

ISAIAH 1:10-20 HEART RELIGION

¹⁰ Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah! ¹¹ “The multitude of your sacrifices— what are they to me?” says the LORD. “I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. ¹² When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? ¹³ Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your evil assemblies. ¹⁴ Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. ¹⁵ When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; ¹⁶ wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, ¹⁷ learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.

¹⁸ “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 as crimson, they shall be like wool. ¹⁹ If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; ²⁰ but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword. ”For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

The heart of religion is found in the heart of the worshipper. To other men, the outward sign of our orthodoxy is exhibited by what we do. However, God sees into the heart. The same outward observances that are meant to help us worship properly and serve as a valid witness to God, become an abomination to God when they are performed for human-centered reasons. There is probably no greater expression of God’s disgust and anger at Israel than to call them Sodom and Gomorrah. Likewise there is no more dangerous place to be than to be referred to as such by God.

Scripturally, the heart is the place of the will. True worship and efficacious sacrifice is found only in the love of God that is expressed in a life that places God’s will and our neighbors’ needs before those of our own. If your worship and prayers seem hollow and often meaningless, try practicing mercy and charity in your daily interactions and seek to obey God’s will as revealed in the Bible. Such practices will lead to a name change. You will no longer be known as Sodom and Gomorrah, but your name will become Jerusalem.

Lord, I do not want to be a legalistic and ritualistic worshiper any more than I want to be someone who does not believe in you. Send your Holy Spirit into my life so that my heart will be softened. Drive out the hardness of self-centeredness and replace it with a desire to love and serve you. Amen.