God’s Goodness & Severity

(by Kevin Heaton)

**Isaiah** chapter one teaches us a lot about the relationship that God wants with His people. In this chapter, it is revealed how God handles His relationship with His people depending on their obedience or lack thereof. In **1:2** the relationship is likened to that of parents to children: ***"Children have I reared and brought up."*** God views His people as His children.

Unfortunately, His children are disobedient at times and do not give Him glory: **1:2-4** ***"'but they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know, My people do not understand.' Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged."***

But God doesn't want to punish His children! This is seen in **1:5** where the question is asked: ***"Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel?"*** God had punished them and wanted to know how long they would want to suffer punishment. God wants His people to come to repentance and get out of punishment. The Lord does not give up on saving His people as seen in **v 9**: ***"If the LORD of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah."***

However, the Lord cannot put up with hypocrisy and sin. In **vv 10-15** God made known His displeasure in their worship to Him because of their sin. **1:13** says ***"I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly."*** But still God doesn't give up. The admonition is to ***"Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before My eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause"*** (**1:16-17**).

Notice God's great mercy in **vv 18-19**! ***"Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land..."*** But take note of His severity as well in **v 20**... ***"but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."***

God will fulfill His work. The wicked will be punished. The righteous saved. ***"The Lord declares, the LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: 'Ah, I will get relief from My enemies and avenge Myself on My foes. I will turn My hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy. And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.' Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness. But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed"*** (**1:24-28**).

God is full of mercy and grace! But He is also full of justice and wrath. Which will you receive from Him? To GOD be the glory!

A Secret Disciple

(by Kevin Heaton)

Can you recall off the top of your head who it was that buried the body of Jesus? If you answered Joseph of Arimathea, then you're right. *(For extra credit you could also have answered Nicodemus, since he helped Joseph - cf. John 19:39-40.)*

But do you know the whole story about this Joseph of Arimathea? Who was he? Why was he the one to bury the body of Jesus? Is there any significance to him being the one to do so?

All 4 gospel accounts record the burial of Jesus' body by Joseph and when we put all 4 of them together, we see the whole story, the big picture of what is so significant about Joseph being the one to bury the body of Jesus.

**1) Matthew 27:57-61 - Joseph...**

- was a rich man.

- was a disciple of Jesus!

- laid the body of Jesus in his own tomb.

**2) More is given in Luke 23:50-56 which tells us that Joseph...**

- was a member of the council.

- was a good and righteous man

- did not consent to the death of Jesus!

- was looking for the kingdom of God.

So far what we find of Joseph is fascinating and encouraging. He was a rich man who was a believer in Jesus. He was a member of the Jewish council and didn't agree with their treatment of Jesus! What an opportunity he had to stand up for Jesus and proclaim his faith to those around him! But unfortunately...

**3) John 19:38-42 reveals to us that Joseph did not stand up for Jesus or proclaim his faith in Jesus. Instead Joseph was a...**

*- SECRET disciple, for fear of the Jews.*

Joseph was a believer in Jesus but kept his faith a secret. Joseph let fear hold him back from openly following Christ. UNTIL...

**4) Mark 15:42-46 tells us that Joseph...**

*- TOOK COURAGE!*

Joseph had been living in fear, not allowing anyone to know of his faith in Jesus. But when Jesus died upon the cross, something changed in Joseph. The death of Jesus finally moved Joseph to take courage and show his faith in Christ. He did so by going to Pilate to ask to bury the body of Jesus. He was no longer afraid. He let the world know that he loved and believed in Jesus.

Application for today...

***We must learn from the negative example of Joseph.*** We must not let fear of persecution from the world hinder us from showing our faith in Jesus. We must not be SECRET DISCIPLES.

***We must learn from Joseph's positive example as well.*** We must TAKE COURAGE as he did and proclaim our faith in Jesus. No matter what the world may say about us or do to us, we must be strong and courageous in our fight against sin. We must boldly proclaim the salvation that is only found in Jesus Christ.

Are you a secret disciple? **Take courage! Live for Jesus**.