He is the only One Who can wash away our sins totally. As in so many places in Scripture, we see this mysterious, transcendent truth of man's responsibility and God's sovereignty.

C H Spurgeon rightly observes that the command "**wash yourselves**"

is your duty. However, (in Ezek 36:25) you are told that the Lord will wash you and make you clean. This is your privilege. "**Ye are clean,**" said Christ to His disciples, "**through the word which I have spoken unto you**" (John 15:3). That is "**the washing of water by the word**" (Ephesians 5:26) of which Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus. The free-grace covenant runs like this: "**Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.**" The Lord sprinkles this "clean water" on the leprous and the polluted sinner, on the man who lies covered with his own blood, a filthy thing in the sight of God, and loathsome to Him (cp "your hands are covered with blood" Isa 1:15b). When God Himself says, "Ye shall be clean," I know that we are clean, for He is the best judge of true cleanliness. His pure and holy eyes detect every spot of sin and every latent trace of disease. Though it may be deep within the heart, He can spy it out; but He says, "I will sprinkle you, and you shall be clean." Then the Lord goes on (Ezek 36:25b) to enumerate that from which He will cleanse us: "**From all your idols, will I cleanse you.**" Is drink your idol? Is some lust of the flesh your idol? "Oh!" you say, "I cannot get rid of these things." No, but the Lord can cleanse you from them. Only come to Him, listen diligently to Him, trust Him, yield to Him, surrender yourself to Him, and He will dash your idols in pieces and tear them from their thrones. He will also cleanse you from whatever else there may be that is unmentionable: "**from all your filthiness,**" things not to be spoken of, not even to be mentioned, those things that are done in secret. "**I will cleanse you from them,**" says the Lord. I may be addressing somebody who, as he reads this, thinks that I am delusional. "Why," says he, "I am a filthy creature. I am a great sinner. Can God bless me?" Yes, He can bless even you. Such was the case of Colonel Gardiner. On the very night on which he had made an appointment to commit a filthy sin, Christ appeared to him, and he thought that he heard Him say, "I have done all this for you; will you never turn to Me?" At that moment he did turn to Jesus. He became noted as an eminent Christian man, more noted than he had formerly been as a debauched officer in the army. The Lord Jesus Christ still works these wonders of grace. He meets men often when they are desperately set on mischief, just as a horse that is rushing headlong into battle. Christ comes and lays His hand on the reins, turns the steed, and leads it back wherever He desires. Such is the power of His almighty love. I pray that He

will do the same for you, according to this wondrous promise: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." (from Grace, God's Unmerited Favor).

Make clean (02135) (**zakah**) means to be clean or to cleanse and is used primarily in a figurative sense in the OT (study the uses below).

Zakah - 8v in OT - Job 15:14; 25:4; Ps 51:4; 73:13; 119:9; Pr 20:9; Isa 1:16; Mic 6:11. The NAS renders zakah as blameless(1), clean(1), cleansed(1), justify(1), keep pure(1), kept pure(1), make clean(1), pure(1).

Job 25:4 "How then can a man be just with God? Or how can he be **clean (zakah)** who is born of woman?

Psalm 51:4 Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight, so that Thou art justified when Thou dost speak, and **blameless (zakah)** when Thou dost judge.

Spurgeon: Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned. The virus of sin lies in its opposition to God: the psalmist's sense of sin towards others rather tended to increase the force of this feeling of sin against God. All his wrong doing centered, culminated, and came to a climax, at the foot of the divine throne. To injure our fellow men is sin, mainly because in so doing we violate the law of God. The penitent's heart was so filled with a sense of the wrong done to the Lord Himself, that all other confession was swallowed up in a broken hearted acknowledgment of offence against Him.

And done this evil in Thy sight. To commit treason in the very court of the King and before His eye is impudence indeed: David felt that his sin was committed in all its filthiness while Jehovah Himself looked on (Pr 15:3, 5:21-note). None but a child of God cares for the eye of God, but where there is grace in the soul it reflects a fearful guilt upon every evil act, when we remember that the God whom we offend was present when the trespass was committed. That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. He could not present any argument against divine justice, if it proceeded at once to condemn him and punish him for his crime. His own confession, and the judge's own witness of the whole transaction, places the transgression beyond all question or debate; the iniquity was indisputably committed, and was unquestionably a foul wrong, and therefore the course of justice was clear and beyond all controversy.

Psalm 73:13 Surely in vain I have kept my heart **pure (zakah)**, and washed (**rahas**) my hands in innocence;

Spurgeon: Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain. Poor Asaph! he questions the value of holiness when its wages are paid in the coin of affliction. With no effect has he been sincere; no advantage has come to him through his purity, for the filthy hearted are exalted and fed on the fat of the land. Thus foolishly will the wisest of men argue, when faith is napping. Asaph was a seer, but he could not see when reason left him in the dark; even seers must have the sunlight of revealed truth to see by, or they grope like the blind. In the presence of temporal circumstances, the pure in heart may seem to have cleansed themselves altogether in vain, but we must not judge after the sight of the eyes.

And washed my hands in innocency. Asaph had been as careful of his hands as of his heart; he had guarded his outer as well as his inner life, and it was a bitter thought that all of this was useless, and left him in even a worse condition than foul handed, black hearted worldlings. Surely the horrible character of the conclusion must have helped to render it untenable; it could not be so while God was God. It smelt too strong of a lie to be tolerated long in the good man's soul; hence, in a verse or two, we see his mind turning in another direction.

Psalm 119:9 (**QUESTION**) How can a young man keep his way **pure (zakah)**? (**ANSWER**) By keeping it according to Thy word.

Spurgeon: When a godly man sues for a favour from God he should carefully use every means for obtaining it, and accordingly, as the Psalmist had asked to be preserved from wandering, he here shows us the holy precaution which he had taken to prevent his falling into sin.

Thy word have I hid in mine heart. His heart would be kept by the word because he kept the word in his heart. All that he had of the word written, and all that had been revealed to him by the voice of God, -- all, without exception, he had stored away in his affections, as a treasure to be preserved in a casket, or as a choice seed to be buried in a fruitful soil: what soil more fruitful than a renewed heart, wholly seeking the Lord? The word was God's own, and therefore precious to God's servant. **He did not wear a text on his heart as a charm, but he hid it in his heart as a rule.** He laid it up in the place of love and life, and it filled the chamber with sweetness and light. We must in this imitate David, copying his heart work as well as his

outward character. First, we must mind that what we believe is truly God's word; that being done, we must hide or treasure it each man for himself; and we must see that this is done, not as a mere feat of the memory, but as the joyful act of the affections.

That I might not sin against thee. Here was the object aimed at. As one has well said, -- **Here is the best thing -- "thy word"; hidden in the best place, -- "in my heart;" for the best of purposes, -- "that I might not sin against thee."** (Ps 119:11) This was done by the Psalmist with personal care, as a man carefully hides away his money when he fears thieves, -- in this case the thief dreaded was sin. Sinning "against God" is the believer's view of moral evil; other men care only when they offend against men. God's word is the best preventive against offending God, for it tells us his mind and will, and tends to bring our spirit into conformity with the divine Spirit. **No cure for sin in the life is equal to the word in the seat of life, which is the heart. There is no hiding from sin unless we hide the truth in our souls.**

A very pleasant variety of meaning is obtained by laying stress upon the words "thy" and "thee." He speaks to God, he loves the word because it is God's word, and he hates sin because it is sin against God himself. If he vexed others, he minded not so long as he did not offend his God. If we would not cause God displeasure we must treasure up his own word.

The personal way in which the man of God did this is also noteworthy: **With my whole heart have I sought thee.** (Ps 119:10) Whatever others might choose to do he had already made his choice and placed the Word in his innermost soul as his dearest delight, and however others might transgress, his aim was after holiness: **"That I might not sin against thee."** This was not what he purposed to do, but what he had already done: many are great at **promising**, but the Psalmist had been true in **performing**: hence he hoped to see a sure result. **When the word is hidden in the heart the life shall be hidden from sin.**

The parallelism between the second octave and the first is still continued. Psalms 119:3 speaks of doing no iniquity, while this verse treats of the method of not sinning. When we form an idea of a blessedly holy man (Psalms 119:3) it becomes us to make an earnest effort to attain unto the same sacred innocence and divine happiness, and this can only be through heart piety founded on the Scriptures.

Proverbs 20:9 Who can say, "I have cleansed my heart, I am pure (**zakah**) from my sin "? (**ANSWER?** no one in their own strength and merit!)

Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight

- Isa 55:6,7; Ezek 18:30,31; Zech 1:3,4; Mt 3:8; Ephesians 4:22, 23, 24; Titus 2:11, 12, 13, 14; 1Pe 2:1)

Seek (command to seek) the Lord while He may be found; **Call** (command to call) upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. (Isa 55:6,7)

"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct," declares the Lord God. **Repent** (command) and **turn away** (command) from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you. 31 **Cast away** (command) from you all your transgressions which you have committed and **make** (command) yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! (Ezek 11:19, 20, 36:26, 27, Jer 32:39, Ro 2:28, 29-note) For why will you die, O house of Israel? (Ezek 18:30, 31)

"Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, **Return** (command) to Me,' declares the Lord of hosts, 'that I may return to you,' says the Lord of hosts. 'Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "**Return** (command) now from your evil ways and from your evil deeds." ' But they did not listen or give heed to Me," declares the Lord.

Remove ([05493](#)) (**sur**) means to turn away, desert, quit, stop, make depart. Here Jehovah commands them to get rid of evil.

This series of Hebrew verbal commands (**remove... cease... learn to do good**, etc) are in essence a call by Jehovah Himself to faithless Judah to **repent and believe and bear fruit in keeping with that repentance**, the same message proclaimed by John the Baptist and by our Lord Jesus Christ...

Repent, (present imperative = command) for the kingdom of heaven is at hand... 8 Therefore **bear** (command) fruit in keeping with repentance (Mt 3:2, 8, cp Acts 26:20)

From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "**Repent**, (present imperative = command) (cp Ro 2:4-note, Jesus declared = Lk 13:3,4, 5, 15:7, 10, 16:30, 24:46, 47, Acts 3:19, 20, 5:31, 8:22, 17:30, 31, 20:21, 2Co 7:9, 10, 11, 12:21, Re 2:21-note, 2Pe 3:9-note; just before the last 3.5 years of the Great Tribulation, God sends an angel with a message for the world - Re 14:6-note, Re 14:7-note) for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Mt 4:17, cp Jesus' call in Mk 1:1, 1:15, 6:12) (**Related Resource:** See word study on **metanoia = repentance**)

From My sight - All evil no matter how secret we might think it before men is open scandal in heaven for all sin is against God and blatantly in His line of sight (cp Ge 39:9, Neh 5:15, Ge 20:6, Nathan the prophet to David after sin with Bathsheba - 2Sa 12:9, 10, 11,12, 13, 14 then came David's cry of confession in Ps 51:4-note). This alone should cause us to be careful how we walk (cp Eph 5:15-note, 1Pe 1:17-note)

Cease to do evil:

- Psalm 34:14; 37:27; Amos 5:15; Romans 12:9; Ephesians 4:25, 26, 27, 28, 29; 1Peter 3:11

Cease (02308) (**chadal/hadal**) means in plain English to stop! God is not stuttering. The Greek verb **pauo** (also in the aorist imperative calling for obedience to this command immediately and completely!) also means to cause something to stop, to bring to an end. From other Scriptures (eg 1Jn 1:8) we know that God is not saying that we are to be perfect for that is not possible in this present life, even for saved individuals. But in context, He is saying stop committing the willful, rebellious transgressions that are outlined in this chapter (and representative of all rebellious acts against God's holiness).

Chadal/hadal - 53v in OT - Gen. 11:8; 18:11; 41:49; Exod. 9:29, 33f; 14:12; 23:5; Num. 9:13; Deut. 15:11; 23:22; Jdg. 5:6f; 9:9, 11, 13; 15:7; 20:28; Ruth 1:18; 1 Sam. 2:5; 9:5; 12:23; 23:13; 1 Ki. 15:21; 22:6, 15; 2 Chr. 16:5; 18:5, 14; 25:16; 35:21; Job 3:17; 7:16; 10:20; 14:6f; 16:6; 19:14; Ps. 36:3; 49:8; Prov. 10:19; 19:27; 23:4; Isa. 1:16; 2:22; 24:8; Jer. 40:4; 41:8; 44:18; 51:30; Ezek. 3:27; Amos 7:5; Zech. 11:12. The **NAS** renders **chadal/hadal** as cease(10), ceased(8), ceasing(1), deserted(1), fail(1), failed(1), gave up(1), hold back(1), leave(5), let alone(1), neglects(1), never mind(2), no(1), past(1), quit(1), refrain(6), refrained(1), refuse(1), regarding*(m)(1), rest(1), stop(4), stopped(4), stops(1), unavoidable*(1).

J C Ryle rightly says that genuine belief...will cost a man his sins. He must be willing to give up every habit and practice which is wrong in God's sight. He must set his face against it, quarrel with it, break off from it, fight with it, crucify it and labor to keep it under, whatever the world around him may say or think. He must do this honestly and fairly. There must be no separate truce with any special sin which he loves. He must count all sins as his deadly enemies and hate every false way. Whether little or great, whether open or secret, all his sins must be thoroughly renounced. They may struggle hard with him every day and sometimes almost get the mastery over him. But he must never give way to them. He must keep up a perpetual war with his sins. It is written, "Cast away from you all your transgressions." "Break off your sins... and iniquities." "Cease to do evil" (Ezek. 18:31; Da 4:27; Isa. 1:16). (J. C. Ryle. Holiness)

John Piper writes...These are the two great needs that we all have. The first is to be forgiven—to have all the violations and offenses and transgressions and disobedience and sins cancelled out. "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow!" (Isaiah 1:18). And the second need is to have God Himself come into our lives where sin once reigned. We need a personal relationship with God through his Spirit. We need wisdom and guidance and love and joy and peace and patience and goodness and self-control (cp Gal 5:22-note, Gal 5:23-note). And we need extraordinary power for the task of local and world evangelization. We need the gift of the Holy Spirit (cp Acts 10:38, Lk 4:14, 18, Isa 32:15, 44:3, Joel 2:28, 29, Jn 7:37, 38, 39, Lk 24:49, Acts 1:4, 8, Mt 10:20, Lk 12:12, Eph 3:16-note, Zech 4:6). (See full message [Repentance, Forgiveness, and the Gift of the Spirit](#)) (**Ed:** All Scripture cross references except Isa 1:18 added)

Walking on the Highway of Holiness

Isaiah 1:16, 17

Sinners are lost and in grave need to hear God's holy word that they might walk in His holy way and will and this section of Isaiah (Isa 1:16, 17, 18, 19, 20) is God's "GPS" ("Global Positioning Signal") "turned on" to guide all those who are spiritual wayward and lost onto the ancient path (Jer 6:16, 18:15), the highway of holiness (Isa 35:8, 30:21, 1Pe 1:15-note) on which the redeemed (Isa 1:27, 35:9) are privileged to walk in this life and eternally in that to come.

REPENT - "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes;"

REFRAIN - "cease to do evil;"

REEVALUATE - "Learn to do well; seek judgment,"

RELIEVE - "relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

WHAT'S RIGHT? - Read: Isaiah 1:11-18 Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor. - Isaiah 1:16-17

When my computer greeted me this morning with what is ominously referred to as "the blue screen of death," I knew it was broken, but I didn't know how to fix it. I read a little, tried a few things, but finally had to call an expert for help. Knowing that something was wrong was only a small part of the problem; I couldn't fix it because I didn't know the right thing to do. The ordeal reminded me of the many pundits who appear on television news programs. All of them are "experts" at proclaiming what's wrong, but most are clueless as to what is right. This happens in relationships as well. In families, churches, and workplaces, nothing gets fixed because we get fixated on what's wrong. It doesn't take an expert to know that something is wrong when people quarrel and hurt each other with unkind words and behavior. But it does take an expert to know how to fix the problem. God revealed to Israel's prophets not only what was wrong but also what was right: "Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isa.1:16,17). Instead of focusing on what is wrong, let's obey the One who knows what is right. - Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, grant me grace throughout this day
To walk the straight and narrow way,
To do whatever in Thy sight
Is good and perfect, just and right.
- Huisman

LIKE A COMPUTER, THE BIBLE ALWAYS POINTS YOU IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

Look What's For Dinner - Isaiah 1:10-20 - Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings. —Isaiah 1:16

A health teacher taught his students the importance of washing their hands before eating. He had them take scrapings from their fingers and put them in an environment that fosters the growth of bacteria. A few days later, they looked at the results through a microscope. The students found critters from their fingers that could have made them sick if they had eaten them with their dinner.

Many people who make sure they wash their hands before they eat are careless about a far more serious kind of contamination. They should heed the advice of Isaiah. He showed God's people the visible evidence of their evil condition. He pointed to their crumbling society and told them it was the result of their moral and spiritual pollution. They had lived for selfish rewards, ignored justice and mercy, and loved material possessions more than people. No wonder Isaiah exhorted them, "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean" (Isa. 1:16).

Behind Isaiah's words is the heavenly Father's love. Because God can see the danger of sin, He points to its visible, physical results. He pleads with us to be as careful with what we take into our hearts and minds as we are with what we put into our mouths. — Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, grant me grace throughout this day
To walk the straight and narrow way,
To do whatever in Your sight
Is good and perfect, just and right. —Huisman

Keep out of your life whatever keeps Christ out of your mind.

Isaiah 1:17 **Learn** to do good; **Seek** justice, **Reprove** the ruthless, **Defend** the orphan, **Plead** for the widow. (NASB: Lockman)

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): learn to do well; diligently seek judgement, deliver him that is suffering wrong, plead for the orphan, and obtain justice for the widow.

Amplified: Learn to do right! Seek justice, relieve the oppressed, and correct the oppressor. Defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

NET: Learn to do what is right! Promote justice! Give the oppressed reason to celebrate! Take up the cause of the orphan! Defend the rights of the widow! ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: Learn to do good, search for justice, discipline the violent, be just to the orphan, plead for the widow. ([NJB](#))

NLT: Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the orphan. Fight for the rights of widows. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: Seek judgment, make happy the oppressed, Judge the fatherless, strive for the widow.

Learn to do good; Seek justice Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow:

- Isa 1:23; Psalms 82:3,4; Proverbs 31:9; Jeremiah 22:3,15,16; Daniel 4:27; Micah 6:8; Zephaniah 2:3; Zechariah 7:9,10; 8:16)

These 5 staccato **commands** remind one of the beautiful passage in Micah...

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

Vance Havner has this to say about social work in the church (orphans, widows)...

In these days of social emphasis, we do well to remember that before God ordered His people to "... seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Is 1:17), He bade them, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well!" (Isa 1:16, 17). Social reform by an uncleansed and unconverted people is not the program of God.

What Is Heavy When Empty?- READ: Isaiah 1:1-17 --Learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. --Isaiah 1:17

After reading Isaiah 1, I thought of this riddle: What is heavy for God when it's empty for me?

Nothing is too hard for God to do, of course, but that doesn't mean that nothing is a burden to Him. In fact, one thing I sometimes take lightly is actually a heavy concern to God.

In the time of the prophet Isaiah, the Jewish people followed their religious celebrations to the letter. They showed up at the right time, sacrificed the right amount, and offered many prayers. But when they left the temple, it was as if they left God there.

Nearly 3,000 years later, not much has changed. Sometimes I think my responsibility to God begins and ends with going to church and giving an offering. But this attitude makes me more of a burden to God than a blessing. I'm not accomplishing the tasks that are important to Him—doing good, seeking justice, defending the fatherless, and pleading for widows (Isaiah 1:17).

God is not impressed with a full house at religious gatherings if the people come with empty hearts. God wants worshipers with hearts so full of love for Him that they overflow in good deeds for others.

Oh, are you still wondering what is heavy for God when it's empty for me? The answer is worship. — Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

My heart is filled, dear Lord, with love,
So let it show in words and deeds;
And help me share, in all my ways,
The overflow for others' needs. —Hess

The heart filled with praise brings pleasure to God.

Isaiah 1:18 "**Come now**, and let us **reason** together," **Says** the **LORD**, "**Though** your **sins** are as **scarlet**, they will be as **white** as **snow**; **Though** they are **red** like **crimson**, they will be like **wool**. (**NASB: Lockman**)

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): And come, let us reason together, saith the Lord: and though your sins be as purple, I will make them white as snow; and though they be as scarlet, I will make them white as wool.

Amplified: 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 like wool. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

NET: Come, let's consider your options," says the LORD. "Though your sins have stained you like the color red, you can become white like snow; though they are as easy to see as the color scarlet, you can become white like wool. ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: 'Come, let us talk this over,' says Yahweh. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. ([NJB](#))

NLT: "Come now, let us argue this out," says the LORD. "No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can remove it. I can make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you as white as wool. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: Come, I pray you, and we reason, saith Jehovah, If your sins are as scarlet, as snow they shall be white, If they are red as crimson, as wool they shall be!

Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool:

- Let us - Isa 41:21; 43:24, 25, 26; 1Sa 12:7; Jeremiah 2:5; Micah 6:2; Acts 17:2; 18:4; 24:25
- Isa 44:22; Psalm 51:7; Micah 7:18,19; Romans 5:20; Ephesians 1:6, 7, 8; Revelation 7:14

Come now - **Come** is a word of invitation. This invitation is from a King and given to helpless spiritual paupers in Judah (and by way of application to all men and women of all ages who are outside of Christ). It is notable that "Come" is one of our merciful God's favorite words. Yes, He uses the word "Depart" but that is not His favorite word. And so we see throughout Scriptures God's invitation to "Come"...

"**Come**, let us talk about these things. Though your sins are like scarlet, they can be as white as snow." (Isa 1:18)

"All you who are thirsty, **come** and drink." (Isa 55:1)

"**Come** to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest." (Mt 11:28)

"**Come** to the wedding feast." (Matthew 22:4)

"**Come** follow me, and I will make you fish for people." (Mark 1:17)

"Let anyone who is thirsty **come** to me and drink." (John 7:37)

THOUGHT - Dear reader, I must pause and ask you "Have you come? The King has given you a personal invitation, but you must accept? Have you accepted His gracious invitation to 'Come'?"

Let us reason together - God is imminently reasonable and here we see the tone is indeed one of reason rather than demand, for the righteous Judge is also a compassionate Father. The very fact that God would reason with sinners when they stray speaks volumes about His lovingkindnesses that are new every morning. Even in Isa 1:5, 6, one senses God's tone of sorrow for His children's sin, much as did the Lord Jesus centuries later as He looked over Jerusalem and wept...

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it! Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!'" (Lk 13:34, 35)

Scarlet... crimson -

There is a fountain filled with blood

Drawn from Emmanuel's veins.
And sinners plunged beneath the flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

Scarlet (towla') was the name for a worm in Hebrew. This particular worm was used in the making of red dye, and so it's often translated "scarlet". The **towla'** would attach itself to a tree as it prepared to lay its eggs, and in the process, the mother would die, leaving a red stain on the wood. Later, after the babies would hatch and leave, the red stain would dry up, turn white, and flake off the wood. In Psalm 22:6, an indisputably Messianic psalm, the Messiah cries out, "I am a worm" (towla'). The picture our humble Messiah presents parallels the worm's life cycle, for Jesus died on a cross of wood in the process of giving birth to us, leaving a bloody stain that turns our sins from scarlet to white as snow! This is surely amazing, utterly incomprehensible grace and love in action! O come let us adore Him!

Related Resource

- Psalm 22-6-I Am a Worm

White as snow - Speaks of total cleansing. God grants the repentant sinner amnesty as it were. He stays the execution and grants pardon to the guilty sinner, for another has paid the price to set the sinner free and allow the granting of "amnesty". The word amnesty is from the word from which we get amnesia which means to forget. What a beautiful picture this presents, for when the holy God washes away our unholy sins, they are completely forgotten. We're left whiter than snow, purer than wool.

The prophet **Micah** gives us a picture of the completeness of God's granting of "amnesty" and His "amnesia" regarding our sins asking...

Who is a God like Thee, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? (He is speaking to faithless Israel but this applies to all forgiven sinners) He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot (This prophecy will ultimately be fulfilled in the time of Jacob's distress, Jer 30:7, 8, also known as the Great Tribulation). Yes, Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:18, 19)

Later in **Isaiah** mortally ill King Hezekiah in his prayer to Jehovah says...

"Lo, for my own welfare I had great bitterness; It is Thou who hast kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, For Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back. (Isa 38:17)

Again in **Isaiah** God says...

"I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins. (Isa 43:25)

Comment: This verse is certainly one of the high points of God's grace in the OT. In spite of Israel's utter unworthiness, the Lord in His grace has devised a way that He can forgive their sins and grant righteousness (Isa 61:10), without compromising His holiness. This He would accomplish through the work of His Servant (Isa 53:6). In spite of her failures, Israel will always be God's chosen people.

The **psalmist** writes...

8 The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.

9 He will not always strive with us; Nor will He keep His anger forever.

10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

11 For **as high as the heavens** are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.

12 **As far as the east is from the west**, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. (One can travel east or west forever without coming to its end.)

13 Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. (Ps 103:8-13)

Peter preaching to the Jews shortly after Pentecost (he had drawn a crowd in the Temple area because God had granted him power to heal a man lame from birth, Ac 3:1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)...

"Repent" (aorist imperative = command to "Do this now!") therefore and **return** aorist imperative = command to

"Do this now!"), that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing (anapsuxis = recovery of breath, breathing again) may come from the presence of the Lord (this occurs when one believes but will be perfectly fulfilled when Christ returns) and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you (since Christ had already come the first time, this speaks of His Second Coming), (Acts 3:19, 20)

Comment: Luke presents a vivid word picture in this passages, for ancient writing was upon papyrus and the ink had no acid in it. It therefore did not bite into the papyrus like modern ink, but simply lay on top of it. To erase the writing a man simply **wiped it away** with a wet sponge; so God wipes out the sin of the forgiven man. Our scarlet, crimson sins are completely blotted out, erased, obliterated before the Almighty Holy God!

Finally **David** writes...

1 (A Psalm of David. A Maskil.) How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!

2 How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!

3 When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long.

4 For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.

5 I acknowledged my sin to Thee, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; And Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin. Selah.

6 Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they shall not reach him. (Ps 32:1-6)

How can God grant amnesty to guilty sinners (eg, 2Sa 12:13)? As Paul explains in one of the great passages of Scripture...

all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Ro 3:23, 24, 25, 26)

Illustration of White As Snow - During the late South African War I stood in one of our main thoroughfares watching a regiment of red-coated soldiers marching to the quay to embark for the front. A friend came up to me and asked me what color I thought their tunics were. "Why, red, to be sure," I replied. "Look through that," he said, handing me a bit of red glass. And to my amazement, when I looked through it, I saw a white-coated regiment pass before me! You look incredulous. It may seem improbable; but test it for yourself tomorrow. Get a piece of red cloth and view it through a red glass, and you will find the cloth becomes white. So with our sins. Though they are as scarlet, the red blood of Christ will make them white as snow. (Cyclopedia of Religious Anecdotes, compiled by James Gilchrist Lawson. Chicago: Revell, 1923)

With this new life comes forgiveness. If you could re-live your past, would you change some things? Would you avoid that tragic mistake, correct that regretted moment? Of course. None of us lives without regrets, yet we cannot go back and change the past. Hence, guilt. When Christ comes into our lives, the guilt is suddenly, completely, permanently removed, and we have a new beginning. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

In trying to convey the marvelous wonder of this forgiveness, the biblical writers strained to give us powerful images from the natural world:

- As great as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy—Ps 103:11
- As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us—Ps 103:12
- Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow—Is 1:18
- I have swept away your sins like the morning mists—Is 44:22 (NLT)

Suddenly, at the moment of conversion, your past was revisited, your record was expunged, your mistakes forgotten, your sin forgiven, your guilt removed, your record wiped clean, and your soul set free. It took a miracle to do that.

ILLUSTRATION: Bible commentators say that scarlet portrays sin, not only to denote its dreadful character, but also to emphasize its indelible nature. They tell us that you can immerse a cloth in any other color and the stain can be removed. Once red dye has

been thoroughly set in a piece of goods, however, no scientific method is known that can successfully eliminate it without damaging the fabric. Even if the material is rubbed and scrubbed until threadbare, the fibers that are left will still retain their crimson hue.

Sin is thus pictured as being indelible as far as human efforts to remove it are concerned. There is nothing man himself can do to change his evil nature and turn it into the white purity of holiness. God alone has the power to erase the terrible stain of our sin. Our Daily Bread ([NET Bible Sermon Illustrations](#))

Larry Richards explains that = Scarlet and crimson were shades of red drawn from the same source, the crushed body of an insect. Isaiah chose the image not because of the color, but because this was the most securely fixed dye then known. No launderer could remove that color from cloth. Isaiah thus says God can do the impossible and cleanse sinners, even though the stain of sin is fixed as firmly as crimson in the sinner's soul. (The Bible Readers Companion. Wheaton: Victor Books)

John Piper references this passage in describing what made him into one of the leading preachers in America...Learning the "Severe Discipline" of Reading the Bible - My debt at this point to Daniel Fuller is incalculable. He taught hermeneutics—the science of how to interpret the Bible. Not only did he introduce me to E. D. Hirsch and force me to read him with rigor, but he also taught me how to read the Bible with what Matthew Arnold called "severe discipline." He showed me the obvious: that the verses of the Bible are not strung pearls but links in a chain. The writers developed unified patterns of thought. They reasoned. "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord" (Isaiah 1:18). This meant that, in each paragraph of Scripture, one should ask how each part related to the other parts in order to say one coherent thing. Then the paragraphs should be related to each other in the same way. And then the chapters, then the books, and so on until the unity of the Bible is found on its own terms. I felt like my little brown path of life had entered an orchard, a vineyard, a garden with mind-blowing, heart-thrilling, life-changing fruit to be picked everywhere. Never had I seen so much truth and so much beauty condensed in so small a sphere. The Bible seemed to me then, and it seems today, inexhaustible. This is what I had dreamed about in the health center with mono, when God called me to the ministry of the Word. (Piper, J. [Don't Waste Your Life](#). Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books)

Illustration - Evangelist E. Howard Cadle (1884-1942), was converted from a debauched life through the power of Isaiah 1:18. He was the black sheep of four children in a Christian family who started drinking at age twelve. He became addicted to alcohol, gambling, and sexual adultery, becoming known as the "Slot Machine King" in much of the Midwest because of his gambling enterprises. He attempted to murder a man, only narrowly escaping the penitentiary. Broken in finances and health, he finally "hit bottom" and returned home and collapsed into his mother's arms, saying, "Mother I'm tired of sin. I've broken your heart, betrayed my wife, broken my marriage vows—I'd like to be saved, but I've sinned too much." His mother replied, "Son, I've prayed for 12 years to hear you say what you've just said." Getting out her Bible, she turned to **Isaiah 1:18**, and on that morning, March 14, 1914, E. Howard Cadle was converted. He later became a powerful and popular evangelist and radio preacher. (Morgan, R. J. Nelson's annual preacher's sourcebook : 2004 Edition. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Not Good Enough - READ: 1 Timothy 1:12-17 -- Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. —Isaiah 1:18

A friend told me recently of a young mother who was trying to explain her father's death to her 4-year-old. The girl wondered where Grandpa was. "I'm sure he's in heaven," the mother answered, "because he was very good." The girl replied sadly, "I guess I won't be in heaven." "Why not?" her mother asked in surprise. "Cause I'm not very good."

The story saddened me, as I'm saddened when I hear of others who believe they must be very good to get into heaven, especially since we all know deep down in our hearts that we're not very good at all.

Perhaps like this little girl you're thinking about your sins and asking, "What must I do to get to heaven?" The answer has already been given: Jesus, by His death, has paid in full the price of your sins, no matter how sordid, tawdry, or shameful they may be. Your salvation is free.

God promises, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). John Donne writes:

Or wash thee in Christ's blood, which hath this might,

That being red, it dyes red souls to white.

No one is good enough to get into heaven. Eternal life is a gift. Receive Jesus by faith. — David H. Roper [Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

The perfect righteousness of Christ
Is free to everyone,
But we by faith must take that gift
And trust God's precious Son. —D. De Haan

**No one is good enough to save himself;
no one is so bad that God cannot save him.**

Isaiah 1:19 **"If you [consent](#) and [obey](#), you will [eat](#) the [best](#) of the [land](#) ([NASB: Lockman](#))**

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): And if ye be willing, and hearken to me, ye shall eat the good of the land:

Amplified: If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

NET: If you have a willing attitude and obey, then you will again eat the good crops of the land. ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: If you are willing to obey, you shall eat the good things of the earth. ([NJB](#))

NLT: If you will only obey me and let me help you, then you will have plenty to eat. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: If ye are willing, and have hearkened, The good of the land ye consume,

If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land:

- Isa 3:10; 55:1, 2, 3,6,7; Jeremiah 3:12, 13, 14; 31:18, 19, 20; Hosea 14:1, 2, 3, 4; Joel 2:26; Matthew 21:28, 29, 30, 32, 32; Hebrews 5:9

If you consent and obey - Note that this is a conditional promise. It necessitates one to make a choice to obey or not. Sounds like the same options that were presented to Adam in the Garden of Eden, doesn't it? God is not interested in "robots" but in men and women who will love Him from their heart, and this is a love which shows itself in obedience (Jn 14:12). Let love for God (and walking according to His Spirit - Ro 8:2, 3) not legalistic constraints be your motive for obeying Him (cp Ro 13:8, 10).

Judah and Jerusalem had been "hard of hearing" rebels who had become disobedient. Here God calls for a total change in direction of their belief and behavior, a clear call to repentance. He even gives a promise that would seem to motivate a willingness to "consent and obey."

Willing To Change - READ: Isaiah 58:1-14 - If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land. --Isaiah 1:19

A recent news feature chronicled the growing search for stress relief through spas, massage, pills, and exercise tapes. The craving to ease tension has spawned an entire industry, including walk-in backrub stores in shopping malls across the country. The report ended by saying, "Although people will pay to fix their stress, they are not about to change the lifestyle that is causing it."

No matter what the problem, our initial response is to treat the symptoms rather than the cause.

During the days of Isaiah, God's people were not experiencing the Lord's blessing. They went through the motions of worship and couldn't understand why God wasn't noticing their religious efforts (Isa. 58:3). But while they were fasting, they were also exploiting their workers and fighting among themselves (Isa 58:3, 4). Isaiah condemned their hypocrisy and told them they needed to change. If they would free the oppressed, share with the hungry, house the homeless, and clothe the naked, God would bless them with healing, answered prayer, guidance, strength, and joy.

Religious activity is no substitute for an obedient heart. With God's help--and a willingness to change--we can eliminate the root problems, not just the symptoms. — David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The Christian life is not confined

To church one day a week;
God wants us to obey His Word,
Each day His will to seek. --Sper

Religious activity is no substitute for an obedient heart.

DON'T BLAME THE RULE - The Grand Rapids Press reported an ironic turn of events that happened to a group of motorcyclists traveling to the state capital to protest Michigan's motorcycle helmet law. The group was scheduled to meet at the capitol building to make some speeches and symbolically burn their helmets. But on the way to the protest, one of the bikers lost control of his machine and slammed into a construction warning sign. He suffered head and facial injuries that most likely would have been avoided if he had been wearing a helmet.

Sometimes we are like those cyclists. We look at the ways of the Lord as unnecessarily restrictive. Yet we ask for and expect His protection and blessing while we resist, rebel, and misunderstand His loving guidelines.

But our efforts to be free from restraint have not brought more happiness, freedom, peace, or satisfaction. Instead, we have lost honor, purpose, and security. Those who insist on doing things their way see an increase in disease, divorce, abuse, and violence. No society has ever profited by disobeying the Lord.

We don't like having our style cramped by laws. But when we read the first chapter of Isaiah and consider the alternative, we realize that one principle stands behind every restriction our Lord gives us: It's always for our good. —M. R. De Haan II ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Don't blame the rule if you don't measure up.

WASTED WORSHIP - "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart." -- Psalm 51:17

If you are able to go to church on Sunday, you probably will. For most Christians, it's almost automatic -- and rightly so. But is it possible that our efforts to go to church for worship might be wasted? Could it all be in vain? Yes. Before we even enter the church, the worth of our worship can be reduced to nothing because of the way we've lived during the week. In Amos 5 (Amos 5:21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27), the Lord had some harsh words for those who attempted to worship Him while bringing with them the guilt of an ungodly lifestyle. His people were constantly angering Him by following false gods (Amos 5:26). When they assembled to worship the Lord through sacrifices and songs, God despised their hypocrisy. In Isaiah 1, God instructed His people that before they could worship Him, they were to "cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice" (Isa 1:16, 17).

What a challenge to us! Before we worship God, we are to put things in order by confessing our sins, seeking His forgiveness, and then serving Him. Our daily walk with God and our obedience to His commands are the elements that prepare us for church. Anything less will lead to wasted worship. -- J. David Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O holy God, undone by guilt depressing
We come to Thee our every sin confessing;
Grant us, we pray, Thy cleansing and Thy blessing;
We worship Thee, O God! -- Frost

Worship that pleases God comes from an obedient heart.

Isaiah 1:20 "But **if** you **refuse** and **rebel**, You will be **devoured** by the **sword**." **Truly**, the **mouth** of the **LORD** has **spoken** ([NASB: Lockman](#))

English Translation of the Greek (Septuagint): but if ye be not willing, nor hearken to me, a sword shall devour you: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken this.

Amplified: But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

NET: But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." Know for certain that the LORD has spoken. ([NET Bible](#))

NJB: But if you refuse and rebel, the sword shall eat you instead— for Yahweh's mouth has spoken.' Lament for Jerusalem ([NJB](#))

NLT: But if you keep turning away and refusing to listen, you will be destroyed by your enemies. I, the LORD, have spoken!" Unfaithful Jerusalem ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Young's Literal: And if ye refuse, and have rebelled, By the sword ye are consumed, For the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken.

But if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken

- Isa 3:11; 1Samuel 12:25; 2Chronicles 36:14, 15, 16; Hebrews 2:1, 2, 3) (Isa 40:5; 58:14; Leviticus 26:33; Numbers 23:19; 1Samuel 15:29; Titus 1:2)

But - A dramatic **contrast**. Whenever you encounter a **contrast** word, pause and ponder what the author (and the Author) is contrasting. Ask questions (**interrogate with the 5W/H'S**) like - Why does he draw this contrast? Who is impacted? What is being contrasted? etc, etc. What you are in effect doing is slowing down (the Bible is **not** well digested when you "speed read" it!) and "chewing the cud" so to speak. You are learning to **Meditate** on the Word of Truth. See **Primer on Biblical Meditation** for the wonderful promises that God associates with Biblical (not mystical) meditation, which sadly has become a seldom practiced spiritual discipline in our day, times in which fare such as the "one minute Bible" are much more popular than Biblical meditation! God grant that we in the church might be given the holy desire to "return to the ancient paths, where the good way is and walk it it" so that we might "find rest for our souls" (Jer 6:16).

Notice the stark contrast in **choices** - "consent and obey" versus "refuse and rebel".

Notice also the radical contrast between the **promises** - "eat the best of the land" versus "be devoured ("eaten") by the sword." Notice the interesting word play for the Hebrew word for "**devour**" also can mean "to eat or consume." In short obey and eat, disobey and "be eaten"!

Our choices always have consequences - good or bad. Which category are you falling in this week? Remember we can't choose our consequences, but only the choices that lead to the consequences! Beloved, in the New Covenant era, may we all "walk by the Spirit" for then (and only then) we will "not (double negative ~ absolute negation) fulfill the desire of the flesh." (Gal 5:16-note)

Refuse (ma'an) means to reject an offer. This is amazing! Look Who they are rejecting! This says a lot about one's depth of deception and the degree of hardness of heart to refuse a word spoken by Jehovah. However, lest we are too hard on Israel, is this not what each of us (believer and non-believer) does every time we choose to "do it our way" rather than God's way?!

Rebel ([04784](#)) (marah) almost always (40 of 45 OT uses) refers to rebellion against God by Israel or Judah (rarely used of any other nation), of direct opposition to His authority and right to rule His creatures.

The **TWOT** notes that "This sin of rebellion may be in word: Nu 17:10; 27:14, complaining; Ps 78:17ff., challenging and defying God to do the abnormal, to cater to their tastes and delicacies. Or, it may be a rebellion in deed: 1Sa 12:15, obedience to man over God; 1Kgs 13:21, 26, actions contrary to God's clearly expressed will by a "clergyman"; Jer 4:17, "your own behavior and actions"; Isa 3:8, "their words and their deeds." What is most often rebelled against is "the commandment/the word of the Lord," (et) pî (literally, "the mouth"). ([Harris, R L, Archer, G L & Waltke, B K Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament. Moody Press](#))