

For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more. **Hebrews 8:12**

## Store In My Heart Isaiah 1:1

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

This verse gives us insight into the time and place of the writings of Isaiah. Beginning before the dispersion of the northern tribes, Isaiah warned Judah to remain faithful to God. The dispersion was a powerful example for his message of rebuke and warning to God's chosen people. He also gave warnings to other nations.

God spoke through Isaiah of the future blessings that awaited those who serve Him, often in prophecies that spoke of both upcoming events and things in the distant future. Many of prophecies found in Isaiah were pointing to Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus and the inspired teachers of the New Testament often referenced the message of Isaiah.



# A World Without Mercy

Matthew W. Bassford

I've heard it said that our increasingly secular world is an immoral one. There's a sense in which that's true, but it doesn't really capture the spirit of our time. The secular world isn't so much immoral as it is differently moral. It endorses all kinds of sexual sins that the Bible condemns, but it also has created its own list of sins, and woe betide the one who violates those moral standards!

For instance, consider the proliferation of articles on the Internet entitled, "Ten Things Not to Say to (Blank)". (Blank) could be nearly anything: African Americans, Asians, women, gays, veterans, the disabled, grieving parents, overweight people, (three thousand other labels), or any combination of the above. In other words, there is some group out there that has been wounded by history or uncaring fate, and saying something clumsy to them will make their pain unendurable. Above all, never say anything clumsy on the Internet, because it will never, ever be forgotten. It will follow you to your grave.

Of course, there is an element of truth to this. One of my dad's favorite verses in the entire Bible is **Ecclesiastes 10:1**: "*Dead flies make a perfumer's oil stink, so a little foolishness is weightier than wisdom and honor.*" (NASB) A single careless word or action can lead to a lost job or a ruined marriage. Certainly, Christians should always be careful to speak graciously!

However, the irony of this world of ours is that even though it requires such grace from the speaker, it requires no grace at all from the hearer. As soon as a boorish tweeter or Facebook poster violates one of your personal Ten Commandments about what must not be said, he's fair game. Out him. Out him as publicly as possible. Be as scathing and sarcastic as you can be in what you say to him and about him. Use lots of ALL CAPS to underscore your self-righteousness and outrage. Rejoice as mobs of other modern-day Pharisees start chucking rocks at your victim too. Accept neither explanation nor apology. Six months later, dredge up the incident again to humiliate him, even if the current conversation has nothing to do with the former one.

It seems to me that I've read about this before. In **Romans 1:31**, Paul describes the fallen Gentile peoples as, "*Without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful.*" Unmerciful. That's got a ring to it, doesn't it? I tend to read **Romans 1** as a description not just of the moral collapse of the pagans long ago, but of the moral collapse of any society that turns away from God. Lack of mercy is one of the fruits by which you shall know them, and it is increasingly evident, in many cases from the right as well as the left. Polemics about "welfare queens" among the poor, anybody? How about arguments about whether public schooling or home schooling is Best For Your Child? How about pro-vaxxing or anti-vaxxing?

I've been listening recently to a CD of hymns from the annual singings of the Kleinwood Church of Christ, and perhaps my favorite hymn on the CD is "Though

Your Sins Be as Scarlet.” I particularly love it for the repetition in the third verse:

“He’ll forgive your transgressions, He’ll forgive your transgressions, And remember them no more, And remember them no more.”

What a beautiful thought it is that God does not remember my sin! I remember them. There are things I did 20 years ago that still make me cringe. He doesn’t. He has blotted them out from His book. He has been merciful to me, and He continues to be merciful to me, even though I sin grievously against Him.

Because God has been so merciful, He frees me and indeed requires me to be merciful myself, to be humble, sympathetic, understanding, and forgiving whenever anyone offends me. I must be gracious not only to the well-meaning and clumsy, but also to the foolish, the ungrateful, and the evil. When I have been forgiven of so much, I do not dare to be unforgiving of so little.

When the mercy of God is removed from the picture, I suppose that people must be unmerciful. The life of the Christian is hidden with Christ in God, but the life of the unbeliever is not. He is vulnerable, exposed, so that even the clumsy, well-intended comment is a threat to him. He has to strike back, or else he will be lessened. Without the riches of the grace of God, he cannot afford to be merciful.

Nor does he even want to be merciful. Why should he be? He owes no obligation to anyone, certainly not the obligation to love his enemies and pray for those who persecute him. He fears and hates those who offend him, even if they do so unwittingly. The offender Should Have Known that rule about not saying this, just as some poor Jewish peasant Should Have Known the Pharisees’ rule about walking across his kitchen floor in the dark on the Sabbath. Better clobber him for it! Froth at the mouth at what a bad, bad person he is, so that he can truly understand what a good, good sensitive person you are.

We could all stand to show less sensitivity to ourselves and more sensitivity to others, not only to the others who are like us, the others of whom we approve, but to the others who threaten us by attacking what is most dear to us. It is often the case that they didn’t even mean their words to be an attack. I can’t even begin to guess at how many times I’ve been bothered by a friend’s cold, distant manner, only to learn later that it was symptomatic of a problem that had nothing to do with me.

Even if not, though, even if offense is the result not of a Twitter misstep, but of a sincere loathing of everything we are and stand for, that is still no excuse to be unmerciful. Hateful people have souls too, and when we strike back at them, we dishonor their Creator. The mercy of Christ is the most powerful force in the universe, and few indeed are those who can remain unmoved after an encounter with it.

Be merciful in the face of offenses from Internet trolls, co-workers, friends, family members, and spouses. When in doubt, err on the side of mercy. God is in no doubt whatsoever about any of us, but He is merciful anyway. Go and do likewise.

## Contact Us

We like opportunities to speak with others about the Lord.

### Church of Christ

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## For Our Information

**Malcolm Rigsby** is waiting on results from his MRI.

**Jim Soliday** is to have a cardiac ablation sometime in the next month or so to help with his a fib problem.

**Sue Soliday** is suffering from her lymphedema again.

**Shannon Soliday** continues physical therapy for his shoulder.

**The Simpson** family is in Star City.

**Dan & JoBeth** plan to be in Alabama Thursday & Friday.

Sunday Evening – **Zechariah 12:9** Wednesday – **John 12:42**

Question sheets are available to help with these studies.

The  
**CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
MEETS HERE



10:20 AM • Sunday Worship Service  
5:00 PM • Sunday Night Bible Study  
7:00 PM • Wednesday Bible Study