

Isaiah 1:2-9

The LORD's Indictment and Mercy

The Lord has an airtight case to condemn you, but He mercifully saves you in Christ Jesus.

Because the Lord is good, He is justly offended by your sin.

The LORD indicts His people for rebelling against His fatherly rule (vv. 2-3).

- “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth;”—**Deut. 31.28** “Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears and **call heaven and earth to witness against them.**” **32.1** “Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak, and **let earth hear** the words of my mouth.” Heaven and earth are enduring witnesses who have seen all of Israel's works from her birth to this day.
- Rebellion (v. 2)— cf. Deut. 32.6 “Do you thus repay the LORD, you foolish and senseless people? Is not He your father, who created you, who made you and established you?”
- Irrational refusal to acknowledge the Lord (v. 3)—cf. Jer. 8:7-11
- John 10:14, 27 “I am the Good Shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me. . . . My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

The prophetic witness to the character and deeds of the accused is against His people (v. 4).

- 4 descriptions of Israel's depraved nature (v. 4a)
 - “Woe”—the word “Ah” or “alas” is usually translated “Woe” (cf. Isa. 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22; 6:5);
 - (1) sinful nation; (2) a people laden with iniquity (or, glorious with guilt); (3) “offspring of evildoers” – Gen 3:15 “seed of the serpent”; (4) Children who deal corruptly (or, children of corruption)
- 3 charges of Israel's disloyalty/covenant breaking (v. 4b)
 - (1) *forsaken* the LORD; (2) *despised* the Holy One; (3) *estranged*
- While the indictment is a formal charge under the law with witnesses, the language is highly personal, even filial. This is no mere crime against the “state,” but a scolding of One who is Love.

Because the Lord is patient, He calls you to repent of your sin.

The prophetic witness appeals to God's people to repent (vv. 5-8).

- “Why will you . . .” points to the people's responsibility to stop slamming their faces against God's fist (v. 5a).
- Analogy of a body with no place left to scourge/punish (vv. 5b-6)
- Analogy of a devastated land (vv. 7-8)
 - Agricultural analogy (v. 8a-b)
 - Warfare analogy (v. 8c)

- The Shorter Catechism Question 17 asks, “Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?” Answer: “The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.” In Christ you are redeemed from this estate of sin and misery. However, when you persist in sin, spurning the love of God, you make yourself miserable.

Because the Lord is merciful, He does not deal with you as your sins deserve.

The LORD’s true people recognize God’s justice and mercy (v. 9).

- They recognize God’s justice: There is an implicit acknowledgment that they have behaved as wretchedly as Sodom and Gomorrah.
- They recognize God’s mercy: God has not dealt with them as their sins deserve.
- How can the Holy One remain just if He does not deal with sinners according to their sins? The answer: Isaiah 53 (there are verbal and conceptual allusions from Isa. 53 to Isa. 1)
- Those who are in Christ “He shall make to be accounted righteous” because He “shall bear their iniquities.” But only a “few survivors” will be saved from wrath out of Israel. “Some” will be saved from every nation and tribe and language and people, to be united as the New Jerusalem (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 21:9-26; Isa. 2:2-4; 19:19-25).
- The question that Isaiah asks in 53:1 is the question we must ask ourselves: “Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?” Do you believe on Jesus? Do you believe that He has borne your griefs and carried your sorrows? Do you believe that He was wounded for your transgressions and crushed for your iniquities? Do you believe that His chastisement brought you peace with God? Do you believe that by His stripes you are healed? Do you believe on Jesus as your righteousness?