

God's Invitations to Us, Part 3
An Invitation to Come for Cleansing
Isaiah 1: 18 – 20

Two weeks ago, I began our series looking at God's invitations in the Bible with the invitation in Hebrews Chapter Four inviting us to come to the throne of Grace to receive grace and mercy; last Sunday we looked at God's invitation to Noah and his family to enter the Ark and be saved from the flood to come.

Today, we move a little further along in the Old Testament to a time in the history of Israel where the people have abandoned the ways of God, and they are living in open sin and worshipping everything but the true God. Not surprisingly it sounds like our day; but it is set in the time and ministry of the prophet Isaiah. Let me show you the flavor of the time in which Isaiah was called to minister before the Lord:

Israel in Isaiah's day:

1. **Rebelled against God (v. 2)**
2. **Turned their backs on God (v. 4)**
3. **Rise in violence in the land (v. 7)**
4. **Their worship had no power (v. 13)**

I confess I get goose bumps when I read this summation of the life and times of Isaiah, because when I read it I feel eerily as if I am reading the morning newspaper. Certainly, it would be prudent to consider God's invitation to Israel, because I am convinced God is issuing the identical invitation today! (Read vs. 18 – 20)

Now, in verses 18 through 20, we see some important truths about God's invitation to come for spiritual cleansing.

1. God initiates the seeking out of us (Isaiah 1: 18a).

A. We do not have the luxury of putting off seeking God, because it is never us who initiates the encounter.

B. Jesus, in the New Testament, reinforces this position.

1. He had come to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19: 10);
2. No one comes to the Father unless He (the Father) draws them

(John: 6: 44)

C. This is an important point: it is God who initiates the seeking.

1. He seeks me out for salvation;
2. He seeks me out for rededication;
3. He seeks me out for His service.

D. And if I let these opportunities pass and not respond, or I tell myself I will consider it later, I do so at my own peril.

1. I may not get the opportunity again; the invitation may get lost in the clutter of my life.

E. So when you sense God is drawing you to do something, and you don't so it at that time, you are gambling you will have another opportunity.

1. That is why I consider the invitation time the most important time of the worship service. If God is inviting you to join Him in some area of your life, you have no guarantee the invitation will be re-issued.

1. Yes, God is patient; God is persistent; God never gets frustrated with us. But there is a limit to God's patience and persistence. Don't play that dangerous game with the mercy of God.

2. Even though what God offers me is better than what the world offers, sometimes I choose the world's offer (v. 18b).

A. In the first part of Chapter One, we discovered the people were dirty, vile, and wicked. They were in desperate need of being cleansed.

1. But what the world was offering was more of the same dirt.

B. While God was offering a complete cleansing, many people were going to choose the dirt of the world rather than God's cleansing.

C. Do you remember when the devil took Jesus out to the wilderness and tempted Him to choose a different route to saving the world; he offered Him all the wealth, power and pleasures of the world.

1. The devil knew fully that what he had to offer Jesus was inferior to what Jesus already had as the Son of God; yet he still offered it!

2. If the devil is bold enough to offer the inferior goods of this world to the Son of God, we should recognize he is bold enough to offer the inferior things of the world to you and me.

D. Let's adopt the mind and wisdom of Jesus, recognize the things of God are always superior, and counter the devil's offer with what God has to offer.

3. God's invitation requires both willingness and obedience on my part (v. 19a).

A. I can be willing to stop abusing alcohol or another drug for the sake of keeping my family together, but if I lack the moral or spiritual power to stop such destructive behavior, I will find myself back in the habits and rituals of those lifestyles.

1. Have I done anything? No!

2. I may be willing – at least I am in agreement about the issue – but I am not obedient.

C. I can put my offering in the plate every Sunday, but then I complain to my spouse that God is robbing me of my hard earned money.

1. I am obedient, but am I willing? No!

D. It takes both an attitude of willingness and an act of obedience for the blessing to be realized.

4. The danger is rejection of God's invitation will eventually result in rebellion against God (v. 20).

A. Once I have rejected God's invitation, things cannot remain the same.

1. Saying "No" to God is no light thing; from that moment I cannot be sure nothing else has changed.

B. When I reject God's invitation, I begin a process of pushing away from God.

1. God Himself says there are consequences to that decision.

2. Do not start down that path; if you have started, turn back while there is yet time to do so.

Today, as He does every day, God is inviting you to come to Him for a cleansing. If the world has dirtied you, God can and will cleanse you.

Let's pray!