

Isaiah 2v11

by John Marshall

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God and the certainty of His victory in the final day, and calls listeners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Duration: 1:12:25

Scripture: Isaiah 2:11, Isaiah 2:17, Luke 15:1

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by emphasizing the greatness of God and how incomprehensible His nature is to humans. He highlights that the world does not acknowledge or understand God's greatness. The preacher then addresses the audience, stating that this evangelistic meeting is about God and His invitation to reason together. He emphasizes that despite our insignificance as mere dust, God cares about each individual and extends His kindness and mercy to even the vilest of people. The preacher concludes by contrasting the response of a horse to kindness with the ingratitude of sinners towards God, despite His continuous provision and care for them.

Transcript

Our reading from the Word of God this evening is taken from the prophecy of Isaiah and the opening chapter, cementing at the opening verse. Isaiah chapter 1, let us hear together the Word of God. The vision of Isaiah the son of Ammon, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Josam, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth. For the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. But Israel does not know. My people does not consider.

Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupted. They have forsaken the law. They have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger.

They are gone away backwards. Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

From the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it. But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. They have not been clothed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointments.

Your country is desolate. Your cities are burned with fire. Your land, your strangers devour it in your presence.

And it is desolate, as overflown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of hosts hath left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom. Give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he-goats.

When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my course? Bring no more vain oblation. Incense is an abomination unto me, the new moons and Sabbath, the calling of assembly. I cannot away with.

It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth. They are a trouble unto me.

I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you. Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear.

Your hands are full of blood. Wash you. Make you clean.

Put away the evil of your doing from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well.

Seek judgment. Relieve the oppressed. Judge the fatherless.

Plead for the widow. 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. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the lamb. But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

And then if you would turn on with me into chapter 2, reading from verse 10. Isaiah 2, verse 10. Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty.

The lofty looks of man shall be humble, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and lofty, and upon everyone that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low. And upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.

And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols he shall utterly abolish, and they shall go into the holes of the rock, and into the caves of the earth for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty when

he arises to shake terribly the earth. In that day, a man shall cast his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats, to go into the clefts of the rock, and into the tops of the ragged rock for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty when he arises to shake terribly the earth.

Seize ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of. And may God be pleased to grant us clear understanding and a faithful application of this his holy and infallible Word. I intend to speak to you this evening from part of the 11th verse of the 2nd chapter of the book of the prophecy of Isaiah.

And I will read the whole verse. It is Isaiah chapter 2 and verse 11. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

And you will perceive that there is a repetition of that in the 17th verse, that God repeats this statement. The loftiness of men shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. I want to speak then about this last part of this verse where it says the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

Now this meeting, as other meetings on the evening of the conference are announced as evangelistic meetings, and evangelistic preaching is the preaching we trust in the power of the Holy Spirit of the glory of the person and the work of Jesus Christ, the glory of Him as the Son of Man, the glory of Him as the Son of God, as God fully incarnate, that preaching of Him in His person and in the glory of His work as Redeemer and Shepherd and Mediator, and the preaching of that in connection with the law of God so that the hearers are brought by the power of God to believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ for their eternal salvation and to repent of their sins and to enter into eternal life and to be justified before God by the righteousness of His Son. That is not meant to be an acute definition. It's a general statement about what is involved in evangelistic preaching.

Now, as you preach, you preach to sinners and, of course, all sinners have many things in common. On the other hand, of course, each sinner is different, and therefore when someone preaches the gospel and seeks to evangelize and to set forth Christ in this way, he addresses a great spectrum of people. There are, of course, children here and one is delighted to see them, little children.

And they have been brought up, maybe, probably in Christian homes and they have heard much about the Lord Jesus Christ and His loveliness, but they have never believed so one would preach to them. And then there are people who've been coming to meetings and to churches for years, but they, knowing much, yet they never have really repented, they never have really believed, they've never really entered into the kingdom of God. And they do not belong to God.

But as I listened in the prayer meeting this morning and to people speaking at meals, it seemed to me quite clear also that there were those in the conference who saw these evening meetings as an opportunity to invite, to hear the gospel, people from overseas and from other countries who were in avarice with, maybe to learn the language or for some other reason. And it is quite clear to me that people had gone to people in the street or maybe here in the university buildings and said, well, if you want to hear about Christianity, come to the meeting this evening. Now that, of course, means that there may be people here for whom this is the first Christian meeting they have ever been in.

They're invited to come, and they have come, and if you have come in that condition, then we're delighted to see you, but you really know nothing at all about Christianity or about evangelism, about preaching or even the gospel. What I wanted to do, therefore, was to begin with a kind of lengthy introduction and to show you how the words that I've read to you from the Bible are applicable to what I'm about to do and relevant to you. And then having done that, to go on and look at these words more in their context in the beginning chapters of the book of Isaiah.

So let me just very briefly and simply bring before you the words of the text. It says here, first of all, the Lord, the Lord, God. Now the Bible tells me that God is not in all the thoughts of sinners.

Sinners do not want to think about God, and they don't think about God if they can help it. On the other hand, the Bible tells me that the great end of God's holy word, the end of preaching, is that men might think about God. So as it were, if I may address someone who has come in and knows little about Christianity, what are we about? Well, we are about speaking to you of the God of the Bible.

That is, the God who made heaven and earth. The Bible begins in that way. You remember, or you don't remember if you've never read it.

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. So what we are about to speak about is God. That is the intention and the end of preaching.

The end of preaching, incidentally, of course, to Christians. And most of you, I trust, are Christians. I would believe are Christians, but you should think about God.

That God should fill your mind. The greatness of God. Now we find, of course, that this is not some idea of mine that I've actually hatched up for this conference, as you know.

It says here, Paul stood in the midst of Miletus, Paul being an apostle of Jesus Christ, preaching in what is now Greece, ancient Athens, the center of the intellectual life of the world at that time. And he says here, as I pass by, I behold your devotions, I found an altar with its inscriptions to the unknown God. Then he says to the Athenians who are listening to him, Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

So the purpose of preaching is to declare the glory and the character of God. And my friends, not only Paul who does this, we find a man, an apostle of Jesus Christ, a servant, a preacher, wrote a gospel, and we read that he wrote it, that he's John, that he might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing he might have life through his name. So John, the fourth of the gospels, is written to the end that men might believe.

How does he begin? In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

So John, writing under the inspiration of the Spirit, he begins with God, if I may say so, with the incomprehensibility of God. Very strange thing. I have no time to stop here and reflect upon that, but if you can understand and explain with great confidence that you understand fully what it means that God, there is God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

I think you're a very boastful person, if I may say so, and I think if you went to the ancient fathers of the church and the fathers of the Reformation, and to Luther and to Calvin, and to Augustine, and said, do you fully understand what John means when he speaks about God in this way? They would say, no. Who can understand God? Who can fully comprehend the relationship of God, the Father to the Son? And yet, that is how John begins. He begins by speaking to men about God, and speaking about how great God is.

Now, you are here. This is an evangelistic meeting. What is it about? It's about God.

The Lord, it says. And it says, secondly, the Lord alone. Now, of course, what I've said about God and the importance of him and through him and to him are all things, to whom be glory forever, is not perceived and understood by the world in which you live.

You pick up the daily paper, you buy the Times, the Telegraph, the Mail, I'd better be careful, the Western Morning Mail, I ought to check that out, whatever paper you particularly read, or I'd better go on further in the Express, I don't know whether I dare mention any others. I have to say this, you won't read about God. And if you turn your television sets on, you're very unlikely to hear about him and what you do hear about him is likely to be folly and idiocy.

You will hear all kinds of other voices addressing you. You will meet with all kinds of other gods in the world. And you'll find all kinds of heroes who are worshipped in some way, all kinds of people who are promoted in some manner, and they will try to fill your mind and fill your life from now until you die.

The Bible says, the Lord alone is coming a time when God shall fill the consciousness of everyone. Thirdly, it says here, the Lord alone shall be exalted. Firstly, it speaks about something that will happen in the future.

And if you want to understand what Christianity is about, it is about what has happened in the past, emphatically. It's about what God says to you in the present. But it's also about what will be in the future.

But this statement, this declaration by Isaiah, is more than merely stating something about the future. It is telling you that Christianity or the Bible, the religion of the Bible, is a religion in which the future is absolutely certain. Now you don't know, any of you, whether you're even going to be alive tomorrow morning, do you? I don't know.

I trust I will be, but I don't know because the Bible tells me my life is but a vapor and that's yours as well. And you know if you look around you in the world, the world is full of uncertainty. Whether it be in the financial markets, the political arena, the military, there's uncertainty.

We don't know what is going to happen. If you knew what was going to happen on the financial markets, if there's some person here who's really interested, you could make a killing, couldn't you? If you knew, but you don't know. We don't know, as far as we are concerned, what is going to happen.

But the Bible says that God has determined what is going to happen. And when it says here, the Lord alone shall be, it is telling you that when God created the world and when God created man, God also determines the end of all things. And because God controls all things and determines all things according to his own will, as the apostle Paul says in the epistle to the Ephesians, he worked all things according to the counsel of his will.

What we are being brought into confrontation here with is the certainty of that of which the Bible speaks. We're not saying maybe this will happen. The Bible says this will happen because God is God and he always does what he says he will do.

So it says here, the Lord alone shall be, what? Exalted. Exalted. Are you aware of that? This is one of the great, great trusts.

We're hearing from Dr. Carson, Satan is a defeated enemy. And the Bible tells me that God alone will be exalted. Are you hearing that? God will be exalted.

Sinner, if I may address you, whoever you may be, may I say this to you, that the cause of God is absolutely victorious. God's holy name in the end will be the only name that is exalted. Remember it says here as it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God.

Shall I read that to you again? This is Romans 14, verse 11. As it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God. And it says, you recollect, or maybe as I say, if you've come in and you don't recollect because you've never read it, may I read what the Bible says about Jesus Christ.

It says here, Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name, that that's the name of Jesus. Every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. I say to you, sinner, the Bible tells me that every knee is going to bow to Jesus Christ.

Every knee. Now you may be here as a rebellious sinner and you may hate the Word of God, but I tell you that one day you're going to bow the knee to Jesus Christ. Every knee shall bow Every knee shall bow.

Every tongue is going to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. When the Apostle Paul is speaking of the resurrection, it says here, He must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet. We read the same kind of thing and it is repeated frequently in the Scriptures in the New Testament.

To which of the angels said he at any time, sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool. So it says here, sinner, the Lord alone shall be exalted. When Jesus died on Calvary, He said it is finished.

If you study, I'm sure many of you have studied this, but if you haven't studied it, may I say this to you? It is a shout of triumph. When Jesus said it is finished, it is not a statement as it were of cold facts. It is an assertion of absolute victory.

When people are dying in agony, in weakness, you do not find that usually they cry out with a loud voice, but He cried with a loud voice. It is finished. Everything is done to ensure the certainty of the victory of God in the world shall be exalted, it says finally, in that day.

What day? Oh, the day of judgment. The day when God has determined the world shall come to an end. Now there are many references to this.

I haven't time to refer to many of them, but you are probably aware, and if you are not, may I tell you about this? It says, as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. Likewise, if it

was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, and they brought and they sold, they planted, they built it. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

Even thus it shall be in the day when the Son of Man shall be revealed. Or you can find other references, such as Thessalonians. The times and seasons, brethren, we have no need that I write unto you.

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a feast in the night. For ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day shall overtake you as a feast. And again, referring to the Apostle Paul preaching in Athens, he says, the times of this ignorance God winked at.

For now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained. A specific time already determined by God that every day you live, whether you know it or whether you don't, whether you like it or whether you don't, we get a day nearer to the day of God. That day, when our Lord Jesus Christ will be revealed in his glory and to the honor of the Trinity, there will be a revelation of the glory of God to all men who have ever lived on the face of the earth from Adam and Eve until the final culmination of which I'm speaking.

Now, here you are. If you come in, you say, what is Christianity about? It's about God. About God.

It's about God alone being exalted in the final day. That's what Christianity is about. And the manner in which he is brought to that exaltation.

And furthermore, what I have to say is, and raise the question which I will raise again, where will you be on that day? Well, where will you be on that day? You will be there. Will this day be a day of unparalleled joy? If you're a believer, it will be. Because every day you pray, Hallowed be thy name, don't you? Or if not the words, the principle, the whole end of your life is that God should be glorified, isn't it? So that day, if you're a believer, is a day of joy.

If you're not a believer, what does that say? Well, we're told something about it here, aren't we? They shall go into the holes of the rocks and into the caves of the earth for fear of the Lord and for the glory of his majesty when he arises to shake terribly the earth. So we have to say here to the sinner, sinner, you have to think. You must think.

You should think. If preachers don't make you think in the power of God, they're not doing their job properly. If I don't say to you, where are you going to be on that day? I'm not doing my biblical, fulfilling my biblical commission.

Where will you be on that day? Where will you be? You will be there. What will your response be? Joy, adoration on earth. The Bible speaks about Christians having joy unspeakable and full of glory.

And the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord Jesus risen from the dead. But when you see him in glory, oh, what joy! But if you're not a Christian, if you're not a believer, if your sins are not forgiven you, where will you be on that day? That then is the introduction. Now, the second thing I want to do is to look at the context in which these words were spoken.

It's got to be very general because actually, as you know, if you do have time to read or you've read it, you will know, of course, that Isaiah gives a very penetrating analysis, a very wide-ranging review of the situation to which he speaks. So all we can do is to look at some of the things of which he speaks. But it is

quite clear that he said these words at a time when the cause of God was at a very low ebb.

He said these things at a time when the cause of God was at a very low ebb and at a time when most people, not everybody, but most people, were in no way thinking about the day upon which the Lord alone shall be exalted. And indeed, had you looked at the people of God, Judah at the time of Isaiah, you would have found a people who were not taken up with serving God, learning about God, knowing of God. They were taken up with their rotten sins and they were sinning in all kinds of ways.

And it seemed then that the cause of God was diminishing and the powers of hell were prevailing. I don't know what you think. Verse 10, Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom.

Give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. The rulers of Judah were like the rulers of Sodom, a byword for perversion and iniquity and divine judgment and carelessness. That was the state of Judah and the people there were not thinking about meeting with God on the last day.

My dear friends, when people sin in the way that is described here, they're not thinking about the last day. They're thinking about gratifying their lusts and inclinations and fulfilling their perverse desires of their will and of their minds and they put out of their minds any sort of divine judgment. But you must see, of course, must you not, that this passage is particularly relevant to our own age.

It's relevant to our own age in which it appears, it appears that the cause of God is overwhelmed. I read this book about the Welsh Revival that was recommended and I found it a fascinating book and I read in one place it says, after the Revival, for many years in every street on Saturday night in Wales there was an open air meeting. Now did you hear that? In every street for years, that's what the book said, I didn't say it, there was an open air meeting in which Christ was preached.

Would you find that to be the case in Wales today? Once a week, in every street? What happened? things have gone down and down and down, have they not? And you yourself, you're glad to be here, to be encouraged to meet with your fellow Christians. But if you look at the situation with which we are faced, it is one of corruption and abandonment and no fear of God before men's eyes. Men boast, as we shall see if we have time, they boast about things that years ago they would have concealed.

You get men boast, talk about Sodom here. People boast about Sodomy. They tell you that they're Sodomites and they broadcast this and they laugh and they deride the Word of God, don't they? And this characterizes people boast about their immorality.

They boast about their infidelity. Even the world sees this. And it appears that the cause of God is very low.

However, my friends, Isaiah says, the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. And we're not to judge Christianity by the temporary situation in our own country. We have to remember, my friends, that our Lord Jesus Christ died on a cross alone in the very heart of Christianity.

He was surrounded by people who mocked him, who derided him. He was forsaken of his friends and misunderstood even by those who had supported him. And he died alone.

But he was victorious. We need to be very careful if you come in here and you say, well, I've come to England or I've come to Wales or I've come to Great Britain. People don't seem to believe in Christianity.

Things aren't what they once were. I thought Christianity was the religion of the British, the Scots, the Welsh, the Irish, the English. But I don't find many people.

I find fewer people go to church here than in my own country. There's something wrong here. Well, I say, read the Bible.

This was true of Judah at the time of Isaiah. But Isaiah said, the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. And we have to read what God says, not what appearances state.

So the first thing we have to say generally here is that there are great evidences of a mass of people who are set upon gratifying their own inclinations and living without reference to God. Let us look specifically at some of the issues here. These people, we read, their land is also full of silver and gold.

Neither is there any end of their treasures. Their land is also full of horses. Neither is there any end of their chariots.

So they were prosperous and they made gods of gold and silver. And they worshipped them. They looked to them therefore for their gratification, for their happiness, for their protection, for their health.

And I hardly need to tell you, do I what, 20 million people, not now because the ratings are going down so I'm told, 20 million people, they look at television on Saturday night to see who's won the national lottery. I don't care who wins the national lottery, but 20 million people, what, well you might win 20 million pounds, right, don't you? And I haven't time, but I say to you, we're a nation eaten up with materialism. Money has a place, I know this.

The Bible says it has a place. But the worship of money, that is the worship of this age, isn't it? And I point out to you, friends, and I point out to you that if you win the national lottery and go to hell with your 20 million pounds, you won't buy one drop of water there to quench your thirst. Nor will you buy five minutes in heaven with your 20 million pounds, nor will you buy forgiveness for one sin with 20 million pounds.

If you come to God and say, Lord, once upon a time on one occasion I sinned, now I've got 20 million pounds, here it is, I'll give it to you if you'll forgive me. Well, you won't be forgiven. You can't buy forgiveness with God.

That kind of currency is worthless with God. That is why we read here, they shall abandon these things, they shall leave them, they shall find no help in them. But that is the world today, isn't it? Money, that is the thing that governs everything, that evaluates everything.

But my friend, my friend, money cannot save one. It ultimately cannot satisfy one heart. It cannot produce one jot of divine joy in the soul.

And yet these people, their land is full of silver and gold, they spend their lives seeking after this. It is all their fault. I remember a man telling me years ago, he worked for a person, a man owned a firm that he worked for, he was a manager of, and he said, this man had massive amounts of money, but every morning he used to scan the stock exchange prices and he said if the prices had gone up, he was temporarily happy, and if they had gone down, he was thoroughly miserable.

And his life used to go up like a, more money than probably anybody, well I don't know, but probably the most of us here have ever seen. But there was no satisfaction in that, but this is the God, the idol of the

people of Isaiah. Secondly, let us look at Isaiah 1 and let us see how God analyzes sin.

So what is sin against God? Well let us see some of the things it says here. He's first of all ingratitude. It may surprise you this.

Hear, O heaven, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib.

But Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. The Bible says that a sinner is worse than an animal. Why? Because animals know those who feed them.

Now there are children. I noticed them last night. I was sitting and I noticed.

Do any of you children? I like to speak to children. If they're here, do any of you live in homes with, you have pets? Do any of you have a pet rabbit? I don't know. I hope so.

Do you have a pet rabbit? Does the family have pet rabbits? All right. I look around, you know. All right.

So who feeds the pet rabbit to you? Well, somebody in the family does it. Maybe your mother. I don't know.

If it's well organized, maybe you do. So every day you go out to your rabbit. And if I may say so, does not your rabbit, when it sees you coming, come charging out of its little hutch and press its little nose to the wire? Why? Because it knows that you feed it.

Now, rabbits are not noted for their intelligence. But they know who feeds them. I suspect they know in your family who feeds them.

And the Bible says, God feeds you. And God gives you every good thing you have. And do you thank him for it? When Paul is analyzing the corruption of the Roman world, he says, you know, right at the beginning in Romans 1, when he's giving this terrible catalog of sin, it says here, because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God.

Neither were thankful. A sinner is an unthankful person. And an unthankful person is a sinner.

They sin because they do not thank God for everything that he gives them. We're to give thanks unto the Lord, are we not? And a sinner is someone who does not give thanks. Animals recognize those who are kind.

My children, I'm going to speak to you again. I'll tell you a true story. It is absolutely true.

This refers to the 1914-18 war. There were, in this particular battalion, a whole lot of horses. And they were put out to feed.

That is to say, they hadn't got the bits in their mouths. And the lines where they were were shelled. And horses become very terrified.

So they all charged, pulled the stakes with which they were tethered, and went all over the place. Now there was one horse, which was particularly vicious. The reason the horse was vicious was because, and people have been very cruel in those days, because it was a wild horse and it wouldn't do what it said.

And those who had it had put a thing called a snaffle on its lip and twisted the lip of the horse to try to get it to do what it wanted. And they left the snaffle on too long so that the lip of the horse was permanently injured. And believe me, friends, if you know anything about horses like that, they'll kick a man to death.

You may think that horses are very sweet and they often are. But horses can be very vicious and this was a vicious horse. So these horses are scattered all over the place.

But a man, one man, he goes up to this horse and he talks to this horse. He gets this horse by the ear and he leads it back to the line. And he said, what are you doing? And he said this, and I know the man because he told me when I was a little boy and I always remember this.

He said, I used to feel sorry for that horse because it had been very cruelly treated. And I used to feed it with lumps of sugar. And whenever I passed it, I would give it a lump of sugar.

And he said, that horse knew my voice. And he knew that whereas he had received cruelty from others, I had been kind and he trusted me. I found that when I was a little boy, a very moving story.

But then I think to myself, here is a vicious horse which has been maltreated. But when someone is kind to it, it responds to the kindness. But my friends, sinners, God feeds them, he puts them in his world, he gives them air to breathe and they curse him to his face.

Or they forget about him altogether or they grumble that he's not done what they want him to do. It says here, the ox knoweth his owner, the ass his master's crib, but Israel does not know, my people does not consider. Then secondly, it says here, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger.

They have gone away backward. Why should you be stricken anymore? The second thing here in this chapter I want to draw attention to is the fact that sin, and this is very strange, sin leads to misery. The way of transgressors is hard.

What the devil will tell you is that sin makes for happiness. But it doesn't. It makes for misery.

Because God has so ordained the world, as we heard this morning, that there is no peace, he says, my God for the wicked. And God, it says, when speaking about the rebellion of the kings of the earth in the second psalm, it says, then shall he vex them in his displeasure. God will fight against them.

He shall speak unto them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure. Now I have to, I'm speaking to many people, but Christians, some of you older Christians, what about the young people you were at university with who went their own way and wouldn't listen. Where are they now? Suicidal, some of them.

Marriage has broken up others. Misery. Now I'm not saying all sinners are always miserable.

That is untrue. There is pleasure in sin for a season. But the Bible here says that the way to hell is a very painful way, a very miserable way.

That sinners, as they go to hell, are not normally happy when they go to hell. They are miserable long before they get into hell. That is the result of sin.

Sin is against a holy God who so ordained the world that sin brings with it his own reward even in this world and that is a reward of misery and sadness. Terrible sadness. You come across them, the alcoholics, the drug addicts, the people who fool around and broken up their marriages and left their

children.

Terrible misery. A man I know years ago said to me, a wicked man by his own admission, he said to me, I wake up in the night and I sweat when I think about what I've done. I don't know what he had done.

Thirdly, it says here, the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even under the head there is no soundness in it. But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, they have not been closed, neither mollified, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

Sin is like a rotting body. You look to people, and many of you are medically more qualified than I am, but you look to people with gangrene, with boils and abscesses. The Bible says here that a sinner, the sinners of whom Isaiah speaks, were rotten from the tip of their toe to the top of their head.

There was a rotten, evil corruption. Their bodies are already dying. Well, the sinner is like that in the sight of God.

When God looks upon you, I ask you this, I have to say this, I don't want to tread on people's feet sometimes, but people go around, I know that they have good intentions and they go around to people and say, what do you think about God? My dear friend, that isn't the question I would like to ask you. In one sense, who cares what you think about God? I'm not being rude, who cares what you think about God? Who cares what a heap of dust thinks about eternal glory? The question you ought to ask yourself is what does God think about you? And that's not just a theoretical question. How do you appear in the sight of Almighty God? Now, who sees all things and knows everything, knows all about you, knows your heart, your inclinations, the sins you would have committed had you dared to or had you had opportunity to do so or maybe the sins that you did commit and you thought were covered up years ago.

Maybe sins you've forgotten about but he remembers and he looks upon you and he says, from what sort of person is it that these evil thoughts come? What sort of heart is it that these evil desires come? Oh, he says, there is no soundness in it, wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. It goes on here, does it not say, it says, except the Lord had left us a remnant we should have been as Sodom and be made like unto Gomorrah. Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom.

Give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. I think we have to say this to our rulers. We have people, we've got to be very careful here but you have rulers and they say, let's have sodomy at sixteen.

Let's lower the age so men who are corrupt can corrupt people when they're younger. And they say this unashamedly or with spurious ideas. It says, hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom.

Give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. Their religion was worthless. Their religion was obnoxious to God.

There were religious people but their religion was objectionable to God because he says here, bring no more vain oblations, incenses and abomination unto me, the new moons and the Sabbaths and calling of assemblies I cannot away with. It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting and when you spread forth your hands I will make, hide mine eyes from you. Yea, when you make many prayers I will not hear, your hands are full of blood.

If I say something, do you not find any answers to your prayers? I've got to be careful here. The Bible says, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. You say, God doesn't hear.

I'm told that God hears prayer. Well, it is true that God hears the prayers of all kinds and conditions of people. Very careful.

God is gracious and God is very kind. But here it says here, I will hide my eyes from you and I will not hear you because your ways are objectionable to me. Now those are the kind of people, and one could go on much longer here, but those are the kind of people to whom Isaiah says, the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

What is going to happen if that is what you are like in that day? Is that all that God has to say? No, my friend, it is not. It is not. First of all, God says to these people, He addresses them, and He says, Wash you.

Make you clean. Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil.

Learn to do well. Relieve the oppressed. Judge the fatherless.

Plead for the widow. But God says to these people, He speaks to them. He doesn't abandon them.

He says to these people that they should make themselves clean. That they should cease from sin. That they should learn to do well.

But this arises and is based upon what He says in verse 18. He says, Come now and let us reason together, says 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. The first thing I want to say to you is this. Will you observe who it is who is speaking and who it is He is addressing.

The one who speaks is God Almighty. Speaking, as I believe, peculiarly through His Son. So it is God who is speaking.

That God who is described here in His Holy Word how sinners are in His sight. That God who is of such great power that were He to touch you and me, we would fall down dead in a moment. God is not powerless.

He can overthrow a man or a woman, Ananias and Sapphira. They dropped down dead. Did they not? Herod, he smote with worms because he gave not God the glory.

God has no limitation upon what He can do for you. He overthrew the whole earth and the flood. He overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea.

So God can overthrow you if He chooses in a moment. He can overthrow me. I know that.

So it is that God who is speaking. To whom is He speaking now? He is speaking to these wishy people. He is speaking to these sodomites and these corruptors and these ungrateful people.

What is He saying to them? God is saying, come now. I don't know who you are, but if you've never heard any preaching before, what does God say? God says to bad men and women, bad children, He says, come now. You say, what did you say? You've just been telling us that God abominates iniquity, that He

hates sin, that He's going to judge sinners.

Yes, that is true. But it is true here that that same God says, come now. Come.

What do you do? Well, I read in the 15th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, wonder of wonders, glory of glories, then drew near unto Him, that is, unto Jesus, all the tax collectors and sinners, for to hear Him. Bad people, sinners, those who were notorious sinners, they drew near to Jesus to hear Him. And Jesus received them and He told the story of the lost coin and the lost sheep and the lost son.

And He spoke most kindly to them. I must say this to you, sinner. God says, come now.

Are you hearing? Are you hearing Him? In your heart, are you hearing Him? And if you are hearing Him, are you coming? Now the devil, who would love to leave you asleep in your sins, he will try to say to you, you cannot come. You are unfit to come. You are a bad woman.

You are a bad man. Look what you've done. How can you come to this holy God? God says, come now.

There's an urgency in this, isn't there? There really is an urgency in it. He says, come now. We're not to fool around.

But He says, come now and let us reason together. It's amazing. The kindness, if I may say so.

One of the difficulties of any preacher is to preach the glory of the holiness and the power of God. And yet to preach the kindness and the mercy and the tenderness and the long suffering and the gentleness of God to the vilest of people. God is not saying, my friends here, come now that I may destroy you.

Listen to what He says. He says, come now and let us reason together. This is the mighty God.

Why should He care about you? Dust of the earth. We're nothing, are we? We're nothing. We're very few.

There are thousands of millions of people on the earth. But He says, come now. God has an invitation for individuals.

Will you know that? This is the greatness of God. He knows who you are. He knows exactly all about you.

He knows your name. I don't know your name. He knows your name.

He knows the name that you were given. He knows all about you. And He says, come.

Come now to me and reason. And oh, my friends, the amazing thing is that this God who is incomprehensible, when sinners came to Him, He spoke to them in ways they could comprehend. Spoke to the woman of Samaria.

Had many husbands. Spoke to Nicodemus. Spoke in such a manner that a dying thief was brought to faith.

Spoke to the apostle Paul when he was a persecutor. Christ knows how to speak. Speaks to men and to women.

Are you hearing Him? Come now. Well, I ask you, you say, what does it mean, come? Well, I say, pray in your heart, Lord Jesus Christ, God Almighty, whom I've read about in the Bible. You're telling me to come.

Well, I would come and hear what you have to say to me. This is amazing that you should speak to me and invite me to come. I don't know what illustration to use.

I go past Westminster. No, I don't. On the way to the Westminster Palace, I go past Buckingham Palace periodically.

I haven't been invited in recently. See, I haven't been invited in ever. And I suspect if I tried to get in, I wouldn't get in.

I do tell people, I won't say, I was going to say something. I say to my Republican friend as he goes past, do your obeisance to the Queen of England, but he doesn't seem to want to do that. I don't know, but he really is a Republican.

I'm sorry. All I'm saying is that I was not invited in. I've never been invited in.

I never go in. If I say, well, I want to come and speak to the Queen of England, he says, well, who are you? Well, who are you? God says, come now and let us reason together. So God is inviting you.

Do you hear that? Are you clear about that? If you go out of here, if you get to the day of judgment, unrepentant, it will not be because God has not kindly addressed you. The mighty God from eternity to eternity addresses you and says, you may come and listen to what he has to say. And if you hear him, he will speak words of great grace.

What does he say then? 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.

What does your conscience say about your sins? What does the law of God say about your sins? What does the death of our Lord Jesus Christ say about your sins? What does the Holy Ghost who convicts say about your sins? Are they red like crimson? Are they scarlet? Well, God says you may come to him and he will speak to you. He will speak to you and he will speak kindly to you. Oh, rebel, isn't this amazing? God could have written us off years ago.

I rebelled. I brought up in a Christian home and I fought against the Gospel for years. Although I believed it, but I just didn't like it.

And I used to think, I don't know why God doesn't slay me. Why he doesn't kill me. Why he doesn't, you know, to use a horrible expression, zap me.

Although I wouldn't have used that then. But why doesn't he deal with me? That's what I deserve. But he does not deal here.

He says, come now and let us reason together. Now what we have to say next, my friends, is that he speaks graciously. But from where does he speak? 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. From where does God speak? Well, he speaks from the cross, my friends.

The Lord Jesus is gold. And by faith you must look at Jesus hanging on a cross. And my friends, the Bible tells me he has a crown of thorns on his head.

And the Bible tells me he's been scourged by the soldiers so that his back is bleeding. And the Bible tells me that he has nails to his hands and his feet. And he's crucified between two thieves.

And the Bible tells me that after three hours of mockery there was darkness. At the end of that, the Lord Jesus said, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? I say, why, why, sinner, is Jesus dying? Why this terrible pain and agony? The physical pain is not that which really has the greatest prominence. It is the spiritual agony of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why thus is he dying in agony? Oh, says the Bible, because God hates sin. But the Bible says because Jesus loves poor dying sinners. If that were not the case, my friends, I couldn't preach to you.

He loves poor dying sinners. He died for sinners. It says Christ once died just for the unjust.

When we were yet without strength in due time, Christ died for the ungodly. God commended his love, as he speaks to the Christians in Rome. Why were we yet sinners? Christ died for us.

You say, why? When Paul looks back and sees the mercy of the Lord Jesus, he says, the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Oh, what does Paul say? I am a blasphemer and a persecutor and a covetous man and a breaker of the law of God. And yet Jesus suffers unparalleled agony on a cross at the hands of the Father.

Why? Because the Father in love sent him for the Father-purpose, that the Lord Jesus should redeem a vast number of sinners to his glory. And that is why he suffered. So that when the Lord Jesus speaks from the cross, he speaks of God's love.

You say, why is Jesus dying? Because God is a God who is loved. That is what the Bible tells you. You understand that? And if you are fighting against God, you are fighting not only against his authority and his law and his sovereign power and his holiness and justice, you are fighting against a God who will send his own Son to the shameful and painful death of the cross in order that he may redeem the wickedest of people, the vilest of people.

That is how God says here, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. My friends, there is a sufficiency in the atonement for all to come. I understand the theological issues to some degree, but I must say to you, I must say to you, if you hear what God says, as you hear what God says, and as you hear about the loving kindness of the Lord, and as you come and cast yourself upon his mercy, you will find that in the blood of Jesus, there is such a merit as shall wash away every sin that you have ever committed and will commit, so that in the sight of God you will be counted as righteous in his sight because of the merits of his Son.

The word here is based upon the work of Jesus yet to be done. This, of course, is the Old Testament, but now done, now completed. May I say something to you here? I do believe that on the day of exaltation, the wonder, part of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ and the glory is the great sinners who will be ushered in, as it were, people whose lives have been characterized by gross wickedness, evil people.

You say, how have these people got here on the right hand of the Lord of Glory? They got here, my friends, through the love of Jesus Christ and the power of the Spirit and the Word of God. They got here because of Jesus of Nazareth and the glory of the work of him who is both Son of Man and Son of God. Are you hearing that? It will be to the glory of God, greatly to the glory of God if you are found on the right hand of Jesus Christ on that day.

But you, you are there, you are there. Sometimes I know my own congregation. I trust I really love them.

But I know, I've said sometimes that I know them in a way I don't know you. Your friends would say, what are you doing here in church on Sunday night? You, you are drunkard. You, and I won't go into their sins.

What are you doing here sinner? How dare you come here? Oh, they say. Oh, Sue, I wouldn't have picked a fight with you. I really like, I can't go into it, but I can think of one man, very strong man.

He'd pick me up and throw me out through the window. He felt like when he was younger at any rate. I never asked him to do it, but he was a strong man.

A very strong man. I say, what are you doing here? He says, the Lord Jesus loved him. Gave himself for me.

Has washed me from all my sins. And by the power of the Holy Ghost, He's delivered me from the bondage of iniquity. And I now love to come and praise Jesus Christ.

To honour Jesus Christ. To subdue my wicked heart. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.

Though your sins be as scarlet, they should be as white as snow. I say, sinner, you come in? What's Christianity about? It's about forgiveness. Once worked in a post office with a man who'd been a petty officer in the Navy.

I don't know why, but he got involved in a religious discussion. He suddenly said to me with tremendous intensity, he said, do you really believe there is forgiveness for sin? I was amazed. Do you believe there is forgiveness for sin? Obviously somewhere in his background, something in his past, I don't know what it was, laid upon his conscience.

And he wasn't sure there ever was forgiveness. If it is, do you believe there is forgiveness? For thou mayest be feared for his forgiveness. Sinner, I must say to you, what stops you coming? Your sins? Well, they shouldn't stop you coming.

They're the very reason why you must come. If you don't come, you'll perish, won't you? And your sins will kill you and prevail over you and destroy you and further bring you into bondage and folly and madness. Is there any want of willingness upon the Lord Jesus to receive you? But he says here, 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. Jesus says this.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. And Isaiah says here, Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near.

Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his sorts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him. And to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. So what do I say? Well, Jesus, my friend, is alive, for he rose from the dead.

And Jesus speaks through his Holy Word, and he speaks to sinners. And he ordains that ministers here and the many other, that we should preach to men the glory of his person and work. And we should

preach to sinners their need of him, but the sufficiency there is in him.

Are you hearing? Are you hearing? The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. I must ask you this. Are you going to be there seeing the Lord Jesus with all his holy angels in the glory of his body that we have not seen? Are you going to rejoice on that day? He will know you.

As the foundation of God standeth sure, the Lord knoweth them that are his. My dear friends, the Lord Jesus, when he's going to Calvary, he's going to suffer, he goes through Jericho. There's a poor blind man there, and he begins to cry out.

And he says, Jesus, our son of David, have mercy upon him, upon me, and they which went before rebuked him that he should hold his peace. But he cried the much more, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood and commanded him to be brought.

Poor blind beggar. Jesus, the son of God, is about to work for his father. What stops him? A cry of a poor blind beggar who says, Jesus, our son of David, have mercy on me.

He's praying that. Will you pray? I'm not allowed to exhort you. I can't coerce you.

I would be wrong, and I have no power in any way to move you. It's only God who can do this, not my work. But I can say to you, there's a prayer here.

Jesus, our son of David, have mercy upon me. There's another prayer. Oh, so simple.

God be merciful to me, a sinner. Come now and let us reason together. The Lord alone, the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day when he's surrounded with all his redeemed ones.

And may by the grace of God you be there to rejoice with him. Now we'll pray. Lord, we confess to thee our need of thy spirit to illuminate our minds, to show us the excellency through thy word of thine only son.

We thank thee that thou art well pleased with him. We thank thee that he's suffered according to thy own purposes and determinate counsel. Thou hast ordained that the gospel should be preached to all creatures and all nations that we might be hearing thy holy word and that we might be calling upon thy holy name, upon that saviour, that we might be finding in him forgiveness and true repentance.

We ask these things in his name. Amen.

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