

Isaiah 12

“Thine anger turned away. . .” 100 years of psychology have radically shaped the view of man. There was a time when people went to church to find out what God required of them and what they needed to repent of. But psychology has produced a massive shift away from this. It has told us that the *holy of holies* is the self, nothing must violate the serenity of self. Psychology tells us that the ‘self’ is the real you (and not your worshipping nature as the image of God) (Scripture indicates that you are known, character, morality, spirituality, by what you worship).

As a consequence, the implicit message of psychology is: *whatever makes you feel bad, must be bad.* If the God of the Bible by His message makes me feel condemned in my sin, I must find a way to dispense, suppress, marginalize or explain away what He says in Scripture. Former divines described this behavior as *“putting the conscience to sleep.”* But, God tells us in countless places that someday the conscience will speak at full volume (**Rom 2:16**).

Impenitent sinners are willfully ignorant that *God is man’s environment.* And, He is such by reason of His omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotent rule over His creation. But, the natural man regards God’s presence as an intrusion into his life. Man wants to wear the crown for himself (self-directed life) and not have God wear it.

Only the new birth by the power of God’s spirit has the ability to slay the sinners imagined sovereignty. Regeneration causes a person to gladly submit to the loving rule of God in Christ. Even regarding that subjection to God as the sweet relationship of an adopted child to a tender Father. By contrast, the natural man may take on the respectability of outward religion. But, he cannot hide indefinitely his distaste for God’s rightful rule. Only salvation can cause the sinner to serve God in joy, rest in the everlasting arms of God, to crawl up on the lap of God and experience being cherished by Him.

Now, the sinner’s love of his imagined independence is a huge factor to *provoking God to anger.* Our public universities have become as Luther warned, stairways to the portals of hell. For, they are telling students that *nothing outside of you defines you*, and if there is a God, *you owe Him nothing (that is a lie birthed by the devil, God’s enemy).* And that the creation made and designed itself. EX. As a for instance, if you take college botany, your professor might say

that the sweet juicy peaches you enjoy this time of year are merely a peach tree's survival strategy to get its pits/seeds distributed (and not the provision of our Creator's goodness). How different is the infallible message of God's Word, that God designed us for His purposes, and each of us owes God perfect conformity and obedience to His commandments.

The unbeliever regards his life to be his own, and his *personal sin to be a private matter*, solely between him and his own conscience. He reasons, "Why does God have to peer into my life and evaluate everything I do, my motives, thoughts, actions, and speech?" That's offensive, invasive. Impenitent sinners resent hearing what they owe God—perfect love to God and neighbor. *We think about how startling it was for the religious Jews of Jesus' day to hear in the Sermon on the Mount*, that our failure to keep God's law perfectly extends even to what we think about, look at, and even to our emotions (the heart an open book to God, a crystal-clear window to the soul).

So, in probing this question of God's anger at sin, we ought to ask, why does God take our sin so personally? That's quite a good question in a world that has an idolatrous worship of autonomy (imagined independence). The answer to this question, "Why does God take our sin personally" ought to be known by every Christian, for spelling this out the answer is an essential part of our gospel witness.

First, we begin with where we came from, who made us and why. We are created in God's image and likeness that we might know God, worship, serve, love and enjoy Him. And this enjoyment of God also involves delight in the good gifts which He gives us unto His honor and glory. "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31). "I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need" (Phil 4:12).

Paul knew how to abase and abound. He could be content with very little, but also abound when he had much without turning to idolatry in either situation. "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures" (Jas 1:17).

In continuing the answer why God takes our sin personally, we learn from Psalm 51 and in numerous other passages, that all sin is against God

Himself. In his prayer of confession of sin, David utters, “Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge” (**Ps 51:4**).

There’s an important set of reasons why this is true—why all sin is against God Himself. Since God’s moral law (the 10 Commandments) is the expression of His righteous and loving character, sin is an antagonistic attack upon God’s righteousness and love. For, our sin opposes who and what God is, and our sin opposes who we are created to be.

Man and woman as the very image and likeness of God is our creational identity (**Gen 1:26-27**). We were formed to reflect His moral majesty and His holiness in all of our relationships. Think of it, there is only one kind of creature in the universe created by God and for God as His image to reflect Him, to reflect His beauty, to mirror and image what He is like. The apostle John tells us in **1 John 4-5**, that those who know God will reflect His character, for John says, “God is love and those who know God love one another; they love God’s truth, and they love the One born of God, Christ Jesus.”

Now, ***sinner in today’s western culture of secular humanism tend to reason in this way***: “If a Christian tells me that I am created in God’s image to know and reflect Him, and that I am accountable to Him, and I don’t prefer that arrangement, I will opt out, and go for a different calling, I’ll do my own thing—like Frank Sinatra, I will do it my way.” But even nature tells us that a creature is created for a particular setting, an environment, an ecological niche.

EX. A porpoise is created to bound through the sea, sport in the waves, glide effortlessly through their blue waters. He doesn’t belong on a hot, sandy beach—if he manages to shimmy up onto the blazing hot sand, he will die there (blister, overheat), the beach is not his creational calling. So also, we creatures made in the image of God, He is our environment, we were made to find our lives in Him. We are lost without Him (‘lost’ without a normal rel. with Him, Luke 19:10).

Now because the Ten Commandments are primarily ***expressed in terms of “thou shalt not’s,”*** we tend not to think about His moral law (the Decalogue) as the safe-guard of love. But, that is precisely what these commandments are. In Moses’ incredible sermons on the law, he spells out in the Book of Deuteronomy that the law is the perfect expression of love to God and neighbor (Deut 30:19-20). Not surprisingly, Deuteronomy is the book from which

Jesus quotes the most in His discourses.

Now back to this concept that God is our environment, *our ethical actions are public in the sense that our lives are on display before God, people and angels*. Therefore, what must characterize the people of God are the virtues known as the Fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, meekness, gentleness, long suffering etc. (**Gal 5:22-23**). When that fruit is evident in our lives we are reflecting our Creator's character and we are fulfilling and realizing our created purpose through Christ.

But, when people live for themselves and not for the Lord, their sin is a slight to God's Name. The Lord does all things for the sake of His Name. His Name is all that He is, wisdom, power, goodness, love, holiness, majesty, and justice. When Scripture says that we are the image and likeness of God, it means that He created us to image or reflect Him as our Maker, to glory in His Name. *This is why God calls human sin the profaning of God's name (see Ez 20)*.

To profane is to make common or base, to de-sacralize, it is to shame or dishonor, to drag through the mud. No wonder God's holy response to sin is wrath, His settled anger. Oh, if we only knew how committed God is to His own holiness. He won't set that commitment aside to save you, that is why the death of Christ is so important. God hates sin not only because it is against Him, but it is also very destructive to us. It degrades, enslaves, corrupts, reduces a person to that of a beast; it mangles and mutilates the image of God in us (**Ps 49:20**).

Redemption in Christ restores us to our creational identity as the image of God so that we may live life as the image of God. Salvation puts us in touch with why we are here, why we were born, why we exist. The gift of a new nature plants in us the desire and ability to obey God. In salvation we meet our Creator, and in so doing, discover the meaning of life and the meaning of our own life. That's what happens when God saves you and takes you as His own.

V. 1 -- Here Isaiah speaks as if his own contemporaries would experience the redemption, though he is actually depicting people of the future millennium. *The Bible does not teach that the wrath of God 'turns into' love and comfort*; for that would equal a low regard/picture of divine integrity. God is wrathful against sin (wrath is His holy response to sin), and that holy wrath must be visited upon sin in justice (**Ez 18:3**). But, if His wrath as punishment for sin falls upon One in the

sinner's place, so that the guilt of that sin is fully born, then God may justly show comfort to the one on whom the wrath formerly rested. That is at the center of our extoling joy—in Christ God has appeased His wrath in Christ for all who will ever believe!

Thus, to those who are recipients of this matchless grace, Isaiah exhorts all godly persons to express their thanksgiving (that the promise may be more fully believed, *Calvin*). The remembrance of God's Name not only extols our Savior, but is profitable for us, reminding us that God bestows honor on us when He condescends to use us to spread the glory of His Name (*Calvin*).

Putting verse one into focus, we are listening to our own voices in the future—this is a foretaste of the praise we will offer in the Kingdom.

I. If you know Christ savingly, then this is your confident testimony of what it means to be saved in spite of your own wretchedness.

Can you say that these words in verse one are autobiographical of you??? God was your former enemy, you knew that His wrath was upon you due to your sins, and that His wrath was warranted—it was required in order for God to be true to Himself as the holy and just One. But, in His great love for guilty people, ***He executes a guilt exchange*** so that by the sacrifice of Christ, believing sinners are morally entitled to be treated as sons and daughters of God (even as royalty, **Revelation 1:6**). EX. Meghan Markle is now a 'royal' by marriage, she was not born the Duchess of Sussex (but by marriage to Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex). The church is royal by marriage (see **Ephesians 5**).

Christ's glorious achievements in satisfying the offended justice of God means that ***our new relationship with God is morally beautiful (for God, in saving us, is Just and Justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus, Rom 3:25-26)***. Because God's justice against the believer's guilt is satisfied, we may go boldly into His presence for love, grace, comfort, and consolation.

V. 1 (cont.), God wants each and every believer to be able to say, **"You comfort me!"** My friends that is the goal of grace, that you will find your all and all in the Lord. Therefore, grace brings God's purpose to fulfillment, that is the ability and desire to recline upon the Son of God as your **Source Person**. "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (**2 Pet 1:2-3**).

We sing (often spontaneously—EX.

Whistling at the health club) of this boundless provision in Christ. And, joy fills our hearts when we recognize how little we are in control, and how much God is in control.

From what does this joy spring???

My friends, God is the Owner of all, but He refuses to do business by payment—He has made all for free (because of Christ’s purchase). Salvation has never been earned, listen, “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance” (**Is 55:1-2**).

“The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost” (**Rev 22:17**). (EX. Filipino believer story in Smackdown, a ‘store’ to buy what you need.)

V. 2 – The long-awaited deliverance has arrived. When God is your salvation, there is no need for fearing, only trusting. Outside of God, without salvation it is only night for the soul. There is despondency, loneliness, guilt, fear, the expectation of punishment (**1 Jn 4:18**). (EX. My experience in India. EX. The realistic kangaroo litter receptacle—every possible spirit must be appeased and placated). “The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, but the righteous are bold as a lion” (**Prov. 28:1**).

All of us feel our frailty and vulnerability, and all of us rely upon something for security and constancy. But, only God can give hope and strength that will not fail. Our confidence is that He has given Christ to be our continent of Rock. The peace of Christ is to ‘umpire’ in our hearts (‘make the call’) (**Col 3:15**).

V. 3 – II. Our rich enjoyment. The wells of salvation refer to the goodness of God in our redemption and the endless supply He provides (EX. Run out of retirement funds Ad). Like a spring that renews its flow and does not have its waterline lowered like a pond, God is an artesian well, He gives to His own all that is necessary for life. He knows the terrible burden of guilt which at one time had separated the believing sinner from Himself. But, now has been removed by the work of Christ. (EX. Kauai hike story, miscalculation, and SW exposure). (See **Jeremiah 2:13**, fountain of living water, versus broken cistern).

“...even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (**Eph 2:5-7**).

All we need flows from God, He satisfies us with Himself. We are to constantly apply ourselves to Him for our use. (“When use Christ for the reasons God gave Him, we are communing with God, *Owen*.)

Our soul’s thirst is the greatest thirst of all. The world’s counterfeit water—poses as possessing real thirst-quenching power (but in reality, it is a wilderness, a leaky, stagnant, cistern, of pond scum, **Jeremiah 2:13**). (EX. David Wells and his ‘study for unbelievers. “Have you been torn up, damaged, disheartened, are you a casualty of the false promises of this world?”).

The remarkable thing about a true believer, when he or she draws from these springs of salvation, thirst is satisfied as never before, and, water flows from the believer!!! “Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life’” (**Jn 4:13-14**).

“Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water’” (**Jn 7:37-38**). Is that your experience?

Vv. 4-6 – III. Our universal mission. When people enjoy the blessings of salvation, they must make known the glories of the redeeming and pardoning God. But, in Isaiah’s day, his Jewish contemporaries despised the Holy One of Israel (**Is 30:12**). My friends, God has called His redeemed to engage in missionary proclamation.

Jesus of Nazareth was an historical figure who was crucified on a Roman cross, history books will grant that. But, when we preach who He is as the eternal Son of God, and we testify what the Word of Almighty God declares that He accomplished by His substitutionary death, we are communicating doctrine. We are bringing light to a darkened world.

Yahweh has done excellent things. Nothing can be compared to the great deliverance He has accomplished when He offered up His only begotten Son. He delivers from the most severe and hard bondage (the world, the flesh and the devil, and fear of death—were our slave masters). The glorious accomplishments of Christ are to be proclaimed throughout the whole earth. Those things God has done are high and exalted. We are to embrace this vision of proclaiming His deeds now; exalting His Name in a profound way. And, it is our duty to rejoice in the Lord, it is just as important as repenting (**Phil 4:4-8**).

As the Apostle Paul says of the public nature of Christ's work, "For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; **for this has not been done in a corner.** 'King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.' Agrippa *replied* to Paul, 'In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian'" (**Acts 26:26-28**).

The nature of this true joy is well-founded. There is no greater happiness than God dwelling in the midst of us. Is your heart set on that kingdom promise as your true treasure (**Mt 6:21**)? If so you will navigate toward the celestial city with single-mindedness and great resolve, making heaven your chief business while you are here. EX. Cal Arts drama major.

Think of it, the majesty of Almighty God making His dwelling place with redeemed men and women—having sanctified us as His property; as members of His forever family. The conviction of this fills us with inconceivable joy (that is no ordinary joy). "But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves" (**Jn 17:13**). Your spiritual victories are all tied to having this 'spiritual sight'.

The purpose of His grace, to ultimately dwell with His people, so that they know the glory of the Lord in experiencing life in the Father's house. "Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I am going to show you, *as* the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct *it*" (**Ex 25:8-9**).

"Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," declares the LORD. Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you" (**Zech 2:10-11**). Do you have 'Kingdom consciousness'?

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away. And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true”” (Rev 21:3-5).

Perhaps there are some here this morning, who feel that the tide has been running against you for so long. Let your heart take courage in these truths and promises we have seen today. Allow yourself to consent to draw water from the springs of salvation, rejoice in what God has done and will do, marvel that the purpose of God’s grace is to have you find your all in the Son who is the fountain of life and light and love.

Isaiah 12 and discipleship

Consider these verses: 1 Peter 3:18, 2:24; Romans 15:13; and Hebrews 9:14. In a one to two-page paper, respond to the following:

The church is to live upon the truth of the massive guilt transfer which took place at the cross (1 Peter 3:18, 2:24). This yields a clear conscience, joy, peace, hope, and the ability to enjoy God (Romans 15:13).

- Why do you think the reality of this guilt transfer energizes holy living, love and humility?

As we feed upon Christ's glory in this guilt transfer, His sanctifying work is released into our experience.

- Why do you think a clear conscience and enjoyment and satisfaction in God produces holiness of life?
- Consider why feeding on the truth of this guilt transfer creates an atmosphere for honesty with God and humble transparency with one another (Hebrews 9:14).
- How can you be transparent in your discipleship?