SHRIVELED TREES & SCORCHED GARDENS

**DATE: 7/6/2016 Wed.**

**TEXT: Isaiah 1:16, 17 (text v. 30)**

***“For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water”***

**INTRODUCTION**

We have heard a lot about Droughts taking place in different parts of the country (of late)

Fluctuating Patterns of wet and dry cycles are common occurrences

Some just last longer than others

And when they do, it’s not a good thing

With a prolonged Drought, crops planted in spring, intended to be harvested in fall, wither away

Intense heat and lack of rain, scorch crops …

Leaving farmers with depleted harvests or no harvest at all

All the expense, time, and energy that went into trying to raise a crop was in vain

The potential yields and fruitfulness were diminished by the drought

This picture is similar to the one that Isaiah paints …

… as we continue in our study of **Isaiah 1**

God's people in Israel were Out of Touch

They were rebellious, inattentive, indifferent and living sinfully

They made God sick with their hypocrisy, insincerity, and phoniness

According to **v. 30, if** they were unwilling to turn from their sinfulness …

They would become like Shriveled Trees and Scorched Gardens

Their blessings would be diminished

Their purpose would go unfulfilled

They would wither away spiritually and physically

Shriveled Trees and Scorched Gardens are a description of the lives of the so-called Christians living in America today

They have chosen to follow the same pattern of living as Israel in Isaiah's day

Their lives are characterized by iniquity, indifference toward God, inattentiveness to the Bible, and insincerity in their dedication to Christ

Lip Service, not Life Service is what they offered

Their profession of dedication is nothing but a joke

God is not impressed

Jesus put it this way in **Matthew 15:8** - ***“This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from me”***

The destiny of God's people was bleak

They were coming to ruin

\*Yet, Isaiah provides a prescription for God's people on how to restore their broken fellowship with Him

He gave them specific instructions on how to turn their lives around for the better

We’d all do well to take heed to Isaiah

God does not want us to become a Shriveled tree,

But rather the trees in **Psalm 1:3 –** ***“a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither;”***

So how do we prevent ourselves from becoming like …

**“Shriveled Trees and Scorched Gardens”**?

Let’s stand to read God’s Word together and then pray so we can find out

Read **vs. 16, 17** … **v. 30** together

**~~~Prayer~~~**

The first thing we find is a call for …

**I. “CLEANSING” – v. 16a**

***“Wash you, make you clean …”***

To wash is to make something clean, to get the dirt out

We’d never think twice about offering someone a dirty dish or glass

Yet, Israel was offering themselves to God as dirty vessels

**II Timothy 2:21 –** ***“If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet (suitable) for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work”***

**A. The ‘Cleansing of God’**

For the Child of God staying right with God is the most important thing they can do

Cleansing begins with asking God for forgiveness

… For what we have done wrong and getting right

**I John 1:9 *– “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”***

As the Children of God; we need to keep short accounts

If you’re reading or listening to this and you don’t have a Bible reason for why you should be allowed into heaven … Then you probably won’t be

You need to repent of your sinfulness and call upon Jesus in Mercy to save you

**B. The ‘Confession of the Child of God’**

What does it mean to ***“confess”*** our sins?

It means …

**1.** Seeking Forgiveness from God

The word ***“confess”*** means *to agree with, or to declare one's self guilty of what one is accused*

Confessing your sins means that you agree with God about your sinfulness

There is no debating, deliberation, or disputing with the Lord about them

Not only does it mean being right with God, but also

**2.** Seeking Forgiveness from Others

Cleaning up your life also involves making matters right with others you have wronged or offended

In other words, it means to clear your conscience not only with God, but also with men

Freedom comes only by facing up to the truth

Shame and guilt are feelings from which you cannot run and hide

From people … and From God

**3.** Jesus thought it Important

**Matthew 5:23, 24 – *“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;” “Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift”***

The word *“****reconcile”*** means *to renew the friendship or to change the mind*

It doesn’t matter whether you think that the other person is justified or not in their offense

Most people just brush it off as unimportant

We say or think things like … *“Oh they are just being a baby”* … etc.

Did you just listen to what Jesus said in **Matthew 5**?

**4.** The Apostle Paul thought it Important

**Acts 24:16 – *“And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men”***

Keeping our lives clean and clear before God and others

… is something we are to do consistently and continually

Paul said that he ***“always”*** makes this effort

A clear conscience gives you credibility when speaking to others about the Lord or His Word

Having a clear conscience will also act as a shield against those who falsely accuse you

Notice what Peter said in **I Peter 3:16 …**

***“Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ”***

If you want to clean up your life, begin by confessing your wrongs to the Lord and to others that have been hurt by you or have hurt you

Let’s look now at the next step in Keeping someone from becoming Shriveled Trees and Scorched Gardens

Notice **v. 16** again

The next thing we see is …

**II. “CEASING” – v. 16b**

***“…put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil;”***

**A. The ‘Principle’**

If we want to walk in fellowship with God,

Then we need to **stop doing** that which is hurting our relationship with Him

Isaiah says, *Put away your evil. Stop doing it!*

***“from before Mine (God’s) eyes”***

This principle is repeated over and over again in the Bible

Let me give you a few example …

**James 4:8 *– “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded”***

**Isaiah 55:7 – *“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon”***

**Psalm 34:14 –*“Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it”***

**Romans 12:9 *– “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good”***

**B. The ‘Problem’**

The problem with many Christians today is they don't want to forsake their sinful habits

They don’t think they are doing anything wrong

Some go as far as to say - *I am under God's grace. I can live any way I want to live because of it*

That my friend, is Grace Abuse

That thinking is being strongly propagated today

And they wonder why they have no Joy, Peace etc.

They become like Shriveled Trees or Scorched Gardens

God, however, addressed this issue almost 2000 years ago through the Apostle Paul

We are NOT to live any way we wish, especially in sin

Anyone who is excusing sinful living for the Christian does not know what they are doing

**Romans 6:1, 2 –** ***“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” “God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”***

**Galatians 5:1 – *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage”***

**Galatians 5:13 – *“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another”***

**I Corinthians 8:9 – *“But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak”***

**I Peter 2:16 – *“As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, (harmful) but as the servants of God”***

**Jude 4 – *“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ”***

**“CLEANSING”**

**“CEASING”**

The 3rd thing we see is …

**III. “COMPREHENDING” – v. 17a**

***“learn to do well …”***

If you want to restore broken fellowship with God,

Then comprehend or learn to do what is right!

That means to be teachable

**A. Learning**

The word ***“learn"*** here not only means *to learn*

But also *to exercise* or *to be trained*

The idea of the word is to put into practice what you have been taught

If you do not put into practice what you have been taught,

Then you are not really learning

You are not Comprehending the truth

**II Timothy 3:7 *– “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”***

Paul described wayward women with this description, but this can apply to anyone

Learning leads to …

**B. Living**

The **Living** of what is right comes from **Learning** what is right

It will be difficult for any Christian to ***“learn to do well”*** if they are not faithful in their Devotional Life

Bible Reading, Prayer, Faithful Church Attendance

By-the-Way …

Not just any Bible will do, for most today are Shriveled Trees and Scorched Gardens

Not just any Church will do, because most are Shriveled Trees and Scorched Gardens

**Proverbs 1:5 *– “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto (go to, find) wise counsels:”***

**Acts 17:11 –*“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so”***

Your thirst for the Word of God can have significant impact on the lives of many others

**Interesting Story:** In 1792, a little peasant girl in Wales, named Mary Jones, became intrigued with the Bible and longed to read from its pages. As her parents were too poor to afford one, she went to a neighbor's house and borrowed a New Testament. Her eyes fell on three words: *Search the Scriptures*. Mary determined to purchase a Bible of her own, and for the next several years, she toiled with her hands, sacrificing many other things in order to earn enough money to purchase her own copy of the Word of God. Times were very difficult, pennies were hard to come by, and Bibles were rare. But in the spring of 1800, Mary heard of Bibles for sale and walked 25 miles to another town, carrying her hard-earned money. She arrived there late in the day and found lodging with a local pastor, but she could hardly sleep for the excitement of having a Bible of her own. Early next morning, she proceeded to the house of Pastor Thomas Charles, who was the one who had the Bibles for sale. Imagine her sorrow to learn that his stock of Bibles was exhausted. Her inconsolable grief so moved Bro. Charles that he said, *“My dear child, I see that you must have a Bible. It is impossible to refuse you.”* Finding a copy that had been promised to another, he gave it to her. But that's not the end of the story. Pastor Charles, deeply moved by that scene, developed a burning determination of his own to do everything in his power to make Bibles available to anyone who desired them, to the millions of Believers not having one. He laid plans, garnered support, expended energy, and in 1894, the British and Foreign Bible Society was formed, the "granddaddy" of all the world's Bible societies.

Beloved, may the Lord help us to learn to do well by reading His Word

In so doing, we can avoid becoming Shriveled Trees and Scorched Gardens

***“wash you, make you clean”*** - **“CLEANSING”**

***“cease from doing evil”* - “CEASING”**

***“learn to do well” -* “COMPREHENDING”**

Then lastly, let’s look at being …

**IV. “CONCERNED” – v. 17b**

Concerned about other

***“… seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow”***

**A. The Selfless**

Isaiah stresses the importance of having a concern for others if you desire to restore / maintain fellowship with God

Love for others is what God is all about and if we are to be like Him, we should have the same attitude

Isaiah told the Israelites to seek justice or fairness

Those who were oppressed were to be helped

They were to defend those who were orphans and widows (the most vulnerable)

Then there are the …

**B. The Selfish**

It is when we are selfish, oppressive, deceptive, or uncaring that we begin to shrivel like parched trees or become like scorched gardens

Selfishness and greed make us uncaring, unconcerned, and unloving toward other people,

Especially those who don't have very much or are easily oppressed

Why do you think we sponsor efforts like the Bus Ministry, Annual Revival Meeting, Sunday School, Street Ministry

That people might have an opportunity to genuinely reach out to show Christ’s love for

 ***“the oppressed, the fatherless, the widow”***

Love for others, is one of our greatest opportunities to show Jesus Christ in our lives

[**John 13:35**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+13%3A35) **– *“By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another”***

**CONCLUSION**

I don’t know about you, but I certainly do not want to become a Shriveled Tree or a Scorched Garden

So that we won’t, let’s be sure to …

**STAY RIGHT**

**STOP DOING EVIL**

**LEARN TO DO WELL**

**BE CONCERNED**