

# The Lesson of the Snow

*Isaiah 1:18-19*

**W**e don't see snow here in our area every day, not even every year. The weatherman tells us that it has been fifty years (!) since we have seen this much snow in our part of the country. And whether or not you enjoyed the snow, I would dare to say that everyone in our state knew that it snowed here this week.

It always helps to have some type of visual aid in teaching, and the same is true in preaching. God provided us with a natural visual aid this week, and the truth of a particular verse in Isaiah shines brighter in our Southern hearts. That verse is Isaiah 1:18, *“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.”*

God is the one speaking, and He has something to say that's very important. I don't think it's blasphemous to believe that God was trying to get our attention through the record snowfall. Could it be that God was trying to say something to us through the snow? He is definitely saying something to us through His Word.

## **1 God tells us something about Himself.**

Notice that the first thing God says in this verse before us tonight is *“Come now, and let us reason together.”* What God is trying to say about Himself is found in that little word *“Come.”* So much about God's nature is found in that little word. You search the faiths of the world, and see if among all those other gods worshipped around our planet, there is one of them that says to his people, *“Come.”* You may find one or two or even three false gods who tell their worshippers to bring sacrifices and observe rituals and so forth, but there is no god but the Lord God who says to His people, *“Come.”*

God is trying to say to us that He is a loving God. You see, only a loving God would or could issue such a loving invitation as this. No one ever receives an invitation in the mail which says, *“We are having a party next Saturday night at 7:30 PM. Don't come.”* God has sent us an invitation, and it reads, *“I'm giving you eternal life, if you really want it. Come!”*

In spite of our sins, compared to His holiness; in spite of our filthy rags, compared to His righteousness, God says, *“Come!”* I believe that that word *“Come!”* could be called quite accurately *“God's Favorite Word.”* It is a word filled with grace and

mercy and lovingkindness as God reaches out to us, telling us that He desires to have fellowship with *us*, of all creatures.

It was a word of **grace** when God saw that the ark had been completed, and He said to Noah, “*Come into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation*” (Genesis 7:1). It was a word of **love** when God spoke through Isaiah 55:1, “*Ho, every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price!*” And then just two verses later, “*Incline your ear, and come to Me; hear, that your soul may live....*”

And don't you think Jesus was showing us how very much He loves us when He said, “*Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28)? In a parable Jesus told, He said, “*And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, Come, for all is ready*” (Luke 14:17). He wouldn't do that if He didn't love us!

And what God is trying to get through to us, through our hard heads and crusty hearts, is that He loves us. He says, “*Come! Come!*” It is such an important thing for God to say to sinful man that we see it several times in one of the last verses in the Bible: “*The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him who hears say, Come. And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price*” (Revelation 22:17).

Do you see how important this word is? We must come to the Father through Jesus. We can't worship a God who is afar off, who is totally disinterested in us, who holds us at arm's length. God is a loving God, and that is what He is trying to tell us when He says, “*Come!*”

## **2 God tells us something about ourselves.**

We learn here in Isaiah that we can come, according to what God Himself says, “*though your sins be as scarlet.*” What is God trying to tell us? He's trying to tell us that we are sinners. He doesn't say, “*If* your sins be as scarlet.” Now most of us are already aware of the fact that we are sinners. At least, we'll agree to that if we have to. But it's quite another thing to consider that **God** knows we are sinners. That's pretty scary, when you stop to think about it!

But notice how God describes our sin. He says, “*Though your sins be as scarlet...though they be red like crimson.*” In the Scriptures, particularly in the book of Revelation, we see that the color scarlet is used as a symbol of wickedness. The picture of Babylon as a harlot is a significant one. That harlot that John saw in

his vision was sitting upon a scarlet beast, and the woman herself was wearing purple and scarlet-colored clothing. It is no mere coincidence either that the robe the soldiers flung across the pulverized flesh of Jesus just after His scourging was a scarlet robe. It represents wickedness, sin, evil. It represents the state and condition of our hearts without Christ.

Isaiah uses two colors here in describing our sins: “scarlet” and “crimson.” Old Testament scholars say that there is no distinguishable difference between the two as they were found in ancient times. The dye for this color came from a worm. The dye was absolutely colorfast and indelible. It wouldn’t wash out, which was one reason why it was so expensive. It went down deep into the very fabric, and wouldn’t come out. It was the same color as blood.

We cannot wash our sins clean. There is no new leaf we can turn over, no self-help program we can launch, no amount of determination we can acquire, that can take away the indelible stain of our sin. And when God says to us, “*Though your sins be as scarlet,*” He’s trying to say to us that not only are we sinners, but our sins cannot be washed away by any human means.

The end of verse five and all of verse six of Isaiah 1 describes our sin: “*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 closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.*” Man in sin is one big bruise! There is no amount of scrubbing that will remove a bruise, because a bruise is below the surface of the skin. A new suit of clothes, or a new hairdo, or a mask of hypocrisy will cover up the outside, but they’ll do nothing to change the inside.

When our tongues, our hands, our feet, our eyes, our minds, do wrong, it’s because the trouble lies deeper than that. The trouble is sin, and sin is so deeply ingrained in us that nothing *we* can do as humans will change anything. You can soak in the bathtub, but sin is more than a layer of dirt. Our sins reach down to the very core of our being, to the depths of our hearts. They cannot be washed away by anything of human invention.

I don’t like being called a sinner. You don’t like being called a sinner. Yet it is reality. “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me...” A wretch? We don’t like that, either! We may not like it, folks, but according to the Bible, that is exactly what we are. God has the final say-so, and this is what He says: “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*”

And what God is trying to tell us is that we are sinners, and that our sin goes down deep. We can't wash it out!

### **3 God tells us something about the way He wants to make us.**

He continues in this verse in Isaiah, *"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."* And what God is saying is that in spite of the fact that we are sinners, and in spite of the fact that sin has indelibly stained our very beings, God Himself is ready to forgive. God tells us something about the way He wants to make us: *"white as snow."*

Snow is used in the Scriptures as a symbol for whiteness, for purity. When David prayed his beautiful prayer of confession in Psalm 51, he said, *"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow"* (v. 7). Daniel had a vision of God, and in that vision he saw that *"thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool"* (Daniel 7:9).

In the book of Revelation, we see the color white used symbolically to refer to purity before God. When Jesus was speaking to the church at Sardis, He said, *"Yet you still have a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy"* (3:4). Reference is made in 7:14 of the saints who had *"washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."* And we are told that the Bride, which is the Church, has been given *"fine linen, clean and white"* to wear in that great marriage with the Bridegroom, who is Jesus.

It has nothing to do with the color of your skin. It has everything to do with the condition of your soul before God. In spite of our scarlet sins, God desires to make us white, pure, forgiven, clean, before Himself, and He does it through the shedding of the scarlet blood of His Son Jesus.

There is a remarkable thing about snow, which I'm sure you, too, have noticed. A blanket of snow transforms everything into glistening beauty! Even the ugliest, most lifeless, most cluttered landscape is transformed into one of the most beautiful sights the eye can behold. God desires to do that to us and for us—transform us into a creation of beauty in His eyes. Our sins shall be washed clean, and we shall be white as snow.

But this forgiveness is not automatic. Forgiveness is not given automatically or unconditionally. God says, *"Come now, and let us reason together."* *"Reason together"* is a court-room term. We are in a courtroom, the courtroom of God, and

we are the defendants. It's almost as if God is saying, "Here is your court summons. You are given a chance to appear before Me as your Judge to plead your case." But He's not saying it's okay to argue with Him. All *we* can do is stand before Him while He brings the charges against us. But then God gives the alternatives which are open and available to us. Though your *sins* be as scarlet, they *can be* as white as snow. We *can* be forgiven, but we must meet the conditions.

Now look at verse 19: "*If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.*" So here are the conditions. ***First, we must be willing to accept this forgiveness.*** It's no good for us unless we accept it personally. Rejecting God's forgiveness renders it useless to you, as an individual. ***Second, we must be willing to be obedient to God.*** Since we are all sinners, there is not one of us who can be obedient to God without *first* repenting of our sins. We have been disobedient; let us repent of our sins, turn around, and be obedient to God. Then, when we are willing to accept this forgiveness, and when we are obedient, *then* we will experience the cleansing, purging, forgiving power of God. Then we will be what God wants us to be—*forgiven!*

Did God speak to you in the snow? When you woke up the next morning to see everything covered with a thick layer of freshly fallen snow, did you remember that all that snow is just a picture of the way God wants to make you on the inside? If not, then perhaps through His Word He has said these things to you tonight.

Are you willing—right now—to begin to be what God wants you to be? God says, "Look at the snow. That's how white I long to make your soul, if you will only let Me."